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Fiction, Citizenship and the Asian
Experience in East Africa *Danson Kahyana*

Briefings

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Editorial Office

Centre for Democracy & Development, 2L Leroy House, 436 Essex Road,
London N1 3QP, UK. Tel: +44 (0)20 7359 7775; Fax: +44 (0)20 7359 2221
E-mail: cdd@cdd.org.uk, Internet: www.cdd.org.uk

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Notes for Contributors

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The Editor

Democracy & Development: Journal of West African Affairs

2L Leroy House, 436 Essex Road, London N1 3QP, UK

Tel: +44 (0)20 7359 7775, Fax: +44 (0)20 7359 2221

or:

2 Olabode Close, Ilupeju Estate, P.O. Box 15700, Ikeja, Lagos, Nigeria

Tel: +234 (0)1 804 3221 / 473 0705, Fax: +234 (0)1 493 4420

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Guest Editor's Introduction

Antinomy of Citizenship: Negotiating Power or Social Existence?

Said Adejumobi¹

The discourse on citizenship has assumed a global phenomenon. The debate resonates in all parts of the world from the Balkans to the Caucuses, South Asia to Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East. Indeed, the issue was becoming a global priority before the rude interruption of the 'War on Terror' (WOT), which seemed to have now engaged the attention of the world and is also consuming substantial world resources. How far the WOT may positively link up with the question of citizenship is yet to be seen. The tendency is that the WOT may adversely affect the resolution of the citizenship question in many countries as the values of democracy, civil liberties, the protection of individual and group rights, and social justice which are crucial to the resolution of the citizenship question are under siege in the WOT. The military occupation of Iraq by the United States in the name of the WOT suggests how the rights of nations and peoples are being undermined in flagrant violation of international law and the citizenship rights of the people concerned. Militarised imperialism has become a substitute for global democratic governance under a regime of the WOT. It is this tendency that Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius describe as one of the manifestations of 'regressive globalism'.²

In the United States of America, the racial profiling which the WOT has elicited has seen Arabs and Muslim Americans being objects of hostile attack and considered as belonging to the 'enemy camp'. Hundreds of young Arab and Muslim men (sometimes women too) have been under surveillance, picked up for questioning and detained indefinitely.³ The Patriot Act, which many countries have been forced to emulate, gives the government of the United States sweeping powers to conduct secret searches, eavesdropping, and detention without trial. The values of freedom and democracy which the WOT is supposed to protect have become its greatest victims. Racial and religious tension and the erosion of

¹ Said Adejumobi has served as the guest editor for this special edition on citizenship. He teaches Political Science at the Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria. He was recently a Post-Doctoral Fellow of the Global Security and Co-operation Program of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), New York, USA (2002-2003). Email: adesaid@yahoo.com, sadejum@cddnig.org.

² Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier & Marlies Glasius, 'Global Civil Society in an Era of Regressive Globalisation' in Mary Kaldor et al. (eds.), *Global Civil Society 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 3-34.

³ See, Ranabir Samadin, 'Colonial Constitutionalism', *Identity, Culture and Politics*, vol. 3, no. 1 (July 2002), pp. 29-30. In this article, Samadin cited a piece written by George Monbiot in the Guardian of March 5, 2002 in which it was reported that 30 African-Americans of Somali origin were rounded up in the United States, beaten, tortured and summarily deported to Somalia without any offence being levelled against them or being tried or allowed access to a lawyer. Jungle justice seems to have replaced civil liberty in the United States.

citizenship rights of Arab and Muslim Americans is the price for the WOT in the United States.

But why has this question of citizenship become a recurring decimal in many countries in contemporary times? Does it have anything to do with the increasing powerlessness and failure of the state under neo-liberal market hegemony? Is citizenship crisis simply an elite induced crisis or is it a socially rooted one located in the structural character of affected countries and

Citizenship is an instrument of political exclusion and social closure through which a state seeks to create a common identity for itself and denies such to others

societies? What is the claim of citizenship on resources? Is it a general social good or an opportunistic benefit and struggle on the claim over resources by privileged groups and individuals? What is the historiography of the citizenship question in Africa? Does it have a colonial pedigree; if so, why did it take so long before its conflagration in many societies? What is the linkage of citizenship with the structural and spatial character of poverty in many countries? Is citizenship discourse another euphemism for the struggle for a welfare state or social democracy, which seemed to have become unpopular with the rise of a market based democracy? These are some of the raging questions on citizenship, which show the diverse forms in which the discourse on citizenship has taken. Our task in this special edition of the journal is not to provide answers to these questions nor is that the objective in this introduction; our focus is simply to shed light on and elevate the discourse on some areas of those issues. What I seek to do in this brief introduction is to lay bare some of the preliminary issues in the citizenship discourse. What is it and what is it not? Why is it contentious in many countries and what are the dimensions it has assumed in African countries with its varying impacts on the peace, stability and security of many African states.

Citizenship: What is it?

Citizenship in its ordinary usage is about the rights, benefits, privileges and duties of an individual as a member of a political community, usually a state. Citizenship is an instrument of political exclusion and social closure through which a state seeks to create a common identity for itself and denies such to others. It is about how spatial fixture determines identity and rights in a global context.⁴ Citizenship in the context of the nation-state is about creating a convergence for diversity of ethnic, religious, political, spatial and social differences by ensuring a regime of equal rights, privileges and obligation as the bound of national identity. As such, citizenship as David Miller observed is supposed to be a unifying force in a divided or plural world.⁵

Citizenship in terms of its origin is not a common public good that every member of a polity automatically acquires. Historically, like all forms of social rights, it is has been the product of concrete political struggles by different social forces and

⁴ For a discourse on citizenship, see, Said Adejumobi, 'Citizenship, Rights and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars', in *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2001).

⁵ David Miller, *Citizenship and National Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), p. 41.

groups. In Europe citizenship did not emerge as an egalitarian phenomenon, but a phrase used to qualify the freemen of the city.¹ Thus it was initially an urban phenomenon. In Africa, as it was in many colonised societies, the natives were not citizens but subjects. As Mahmood Mamdani argues, in colonial Africa, citizenship was racialised and urbanised; it was the terrain of the colonisers.² It took some bitter anti-colonial struggles sometimes-bloody wars before citizenship was liberalised in Africa.

Citizenship exists in the juridical and instrumentalist senses. The former is the legal conferment of citizenship, while the latter is the tangible social goods and benefits that accrue to the individual from that juridical identity. The two may not necessarily overlap. There are intra-national struggles on citizenship in many countries. This takes many forms-ethnic, racial, gender and physical conditions. This intra-national struggle in the ethnic sense is what Mahmood Mamdani refers to as the bifurcation of citizenship - the tension between the local and the national or amongst ethnicities.³ There are other dimensions of the intra-national struggles on citizenship. This includes the gender struggle especially of women on citizenship rights and the rights of the physically challenged to be duly recognised and participate in the public life of their countries. The latter group has gotten less attention because of its seeming voicelessness in many social formations.

Citizenship in its instrumentalist sense is about *access* to compete for resources and social goods. It may not guarantee individual's acquisition of those resources. What it guarantees is the opportunity to compete. As such, although citizenship is a political construction, it has a strong economic or material underlay. This is why the contest over citizenship is often very volatile and sometimes violent in many countries. Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda and Burundi have gone up in flames on issues directly related to group contest over citizenship. South Africa and Nigeria are grappling with serious questions of identity and citizenship, which they are yet to creatively resolve, while Uganda and the Congo are yet to solve the intractable problems of citizenship that has continued to fuel conflicts in those countries. The list is endless.

Citizenship: Why Take Up Arms?

There are two conditions under which groups and individuals may take up arms in conflict over citizenship issues. The first is when citizenship assumes a language of power. That is when the political elite is engaged in a dangerous game of brinkmanship in the process of negotiating political power by deploying the lapses of citizenship as a political tool. In this case, the subjective element of citizenship becomes a mobilisation instrument in drumming the songs of war. The second instance is a more objective one in which a social group is thoroughly marginalised and its social existence threatened in a political or social context. It may make recourse to arms to fight for citizenship rights or mainstream itself into the political

⁶ See, Anh Nga Longva, 'Citizenship, Identity and the Question of Supreme Loyalty: The Case of Kuwait', *Forum for Development Studies*, vol. 22, no. 2 (1995).

⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁸ *Ibid.*

process. Either way, it is possible to hypothesise the following on the linkage between citizenship and conflicts:

1. The higher the non-inclusive character of a political system, the greater the propensity for conflict over citizenship.
2. The greater the level of spatial inequality and uneven development among groups or areas, the higher the possibility of citizenship crisis.
3. The more resources (including land) are identity tied the greater the level of citizenship conflicts.
4. The higher the level of poverty and social inequality in a society, the more likely there would be conflict over identity and citizenship.
5. The greater the level of state failure, the higher the level of intra-national struggles over citizenship claims.

Ultimately citizenship relates to the broader issues of democracy, rule of law, social justice, equity, and fairness in the management of state affairs. It also relates to the social character of state construction on how the state will benefit not just a group, a few or social class but will distribute its social values in a way to alleviate fears and insecurity by individuals and groups in a political community. This is the point strongly canvassed by the first article, which takes a philosophical perspective to the issue by reflecting on the works of Plato. The paper argues that the erection of a just social order as advocated for by Plato in various works is crucial to addressing the problem of citizenship that is unravelling many African countries. This requires that we take a more introspective view of Plato's treatise on social order and the conditions necessary for its emergence in the political reconstruction of African countries.

Citizenship and Transnational Identities

Citizenship though related to rights and duties also has an element of political containment. It cages people in national boundaries often artificially constructed and discriminates against people on the basis of those political cages so constructed. Ordinarily, this should not be a problem as people are bound to belong to one cage or the other, but there is a particular dimension of the problem in Africa, which requires closer scrutiny. The political cages called states were arbitrarily constructed in Africa with groups and communities indiscriminately split into different countries. Many are likely to argue (as Toure Kazah-Toure did in his article on Nigeria in this edition) that all states are artificially created, and there is nothing abnormal or exceptional in the African experience. What is different in the African experience is that those states did not respect the cultural and national identities of people and bifurcated peoples and nations in an indiscriminate if not reckless manner. While migration and multiculturalism are parts of the reality and processes of state construction and identity formation, as identities are never fixed but in a state of flux, however, the forcible breaking of identities or their bifurcation through imposed state partitioning often prove counter-productive. This is why it is easy for a Fulani from Niger Republic, Senegal or Mali to be easily assimilated and granted what Chidi Odinkalu referred to as cultural citizenship in Northern Nigeria with all the paraphernalia of civic citizenship, while an Igbo or Yoruba from Nigeria is not so accommodated and less preferred in Northern Nigeria.

The fact is that given the nature of the artificial creation of states ethnic groups in Africa have assumed trans-border or transnational identities existing beyond the boundaries of states, exercising organic solidarity and rarely respecting the artificial borders of the states. For instance, the Yoruba ethnic group is found in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Benin Republic, Togo, and Cote d'Ivoire. The Fulani's are scattered in the Sahel region of Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sudan and Mali. The Ndebele are found in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana. The Tutsi and Hutu traverse the Great Lakes region of Rwanda, Burundi, Congo and Uganda.¹ This is just to mention a few. In the context of a rigid state system and its notion of citizenship, nationalities are bifurcated by artificial borders, transnational identities undermine state loyalty with tension and conflicts often the outcome. This is more so given the legal basis of citizenship in many African countries, which is based on ancestry rather than residency. Ancestry is a fixed variable that neither respects migration nor the transnational nature of group identities in Africa.

A major challenge for sub-regional and regional organisations in Africa is how to create new poles of political organisation that will redefine citizenship and unbound the territoriality of group identity that seems to be causing political friction for many African countries. A regional organisation like ECOWAS has taken the lead in creating what Chidi Odinkalu refers to transactional citizenship, but which I prefer to describe as regional citizenship. Apart from the protocol on the free movement of persons and goods in the ECOWAS treaty, the organisation has moved a step ahead with the creation of 'ECOWAS Passport' designed to provide a common juridical identity for citizens of the sub-region and a basis of the harmonisation of their immigration policy.

Other sub-regional organisations have something to learn from ECOWAS on this. The African Union (AU), which is the main organisation to facilitate the Pan-African ideals would have to address the issue of citizenship headlong. The AU does not expressly have provisions on citizenship in its Constitutive Act; however, there are existing organs and provisions that may be used to protect citizenship rights in the respective African countries. First is the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights and the Kigali Declaration on Human Rights in Africa (2003). The African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, which is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the implementation of those rights has been very weak and inactive. What needs to be done by the AU is to invigorate the Commission and make it functional in order to protect the rights of the people in African countries. The shift by the AU from the 'principle of non interference' to the 'principle of non-indifference' in the internal affairs of African states and the new emphasis on democracy, good governance and the rule of law are all remarkable but indirect ways to protect the rights of citizens. They constitute processes by which the citizenship question may be attenuated in many African countries. However, there is the need for the AU to overtly put the citizenship question on the agenda of the organisation. It makes no rationale logic that while many African countries give free entry, movement and

⁹ On the transnational nature of identities and the dilemma this poses for the citizenship question, see Said Adejumobi, *Beyond Artificial Borders: Citizenship Rights and the New Regional Initiative in Africa*. Paper Presented to the African Association of Political Science (AAPS) Biennial conference, Durban, South Africa (June 2003).

residence to many Western citizens; they often deny it to fellow African brothers/sisters. As Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem would argue breaking down the artificial borders is the first step towards the realisation of the Pan-African dream enunciated by Kwame Nkrumah and the other founding fathers of the African continent.

There are two unique features of this 'discourse on citizenship' in this edition of the journal. The first is the multi-disciplinary nature of the discourse. The edition draws on articles from philosophy, history, political science, literature and law. The discourse on citizenship is too important and multifaceted to be left only to political scientists. A nuanced multi-disciplinary approach is more enriching, educative and refreshing. The second unique feature is the focus of analysis. The analysis of citizenship and its attendant problems covers the local, national and regional levels and the policy options at addressing them at those respective levels. To reiterate what I mentioned earlier on, our objective in this edition is not to answer the entire questions related to citizenship, but simply to systematise and elevate the discourse and further provoke debate on those issues discussed.

Citizenship and Social Order: Reflections on Plato

By Ujomu Philip Ogo¹

French Abstract (*Résumé*)

Citoyenneté et ordre social: réflexions sur Platon

Cet article traite de la relation entre ordre social citoyenneté et en s'inspirant de Platon. L'ordre social renvoie à des questions fondamentales de justice, de coopération entre les hommes et de recherche du bien commun. Il s'agit donc de savoir comment les responsabilités et les droits peuvent être partagés et gérés entre les citoyens. La crise actuelle de l'ordre social génère des problèmes de citoyenneté, comme celui de sécurité qui en découle, et qui touchent la plupart des sociétés africaines comme au Nigeria. Comment concilier dans ce cas la question de la citoyenneté et celle de la communauté ? L'article s'appuie sur Platon pour mieux comprendre cette problématique aux plans historique, conceptuel et théorique.

Abstract

This paper focuses on the problem of citizenship and social order by drawing on the lessons of an ancient philosopher - Plato. The problem of social order has consequences for the idea of citizenship. This is the search for community, which raises fundamental questions about justice between men and how they can achieve cooperation for the common good in the society. This borders on the question of how rights and duties, benefits and burdens, as well as responsibilities can be properly and effectively maintained among the members of society. Thus, the issue of citizenship will make better sense theoretically if situated against the backdrop of a conceptual model such as social order. This essay is significant because of the reality of the crisis of social order and the problem of security arising thereof. The idea of security is of value, in itself as central to the human project, and also as the central goal of the quest for social order. However, the problem confronting most African nations including Nigeria suggests contradictions arising from a disconnection between citizenship, social order and security, as occasioned by systematic social anomie and degeneration of the quality of human life in the society, has raised questions about the capacity of a society to ensure ideological transformation and political community. This work appeals to the ideas of an ancient classical philosopher - Plato, in order to provide a conceptual, historical and theoretical analysis of the problematic.

¹ Ujomu Philip Ogo is a Lecturer in the Dept of Philosophy, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. He writes in the area of ethics, history of philosophy, and social philosophy. Email: pujomu@yahoo.com

Introduction: The Problem of Citizenship and the Crisis of Social Order

In examining the conditions for social order and national security in Nigeria as in many African countries, events indicate that the state has not been able to effectively guarantee security and other goals of the social order. This failure has led to the vitiation of the capacity to ensure human survival and well being at the personal and social levels. It has also led to the

The substance of the problem of social order is the search for community, which raises fundamental questions about justice between human beings, and how they can achieve co-operation for the common good in the society.

vitiation of efforts to achieve enduring progress and development at the national level. The discussion of security cannot be separated from the question of citizenship, since it implies not only on the possibility of promoting ideological transformation, but also the reinventing of the political community. The general lack of commitment to the common good has ensured that most people seek to satisfy their avarice. Such people lack the intellectual and moral basis for the proper utilisation of knowledge and power for the good of all. Thus, they ultimately create conditions of insecurity, deprivation and instability in the polity. The mismanagement of national resources by the leadership creates a social environment in which citizens engage in corruption and display a lack of commitment to the country. Endemic corruption among public officials ensures that social institutions are ineffective. The poor practice of citizenship, especially citizen involvement in security has compromised the integrity of the nation. It has exposed the bulk of citizens to unnecessary fear and deprivation. This situation has bred cadres of individuals in different sectors of national life, who share the common value of engaging in conduct inimical to their fellows. The state and its agencies have not been able to manage such virulent fluidity and the malignant contradictions arising from these have led to spiralling insecurity. The inability of the society to establish trust and obedience to laws has made human life most uninteresting, unrewarding and unmanageable. Unfortunately, the citizens' experiences of injustice, oppression, depravity, neglect, and deprivation as witnessed or encountered by many communities and regions in the country are evidence of inability to establish political morality. Why then must we have the social order?

Theorising the Idea of Social Order as a Conceptual Platform for Understanding Citizenship

The idea of 'social order'² refers to the social systems and schemes of social relations that define the political, economic and social roles, rights and duties of people in a society. It is the sum of all the human arrangements, values, rules, norms, regulations, ideologies and institutions that enhance the proper functioning of the various parts of the society or community. Social order as a set of arrangements put in place by man in order to attain certain important ends such as justice, peace, and self and group actualisation, aims in all at the general well-

² Robert Bierstedt, *The Social Order* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963). p. 1. Austin Fagothey, *Right and Reason* (USA: The C.V. Mosby, 1959), p. 149. Johannes Messner, *Social Ethics* (London: Herder Books, 1949), p. 523.

being of all. The substance of the problem of social order is the search for community, which raises fundamental questions about justice between human beings, and how they can achieve cooperation for the common good in the society. This borders on the question of how rights and duties, benefits and burdens, as well as responsibilities can be properly and effectively maintained among the members of society.

The problem of social order has become increasingly important to man because human societies have become larger, more complex and more closely connected than ever before. The effects of such changes are seen in the various problems, needs and aspirations of present day human societies. 'A lot of people have lost hope and have viewed with dismay the limits of technology, politics, education, science' etc.³ Most especially in Africa, people have seen the devastating effects of war, famine and the general depreciation in the quality of human life. Corruption, social injustices and social anomie have become the order in many African nations. The character of leadership and citizenship in most African nations has failed to provide a more humane, secure and organised way of life for people in these societies. To this effect, there is an urgent need to find stable forms of social order within which the prevailing socio-political problems of nations can be addressed. This point is remarkable, because given the existence of various conflicts and tensions existing within, and among societies, human beings cannot live in an atmosphere of peace and security.

The fact that rules of consideration, reconciliation and mutual respect are not applied to the management of differences clearly indicate that human beings have not fully comprehended the worth of seeking humane and peaceful relations and modes of interpersonal existence. The need for organised social existence gives rise to fundamental questions about justice between human beings. Justice demands that each part of a social scheme be given its due, rights, duties, roles and benefits in relation to others. According to Aristotle the just is the lawful and fair.⁴ It is the greatest of virtues encompassing those acts prescribed by the law with a view to education for the common good. According to St. Augustine justice is that virtue which gives everyone his due.⁵ Also, Aquinas holds that the function of justice is to establish rectitude in various kinds of exchanges and distributions.⁶ The emphasis is on what is right, decent, correct and good. The above emphasis suggests that justice is cardinal to the establishment of viable ideas of citizenship and society.

To ensure justice, each person possesses a variety of functions or social roles that arise from his membership in various communities. These social roles carry a variety of duties that compel individuals to act in certain way.⁷ Social roles properly understood imply that 'a certain number of reasonably stable functions and

³ Richard Bonnke, *Evangelism by Fire* (Germany: Full Flame GmbH, 2001). p. 52.

⁴ Aristotle, 'Politics Aristotle II', (Trans.) B. Jowett, in M.J. Alder (ed.) *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 8 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1990), pp. 376-382.

⁵ Augustine, 'The City of God', (Trans.) M. Dods, in M.J. Alder (1990) *op.cit.*, pp. 231 & 593.

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, 'The Summa Theologica Aquinas II', (Trans.) L. Shapcote, in M.J. Alder (1990) *op.cit.*, vol. 18, pp. 51-52.

⁷ G. Grisez, and R. Shaw, 'A Contemporary Account of the Virtuous Life', in M. Bayles and K. Henley (eds) *Right Conduct: Theories and Applications* (New York: Random House, 1989), pp. 38.

expectations can be depended upon'.⁸ The idea of role refers to a set of expectations associated with the position of a person in a society. Since social organisations are characterised by a differentiation of functions, then stable role definitions allow social organisations to function effectively and properly.⁹ A role does not exist by itself; rather, it is a bundle of activities meshed into the activities of other people. It embodies both expectations and obligations.¹⁰ Roles are sets of norms that define our obligations, which are the actions that others can legitimately insist that we perform. Given the nature of a social system, roles usually operate in conjunction with norms. Norms are standards of behaviour which members of a social group share.

In what way, if any, does the social order facilitate the proper functioning of various parts of the society? The problem of social order according to Nisbet refers to 'the plurality of quests for community'¹¹ that have been formulated by the social and political philosophers starting from Plato. This problem centres on the attempts to reconcile the individual and society. It is concerned with the search for tenable ways to define the relationship between man and man as well as man and society. The issues involved can either be discussed in terms of the major social philosophers or the major social and political traditions. It is possible to identify some kinds of social order such as socialism, capitalism, democracy, communism, totalitarianism and so on. These have different features, methods and goals for citizenship corresponding to their guiding principles and values. Social order is fundamentally based on the proper definition of social roles through reciprocal relations based on distribution of rights and duties among the members of the society.¹² A right 'is the moral and inviolable power vested in a person to do, hold or exact something as his own'¹³ or a 'justified claim or entitlement to the carrying out of correlative duties positive or negative'.¹⁴

The notion of right relates the individual and the social aspects of human life to each other.¹⁵ Rights therefore concern the relations between persons in a community. To reinforce this connection, Mill holds that 'a right is anything which a person has a valid claim on society to protect him in the possession of it either by the force of law, education or opinion'.¹⁶ The notion of right is a juridical concept whose proper function is discerned in the moral or legal institutions of society.¹⁷ Rights exist, and are based on the principle that a person should be given the opportunities for full human development. Scholars separate natural rights- the right to life, political rights - the right to vote, civil rights - the right to own property, active rights - rights of action,

⁸ Dorothy Emmet, 'Roles, Professions and Moral Responsibility' in M. Bayles and K. Henley (eds), *Right Conduct* (New York: Random House, 1989), p. 324.

⁹ K.E. Scheibe, 'Role', in *Academic American Encyclopaedia*, vol. 16 (Danbury, CO: Grolier, 1982), p. 271.

¹⁰ James Zanden, *Social Psychology* (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 173.

¹¹ Robert Nisbet, *The Social Philosophers* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1982), p. vii.

¹² C. N. Bittle, *Man and Morals* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Pub. Co, 1950), pp. 273-280.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

¹⁴ A. Gerwith, 'Are There Absolute Rights', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 122 (January 1981), p. 2.

¹⁵ C.R. Kordig, 'A Theory of Rights', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (April 1981), p. 171.

¹⁶ John Stuart Mill, 'On Liberty, Representative Government, Utilitarianism', in M.J. Alder (1990), *op.cit.*, vol. 40, p. 70.

¹⁷ A. Wood, 'Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 8, no. 3, (Spring 1979), p. 268.

passive rights - rights of recipient, enabling rights - rights that bestow liberties and powers.¹⁸ All of these rights are crucial in the formulation of an adequate idea of citizenship.

Rights and duties go together. Duty refers to 'the moral obligation to do something or to omit something in favour of another'.¹⁹ Within the context of society, Grisez and Shaw hold that duty is something that one has a responsibility for doing or not doing by virtue of one's role in a particular community.²⁰ Duties are moral responsibilities because the members of a community are engaged in a joint action seeking the realisation of a fundamental human purpose. A duty is the designation of any action to which anyone is bound by an obligation.²¹ It may be exacted from a person as one exacts a debt. Real duties are duties of perfect obligation, which ensure that a correlative right resides in some person.²² The essential character of a right or a duty as a moral demand suggests that the claims of right or duty are not invalidated even if there are situations in which they are breached or neglected.

Social Order and Citizenship in Plato

Plato in his conceptualisation of social order lays emphasis on the importance of justice in the state. He places emphasis on division of labour and the happiness of all in the society. According to him, 'justice is doing one's own business. Justice is having and doing what is one's own or what belongs to one.'²³ The state is organised on the basis of justice 'when the trader, the auxiliary and the guardians each do their own business'.²⁴ Therefore, a state is seen as just when 'the three classes in the state perform their specific functions'.²⁵ For Plato, the best guardians or rulers of the state are people whose lives are guided by the interest of the state. The guardians must pass through various experiences before they become rulers in the state. 'They will be carefully watched and brought up from their youth.'²⁶ They will be tested in many areas of life and only 'those who are successful in their education shall be appointed rulers or guardians of the state'.²⁷ Through education, the guardians will develop qualities like civility and humanity in their relations with one another and the rest of the people under their protection. 'Everything about the guardians will be designed to ensure that their virtues will not be impaired.'²⁸

¹⁸ D.T. Meyers, 'Human Rights in Pre-Affluent Societies' *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 123 (April 1981), p. 139. F. Schauer, 'Can Rights be Abused?', *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 124 (July 1981), p. 229. C. R. Kordig, (1981), *op.cit.*, p. 171. A. Gerwith (1981) *op.cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁹ C.N. Bittle (1950) *op.cit.*, p. 277.

²⁰ G. Grisez, and R. Shaw, (1989) *op.cit.*, p. 38.

²¹ Immanuel Kant, 'Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals: The Science of Right' (Trans.) W. Hastie, in M.J. Alder (ed.), *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 39 (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc, 1990), p. 391.

²² John Stuart Mill, (1990) *op.cit.*, p. 468.

²³ Plato, 'The Republic', in J. Somerville et al. (eds.) *Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: Double Day, 1963), p. 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

With the state's programme of educating each person or group to perform their functions well, Plato argues that 'the state has its foundations in the greatest happiness of the whole. The state that is ordered with a view to the good of the whole is a just state and the just state is the happy state.'²⁹ And so, Plato links justice with happiness and then argues for the division of, and proper performance of social functions and roles in order to achieve a community that is united, harmonious and well organised. Plato also identifies some types of government, which are *timocracy*, *oligarchy*, *democracy*, *tyranny* and *aristocracy*. For him, 'governments vary as the dispositions of men vary and the states are as the men are'.³⁰ He means that the states grow out of human character and that human nature is also vital in the formation of social order. This further implies that good people will more likely form a good social order and vice versa. Plato argues that aristocracy, as a form of government is good and just. It is the government of the best.³¹ On the other hand, timocracy is the government of honour. It is a middle point between oligarchy and aristocracy. The spirit of contention and ambition guides timocracy and it celebrates the military culture and upholds war as a major value or principle. On its part, oligarchy is based on money or wealth. It honours the rich and dishonours the poor. According to Plato, 'there are two states in an oligarchy, one of the poor and the other of the rich. They live together and conspire against themselves.'³²

In the opinion of Plato, democracy is the rule of the poor who have conquered the rich men. It gives freedom to the individual to order his life as he pleases. Also 'there is liberty in a democratic state and it is full of variety and disorder. Democracy dispenses a sort of equality to equals and unequal alike.'³³ Finally, tyranny is the rule of a lawless man who for Plato has extinguished all good principles and virtues. The tyrant has instead, given rein to madness. The tyrant according to Plato, 'is a cheat and a deceiver who uses force to plunder peoples goods and properties. He celebrates lust, passion and derangement and he does not exclude anyone from his oppression.'³⁴

Some comments and criticisms of Plato's idea of the state and social order are imperative here, for a better understanding of his position. According to Copleston, Plato's political theory is developed in close connection with his ethics. The state is composed of individual men, and exists for the attainment of the good life. Plato was more interested in constructing the form of the ideal state or the pattern to which every actual state should follow.³³ Furthermore, Strauss stresses that Plato's dialogues refer more or less directly to the political question. Plato demands an answer to this question of the proper form of society, the just city. For Plato, justice is full dedication to the common good and it demands that a man withhold nothing from his own city.³⁵ This, for Strauss, implies a form of absolute communism. More importantly, the just city as an association of men demands that each man should do only one job to the best of his ability and with full dedication.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 32-36.

³⁴ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy, Volume One: Greece and Rome* (London: Burns and Oates Ltd, 1961), pp. 223-224.

³⁵ Leo Strauss, 'Plato', in L. Strauss & J. Cropsey (eds.), *History of Political Philosophy* (USA: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 33-67.

Therefore, Strauss concludes, 'the teaching of The Republic regarding justice although not complete, can yet be true in so far as the nature of justice depends decisively on the nature of the city. The Republic then, indeed makes clear what justice is.'³⁶

Some analysis is required here. We must note that the theory of the modern state can be tackled in terms of two central themes: sovereignty and political economy. Hobbes, Locke and other social philosophers provide clarifications on these themes. Following the attempt to conceptualise the state and thus to articulate a form or model of social order, certain fundamental questions or problems arise. First, is the problem of what level or degree of independence, freedom and autonomy should individuals have within, and in relation to the state? In other words, what is the extent of the power that society can exercise over the individual? For Plato, what is required is a total integration and harmonisation between the individual and society. On the other hand, Aristotle prefers that the different components of society (individuals and groups), be given their independence and autonomy. The second problem centres on what is the extent of power that can be exercised by the sovereign or ruler in a state, over the citizens? Hobbes answers that the power of the sovereign over the members of the community is absolute and illimitable. Locke, on the other hand, argues that the sovereign in a commonwealth should not have absolute power over the members of the society. He suggests that the sovereign may be overthrown or removed by the people who hold ultimate sovereign power, if there is abuse of power.

In spite of the seeming differences in their preoccupations, some of the social philosophers mentioned have in common the belief that social order is crucial to the survival and flourishing of human beings, both individually and collectively. For them, social order allows man to attain his fullest development as a person and as a social being. These social philosophers explain that social order exists within the context of a specific form of society. Furthermore, despite the variations in their descriptions of social order, these philosophers agree that, in a significant sense, the society is higher, more important and greater than the individual because it is only within the context of society that the major goals of human existence can be achieved. Also, because no individual is self-sufficient or self-sustaining, social order becomes imperative, in order to assure the development of the person within the framework of an interplay of mutual relations and activities among people in a society. However, there is no consensus among these philosophers about the proper limits of the power of society over individuals. Plato, for instance, holds that the community should completely define everything that the individual does, whereas, Aristotle suggests that the society is best defined by the recognition of the autonomy of its various components. The question citizenship arises in relation to the life of man in the society.

Another area of convergence among these social philosophers is the belief that social order aims at ensuring justice. The most prevalent idea of justice that cuts across their views

the society is higher, more important and greater than the individual because it is only within the context of society that the major goals of human existence can be achieved.

³⁶ *Ibid*, pp. 67-68.

is that justice refers to the condition in which everyone fulfils his/her duties and obligations towards every other person. To ensure that justice is done, they further agree that some idea of law, morality and constitution is vital in establishing and maintaining social order. Therefore, one can see that the fundamental task of the social philosophers is to provide justifications for certain conceptions of social order. They also try to explain how social order can be established and sustained. It is in line with this objective that the social philosophers provide their conceptions of the political community. From the above analysis, we see that Plato was mainly concerned with the issue of establishing conceptions of justice, which would most effectively guarantee the sustenance of social order. These ancient philosophers discussed the important question of the extent of the freedom and autonomy that should be granted to individuals and groups without compromising the power and security of the state. In all, the views of the ancient philosophers provide the required conceptual basis for a fuller analysis of the nature of social order.

Lessons from Plato on the Citizenship Question

The condition of change requires the redefinition of the idea of citizens as responsible, committed, or willing, to ensure the dignity of the human person and the social context of human development. Human dignity is the outcome of responsible and responsive conduct based on the just and fair treatment of all in line with rules that promote peace and general interest. The idea of common responsibility is fundamental to democracy. It implies on the one hand, fraternity or the responsibility for others, and on the other hand, it implies liberty or the responsibility for oneself. Hence, to the extent that the principles of inclusion, recognition and positive growth are central to the design of a democratic system, the aim is to ensure that all interests shall retain benefits within a reasonable system that allows for participation, consultation, protection of rights and rule-guided action. Citizenship goes beyond mere physical residence in a place. It depicts the relationship of belonging to a state by birth or choice and an intention to continue that relationship. Citizenship implies the possession of rights and duties. To be proud and satisfied with one's citizenship, one must retain the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There is a need for an informed, constructive and enlightened citizenship, which is capable of reconciling rights and duties, and also imbuing pride and civic duty in the individual. Genuine citizenship must strive to attain the rule of law, trust, peace and the recognition of rights as the basis of achieving a humane and just social order. Citizenship encompasses the sum of the contributions of persons and groups, and the means by which their goals are attained. Enduring citizenship can be attained only when there is a strong level of consensus of thought and action, coherence or streaming of approaches, and a framework of norms (acceptable to all) for the conduct of public affairs. In short, citizenship would require a deep sense of commitment to the community. Citizenship is built up through good character traits like discipline, obedience to laws, recognition of moral conduct and the display of social consciousness. Citizenship is to be understood as an idea based on popular sovereignty and human rights. The basic problem of value orientation in citizenship focusing on how to mediate the quest for the common good and the differentiated interest positions of private persons. To deal with this challenge we can use the constitution and its

laws, the just society seeks to provide a framework within which its citizens can pursue their own values and end, consistent with a similar liberty for others.

What can we learn from the ideas of Plato on the question of citizenship and social order? Plato in giving emphasis to the idea of justice as some kind of efficiency or division of labour clearly suggests that each individual or group or citizen ought to do that thing which has been assigned to him or her properly or is best suited for her/him to do. He therefore suggests that one can be effective either by dint of natural talent, hard work, or by assigning or devolution of roles and responsibility within an environment. The leader must lead well and the others in the society must do their own part. This point is significant because it is possible for one to request for, or be assigned to a task but that person will do something antithetical to the goal or purpose.

There has been a pattern that things are not always the way they seem to be or appear. For instance, infrastructures and institutions that have been put in place to serve the people and make their lives comfortable can now turn against them, becoming sources of life threatening danger. This situation can create fear and apathy within the society. Ake holds that 'the state in Africa has been a maze of antinomies of form and content: the person who holds office may not exercise its powers, the person who exercises the powers of a given office may not be its holder'.³⁷ This point is more relevant in the light of Plato's insistence that people and structures fulfil their set objectives. Such antinomies arise due to mismanagement, neglect, under-utilisation and disregard for structures and their roles in development. The problem of antinomies and Plato's attempt to escape from this, has a further implication that if one part does not do its own function well then there can be problems of disequilibrium, imbalance and destabilisation of the social order. Such a state of imbalance will not allow for harmony and smooth functioning of the society. More recently, some scholars have linked the question of role functioning to the capability to achieve planning, policies and activities that enhance the ability to regulate or govern without minimal outside control. Harman points out the value of the concepts of autonomy and accountability. Autonomy refers to the right to self-governance and control of internal life. Accountability refers to the demand by those competent people or structures to know how resources are used and to determine or monitor the effectiveness of programmes.³⁸

The ability to fulfil role expectations depends on the character of individuals. It suggests the idea of representation and responsibility. The social order has a form that suggests a collection of people and responsibilities for work within various organisational hierarchies. In this way there is an emphasis on greater participation of more competent personalities. The system cannot perform effectively, if it does not contain individuals with high-level skills, ethical conduct and creativity. Thus we see the value of Platonic analysis. The need for the kind of integrated action suggested by Plato arises firstly, because, it has been shown that no man has a monopoly of knowledge. This point demonstrates that the smooth functioning of any system depends on the division of labour, the sharing of knowledge or ideas, as well as the integration of social roles. Secondly, it can be deduced from reason as well as empirical evidence, that the nature of the challenges confronting the modern society has ensured that

³⁷ Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2001), p. 14.

³⁸ Grant Harman, 'The Erosion of University Independence. Recent Australian Experience', *Higher Education*, vol. 12, no. 5 (November 1983), p. 503.

no one man or group of men can possess the entire skills, capabilities, creativity and ingenuity needed to ensure effective resource management, infra-structural transformation as well as human technical and moral development in the society.

Plato's emphasis on the performance of roles or good role execution in terms of expectations and obligations is suggestive of the demand for efficiency and effectiveness. According to Saldak efficiency can be discussed from the external and internal viewpoints. On the one hand, external efficiency refers to the success of the system in meeting the cultural, social and economic objectives outlined or assigned by the society. On the other hand, internal efficiency refers to the success of the system and its individual institutions in meeting specific operational targets within the resources made available to it. To this extent, efficiency defines the level and extent of meeting the goal of a system resulting from economic and social policy.³⁹ Both types of efficiency require the conscious actions and interventions of committed and capable individuals who can effectively combine theory with practice so as to meet the needs of the society. Efficiency requires not only versatility and relevance, but also prudent and visionary resource management within the system. This emphasis on the moral and technical capabilities for change and the attainment of desired goals is very vital.

Although Plato implied a rigidity in the structure of the society so that each individual or group is carved into a social class, yet we must now move beyond his position to recommend the possibility of social status enhancement or mobility so that each man or group can attain his own self-concept or fullest development. How can this be attained? The redefinition of citizenship in a social order is based on justice. In order to achieve justice, Wollheim makes it clear that a great deal is expected in the way of social reform and economic redistribution.⁴⁰ Kymlicka holds that we need to focus on the wider context of solidarity. In our quest for ties that bind, there is the question of social justice, community and fraternity.⁴¹ According to Nielsen the question of justice 'is the question of what is a proper social order which can guarantee human flourishing. Indeed, a just social order cannot allow a society of slaves where for some people, resources external to them are properly subject entirely to communal control, such that they, having no control or very little control of the means of life have their autonomy undermined'.⁴² Given the above situation, Pojman is right when he insists that justice is a constant and perpetual will to give every man his due. A society that has a commitment to rewarding those who contributes to its well being and punishing those who purposefully undermine it.⁴³ In fact, any society that rewards positive contributors and punishes wrongdoers will survive and prosper better than a society that lacks these practices. For Hospers a just society needs to define and recognise individual rights and to embed these rights in the constitutional structure, so that no would be tyrant can pervert, usurp or take them away.⁴⁴

³⁹ J. Saldak, 'Efficiency in Higher Education: Concepts and Problems', *Higher Education*, vol. 7, no. 2 (May 1978), p. 215.

⁴⁰ R. Wollheim, 'Democracy' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. XIX, no.2 (April 1958), pp. 230.

⁴¹ Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 173.

⁴² Kai Nielsen, 'Conceptions Of Justice', in M. Hawkesworth (ed) *Encyclopedia of Government and Politics*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 81.

⁴³ Louis Pojman, 'Equality and Desert', *Philosophy*, vol. 72, no. 282 (October 1997), pp. 549-558.

⁴⁴ John Hospers, *An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge and Paul Kegan, 1973), p. 616.

Thus, it is crucial to note that justice in its fuller conceptualisation has a largely social character. To this effect, its true and proper manifestations are found only where the acts and the claims of several persons meet. Johann has noted that the specific function of justice is to establish between these claims, their due limits and harmonious proportions.⁴⁵ Hence, we can rightly agree with Peperzak that justice refers to the respect that a person shows for the freedom of the other, the chance she offers the other to be what he is, and to develop his possibilities in this world.⁴⁶ Against this backdrop, we can better appreciate the view of Pazhayampallil that justice is the fundamental principle of the existence and the coexistence of man as well as of human communities, societies and peoples.⁴⁷ This is the way that social justice makes sense.

Social justice among other things demands the establishment of institutions and rules of fair competition for social benefits and the equality of opportunity for every individual or group to develop his or her capabilities and talents to the optimum. By so doing, social justice aims at 'establishing the right social order that will create those economic, political, moral and intellectual conditions which will allow the citizens to live a fully human life'.⁴⁸ Thus, the institution of social justice is indispensable for the establishment and sustenance of social order, because it provides the basic principles and structures by which we can achieve just distribution of benefits and burdens in the society. In other words, there must be a conscious attempt within the society to reduce social and economic deprivation among the generality of the people so as to guarantee the greater peace and stability of the social order. Given the fact that there can be no stable social order in a society where the economic situation of the majority of the citizens are dismal and restrictive, then the social order has an important task of alleviating the economic inadequacies of its citizens. In this regard, it makes little sense to uphold the formal equality of political rights, when there are widespread economic inequalities and social disempowerment.⁴⁹

The reality of the imperative of justice arises from the current volatile state of a multiethnic society where conflicts are rife. The linkage between ethnicity and social life can be used as a model for explaining the crisis of citizenship. Edelstein holds that the essential condition of a structurally plural society is that these subordinate members are seen as lesser citizens. This has practical consequences in the form of differential distribution (either through law or extra-legal means) of civil and political rights and economic, social and other opportunities.⁵⁰ Foltz holds that ethnic differences or distinctions reflect distinctions of status and thus generate conflicts based on individual and group status considerations.⁵¹ Freeman says that ethnic conflicts have led to years of divergence created by groups that seek to gain

⁴⁵ Robert Johann, 'Love and Justice', in T. De George (ed.) *Ethics and Society* (New York: Anchor, 1966).

⁴⁶ Adrian Peperzak, 'Freedom', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XI, no.3 (September 1971), p. 354.

⁴⁷ Thomas Pazhayampallil, *Pastoral Guide*, vol. 1 (Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti, 1995), p. 876.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 878-879.

⁴⁹ Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p. 204. David Beetham, 'Liberal democracy and the Limits of Democratisation' *Prospects for Democracy* edited David Held (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 61.

⁵⁰ J. Edelstein, 'Pluralist and Marxist Perspectives on Ethnicity and Nation-Building', in W. Bell & W. Freeman (eds.) *Ethnicity and Nation-Building: Comparative International and Historical Perspectives* (London: Sage Publications, 1974), p. 46.

⁵¹ W. Foltz, 'Ethnicity, Status and Conflict', in W. Bell & W. Freeman (1974) *op.cit.*, p. 103.

in competition with one conflict appear to play a functional part in the maintenance and existence of any societal system when observed in the framework of national growth.⁵² Galey holds that cultural processes, which define ethnicity, also advantage through maintaining and encouraging strong and separate ethnic identities influence citizenship and attitudes to national development and national integration. Thus styles of living, value orientations, patterns of behaving are learned and passed on to new generations through family and tribe. These may encourage resistance and/or openness to change.⁵³ More over, Galey says that ethnic conflict plays an important role in the processes of national development. Within national societies, discussion among ethnic groups has led to the development of national norms of conduct.⁵⁴ Laakso and Olukoshi argue that ethnic and religious conflicts can have a tendency to become a zero sum game, affecting the very definition of citizenship by linking it organically to the endowment of the state with an exclusive ethnic or religious character. The reason for this is that ethnicity has the potential to become political, it can totalise other types of group identity e.g. family, gender, age, class, occupation, etc.⁵⁵ To escape from the shortcomings of perverted ethnicity, there is need to review the character of leadership.

Plato made the crucial point that the value of an enlightened set of leaders or rulers is non-negotiable. He described in some details the mode of the education of the members of society especially the leaders. For him the central feature of the good leader is the concern for the interest of the state or community, such concern for the well being of the community is uppermost. Plato placed emphasis on character and conduct and insisted on the fuller education and training of the guardians or leaders so that they lead the society aright. The intention of the Platonic education was for the leaders to develop the attributes of civility and humanity in their dealings with each other and other members of their society. There is a link between the attainment of educational goals and leadership. Weinert contends that educational goals to be provided include social competence in the sense of capacity and readiness for social-empathetic behaviour. There is a need for the ability to act in the sense of having the motivational and cognitive dexterity to act independently and effectively even in difficult situations.⁵⁶ Luckert argues that education aims at the cultivation of man, so that he can take part in culture and take on tasks in society. To achieve this goal, education aims at the development of character. It seeks to instil in individuals through the process of socialisation certain desired and desirable forms of behaviour in society.⁵⁷

Education seeks to achieve the full development of the human person. Bollnow holds that the educational virtues required include tolerance and trust. The virtue of trust is very

⁵² W. Freeman, 'Functions of Ethnic Conflict and their Contributions to National Growth', in W. Bell & W. Freeman (1974) *op.cit.*, p. 177.

⁵³ M. Galey, 'Effects of Ethnic Conflict on National Development. A Commentary' in Wendel Bell & Walter Freeman (eds.), *Ethnicity and Nation - Building: Comparative International and Historical Perspectives* (ed.) (London: Sage Publications, 1974), p. 270.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁵⁵ A.O. Olukoshi & L. Laakso, 'The Crisis of the Post-Colonial Nation-State in Africa', in Adebayo O. Olukoshi & Liisa Laakso (eds.), *Challenges to the Nation-State in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 1996), p. 31.

⁵⁶ F.E. Weinert, 'Demands on Education Today', *Education*, vol. 50 (1999). Liisa Laakso & Adebayo Olukoshi (1996), *op.cit.*, p. 8.

⁵⁷ H. Luckert, 'The Need of Man for Education', *Education*, vol. 15 (1977), p. 7-11.

important because, it provides a sense of security, reliability and clarity. It allows relationships within the social setting to be significant, intimate and accessible.⁵⁸ Therefore, we can understand Wulf when he insists that education is not just acquisition of knowledge resulting from applications to the scientific aspects of knowledge. Education aims also at achieving 'good manners' and 'piety'. Its cardinal task is the transmission of the values regarded as paramount. Education transmits the right knowledge, values and attitudes, so that people may learn all that is necessary for this life.⁵⁹

It is in this light that Becker's position becomes most significant. He says that 'more than ever before, modern man is dependent upon cooperation. Such a community of interests and action is based on the voluntary decision of the individual and general agreement for specific purposes. Justice and a scientific attitude form the basis of the system of world education for the future'.⁶⁰ Ritscher is right to say that 'the central guiding idea of education to be found in the concept of responsibility. Responsibility presupposes a basic relationship to the value of life'.⁶¹ For Ritscher the nature of human action needs to change to such an extent, that responsibility has makes its appearance in the sphere of political life and thereby of political morality. Therefore, the practice of collective responsibility invariably presupposes a sense of responsibility in the individual. Poeggler upholds this view when he insists that education offer maturity, freedom and responsibility. Education is directed towards responsibility and freedom of thought as it enables individuals to exercise mature responsibility in their profession and society.⁶² With special emphasis on the Nigerian situation, Fafunwa posits that education in Africa must emphasise social responsibility, humility, honesty, as well as other spiritual and moral values. It must focus on the formation of behaviours that are positive and beneficial to the Nigerian nation.⁶³

Plato stressed the fact that a good leader would show concern for the interest of those under his care. The critical question is then whether any society or state that we can imagine has actually fulfilled this mandate or is capable of fulfilling this imperative of social order, social reconstruction, in view of a more holistic human development. What does it mean for a good leader to care for his fellows in the society? This demand for care, compassion and duty-bound action on the part of the leadership is suggestive of among other things, a minimal sense and practice of morality. Morality is simply 'the observance of rules for the harmonious adjustment of the interests of the individual to those of others in society. It involves not merely the 'de facto' conformity to the requirements of the harmony of interests, but also, that conformity to those requirements which is inspired by an imaginative and sympathetic identification with the interest of others even at the expense of a possible constraint to one's own interests'.⁶⁴ Morality is valuable to the society because the moral rule tries to prevent harm to both the individual and the society. By ensuring that many people keep within the boundaries delimited by morality as much as possible, human

⁵⁸ Otto Bollnow, 'On the Virtues of The Educator', *Education*, vol. 20 (1979), pp. 70-75.

⁵⁹ C. Wulf, 'The Education Dream', *Education*, vol. 31 (1985), p. 48.

⁶⁰ Helmut Becker, 'Education for Tomorrow's World', *Education*, vol. 13 (1975), pp. 39 & 43.

⁶¹ H. Ritscher, 'Education, Culture and Responsibility', *Education*, vol. 30 (1984), pp. 117-118.

⁶² F. Poggeler, 'The Fundamental Right to Education', *Education*, vol. 39 (1989).

⁶³ A.B. Fafunwa, *History of Education in Nigeria* (London: George Allen, 1977), pp. 15-24.

⁶⁴ Kwasi Wiredu, 'The Moral Foundations of an African Culture', in K. Wiredu & K. Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies I* (Washington, DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992), p. 191.

personal and social life become more bearable and productive. Frankena holds that morality throughout history has been concerned with the cultivation of certain traits such as character.⁶⁵ By defining the roles and responsibilities of men, morality reveals the character of man as a responsible, free and dignified being capable of self-respect, self-determination and accountability in the things he does.

A certain minimum of altruism is absolutely essential to the moral motivation.⁶⁶ Altruism is the consideration for the interest of others, and only when we consider others, can the talk about harmonisation of conflicting interests retain meaning. According to Cox, altruism acknowledges correctly that the form of moral behaviour appears generally to be other-regarding. However, altruism fails to acknowledge the individual, social and practical ends served by moral systems. On the other hand, egoism achieves a correct recognition of the function of morality as supportive of human self-realisation but it ignores the social role in self-actualisation.⁶⁷ Therefore 'both theories express a portion of the truth but neither by itself is sufficient'.⁶⁸ Sharing a similar view with Cox, another philosopher McMahon, holds that some connection exists between acting as morality requires and promoting the interest of others.⁶⁹

Plato insisted that there must be virtue in operation in the state so that oppression will be reduced to a minimum among the groups either at the vertical level or the horizontal level of human relations. What does virtue connote? To overcome the immanence of the ethical shortfalls besetting the society there is a need to redefine the theory of virtue as a means of institutional and personal rejuvenation. A foremost philosopher, Descartes gave precedence to humility as a starting point in the quest for human or ethical rectification.⁷⁰ In his personal and academic statements, Descartes carries his humility almost to the point of self-depreciation. But then this is the essence of humility, understood as the bringing down of oneself in totality. As Stravinskis contends, humility is the natural virtue, which stands in opposition to pride, arrogance and vanity. It not only acknowledges and recognises the worth and value of the neighbour, but it also promotes the well-being of conscience, and leads to prudence, astuteness and thoughtfulness.⁷¹ Therefore, Andreassi holds that humility is the supreme moral virtue that enables a person to always abhor or reject self-centredness. It is the foundation of all human virtues. It is more important than any other virtue except justice.⁷²

⁶⁵ W. Frankena, *Ethics* (USA: Prentice Hall Inc, 1973), pp. 63-65.

⁶⁶ Kwasi Wiredu, (1992), *op. cit.*, p. 191.

⁶⁷ D. F. Cox, 'An Empirical Theory of Ethics: Morality as Defensive Behaviour', *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 2 (April 1981), pp. 185-190.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Christopher Mc Mahon, 'Morality and the Invisible Hand', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 10, no. 3, (Summer 1991), p. 250.

⁷⁰ Rene Descartes, 'Dualism and the Quest for Certainty. Rules for the Direction of the Mind' in Melvin Rader (ed.), *The Enduring Questions: Main Problems of Philosophy*. (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1976). Rene Descartes, 'Discourse on Methods' in *Descartes Philosophical Writing* (ed.), G. Anscombe and P. Geach (New York: Bobbs and Merrill, 1980). Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, (Trans.) Elizabeth Haldane et. al., in Joel Feinberg (ed.), *Reason and Responsibility* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1996).

⁷¹ Peter Stravinskis, 'Humility', *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia* (Indiana: Our Sunday visitor publisher, 1991), p. 491.

⁷² Anthony Andreassi, 'Humility', in Michael Glazier et al. (eds.), *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994), p. 410.

No discussion of morality can be considered complete, without a study of how virtues and other favourable dispositions or character are formed in man, especially in the context of institutional and social life. Aristotle says that virtue is classified into two kinds, intellectual and moral, and while the former arises out of teaching, the latter arises out of habit.⁷³ For Aristotle, we acquire the virtues by first exercising them. Thus, the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them. For example, we come to be just by doing just acts. In this view, the virtues are modes of choice and states of character. Aristotle argues that virtue must have the quality of aiming at the intermediate.⁷⁴ The idea of virtue as power becomes an important issue. Aquinas argues that virtue signifies a certain perfection of a power and 'a thing's perfection is considered chiefly in relation to its end and the end of power is to act'.⁷⁵ Aquinas maintains

A viable social order requires the participation, and contribution or commitment of as many citizens as possible, and that they are responsible, committed or willing, to make their input to national governance and social affairs.

that human virtue is a habit of perfecting man in view of his doing good deeds. There are in humans, two principles of human actions, the intellect or reason and the appetite. And every human virtue is a perfection of one of these principles. Aquinas maintains that a perfection of the practical intellect is an intellectual virtue, while a perfection of the appetite is a moral virtue. Aquinas attempts to elevate virtue to a higher level of human actualisation when he describes virtue as a power or perfection.⁷⁶ By this he implies that it is a quality that is not actually open to just anyone. It has to be worked for. Frankena holds that virtues are dispositions or traits that are not wholly innate. These traits must all be acquired, at least in part by teaching and practice, or perhaps by grace.⁷⁷ Aquinas stresses the character of virtue as a capacity, gift, ability or resource, which can put its owner in good stead with himself and others. Davis reinforces this position when he says that not only does 'good conduct presuppose both good will (with its underlay of good character) and knowledge, but to teach virtue, a teacher would have to be virtuous'.⁷⁸

Social Institutions, the Goals of Social Order and Value of Citizenship

The goals of social order provide a point of convergence of the various ideas, approaches and principles constructed by the personality of Plato in the quest for social order. The institutions created by society seek to provide some form of security for humanity therein. Institutions simply aim at society's efficient practice and continuation. The extent to which these institutions and aims are attained is actually another issue. However, to comprehend the processes involved in sustaining society, we need to examine in a systematic way, the key principles

⁷³ Aristotle (1990), *op.cit.*, pp. 348-351.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁷⁵ Aquinas (1990) *op.cit.*, pp. 26 & 51.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ William Frankena (1973) *op.cit.*, pp. 63.

⁷⁸ Michael Davis, 'Who can teach Workplace Ethics?', *Teaching Philosophy*, vol. 13, no.1 (March 1990), pp. 35-36.

that facilitate the provision of security for the society. A viable social order requires the participation, and contribution or commitment of as many citizens as possible, and that they are responsible, committed or willing, to make their input to national governance and social affairs. The assumption underlying this idea of shared feelings of purpose and feelings of mutual responsibility which are understood by the two broad groups, namely the represented and the representatives. The society aims at the common good through greater opportunities for participation and responsibility among citizens. Underlying this feeling of mutual responsibility is presumably, the attitude of trust or faith in a unique pattern of political administration and social conduct that seeks the inclusion of as many as possible, using the principle of the dignity of the human person.

The most important goals of social order⁷⁹ arranged in their order of significance are discussed below. The most important goal of social order is to achieve the security, protection, safety, defence and preservation of the lives and property of people in a society. The protection of lives and property is the central goal of social order, because, society cannot survive for long in any meaningful sense if the safety of life and property is not maintained. This goal is assured by identifying and distributing properly certain roles, rights, duties and benefits that accrue from effective social coexistence among people. The good society ensures that everyone has some stake or interest in it in a way that induces him to strive for individual and collective security and protection. To ensure security of lives and property, the social order allows each person to have certain valuable possessions and commitments. Hobbes has been a major exponent of this demand for security. Others include Locke and Rousseau.

A second goal of social order is to ensure that things are done in the common or public interest. This means that the social order ensures that people do those things, which assure the sustenance and security of everyone in the community. Common interests are thus separated from the private interests of individuals or even the group interests of associations which serve personal or sectional ends. The idea of common interest or public interest suggests the conscious promotion of the shared interests of a community as an effective means of guaranteeing certain rights and advantages to individuals and groups. Such advantages include security of lives and property, peace, freedom, and mutual cooperation. Rousseau has been most prominent in exposing this idea of common interest. Others include Plato, Aristotle, Kant and Augustine.

There are a third and fourth goal of social order. A third view holds that social order is also geared towards achieving peace among all and sundry in the society. Peace in the community is emphasised because, it is only in an atmosphere of peace that any community can survive and make progress. A peaceful environment allows all the social rules, policies and institutions to operate efficiently and purposefully towards the central goal of the society in whatever way it has been designed. Augustine has been a key exponent of this view. Others include Mill and Tocqueville.

⁷⁹ Aristotle, 'Politics', in J. Somerville et al. (ed.) *Social and Political Philosophy* (New York: Double Day, 1963). St Augustine, *The City of God*. (Trans.) G. Walsh, (Ed.) V.J. Bourke (New York: Image Books, 1958). Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* in J. Somerville et al (1963). Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, edited by N. Fuller, in M.J. Alder (1990), vol. 21. John Locke, *Treatise Concerning Civil Government: Second Essay*, in M.J. Alder (1990). Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, translated by G.D.H. Cole, in M.J. Alder (1990), vol. 35. Alexis Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* Vols. 1 & 2, (Trans) G. Lawrence, in M.J. Alder (1990), vol. 44.

goal of social order is to promote love, good conduct and morals within the society. Social order is impossible without these qualities. The coexistence of any group or community of people requires some level of friendly feelings shared among them. Such friendly feelings facilitate mutual cooperation, communal rapport and integrated activities. These friendly feelings also help to manage and control inevitable differences of opinion and interest that can arise out of communal co-habitation. It is also impossible for people to live conveniently together within a community if morality is absent. Morality is what defines the way people conduct themselves in a good or bad way. Apart from defining the right or good conduct of people, morality also guarantees the harmonisation of diverse interests through the promotion of the disposition by individuals to take the interests of others into account. Therefore, a significant level of good conduct is vital to the survival of individuals and even a community. Augustine and Mill have been key exponents of this view.

Lastly social order aims at ensuring the progress, prosperity and well being of all in the society. Socio-economic progress and prosperity are vital elements in the maintenance of a social order because for social order to be functional and meaningful people need to be induced to make commitment and contribute to the well-being and progress of the community by their different activities. The people's interest and dedication to preserving the social order is assured if they have made some valuable and perennial input to the prosperity and wealth of the society. Mill and Tocqueville have been key exponents of this view. But all of these goals are in fact present in the ideas of Plato, as we have seen.

Conclusion

This study has examined the problem of citizenship and social order. It has drawn upon the lessons of Plato as a social philosopher. It argued that social order has consequences for the idea of citizenship, as seen in the search for community which raises fundamental questions about justice between men and how they can achieve co-operation for the common good in the society. This essay argued that the question of how rights and duties, benefits and burdens, as well as responsibilities can be properly and effectively maintained among the members of society is central to social order. In linking the problem of security to the central goal of the quest for social order, we saw that the problem confronting an African nation such as Nigeria suggested a misconception of security and by implication citizenship. These contradictions which have caused social anomie and degeneration of the quality human life in the society, raised questions about the capacity of a society to ensure ideological transformation and political community. We argued that there are critical lessons that can be learned from the ideas of an ancient classical philosopher, Plato, in order to provide an alternative emphasis in the conceptual, and historical analysis of the problematic. We suggested that there are lessons to be learned from Plato's emphasis on good and caring leadership, disciplined, efficient and competent citizenry, as well as a society that consciously strives to attain security, progress and justice at the commutative and distributive levels.

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From Nativity to Nationality: Understanding and Responding to Africa's Citizenship Crises

By Chidi Anselm Odinkalu¹

French Abstract (*Résumé*)

De "l'autochtonie" à la nationalité: comprendre la crise de citoyenneté en Afrique et y répondre

Cet article propose un cadre d'analyse de la crise de citoyenneté en Afrique et des solutions adaptées qui pourraient lui être trouvées. L'argument défendu est que bien que la citoyenneté soit en elle-même un droit et une condition d'effectivité des autres droits, la combinaison de certains facteurs culturels, politiques et sociaux limite sa réalisation. S'intéresser à la question de la citoyenneté requiert une approche multidisciplinaire et l'implication d'une pluralité d'acteurs comme les universitaires, la société civile, les communautés locales et l'État.

Abstract

The paper undertakes a contextualised framing of Africa's citizenship crises and the appropriate response that may be developed to deal with it. It argues that although citizenship by itself is a human right and a condition for the realisation and protection of other rights, however, a combination of cultural, political and social factors inhibits its realisation. Tackling the citizenship question would require a multi-actor and multi-disciplinary research, information, advocacy, and enforcement interventions that will involve the academy, civil society, local communities, and the state.

Introduction

Citizenship is the most under-discussed and misunderstood subject in contemporary human rights discourse and advocacy. Arguments framed in citizenship terms are often mistaken as exclusionary. In chronological terms, citizenship emerged even later than human rights in the verbiage of popular struggles in Africa. Until independence in the second half of the 20th century, the continent's only citizens were ironically the colonialists. And because human rights is perceived as a more inclusive expression, it is preferred in usage to citizenship.

In reality, human rights advocacy in developing contexts, such as in Africa, is all about the construction of civic citizenship and the institutions for its protection. For citizenship is both a human right and a condition for the effective protection of all rights. Contestations around citizenship suffer from the neo-Hegelian framing of the subject as in a strictly civic

¹ Africa Programme Director, Open Society Justice Initiative. The views expressed here are the author's and do not reflect those of the Open Society Justice Initiative.

context involving the definition and regulation of the relationship between the human person and territorialised political community. In reality citizenship is easily a much more complex concept.

Three different strands of it can be distinguished. There is civic citizenship, which defines the optimal relationship between a person and their territorialised political community. Citizenship in this sense is most easily understood in international law and relations as being equal to nationality. Cultural citizenship on the other is more closely associated identity although the two are not necessarily the same thing. The main difference between civic and cultural citizenship is that the former is territorialised while the latter is historicised. Quite apart from these two, there are increasingly evolving norms of and notions of transactional

The relationship of culture to citizenship and participation rights in the public sphere is hardly the subject of any attention. In the multi-ethnic and multi-national states that constitute Africa, these are very touchy subjects affecting both the legitimacy of state authority and the identities of persons subject to this authority.

citizenship, which define the horizons of transboundary factor mobility, performance and development.² Transactional citizenship is evolving, in the language of Article 55(a) of the UN Charter, to seek to advance higher standards of living or development within regimes of regional economic integration. Transactional citizenship is the world of the inhabitant of Robert Cooper's Post-modern state.³ By way of a summary, cultural citizenship builds on a sense of a shared past; civic citizenship is a project for a shared future. Transactional citizenship bridges the past and the future through the creation of zones of factor and values mobility. All three can happily co-exist but the relationship between them is not always a happy one.

The scope of citizenship all over Africa is defined in the intersection of law, culture and politics. Pre-political, cultural identities are transposed onto political identities with fixed legal consequences. The complex set of relationships and consequences created by this intersection has not yet been properly investigated, articulated, or understood in advocacy circles. All over Africa, culture is a critical - in many cases, decisive - determinant of rights. It is also a site of severe contestation. In most places, there is a spatial and normative segregation of the cultural from the civic realm resulting in what has been described as 'decentralised despotism'.⁴

Culture is imprecisely associated with customary law, in relation to which there is now a growing but still very limited body of advocacy interest, especially as it affects the human rights of women and non-urban inhabitants. But culture manifests itself much more than just customary law. It is also an anchor of pre-political identities, for political mobilisation,

² E-U. Petersmann, Human Rights and Economic Law in the 21st Century: The Need to Clarify Their Interrelationships, *Journal of International Economic Law*, vol. 4, no. 1 (2001), p. 19.

³ Robert Cooper: *The Breaking of Nations, Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 26-42 (London: Atlantic Books, 2003).

⁴ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, (Oxford: James Currey; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 109.

and, in most African countries, for threshold access to citizenship rights and classifications. The relationship of culture to citizenship and participation rights in the public sphere is hardly the subject of any attention. In the multi-ethnic and multi-national states that constitute Africa, these are very touchy subjects affecting both the legitimacy of state authority and the identities of persons subject to this authority. Legal responses have not yet found a handle on these issues.

It would be fair to say that the construction of secure civic citizenship and nationality is arguably the greatest problem facing Africa today. Notwithstanding this, citizenship as an issue has yet to emerge as a problem on the radar screens of the social justice/human rights movements in Africa. Clearly, the primary actors in constructing citizenship in Africa are the peoples of the continent, its residents, communities, nationals, and institutions. As will become evident shortly, international partnership, solidarity and facilitation can reinforce this, partly because Africa's current citizenship crises have origins in which international actors were and remain significant actors.

This paper argues that citizenship locates the single most important project of Africa's social conscience and political movements. It undertakes a contextualised framing of Africa's citizenship problems and argues that the crisis of citizenship in Africa is rooted in factors that are both historical and contemporary. It maps the essential characteristics of this crisis.

Why Citizenship?

The appeal of citizenship as a site of intervention and development lies in the fact that it is a right necessary for the realisation of other rights. The relationships that it defines are also antecedent to building of political community, the accountable exercise of political power and the realisation of all rights.

Citizenship in its civic form at least, which is the best known, defines the optimal relationship between a person and a sovereign entity. On its own, citizenship or nationality is a human right. Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees it as such and provides against its arbitrary deprivation. But citizenship also has an instrumental role as well. As the foundation of the framework of protection of the human person in international (human rights) law, it serves three essential functions in ensuring participation, protection and movement. Participation rights enable the individual to have a say in constituting his or her own government. On behalf of the state, government bears the obligation to ensure that the human person and their rights are protected. Nationality documentation based on citizenship is also necessary for the exercise of movement both as a human right and as a transactional necessity. As the United States Supreme Court observed in *Trop v. Dulles*, citizenship is, in fact, the right to have rights.⁵

From Nativity to Nationality

The origins of Africa's citizenship crisis lie, in a substantial part, in the history of the continent's colonial experience. By its very nature, colonial 'possessions', as the territories were called, had no citizens. The inhabitants of the British colonial territories were mere subjects of the colonial power. Under the French colonial policy of assimilation, the inhabitants of French

⁵ 356 US 86, 102 (1959).

colonial territories could aspire on a selective basis to the privilege of French citizenship as the highest form of their own civilisational evolution. Under either regime, relative legal entitlements were determined with reference to race or 'nativity'/indigeneity. Examples of racial designations included Arabs (Zanzibar and North Africa); Batutsi (Rwanda/ Burundi), 'Coloureds' (Southern Africa), 'Metis' (French & Portuguese African territories); Indians (East and Southern Africa), and Whites (everywhere). There was a distinction between 'natives' (Bantus) and 'non-natives' or of natives and 'settlers'. Natives were ultimately all under the authority of customary law, which was inapplicable to non-natives whose rights were determined by civic law. Since customary law varied from place to place, this meant that the rights of the native also varied from place to place.

For African countries and their people, the entitlement to citizenship only emerged as part of the independence settlement in the shadows of the experience of colonialism. Even then, the nature and content of citizenship that emerged was neither clear nor settled. Most of Africa's colonial territories had been administered in zones of administrative convenience determined by contiguity. For instance, French colonial Africa was administered in two territorial blocks from Libreville and Abidjan for Central and West Africa respectively. Modern Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi were until 1956 administered as one colonial Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. There were approximate arrangements in East and West Africa. The citizenship laws adopted at independence did not resolve the business of untangling the relationships of people to the sovereign territories that emerged after independence. Nor did the post-independence settlements address the content of inherited colonial laws that effectively denied people of citizenship and consequential rights. To emphasise the tenuous relationship of people to territory, exile (and versions of internal banishment) remained, until several years after independence, a major form of penal punishment.⁶

The distinctions between settlers and natives survived colonialism with minor adaptations that entailed the replacement of colonial rulers by homegrown ones. The powers to exclude and exile supposed citizens remained in tact and were often used by post-colonial regimes. Nativity became a major instrument of political mobilisation and retention of power. In most countries, post-colonial constitutional settlements privileged indigeneity and customary law over citizenship rights and civic law.

In Africa, therefore, the political and legal relationships defined by citizenship have either not existed in the civic sense or, where they did exist, were tenuous, dysfunctional or both. Elective government has a recent and uneven history, and governments, themselves the biggest and often most egregious violators of the human person, are mostly unwilling or unable to exercise their protection obligations. Africa's perennially large population of forced displacement is the best evidence of this. Forced displacement results from a failure of the guarantee(s) of protection that citizens are entitled to from their states.

In many cases, rebel movements effectively challenge the capacity or legitimacy of government to protect both their own nationals and other residents of their territories. Effective national insurgencies additionally also endanger the participation rights of citizens and

⁶ In Uganda, for instance, the Constitutional Court only pronounced the punishment of banishment unconstitutional in 1997, in *Salvatori Abuki & Anor v. Attorney-General* (1997).

endanger vast swathes of the continent's humanity. Some of the rebel insurgencies that have caused so much human destruction and political instability in Africa are the result of lingering exclusions from both citizenship and its benefits.⁷ In this sense some of Africa's wars today are easily seen as citizenship wars where in the past they were said to be proxy wars fought by domestic clients of foreign influence(s).

In addition historical, statutory and bureaucratic bottlenecks conspire to frustrate the effective exercise of free movement with far reaching consequences for economic and transactional life across the continent. Arguably, therefore, the greatest human security and development problem in Africa today arises around the intersection of citizenship, nationality and migration.

The Multiple Dimensions of Africa's Citizenship Crisis

The problem framed above has multiple manifestations in Africa's political economy. Six inter-related dimensions of this problem may be highlighted for our immediate purposes:

(a) Segregation of Civic (Rights) from Cultural (status)

Against the background of the context sketched in paragraph 3, post-colonial African states have struggled, largely unsuccessfully, to evolve national identities from the multi-national and multi-ethnic comprised within their borders. The settler-native distinction and the entitlement distinctions based on it still survive. Small proportions of national elite who succeeded to the colonial privilege(s) continue to be subjects of rights and of common and statutory law. A majority of the population continues, however, to be subject to customary law that is, in many cases, above constitutional oversight. Civic entitlements from the state are often, in turn, dependent on cultural/nativist affinities. In countries with significant racial diversity such as are found in East and Southern Africa, this segregation of legal communities is also racially or religiously constructed.

(b) Annihilationist Xenophobia

Growing xenophobia targeting perceived non-nationals/settlers for elimination has been a response to the introduction of plural politics in Africa. The definition of non-nationals/settlers in such cases is often done on bases that are irrational, arbitrary and designed to foment utmost harm. The targeting of perceived non-nationals or branding of perceived opponents as 'foreigners' has emerged as a relatively recent form of political persecution in Africa. Many of Africa's recent conflicts, including Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, DRC, Eritrea/Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Sudan, have resulted from or utilised the denial on a mass scale of the citizenship rights of vast segments of the population. In Cote d'Ivoire, for instance, the status of nationals whose historical parentage is traceable to communities in neighbouring countries, especially Burkina Faso is the defining cause of the current crisis. As part of this crisis, the ideology of

⁷ See Christopher Clapham (ed.), *African Guerrillas* (Oxford: James Currey; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 3-4; and Said Adejunmobi, 'Citizenship, Rights and the Problem of Conflicts and Civil Wars in Africa', *Human Rights Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (2001), p. 148.

Ivoirité also calls into question the status of Muslims from northern Cote d'Ivoire. In the DRC eastern Congolese Banyamulenge are branded as 'Rwandans' and, therefore, enemies in their own country. In Rwanda itself, a genocidal ideology has evolved around claims that of two otherwise indistinguishable identities one, the Tutsi, are 'Nilotics' from the Nile Basin of the Horn of Africa. In the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, both governments resorted to forced transfers of their own national with alleged historical descent from the other's territory as instruments of war. In Nigeria, episodic slaughter in inter-communal conflicts across the country revolve around the issue of who is an 'indigene' of a particular state or local government area and who is a 'settler' in the context of Nigeria's Federal Character policy - that government appointments should reflect the geo-political and ethnic diversity of the country.

(c) Nationality-Based Exclusion From participation

Rather than serve as a basis for participation, many African governments increasingly use nationality-based exclusions to preclude their own nationals from exercising rights of participation in government, thereby reinforcing narrow ethnic power bases. Governments routinely denationalise their opponents who are then deported (civic elimination) or targeted to be killed (physical elimination). Early examples of this practice are found in the deportation by Nkrumah's government in Ghana of some of his most powerful ministers in 1960-61 or in the collective deportation of East African Asians from Uganda in the 1970s. More recently, governments in DRC, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, among many examples in Africa, have been complicit in the manufacture of nationality-based exclusions as a means of persecuting and precluding swathes of their own population from political participation.⁸

(d) Nationality as Constraint on Voluntary Migration and Vector of Forced Migration

Involuntary and voluntary, as well as intra- and inter-country migration is problematic in Africa. The peculiar history of the evolution of colonial borders in Africa places millions of Africans in a position in which they can claim more than one nationality because national boundaries were delineated asymmetrically from the colonial administrative units; and arcane post-independence nationality laws deal inadequately with this situation. Coherent Ethnic nationalities/identities straddle multiple countries across ill-defined and ill-recognised borders, posing problems for all kinds of migration. In the sphere of forced migration, governments are largely unable to respond adequately to individuals or groups forced to cross international borders in search of refuge or a better life. Many have no laws for refugees and are complicit in triggering internal displacement. As a result, Africa continues to harbour the largest *per capita* distribution of populations of concern to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees,

⁸ Chidi Anselm Odinkalu, 'Back to the Future: The Imperative of Prioritising for the Protection of Human Rights in Africa', *Journal of African Law*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (2003), pp. 13-18.

including refugees and internally displaced persons. Such people are often left to fend for themselves in the informal sector provided by family and ethnic relations.

Concerning voluntary migration, millions of nationals of African countries live and work in countries other than their own. Some people simply cross into neighbouring communities with whom they share language, culture and identity. Others travel long distances in search of employment in industrial or agricultural centres, such as Egypt, Nigeria, Senegal or South Africa. Many economies have been built on migrant labour. In Southern Africa and parts of West Africa, the mines and the cocoa plantations respectively attracted significant populations of migrant labour during the colonial period that subsequently became 'settler communities' thereafter. What is more, African countries discriminate against voluntary migrants from Africa in the procedures for entry clearance. Intolerance of intra-African migration is also to be seen in the episodic instances of collective deportation of African nationals around the continent.

African countries discriminate against voluntary migrants from Africa in the procedures for entry clearance. Intolerance of intra-African migration is also to be seen in the episodic instances of collective deportation of African nationals around the continent.

In response to these problems, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has attempted since 1979 to evolve norms for the protection of nationals of West African countries in the sub-region. Similar regimes do not exist in other African countries. The crisis in Cote d'Ivoire with the attendant persecution of people branded non-nationals shows both the limitations of these norms where they exist and, ironically, the need to make these norms more effective.

(e) Gender-Based Discrimination in Nationality and Migration

In addition, there is a long-standing history in African countries of nationality-based, gender discrimination. Women are notoriously unable to pass their nationality to their children and, in many cases, are forced to give up their nationality of birth if they marry and wish to co-habit with men from outside their own country. In some countries, married women are required to present written evidence of spousal consent as a condition for securing nationality or travel documentation. The scope of women's citizenship problems in Africa is quite vast and requires methodical attention. The peculiar problems associated with the citizenship of women in Africa are similar in many countries. Positive gains in the development of legal standards in this field, such as the decision of the Human Rights Committee in *Aumeerudy Cziffra v. Mauritius* (1978) and of the Botswana Supreme Court in *Unity Dow v. Attorney-General of Botswana* (1992), have been episodic rather than systematic.

The problems associated with or arising from women's citizenship in Africa are multi-faceted. Examples include:

- inferior protection of women's nationality rights in comparison with males;⁹
- gender-specific bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining documentary evidence of nationality;
- inability of women to acquire new or transmit their own nationalities after marriage;
- specific targeting for violation and elimination of women (and their families) married across borders (or communities) in situations of inter-ethnic conflict/clashes;
- transboundary trafficking in women and girls utilising, in many cases, loopholes or constraints in nationality laws that make documentary proof of a woman's nationality dependent on the support or evidence of males;
- gender-specific violations and exclusions suffered by women in regional transboundary commerce and migration;
- increasing feminisation of customary law as men, enjoying greater intra- and inter-country mobility, escape from its territorial scope;
- continuing application of nationality-based penal punishment (such as internal banishment) for gender-specific crimes (such as witchcraft and sorcery(!)).

These problems cut across many themes associated with the protection of the human rights of women. (A mix of) some of these examples of women's citizenship problems may already be receiving attention from groups working on the human rights of women. However, the issues are not always framed as the citizenship rights of women nor always addressed as such. Alternatively, when framed as women's citizenship rights, the problem is apt to be narrowly defined as the inter-generational and nationality-related consequences of transboundary marriages or trans-racial marriages.

A recent and growing trend in migration in Africa is the problem of trafficking in women and children. The direction of the trafficking is both international - from Africa to different parts of Europe, the US, the Middle East, and Asia - and intra-African. This problem has received some policy attention within and outside Africa. In December 2001, ECOWAS adopted an Initial Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons. In December 2002, the 'Second Africa-Europe Ministerial Conference' also adopted a 'Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Humans, Especially Women and Children'. International recognition of this problem has resulted in several standards, including, notably the 'UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children' adopted in 2000 as a protocol to the 'Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime'.

(f) Nationality and Statelessness

As a result of the combined effect of the factors described above statelessness in Africa is on the increase. In this sense, statelessness may be the absence of the legal status of nationality (*de jure* statelessness) or the consequence(s) of a denial of that status (*de facto* statelessness).

⁹ E.g. enabling girls less than 14 years to contract (transboundary) marriages, when the same act would otherwise be illegal child trafficking contrary to criminal law.

The prevalence of statelessness is difficult to pin down. However, wars, forced displacement, arbitrary denial of nationality, trafficking, historical migrant labour and population transfers, are some of the causal factors of statelessness in Africa. Fewer than half of African countries are party to the two statelessness Conventions.¹⁰

An Inadequate Normative Framework

One major cause of Africa's citizenship crises is the absence of an adequate legal framework for protecting and guaranteeing citizenship. Both international and national law governs the framework of laws applicable to citizenship and nationality. Nationality is recognised as a human right in the UDHR. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) similarly guarantees the right of every child to 'acquire a nationality',¹¹ which is far from a secure entitlement of nationality at birth. Each country reserves the right to define the rules applicable to the acquisition and retention of its nationality. These rules vary from place to place. Generally, however, nationality may be acquired through variations of birth, blood/descent, or domicile/residence.

Unlike the UDHR and the ICCPR, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights remarkably omits the guarantee of a right to nationality. National laws on citizenship in Africa were mostly adopted in the immediate aftermath of decolonisation and have not proved to be particularly adaptable to varieties of more contemporary manifestations of the problem of citizenship in Africa. Nor have these laws been reconciled with national bills of rights adopted after independence.

All but eight African countries have ratified the OAU Convention on the Specific Problems of the Refugee Problem in Africa, but most of them do not have national laws, institutions or procedures for addressing refugee/asylum situations. Mechanisms for integration of refugees in the national populations do not exist. In East Africa and the Great Lakes, for example, pre-independence Rwandan and Burundian refugees who acquired the nationality of their host states are now at risk of losing their nationality in some of the countries, such as Tanzania and DRC where they have been settled for generations.

Conclusion: Towards an Effective Response

It is clear from this brief mapping that citizenship present Africa with its most serious human development and peace and security crises. It is not an accident that nearly all zones of major conflict in Africa - Eritrea Ethiopia; Somalia; Southern Sudan/Northern Uganda; the Great Lakes and Manor River Union countries - involve transboundary nationalities. These conflicts tend to reflect tensions between cultural citizenship, and the territorial boundaries of non-existent civic and transactional citizenships.

A response to these crises must envisage a range of multi-actor, multi-disciplinary information, advocacy, and enforcement interventions that will raise the visibility of the citizenship problem in Africa and begin to develop standards of good law and practice for the

¹⁰ These are: the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons (1954); and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness (1961).

¹¹ Article 24(3).

protection of citizenship. There must be avenues for creating a set of rallying points for different actors: political, economic, civic, cultural, activist etc., to make a contribution to constructing citizenship in Africa as a responsible relationship of people to communities. Such activities would serve a broad range of goals including:

- a. facilitate the development of further diagnostic information on the nature and 'epidemiology' of the citizenship problem in Africa;
- b. contribute to the development of standards,¹² good legal and administrative practice for the protection of citizenship in Africa;
- c. pioneer regional approaches to the implementation of citizenship standards where they exist; and
- d. facilitate the development in different countries of institutional, skill and capacities to provide remedies to, highlight and ultimately prevent citizenship-related violations.

Clearly, no one entity can accomplish all these goals or, by itself alone, re-shape the direction of the development of citizenship and the institutions for its protection in Africa. Inter-disciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships are called for. Such partnerships should also cut across the hemispheric and traditional, all too familiar state *vs.* civil society antipathies.

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A Discourse on the Citizenship Question in Nigeria

By Toure Kazah-Toure¹

French Abstract (*Résumé*)

Une analyse de la question de la citoyenneté au Nigeria

Dans la constitution nigériane de 1999, la citoyenneté est définie en termes primordiaux de consanguinité, d'origine ancestrale et d'appartenance à une communauté nigériane indigène. Ces dispositions constitutionnelles et les pratiques concrètes n'aident à résoudre les problèmes de citoyenneté ni au niveau étatique, ni au niveau communautaire. De nombreuses personnes non indigènes voient leurs droits niés sur la base de ces dispositions. Ainsi, ceux qui sont considérés comme indigènes peuvent bénéficier de droits même s'ils ne résident plus dans les communautés alors que ceux qui sont considérés comme des allogènes n'en bénéficient pas même s'ils vivent dans la région. Ainsi, un des grands problèmes socio-politique que vit le Nigeria renvoie à cette problématique entre autochtones et allogènes qui fait que les mêmes citoyens sont parfois inclus, parfois exclus sur la base de cette dichotomie.

Abstract

Citizenship in the operational 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is fundamentally defined in the most primordial terms of consanguinity, of tracing ancestral origin to a particular community considered as indigenous in the country. Constitutional provisions and the concrete practices, at the levels of both the state and partly society, do not help the future of the country in relation to its tackling the citizenship problematic. Millions of citizens are denied some rights where they reside on the basis of their being classified as non-indigenes, that is they are treated as settlers within their immediate local communities - even if they were born, bred, continuously work and pay taxes there. Important also is the syndrome or parlance such as the 'son of the soil' - hardly daughter. Meaning inclusion, within geography and location, which contrasts with other citizens that are not perceived as such, meaning exclusion. Citizens fitting into the classification as the native, indigene or 'son of the soil', in a given community, may not be residing in the area - but can benefit from citizenship rights no matter the years of having been absent from the location, but those categorised as 'settlers' have all sorts of obstacles concerning citizenship rights. Thus, a core political and social problematic Nigeria faces increasingly, on citizenship, is the indigene (native or son of the soil issue) and non-indigene or settler perceptions and practices, despite the reality that both the included and excluded are citizens of Nigeria.

¹ Department of History, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria.

Introduction

Several conflicts on the continent of Africa, into the early 21st century, are linked with the citizenship question. Complex crises are currently manifesting in ethnic, religious, regional, and many other forms.² Found are diverse conflicts of various dimensions ranging from political, economic, and socio-cultural - depending on the context and specificity. There is a degree of validity in the position of Michael Ignatieff that ethnic nationalism is prominent, with a global spread.³ Abubakar Momoh does emphasise that ethnic, religious, gender, regional and other identities have become major challenges in the polity because these are somehow associated with the perceptions of discriminations and the prevailing limitations of inclusive citizenship.⁴ To some extent the argument goes that in the process of constructing a modern nation, both the Nigerian state and the dominant sections of the ruling class have tended to be putting in place mechanisms that ignite more divisive identity-based conflicts heavily bordering on the citizenship question. For decades, the post-colonial project experienced governments becoming more authoritarian, excluding sections of the population from participation in the affairs of state and denying them equality in the sharing of resources and social provisioning.

Ideas of a united plural ethno-religious Nigeria, with common citizenship - free from the viruses of sectarian bigotry and other forms of discrimination against certain sections of the population - have been the pursuit of many patriots and nationalists. Nigerians envisaged a post-colonial nation with equality, united in common political practices. Such vision of civic nationalists has largely not materialised. Attahiru Jega states that the post-colonial project of constructing a common citizenry with the same aspiration, one pan-national identity, and a cosmopolitan outlook, instead of ethnic and 'tribal' and sectarian religious loyalties, has essentially failed.⁵

Conflicts related to citizenship are posing serious challenges in recent times. Contrary to the dominant perception, Nigeria and other third world countries do not have the monopoly of being the flashpoints or theatres of ethno-religious tensions and conflicts. Few examples are relevant. Elsewhere in the world - such as the Balkans (especially in the old Yugoslavia), the Basque Country in Spain, and Northern Ireland in Britain - contemporary events and political processes provide ample evidence that the developed countries are not free from the deadly explosions and violent confrontations along ethnic, racial, religious, regional and other divisions. The racial tensions and conflicts in the USA in terms of the white domination of the African-Americans, the indigenous Inuit people and the Latinos are still raving. Since the events of September 11, 2001, with the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon, the citizenship of Arab-American, whether Muslims or not, has been attracting some new racial attacks in certain circles.⁶

² See John Markakis, 'Group Conflict and Human Rights in the Horn of Africa,' *ISSUE: A Journal of Opinion*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, p. 5.

³ Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging: Journey into New Nationalism* (Toronto, Viking-Penguin, 1993), p. 2.

⁴ See Abubakar Momoh, *Even Birds Have A Home: Explaining the Pathologies of the Citizenship Question in Nigeria*, EMPARC's Annual Lectures series no. 7 (Lagos: EMPARC, 2001).

⁵ Attahiru Jega 'The State and Identity Transformation Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria', in A. Jega (ed.), *Identity Transformation and Identity Politics Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria*, (Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitute, 2000), pp. 27-34.

⁶ See the article on Arab-Americans in *The Economist* (29 November 2002), pp. 49-50.

Looking at the global scene pertaining to identities it can be argued that what makes the difference, from one country to another, is the question of the degree of struggles, and efforts to address the basis of problems related to ethno-religious conflictuality. In some countries mechanisms have been put in place by opting for democratic frameworks of tackling the problems while in others nothing has been concretely done, and, therefore leaving the problems to find concrete expressions in the most violent terms.

On attainment of independence from colonialism, especially in the post World War 11 years, many leaders and regimes of the newly independent countries, such as Nigeria, kept on with the tempo of denouncing the threat posed by ethnicity, religious bigotry and regionalism. For them - generally - those were deadly viruses that posed threats to their godlike declaration of the indivisibility of the newly born states. Somehow the line was pushed also to justify all sorts of undemocratic practices ranging from civilian authoritarianism, one party systems and to stifle pluralism - as regards divergence of perspectives and political parties - in national politics. A paradox of the position was the reality on the ground that many of the self-proclaimed leaders of being anti-regionalist and anti-ethno-religious bigotry were themselves exploiting sectarian methods as sorts of weapons to exclude, marginalise and repress those in the opposition - as well as those they either perceived or labelled as enemies.

Jibrin Ibrahim conceptualises citizenship and situates it in a historical context:

Citizenship is applicable to a person endowed with full political and civil rights in a state. It has much to do with political, civil and social rights attributed to the individual as a member of a state. In a modern state the acquisition of citizenship can be through birth (the law of blood), law of place, and through naturalisation. The notion of citizenship was developed in the context of bourgeois revolution and the ascendancy of liberalism. The idea evolved with the collapse of feudalism and the medieval state, which limited the rights, and freedom of the individual. The rights and freedom, which were won and secured with the birth of the modern state therefore, transformed the individual from subject to citizen. Citizenship is thus defined in terms of the special status granted by the state to its members and expresses at the formal level, the equality of all before the state. The rights of citizens essentially include political, civil, and social rights. More often than not, the rights of citizens are limited to the right to life, freedom of religion, peaceable assembly and freedom from discrimination to mention just a few. Ordinary, the rights of a citizen should include social rights such as the rights to employment, education and economic well being.⁷

It has been stressed that citizenship in Nigeria is basically based on ethnic identities and tracing origin. Complex processes of change and development are at the core of the problematic connected with citizenship. The question of groups perceiving themselves as neglected

⁷ Jibrin Ibrahim, *Constitutional Reforms and the Struggle for Civil and Political Rights in Nigeria: An Overview*. Paper Presented at the Nordic Africa Institute Conference on Africa: A Future Beyond the Crises and Conflicts, Helsinki (19-20 April 2002).

or excluded from the terrain of political power, and in the sharing of the benefits of the resources and wealth of a country, is central. The problematic permeates central issues of class relations, ethnicity, religion, gender, justice, social equality/inequality, governance, and political power. Part of the challenges of the times is to analyse relations between diverse segments of society.

One fundamental question pertains to what the processes are that do establish social, economic, and political exclusion and domination over a historical period. An approach that can be adopted is to study the nature of the socio-economic and political structures and their operations in relation to different identities, as well as people's perceptions of these at various stages of the historical and political developments. The centrality of the state in terms of the question of democracy, equality of the citizenry and justice has to be part of the focus. Oppression, authoritarianism, and undemocratic forms of governance reinforce ethnicity, which generates reactions that further entrench ethnicity that is a real danger to inclusive citizenship. Relevant is the apt position, of Mahmood Mamdani, that in many countries in Africa the 'ethnicity of the president is the surest clue to the ethnic tinge of the government of the day'.⁸

However, this by no means is to suggest that each of the key issues is criss-crossing at all times and places. Much focus has to be on sectarianism hinging on ethnicity and religious identities, authoritarianism in governance, group marginalisation, inclusion and exclusion of some groups, the manipulation of ethnicity and religion by ruling elite and the monopoly of political power by a dominant ruling elite from particular ethnic or religious groups - while others are kept away from sharing power. Linked to these are other issues including control and distribution of resources, economic privileges not being extended to all sections of the citizenry, lack of care for the environment of communities that produce wealth, intolerance which involves not respecting the beliefs and cultures of other peoples, entrenched sectarian and chauvinistic arrogance by ruling elite which permeates society, the role of externally factors in influencing negative state policies. T.D. Sisk makes a valid point by positing that when the boundaries overlap between those who control political power, dominate the economy and other facets of the state, and a particular ethnic group, the contradictions between different sections of the citizens become more serious at the ethnic level.⁹

Historical Roots of the Nigerian Citizens

Barbara Crosseter argues that in plural societies in Africa, ethnic identities are stronger than national citizenship due to the fact that the colonialists created artificial countries 'without reference to the people in them'.¹⁰ This point holds to a limited extent, but the reality is that most states in the world have been artificially created and the dynamism has kept on changing. Largely states - including those that are called nation states - have been products of historical and political processes going along with much fluidity of changes in their identity composition,

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of late Colonialism*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 289.

⁹ T.D. Sisk, *Power Sharing and International Mediation in Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace, 1996), p. vii.

¹⁰ As quoted in Jeffrey Herbst, 'The Role of Citizenship Laws in Multiethnic Societies: Evidence from Africa', in Richard Joseph (ed.), *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), p. 28.

which are constructed and reconstructed depending on time and context. In the contemporary world, most nation states are plural. Plural societies, such as Nigeria, are those with multiplicity and diversity in identities whether in terms of, ethnic, religion, ideology, culture and race. There has not been, to the best of existing knowledge, any cosmopolitan state without these diversities. Even at the minutiae level an individual has more than one identity. A person, for example, is a Nigerian citizen at one level but at the same time is Muslim or Christian or non-religious. In addition every citizen has a gender identity, as a man or woman. In the same vein someone who is a Nigerian can be, at the same time, a Yoruba, female and a poor worker in contrast with a Yoruba big landowner who is also a man and a leading politician. There is the need to critically examine the limitation of those that claim total harmony of group identity. Marina Ottaway makes the point that primordial perception of ethnic identities, as fixed and given, has limitations because national and ethnic identities undergo mutations, and thus are in constant change overtime, with much fluidity.¹¹

In Nigeria before the colonial period (in the late 19th century and early 20th century) one of the present major ethnic groups in the country, the Igbo, did not exist in the form that it does today. The composition was made up of groups referring to themselves as the same, or similar and even as different ethnic groups - some speaking related dialects and others not quite related ones. Colonial authorities and missionaries developed a common written standard language, anti-colonial nationalism galvanised pan-Igbo identity, the civil war of 1967-1970 reinforced it, and today the pan-Igbo identity is a reality in Nigerian politics.¹² The case of the Igbo is just one example.

Many identities in Nigeria have undergone similar changes in time and space. Even identities that are part of current Nigerian parley such as the North, South, South-west, North-central, South-south, South-east, North-east and North-west are colonial and post-colonial constructs - or outright inventions - that came about in the various phases of political development in Nigeria. These only remain relevant because Nigeria exists as a country, with the contest by the various factions of the ruling classes and peoples over power relations, control and distribution of resources.

Jibrin Ibrahim argues that historians generally agree that it is difficult to talk about the origin of the Hausa in precise terms. The ancestors of the Hausa were, however, mainly autochthonous to the territories that came to be known as Hausaland.¹³ As a people, and unlike many other groups, the Hausa do not have a 'tradition of common origin'.¹⁴ Different Hausa communities and families have their traditions. Abdullahi Smith points to the fact that

¹¹ Marina Ottaway, 'Ethnic Politics in Africa: Change and Continuity', in Richard Joseph (ed.), *State, Conflict, and Democracy in Africa*, p. 12.

¹² Toure Kazah-Toure, *Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Kaduna State*, (Kaduna: HRM, 2003), p. 12.

¹³ Jibrin Ibrahim, *Social Provisioning in Nigeria: The Maguzawa and Hausa Christians in Kano State, Nigeria*. Draft Research Report Submitted to the NAI Research Network on The Political and Social Context of Structural Adjustment in Sub-Saharan Africa: Phase II (1997).

¹⁴ Y.B. Usman and Alkassum Abba, *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria* (Zaria: CEDDERT, 2000), p. 82.

Hausa, in terms of linguistics classification, is accepted to 'belong to the Chadic group of languages' of the Afro-Asiatic family.¹⁵

By about 11th century A.D., the Hausa were already organised in different state formations, varied dialects and territories. The people of the different states were for a long time not identifying themselves as Hausa. They were associated with names of their territories such as Katsinawa and Kanawa.¹⁶ Migration into Hausaland was a common feature of the historical and political processes of establishing new identities. This was much so between the 12th and 19th centuries.¹⁷ In this process people of diverse backgrounds continuously moved into the areas and increasingly lost their previous identities by becoming Hausa, as well as the cultural identities of their new environments. At the same time others were also migrating from Hausaland in different directions. What this means is that some people that were erstwhile Hausa were at the same time taking on new identities elsewhere.

Islam spread into Hausaland over a long period. By the 15th century the religion had penetrated the area, and most conversion had taken place 'at least at the formal level'.¹⁸ In urban areas such as Kano the cosmopolitan culture and process has been relatively advanced over a long period, to the extent that the historical ethnicities so much differed but people within a short period of stay become absorbed into a Hausa identity. Precisely, it is this kind of positive integration that the Nigerian State has largely failed to build on in the direction of inclusive citizenship. What is perceived today within contestations in Nigeria as the pan-Hausa identity is more recent than often assumed.

The experience of the Igbo and the Hausa is not unique and exceptional, for many other ethnic groups in Nigeria went through similar identity transformations. Before the 19th century the Yoruba, as known today, did not exist as a single ethnic group or one social and political formation. People were known with different identities related to their territories and area, and there was no common Yoruba language. Also, there were continuous series and chains of migration in and out of the areas, by diverse peoples. The rise of the Oyo Empire and the subsequent development of a written language by African Christian missionaries, a number of them freed slaves that traced their origin to Yorubaland, changed all that. By the 20th century the Yoruba, as an ethnic group, had become one of the three majority groups in Nigeria.

Taking another, but different, example. The concept of the Middle-Belt is an ethno-religious, cultural and political construct, mainly having historical roots in the tussles of the decolonisation process, from the late 1940s, by a converted Christian elite (from predominantly non-Muslim minority ethnic groups in Central Nigeria) in their political and social contestations with the emirate aristocracies.

An issue that has been treated in a much distorted and ahistorical manner is the argument that Nigeria is a geographical expression and a country artificially created major

¹⁵ Abdullahi Smith, 'Some Considerations Relating to the Formation of States in Hausaland', in G.A. Kwanashie et al, (eds.), *A Little New Light: Selected Historical Writings of Abdullahi Smith*, (Zaria: Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, 1987), p. 61.

¹⁶ Attahiru Jega, 'The Nigerian Federal System: Problems and Prospects', in R.L. Basta and Jibrin Ibrahim (eds.), *Federalism and Decentralisation in Africa: The Multicultural Challenge* (Fribourg, Institute of Federalism, Fribourg, 1999), p. 204.

¹⁷ See the study by Jibrin Ibrahim, *Social Provisioning in Nigeria*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

proponent of this thesis, who most analysts still borrow from, is Obafemi Awolowo, a leading Nigerian nationalist of the 20th century. Central to the position advanced is that there are no Nigerians as there are Germans, English and French that can be called a nation. In this regard the thesis advanced that because the country is made up of a combination of diverse people of different origins, languages, worldviews, histories, religions, cultures, and different sources of inspiration that the British brought together, and made a country, through colonisation.¹⁹

A critical look into the history of the emergence and development of nations does not go in line with this assertion. Most nations, even nation states, emerged from diversity, and there has not been any nation without changing historical and political processes. Presently, those who are English within Britain – apart from the Scots, Welsh, Irish and the numerous minorities – are not all of the same origin and do not draw from a single history. The borders and composition of states in Europe have never been fixed for all times but created at various epochs of complex historical, political and socio-cultural processes.

A major discourse in Nigeria, related to the historical roots and contemporary discuss on the citizenship question, is the amalgamation of 1914, the process in which the British brought together the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria and the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria as one colony. Most often the argument is made that one way of solving the citizenship problematic is for the country to be broken into autonomous federating units based on the boundaries of 1914, or that there should be renegotiations of the federation on that basis. In the past two decades neo-ethnicist and sectarian forces have been in the forefront of pushing such a line of interpretation, and making such ahistorical claims in the media with a view that this may become a popularly accepted truth and agenda.

To the contrary, the historical reality is that both Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria of pre-1914 were British creations. Lugard's declaration at Lokoja on January 1, 1900, before the conquest of most polities in the north, was the creation of Northern Nigeria. Sokoto, the capital of the caliphate, was conquered over three years after this, on March 15, 1903. Some groups in the north were still offering armed opposition to the colonialists after the 1914 amalgamation.²⁰ Similarly Southern Nigeria was a British colonial creation, as hitherto different hundreds of independent and diverse polities, languages and cultures were in existence, and nothing existed as that before the British occupation.

The development since 1914 is part of the historical and other processes, which most Nigerians living today are products of.²¹ In fact both what is Nigeria and Nigerian citizenship, as enshrined in the constitution, is fundamentally based on that colonial experience. A Nigerian identity and citizenship is still a concrete reality just as the English, French, and others identities are in the world of nations, in spite of its problems.

¹⁹ For this thesis, partly as his contribution towards federalism for Nigeria, see Obafemi Awolowo, *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947).

²⁰ Toure Kazah-Toure, 'The Political Economy of Ethnic Conflicts and Governance in Southern Kaduna, Nigeria: (De) Constructing a Contested Terrain', *Africa Development*, Vol. XXXIV, Nos. 1 & 2 (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1999), p. 177.

²¹ Y.B. Usman and Alkassum Abba, *The Misrepresentation of Nigeria*, pp. 43-48.

Racist and ethnicist ideological perceptions informed British administrative policies towards the different ethnic groups. The colonialists used these criteria in assessing the so-called different levels of civilization of the linguistic and ethnic groups. In this regard the Fulbe (Fulani) aristocrats were tagged as being inferior to Europeans, but were considered superior to other ethnic groups. Yusufu Bala Usman clearly brings out the reality that as at the 19th century Heinrich Barth had depicted Fulbe rulers as the most ingenious, intelligent, cultured, and politically sophisticated.²²

The Lugardian School of British administrators followed this racist and ethnicist path in the administration of Nigeria - especially in the north. Fulbe, Hausa and Muslims were considered as superior to other ethnic groups and non-Muslims - what the British called the pagan tribes. Regardless of such categories, any groupings that were opposed to the colonialists were presented as primitive. Mahdists that led primary resistance to the British were classified as savages, fanatics, full of pagan superstition, in spite of the fact they were Muslims and some of them were Fulbe aristocrats.²³

The application of this racist perception, in concrete administrative terms, contributed to the ethnic identity problems, between various groups of colonial subjects, which manifested themselves in Nigeria. One of the arrangements was one in which the British appointed feudal aristocrats, that were either Fulbe or Hausa, to lord over the Fulbe or Hausa ethnic groups using the native authority system. In this case the aristocrats shared the same ethnic and religious identities with the majority of the people. In such contexts the contradictions were mainly of class and less complex. In the second arrangement were instances in which Fulbe or Hausa rulers, that were Muslims, occupied the leading positions in areas that were predominantly non-Fulbe, non-Hausa, and non-Muslim. These types of settings led to contradictions that reflected a close link between the class and the ethnic questions - with the latter becoming more apparent.²⁴

Differentiation in the development of classes - in the process of class formation - between the northern aristocracies on the one hand and other peoples on the other has contributed to the advancement of the thesis of internal colonialism, by scholars such as M.H. Kukah, which demonstrates the inequality of citizenship.²⁵ Contributory to this is the people's concrete experience in relation to phenomena of ethnic inequality, discrimination, inclusion,

The aristocracies did not have any significant independent political base outside the space provided for them by the British colonial state. This does not negate the role and place of the aristocracies in the domination, exploitation and oppression of peasants and commoners (of all ethnic groups), misrule over minority ethnic groups and the role they played in promoting ethno-religious chauvinism in the process.

²² Y.B. Usman, 'The Assessment of Primary Sources: Heinrich Barth in Katsina, 1851-1854', Seminar Paper (Zaria: History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, 1977).

²³ Lord Lugard, *Political Memoranda* (London: Frank Cass, 1970), p. 137.

²⁴ 'Administrative Policy (1921-35)', National Archives Kaduna (NAK): ZAR PROF No. 1553. Volume I.

²⁵ See the book by M.H. Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 1993).

and exclusion. In this analysis the argument is that the thesis of internal colonialism is found not to be on tenable grounds.

For in the realities of the process there was a principal ruling class, which was foreign and indeed British. It ultimately controlled state power, organs and institutions of the colonial state. In spite of the power the northern aristocracies wielded in the system, they in essence derived their authority and power base from the British coloniser. The aristocracies did not have any significant independent political base outside the space provided for them by the British colonial state. This does not negate the role and place of the aristocracies in the domination, exploitation and oppression of peasants and commoners (of all ethnic groups), misrule over minority ethnic groups and the role they played in promoting ethno-religious chauvinism in the process. Overall, the point is that the coloniser created and fuelled the ethno-religious inequalities, given the fact that the British subjugated all the ethnic groups. The colonialists maintained sovereignty over the feudal aristocracies, as well as over both the ethnic majorities and minorities.

Social scientists such as Shelley Drayton and Okwudiba Nnoli stress the fact that in several colonies in Africa, the occupiers entrenched segregation amongst the colonised along ethno-religious and other identity lines.²⁶ In Nigeria this kind of colonial imposed 'tribalism' was more glaring and prominent in urban areas. In terms of settlement, or residency, indigenes lived separately from the non-indigenes even within the same ethnic group. The 'native Africans' in a given town were compelled to physically live apart from 'non-native Africans', Africans lived separately from Europeans, and in some instances settlements were mapped out along other primordial divisive lines.

When one talks about the *Sabon Gari*,²⁷ and the city, whether in the north or south, it is partly the question of a historically imposed segregation. This pattern was extended to ethno-religious segregation, and physical separation, in the settlements and in both the native authority and missionary schools. One of the best intellectuals Nigeria ever produced, the late historian Mahmud Moddibo Tukur, stated that in the realities of the times the colonialists did everything 'to keep these communities apart physically, culturally and psychologically'.²⁸ An outcome of these policy and practice was a rise among the colonised of divisions along ethno-religious identities, rather than a cosmopolitan or civic consciousness, not ignoring the fact that some nationalists struggled for the latter. Negative and divisive policies, located in the past and indeed the present, have impacted on the citizenship question.

Stifled Nationalistic Efforts Towards an Inclusive Nigeria

In delving into the post-colonial development, it is necessary to observe that the ruling party that emerged - the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC) - was composed of some

²⁶ Shelley Drayton, 'De-Mystifying 'Tribalism': Identity, Politics and Conflict in Modern Africa,' *CODESRIA Bulletin*, no.1 (Dakar: CODESRIA, 1995), p. 10; and Nnoli Okwudiba, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Forth Dimension, 1980), pp. 3-4.

²⁷ In most cities in northern Nigeria, there exists a district called Sabon Gari, which is Hausa for 'Stranger's Quarters', and which traditionally was inhabited by non-Muslim 'immigrants' from southern and eastern parts of Nigeria, like this Yorubas and Igbos.

²⁸ M.M. Tukur, 'The Nature, Extent and Essence of British Policy in the Emirates: 1900-1914', in Tanimu Abubakar (ed.), *The Essential Mahmud: Selected Writings of Mahmud Moddibo Tukur* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1990), p. 138.

of the most aristocratic forces in the country. In the colonial conditions the feudal aristocracies, at the head of the native authorities, were the main buffers between the coloniser and the colonised. The NPC was not part of the radical anti-colonial movement in the north, but emerged as a counter-force (propped up by the colonialists) principally to thwart the anti-colonial and anti-feudal Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU), and to pre-empt and compromise the outcome of the struggle for independence.

By 1945 the colonial state had put in motion its counter-offensive directed at the pan-Nigerian section in the nationalist movement in Southern Nigeria. This manifested in attempts at destroying the labour movement (that waged a vigorous and successful national strike in 1945). Worth noting is the banning of the militant anti-imperialist Zikist Movement and repression of its leaders. In addition was the exploitation and manipulation of ethnicity to undermine the national spread of the Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe led National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), as the leading nationalist party in the country that was struggling towards a pan-Nigerian identity. The colonialists clampdown on the nationalist press and nationalistic forces that had potentials of linking the south and north to create a solid national front capable of transcending sectarianism, regional barriers and towards building a foundation for the emergence of a future pan-Nigerian citizenship.

From its formation, and official declaration, as the first political party from the north, on 8 August 1950, NEPU emerged as a fiery anti-colonial party of the peasantry and commoners. Its roots were traceable to decades of struggles waged by the oppressed in the emirates, in the context of colonial domination, and the experience from the activism of militant youth in preceding nationalistic struggles. The anti-British and anti-feudal ideology of NEPU was very strong and popular. It entered into alliance with the NCNC and the militant/activist Zikist Movement. Within the geo-political setting of the north, NEPU established links with political organisations that were championing the cause of ethnic minorities, such as the Middle Belt Peoples Party (MBPP) and the Borno Youth Movement (BYM).

The advent of NEPU as a militant anti-British and anti-feudal party, with some high degree of acceptability among the commoner classes in the north, frightened the colonialists and the aristocracies. Launching an onslaught, both the British and the emirs painted NEPU as an enemy that must be checked. Frightening to the coloniser and local collaborators were the linkages the radical party established with similar ideological currents elsewhere. British propaganda was stirred in portraying NEPU as an agent of southerners wanting to infiltrate the north and undermine it from within.²⁹ Daily struggles waged by NEPU against exploitative and oppressive policies and practices, made the party very popular among the peasantry and commoner strata. C.S. Whitaker emphasises that this 'was typical of NEPU's approach to the peasantry - the direct advocacy and defense of their interests through informal campaign of enlightenment which informed the peasants of their rights and encouraged them to assert their rights.'³⁰

Delving into this phase of the nationalist struggle is important for two reasons. It sheds light on the origin of scuttling a potentially nationalist project of unity between

²⁹ See this in 'NEPU-SECURITY', National Archives, Kaduna (NAK), File SNP no. 349.

³⁰ C.S. Whitaker (Jnr), *The Politics of Tradition, Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria 1946-1966* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), p. 380.

the north and south. This is also necessary to clarify an incorrect myth about a monolithic north in Nigerian politics. It is very important to reconstruct the history as to how unity among the Nigerian peoples has been fought against by the forces controlling state power, which has implications for the contemporary citizenship question. In the process of decolonisation the colonialists launched a fight to crush popular forces capable and committed to the project of forging a united country. The British designed strategies of pushing the aristocracies to the fore (to take over from the coloniser at independence).

A significant turning point was the victory recorded by NEPU at the primary stage of the legislative elections in September 1951, in some towns in the north, in conditions in which there was a denial of direct universal suffrage. In addition there was provision for an automatic reservation of 40% of the legislative seats for the aristocracies. It was also a common practice to use the native authority police, courts, and thugs in the service of the aristocracies, and other instruments of state coercion to frame and repress those who do not support the status quo. Bill Freund emphasises that the entire system was marked by the operation of an Electoral College System dominated by the native authority aristocracies and their subordinate officials.³¹ One gap in the historiography is that it is often not mentioned that it was NEPU that first challenged the denial of suffrage and the disenfranchisement of women in the north. Mallam Aminu Kano, the president of NEPU, and leading female activists in the party such as Ladi Shehu and Gambo Sawaba fought the injustice against women. Throughout the colonial period and beyond, and until the 1979 elections, women in the north were completely barred and denied democratic rights in the electorate process. Women were not allowed to vote, not to talk about contesting in the elections.

In September 1951, a systematic operation was further geared in motion to stifle NEPU and pave way for the NPC. This was partly based on a submission by Sharwood-Smith to the higher authorities in which the thrust was that:

It may well not represent the popular opinion ... if N.E.P.U. is permitted to pursue its way uninterrupted. If in fact this well-organised minority movement ... gains further impetus, the activities of the N.P.C. will be of purely academic interest. To repeat what I have frequently said before, the executive of N.E.P.U. and its founder members are a worthless lot in terms both of mental calibre and experience. They do however, possess drive, zeal and appreciable measure of organising ability. This thing can spread unless responsible Africans who have the real interest of the North at heart get down to it at once and organise a counter offensive.³²

Issues of concern stressed were that despite earlier warnings, leading officials of the various native authorities in the north were complacent and underrating the danger of NEPU achieving a sweeping victory in the region. Sharwood-Smith was seriously perturbed 'that once this quite worthless movement is permitted to gain adequate momentum it will effectively penetrate the rural areas after which the fat will be well and truly in the fire.'³³

Immediately this line of action was advanced, there was an official declaration of the NPC as a political party. The party was much linked with the coloniser and subsequently it became the major beneficiary (among the three emergent dominant ruling regional blocs)

³¹ Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa* (London: Macmillan Press, 1984), p. 216.

³² See 'NEPU-SECURITY...', *op.cit.*

³³ *Ibid.*

of getting concessions at the different constitutional talks in the decolonisation process. A major concession the British gave was that 50% of seats or constituencies in the National Parliament (Senate and House of Representatives) were to go to the Northern Region. The Western and Eastern Regions were to share the other 50% representation. The main criterion was population, and census has ever remained a major controversial issue in the country. Census figures have, subsequently, somehow, influenced the number of states created in Nigeria (along the north/south divide) and partly a strong criterion in the distribution of resources to states by the central government, thus it is a factor in the politics connected with citizenship.³⁴

Ultimately the NPC inherited power from the colonialists at independence in 1960. It was the ruling party both in the Northern Region and at the centre. In the 1959 federal elections the NPC had enough seats to form the central government – in a parliamentary system. However, the reality of its being a regional party influenced the NPC into the practical politics of looking for an alliance to enable it run affairs at the centre. Perhaps this was partly aimed at ensuring a national semblance and unity of the country. Of course, there were grievous implications for the new country if the federal government was to be run only by northerners.

The NPC formed the government at the centre in alliance with the NCNC – which was sidelining its radical members and fast declining into the politics of ethnicity and regionalism. The NCNC did not consult its NEPU allies – and NEPU never became part of that political alliance in forming the government. Never for once did the NPC contest elections outside the Northern Region. It used state institutions, resources, coercion, and repression to clinch its hold on power.

A major setback in the First Republic, 1960-1966, was the resorting to political victimisation and repression in dealing with the opposition and rivals that were equally citizens. In 1963 the central government created a Mid-Western Region out of the Western Region. There was indeed popular agitation for this region by the non-Yoruba minorities in the Edo and Delta provinces, in their striving for autonomy. However, it was obvious that the NPC led federal government had other ulterior motives and calculations, because equally popular demands for new regions by minorities in the north and in the east were not given any concessions. This deepened the national and citizenship questions.

Except for sharing political offices at the centre, with the NPC, the NCNC had by the 1964/65 elections embraced a common front of the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA), comprising the Action Group (AG), NEPU and United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC). This was in opposition to the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA), led by the NPC. The main issues of the times included the controversies towards the December 1964 federal elections, the state of emergency imposed by the central government in the Western Region and the reign of terror against the opposition groups and parties in the north. An obvious picture of both the UPGA and NNA blocs was that dominant parties were not engaging the people and popular organisations on basic issues of national interests. The electoral calculations and fortunes of factions of the ruling class were the salient targets of major pursuits. NCNC in effect switched

³⁴ Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, p. 33.

over to join forces with the NPC - once more - as a partner in controlling power at the centre, claiming this was to secure national unity. By this political move, the NCNC sort of ditched its political allies in the UPGA coalition, and left them in the cold.³⁵

By 1964/65 massive level of political repression directed at NEPU and the UMBC had reached a climax. A militant revolt broke out in Tivland (the nerve centre of the UMBC), against the NPC-led government, and it widened the frontiers of the conflict. Tiv uprising was anchored on a popular perception about political exclusion, marginalisation, discriminatory practices, and repression by the NPC. All this made more complex the citizenship question. In that zone the federal and regional governments, as well as the native authorities, were virtually seen as being synonymous with the ruling party - the NPC.³⁶

That situation remained until the first military coup was carried out on 15 January 1966. A majority of its principal movers were Igbo officers, led by Major Kaduna Chukwuma Nzeogwu. Once the coup was perceived as having an ethno-regional dimension, and as exempting leading politicians and military officers of Igbo extraction from physical elimination, the interpretation of the scenario as sectarian and sectional surfaced. Except for the operations and killings at Kaduna, Lagos, and Ibadan the coup was a flopped elsewhere.

Among those killed were the Prime Minister of Nigeria, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa; the Premier of the Northern Region, Sir Ahmadu Bello; the Premier of the Western Region, Chief Ladoke Akintola; and the Federal Minister of Finance, Chief Okotie-Eboh (a Mid-Westerner). Apparent sectional killings extended to the military where '4 out of the 5 Northern officers of the ranks of Lt. Colonel and above were killed, 2 out of 5 from the West, none out of 7 from the East and 1 out from the 4 from the Midwest'.³⁷ The coup leaders were rounded up and thrown in detention without trial. Power was taken over by the top military officers headed by the Chief of Army Staff, Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, who was Igbo.

What followed was the formation of a military government, the banning of political parties and political activities. One significant development was the move by the Ironsi government to reverse federalism and transform the country to a heavily centralised unitary system of government, based on an earlier colonial twenty-two provinces structure. In several quarters this move ignited fear, it was perceived as a move towards the centralisation of power and domination of the non-Igbo in the country.

Before the unitary system was implemented some officers of northern origin launched a bloody counter-coup on 27 July 1966. It has been labelled as a revenge coup, because it was principally targeted at the Igbo. The military faction that came to power, with the then Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon as Head of State, could be described as one nurtured by the northern establishment. In the explosive conflict that ensued, there was the massacre of Igbos in northern parts of the country with some reprisal killings (of much lesser magnitude) of northerners in the east.

Once citizens started killing one another the question of common citizenship was challenged, and in some cases negated. In the process of the conflict the military

³⁵ Billy Dudley, *Parties and Politics in Northern Nigeria* (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

³⁶ Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria: The Tiv and Yoruba Experience* (Enugu: Nok Publishers, 1982), pp. 155-157.

³⁷ Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria*, p.242.

governor of the Eastern Region, Colonel Emeka Odemegwu Ojukwu, refused to recognise the regime of Gowon. The east further demanded for a confederacy system, which was clearly in line towards secession. Instead, the central government abolished the regions and created a 12 states system. A peak of the conflict was the eventual declaration of secession in the Eastern Region - the birth of the Republic of Biafra that was led by Ojukwu. All this culminated in the Nigerian civil war between 1967 and 1970, which came to an end with the surrender by Biafra. In the last 35 years of the 20th century the northernist tendency, with roots in the July 1966 counter-coup, remained dominant in all the different military regimes that ruled Nigeria. This was so in spite of the intrigues, coups, and counter-coups within this unofficial faction.

Federalism, Citizenship and Democracy

At the time of the first military intervention on the national political scene, in 1966, the country had four regions that were relatively autonomous in certain spheres. Regions were essentially relying on themselves for the mobilisation of resources and revenue generation, which were used in the operation of public governance and the execution of projects, rather than heavy dependence on the central government, which later became the case. Undermining federalism cannot be adequately attributed to the subsequent split of the regions into 12 states - in 1967 - and neither does it fall in line with the simplistic contention that the present 36 states are not viable for a federation. A major thrust in this analysis is that for four decades of post-colonialism, Nigeria experienced protracted military rule (for a total of about 30 years) that bred centralisation of public governance. This mode of centralisation of power at the different levels of governance is akin to the military command structure, by which instructions and orders are enforced only from top to bottom. It contributed to rendering federalism in tatters.

A major feature of the centralisation has been the high degree of power conferred in the office of the president. It is not surprising that many leaders have been presiding over state affairs in a manner similar to that of managing a personal estate. The 1999 constitution - which the military fashioned and imposed on the people without their participation in its making - has not significantly altered the concentration of power in the presidency. Years of denial of significant autonomy to the lower units, authoritarianism, the absence of governance based on the consent of the citizenry, and the lack of an enduring democratic culture and practice has contributed in galvanising various forces to pose challenges to the state and the ruling class. Coupled with regional contradictions the citizenship question became more crucial. The rationale for this is located in the fact that 'only constituencies and clients of those who control state power actually continue to have access to state resources through patronage.'³⁸ The annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, presumably won by M.K. Abiola (a Yoruba Muslim and Southerner) was viewed in many circles as an execution of a plan by a northern dominated military and their civilian wings. That Abiola received most of his votes in the north was not the issue. The argument was that if such an ally of the northern ruling elite (both military and

³⁸ Attahiru Jega, 'The State and Identity Transformation Under Structural Adjustment in Nigeria', p.25.

civilian), a Yoruba from the southern majority and a Muslim, could be denied the presidency, then no other southerner stood a chance of occupying that office.

The state terrorism of the military in power, including the physical annihilation of people, which was mostly directed at perceived opponents in the South-west, worsened things. The execution of the Ogoni activists and the military repressive operations in the Niger Delta could not escape being seen as also part of the citizenship question. But there is an implied counter argument that the north did not benefit as such from the domination of power by an elite from that part. It has been argued that the north is not having presence in the economic sector.³⁹ But in a society where the control and access to political power determine other things the question becomes part of the national debate. A.D. Umar emphasises another dimension of the problem by maintaining that many years of northern elite controlling political power was without responsibility to the north, rather there was so much destruction of the educational and social provisioning as elsewhere in Nigeria.⁴⁰

In the wake of a civilian government that came to power (on 29 May 1999) formerly suppressed grievances and anger have continued to erupt. Perceived injustice - real and imagined - and narrow perceptions are surviving. All this suggests that both the state and civil society have a task to address the thorniest problems of the times. Worth recognising is the

..., federalism and its principles did not fail in Nigeria. Indeed, the country has experienced little of it. The argument here is that the state and factions of the ruling classes have been central to undermining

fact that issues, as well as the discourse on the question of putting Nigeria on a democratic course, cannot be restricted to the exclusive confines of the ruling elite. Imperative is the need to seriously consider the concrete engagement and involvement of people - and their organisations - in the democratisation and political processes.

Currently there is a widespread view held across Nigeria that the country has over-stretched its luck with the dangerous manner in which leaders have been toying with it. Major surgical operations, beyond mere constitutional reforms, have to be embarked on. For the democratisation process to be on course, and survive, various strands of popular and people's organisations in civil society have to be part of the initiative and the question of participation by all strata of the citizenry has to be taken seriously. Limiting restructuring to constitutional reforms (by a tiny 'representative', in what ever form, to the exclusion of the citizens and their organisations in civil society, is not the best way to go about it.

Far from it, federalism and its principles did not fail in Nigeria. Indeed, the country has experienced little of it. The argument here is that the state and factions of the ruling classes have been central to undermining federalism. Revenue generation, distribution of resources, and social provisioning to the citizenry that collapsed with the imposition of structural adjustment agenda affected citizenship rights. During the first republic, when oil was

³⁹ For this see, for example, A.S. Mohammed, *The Living Conditions of the Talakawa and the Shariah in Contemporary Nigeria* (Zaria: CEDDERT, 2000).

⁴⁰ A.D. Umar, 'Healing the Nation's Wounds', in the magazine *Tell* (Lagos, 3 July 2000); and also see Umar's interview in the *Weekly Trust* (Kaduna, 9 July 1999).

not the main resource, the then four regions tapped the resources of their zones and each had a drive in a healthy competition with the other regions. The present states have kept on relating to the centre, as helpless babies do to mothers. In the 1963 constitution it was provided for, in section 140, that the federation shall pay to each region the sum of 50% 'of the proceeds of any royalties received by the federation in respect of any mineral extracted in that region'.⁴¹ Out of the 50% balance, 35% was shared between the other regions while 15% went to the federal government. This principle of derivation was virtually thrown out and political criteria were introduced by the military, in the thirst to control oil resource and money. Babangida reduced derivation to 2% and Abacha increased it to a mere 3%.

In the 1999 Constitution derivation was raised to 13%.⁴² The executive arm of government, presided over by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, resisted assenting to the bill on Niger Delta Development Commission, which focuses on special funds and projects in the zone. The legislature (both the Senate and House of Representatives) did override the former by passing a bill to ensure the constitutional provision is followed. However, this has led to the emergence of a new dimension in the agitation for the so-called resource control in the Niger Delta, as some circles have begun to raise the issue of communities where oil is drilled and those where it is not. There is now a new wave of agitation for special funds for states where dams producing hydro electricity are located.

In reality the country must find a way of getting the states to harness the resources in their zones, and to contribute to the federation account. There is no part of Nigeria without resources. If people are to largely depend on the revenue they generate there is most likely to be healthier competition between the states. An end has to be put to the states dependency on oil money, without any consequential production. Whatever arrangement is to be made by the citizenry should hinge on deepening democratic structures, institutions and participation from the lowest levels of governance to the centre. Unless this is done, as a prerequisite, more exploitative and domineering forces (and possibly ethnic warlords) will spring up to corner the resources and wealth even at the lowest levels, and it will remain the same old story.

One of the challenges of the present democratic transition is connected with constitutional constraints. The 1999 Constitution has many provisions that are affront to the rights of Nigerian citizens and these do not help matters in terms of the future of the country, a proper federal system and the citizenship question. Olufemi Taiwo asks the question as to what sort of cosmopolitan constitution recognises citizenship by birth, registration, naturalisation, and even allows dual citizenship but takes it away - by making provision for consanguinity or ancestral origin to a local community.⁴³

On attainment of independence, in 1960, the then constitution was flexible in granting people that were in Nigeria, regardless of their historical origins, citizenship if they wanted it. Today their descendants find it hard to be accepted as real citizens due to the clause of ancestors not being indigenous to local communities. Beyond the constitutional provisions

⁴¹ Nnimmo Bassey, *The Niger Delta and the Future of Democracy in Nigeria*. Paper presented for Assessment of Democratic Reform in Nigeria, facilitated by International-IDEA (Lagos, 2000).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Olufemi Taiwo, 'Of Citizens and Citizenship', in *Constitutionalism and National Question in Nigeria* (Lagos: Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation, 2000).

many Nigerians, in practice, want to be beneficiaries of citizenship based on place of residency while contradictorily they are not ready to give up their claims of being the 'indigenes' - as opposed to 'settlers' in their supposed towns, communities and villages of origin. In this context being an 'indigene' means having the right claims to all citizenship rights, whilst being the 'settler' by implication means the denial of some of these.

This has become a major factor in the ethnic, religious and other conflicts in all regions of Nigeria. Mention has to be made of the other side of the coin, of those citizens that complain much about denial of citizenship rights in their places of residency but at the same time rush to the communities or states they claim origin to fight other non-indigenes or expel them. In fact there are citizens that will even return to their places of origin to register a car, despite making the money in the place of residency and some do not make an effort to identify with the community they live within.

The perception of a Nigerian citizen in the communities is problematic. What, for example, makes a Hausa from neighbouring Niger Republic still carrying a Nigerian passport, illegally settled in Katsina five years ago, to be considered as an indigene, while a Nigerian citizen of Igbo origin (born, bred, working and paying tax in Katsina) is treated as a non-indigene? In another instance take a Yoruba from neighbouring Benin Republic accepted as an indigene of Otta and not so a Nigerian who is Kanuri that was born, educated, and pay tax in Otta which is the only home for him/her in the country.

What it means is that in certain situations it is easier for a person to be accepted as a Nigerian citizen than to be treated concretely as a citizen in the area of residency. It is important to ask a question about the syndrome of 'son of the soil' and that of the 'settler' in a country that claims to have inclusive citizenship. When a new state was created by the federal government, from people of the same ethnic group, like Osun State from Oyo State that are both Yoruba, the two states hardly waited to embark on expelling each other's 'non-indigenes'.⁴⁴

Another dimension is the rise of sectarian ethnic organisations that claim to represent ethnic groups but without any democratic mandate from the people they claim to represent. By their actions, negative identity divisions are further entrenched. In fact the new ethnic militias are a challenge to inclusive citizenship in a situation, for example, where the Odua People's Congress (OPC) in 1999 expelled Hausa in Shagamu with reprisal attacks by Hausa gangs of ethnic chauvinists on the Yoruba in Kano. The present danger is that undemocratic forces are using ethnic militia in defining those that are tagged as not being the real indigenes. Also, the sectarian militia use extra judicial methods to deal with opponents of their masters, while some of the militia play the illegal and unconstitutional role of security forces including the assassination and instant execution of rivals. Emergence of political warlords and some dark political forces prop, train, maintain, direct and unleash the new terrorism of the militias. In all this the state has been doing little to check this terror on citizens. Instead some of the incipient warlords are being patronised and protected by some politicians.

On the issue of gender identity the citizenship provision of the 1999 Constitution has a retrogressive clause against Nigerian women. Foreign women married to Nigerian men are

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

entitled to the country's citizenship. However, foreign men married to Nigerian women are not entitled to it. I.E. Sagay argues that this provision is a contradiction. For it is obviously 'discriminatory against Nigerian women and is therefore a violation of sections 17(2)(d), and 42(1) prohibiting discriminatory on the basis of community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex etc'.⁴⁵ Apart from this, women suffered discrimination in having citizenship rights. If a woman marries outside her state of origin the husband's state treats her as the 'daughter' of another state, and thus a non-indigene. This affects job opportunities and discrimination in terms of promotion if she happens to be employed. At the same time her state of origin would often insist that she should exercise citizenship rights in the state of origin of her husband.

A type of conflict brewing among citizens in the Sahelian areas of far north in Nigeria is that between the nomads on the one hand, mainly Fulbe, and the sedentary farmers of the Hausa, Bedde and Kanuri on the other. This is seriously connected with citizenship within localities and access to resources. The serious problem of the official neglect of the land question in terms of grazing, source of water and farming as well as the impact of desertification has also affected the citizenship question in the rural communities. In 1995 over 500 people were killed and 16 villages razed in Guri district of Jigawa State, in the nomadic Fulbe versus the sedentary Bedde conflict.⁴⁶ Similar violent clashes have erupted in different parts of the Sahel. Usman maintains that many analysts, and dominant sections of the media, do not seem to give this type of conflict among the citizenry the coverage it deserves partly because it does not fit into the stereotype:

It exposes as questionable, the dominant dichotomies of conflict they insist on imposing on the general domestic and foreign perceptions of Nigerian politics, which are, that is has, and has always been, a matter of rivalry and conflict, pitting, the north versus South; Christians versus Muslims; Hausa-Fulani versus Middle Belt minorities; and Hausa-Fulani versus the rest.⁴⁷

A general tendency in the country is that people only get concerned about discriminatory practices affecting them and maintain pervasively indifferent in relation to the rights of other citizens. According to Claude Ake oppression and domination are seen as wrong when the section or group one belongs to is affected. People complaining about majority domination turn out to oppress smaller ethnic groups in the states where they have numerical strength. Then the minorities at the state level go to the local government level and oppress groups they are more powerful than, while the latter could, in the same fashion, go to the district or ward levels and dominate others. Then even the clerk at the office demands subordination from the messenger or else she/he unleashes their tyranny.⁴⁸

Found in the 1999 Constitution are provisions for full rights of association and peaceful assembly. Obstacles are placed on a level playing ground between political parties. For even in the context of the nationalist struggle against British colonialism, when Nigerians were

⁴⁵ I.E. Sagay, 'The 1999 Constitution: A Critique', in *Constitutionalism and National Question in Nigeria*, (Lagos: Centre for Constitutionalism and Demilitarisation, 2002).

⁴⁶ Adagbo Onoja, 'Living by the Dagger: The Why and How of Communal, Ethnic and Religious Riots in Nigeria', *Community*, Vol. 1 No. 1, (Abuja: CAPP, April-June 1996), pp. 6-7.

⁴⁷ Y.B. Usman, 'Violent Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria: Beyond the Myths and Mystifications', in the magazine, *Analysis*, Vol.2, No. 2 (Zaria: In-Depth Communications, February 2003), p. 20.

⁴⁸ Claude Ake, 'A Plausible Transition', in *TELL*, (Lagos, 25 September 1995), p. 34.

subjects and not citizens, there was no enforcement of registration of political parties.⁴⁹ Powers given to the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), which in reality is far from being independent, include decision to register parties. Scratching beyond the surface, it is glaring that this is to pave the political space in favour of the rich and the powerful and tilt the field against the dominated classes in society. It took the struggle waged by some activists, culminating in the ruling of the Supreme Court, for more parties to emerge. But then the obscene and reckless manner in which the 2003 elections were rigged has set in motion a movement in the direction of a one party state, with president Obasanjo wanting many parties to be deregistered.

In a democracy, for example, people concerned with desert encroachment in the far north and the environmentalists in the oil producing Niger Delta, have the right to form parties focusing on ecology problems and the havoc done by the activities of oil companies in relation to pollution and negative effects of drilling respectively. It should be up to the citizens residing in those regions - and elsewhere in Nigeria - to decide, within the democratic process, whether such political parties are relevant or not. Political parties are not just for contesting elections but are also for the mobilisation of the citizens on many other issues, and can even opt not to partake in elections.

A major challenge to the Nigerian State and the people pertains to constitutionalism - which goes beyond having a constitution in place. Julius Ihonvbere succinctly and poignantly analyses the key issues of constitutionalism. One, the democratic process of constitution making has to be inclusive and involving the participation of all segments of the citizenry. Two, there must be openings, institutions 'and processes of making the constitution a living document by taking it to the people so that they are in a position not just to have access to it, but also to understand it, claim ownership and use it in defence of the democratic enterprise'.⁵⁰

Embarking on this will mean that constitutionalism will be an entirely embracing process, and all mechanism will be in place to check the excessiveness of power wielders. Sovereignty will be in the hands of the citizenry as a collective, and the arbitrary rule of governments that have the tendency of lifting themselves above the aspirations and wishes of the people will not be the norm and practice any longer. As has been argued elsewhere, the problem of democracy in many countries in Africa is 'that the states have been willing to have constitutions but have been unwilling to allow constitutionalism'.⁵¹ Throughout its history Nigeria is yet to have a constitution coming from a national debate, inclusive participation by all segments of the people (and organisations) and based on their agreed consensus.

A fact often overlooked by those solely advancing the ethnic line is that most parts of the country are multi-ethnic with no clear-cut territories demarcating peoples. Figures are not available for this analysis, but any casual observer can see that the population of most towns in the north is significantly made up of Yoruba, Igbo, and other people who are historically of southern origin. All Nigerians should have their citizenship rights where they reside. Furthermore, the undemocratic governance, the ruining of national

⁴⁹ Jibrin Ibrahim, 'A Political Analysis of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution: Its Problems and Prospects', in, *Legislative Mandate*, no.2, (CAPP, Abuja, September-November 1999), pp. 18-24.

⁵⁰ J.O. Ihonvbere, 2000, 'How to make an undemocratic constitution: the Nigerian example', *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2 (2000), p. 344

⁵¹ As cited in Jibrin Ibrahim, 'A Political Analysis of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution...', pp. 18-24.

institutions, poverty, unemployment, and exclusion from the political process, and other ills in the country transcend ethnic boundaries. Pluralism and democracy cannot entertain an exclusionist agenda. There are many identities in the country. It has to be appreciated that there are citizens without ethnic identity. Descendants of those who served the colonial state or migrated from elsewhere in Africa but became citizens of Nigeria at independence are excluded in the ethnicist designs. Moreover, not everyone wants to be imposed upon with an ethnic label or be represented in those terms. Citizens are many that prefer to be represented at class, gender, professional, and other levels.

Found are ethnic, religious and regional champions of all shades that are yet to grapple with the present development in connection with the political situation in the country. Therefore, they are still agitating for the Sovereign National Conference (SNC). In spite of the limitation of the present political order, the democratic experiment is on course and the democratic space has shifted from what it used to be under military dictatorship. What is needed is to wage struggle towards a democratic process that will be inclusive. In the light of this other means have to be employed to address the serious problems of constitutionalism, ethnicity, control and distribution of resources, religion, gender, federalism, and citizenship, and so on, to deepen the process of the real transition from civilian governance towards democracy.

A major problem confronting the democratic project is the politicisation of religion. The introduction of Sharia Law in some northern states - and certain opposition to it - cannot be separated from the battle for support and base, by factions of the ruling classes, from the ordinary people. But it raises a basic challenge to equality of citizens and their rights. What has been the trend is not using Sharia in the direction of social justice such as provision of jobs, education, health facilities and other social provisioning to the people. Rather the emphasis has been to use the most punitive aspects to victimise the weak in society, especially poor women. Thea Buttner points out that in the colonial context the British strengthened the class position of the local aristocracies through the use of the native courts.⁵² Having wide powers, it was partly through the courts and the brutal native authority police, called the *Yandoka* in Hausa, that the grip on the *talakawa*⁵³ was held. The lesson from this ought to be to avoid a situation in which a few undemocratic forces hijack that which is part of the life of the people and turn it into a weapon for autocracy and repression.

While some political forces might have different calculations for the politicisation of Sharia, the ordinary Muslims, betrayed by the different regimes, popularly perceive it as a solution towards a more just society. General perception among Muslims is that colonial rule and the post-colonial project have been rooted in the legal traditions that are rooted in Christendom to the detriment of Islam. This has been part of the debate on Sharia since 1970s. It should be noted that the 1999 Constitution made provision for Sharia. What has

⁵² Thea Buttner, 'Imperialist Colonial Policy, 'Indirect-rule' and the Anticolonial Struggle: The Satiru Rising of 1906 in Northern Nigeria', in *The Journal Asia, Africa, Latin America*, Special Issue 2, (Berlin: Akademik Verlag, 1977), p. 27.

⁵³ This is the Hausa concept of commoners/non-nobility and peasants.

dominated the debate pertains to whether the powers extend to the death penalty. At another level the political dimension has brought to the fore ethno-religious polarisation and sectarianism as citizens use extra-judicial methods in killing fellow citizens in bitter conflicts.

It is important for those concerned to intensify efforts targeted at the resolution of basic problems hindering erections of proper structures that form a foundation for inclusive citizenship. Neglecting this puts impediments on the part of a transition to a more democratic and participatory order. The problems include the non-attainment of democracy, for what exists is civilian rule. Connected with citizenship is the fact that there are no adequate mechanisms for tackling both the subtle and violent ethnic, religious and other identity based problems. Pluralism, which forms the bedrock of class and ideological politics, has to be at the top of the political agenda. Also connected with the citizenship question are the crucial issues of ownership, control and distribution of resources.

Conclusion

Given the whole nature of the setting and the tendency of most Nigerian politicians, civil society must move ahead as part of the citizenry while not ignoring the fear of the elected representatives. Citizens have rights, and should never wait for anyone in power when pushing their legitimate interests. There is a danger in waiting for governments to take the first action on issues such as constitutionalism and political reforms.

Resolution of basic problems threatening the efforts towards erecting and subsequent consolidation of a democratic plural society requires serious attention. If this is neglected the impediments on the path to a proper transition to a democratic order will not be overcome and the scourges will remain. An area to tackle is the democratic devolution of power to reflect pluralism. There has to be an institutionalised guarantee of group and cultural rights for all the citizens, wherever they reside.

Nigerians have to strive to establish a genuine multi-party system based on pluralism - which forms the bedrock of class and ideological politics - and build genuine and representative democratic structures and institutions - both in the spheres of the state and civil society. The inclusion of people, to reflect identity pluralities within the polity in the decision-making process, should be seriously placed on the inclusive and participatory agenda. A lesson is that in modern states, as Taiwo puts it, citizens do not wait for governments to fight for their rights or to organise themselves.⁵⁴ In order to address the citizenship problematic the people, at the level of their organisations, have to get government to respond to their popular wishes.

⁵⁴ See Olufemi Taiwo, 'Of Citizens and Citizenship'.

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Narrating National Identity: Fiction, Citizenship And The Asian Experience In East Africa¹

By Danson Kahyana²

French Abstract (Résumé)

La narration de l'identité nationale: fiction citoyenneté et l'expérience asiatique en Afrique de l'Est

*Cet article porte sur une construction littéraire de la question de la citoyenneté en Afrique de l'Est. Il examine la manière dont l'identité nationale et la citoyenneté sont abordées dans les romans d'Africains d'origine asiatique, notamment dans ceux de M.G. Vassanji (*The Gunny sack*), de Yusuf K. Dawood (*Water under the Bridge and Return to Paradise*), et de Peter Nazareth (*In a Brown Mantle*). L'article soutient qu'il y a chez ces auteurs, une conception de la citoyenneté dans laquelle l'identité nationale renvoie à l'origine ancestrale et non à l'appartenance ou à la contribution à l'État. Cela contribue à dénationaliser les Africains d'origine asiatique et à mettre en place une dichotomie autochtones/allogènes transparaissant dans les romans et militant contre la construction de l'identité nationale, de l'intégration sociale et de la citoyenneté dans les pays d'Afrique de l'Est.*

Abstract

The paper is a literary construction of the citizenship question in East Africa. It examines how national identity and citizenship are narrated in the East African Asian fiction, particularly in the selected novels of M.G. Vassanji (*The Gunny Sack*), Yusuf K. Dawood (*Water under the Bridge and Return to Paradise*), and Peter Nazareth (*In a Brown Mantle*). The paper argues that there is an alienated notion of citizenship for East African Asians in which the marker of national identity is ancestry/descent not residency or commitment/contribution to the nation-state. This denationalises the East African Asians and sets in a settler/native distinction. Thus the settler/native dichotomy is graphically depicted in the fictional works of East African Asian writers, a phenomenon which in practical social experience militates against the construction of national identity, social integration and common citizenship in East African countries.

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² Danson Kahyana is of the Department of Literature, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. Email: dansonkahyana@yahoo.co.uk

Introduction

East African Asian fiction, like any other fiction on (im)migrants' experiences, centres on the special postcolonial crisis of identity and explores the various forms - racial, cultural, ethnic, national, etc - in which this identity manifests itself. This exploration is done from the (im)migrants' point of view because the 'traditional' East African Asians - distinct from the contemporary 'investor Asians' who made their (first) settlements in East Africa in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s - are by and large an immigrant community, or to be more accurate, descendants of an immigrant Asian community, or communities, that settled in East Africa before, during and even after European colonisation of Uganda, Kenya and Tanganyika.³ The paper highlights national identity and attempts to analyse the way this identity is narrated in East African Asian fiction, particularly in the selected novels of M.G. Vassanji, Yusuf K. Dawood, and Peter Nazareth.⁴

The choice of fiction as a critical and creative medium of producing knowledge is deliberate, for as Ngugi⁵ and Tolstoy⁶ observe, literary art (of which fiction is a key component) embodies in word images the tensions, conflicts and contradictions at the heart of a community's being and becoming, and directly or indirectly affects the lives of the people who make or experience the events of a given epoch. In the East African context, these tensions, conflicts and contradictions arise from basically three things that hindered, in the colonial era, any possibility of a harmonious relationship between Asians and Africans. These things are: Asians' (alleged) racial and social exclusiveness; Asians' (alleged) economic exploitation and domination of Africans, and Asians' (alleged) identification and collaboration with the British and German empire-builders. Suffice it to say - before we make an analysis of how these allegations relate to Asians' identification with East African nation-states - that there are several markers of national identity that this paper gives central attention. These include natality (place of birth), ancestry/descent, place of residence, culture (names, languages, foods, etc), and commitment and contribution to a particular nation-state.⁷

Let us now highlight the various ways through which indigenous East Africans construct East African Asians as partial, provisional, second-race citizens in the fiction under study, bearing in mind the fact that this is one of the four aims of this paper,

³ The immigration of these 'traditional' East African Asians into East Africa did not stem entirely from the building of the Kenya-Uganda railway at the turn of the nineteenth century as empire-building historians sometimes argue it. In fact, small numbers of Indians have lived in the coastal regions of East Africa for centuries, arriving long before the days of European settlement. See George Delf, *Asians in East Africa* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963).

⁴ These Novels are M.G. Vassanji, *The Gunny Sack* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1989); Yusuf K. Dawood, *Water Under the Bridge* (Nairobi: Longhorn, 1991) and *Return to Paradise* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2000); and Peter Nazareth, *In a Brown Mantle* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1972).

⁵ Ngugi wa Thiong'o. 'Literature and Society: The Politics of the Canon', in Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics: A Re-engagement With Issues of Literature and Society* (Oxford: James Currey, 1997), pp. 4-7.

⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Literature and Revolution*, Translated by Rose Strunsky (Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1960), p. 12.

⁷ For a more engaging discussion of these markers of identity, see Frank Bechhofer, et al, 'The framing of Scottish National Identity', in Nicholas Abercrombie and Alan Warde (eds.), *The Contemporary British Society Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001).

the other three being: to locate this construction in the political and economic history of East Africa; to deconstruct the constructions in order to show the weaknesses inherent in them; and finally, to suggest key lessons that East African governments could learn from the Asian writers' portrayal of citizenship, so that the rejuvenation of the East African Community under way may herald concerted efforts towards the creation of a multiracial, multiethnic and multicultural society, where all citizens will be considered full citizens irrespective of their races.

The Construction of Asians as Provisional, Partial Citizens

In East African Asian writing, two interpretations of citizenship are clearly portrayed. The first interpretation limits citizenship to possession of a passport, the magical book that demystifies territorial boundaries and internationalises travel. This tendency to emphasise the passport has its origin in the libertarian conception of citizenship, which sees citizenship predominantly as a legal status and attempts to give the individuals the maximum amount of freedom, and believes that self-interest is the basic motive upon which citizens act. This self-interest is, of course, controlled by the laws of the state, which stipulate given rights and obligations for the citizens. As a trading immigrant community, the Asians of East Africa blessed this libertarian conception of citizenship mostly because their major concern was the security of their families, their trade and savings.⁸

The second interpretation of citizenship emphasises social participation in public and community affairs and demands that the individual citizen should contribute to the common good of his or her community (read: nation). This interpretation, which Voet⁹ calls the communitarian conception of citizenship, appealed well to the indigenous Africans who wanted to see the Asians contribute more and more to the economic, social and political development of the post-colonial East African nation-states of Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. The aspects the Africans wanted to see in their relationship with the Asians were mainly three: unity in the struggle against British colonialists; racial tolerance and social inclusivity; and fairness in business and trade. These aspects influenced the Africans' view of a good Asian citizen: a person who worked towards the harmony between Africans and Asians, and this harmony basically entailed the uplifting of the standards of living of the Africans, which in turn meant heavy sacrifices on the part of the Asians whose major concern, as we have mentioned before, was the security of their families, their trade and savings. This inevitably led to the clash of interests - the libertarian self-interest (favoured by Asians) and the communitarian 'common good' interest (favoured by the Africans). This clash of interest was inevitably racialised with the unfortunate result that the Asian citizen was considered a harmful element, prejudicial to the interests of East African nation-states. And as a 'harmful' citizen, the Asian was considered a provisional and partial citizen whose citizen status could be erased. This is what former President of Uganda, General Idi Amin, did when he expelled both citizen and non-citizen Asians from his country in 1972.

⁸ M.G. Vassanji, *The Gunny Sack*, p. 52.

⁹ Rian Voet, *Feminism and Citizenship* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 10.

One reason to explain this provisionality of the Asians' citizenship is that some Asians did not fully identify themselves with the post-colonial East African nation-states for they either did not apply for Ugandan, Kenyan and Tanzanian citizenship, choosing to remain British passport holders, or if they did, they still identified themselves not as Ugandans, Kenyans and Tanzanians, but as Goans, Pathans and Indians despite the fact that the passports they were holding were Ugandan not Goan, Kenyan not Pathan, Tanzanian not Indian. As for those who held British passports or any other countries' passports, they were technically aliens in their countries of adoption.¹⁰ In fact, 80,000 of the Asians Idi Amin expelled from Uganda held British passports and were therefore British citizens, which is why the General asked Britain to make arrangements and receive them.¹¹ In the fiction we are studying, there are examples of such Asians. In *Return to Paradise* we have Masood Khan and his family who pass for Ugandan citizens but hold British passports; in *In A Brown Mantle* we have Bernie Rodrigues and the narrator's father. Our concern in this paper is not these 'British Asians', but the East African citizen Asians.

We have already mentioned that some East African Asians did not fully identify themselves with East African nation-states, but with Goa, Peshawar and India, even when the passport they were bearing were Ugandan, Kenyan or Tanzanian, not Goan or Pathan or Indian. This shows that these Asians privileged their countries of descent and marginalised their countries of adoption, to the dissatisfaction of East African nationalists who seized upon this opportunity to condemn 'Asian ingratitude' and 'lack of commitment to the destiny of Africa'. Theroux¹² gives examples of condemnatory statements made by the first President of independent Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, and his Vice President, Daniel Arap Moi, who bluntly demanded, on several occasions, that Asians should leave Kenya if they refuse to subordinate their social, cultural and economic interests to those of black Africans, sometimes called 'African Africans' to emphasise the descent and racial issues at stake. This condemnation was fuelled by other factors - Asians' (alleged) racial intolerance, economic exploitation, and middlemanship between the Africans and the British during the colonial era. It is for this reason that this paper argues that in order to understand the Africans' construction of Asians as provisional, partial citizens, we need to have a look at the political and economic history of East Africa.

Colonial History and Asians' Postcolonial Predicament

Colonial East Africa was a racially stratified society, with the whites constituting the upper class, the Asians the middle class and the Africans the bottom class, hewing wood, fetching water and baby-sitting white and brown babies. In this three-tiered racial structure, the British used the Asians to serve the empire's interests by acting as middlemen between the white colonisers and the black Africans. By becoming the individuals who put colonial exploitative policies into effect, they inevitably came to take the blame for an exploitative colonial system while the real authors of the system, operating often invisibly behind the buffer, remained

¹⁰Anirudha Gupta, 'India and the Asians in East Africa', in Michael Twaddle (ed.), *Expulsion of A Minority: Essays on Ugandan Asians* (London: The Anthlone Press, 1975), p. 125.

¹¹ *Uganda Argus*, August 7, 1972.

¹² Paul Theroux, 'Hating the Asians', *Transition*, vol. 7, no. 33 (Kampala, 1967).

relatively free from black African hatred.¹³ It is for this reason that Robert Kyeyune, the agitator for Damibian (Ugandan) independence, observes thus:

The British are clever. They placed a middleman of another race between them selves and Africans so that they could rake in the profits undisturbed. Do you know the story of Cleopatra and Anthony? When the messenger brought news to Cleopatra that Anthony had been defeated, Cleopatra executed the messenger! It is the one who deals directly with the African who is hated most. The British remain aloof and are neither loved nor hated.¹⁴

In fact, the British did not remain aloof as Kyeyune suggests: fearing a potential Asian-African political alliance, they propagated the view that the Asians were the merciless exploiters of the African, and a monolithic trading community that had come to East Africa at the turn of the 19th century to grab what they could and leave. They also gave the Asians the epithet 'Jews of Africa', which contained the same negative assumptions about the Asians as were to be found concerning Jewish merchants in Europe.¹⁵ Other adjectives describing the Asians abounded - crafty, money-making, cunning, someone with his soul bound to his body by the one laudable and religious concern to turn his coin to better advantage; the user of false weights and measures, and a receiver of stolen goods, among others.¹⁶ An extract from a colonial Kenya newspaper, *Sunday Post*, summarises the colonial project of setting the Asian against the African:

In the future Kenya will have to suffer to an extent never contemplated in the past from the most evil influence of oriental feudalism. Thousands of years of autocracy have made the Indian people what they are today: a race of usurers and gamblers. Usury and gambling are in the pigmentation of their blood. They can no more resist the temptation to exploit their fellow men than a drunkard can resist the taste of liquor. Land, food, living space, the means to live, are the counters with which most love to gamble.¹⁷

Now, we should note that the above adjectives describing the Asians are the same adjectives post colonial black Africans used in cataloguing the 'evils' of the Asian race in East Africa. In *In A Brown Mantle*, Mr. Gombe-Kukwaya, an influential Damibian (Ugandan) politician of the pioneering post-colonial generation tells a crowd of his supporters this at a political rally:

[I]t is not only the white people who have exploited us - we have within our midst the Brown people, the *Muindi*, who continue to exploit us to this day! We have only tolerated the Muindi, because we thought they would change and become part of us, but we know now, after bitter experience, that they continue to exploit us as though we are cattle. Will we continue to tolerate this enemy within our midst for much longer, my brothers and sisters?¹⁸

¹³ Dent Ocaya-Lakidi, 'Black Attitudes to the Brown and White Colonizers of East Africa' in Michael Twaddle (ed.), *Expulsion of A Minority*, p. 82.

¹⁴ Peter Nazareth, *In A Brown Mantle*, pp. 45-46.

¹⁵ Dana April Seidenberg, *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians: The Role of A Minority Community in Kenya 1939-1963* (New Dheli and Nairobi: Vikas Publishing House, 1983), p. 14.

¹⁶ Ocaya-Lakidi, 'Black Attitudes to the Brown and White Colonizers of East Africa', p. 85.

¹⁷ Seidenberg, *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians*, p. 33.

¹⁸ Nazareth, *In A Brown Mantle*, p. 74.

A similar speech is made by Dr Musozi Ebongo.¹⁹

These fictional leaders, needless to mention, prefigure actual leaders like President Milton Obote who told the Ugandan parliament on 20th April 1970 that his government wanted non-citizen Asians to leave Uganda because 'they have never shown any commitment to the cause of Uganda or even to Africa' for 'their interest is to make money, which money they exported to various capitals of the world on the eve of our independence'.²⁰ Better still, the leaders prefigure President Idi Amin who expelled the Asians from Uganda in 1972.

The racial stratification of the colonial East African society also affected the Asians in another way: coming second to the British, the Asians considered themselves superior to the Africans whom they regarded members of the lowest caste, and atavistic remnants of the

This attitude was bound to cause inter-racial tension between Africans and Asians - a tension that in one respect climaxed in the 1972 expulsion of the latter from Uganda on the grounds that they were not committed to the social, economic and political development of the country.

Neolithic Age.²¹ Simatei²² suggests that this feeling of racial superiority on the part of Asians, together with the notion of exclusion, which is so ingrained in their caste-centred social organisation that it comes to them almost naturally, militated against social (and sexual) intercourse between them and the Africans. No wonder then that Asian social clubs, for instance the Goan institutes in Kampala, were until independence, racially exclusive.²³ And little wonder that the Asians discouraged intermarriage with Africans so much that Karim Hussein, a Ugandan Asian in the play, *Sweet Scum of Freedom*, beats up his wife when his daughter marries an African. The wife is beaten up because she did not teach her daughter proper manners, that is, she ought to have impressed it upon the girl day and

night that marrying an African was the least an Asian could think about. How do other Indians react to Hussein's 'tragedy'? One of them sends all his daughters to India to get married lest they get seduced - mark the word seduced - by African men.²⁴

Because of this exclusiveness, the return of the Asian to India for a marriage partner is a recurrent motif in East African Asian fiction. In *In A Brown Mantle*, the narrator's father goes to Goa for a wife,²⁵ in *Water under the Bridge* the Desai family does the same, which is why Kanti's wife, Rheka, is referred to as an 'imported bride'.

²⁶ In *Return to Paradise* Masood Khan has to leave Uganda for the Khyber Pass

¹⁹ Jagjit Singh, 'Sweet Scum of Freedom' in G. Henderson (ed.) *African Theatre* (London: Heinemann, 1973), p. 45.

²⁰ Dennis Pain, 'The Nubians: their perceived stratification system and its relation to the Asian issue', in Michael Twaddle (ed.), *Expulsion of A Minority*, p. 188.

²¹ Seidenberg, *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians*, p. 7.

²² Peter Tirop Simatei, *The Novel and the Politics of Nation Building in East Africa*. (Bayreuth: Beyreuth University African Studies Series, 2001), p. 74.

²³ Nazareth, *In A Brown Mantle*, p. 133.

²⁴ Singh, 'Sweet Scum of Freedom', p. 47.

²⁵ Nazareth, *In A Brown Mantle*, p. 6.

²⁶ Yusuf K. Dawood, *Water under the Bridge*, p. 54.

so that he may get a real Pathan woman, with unalloyed and unspoilt Pathan blood.²⁷ The irony is that in all the novels the Asian runs to the African women for casual sex, giving the impression that he considers prostitution as the African woman's calling. When an African prostitute asks an Asian client why Asians do not want to marry Africans, he answers thus:

They are so pure and clean - must say their prayers and wash their bodies every day. And they are so rich - most of them and they have such big cars and you don't - so they will never marry you.²⁸

What is implied here is that the African is dirty and irreligious, a thing that parallels the racial arrogance of the whites who construct(ed) Africans as lazy, unintelligent, immoral, ignorant, dirty and irreligious. This attitude was bound to cause inter-racial tension between Africans and Asians - a tension that in one respect climaxed in the 1972 expulsion of the latter from Uganda on the grounds that they were not committed to the social, economic and political development of the country. Let us now examine how Asian economic practices enhanced the view that Asians were get-rich-quick-immigrants-in-transit who did not care about the future of their countries of adoption.

Asian Economic practices and the Get-Rich-Quick-Immigrants-In-Transit Image

By and large, Asian economic practices have, from the colonial period to the present, bordered on exploitation and dishonesty. In *Water under the Bridge*, an Asian businessman and Kenyan national, Jaffer, admits that the Asians exploit Kenya through 'unfair competition, price rises, siphoning of foreign exchange [and] embezzlement'.²⁹ The unfair competition Jaffer is talking about had its origin in the prices the Asian traders charged for commodities, especially to African retailers: these retailers were sold at a high price, forcing them to sell to their brothers and sisters at even a higher price. Because of this, the Africans ended up buying from Asian shops, where commodities were relatively cheaper, a thing that forced the Africans out of business. Ngugi puts this concern thus:

Black people too bought things from the Indians. But they also bought in the African shops, which stood alone on one side of the town near the post office. The Africans had not many things in their store and they generally charged higher prices so that although the Indians were not liked and they abused women, using dirty words they had learnt in Swahili, people found it wiser and more convenient to buy from them.³⁰

Besides, the Asians were experienced bargainers to the detriment of the Africans. When Jaffer leaves young Oloo in charge of his fish business to join his sick wife in Canada, this is the instruction he gives him:

You know our suppliers. Pay them from the float we keep in the till. Never pay them what they ask for. You know what I mean. You have seen me haggling. If they ask for ten shillings for their load, you start with an offer of one, and finish at three or four. Only on the day when you find the fish in short supply, you go up to five.³¹

²⁷ Yusuf K. Dawood, *Return to Paradise*, pp. 11-12.

²⁸ Singh, 'Sweet Scum of Freedom', p. 46.

²⁹ Dawood, *Water under the Bridge*, p. 308.

³⁰ Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *Weep Not Child* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1964), pp. 7-8.

³¹ Dawood, *Water under the Bridge*, p. 31.

This extract makes it clear that the African fish seller is cheated for the difference between what he and the Indian got, and that this difference was so big that for the latter 'even with the packing and transport costs added, there was a huge profit margin, which ran into *two to three* hundred percent'.³²

The Africans were not only cheated through selling, but also through buying. 'These people' a black Ugandan pointed out in 1972, 'have and are still exploiting the sons and daughters of Uganda in many ways, e.g., when one goes to buy a dress you find there written a price of 140/=. As you go on bargaining you will surprisingly find that you have bought the dress at 100/=. which means that they are never straightforward to us at all.'³³ The most painful form of exploitation was probably the siphoning of foreign exchange from East African countries. There were several ways through which this was done. One of these was direct smuggling of the foreign exchange and jewellery. When the Desai family in *Water under the Bridge* decide to invest in Canada, one source of capital available to them is the jewellery, travellers' cheques, and foreign currency to be smuggled out of Kenya by Rajoo. This is how Rajoo is to do it:

Fill your suitcase with them. You are allowed thirty kilos, because you travel first class. No label on the suitcase, no clues about the owner anywhere. You check in at the counter where the airline staff is only worried about the weight. Nobody from the customs checks the outward-bound suitcase, which accompanies a passenger. At Geneva Airport enroute to Canada, you pickup the suitcase. Nobody cares there what you are bringing, as long as you don't carry drugs or arms.³⁴

Everything works out well, and the Desai family begins a business in Canada. Tribe³⁵ gives us other ways through which capital was exported from East African countries by Asians: over-invoicing of imports, under-invoicing of exports, false declaration of factor incomes such as profits and rents, and improper use of personal transfers. Where an Asian businessman, for example, imported goods worth ten million shillings, he would send double the amount so that the balance is put on his London or Swiss account. If he exported goods worth twenty million shillings, he would under-invoice them and declare that they were worth five million. The fifteen million, again, would find itself on the London or Swiss account. Besides, the Asians involved in the tourism industry were paid in London banks, meaning that the post-colonial East African governments were sidelined. The Asians, who kept two books - one for themselves and the other for the income tax department,³⁶ evaded even the taxes levied by the authorities. This second book understated, of course, all the transactions conducted so that as little money as possible is paid to the government as taxes. Consequently, the image of the Asians, earlier constructed by the British as crafty, money-making, cunning, unscrupulous, etc, was upheld by African nationalists - Presidents Milton Obote and Idi Amin in real life, and Messrs Musozi Ebongo and Gombe-Kukwaya in the fictional world.

³² *Ibid*, p. 26, Emphasis added.

³³ Ocaya-Lakidi, 'Black Attitudes to the Brown and White Colonizers of East Africa', pp. 93-94.

³⁴ Dawood, *Water under the Bridge*, pp. 139.

³⁵ M.A. Tribe, 'Economic Aspects of the Expulsion of Asians from Uganda' in Michael Twaddle (ed.), *Expulsion of A Minority*, pp. 144-153.

³⁶ Dawood, *Water under the Bridge*, p. 43.

An Attempt at Deconstruction

What is at stake here really is not so much the question of contribution/ commitment, but that of ancestry. The citizen status of the Asian exploiter is questioned not just because he is sabotaging the progress of East Africa, but mostly because he is perceived as a foreigner, a stranger who has no right to plunder his country of adoption. This is why no one questions the citizen status of the black exploiter. And so, when Mr. Gombe-Kukwaya, a minister in a Ugandan post-colonial regime in *In A Brown Mantle* buys a golden bed for his wife, he is accused of mismanaging government funds, not of being a bloody foreigner.

In fact, there are several examples in the fiction under study that show the black African as an active and enthusiastic participant in the exploitation of East Africa. Listen to the thoughts of a black character in *Water under the Bridge* on the power of a member of parliament and the benefits that accompany this position:

A member of parliament was a powerful figure and if [I] ever became a minister or even an assistant minister, [I] would be considered a demi-god. [My] patronage would attract wealth like a magnet. To wield power and amass wealth, one had to climb the political ladder and the first rung of that ladder was a seat in parliament. The returns were so great, no price was too high.³⁷

Notice the absence of the voters' welfare in this meditation: no mention of health centres, schools, income-generating projects, rural electrification. What matters to this politician is not the economic and social progress of his country, but his personal welfare:

What appeals to me most is that as a minister you don't have to wait anywhere - not for lifts, not at the airport - no waiting in offices, everywhere you are received and your path made smooth and easy. All the drudgery of life is taken out. Everyone gives you preferential treatment; foreign travel is no longer an ideal - it is a luxury. You are received and looked after like a lord. You know, on my last visit to England with his Excellency, we were invited to stay at Buckingham palace.³⁸

The question that comes to mind is: What kind of commitment to the East African nation-states is this kind of leader capable of? What kind of contribution is he likely to make in developing his country? The answer is simple: nil. The primary interest of such leaders is not the pursuit of development strategies, but staying in power and using the state as an instrument for predatory ostentatious consumption. Believing that cunning (read: theft, robbery) is more profitable than hard work, these leaders pray:

Cunning, be my guide,
And lead me all the time,
Waking and sleeping.
And wherever I go,
I would like you to give me
The food I eat,
The water I drink,
Even the clothes that I wear.³⁹

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 146.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 232-233.

³⁹ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Devil on the Cross* (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1982), p. 103.

And whoever stands in the road of this cunning must be crushed. This is what happens to Pius Cota, the 'bloody Mugo' in *In A Brown Mantle* who is assassinated for unearthing a scandal in which a minister steals a consignment of prefabricated houses from a foreign country meant to mitigate the housing problem in Azingwe (Kenya). This is the irony of the commitment/contribution argument: the Asian who is interested in the social and economic development of his country of adoption is referred to as a 'bloody Mugo' and a 'pain in the neck'.⁴⁰ The reference to Cota's Goanness is, of course, an attempt to estrange him from Kenyan citizenship, to make him a foreigner in a country he fully identifies with and dearly loves, a country whose independence from the British he fought for. What the assassins are telling him is that as an Asian he has no business in 'meddling' in the affairs of Kenya, a black country for Black Africans, and that as an immigrant his only business is trade, not politics. Thus Cota, who feels it is his duty to fight corruption in order to contribute to the common good, is frustrated by the Africans themselves.

Even Deogratius D'Souza, the narrator of the novel, is discriminated against: he is called a Mugo meddler and asked to return to his country, even when he was born in Uganda. 'Hey Mugo', the golden-bed-minister, Gombe-Kukwaya asks:

When are you going back to your country? ...if I were in power, I would chase all these brown people into the sea. They kept aloof from us until we won our independence and now that we are the bosses, they are trying to be friendly.⁴¹

True, some Asians collaborated with British colonialists. But others like Deogratius D'Souza and Pius Cota (in the world of fiction) fully participate in the fight for East Africa's independence. D'Souza, for instance, serves as personal assistant to Mr. Robert Kyeyune, the leading nationalist fighting British colonialism in Damibia, which is the pseudonym for Uganda. He even encourages the Goan community in Damibia to identify itself with the country by taking its citizenship - a call hearkened to by the younger generation Goans like Joaquim D'Costa. He is honest enough to admit that at independence, there was a need to reorganise the economy that was visibly in the hands of the Asians (who owned land in towns, held most of the jobs and owned almost every shop) and invisibly in the hands of the British and other Europeans (who owned banks, import and export houses, motor vehicle agencies, and the insurance companies) so that the Africans move to the centre of controlling their resources.⁴² That D'Souza makes such an observation sets him apart as a genuine African nationalist.

Pius Cota, who is modelled on the Kenyan Goan journalist, Pio Gama Pinto, goes even a step further to fully identify himself with the well-being of both Damibia and Azingwe (Kenya). He dedicates his life to fighting colonialism and when independence is achieved, he continues fighting the injustices meted out on the poor peasants by the leaders of newly independent Kenya. This fight, as we have already seen, costs him his life, for he is assassinated by his former comrades who have betrayed the cause of independence by using their positions to amass wealth to the detriment of the poor peasants in shacks, and the under-employed

⁴⁰ Nazareth, *In A Brown Mantle*, p. 147.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 114.

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 110.

detriment of the poor peasants in shacks, and the under-employed and unemployed Africans who are starving to death. In fact, D'Souza describes Pius Cota as a man who spent all his time being a dedicated nationalist, pan-Africanist, and socialist.⁴³ And Father Van Santen compares him with Jesus Christ, for both give up their lives for their people.⁴⁴ This is in the world of fiction.

In the real world, we get more examples of East African Asians dedicated to the liberation of East Africa from colonial rule. Isher Dass, as a member of the Legislative Council from 1933 to 1942, made frequent representations on behalf of Africans, especially in respect of their demands for more land, political representation and the removal of restrictions on the growing of economic crops. Other Indian representatives on the LEGCO helped him in this task - B.S. Varma and U.K. Oze, by opposing further alienation of land to non-Africans.⁴⁵

Logistically, the Asians helped in the printing of African nationalist newspapers from 1942-1952 (and even earlier in the 1920s when Harry Thuku was agitating for freedom from colonial rule). Examples of these newspapers are the Kikuyu daily *Inoororia Gikuyu* (Gikuyu sharpener), a Swahili weekly, *Afrika Mpya* (New Africa), *Mwiguithania* (Conciliator), *Sauti ya Mwafrica* (Africa Voice), *Hindi Ya Gikuyu* (Gikuyu Times) and *Habari Za Dunia* (News of the World).⁴⁶ The contribution of these newspapers (and therefore of the Asians who financed their printing), to the achievement of Kenya's independence in 1963 cannot be underestimated.

Besides, East African lawyers helped defend African nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta and other Mau Mau detainees. In 1954, for instance, A.R. Kapila (who, together with F.R.S. De Souza, S.N. Pritt, Chaman Lall and Jaswant Singh had defended Jomo Kenyatta) defended General China, a renowned leader of the Mau Mau. From 1953 to 1957, De Souza defended over 200 Mau Mau suspects. Other East African Asian lawyers - E.K. Nowrjee, A.H. Malik, S.M. Akram, S.P. Handa, Sheikh Amin, M.K. Bhandar, K.D. Travadi, and Arvind Jamidah worked behind the scenes defending Mau Mau suspects.⁴⁷ Asian journalists also threw in their lot to support the African cause, for instance Harun Ahmed, Pranalal Sheth, D.K. Sharda and Pio Gama Pinto, on whom, we have already observed, Peter Nazareth modelled his African-Goan politician, Pius Cota.

What these examples show is that not all East African Asians were anti-African independence/progress. There were fingers that brought oil, but these did not soil the entire hand. Thus, labelling all the Asians as traitors, opportunists and exploiters is erroneous, just like it is to label all Africans as true nationalists.

Conclusion

What the above discussion makes clear is that the most important marker of national identity in East Africa is ancestry/descent, not commitment/contribution to the nation-state, and not natality. This point becomes obvious when the question of distribution of resources and opportunities arises. Where the Asian citizen amasses wealth, it is expected by the indigenous

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 71.

⁴⁵ J.S. Mangat, *A History of Asians in East Africa* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 168.

⁴⁶ Seidenberg, *Uhuru and the Kenya Indians*, p. 76.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, p. 116.

citizens that he uses part of this wealth for the development of the country, lest he is labelled an ingrate and a bloody foreigner, fit for deportation; irrespective of whether he was born in East Africa or in India/Pakistan. In other words, the brown citizen is expected to negotiate his citizenship through being good, which really means being charitable and apolitical. The black citizen, on the other hand, remains a citizen whether he is a thief or a rebel. He can only become a bad citizen, but not a bloody foreigner.

It is for this reason that East African leaders, who are tirelessly struggling to fully rejuvenate the East African community, should seriously address the possibility of a multiracial and multicultural East African society. They should work towards the elimination of racial discrimination in their countries, and should strengthen links between East African governments and Asian countries like Pakistan and India, where the descendants of East African Asians emigrated. The leaders should demonstrate that true multiculturalism is possible. The indigenous Ugandans' voting of Jay Tana, a Ugandan Asian, to the sixth parliament as the representative of the youths from the Eastern region of the country shows that it is possible to iron out racial prejudices, and that it is possible for different races to become accommodative. I am singling out Uganda because this is the country that experienced the worst form of racial friction after the country's independence in 1962, a friction that climaxed in the expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972 and the consequent confiscation of their properties.

In my view the success of the East African community should be judged, in one respect, from its commitment to social integration across ethnicity and race so that the three countries face the challenges of poverty and economic stagnation in an environment of ethnic and racial harmony. An ideal, some people will say. But who said ideals are unattainable? Doesn't Shakespeare tell us, in *Measure for Measure*, not to think impossible what seems improbable?

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Briefings

Mauritania's Political Development 1960-2003: Mirage Democracy, All Too Real Woes¹

By Boubacar N'Diaye²

French Resumé

Le 7 Novembre 2003, à moins d'un improbable coup de tonnerre politique, la réélection de Ould Taya, l'actuel président de la Mauritanie depuis 1984, est assurée pour un troisième mandat de cinq ans. Dans ce contexte, pour comprendre la tentative de coup d'état sanglant des 8 et 9 Juin, 2003 qui a failli lui coûter le pouvoir - et la vie, il convient de la situer and le context historique de l'évolution politique de la Mauritanie depuis son accession à l'indépendance en 1960. Celle-ci sera traumatisante et laborieuse du fait, notamment, des revendications Marocaines appuyées par le monde Arabe. Cette évolution politique peut être suivie en se référant à quelques dates qui l'ont particulièrement marquée. La création par le premier président Ould Daddah, du parti unique en 1961 pour combattre les forces centrifuges et forger l'État-nation, les troubles raciaux de 1966, la guerre désastreuse pour le control Sahara Occidental en 1975, et bien sûr l'arrivée des militaires au pouvoir en 1978 sont de celles-là. L'arrivée au pouvoir de Ould Taya avec le soutien de la France en 1984 en fut une date charnière. Ould Taya a présidé à une détérioration sans précédent des tensions ethniques et raciales qui se sont accompagnées de massacres et de déportations, et autres abus des droits de humains entre 1986 et 1992, decevant les espoirs qu'il avait suscités. Il fut contraint, sous la pression de bouleversements internationaux de 'démocratiser' le régime militaire en 1992 tout en prenant soin de contrôler tous les aspects du processus, pendant la 'transition,' en éludant notamment le 'déficit humanitaire'. Celui-ci continue à empoisonner la politique en Mauritanie et a forcé Ould taya à s'appuyer de plus en plus sur le nationalisme Arabe, à raviver le tribalisme, le clientélisme, le régionalisme, et la répression politique comme instruments de government, ainsi qu'à prendre des initiatives diplomatiques controversées. Dans ce contexte, le dernier coup d'état sanglant n'est pas nécessairement attribuable aux Islamistes, comme hâtivement présumé, et ses motifs sont sans doute multiples. Mené exclusivement par des officiers et sous-officiers des tribus de l'Est du pays, il semble être une conséquence prévisible, et peut-être expiatoire, d'un verrouillage politique illustré par la dissolution reccurrente de partis d'opposition et la vague d'arrestations d'opposants immédiatement avant la tentative de putsch. Dans sa gestion de l'après-coup, (et dans l'optique des prochaines présidentielles, notamment), les décisions et calculs du Président Ould Taya dans le secteur de la sécurité, mais aussi les changements de personnel politique opérés peuvent avoir des conséquences aussi inattendues que risquées pour le système politique tout entier après les élections.

¹ Please note that this article was written prior to the elections on 7 November 2003, when the last presidential and parliamentary elections took place in Mauritania.

² Boubacar N'Diaye is Assistant Professor of Black Studies & Political Science at the College of Wooster, Ohio, USA.

de personnel politique opérés peuvent avoir des conséquences aussi inattendues que risquées pour le système politique tout entier après les élections.

On 7 November 2003, when the next presidential elections take place in Mauritania, short of a highly improbable electoral thunder in the blue sky over the desert nation, President Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya will be re-elected with an enviable score. And his party, the *Parti Republicain Democratique et Social* (PRDS) will maintain its overwhelming majority in both houses of the parliament. Ould Taya would have, through the ballot, prolonged his tenure in power by five more years. This would be his third presidential term, at the beginning of which he would have already beaten the record of longevity in office of all heads of states in West Africa, except Togo's Gnassingbe Eyadema. Additionally, Ould Taya's regime would have been the only one to have remained unchanged in contrast to all neighbouring states, especially Mali and Senegal, considered models of democratic evolution. In contrast to troubling (and more violent) elections in Togo, Nigeria and elsewhere only a few months earlier, the election will certainly be peaceful and violence held to a minimum thanks to a show of force by security forces. Undoubtedly, friendly voices at *Jeune Afrique/ l'Intelligent*, for example, will make sure the contrast is not missed. And, after the clamour of the opposition's protestations and a few observers' carefully worded reservations about the 'complete fairness' of the elections, life will continue.

The above scenario is unremarkable in Africa's political landscape, despite notable gains in liberal democratic practices since the 1990s. What will make this 'déjà vu' unremarkable is the well-established tradition of benign neglect of Mauritania and whatever happens within its borders. Lost between West and Northern Africa, this country is little known, particularly in the English-speaking world, and easily 'slips through the cracks' except when a major coup attempt occurs as on 8 and 9 June 2003. The significance and implications of this event for Mauritania underscore the *problématique* of interrupted democratisation, persisting authoritarian hangover, and attendant instability and insecurity in the sub-region and beyond.³ The remarkable similarity with many other Sub-Saharan countries can also be instructive on the predicaments Mauritania shares with many African states. Before this portentous event is analysed in light of the upcoming elections, the recent evolution of the political situation in Mauritania before and after the first military incursion in politics in 1978 will be used to put it in an enlightening context. First, it is useful to present a brief political, social, and historical background of the country.

Brief Relevant Background

A vast, mainly desert territory straddling West Africa and the Maghreb, the Islamic Republic of Mauritania became independent on 28 November 1960, after decades of French colonial rule. In the Early 1900s, France had defeated the resistance of emirates led by warrior tribes,

³ For a discussion of these phenomena, See Boubacar N'Diaye, Abdoulaye Saine, and Mathurin Hounnikpo, *Not Yet Democracy: West Africa's Slow Farewell to Authoritarianism* (Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, forthcoming, 2004).

'pacified' the area and carved out what became modern day Mauritania. Claimed by Morocco as part of its territory, it needed all the backing of its former colonial power, France, to impose its international sovereignty. Shunned by Arab countries, and harassed by Arab nationalist, irredentist groups backed by Morocco, Mauritania benefited from the strong support of Sub-Saharan African countries. As a result, while claiming a historical role of bridge between the African and Arab worlds, Mauritania played an active role in the various Sub-Saharan political and economic organisations France had set up among its conservative former colonies. It built a network of goodwill and a substantial reservoir of respect among its Sub-Saharan African peers, having consolidated a semblance of national unity under the banner of a single political party, the PPM (*Parti du Peuple Mauritanien*, Mauritanian People's Party).

Conspicuously the only Islamic Republic in Africa, Mauritania has an estimated 2.7 million people who share the same religion, Islam, but are made up of three major ethno-cultural groups. The first group (referred to as 'Negro-Mauritanians') is comprised of four essentially sedentary black ethnic groups (the *Halpulaar*, the *Soninke*, the *Wolof* and the *Bambara*) who live mainly in the south and make up roughly one third of the total population. Mauritania's recent political history has been marked by repeated attempts by these groups to assert their (non-Arab) cultural identity, and an insistent claim to a more equitable share of political and economic power. The second group is the nomadic Arab-Berber (Beydane or 'White' Moor) tribes who live mainly in the north, centre, and in the east of the country. They are organised in at least 150 different tribes linked by a complex network of social relations of solidarity, alliances and rivalries.⁴ The survival of these relations and allegiance to pre-colonial political organisations (various emirates) and feudal structures have constituted a major challenge for successive post-colonial regimes. Arab-Berbers also make up about one third of the population, dominates all institutions, and monopolise all facets of political and economic power. They identify more with the Arab world and, in general, insist on the Arab and Islamic character of Mauritania. Over the years, this monopoly on power enabled them to depict to the outside world a picture of Mauritania as an Arab country. They constitute the majority of Mauritians living in ECOWAS countries, where they often control retail and commerce. Finally, the *Haratines* and *Abeed*, the largest group, are (freed or still enslaved) descendants of enslaved Africans, who identify culturally and psychologically with their former or current Beydane masters with whom they share the same language and Arab-Islamic culture and social organisation. One of the most significant developments in Mauritania politics in recent years has been the emergence of the *Haratines* as a social and political force.

Up until 10 July 1978, when the military overthrew his single party government in a bloodless coup, Mokhtar Ould Daddah, the first president, had succeeded in forging a Mauritanian national identity. Weary of the war it was fighting (and losing) against the independence movement of the Western Sahara (the POLISARIO), and against the background of mounting economic problems, and tribal and regional rivalries, the army took power, and withdrew from the territorial conflict. But soon enough, dissension, personal ambitions, and political rivalries within the military became apparent and a series of coups and countercoups occurred.

⁴ For an authoritative discussion of the subject, see Philippe Marchesin, *Tribus, ethnies et Pouvoir en Mauritanie* (Paris: Khartala, 1992).

Without much of a coherent program, successive military leaders undertook various economic, social and political development experiments. Very likely at France's urging and with its assistance, Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya staged the latest coup on 12 December 1984, toppling Lieutenant-Colonel Mohamed Khouna Ould Heydalla, then Head of State and President of the military junta (*Comité Militaire de Salut National, CMSM*). Ould Taya remained President of the restructured junta until the first multiparty presidential election was held in 1992 under a new political dispensation. Dramatic events between 1986 and 1992 and their aftermath marked the end of the traditional role of Mauritania as the good will ' *trait d'union*' between Black and Arab North Africa.

Political Evolution: Turning Points

Mauritania has not escaped the vexatious tribulations other Africa states experienced as decolonisation thrust them onto the international arena. More than most, however, it was especially ill equipped to chart its own course toward political and economic development and to develop the self-confidence that helped to strengthen the national character of countries such as Ghana, for instance. Its first steps as a sovereign state were to navigate a particularly hostile environment in which its very existence was not recognised by most, especially Morocco, which claimed it as a historical part of a 'Grand Morocco'. The related ostracism of the Arab world with the exception of Tunisia created an overpowering desire to compensate and negate an image (among some Arabs) of a '*duweyle el letti gehelet ha ettarikh*.'⁵ This must be considered an important element in understanding the evolution of Mauritania. Throughout its existence it has had an especially high sense of vulnerability⁶ and an almost pathological desire to prove that indeed it has the right to an independent existence and to the respect of others states. This affected its self-image and still constitutes an important parameter in analysing Mauritanian politics and many of the policy decision various regimes made especially on the international arena, but also domestically. This impediment was compounded by the composition of the population, which presaged the continuation of a historically chequered co-habitation marked also by bitter memories of slaving raids and supremacist attitudes. To understand the evolution of Mauritanian politics over the last decades with an emphasis on recent years, one must be sure to focus on a few dates of pivotal importance in that evolution. The events these dates demarcate are, in effect, the culmination of complex but real dynamics often inaccessible to the casual observer. As such, they must always be present in any appreciation Africans, West Africans certainly, must make of eventual developments in Mauritania.

⁵ This means in Arabic 'that negligible state that history all but ignored.' It is a polemical label sometimes attached to Mauritania by the media of fellow Arab league members during the controversial arguments on the necessity of dialogue with Israel.

⁶ Anthony Pazzanita captures rather well this essential vulnerability. See 'Mauritania's Foreign Policy: The Search for Protection', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1992, pp. 295-300.

Early Challenges

An apt starting date is 1961 when the single party, the PPM was instituted. Barely a year after independence, Moktar Ould Daddah, a barrister from a reputed Zwayya⁷ family (and tribe), hand picked by the French for leadership, succeeded in beating back centrifugal forces. These were mainly the pro-Moroccans Arab-Berber elements, but also southern Blacks unsure of their future were pushing for a federal state in a country already dominated by Arab-Berbers. All the political forces in competition at independence accepted to merge and as Ould Daddah articulated it 'to build together the Mauritanian fatherland.' The creation of the PPM brought both a respite and a promising unity of the political class to face the daunting challenges of independence. In addition to hurdles to its existence,

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the state had to address intractable tribal and feudal realities that coloured every situation among Arab-Berbers especially. Equally challenging, Mauritania literally needed to be built from scratch. Administered from Saint-Louis in Senegal until the eve of independence, it did not even have a capital, let alone buildings to house an administration, or other basic infrastructures and institutions. However, the creation of the single party did not mean that the centrifugal forces were defeated. Instead, the party became the repository of ethnic, cultural, ideological, and personal rivalries. Only the mild personality of Ould Daddah and the behind the scenes protective guidance and support of France allowed the fledgling state and political system to sidestep or diffuse successive crises, such as the 1962 terrorist attack carried out by Pro-Morocco forces in the east of the country. Ould

Daddah's savvy and France's diplomatic and financial support helped to rapidly set the state on a promising course as it made significant strides toward consolidating its authority domestically while slowly gaining acceptance and even respect from an increasing number of countries.

Soon enough, however, another major event, critical in understanding Mauritania today and certainly the developments in the late 1980s and early 1990s took place in February 1966. Under the pressure of Arab nationalists in the Party, and also to implement his own conception of Mauritania's vocation as first and foremost Islamic and Arab, Ould Daddah's regime decided to make Arabic compulsory in primary and secondary education. This decision sparked protests and strikes by non-Arab students in the secondary. Later, their elders in the civil services backed them up and articulated in the famous manifesto of 'the nineteenth' the fears of marginalisation and forced 'Arabization' of the Negro-Mauritanian elite. In that document, they denounced what they perceived as the Arab-Berber community's monopoly of political and economic power, and its aims of transforming Mauritania into an exclusively Arab country. This action and the reaction of Ould Daddah's government created a major crisis and led, in February 1966, to inter-communal violence that necessitated the

⁷ Zwayya (especially Zawi) refers, in the tribal society's structure to depositories of (Islamic) knowledge, as opposed to warrior tribes (*Hassan*) to whom the Zwayya are vassals. The French have tended to exploit the tribal structure and enlist the cooperation of the Zwayya.

intervention of the army in Mauritania's major cities. Only such an intervention, itself a precursor of the military intervention in the 1970s, avoided even more bloodshed. What was to be labelled coyly 'the National Question' was born and was to plague Mauritanian politics ever since. Ould Daddah, true to character, diffused the crisis by placating all the protagonists, reversing partially the decision while punishing the 'nineteen' and reiterating the general objective of 'Arabization.' He did not really address the critical factors at the root of the crisis: how to find a mechanism of real power-sharing and an agreed redefinition of a conjoint Mauritanian citizenship. These events brought to the forefront, for the first time in stark terms if not the question of the viability of Mauritania as a unitary state, certainly the issue of the feasibility of an intelligent co-habitation between its two main ethnic and cultural, (and for some racial) components. The reoccurrence of the 1966 events, twenty years later only with considerably more violence and disruption, is an indication that Ould Daddah's approach has definitely not worked. Though it continues to threaten Mauritania, this conundrum is not the only prism through which the country's current political situation should be viewed.

Another turning point in that evolution was the decision of Ould Daddah's regime in the mid-1970s to aggressively pursue its claim to make the Western Sahara a part of its territory as Spain was nearing a decision to decolonise that territory. It was to lead to arguably the central event in Mauritania's contemporary history, the 10 July 1978 military coup. That decision clearly ran counter to the OAU charter's principles on the respect of colonial borders and right to independent existence of colonial territories. Mauritania had invoked these principles freely when it was struggling to ward off Morocco's expansionist claims. More critically, it accepted to be a junior partner to Morocco in its attempt to annex a portion of the territory. This adventure can only be interpreted as the manifestation of the syndrome evoked above, whereby Mauritania seems to be ever compensating the experience of being denied international sovereignty, and slighted, particularly by its Arab brethren. In addition to territorial gains, the annexation of a portion of the territory and its Arab-Berber population would have strengthened the Arab credential and orientation of the country and consequently reduced the influence of the Negro-Mauritanian community. A diplomatic success would also have taken to new heights the international aura that Ould Daddah has strenuously worked to achieve over the years. This proved to be the single most disastrous miscalculation of his tenure. It was to cost him power and, in the process exacerbated, not just the demons of ethnicity (black recruits having been used literally as cannon fodder), but also the demons of tribalism and regionalism. Increasingly isolated internationally, facing a waning domestic support for the war under the onslaught of the POLISARIO, and increasingly dependent on an army led by officers, many of whom got enriched by looting the territory they were occupying, Ould Daddah's overthrow was only a matter of time.

Enter the Military...

Weary of a war it was (badly) fighting and loosing, the military carried out a bloodless coup on 10 July 1978 and established a *Comité Militaire de Salut National (CMSN)*. This was indeed a pivotal event in the life of Mauritania and was, predictably, to open an especially eventful era in the country's recent political evolution. This event brought to the fore another facet of Mauritanian politics: Tribalism and regionalism that have now become a central feature of politics. President Moktar Ould Daddah built his power on a cunning ability to navigate the slippery slopes of tribalism, regionalism, and ethnicity. He managed, through consummate skills in dosages and balancing acts to convey the impression of harmony and balance in which all

components of the country had a stake. Nevertheless, the reality was that political power has been associated with Ould Daddah's tribe of the west and centre and in the hand of a 'Zawi'. After the coup led by his army chief of staff, Moustapha Ould Mohamed Saleck, and masterminded by officers issued from warrior tribes of the east of the country, the centre of power had shifted, for the first time to warrior tribes and to the east of the country. Given the intricate tribal politics of Mauritania, this was not a trivial event. It played a significant (though unstated) role in forcing a psychological adjustment to this situation that summons atavistic but significant psycho-cultural referents for many in the Arab-Berber elite. Immediately following the coup, however, the first order of business was to get out of the ruinous war. In 1979, the junta made a separate deal with the POLISARIO in Algiers, renouncing the part the territory it had annexed after the Madrid accords,⁸ and left to Morocco to shoulder alone its territorial claims against the whole of Western Sahara. Predictably, even this decision brought to the fore deep divisions within the military and a split between opponents and proponents of the Algiers agreement was evident as each side jockeyed to prevail within the junta. Soon, plots and countercoups started to occur in rapid succession. More or less bloody, they illustrated the ideological, regional, personal and other rivalries that inevitably beset militaries that assume political power. The bloodiest coup occurred on 16 March 1991 when a commando of exiled officers, armed and supported by Morocco, tried but failed to seize power.

In 1984, having since 1980 forced his way towards the presidency of the CMSN, it was widely assumed that Lt.-Colonel Mohamed Khouna Ould Haydalla was well on his way to consolidating his power. An impetuous and forceful leader from a northern warrior tribe based in Western Sahara, and perceived as an outsider, Ould Haydalla built up his power by gaining the support of Negro-Mauritanians and the *Haratines*.⁹ Without necessarily tackling the lingering ethnic and cultural issues, he closely associated the Negro-Mauritanians to the exercise of power through their military officers. He also associated the *Haratines* in the same way and, in addition, in 1981, enacted Ordinance 81-234 of 9 November 1981, abolishing slavery. Again, without going further than the symbolic decision, he made *Haratines* important players in a popular mobilisation scheme, the *Structures d'Education des Masses*, SEM (structures for the education of the Masses). His authoritarian tendencies and fierce nationalism and populism (he grew closer to Libya) quickly created the conditions for the last successful coup to take place in Mauritania.

On 12 December 1984, while Ould Haydalla attended the Bujumbura Francophone summit (not coincidentally believed to be at the express insistence of French president

⁸ The 1975 agreements signed between the Franco government on the one hand, and Morocco and Mauritania on the other transferring control of the territory to the latter countries.

⁹ Descendants of enslaved Africans, who identify culturally and psychologically with their former or current Beydane masters with whom they share the same language and Arabo-Islamic culture, social organisation. See above under 'Brief relevant Background'.

François Mitterrand), he learned with incredulity and horror that his chief of staff, Colonel Maaouya Ould Sid' Ahmed Taya had toppled him. Power has not changed hands since, and given the momentous events that occurred since that date, it is evident that 12 December 1984 was another deciding date in the political development of Mauritania. While Ould Taya's regime must also be analysed in connection with the antecedents discussed above, the dynamics that shaped the events that occurred in Mauritania over the last nineteen years must, first and foremost, be traced to attitudes and behaviours held, and of course decisions made since 1984. And Ould Taya, as the pre-eminent actor is ultimately inexorably linked to these policies and choices, as well as their outcomes and long-term consequences. Regardless of the interpretation one gives the developments since 1984, Ould Taya changed Mauritania forever.

The Ould Taya Regime, Part I

It is now forgotten, and for some hard to imagine, that the 1984 coup was, in contrast to previous palace coups, welcome with cheers and sincere and hopeful sighs of relief by the majority of Mauritians. Though he had been member of all the military juntas since 1978, and even Prime Minister before going back to the barracks as army chief of staff, little was known of Ould Taya by the public at large. He enjoyed a reputation of an honest (a noteworthy praise since by then the biggest fortunes of the country were owned by military officers) and sober officer, removed from the nefarious influences of both tribalism and the numerous ideological groups in the army. Not to be neglected in a context where tribalism and ethnic afterthoughts were becoming prevalent, he was member of a numerically small trading, impoverished, and self-effacing 'zwayya' tribe from the north of the country, and has, throughout his life, had very solid ties with prominent members of the black community. He was also reputed to have had assiduous relations with the progressive circles of the clandestine political movement of the country. These perceptions and his first pronouncements¹⁰ and measures of power consolidation such as freeing the numerous political prisoners gave him an undeniable popularity during the first months of his tenure. In short, hopes were high that, at last, Mauritania had gotten the 'right' military leader to preside over its destiny and tackle its pressing problems. Politically, he downplayed tribalism and ethnicity as features of Mauritanian politics. And, on 19 December 1986, held pluralist municipal elections in regional capitals. These were the first elections since the original coup in 1978. The stakes in these elections were not ultimate political power. Nevertheless, though tribalism and regionalism were rife and tolerated, they were generally free and fair and signalled a willingness to decentralise power. They certainly seemed to confirm the favourable impressions Ould Taya had generated, and made many hope that, perhaps soon, other elections would follow that will return the country to a normal constitutional order and return the military to their barracks. Yet, Ould Taya did not tackle seriously any of the major contradictions of Mauritanian society. Nor did he address aggressively the economic and social problems that made Ould Heydalla unpopular,

¹⁰ A good example of such hopeful statements was the speech made shortly after he came to power, in Nema in the east of the country. He then chastised tribalism in particular as a dead weight on progress in Mauritania.

especially those linked to the runaway urbanisation following years of drought in the countryside, unprecedented levels of economic mismanagement and corruption, and income inequality. The popular perception however was that he was heading in the right direction and should be granted the benefit of the doubt. Whether these early features of the Ould Taya regime were elaborately staged calculations of a Machiavellian mind, or instead reflected the genuine predisposition of a military leader full of potential may never be ascertained. However, starting in 1986, Mauritanian politics would take a turn for the worse and reach depths the decisions and actions of the early months of the post 1984 regime could never have presaged. Before the first phase of his regime ended with the promulgation, on 12 July 1991, of Mauritania's latest Constitution, the country was shaken to its core and would never be the same.

Ethnic Cleansing and other Transgressions

As suggested above, the 'National Question,' always simmering, has cyclically led to serious shake-ups of the polity and often led to the repression of Negro-Mauritians. However, the scale and consequences of the repression visited on them under Ould Taya's regime between 1986 and 1992 is unparalleled. In 1979 under the newly installed military regime, a decision in the education system reminiscent of the 1966 decision led to sustained protests by black pupils and students. Shortly thereafter, the military junta apportioned the seats to a constituent assembly on the basis of 75% to Arab-Berbers and 25% to Negro-Mauritians. The promulgation of ordinance 83/127 on 5 June 1983 to institute a new land tenure regime in the soon to be economically attractive Senegal River valley crystallised the sentiments of Negro-Mauritians that a deliberate policy to disenfranchise them was in the works. It was in this context that, in 1986 two years into the regime of Ould Taya, the FLAM (*Forces de Liberation Africaines de Mauritanie*) an organisation formed in 1983, published '*le Manifest du Negro-Mauritanien opprimé*' (the manifesto of the oppressed Negro-Mauritians). The pamphlet, widely distributed at the OAU summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, infuriated Ould Taya. It led to a wave of dismissals (including a black Interior Minister), arrests, trials and imprisonment in harsh conditions of prominent *Haalpular* intellectuals and civil servants. This crackdown occurred in the context of behind the scene rivalries between Arab nationalist factions (*Baathists*, of Iraqi allegiance and *Nasserists*) among others, which were vying for strategic positioning within the fledgling Ould Taya regime, as well as various tribal repositioning. To complicate an already explosive situation, in 1987, three black officers, alleged leaders of a military coup plot, were executed and dozens of their alleged accomplices imprisoned in conditions that would lead to the slow death of many of them.¹¹ In an atmosphere of extreme tension, it was only a matter of time before this situation degenerated in the most egregious policy response to the 'National Question' Mauritania had ever experienced. The French phrase *passif humanitaire*, the equivalent of 'human rights deficit,' has now become the signal phrase in Mauritanian political vocabulary to invoke what was to ensue. It refers specifically to the 1989-1992 'events,' as the mass killings and deportation of Negro-Mauritians are prudishly called. Amnesty

¹¹ For a survivor's account of the ordeal, see Alassane H. Boye, *J'Étais à Oualata: Le Racisme d'État en Mauritanie* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 1999).

International established that the Mauritanian government was involved in the most outrageous atrocities against its black citizens even during the fateful initial April 1989 incidents.¹²

Before the phrase 'ethnic cleansing' was coined in the mid-1990s to describe the gruesome practices in the war-torn Balkans, comparable policies had become the cornerstone of the Ould Taya regime's response to the intermittent ethnic tensions that have poisoned Mauritanian politics since independence.¹³ An indication of this deep-rooted problem is that Mauritania is among the few countries in the world where the statistics on the ethnic composition of the population are a 'state secret.'¹⁴ Indeed a mid-1980s population census was never published, allegedly because it verified Negro-Mauritanians' long held belief that they are the numerical majority.

The process of political and economic marginalisation and physical elimination of Mauritania's non-Arabic speaking populations as a force has been amply documented by foreign governments and non-governmental organisations alike.¹⁵ These practices were so uncommon even by African standards of political exclusion and repression that they were labelled an informal apartheid.¹⁶ Arab nationalists elements within the military and state bureaucracy¹⁷ saw in a border dispute with neighbouring Senegal a golden opportunity to solve once and for all the long-standing ethnic tensions in the country.¹⁸

Between 1989 and the end of 1992, 50,000 to 100,000 black Mauritanians were stripped of their citizenship and deported or forced to flee to Senegal and Mali.¹⁹ Human rights observers have also documented the extra-judicial killing of (at least) 500 black Mauritanians most of whom, from the ranks of the military. A campaign of terror consisting of kidnapping, rapes, and torture, made possible by military occupation and blackout was carried out throughout the southern region where most blacks live. Mass graves, obvious signs of moral and physical

¹² Amnesty International, *Mauritanie 1986-1989: Contexte d'une Crise*, Les éditions Francophones d'Amnesty International (1989), p. 11; also Janet Fleischman, 'Ethnic Cleansing', *Africa Report*, vol. 39 (Jan-Feb 1994), p. 46.

¹³ For a discussion of this issue also, see Marchesin *Tribus, ethnies et Pouvoir*.

¹⁴ François Soudan, *Le Marabout et le Colonel. La Mauritanie de Ould Daddah à Ould Taya* (Paris: Jalivres, 1992), p. 98. The opposition and independent sources have long argued that this was an attempt by successive regimes to ignore the fact that black Mauritanians (including the *Haratines*) far outnumber the Arab-Berber 'Whites'.

¹⁵ See, for example, Human Rights Watch/Africa, *Mauritania's Campaign of Terror: State Repression of Black Africans* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1992); U.S. Department of State, *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1992, Mauritania* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992), pp. 162-170; and *Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1993*, pp. 177-185.

¹⁶ The oppressive practices of the Ould Taya regime in particular were not as sophisticated or as codified as those of apartheid South Africa. However, opponents and neutral parties have made a strong case as to the similarities between the effects of the repression of Blacks in both countries. See Garba Diallo, *The Other Apartheid?* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 1993); FLAM Manifesto, *Mauritanie: 30 ans d'un apartheid meconnu*, pamphlet (Dakar, October 1989); and 'Committee on Foreign Hearing before the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Organizations and on Africa', (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 19 June 1991).

¹⁷ For an account of the influence of Ba'athists on Ould Taya's regime and the agenda they have pursued see Pazzanita, 'Mauritania's Foreign Policy,' pp. 295-300.

¹⁸ Mark Doyle, 'Nouakchott's New Nationalism', *Africa Report*, vol. 35, no. 3 (Sep-Oct 1989), p. 39.

¹⁹ The UN High Commission for Refugees estimates the number at 65,000 as of June 1991 in Senegal and Mali. Other estimates are higher. See Fleischman, 'Ethnic Cleansing', p. 45-46.

destitution, as well as a surge of the number of mixed-blooded children conceived in rape in the Senegal River valley are vivid reminders of these human rights abuses.²⁰ These events resulted not only in what was described as a 'psychosis of fear in the black community',²¹ but also in a tremendous amount of anger and resentment in that community. By any standards, these events amount to crimes of genocide and, therefore, crimes against humanity since, undeniably, a specific national community, as such, was systematically targeted. Until then unimaginable in Mauritania, this reality weighed most heavily on nearly everything that happened since.

As these events took place, the world was changing at a breath-taking rhythm. The Cold War ended in 1989, a New World Order was being ushered in emphasising respect for human rights and democratic governance illustrated by the *La Baule* doctrine,²² and, critically for Mauritania, a coalition led by the United States drove Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait and reduced him to size. Equally important, Ould Taya himself underwent a treacherous personal transformation. This is an important factor in understanding not only the fateful events between 1986 and 1992, but also the other developments to be examined shortly.

The 1987 failed coup by a group of *Halpulaar*²³ officers and the 1989 inter-communal tensions were traumatic events and marked a turning point in Ould Taya's personal evolution. In less than a decade he went from a political non-factor tapped by France to replace a recalcitrant pro-Libyan leader, to a savvy political manipulator who would consolidate and legitimise his imperilled power at almost no cost. They crystallised his Manichean view of the 'National Question.' A formerly 'detrilled' Ould Taya soon became a born-again Arab nationalist championing the Arab character of Mauritania. He started to see as his mission in life the rescue of the 'national unity' and the defence of the 'Arabness' of his country against the 'permanent plot' of its enemies. Soon his Mauritania became 'Arab' in the most restrictive and exclusive meaning of the term. A pre-first Gulf War alliance with Saddam Hussein financed and made possible a set of outright racist ideologies and policies concentrating on 'keeping Mauritania Arab.' Ould Taya's obsession seemed aimed at anchoring Mauritania in the Arab world principally to ward off what he saw as the 'black peril'. A resulting second-class citizenship for blacks accompanied by repression to eliminate their resistance to cultural assimilation are enforced or justified by a need to uphold Islam and national unity. This perpetuated a consummate amalgam between Islam (the religion of all Mauritians)

Soon his Mauritania became 'Arab' in the most restrictive and exclusive meaning of the term. A pre-first Gulf War alliance with Saddam Hussein financed and made possible a set of outright racist ideologies and policies concentrating on 'keeping Mauritania Arab.'

²⁰ See Human Rights Watch/Africa, *Mauritania's Campaign of Terror*, pp. 58-70 and 93-122.

²¹ Rakiya Omaar, 'Arrests and Executions,' *West Africa* (8-14 July 1991), p. 1124. It is estimated that the reluctance of Blacks to engage in any overt opposition political activity, even today, is traceable to this traumatism.

²² At the June 1990 Franco-African summit meeting of La Baule in western France, President Mitterand emphasised the link between democracy and development, and stated that: 'French aid will be lukewarm towards authoritarian regimes and more enthusiastic for those initiating a democratic transition,' effectively threatening that France would penalise financially authoritarian African regimes.

²³ Black ethnic group, part of the 'Negro-Mauritians'. See 'Brief relevant Background' above.

and Arab identity peremptorily claimed by some and just as fiercely rejected by others. The decision to withdraw from ECOWAS in 2002 must be understood against this background. In 1991, however, the pressing imperative was to adjust to changes in the world that made a regime rearrangement a matter of survival not just for the regime, but seemingly for Ould Taya and those directly responsible for the 'events' as well.

The Ould Taya Regime, Part II

Ould Taya must have seen the day of reckoning fast approaching as he watched his protector and ally being handed a crushing defeat in March 1991. In effect, he had quite imprudently supported Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf war, forsaking Saudi, Kuwaiti, and Western funding and support, while burdened by such a 'human rights deficit'. On 15 April 1991, following a marathon meeting with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, to everyone's astonishment, Ould Taya announced the opening up of the political system. His regime was, in all likelihood, given a second chance and firmly invited to jump on the bandwagon of democratisation that was supposed to be underway on the continent. However, he was determined that his 'democratisation' would be tightly controlled and on his own terms and timetable. It would not resemble in any way that of others military regimes in countries such as Benin and Congo, and much less next-door Mali where his friend Moussa Traore was toppled under popular pressure.

The 'Programmed Electoral Putsch'²⁴

While he still believed that the country was 'not ready for democracy',²⁵ he nevertheless had a French Fifth Republic style Constitution drafted, making sure that the opposition had absolutely no input in it. To mute the clamour of an embryonic but growing opposition emboldened by the regime's international isolation, he put its major leaders under house arrest and imposed on them an internal exile in remote villages.²⁶ They were freed only after the Constitution was passed - as originally drafted. On 12 July 1991 the draft Constitution was submitted to a referendum and ratified, amid calls for boycott by the opposition, with 97.9% of the vote cast, but with a participation rate of only 8% of the registered voters.²⁷ This pattern of staying ahead of the opposition leaders in this high stakes game characterised the entire transition process and its aftermath. After the Constitution was adopted, article 104 was added to it. This article, conspicuously absent in many English versions of the Mauritanian constitution reads: 'All the laws and regulations currently applicable in the Islamic Republic of Mauritania remain in force as long as they have not been duly modified in conformity

²⁴ This is the characterisation used by the main opposition leader to characterise the event leading to the first election of Ould Taya. See *Livre Blanc sur la Fraude ou Chronique d'un Putsch Electoral Programme*, Direction de la Campagne du Candidat Ahmed Ould Daddah aux election Presidentielles du 24 Janvier 1992 an Mauritanie, Nouachott. This certainly reflects the outcome of the 'transition' period.

²⁵ Soudan, *Le Marabout et le Colonel*, p. 112.

²⁶ Soudan, *Le Marabout et le Colonel*, p. 113.

²⁷ Peter Da Costa, 'Democracy in Doubt', *Africa Report*, vol. 37, no. 3 (May-June 1992), p. 59.

with the present Constitution' (author's translation). This addition all but emptied the Constitution of any substance. In practice, it annulled all the basic freedoms of assembly, association, etc. the brand new Constitution was supposed to guarantee. This disposition reinstated (as supposedly a transitory measure) very restrictive decrees governing these matters enacted under the military regime. The opposition had just lost the first and decisive battle. A multitude of parties most of which allied to the government, were allowed to operate. The opposition, more or less, coalesced in the party *Union des Forces Democratique - Ere Nouvelle* (Union of Democratic Forces - New Era), while the regime set up the *Parti Republicain Democratique et Social*. Other small formations positioned themselves to maximise their impact, most ending up rallying Ould Taya. To avoid the chancy two-way race between Ould Taya and the opposition's candidate (the first civilian president's brother), the military junta instigated additional candidacies.²⁸

Throughout the campaign, on behalf of Ould Taya, the government-controlled media succeeded in portraying Ahmed Ould Daddah as the candidate of foreign powers (the West). This clearly tapped into the strong anti-Western feelings of the Arab-Berber population in the aftermath of the Gulf War. In a country badly divided along ethnic, cultural and racial lines, especially after the repression against non-Arab Mauritians, Ould Taya portrayed himself as the protector and champion of an Arab Mauritania forced to defend itself in a hostile (Negro-African) environment. Tellingly, he also tapped into the fears of army officers and civil servants who actively participated in the massive human rights abuses and projected himself as the only one capable of protecting them.²⁹ He also hinted at risks of a coup d'état should he lose power.³⁰ Throughout, an ill-defined and clearly deceptive notion of 'national unity' in need of protection and enhancement at all cost was used to evade serious discussion on ethnic and racial questions that have plagued and almost destroyed the country.³¹ In the same vein, an amalgam between Islam and Arabism, destined to put the non-Arab but Muslim segments of the opposition on the defensive, was cleverly maintained to obscure the core issues of cultural identity and power-sharing.³² When the presidential election was held on 24 January 1992, the result of the entire process was a foregone conclusion. Colonel Ould Taya was declared the first round winner by 62.65% of the votes cast. The opposition and neutral observers denounced or pointed to massive election fraud calling it a 'democratic farce'.³³ Massive irregularities were documented in the establishment of electoral lists as well as in the actual conduct of the election.³⁴ Severe clashes between security forces and opponents during

²⁸ Mohamed Vall Ould Oumere, 'Il evite le Face a Face,' *Al Beyane*, (11-17 Dec 1991).

²⁹ Interview with Cheikhna Sonogho, political activist, in Nouakchott, July 1996.

³⁰ Peter Da Costa, 'Democracy in Doubt', *Africa Report*, vol.37, no. 3 (May-June 1992), p. 60.

³¹ Doyle, 'Nouakchott's New Nationalism', pp. 37-40.

³² Rakiya Omaar and Janet Fleischman, 'Arab Vs African', *Africa Report*, vol. 36, no. 4 (July-Aug 1991), p. 37.

³³ Jacques de Barin, 'Mauritanie: La Democratie a l'Epreuve des Tensions Raciales,' *Le Monde* (Paris, 6 March 1992); also *Africa Research Bulletin*, Political, Social and Cultural Series, vol. 29 (1-31 January 1992), pp. 10414-5.

³⁴ Da Costa, 'Nouakchott's New Nationalism', p. 59. It was common knowledge that the Arab-Berber-looking Touareg refugees from Mali were allowed to vote and that the electoral lists were inflated just as most blacks were prevented from voting. Those in refugee camps in Senegal and Mali were not acknowledged much less allowed to vote. See also Omaar and Fleischman (1991), 'Arab Vs African', pp. 35-38.

demonstrations resulted in several deaths and wounded, and was followed by a curfew in major cities. Though the military regime was supposedly over, the military was indeed very much in charge as the role it played in securing its candidate's victory underscored.

Mohameden Ould Mey aptly captured the outcome of this period as follows:

[T]he structure of power survived (almost intact) the transition from a military regime to a civilian regime based on multipartyism, free election and free press. To caricature it, the colonel took off his military fatigues and wore a business suit as a cosmetic constitutional reform designed more for appeasing Western pressure and disarming the opposition than genuinely empowering the people...³⁵

A telling indication that Ould Taya's overall strategy was successful was the continuing split of the opposition on the eve of the presidential election on 12 December 1997. The script of this second 'multiparty election' closely resembled that of 1992. This time, challenged only by minor candidates, the main opposition parties having boycotted the election, Ould Taya was elected by more than 90% of the votes cast.³⁶ And, of course, just as after the first election, '[m]uch of the old, authoritarian regime remained intact, and a tribal-regional-ethnic quota system continued to determine who got what how and when.'³⁷

It was hoped that this second election would turn completely the page on the military regime and its vicissitudes. It did not. The 'human rights deficit' had become *the* signal code in the political lingo, although the government never acknowledged officially that massive human rights abuses were committed. The 23/93 law of 14 June 1993 granting a 'complete pardon' for all crimes between 1989 and 1991 especially froze this issue and, paradoxically, instead of occulting it, made it a permanent, if below the surface, presence in the political discourse in Mauritania. Since the law was passed, a national silence was imposed on the topic, and any attempt to revive it was considered an attack against 'national unity.' This did not mean that the traumatic past was laid to rest by the continuous 'taboo-isation' of this issue, as the 1999 Ely Ould Dah affair soon evidenced.³⁸ It only made a genuine democratisation all but impossible, despite assiduous efforts of the government to convey the image of Mauritania as a successful '*democratie apaisée*.' While many have accepted this image readily, Kevin Bales who conducted an undercover study in Mauritania for a book on slavery observed perceptively that this outwardly 'Alice in the Wonderland character' concealed a ruthless 'police state.'³⁹ The ordeal of Mohamed Ould Baba Ould Saïd, a Franco-Mauritanian university Professor who was severely tortured and pressured to

³⁵ Mohameden Ould Mey, *Global Restructuring and Peripheral states: The Carrot and the Stick in Mauritania* (Lanham, MD: Littlefield Adams Books, 1992), p. 256.

³⁶ 'Taya Reelected', *Africa Research Bulletin* (December 1997), p. 12928.

³⁷ Mohamed Mahmoud Mohamedou, 'The Rise and Fall of Democratization in the Maghreb,' in Paul J. Magnarella, (ed.), *Middle East and North Africa: Governance, Democratization, Human Rights* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), p. 225.

³⁸ This is the case of a Mauritanian officer accused of torture and incarcerated briefly. He is now a fugitive. The case is still pending before a French court. For details on this affair and its reverberations see N'Diaye 'The Effect of Mauritania's 'Human Rights deficit,' the Case against to 'Forgive and Forget'', forthcoming, *Journal of African Policy Studies*, (2003).

³⁹ See Keven Bales, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 80-83.

keep quiet about it in the spring of 2001, and other testimonies, would tend to support Bales' characterisation.

By all accounts, all the periodic elections held between 1992 and 2001 were not truly competitive. The process that led up to elections and the polling itself were systematically fraudulent. They were for external consumption mainly and their real purpose was to legitimise a military leader desperate for legitimacy, and unable to imagine his country without himself being at the helm.

After the 1992 election, firmly in control of what Da Costa called the 'paper democracy of his creation',⁴⁰ Ould Taya was able to carry out a charm offensive toward Mauritania's main providers of vital economic aid and political support while cleverly continuing to neutralise the opposition. Because of its economic and strategic interests, France was (and is) much more understanding - and protective⁴¹ - of a regime it helped, and in all likelihood, put in power. France left no doubt as to its stand when the late president Mitterrand received Ould Taya in a business-as-usual like fashion just a few months after his inauguration following elections the French President knew were fraudulent.⁴² Not coincidentally, European (mostly French) companies extracted incredibly lucrative deals, particularly in the fishing sector.⁴³ As to US administrations, they were only interested in punishing the Ould Taya regime for its defiant alliance with Saddam Hussein. Silencing the only critics who could jeopardise the legitimisation and 'consolidation' of his power put the finishing touch to his efforts to retain power while rehabilitating himself. By the end of Ould Taya's first term, Mauritania's Western partners seem to be satisfied indeed. In addition, the (legal and underground) political opposition to the regime, kept in check or neutralised, has not been able to challenge seriously the peaceful and benevolent image the regime has assiduously projected to the world.

The Seeds of 8 and 9 June

In spite of the 'transition,' four critical features have consistently characterised the regime. The first is its extreme vigilance, consummate ruthlessness, and its willingness to take drastic, often impulsive measures to prevent the emergence of any credible challenge. A second related feature has been a policy of undermining, frustrating, and dividing the opposition in order to keep it constantly off balance. Relatedly, the third significant development in Mauritanian politics, following the 1989-1992 'events' and the aborted transition to democracy, has been the return in force of tribalism and regionalism and their naked manipulation by the regime. Both during elections and in the running of state business, Ould Taya has elevated to a perverse art form the manipulation and exploitation of inter- and intra-ethnic, tribal, and regional competition and rivalries to consolidate his power, punish the opposition and keep (temporary) allies in check or dependent. Finally, a fourth feature has been the shrewd diplomatic moves to remain in the good graces of Western countries and their

⁴⁰Da Costa, 'Nouakchott's New Nationalism', p. 60.

⁴¹See in this regard a clearly apologist interpretation of the 1992 elections by the representative of the European Union in Mauritania, Jean-Michel Perille, 'Entretien avec Jean Michel Perille,' Interview by Dominique David, *Le Courrier*, 137 (January-February 1993), pp. 39-41.

⁴²See Francois Soudan, 'Mauritanie: Le Bon Elève,' *Jeune Afrique* (23 Dec 1993 - 5 Jan 1994).

⁴³Hamoud Ould Etheimine, 'Un Marche de Dupe,' *La tribune*, no. 17 (3 July 1996), p. 6.

lending institutions. Throughout, the overriding concern of the regime has been to prevent any evocation of Mauritania's 'human right deficit' or slavery, which have remained the sore point of politics in the country.

Since 1992 and seemingly ceaselessly, there have been regular waves of arrests, harassment, trials, torture and imprisonment of numerous opponents. The leaders of parties were often put on trial on trumped up charges, and the leader of the front of opposition parties is still in prison after a blatantly political trial. Every time a party becomes strong enough, Ould Taya has no qualm banning it outright under any pretext. After the parties *Attalia* and UFD/EN⁴⁴ were banned in 2000, *Action pour le changement* was banned in 2001, almost immediately after it won seats in parliament. This reflects a relentless will to keep the pressure on the opposition and remain in command of the political system. For that purpose, a short leash was put on the media. The minister of the Interior has freely used his powers according to article 11 of ordinance no. 91-023 of July 25, 1991, which governs the freedom of the press, to muzzle and harass journalists. This disposition was used as often as necessary whenever the opposition or independent press attempted to evoke the politically and diplomatically embarrassing issues of the past human rights abuses, the predicament of Black Mauritians, or the prevalence of slavery. It is noteworthy that Mauritania is the only country in West Africa to have kept a complete state monopoly over the airwaves, a significant feature when one considers the power of audiovisual media in a country with a high illiteracy rate. At the same time, after his tribal instinct were awakened by the 'events', and the death of his first wife of Lebanese origin forced him to return to the tribal fold through a second marriage, Ould Taya suddenly became a consummate manipulator of tribalism. As in no time in its recent history, tribalism, regionalism, and clientelism and their blatant manipulation have become the mainstay of Mauritanian politics. Very frequent government reshuffles are a means Ould Taya uses without restraint to adjust cabinet and high functions of the state, and the direction of parastatals to reflect the inter- and intra-tribal balancing as needed. As one would expect, the formalisation of this culture has revived, especially among the Mauritanian elite, dormant tribal and regional instincts and solidarities. Given the fractious nature of Mauritanian politics, Ould Taya may have unleashed dynamics the consequences of which can be disastrous for the prospect of state building, the transcending of cleavages, and even future security and stability.

In the International arena, to compensate for its past support for Saddam Hussein, Ould Taya's regime literally threw itself at the mercy of the West, starting in the mid-1990s. Mauritania uncharacteristically embraced closer relations with Israel as early as 1995.⁴⁵ It was also willing to participate in the NATO-led efforts to fight Islamic fundamentalism in the Maghreb.⁴⁶ In 2000 still, suspected Islamists were rounded up, their political party (Attliaa) banned and, even before September 11, 2001, Mauritania collaborated ostensibly

⁴⁴ Union des Forces Democratique - Ere Nouvelle (Union of Democratic Forces - New Era), see 'The 'Programmed Electoral Putsch'' above.

⁴⁵ See *Africa Research Bulletin*, Political, Social and Cultural Series, vol. 32 (1-31 Dec 1995), p. 12101C. This shrewd move on the part of Ould Taya on behalf of a country such as Mauritania where deep seated anti-Israeli feelings prevail should put to rest the argument put forth by the President to explain his initial support for Saddam Hussein as reflecting the fear of 'being swept aside' by the strong domestic support for Iraq.

⁴⁶ See *Africa Research Bulletin*, Political, Social and Cultural Series, vol. 32 (1-31 March 1995), p. 11775B.

with the U.S. efforts against terrorism. These were clear indications of Ould Taya's readiness to pay his dues in exchange of international acceptance in the post Gulf-War World Order dominated by the United States. Previously, only the United States had maintained, up to 1995, its pressure on the Ould Taya regime citing the continued mistreatment of part of its citizens, including slavery. This changed when Mauritania displayed its eagerness to redeem itself. In April 1999, the United States government awarded Mauritania trade benefits under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP).⁴⁷ A few years earlier, the same vital economic privilege had been suspended because of human rights abuses, including slavery. Undoubtedly, the most astute and profitable move, was Mauritania's decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1999. It has remained the only Arab League and World Islamic Conference member, to maintain its

This shrewd diplomatic move (maintaining normal diplomatic relations with Israel) in total defiance of national, Arab and Islamic international public opinions has had the added benefit of attracting the favour of international financial institutions and muting US criticism of Mauritania's human rights practices, especially the persistence of slavery.

ambassador in Tel Aviv and to send its Foreign Minister there despite the resolutions of these bodies to withhold normal diplomatic relations with Israel. This shrewd diplomatic move in total defiance of national, Arab and Islamic international public opinions has had the added benefit of attracting the favour of international financial institutions and muting US criticism of Mauritania's human rights practices, especially the persistence of slavery. The international community was, once again, reminded of these issues by a November 2002 special report by Amnesty International documenting their persistence and gravity.⁴⁸ This pattern of bizarre decisions in the international arena was capped by Mauritania's decision to withdraw from the regional organisation (ECOWAS), which it helped to found. The pattern illustrates the syndrome evoked earlier. Mauritania seems to continuously act out to come

to terms with, and overcome early rejections and slight in the international community. In this case, however, salvaging his power appeared Ould Taya's only motivation.

Starting in 1985, Mauritania entered various structural adjustment programs and loan agreements with the IMF and the World Bank. It eagerly accepted the usual recipes of these institutions, particularly the privatisation of parastatals, most of which were sold off to a coterie of businesses and individuals close to Ould Taya. The international financial institutions have motivated their continued engagement with Mauritania by the dramatic increase of its macroeconomic indicators of growth since 1996. The World Bank credits Mauritania with spectacular economic achievement and poverty alleviation. This assessment brought with it several debt reductions and fresh funding, making Mauritania one of the highest per capita

⁴⁷ In 1993, President Clinton addressed a correspondence to Congress expressing his 'intent to suspend indefinitely Mauritania from [its] status as GSP' beneficiary. Other forms of bilateral aid were also curtailed. However, many were baffled by the State Department's decision, starting in 1996, to delete from its annual reports the critical paragraphs about human rights abuses, including the residual practice of slavery.

⁴⁸ Amnesty International, *Mauritania: A Future Free from Slavery?* (London: Amnesty International, 2002).

beneficiaries of official development foreign aid, as a percentage of GDP in recent years.⁴⁹ However, instead of a notable alleviation of poverty, many have witnessed a worrisome 'shantytown-isation' of the country.⁵⁰ The recent discovery of pockets of offshore crude oil and natural gas with promising prospects in the northern desert region, offers great prospects of accelerated economic growth. At the same time, it carries the risk of adding another element of contention in Mauritanian political economy as other interest groups, especially tribes, will resent monopoly also on this new sector by the regime's allies in the business class already dominated by Ould Taya's tribe, the Smassides. The blind reliance on the benevolence and tacit support of its Western partners confirm the regime's emphasis on international acceptance and legitimacy at the expense of domestic legitimacy through free and fair elections, democratic institutions and responsiveness to people's needs. Ironically, the combination of Ould Taya's regime two defining features help set the stage for the June 8 and 9 bloody coup attempt that almost cost him his power - and his life. In effect, in his zeal to please Western supporters, and be viewed as an ally in the fight against terrorism, he first had dozens of 'Islamists', many of whom were preachers, arrested. Second, as a matter of long-term strategy discussed above, thanks to multiple bans of main opposition parties, arrests of political leaders, press censorship, he had so weakened and disrupted the opposition that there seemed to be no alternative to express deeply felt popular sentiments. Mauritania's support to the second Gulf War, its continued relations with Israel, as well as the arrest of several well respected preachers in a devoutly Muslim society were widely resented. It was only a matter of time before 'something had to give.'

8 and 9 June 2003, the Reckoning

On 8 and 9 June 2003, the *Nouakchottois* were awakened to the thundering of heavy weapons, tanks, air to surface missiles, and small weapons. And, for more than 36 hours, political power was essentially vacant in Mauritania. The coup was plotted and carried out by a handful of exclusively Arab-Berber officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers. According to some estimates, it resulted in hundreds of dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, in addition to extensive material destruction, including the ransacking and brief occupation of the presidential palace and other strategic locations. It was, by far, the bloodiest and costliest coup in Mauritania's history. Beyond the strategic installations and buildings targeted, the explosions and bombardments shook to their core Ould Taya's regime and, doubtless, the man himself. As will be seen in the decisions in its aftermath, the meaning and reverberations of the coup

⁴⁹ Since 1996, World Bank annual reports have consistently lauded the performance of Mauritania's economy putting its annual GDP growth at more than 4% annually. This assessment of the macroeconomic indicators, is contested by the opposition. It certainly does not seem to have improved the dismal living conditions of the population, threatened by recurrent famines. The extent of inequalities, as measured by the World Bank itself, seems to tell another story. For relevant statistics, see World Bank, *African Development Indicators, 2001* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2002); also World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003).

⁵⁰ See 'Dix Ans et Plusieurs Pas en Arriere,' interview of Moustapha Ould Ahmed Ely, *Calame*, no. 301 (Aug - Dec 2000), pp. 13-23.

have already profoundly transformed the political equation. And its implications for the future appear ominous for the long-term stability and peacefulness of Mauritania.

The overwhelming majority of the plotters from the east of the country, and belong to warrior tribes, principally Oulad Nacer, a tribe whose elite (only coincidentally) is ideologically drawn to Nasserism.⁵¹ They purported to, and almost succeeded in overthrowing a regime that had succeeded in convincing most opponents of its invulnerability. Since they were not able to articulate in their own words their motivations and program, if they had taken over power, the interpretation of these can be based only on available indices and on the analysis of acknowledged variables and dynamics. The most important of these, of course, are the antecedents to the coup and its ringleaders led by Major Salah Ould Hannana, who was allegedly discharged two years earlier for criticising the country's relations with Israel. Like most other plotters, he is still in hiding. Because the coup happened after a wave of arrests of 'Islamists' (freed as the coup unfolded) and against the backdrop of the hostile popular sentiment on the invasion of Iraq, a common mistake, has been to rush to the conclusion that the putsch must have religious or Arab nationalist motivations. Clearly, the regime favours this interpretation,⁵² and as the statement of an unnamed Western diplomat seems to suggest, its Western allies tend to agree.⁵³ While this may well be a partially correct interpretation, it is by no means the only one. Many of the officers named as plotters do not seem to have any association with Arab nationalism or 'Islamists.' Given the regime's past policies that encouraged Arab nationalism in the military while purging it of Negro Mauritians, it would be ironic if the coup was hatched by officers imbued of that ideology in Iraqi or some other Arab countries' academies. The putschists may very well have been motivated by an array of grievances, including the frustrating political deadlock, corporate concerns (the resentment the army feels for its neglect in favour of the tribally based presidential security units), and even personal. As the foregoing discussion suggests, awakened regionalism and tribalism as acceptable avenues to lay claim to power and for resource allocation were, in all likelihood, important factors also.

As to the failure of the coup, it could be interpreted (and Ould Taya did), as a vindication of the regime's claim to strength and support among the people (who did not rally to the plotters), and in the security establishment (which did rescue Ould Taya). June 8 and 9 may also have signalled a reckoning long in the making and an abrupt reality check. Evidently, the coup attempt's first casualty may have been precisely the deceptive perception of invulnerability and stability, a most valuable commodity for authoritarian governments - by definition intrinsically unstable and vulnerable indeed.⁵⁴ Mauritania has, in effect, made it a clever publicity device to remind partners, critics, and opponents of its durable stability pointing to the lack of coups and major strife compared to other states in the region, and to the economic advantages accruing from this situation. One of the outcomes of the failed coup is that this claim can no longer be made credibly.

⁵¹ This is a pan-Arab nationalist and socialist ideology named after its theoretician, Egyptian Gamal Abdel Nasser. It is now associated with Libya's Moammar Gueddhafi.

⁵² Ould Taya made extensive remarks to that effect in Zouerate, on 15 July 2003.

⁵³ See 'President Survives Coup Attempt', *West Africa*, no. 4380 (16-22 June 2003), p. 19.

⁵⁴ See N'Diaye, Saine, and HOUNGNIKPO, *Not Yet Democracy*, Chapter 4.

Another outcome of the coup has been the new perception of the regime that supplanted in the average Mauritanian's mind the old perception of a self-assured and secure power. There is no agreement on the course of events that returned the situation in favour of Ould Taya's regime. However, it is established that the first hours of the coups sent prominent members of the regime scrambling to reach foreign Embassies seeking asylum, as the president's praetorian guard (the BASEP)⁵⁵ was completely overwhelmed and in disarray. Persistent but non-authenticated rumours that Ould Taya himself cowardly sought refuge in a Western embassy (the US's) and owes his survival to American (and Israeli) protection and technical assistance have been the basis of a perception that the regime's hold on the country was tenuous indeed. Even supporters do not accept entirely the official version that he took the command of the operations to rescue the regime from the headquarters of the National Guard. This translates in a certain loss of prestige for Ould Taya as unflattering comparisons are made between him and former African and Arab rulers who enjoyed the same backing in the past. Whether based in reality or not, this perception had better not be lost on the regime or its Western supporters.

The future security of the regime and the extent to which it can continue to have confidence in the security apparatus are already very much in question. Granted, no units joined the coup in progress and, of necessity, the long-term security of the regime will be reassessed. Nonetheless, this coup may also have the demonstration effect that, indeed, a small group of determined soldiers can severely sap a regime and, and with more luck even displace it when all other avenues for access to political power seem blocked. This psychological effect adds undoubtedly to the long-term cumulative adverse consequences of the coup attempt.

Other consequences were instantaneous and took the form of rapid shake up of the security sector, the formation of a new government, and appointment of a new Secretary General for the ruling party, the PRDS. While some decisions aimed at adjusting to, and managing, the short-term effects of the coup in view of the approaching elections, others suggest that a profound reconfiguration of the underpinnings of the power structure in Mauritania may be in the works. The near death experience the coup represented for the regime could constitute a golden opportunity to get off the slippery slope down which Mauritanian politics have been going for a long time. The question remains whether this is still possible, with an increasingly isolated Ould Taya with a severe persecution complex.

Post-Coup Handling

In the wake of the failed coup, it was evident that a stunned and ego-bruised Ould Taya was not satisfied with the performance under pressure of either his security apparatus, or his close civilian advisors. Having overcome (with an eye on the elections) the impulse of inflicting pain, and extracting blind revenge on the Oulad Nacer family, the relatives of the known putschists, and the eastern tribes generally,⁵⁶ he turned to a more sober management of the after-coup. He unceremoniously sacked all three chiefs of staff of the navy, the paramilitary *gendarmérie*, and the National Guard, and replaced them, while appointing a new army chief

⁵⁵ Bataillon de la Sécurité Présidentielle. It is alleged to be made up of exclusively *Smassides* and allies and commanded by a relative of Ould Taya's.

⁵⁶ In fact, the harassment and arrests had started with a vengeance before being called off, no doubt only temporarily.

of staff in replacement of Ould N'Diayane, killed during the coup. Such a drastic show of no confidence is understandable, under the circumstances. However, it brought down long time pillars of the regime, close allies, and some relatives of Ould Taya's. How these moves will affect these services in the medium term is hard to discern. On the civilian front, the pre-coup government of Ould Cheikh El Avia was essentially dismissed and a new Prime minister, Sghair Ould M'Bareck, appointed. He is a member of the servile and exploited group, the *Haratines*. This appointment, following the coup, and only a few months ahead of the presidential elections is of tremendous significance. It illustrates perfectly the political game in which Ould Taya has become a master. A reputed (black) Arab nationalist of Baathist allegiance, Ould M'Bareck's appointment is aimed at appealing not only to the *Haratines* (a numerical majority in the country) but also the eastern part of the country of which he is a native. It allows Ould Taya to perpetrate a subtle psychological coup as well. Not only did he appoint a member of a servile group over noble warriors, the new Prime Minister is also from a tribe traditionally rival to some of the tribes associated (in the public's mind) to the coup. Another objective, doubtless, is to weaken the appeal of the charismatic *Hartani* leader Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, a likely presidential candidate, and bitter rival to both Ould Taya, and Ould M'Bareck (in *Haratines* politics). This may also signal a redistribution of political cards, signalling Ould Taya's new alliance with the *Haratines* after successively failed similarly alleged informal 'arrangements' with the Arab-Berber 'white' community after 1987, and much earlier, with the Negro-Mauritanians. This reconfiguration may mean a breakdown of what could be termed the 'grand Arab-Berber consensus' that has underlain Mauritanian politics since independence. Ironically, it may have the unintended consequence of breaking a major psychological barrier in Mauritania's conservative society by introducing as perfectly legitimate the notion of a *Hartani* as head of state. This could help the charismatic Messaoud Ould Belkheir, an already threatening opponent, in free and fair elections.

Another move has been for Ould Taya, to the surprise of all, to essentially fire the Secretary General of his party and former Cabinet Director and *eminence grise*, Louleid Ould Weddad and to appoint a former party operative Ould Mogueya to replace him. A much-reviled Ould Weddad has been by his side since coming to power, though constantly engaged in epic battles against the Taya family and Smasside kin for the confidence and favours of the president. His sacking appears as a clear victory of his detractors and makes possible further rearrangements and realignments on terms still difficult to discern, but dictated by the huge stakes of the Smassides in Ould Taya's maintenance in power. How this gamesmanship by and around Ould Taya will affect Mauritania in the short term is open to interpretations. Possibly, most of these post-coup moves will not survive the elections whether they are rigged or, unexpectedly, transparent and fair. Given the state of a fractious, demoralised opposition, unable to mount any serious challenge despite the regime's post-coup fragility, Ould Taya might as well hold a perfectly free and fair presidential election. He would most likely win them handily. Even the exiled and underground opposition seems to have collapsed amid petty rivalries and lack of a unifying formula and leadership. Since the imprisonment of Ould Chbih then president of the front of opposition parties, the opposition has been unable to design the only winning strategy possible, a united front and a single candidacy. The idea of a coalition around the former head of state Ould Heydalla, seems to have lived, each of the other party leaders insisting on being candidate. In fairness, as described above the state of the opposition owes also to the merciless undermining tactics it was subjected to and to the abuse of state

power and resources to marginalise and keep it on the defensive.

Conclusion

As asserted at the opening of this article, the re-election of Ould Taya, in the absence of an astonishing and unforeseen event, seems a foregone conclusion. In reviewing what leads to this conclusion, it appears the predicament of Mauritania stems from the cumulated effects of an especially dysfunctional and unsustainable polity characterised by profound divisions of all sorts, resentment, and the ghost of massive human rights abuses against the Negro-Mauritanians. Just as the 8 and 9 June 2003 bloody coup attempt suggests, these divisions, the regular banning of major political parties, the muzzling of the press, and the unfinished business of the 1986-1992 'events', unless remedied, will come back with a vengeance to haunt the country's autocratic system. So far, the handling of the situation after the coup, and more importantly, after the elections, will also be a major test for Mauritania, particularly if the manipulation of tribalism and ethnicity, now a legitimate instrument of government, unless it gets out of hand as it very well may. The consequences for Mauritania and the sub-region of embittered (and allegedly well-armed) tribes with a warrior tradition settling scores, or violently jockeying for privilege, and the demonstration effect of 8 and 9 June 2003 can be foreboding indeed.

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Book Reviews

Issues in the Contemporary Politics of Sub-Saharan Africa: The Dynamics of Struggle and Resistance, by Graham Harrison. Basingstoke: Macmillan-Palgrave, 2002. £16.99 paperback. ISBN: 0-333-98725-X.

In a context of acute economic and political instability combined with high levels of corruption, authoritarianism and violence that have dragged many observers to the depths of despair, Graham Harrison has written a book which attempts to keep hope alive for Africa. Where most authors find political struggles on the continent to be hopelessly retrograde or at best ambivalent, Harrison finds in them the seeds of liberation. For him, every act of oppression has its moment of resistance, every circuit of exploitation generates the potential for liberation, and every storm cloud on the political horizon has its silver lining.

Reading Harrison's work, one cannot help but think that part of his optimism stems not from a careful attention to the evidence, but from a repeated conceptual slippage. Let me explain: the book's main theme is 'struggle'; entry 1.a. under 'struggle' in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), defines it as 'An act of struggling; a resolute contest, whether physical or otherwise; a continued effort to force or free oneself from constraint; a strong effort under difficulties'. Clearly, under these varied definitions, there is a lot of struggle going on in Africa: military contests, religious debates, demands for human rights, attempts to secure subsistence, and so on. But Harrison prefers not to focus on struggle in all its dimensions. To begin with, he chooses to understand 'Africa' only in terms of those African states devoid of military conflict, thus evacuating some of the more troubling aspects of struggle from his analysis. Secondly, he states that the study of struggle, normatively speaking, 'implies an ideal of *liberation*' (p. 21). Thus his normative perspective ties him to the OED's third definition of 'struggle': the effort to free oneself from constraint. Elaborating on his approach, he states that 'liberation here relates to ideals of equality, widening political participation and resistance to overbearing power' (p. 22). Such semantic manoeuvres allow Harrison to present struggle as an unequivocally positive thing.

The book's other main theme is an argument for the importance of political economy. It 'takes as its starting point the centrality of capitalism as a social system which has generated contradictions, forms of oppression and processes of exploitation' (p. 3). Harrison believes that, 'all forms of oppression produce their own seeds of resistance and all structures of inequality yield struggles for transformation' (p. 2). There are two things to say about this. Firstly, while few people would argue against the idea that capitalism has in many instances been oppressive in Africa, and horrifically so, it is clear that it has also brought wealth and enjoyment, at least to certain sectors of the population. The author's focus on capitalism's unpleasant aspects reveals not so much a normative bias - about which he is candid - as an ideological one. Next, the idea that oppression and domination entail resistance needs to be shown empirically; it cannot be assumed *a priori*. But this is what Harrison appears to do when he argues that, 'The recognition of the existence of structures, and their constant reproduction or reconfiguration in the context of social relations, leads us to recognise that there is *struggle* embedded in all structures... In fact, all processes of domination contain within them, and provoke, acts of resistance, even if these acts do not necessarily directly challenge an oppressor' (p. 13). And by believing that domination entails resistance, or struggle, and because he has arbitrarily associated struggle with a desire for liberation, it allows him to imply that there is a great deal of progressive

struggle going on in Africa.

Subsequent chapters attempt, with difficulty, to find the struggles that the introduction argued for: in chapter two for example, peasants are found to resist inappropriate development schemes and rapacious states; their 'everyday acts of resistance' are presented, quite reasonably, as acts of defiance and struggle: a politics of 'sabotage and subterfuge' (p. 46). However, the author fails to stress that everyday acts of peasant resistance, small-scale and uncoordinated as they usually are, are capable of undermining the state, but rarely of constructively changing it. Chapter Three contains an examination of the politics of resistance to debt and structural adjustment. The evidence presented is rather thin: 'Labour unions have often challenged the economic austerity of SAP, but it is fair to say that labour resistance has not been as great as some people predicted' (p. 62). Harrison concludes that, 'it would be inaccurate to imagine a strong, clearly directed popular resistance to structural adjustment'. Nevertheless, because he believes adjustment must create contradictions, he eschews 'pessimism of the intellect' in favour of 'optimism of the will' (p. 76).

Also, chapter five, on identity, discusses the postcolonial rendering of struggle as a 'play', going on to say that 'play' can also relate to 'more concrete' forms of struggle (p. 109). The point of the chapter seems to be to accept many of the phenomenological findings of postcolonial and post-structural analysis, while arguing that multiple identities are bound up with economic change, in what he terms 'a real political economy of hybridization' (p. 113). In this way the failure of clear proletarian identities to emerge and the channelling of political action into 'identity politics', such as relating to religion or youth, can still be subsumed under Harrison's master-narrative of people's progressive resistance to capitalism. The trouble with this subsumption is that much of this political action does not conform to Harrison's progressive criteria: think of the Bakassi Boys or the Odudua People's Congress or Islamic revivalism in Nigeria, think of the Mungiki in Kenya, the SunguSungu in Tanzania, the 'War-Veterans' in Zimbabwe, restoration movements in Uganda, witch-finding movements in South Africa. It is true that struggles expressed in the idioms of moral economy, ethnicity or religion, often inscribe a strong egalitarian ethic. But they often also re-inscribe hierarchy, sometimes of men over women, sometimes of elders over youth; some of their strategies, drawing on supernatural beliefs, entail the denial of basic human rights. These facts do worry Harrison, and he suggests in response that we should distinguish between 'positive' and 'negative' ethnicity, 'the former of which involves ethnic mobilization to promote some notion of collective empowerment, rather than violence, chauvinism or revanchism' (p. 142). It is telling that the most positive case he can find in Nigeria is MOSOP, whose supporters were above neither ethnic chauvinism nor violence.

At one point the author raises the possibility of drawing up a kind of balance sheet of the positive and negative dimensions of particular struggles, but then rejects this idea, sensibly, as being too static. He opts instead for an emphasis on the progressive potential of struggles as processes. The problem with this perspective is that it is founded on a rather blithe teleology. There is nothing immanent in political processes to determine that their positive potential will be reached. In fact, history, insofar as it can hold lessons, teaches us quite the opposite: social movements have a tendency toward oligarchy and re-domination, even if this does not quite approach the status of an iron law.

In spite of the paucity of evidence for the kinds of struggle Harrison would like to see, he insists that 'each regime change...has to consider its effects on organised groups rooted in

some ideal of struggle and liberation based on notions of justice and social equality; no structure of power can be entirely removed from struggles from below' (p. 153). In this sentence 'struggles from below' are conflated with 'struggle...based on notions of justice and social equality'. This is a clear example of the conceptual slippage of which I spoke. The majority of Harrison's book details political processes that can be described as struggle on a broad definition (resolute physical and ideational contests; strong efforts under difficulties), while, in the interests of preserving a positive message, he claims to have shown evidence of struggle compatible with his own narrow view (struggles for liberation which do not dominate others). In other words what we have here is a logician's fallacy of equivocation that goes something like this: 1) struggle (according to one definition) is a good thing; 2) there is a lot of struggle (according to another definition) occurring in Africa; therefore 3) there are lots of good things occurring in Africa. Which is not to say that there are not; it's just that they rarely take the form of struggles for liberation, emancipation and so on.

Harrison admits toward the end of the book that he has offered little more than a 'kind of hope against hope', a 'reference to struggle as an act of faith' (p. 158), which he intends as a political counterweight to Afro-pessimism. His openness about this normative agenda is welcome; the attempt to combat the voices of doom is nothing short of heroic. However, the book is so clearly a case of presenting the facts one way, and then spinning them another, that it is unlikely to convince many people; by the end of the book it is not even clear that he has convinced himself. Harrison has done nothing dishonest, but my worry is that he risks misreading a set of decidedly ambivalent social processes, through his normative inflation of the concept of struggle.

Its political intent notwithstanding, the book is essentially a teaching text with the feel of a set of elaborated lecture notes. It is clearly written and the author makes many moderate and sensible remarks, unfortunately, the editorial process has not been tight. Some sections are rather sparsely referenced. The discussion on African debt is very general, making an argument that applies with more force to other parts of the developing world than to Africa (it is curious that sugar, for example, is chosen to illustrate trends in commodity prices, when few African countries export it in substantial quantities (p. 53)). Besides, there are some mistakes: Julius Nyerere was an associate of World Bank President Robert McNamara, not 'Peter' (p. 73); the first Nigerian coup was in 1966, not '1996' (p. 137); it is Jean-Pascal Daloz, not 'Deloz' (p. 158). There are also some misleading simplifications: Nigeria's oil is not detained by the 'Igbo East' (p. 137), but in areas of the South-East populated by 'minority tribes'.

Tim Kelsall, PhD, Lecturer in Politics

School of Geography, Politics and Sociology, University of Newcastle, UK

Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau, by Adekeye Adebajo. London; Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002. \$14.95 paperback. ISBN: 1588260771.

Building Peace examines the origins, actors involved in, and management of conflicts in West Africa, particularly in the Mano River states of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. As Adekeye Adebajo, the author, points out, personalised autocratic rule triggered wars in these

countries: evidenced by the misrule of Samuel Doe in Liberia; Joseph Momoh and his predecessor, Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone; and Vieira in Guinea Bissau. In all the three cases, the violent attempt at upstaging the incumbents led to serious humanitarian emergencies, including thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons, destruction of lives and property, and a total or near-total state collapse. Yet those who challenged the existing regimes never offered any radical, progressive alternative capable of positively transforming the lives of the masses. While Charles Taylor succeeded in becoming the ruler in Liberia, General Mane and Foday Sankoh failed in Guinea Bissau and Sierra Leone respectively.

Though the book acknowledges the commendable role of civil society groups, especially religious bodies, to resolve internally or complement external efforts at managing the conflicts, its overarching focus was on the role of the sub-regional economic union, ECOWAS, in managing the civil wars in the three Mano River states. The outbreak of armed conflict in Liberia in 1990, which was to set off insurrection in neighbouring Sierra Leone and perhaps, Guinea Bissau, was the catalyst that highlighted and indeed incorporated conflict and security management into ECOWAS' mainly economic agenda. The book's evaluation of ECOWAS intervention (failures) in conflict management highlights the inadequate institutional and logistical capacity of the sub-regional union in the task of conflict management. Besides, the author pinpoints the political undercurrents of conflict management in west Africa: inter-faction suspicion and the lack of political will by some ECOWAS member-states, evidenced by their support to particular warring faction(s) in a conflict. In Liberia for instance, Charles Taylor's NPFL was actively supported by ECOWAS member-states, such as Burkina Faso and Cote d'Ivoire, while in Sierra Leone the rebel RUF movement was given military and non-military support by Liberia and Burkina Faso. Underlying the support some ECOWAS member-states gave to the factions was the access to lucrative resources, such as alluvial diamonds and other mineral resources that the factions had and readily made available to their backers. More important, the book also identifies the use of 'appeasement' (in the form of power sharing- allocation of ministerial positions to factions) in peace negotiation as another bane of ECOWAS' conflict management strategy.

While the book is particularly strong in its use of a comparative framework to identify least common denominators in ECOWAS's intervention; however, the author's discussion on the socio-political complexities of peace-building efforts in the three case studies is deflated by his uni-dimensional analysis of the war in Guinea Bissau as simply a 'peasant revolution'. This thesis is unlikely to sway even the most credulous reader. What is the nature of a 'peasant revolution' that makes it different from other types of civil war? And how does this pose a similar or different challenge to ECOWAS's conflict management strategy? In this light, the author would have done well to explain his understanding and use of 'peasant revolution' and in relation to peace building, especially ECOWAS's conflict management strategy.

Adebajo's conclusion - that even though ECOWAS may have faltered in learning the steep curve of conflict management, but has thereby learnt significant lessons from the three case studies that could be vital to tackling future similar and even different, situations, can hardly be faulted. The outbreak of armed conflict in Cote d'Ivoire (and the second cycle of civil war in Liberia) readily provides a good test case for evaluating ECOWAS' capacity to stem the tide of violent conflict in West Africa.

Joe Wylie, currently Senior Military Advisor,
LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy), Freetown, Liberia

The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars, by Douglas H. Johnson. Oxford: James Currey; Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003. £12.95 paperback. ISBN: 0-85255-392-7.

One cannot be blamed for being a bit sceptical about a book that claims to explain the root causes of Sudan's long-running civil war. Most portrayals of the Sudanese conflict describe it as a clash between a fundamentalist Muslim and Arab, developed North and a very underdeveloped, predominantly Christian or animist South. Such portrayals of one of Africa's longest and most ruthless civil wars are, at best, half-truths and generalisations, and at worst, deliberate distortions. Johnson's book, however, follows in the footsteps of scholars like Alex de Waal and David Keen, who, in recent times, have done much to expose the interrelated factors sustaining the Sudanese civil war.

Johnson's is a very ambitious project, which gives the reader a detailed historiography dating back to the very beginning of a North/South divide, as well as an excellent overview of the political chain of events both in the North and the South since the beginning of the conflict till date. This includes a detailed explanation of British and Egyptian overrule, leading up to the country's independence in 1956. His book deals with the central issues of race and religion, and cultural assimilation (Arabisation), which lie at the heart of the conflict, but are by no means the only factors involved. In addition, important issues- the flourishing war economy and its many benefactors; issues of external interests in the conflict; peace negotiations; the emergence of a lucrative oil exploration activity; and international anti-slavery campaigns - are discussed. However, though the book is successful in tying-in most of the factors that can be said to belong to the root causes of the civil war, one gets the feeling that it is rather unbalanced in the ways it deals with the two sides in the conflict and the country as a whole. While the dynamics of the political situation in the South is given much attention, the understanding of the political and socio-economic situation in the North is given limited mention. The incorporation of the rest of the country in Johnson's book is also restricted, especially the East and the West, which by no means can be said to be unaffected by the conflict. One gets the feeling that Sudan comprises a much diversified South on one side, and the capital Khartoum on the other, which is far from the truth. This is a minor criticism, although it can arguably be said to contribute to the very simplifications that Johnson sets out to work against.

The most critical omission in the book's account of the Sudanese conflict is the people, who have suffered the many decades of insecurity, famine, forced migrations, and trauma. Leaving out those who suffer the most is ironic, especially in a book that dedicates its last chapter to the prospects for peace and democracy in the Sudan. Although Johnson describes the problem of a widening gap between politicians, warlords and the people, and notes that the future of the Sudan depends on the type of peace it achieves, very little is mentioned about what can be done to ensure that some agency is given to the people in the present peace negotiations and in the eventual post-war era. Furthermore, though the book's much detailed historiography gives the reader an idea of the many factions and views on both sides, the account of the contemporary political situation is disappointing, as it mainly deals with the National Islamic Front (NIF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) without describing them in as much detail as past political actors. Also, very little attention is given to civil society organisations, including the ever-present and growing missionary churches, or the

newly formed women organisations.

All this notwithstanding, Johnson's is a very readable book, and is warmly recommended to anyone interested in the dynamics of the Sudanese conflict.

Amira Malik,

FORWARD, London.

African Pastoralism: Conflict, Institutions and Government, edited by M.A. Mohamed Salih, Ton Dietz and Abdel Ghaffar Mohamed Ahmed. London; Sterling, VA: Pluto Press, 2001. £45.00 hardcover. ISBN: 0-7453-1787-1.

African Pastoralism is the outcome of an October 1999 international conference on 'Resource Competition and Sustainable Development in Eastern and Southern Africa' organised by the Organisation of Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) and the Institute of Social Studies (ISS) at The Hague. There are 12 chapters by 17 international authors, presenting case studies from Botswana, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

The book analyses the key issues facing pastoralists, especially the forms and impacts of government interventions in specific contexts, highlighting how these interventions are often in conflict with the traditional structures and how they can result in violence. In chapter three for example, Helland in his study of Borana in Southern Ethiopia, notes that government-sponsored institutions and initiatives (government-created local pastoral associations) are proving incapable of replacing the crumbling traditional structures (self-help, independent pastoralist bodies) used by pastoralists to ensure sustainable use of resources. Besides, such new associations dis-empower the pastoralists, and tend to become an instrument of state control, even repression. Gebre's chapter on Conflict Management, Resolution and Institutions among the *Karrayu* and their neighbour in Ethiopia, extends Helland's views, arguing that the traditional structures of managing conflicts (by forming kinship and ties through marriages to build inter-ethnic trusts and confidence) have been eroded by the government's policy on large scale farming, a development that has heightened the competition for resources, and with it, inter-ethnic tensions and conflicts, among pastoralists. Similarly, Baxter in his chapter on the Borana of Kenya pinpoints the main threat to pastoralism to be 'the end of the commons, privatisation and alienation of water and grazing and restrictions on their freedom to move across borders in search of water and pastures in desperate times'. Other chapters in the book focus on governments' policies and the different challenges (problems) faced by pastoralists in countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Botswana and Uganda.

The book's major strength lies in its use of a case-study approach to avoid controversial generalisations and to show how a variety of circumstances influence specific situations. It is a bold attempt at understanding the challenges posed by a changing, modernising world to age-old occupations such as pastoralism. Invariably, changes in power and power relations amongst pastoralists, and limitations imposed by national borders on access to land continue to affect the ability of pastoralists to survive, especially keeping their nomadic lifestyle. Though some of

the essays occasionally become overly concerned with names and numbers at the expense of clarity of argument, it remains a useful volume for anyone interested in pastoralism, natural resources and sustainable development.

Kjersti Dale, Project Coordinator
Sogn og Fjordane Red Cross, Førde, Norway

The Future that Works: Selected Writings of A.M. Babu, edited by Salma Babu and Amrit Wilson. Trenton, NJ and Asmara, Eritrea: Africa World Press, 2002. \$24.95 paperback. ISBN 0-86543-834-X.

In the present era of global upheaval where the ideology of the World Bank and the US-led globalisation seeks to present itself as the new consensus, this collection of writings by Abdulrahman Mohamed Babu - drawn from a political life of some forty years - recaptures some of the important lessons that African history can teach us in relation to the present and the future. The collection, edited by Salma Babu, and Amrit Wilson is a tribute to the life and teachings of Mohammed Babu. Both knew him well and valued his contribution to knowledge as well as his courage to say things that others preferred not to say for political expediency. Babu led the 1964 Zanzibar revolution and was a cabinet minister in Tanzania until 1972 when Nyerere imprisoned him. Released in 1978 after an international campaign to get him pardoned, he continued to play a unique role in African politics as a political commentator and lecturer, living first in the US and then in Britain.

Coming seven years after Babu's demise, this compilation of his writings- essays, articles, letters and speeches - is a significant historical documentation. 'The Future that Works' is divided into seven sections: economic policies and development; Pan-Africanism; Imperialism - strategies of control and strategies of resistance; democracy; national liberation in the era of neo-colonialism; Marxist theory; and a last section which is essentially a political and economic blueprint for what he calls 'the Africa we need'. Using historical materialism as the underlying analytical framework, Babu's writings provide remarkable insight for understanding African politics over the past few decades as well as present political events.

The urgency of change remains a central theme across the writings. Arguing that Africa must focus on internal issues, he locates these as the foundation for effecting change. Babu's commentary on Zimbabwe's land ownership is particularly incisive. In 1980 he noted that: 'Experience elsewhere has taught us that the taking over of ongoing viable farms has invariably led to almost total collapse of agricultural production and has forced the countries concerned to incur heavy foreign debt to import food...It is a painful historical fact that in Zimbabwe such large-scale farms are owned by White settlers, some of whom are liberal and others incorrigibly reactionary. To expropriate them will amount to economic disaster, at least in the short run. To allow them to continue as before will amount to perpetuating a national injustice.'

Babu was unequivocally critical of the prevailing Western neo-liberal, free market economy arguing, 'Africa must not confuse democracy and the free market. Democracy does not necessarily mean a free market'. Ideologically, he moved between nationalism and socialism, two bodies of ideas he saw as mutually reinforcing. Underlying Babu's disdain for Western neo-liberalism was

his Pan-Africanist orientation, which informed his dream for a united and socialist Africa. It is no surprise that he advocated a second liberation of Africa, a development he hoped for and was fairly optimistic about.

The text offers valuable contributions to current debates about development and underdevelopment in Africa, especially current debates on the African Union, democracy and democratisation in Africa, and the development of a global consensus for equitable distribution of resources and a truly inter-dependent world system. I hope it receives the wide readership it deserves.

Wangui wa Goro, Research Fellow

London Metropolitan University, London

Determinants of Democratization in Africa: A Comparative Study of Benin and Togo, by Mathurin C. Hounnikpo. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2001. \$36.50 paperback. ISBN: 0-76182-064-7.

Hougnikpo's comparative study of attempts at democratic transition in Benin and Togo provides an important opportunity to understand the internal dynamics of democratisation process in a comparative framework. The book outlines both the exogenous (the end of the cold war, the new momentum democratisation gained in global politics, aid and its conditionality on political reform) and endogenous (authoritarian regimes faced a crisis of legitimacy, economic restraints, civil society's vibrant come-back) factors that induced a new political climate in Africa. Hougnikpo's central argument: that although civil society played a crucial role in changing the face of Africa's authoritarian politics, democracy only occurred in countries where the military either embraced or at least condoned it, is clearly stated. However, his fragmented style makes it difficult to locate his focus and logically follow his argument. Agonisingly, he reviews a range of theoretical perspectives on democratisation, civil society, the military, and political culture in Africa, without relating them to his research problematic. The depth of information provided is often unfocused and is not used to reiterate the central hypothesis. As a result, the analysis of the role of the military in Togo and Benin's political evolution often has to be painstakingly extracted, and his fundamental question- does the military need to endorse democratisation for its birth and survival? - is posed without being convincingly argued or answered.

Hougnikpo argues that the military has also had a positive (perhaps decisive) role in democratic transition in Africa. He uses Togo and Benin, two countries with contiguous borders, a similar culture and comparable experience of past military rule, to demonstrate that their recent political differences, encapsulated by the different outcomes from their national conferences, are attributable to the divergent dispositions of the military establishment in the two countries. While in Benin General Kérékou accepted the outcome of the 1990 national conference, President Eyadema disbanded the 1991 conference halfway when participants wanted to follow the precedent in Benin by declaring it sovereign. Although Hougnikpo gives us the facts behind the national conferences, he does not convincingly argue his case that the difference in outcomes lies in the role of the military. Besides, he gives no thought to other

factors, such as the role of France's age-old influence and support for incumbents of power - Eyadema, the impact of precedence, especially from Benin and the role of the domestic political economy.

It is only from the fifth chapter that an attempt is made to provide a convincing argument by supplying valuable data on civil military relations in both countries. In Benin, although Kérékou had long had the support of the dominant, primarily northern soldiers from the North, by 1988 the mood in the army ranks was one of frustration and a demand for change, a development that favoured the military's disposition towards democratisation. Conversely in Togo, Eyadema has cleverly maintained a disproportionate representation in the military, favouring his own ethnic group - the Kabiye, and thereby narrowing threats to his regime. As such, the national conference was perceived by the military not as a tool for political reform (unlike in Benin), but as a way of upstaging the north's domination of politics and the military. Thus the dynamics within the military and inter-ethnic power calculus explains the different outcomes from the respective national conferences.

The major limitation of the book lies in its conception of the military in both countries as a united, single entity and thus credits the institution as a whole for the success and failure of the national conference in Benin and Togo respectively. The author, for instance, fails to highlight the fact that it was the personal willingness and commitment of Kérékou to genuine reforms, rather than the military's inclination towards democracy, which explains the positive outcome of the national conference in Benin. Conversely in Togo, Eyadema has strong support from the military elite comprising mainly his own family members, however Hougnikpo indiscriminately subscribes to the myth that he has the full backing of the military as a whole. The reality is that, like in Benin, the bulk of the military benefits very little from the regime and would most likely embrace change in the form of multi-party democracy. What stops them from taking action is the fear of failure: the backlash associated with the failure to upstage a dictatorial regime. Thus, it is not the military as a whole that has impeded democratic transition in Togo; rather, it is the aforementioned tiny elite, perhaps Eyadema himself.

Finally, it is regrettable that the more useful and intellectually challenging sections of the book are relegated to the background, in favour of mundane, even though informative, chapters. Thus an unfortunate, illogical ordering of the chapters, something that undercuts Hougnikpo's great attempt at contributing meaningfully to the understanding of the democratic transition in Africa.

Maimouna Jallow, journalist

BBC, London, UK

The Open Grave: NADECO And the Struggle for Democracy, by Olawale Oshun. London: Josel Publishers, 2002. £15.00 hardback. ISBN: 0-9537395-1-1.

The Open Grave is Wale Oshun's second book on Nigeria's most recent political history. The first was *Clapping With One Hand*, published about two years ago. I have not read *Clapping With One Hand*, but the title is suggestive of the author's account of the June 12, 1993 Political struggle - its genesis, betrayal, intrigues, and tragedy. *The Open Grave* seems to be a logical continuation of the author's attempt at documenting and analysing post-1993 Nigeria's chequered political

history. It explores developments on Nigeria's political scene in the post-annulment era, with the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) serving as the linchpin of the struggle for enthroning democracy in opposition to the then military dictatorship of the late General Sani Abacha.

The author, on account of his position as the Chief Whip of the country's lower legislative chamber during the truncated third republic, combined with his deep involvement in the Abiola electioneering process and his membership of NADECO, was thoroughly immersed in the struggle to de-abrogate the June 12 presidential election. It is no surprise that his involvement was at a great personal cost, including but not limited to arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, and forced exile. The scope and depth of Wale Oshun's analysis of NADECO and the Struggle for Democracy are at once reassuring and disturbing. He presents an incisive narrative that is fluid and compelling, demonstrating a good grasp of politics and the informal political process, especially the covert aspects of political struggles. The reader is presented with a vivid account of the intricacies of the 'Struggle Years', including the story of NADECO, the individuals and associations behind it, its operations and its myth', leading up to the end of military rule and the achievement of the present democratic dispensation.

Oshun's book is structured to reflect the evolution (of NADECO), the dynamics and the different stages of the struggle, and the climax of the agitation for democratic governance. There are seven chapters in all. Chapter one, titled 'In the Beginning', is easily the longest accounting for 83 of the 296 pages of the book. Chapters Two and Three, titled 'NADECO-Abroad and Dynamics of Foreign Policy' respectively, account for 63 pages in total. The funding, propaganda war, and unsung heroes of the struggle are discussed in chapters four, five and six respectively. The last chapter is the 'Epilogue'.

It opens with an account of the 19 December 1995 NADECO rally, at Yaba, Lagos. The rally itself was significant, not only for the fact that Anthony Enahoro (a foremost nationalist) was the lead speaker, but for capturing the political and security undercurrents of the time. It was NADECO's first definitive reaction to the judicial murder of playwright-turned environmental activist - Ken Saro Wiwa, and the assassination of a key pro-democracy figure - Alfred Rewane. The rally was a reaffirmation of NADECO's intent, resilience and determination to confront Abacha's security agents who were out to cow intransigent pro-democracy activists. It was an episodic test of wits and character, given that Abacha's limitless capacity for mindless brutality was never in doubt, evidenced by his July 1993 Order mowing down of some 234 persons, confirmed to be protesting against the June 12 annulment, on Ikorodu Road, Lagos. So the possibility of a repeat was real. Yet, the rally rather than cow opposition to the Abacha regime, became a unifying factor for the mainstream pro-democracy movement as it was graced by notable pro-democracy activist, including Chief Gani Fawehinmi, the implacable lawyer (who was hitherto suspicious of politicians in the mainstream pro-democracy groups). *'For the first time in its 18 months existence,'* writes the author, *'NADECO came forward with the cream of its leaders and positioned them in the frontline of a direct confrontation with the military.'* This is followed by the author's account of the origin of NADECO - evolving as a coalition of the various Committees for Unity and Understanding (CUU), made up of CUU East, CUU Middle-Belt, CUU West and CUU South-South, although very little is said of the origin of individual CUUs.

But we are informed that NADECO began in May 1994, just six months into General Abacha's dictatorship. By its nature, the circumstance surrounding its formation, and perhaps, its

composition, NADECO was destined for internal contradictions as well as confrontation with the holders of power. The first in the series was the May 31 1994 ultimatum given to the Abacha regime to vacate power and restore democratic governance. This generated ripples within and outside the NADECO fold. Former military officers within NADECO, notably Commodore Ukiwe and General Adeyinka Adebayo vehemently opposed such vacation order, to the point that the former almost withdrew from the group. Still, other former military officers sympathetic to NADECO's cause- General Olusegun Obasanjo, for example, also show considerable disapproval to the ultimatum, arguing that whatever happened, the *'military was a sacrosanct institution that should not be humbled.'* (p. 19). The author identifies this as the tendency of former military men to protect the military constituency from any action by the civil society capable of diminishing the prestige of, and de-mystifying, the military.

In spite of the author's obvious effort to present a balanced and objective account, he could not but reflect his obvious bias(es), bordering on hero-worshipping, of two personalities namely, Chief Anthony Enahoro and General Alani Akinrinade, whose roles and lives seem to have impacted most positively on him. Thus, while he is unsparing of all others in his open criticism of any of their allegedly unsalutary deeds, these two could almost do no wrong. Still, overall, there is an unmistakable ring of truth and sincerity in his allusions, betraying neither animosity nor spite - simply an exhilarating narration of the good, the bad, and the ugly events of those years of the struggle. Those that emerged shining, even though not without some light swat of Oshun's fly-whisk include; Professor Bolaji Akinyemi, the taciturn academic spokesman of NADECO abroad, whom Oshun had always thought to be snobbish, but apparently safeguards himself against unwarranted insults by such mien; Senator Bola Tinubu whose financial and personal contributions, according to Oshun, were only surpassed by that of General Akinrinade; John Odigie Oyegun, who could laugh off his deprivation and found humour in his diminished circumstance in exile (p. 130); and Professor Wole Soyinka, who deployed his towering international stature to the struggle through the many conflicts, contradictions and collaboration of his groups with NADECO.

The book gives a sordid account of Abacha's despicable brutality and the illusory efforts of his deputy, Dipo Diya, to *'create a new Yoruba leadership class, one that would be in his own image'* (p. 47). Diya in the pursuit of his selfish agenda, recklessly connived and conspired to *'deliver'* his own Yoruba people, and failed to learn *'from his northern colleagues one prerequisite lesson; that the northern political class remained always in charge of the relationship and would not under any circumstance be brought to public odium by those who bore arms.'* (p.46). But even in this, the author remains generous where possible. *'There was no question,'* he writes, *'that General Diya wanted Abiola out of detention.'* (p. 46).

Oshun's book is an account of heroic deeds of valiant men who suffered severe deprivations and took life-threatening risks for a noble cause - some with and some without ulterior motives. Such as newspaper houses shut, vandalised or set on fire; journalists harassed and hounded into jail or exile; and individuals such as Frank Kokori, the then General Secretary of the umbrella union for oil workers-NUPENG - *'who in a way had become a civilian General in the undeclared political war'* (p. 58), but got caught and beaten up before being hauled into jail without trial four years. It is also a story of the role ethnicity in Nigerian politics and how it continually shaped alliances and counter-alliances, as well as the overall dynamics. Ethnically motivated opposition to a cause dodged the struggle throughout and was brought to play with

devastating effect on NADECO-abroad, with repeated demands for the jettisoning of principles and prior collective understanding on the altar of base ethnic considerations.

The author devotes considerable time in the 'Epilogue' to summing his position on the political questions and puzzles confronting the nation: Was, as the author would want us to believe, General Bamaïyi prodded by the British Intelligence to plan a coup to remove General Abacha? Why did Bamaïyi choose to involve General Diya? The author asserts that '*it was more than mere speculation to assert that Abacha's confidence in Bamaïyi was continuously bolstered by Bamaïyi*' foreign sponsors, and premises this position on the difficulty a trapped Bamaïyi would pose to a new attempt to seat Abacha in a short while. The 'Epilogue' is replete with informed postulations on many such issues: Abacha's death, Abiola's demise, the Caliphate's hand, International conspiracy, among others. Oshun author concludes by dwelling on the place of the military and ironically, NADECO, in Nigerian politics and also raises several serious, but unanswered questions on the nature of politics in Nigeria. In particular, considerable attention is given to the political upheaval of Lagos State as represented by the tussle for power and control of the AD Party machinery, not the least because the author himself was a principal figure in the task of finding a resolution to the crisis.

Though valuable for its insider's account of a delicate and dangerous struggle, the book, in its pursuit of reporting almost every detail to prove what the author considers to be the 'truth', regrettably fails to undertake a systematic analyses of events, something that would have been an important value-added. In spite of this shortcoming however, it should provide a good read for students, academics and politicians interested in understanding the internal workings of ethnically motivated causes and political struggles.

Tunde Fagbenle, Journalist,
Lagos

The Reversed Victory: Story of Nigerian Military Intervention in Sierra Leone, by Rafiu A. Adeshina. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria). £18.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781294213.

This insightful and candid memoir of an Infantry General could well have been titled 'Triumph and Tragedy', to borrow one of the captions of the monumental military annals of all times - the six-volume rendition of the Second World War saga by Winston Churchill. However, while Churchill was fighting the war from his underground dungeon of no. 10 Downing Street with his powerful war speeches, General Adeshina was driving himself and his men to exhaustion in the jungles of Sierra Leone with limited logistical resources to support him and the intrepid enemies attempting to drive him out. *The Reversed Victory* is therefore a veritable and breath-taking *tour-de-force* from one of Nigeria's military intellectuals. By firing the first salvo in what promises to be a lively intellectual debate about why we were in Sierra Leone (that is, the policy rationale of intervention) and what eventually went wrong (that is, the operational question of how a defeated band of rebels eventually reorganised and almost drove a professional outfit into the sea) the author provides the Nigerian public a rare insight into the country's foreign policy making process. In the process, questions bordering on the micro and macro competence

of the Nigerian military establishment in the context of what Kenneth Boulding has termed the 'radius of effective military action' ('loss-of-strength gradients') must be addressed. As to the first policy level question (why were we in Sierra Leone in the first place?) the Nigerian public has always wanted to know. This book does not disappoint its readers: to avoid the withdrawal of the Sierra Leonean contingent from ECOMOG (and, therefore, maintain the façade of ECOMOG's multinational image) and to 'safeguard the ECOMOG Forward Operation Base (FOB) which was then sited at the Sierra Leonean International Airport at Lungi' (p. 7).

Thus, by deploying Nigerian troops for a glorified guard duty in Sierra Leone (including the Presidential Palace), in the face of internal insurgency by RUF, our policy makers in Abuja gave little thought to the lessons of contemporary history: that those troops will likely be sucked into the domestic quagmire of Sierra Leone, signified by the restiveness of its military and the gathering storm of RUF rebellion which the book has brilliantly analysed (Part 1). As to the related policy question: why use Nigerian Troops 'under the aegis of ECOMOG' to pacify the entire country and disarm the rebels (who ordered the 'third mission'?), the author is as baffled as most Nigerians (pp. x and 29).

Nevertheless, it is really in the operational direction of the war that the book demonstrates considerable depth with episodes of gallantry and tactical setbacks. Irrespective of who ordered the 'third mission' to overrun and occupy Sierra Leone, it was fairly obvious to defence analysts that without gaining strategic depth, the ECOMOG forces in Freetown will eventually become sitting duck to the junta forces and the RUF. The 'third mission' in my appreciation, therefore, became inevitable in the context of the inexorable logic of the circumstance. However, the inescapable question the author still has to answer, in the context of the vicissitudes of the operational level of warfare, is whether in the light of the objective constraints imposed on the 24th Infantry Brigade (in terms of human and logical resources) and the tactical disposition of enemy forces, the aggressive 'end-run' for the Kono campaign (reminiscent of the blitzkrieg of the German Land Forces in World War II) met the requirement of good judgment and reasonable action.

Certainly, the rebellious elements of the 24 Infantry Brigade (5 Battalion) did not think so. Their casualties at Yigbeda, as Corporal Dominic Amade notes, directly relate to the attempt by the men to satisfy one of the most basic of human instincts (food - by helping themselves to some 'ripe mango fruits') (p. 59). As the old adage goes, 'armies travel on their stomach', it is clear from the author's account that by deliberately overstressing his line of communication, he was indirectly courting disaster. Was the 24th Brigade Commander, then Colonel Adeshina, deliberately trying to perform a divisional job with brigade level resources? Should it not have occurred to him that overrunning a territory is one thing and effectively occupying or policing it is another? Of course, he realises this as noted in the book. Hence his hectic attempt (even at the cost of his life) to get back to the Headquarters of ETFSL in Freetown after the fall of Sefadu to make a passionate and urgent case for more men and material of war, to consolidate operational objectives already achieved.

As a perceptive student of military science, the imperative to maintain pressure on the enemy in flight, if the 'heart' of the entire operations in Sierra Leone (Kono) was to be reached with minimum cost in lives and hardware was not lost to the 24th Infantry Brigade Commander. His 'storm-trooper' method was, therefore, an act of military perspicacity rather than an act of recklessness as critics of the campaign are wont to assert.

Ultimately, the 'Reversed Victory' is not a story of a military blunder arising from the lack of know-how of operational direction in a command position, but rather the lack of political

will at the policy level to ensure the availability of the necessary human and material resources to consolidate the exploits of the gallant troops of the Nigerian Legion in Sierra Leone to whom so much was expected with palpably limited logistical resources and psychological support. Perhaps with little sensitivity at the Defence Headquarters, the men who participated and survived the bloody battle for Freetown would have been sent home as they were first made to understand (p. 58). The 'third phase' of the mission should have, therefore, started with a fresh body of men and material anchored to a policy akin to what Americans called 'Vietnamisation' in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In other words, the ultimate burden of return of peace in the Sierra Leone vortex should have been borne by the Sierra Leoneans themselves not by the exhausted Nigerian soldiers, many of whom have seen more action and less of their families, in Liberia and Sierra Leone. In the final analysis, this book serves as a desideratum for policy and defence planners: that, as Fred Greene once noted, a 'foreign policy objective beyond a state's capacity inevitably establishes requirements that military planners cannot meet.'¹ In this regard, 'to provide sensible war plans based on actual capabilities of a state and in accordance with foreign policy objectives that are themselves both sensible and prudent poses one of the most difficult challenges to statecraft.'² It is quite reassuring to note that in the present democratic dispensation, this desideratum is well noted by the Nigerian Defence Establishment. In the words of the present Chief of Army Staff: 'a nation that is not prepared to sustain its forces in combat has no business initiating it in the first place as the consequences may be grievous. We must also eschew our nation's penchant to embark on unilateral missions that have implications for enormous human and material resources only to abandon such troops when inducted, without adequate logistic and sustenance items' (p. vi). What remains to be seen is how the developing dialogue and consultation between the civil and military intellectuals will shape the direction of our defence policy in the 21st century.

Celestine O. Basse, Professor
University of Calabar (UNICAL), Calabar, Nigeria

Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa, 3rd edition by Naomi Chazan, Peter Lewis, Robert A. Mortimer, Donald Rothchild, and Stephen John Stedman. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1999. \$24.50 paperback. ISBN: 1-55587-679-X.

This is the third edition in a series that is arguably on its way to becoming a basic introductory text to understanding the complex and often confusing landscape of politics and society on the African continent. With its dubious reputation as the region whose actual essence continues to evade critical apprehension, Africa is the social commentator's worst nightmare.

¹ Fred Greene, *Dynamics of International Relations: Power, Security, and Order* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964).

² *Ibid.*

Hegel's famous thumb down of the continent as the 'land of childhood, removed from the light of self-conscious history and wrapped in the dark mantle of light' was, racial condescension aside, an admission of a well known analytic helplessness. Bravely, the editors of this comprehensive volume set off from the premise that the situation is not totally hopeless. The problem, they argue, resides with the approaches that have been adopted by scholars to unwrap the object

of their study, as opposed to the continent itself being innately incomprehensible. Thus, the entire book can be understood in a sense as a rejection of existing approaches to the study of Africa, and a methodological innovation that attempts to configure a new trajectory for the study of the continent.

The authors proceed by outlining some of those approaches that scholars have employed in the past to analyse social reality in Africa and the failings of such approaches. The first is modernisation theory, which was the subject of a wild intellectual romance in the early post-independence period. With its emphasis on Western style rationality, efficiency and scientific logic, it appealed to the emergent post-colonial elite many of whom had given up on the capacity of traditional values and institutions to produce 'development'. Yet, a few years down the road, it became obvious that the modernisation approach, its other merits notwithstanding, was incapable of 'delivering the goods' to the people. Some of the criticisms of the approach have rightfully denounced its uncritical equation of westernisation with development, while others have attacked it for giving short shrift to the all-important external context of African politics.

The vacuum produced by the decline of the modernisation approach was filled, in succession, by the dependency and statist approaches. The authors examine the strengths and weaknesses of both. The dependency approach, emerging in seeming response to the failings of the modernisation school, appear to have privileged the burden of history borne not only by Africa, but also other Third World formations with whom the continent shared the same horrendous experience of slavery and colonialism. For this school, the conclusion was that Africa is where it is today because it had been exploited by the west, and the continent's crisis of underdevelopment cannot be understood without due attention to this political economy of exploitation. The dependency school commanded widespread appeal especially from scholars of Marxist leaning, but its strengths were as egregious as its weaknesses. Perhaps the most serious of the latter was its tendency to generalise about conditions in the whole of Africa and the Third World, thus assuming a certain consistency over time and space that did not in fact exist in reality.

In recent times, perhaps the most severe criticism of the dependency approach has come from the French thinker, Jean Francois Bayart, who, in his exposition of the theory of extraversion, has argued that Africans themselves 'have been active agents in the *mise en dependance* of their societies, sometimes opposing it and at other times joining in it.' Thus, while you cannot 'deny the existence of a relationship of dependence between Africa and the rest of the world, the point is to consider the fact of dependency while eschewing the meanderings of dependency theory. These are two entirely different matters.'

In retrospect, the dependency paradigm, it seems, failed to apprehend one of the most salient aspects of modern African life - the role of domestic actors in the interplay that has left

the continent with its current reputation as the sick man of the world. Conceptually, this appears to be a continuation of the trend noticeable in modernisation theory, in which local processes and forces are relegated to the backwater of scholarly analysis. Clearly, the statist perspective, with its emphasis on the role of the state and allied actors in the domestic and international *milieux* was developed to remedy this situation. The hypotheses behind the statist perspective is that if the state, arguably the most influential actor in African social formations, can be studied in all its puzzling complexity, then an invaluable window would have been opened into the dynamics of life in Africa. Statism enjoyed a brief reign as the conceptual new kid on the block, until the sensational events of the late 1980s and early 1990s, and the culmination of years of authoritarian misrule occasioned the implosion of its subject matter in several parts of the region. These days, the state in Africa is much beleaguered, and only a pathetic shell of the actual thing remains in several parts of the continent, especially in Somalia, former Zaire, Sierra Leone, and Liberia to name a few illustrative examples.

A survey of this grim landscape of conceptual mortality has led the authors of the present volume to evolve a new 'political interaction framework' that 'focuses on identifying the multiple factors at work on the African political scene and tracing their diverse dynamics over time.' 'This perspective, unlike the managerial view of the modernization school, the exploitative emphasis of dependency approaches, and the instrumental notions of statist writers, highlights the fluidity of politics and attempts to trace the vacillating political course,' say the authors.

What then follows is a largely successful attempt to examine virtually every facet of historical and modern African life through the lens of this apparently inclusive perspective. This is done under five overlapping classifications: the structure of politics, the political process and political change, political economy, international relations, and political futures. The breadth of knowledge about African history and political and cultural processes is clearly evident in the book. This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that the five authors are easily some of the leading names in Africanist scholarship in the past two decades. Several themes are handled with sympathy and enviable erudition and the footnoting is invariably heavy and illuminating.

In the past couple of years, the imperative has emerged to eschew the popular tendency to study Africa in a top down fashion. A bottom up perspective, the reasoning goes, does not only yield extensive primary material, it also enables researchers and scholars to come up close to myriad subaltern actors and forces that play crucial roles in animating social life on the continent, but that are usually neglected by 'parachute anthropologists'. At the same time, the rapid decline of the state in Africa has created a socio-political vacuum that has been steadily occupied by a collage of people centred organisations with the aim of filling exactly that niche that the state has abandoned. This is the much-contested arena of civil society, increasingly a resonating mantra in post-Soviet development discourses. Admittedly, by aiming to focus intellectual searchlight on those spaces and forces that a top down approach has clearly neglected, the volume under review constitutes a timely response to an urgent imperative.

So far so good. What seems to be lacking is a comprehensive theoretical discuss of some of those issues around which the challenges and opportunities facing Africa have in recent times been structured. Prime amongst such issues are globalisation and its implications for the continent

in the international political and economic order; the threat to the state (or what is left of it) and its classical attributes within the context of globalisation; and the emergence of the neo-liberal discourse on civil society and the role of African civil society in the development process. As a methodological project, this volume is a roaring success, but lacunae such as those just highlighted certainly vitiate the authors' claims to have produced a volume that is 'broadly encompassing'. There is also clearly no 'revised discussions of civil society' as claimed.

These are issues that can be usefully tackled by subsequent editions of the book which remains all the same an important and extremely knowledgeable introduction to the subject. Its major strength - its extensive range - also happens to be its bane. In the noble attempt to provide a panoramic guide to a befuddling subject, much illuminating minutiae is inescapably glossed over. That does not seem like a capital offence.

Ebenezer Obadare, PhD Student,

Centre for Civil Society, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

Books Available for Review

Readers are encouraged to request for copies of these books for review or review articles in subsequent editions of the journal.

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