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Explaining and Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy

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Abstract

Situating the salience of ethnic conflicts in the character of the state as a partisan and major source of ethnic conflict, this article argues that we may reasonably expect to lessen rather than deepen ethnic conflict by changing the character of the state, making access to it more inclusive of significant ethnic groups in the country.

Using Ethiopia and Nigeria as examples, the article shows how federal-type consociational power-sharing constitutional arrangements, which divide or fracture and structure the sovereignty of the state, such that significant ethnic groups have their own "sovereignty" within their natal or local spaces, while entrenching their participation within the national "sovereign" space, through provisions for mutual control of the state at that level, can be strategically utilised to achieve such an object.

Introduction

That ethnic conflict is now a pervasive and salient dimension of political and social conflict in several countries in the world seems obvious enough. For example, Gurr (1993) identifies about 80 raging ethnic conflicts, of which about 35 could be classified as or close to civil wars in different parts of the world. Furthermore, Gurr and Harff (1994: 4–7) illustrate the global salience of "politically active national peoples and ethnic minorities", and of "protracted communal conflicts", by showing their global distribution across various regions in the world.

In respect of "politically active national peoples" the distribution was: Africa (74), Asia (43), Latin America (29), Middle East (31), Soviet Bloc (32), Western Democracies (24). In respect of "protracted communal conflicts", the distribution was: Africa (12), Asia (16), Latin America (1), Middle East (11), Soviet Bloc (1), Western Democracies, (8).

The Uppsala Conflict Data Project (Eriksson, 2004: 45–52) reports that for the 13-year period, 1990–2002, there were 58 "major armed" conflicts in the world, of which, on close examination, ethnic related ones constituted a considerable

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number, with the following regional distribution: Africa (19), America (5), Asia (17), Europe (8) and Middle East (9).

What is problematic, or not so obvious, is what methodology and data sources to use in categorizing ethnic conflicts, as well as how to explain not just their roots and manifestations but their difference from other forms of conflict, their complex trajectories, and the various strategies adopted to manage them and attenuate their sometimes deadly and dysfunctional consequences for peace and development within, among, and between nations, and in domestic and international politics.

Shifts in Intellectual Focus and Perspectives on Ethnic Conflict

If scholarship, particularly in the social sciences, is in some arguably controversial sense dictated by the complex, sometimes contradictory unfolding of, and the need to understand social and political phenomena in their historical and cultural contexts, and to bring intellect to bear on the solution to problems, deriving from, or unleashed by them, this is clearly the case with respect to recent historiographical trends and shifts in the study of ethnic conflicts, which tend to suggest that, entrapped within their cultural specificities and milieux, scholars are captive to those specificities and to paradigms derived from them. For Jalali and Lipset (1992/93:585), "race and ethnicity provide the most striking example of a general failure among experts to anticipate social developments in varying types of societies".

However, the tension between the particular and the universal, which ethnic and other related communal or primordial identity-based conflicts give rise to, is replicated, in this way, at the level of scholarship. Indeed, there is some point in the admonition that we should look at "questions of ethnicity in a globalised way…away from a westocentric perspective, which can be found often not only in white liberal writings but also in the writings of blacks and postcolonials" (Yuval-Davis, 2001:11).

To cite one example, there have been noticeable strategic and paradigmatic shifts of focus by a number of mainstream western scholars, who had assumed in the 1960s, that the twin-related processes of economic and political development or modernisation would, in due course and inexorably, render ethnic conflict passé on a world scale, particularly in the developing countries which, as "follower-societies", were predictably bound to move along the path already charted by the industrialised West (Hutchinson and Smith, 1994; Jalali and Lipset, 1992/993; Newman, 1990/91).

As Hutchinson and Smith (1994:10) so well put it, "movements demanding ethnic autonomies…in Quebec, Scotland, Wales, Flanders, Brittany, Corsica, Euzkadi, Catalona, and other 'ethno-regions' in old established western states undermined many common assumptions about modernisation and democracy".

These "common assumptions" constituted in retrospect the hegemonizing ideology of *Developmentalism* in mainstream American and, indeed, in mainstream

western social science, masquerading as objective, universal or value-free social science, while also trying to localise the political salience of ethnicity, especially its assumed dysfunctionalities, in the form of political instability, to the politics of "new states" in Africa, Asia and Latin America (Apter, 1963, 1965; Geertz, 1973).

The renewed interest in ethnic conflict, however, stands at the intersection of various disciplines, such as anthropology, history, geography, law, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology, to name a few and is reflected in various multidisciplinary approaches to unscrambling, understanding and coming to terms with it.

The approaches range from a revised modernisation approach to psycho-cultural, socio-biological and constructionist ones to philosophical ones, which, by opposing multiculturalism to the centralising and assimilationist assumptions of liberalism and Stalinist-type soviet marxism, point to new directions in the philosophical and public policy debates about *rights, citizenship, accountability, democratic governance and participation in the contemporary nation-state and the wider world system of nation-states* (Farrelly, 2004, chapter 6; Newman, 1990/91; Pieterse, 1997; Yeros, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 2001).

It is this last approach which I want to pursue in this paper.

Ethnic Conflict and State Formation

To understand the character and trajectories of ethnic conflict in Africa, we must situate it in the broader context of the democracy and development project on the continent. That project is primarily concerned and connected with the state-building or state-formation process, which characteristically involves or generates hegemonic-directed competition, cooperation and conflict, under conditions of scarcity, about who should control the state and direct its regulative, allocative and distributive functions, policies and programmes.

The inclusivist notion of common citizenship, based on individual rights, that has tended to underline this state-formation process, has been problematic in Africa not only because virtually all the countries on the continent are "ethnically split", to borrow Balandier's (1970:38) expression, but also because the political economy of colonial rule, and the state formation processes that went *pari passu* with it encouraged and deepened intense ethnic conflict on the continent (Ake, 1976:4–9; Nnoli, 1980).

In such a circumstance, where individuals define themselves and are defined in terms of the ethnic group to which they belong, the neutrality or autonomy of the fledgling state, the state-in-process-of-formation, with its commanding control of the economy and the vast resources, therefore at its disposal, from competing social forces and groups, like ethnic ones, cannot be taken for granted.

On the same ground, an inclusivist common citizenship cannot be taken for granted, in so far as it is linked to "belonging" to the state, for it begs the question of access to the state and the privileges deriving from it, raising the question

"to whom (to which ethnic group) does the state belong? Whose or which ethnic group or ethnoregional interest does it promote or obstruct, protect or frustrate?" On this score, Wimmer (1994:635) is right to observe, with respect to post-colonial societies, that "ethnic conflicts arise during the process of state formation, when a fight erupts over which people the state should belong to".

More often than not, and precisely because of its lack of autonomy or its limited autonomy from competing ethnic groups, the state becomes the core contested terrain, the deadly serious theatre of ethnic conflict over which ethnic group or coalition of ethnic groups should control it and its vast resources. The bureaucracy, what John Maynard Keynes once called "the engine of government". with its arsenal of patronage positions and public finances to disburse, and its superintendence of public educational institutions, which play a critical role in elite recruitment and reproduction for the bureaucracy and the political and business classes, are invariably prime targets in competitive ethnic relations for access to, and control of the state, becoming theatres of ethnic wars over control of state resources.

In this way, the state and its institutions are ethnicised and immersed in clientelist ethnic networks and in ethnic-based struggle to implant and entrench ethnic "gatekeepers" in critical positions in the bureaucracy and educational institutions, and in other public sector institutions and, even in, the private sector, which in many African countries, relies heavily on the public sector.

Contextualizing Ethnicity: the Antinomies of Other Identity Claims

However, interrogating ethnicity and citizenship within the state-formation process in this manner, and the level or intensity of the conflict it generates, requires various units and levels of structural and institutional analysis to disaggregate and contextualise ethnicity and the roots, genesis, dimensions, and patterns of particular ethnic conflicts. This should enable us determine the various factors that are involved in particular ethnic conflicts and how they intersect with or crosscut other kinds of conflict and social formations, like class and religious ones. One important implication of this perspective should be emphasised.

At the structural level, if ethnic conflict is not unrelated to, or is in fact embedded in domestic and global social relations of production, reflecting their contradictions, and crosscutting other solidarity ties and antagonisms, then we need to move away from regarding it as simply a cultural symbol. This requires our going beyond its ascriptivist-essentialist and primordial-cultural symbolism to locate its political or conflict-generating salience as a function of various fields and networks of social relations, which dynamically confront ethnic individuals on a daily basis, expanding, in some situations, and constricting, in other situations, their choice options. In response to these fields and networks of socials relations, ethnic individuals are strategically forced to assume multiple identities.

In short, focusing on the domestic and global social context within which to understand ethnicity and situate ethnic conflicts, we need to locate the salience of ethnicity as a manipulatable and mobilisable political resource in conflict situations, in the nexus connecting structure and process, and in the conundrum posed by the competing identity claims on individuals as they engage in the unavoidably competitive logic of social relations in the state-formation process.

Let me spell out some of the implications of this perspective. Firstly, accommodation as well as compromise or cooperation, in the form of coalition building across the ethnic divide, is compatible with the concept of an ethnic group and may, indeed, be a feature of ethnic conflict. For example, accommodation is sometimes a strategy in the arsenal of the leadership of ethnic groups, dictated by the rationality or logic of particular competitive or conflict situations in which they find themselves. On some critical occasions, this may impel ethnic leaders playing a brokerage or bridge-building role across the ethnic divide. It is the context, therefore, and the complex configuration of social forces and issues that arises from it that more or less determine the trajectories of ethnic conflict, indicating why it assumes deadly violent and armed dimensions or why it is contained and directed towards accommodation and cooperation.

Ethnic Conflict as a Spectrum

It is useful, from this perspective, to regard interethnic relations as a fluid, even malleable continuum or spectrum, with ethnic cooperation and accommodation at one end and violent or armed conflict at the other end, and the intensity of cooperation and conflict, and the various forms they assume, depending on how the ebb and flow of ethnic relations along the spectrum range closely to or away from either end, away from an imaginary centre of the spectrum, and what other social forces mediate this see-saw, or ebb and flow along the hypothetical spectrum.

A second implication of this perspective on the nexus between structure and process in explaining and understanding ethnic conflict, its roots and trajectories, is that we need to probe more deeply into the dynamics of the manipulation and mobilisation of ethnic identities for conflict purposes. What are the complementary or contradictory roles of ethnic leaders and their mass followership, in triggering ethnic conflict or influencing its course? Under what conditions do these roles appear, complement or contradict each other? What clientelist or patrimonial structures and system of reward and sanction link the ethnic leadership with their followership? What accounts for their durability or breakdown?

Moreover, perhaps because held captive by the allure of the "clever elite/dumb mass" thesis, which Hodgkin (1961) once coined to characterise a weakness in the study of African nationalism, we need to focus on mass role in triggering and directing ethnic or ethno-national conflicts in Africa, especially in the form of ethnically-based popular mass movements against central authorities, in the

hinterlands, far removed from national centres, in colonial and postcolonial Africa.

This focus can provide interesting illuminations of the intersection or disjunction of the trajectories of elite-driven and mass-driven manifestations of ethnic conflict, for example "...in those regions, notably East and Central Africa and the Congo, where the roots of the modern-educated elite and modern-style politics are shallowest" (Stokes, 1970:100).

A third implication of this contextual perspective, often ignored in the analysis of the dynamics of ethnic conflict, is that ethnic groups are oftentimes polarised among themselves, over, for example, strategies to pursue in competitive situations with other ethnic groups, over leadership succession, all leading to fractures and, in many cases, the emergence of sub-ethnic or even newly constructed ethnic groups within them. We, therefore, need to study intra-ethnic conflict, as a micro-level of analysis within the larger kaleidoscope of inter-ethnic relations and conflicts.

The Ethnicity/Citizenship Conundrum

Because ethnicity as a form of identity needs to be disaggregated and contextualised in this manner, it is necessary also to problematise the notion of citizenship, so that its assumed undifferentiated nature in liberal democratic theory should not be taken for granted or assumed to be unproblematic, especially in "ethnically split", or deeply divided African societies.

Here again, the historical-social context is important in explaining the structural and institutional linkage between citizenship, the state and state-formation processes, and how it has shaped (inter- and intra-) ethnic relations and ethnic perceptions of the state. For example, colonial administration discriminated among citizens, creating a hierarchy of unequal citizenship, with white administrators and immigrants (businessmen, missionaries) from the metropolitan countries at the top of the hierarchy, followed in descending order by other white immigrants, Asians, Levantines (mainly Lebanese and Syrians), coloureds and blacks, who were further sub-divided or differentiated by the colonial administration into "advantaged" or "disadvantaged", "favoured" or "unfavoured" ethnic groups, based on the differential diffusion of westernisation, on "colonial evaluations of imputed group character," among them (Horowitz, 1985:160). These ethnic groups were, moreover, and as a matter of administrative convenience or arbitrariness, sometimes invented ("constructed" or "deconstructed") by colonial administrators, under the influence of "colonial stereotypes" of African ethnic groups, "tribes" (Atkinson, 1999:24).

This was an asymmetrically fractured or differentiated ethno-racialised citizenship hierarchy, which, for some citizens, facilitated access to, and for others constricted access to the state and its resources, in the public services, in commerce, trade and industry, in the judicial system and in the administration of justice, in

spite of the universalising ideology and pretensions of colonial rule.

Although African nationalism under colonial rule was an attempt to claim or reclaim citizenship rights, the claim was asserted as a collective national patrimony, under a "rainbow" coalition of the various ethnic groups and other social forces in each colony. But this did not settle the national question, for a number of reasons.

First, the asymmetrical ethno-racial stratified social structure of the colonial state, left its unwholesome, unhealed, simmering scars, recriminations, mutual antagonisms and fears, all of which served to undermine the long-run emergence of a sense of nationhood and common citizenship. For the effect of the ethno-racial stratification was to diminish "existing inter-cultural linkages" while strengthening, instead, "the sense of internal cohesion within the component polities and language groups" (Ajayi: 1984:4–5).

Specifically focusing on what he characterised as Nigeria's "Diversity and The Burden of History," Mustapha (2002:153–4), while contending that, "a central feature of Nigerian society is its fragmentation along ethno-regional lines," argues that:

> *in many ways the ethnicisation of power and politics is contrary to pre-colonial experience... The potential for discord apparent in the pre-colonial system was more than realized under colonialism which had the intended and unintended consequences of accentuating the divisions between different groups, and converting conflict from mere potential to a reality of everyday life. The long-run divisions along ethno-regional lines have not only been enduring, they have become systemic; the divisions have been reproduced in the state, giving a lie to the notion of a state standing above society.*

Secondly, the departure of the colonial powers, hasty in many places, left the ethnic question unresolved, although many ethnic groups, particularly minority ethnic groups, as was the case in Nigeria, expressed troubling concerns and legitimate fears about their collective ethnic group and collective citizenship rights in the postcolonial state.

Referring to the centrifugal forces so unleashed in the wake of the hasty departure of the colonial powers, as a result of the "mutual alienation" among the "coalition partners," in the rainbow coalition, Ake (2001:5) has observed quite rightly that:

> *as they pulled apart, they placed more value on capturing political power for themselves and grew increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for control of state power. Thus the premium on political power rose higher and higher and with it the intensity of political competition and its domination by efficiency norms.*

Little wonder that the departure of the colonial powers was in several African countries accompanied by the decimating and internecine armed conflict between

majority, or "favoured" ethnic groups who wanted to maintain control of the inherited state and "disadvantaged", usually but not always numerically minority ethnic groups, who wanted to capture or reconstitute the inherited state on more favourable terms, or, failing which, to secede from it. This much is clear from the postcolonial histories of Angola, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Thirdly, the inherited psychology of ethnic domination, "mutual alienation," which the asymmetrical ethno-racial stratified hierarchy of citizenship rights gave rise to under colonial rule, remains a central aspect of ethnic conflict in the postcolonial African state.

This fear was reinforced, in many cases strengthened, by the further centralising dimensions which the state-formation processes assumed in the postcolonial state, in the form of the one-party ideology and the drift towards, and consolidation of authoritarian and personal rule, on the pretext that the state formation process required strong man rule, in order to eliminate ethno-parochial tendencies, which allegedly would only serve to divide, weaken and divert the state from the nation-building project.

However, as the following observation by Laakso and Olukoshi (Olukoshi and Laakso, 1996:15) only too well point out, the strong pull of ethnicity was evident as a significant legitimising political resource by civilian authoritarian and military regimes in Africa:

> *Many African one-party and military regimes, in spite of their supposed aversion to ethnicity…rested on distinctly ethnic political foundations and reproduced themselves on the basis of definable, and, in most cases, narrow ethnic alliances.*

There was and remains a residual fear that independence had merely served to replace one 'alien' rule with another one.

Ethnicity, Democracy and Development

For these reasons, there is an important sense in which the protracted intensity of some of the ethnic conflicts in Africa is closely related to opposition by marginalised ethnic groups against what Fanon (1968:183) once aptly described as an "ethnic dictatorship…" in other words, to historically-based demands for the opening up of the democratic space to ensure broader and more diverse participation and accountability in governance at the national level and at sub-national ones and to the re-examination of the inherited assumptions of the liberal state, particularly in respect of undifferentiated, individual or universal citizenship rights, which are often associated with it.

This is not to say that ethnic conflicts, in their objectives or intended or unintended effects, may not undermine, derail or place stress on the democratisation project; or that the demand for the decompression, opening up or liberalisation of political spaces may not be rationalisations or subterfuges for other, less noble

objectives of the initiators of armed ethnic conflict, especially in richly resource endowed regions, which predispose to the externalisation of the conflict.

Rather, the point is that the objective conditions and their consequential contradictions in many African countries give rise to "contested incompatibilities," in the sense used by the Uppsala Conflict Data Project (Eriksson, 2002: 19, 55–6), and predispose to the mobilisation and manipulation of ethnicity in popular democratic struggles against personal, authoritarian or manifestly unpopular rule, especially in backward or underdeveloped, "internally colonised", or neglected ethno-regions of African countries.

As Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987:65) has argued, one consequence or manifestation of the prosecution of these "contested incompatibilities" has been that "in postcolonial Africa, ethnic nationalism with secessionist tendencies has risen in the form of irredentism, revanchism, or as a result of violent conflicts stemming from inter-ethnic competition for economic resources and political power". These "incompatibilities have also been "a constant factor of regional instability in the Horn of Africa", and in other regions of the continent, like West Africa and Southern Africa, where regional bodies have been brokering peaceful resolution of the conflicts in recent years.

Some of the following examples, given to illustrate this argument, draw on Nzongola-Ntalaja (1987: 65–80).

'The Somali Question', involving the demand of the ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden and parts of Ethiopia, in Djibouti and in the Northern Frontier of Kenya for unification with Somalia has been one of the major irredentist demands in postcolonial Africa, as was the demand, albeit on a less protracted scale, of the Ewe-speaking people of Togo for reunion with their ethnic kith and kin in Ghana.

The case of the ethnic Baganda in Uganda to recover lost territory and status was a revanchist attempt at developing a Baganda nation within Uganda, which fell foul of the central authority in Uganda. Some revanchist element is also reflected in the Casamance Rebellion, involving demand of the Ethnic Diola-based Casamance movement in southern Senegal, in the 1980s, under the leadership of the *Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC) for independence from Senegal.

The separatist demand of the MFDC arose out of a sense of colonisation and marginalisation by the ethnic Wolof-dominated Senegalese state. It escalated into military confrontations, short of civil wars, at various times in the 1990s, reflecting "conflicts of interest centered on the benefits of local resources in turn materialised politically around the unresolved question of state legitimacy" (Douma, 2003:113). On the other hand, Biafra in Nigeria and the South Kasai in Zaire are examples of inter-ethnic conflicts, involving territorial, secessionist claims which degenerated into civil wars.

Chad, Ethiopia, Sudan, Niger and Nigeria provide examples of the demand of oppressed ethnic minorities for greater socioeconomic and infrastructural development and for home rule or self-government in their ethnic heartlands, and not

necessarily secession from the state. The word "minority" is used here in a sociological, and not necessarily numerical sense, to refer to situations of superordinate/subordinate power relationships as used by Georges Balandier (1970, quoted in Nzongola-Ntalaja, (1987:74), and Ralf Dahrendorf (1954).

In the case of Chad, the superordinate/subordinate relationship was on an ethno-regional north/south divide, as is the case in Sudan, separating black Africans from Arabs.

In the case of Ethiopia, the three major ethnic minority groups, Oromo, Somali and Tigrayan, asserted the right to self-determination against the dominant Amhara ethnic group, under the banner of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Force (TPLF).

In Niger, the concentration of over 49% of all government investment between 1976 and 1990 in the capital and its adjoining region, Tillabery, inhabited by the dominant Djerma-Songhai, which has ruled the country during most of its postcolonial history, created a pattern of regional inequality, which has aggravated and fed ethno-linguistic rivalry (Douma, 2003:57).

In Nigeria, the demand of minority ethnic groups for self-determination and greater share of government investment and revenue, has, at various times, assumed violent and rebellious dimensions, as in the Tiv Riots in the 1960s and ethnic violent uprisings in the oil rich Niger Delta since the 1990s.

Ethnicity and the State: Some Theoretical and Policy Questions

The contradictions between the state and ethnicity illustrated in the various examples above are symptomatic of a deeper contradiction arising out of the inappropriateness of the Schumpeterian, simple majoritarian, winner-takes-all model of parliamentary government, which generally informed the transfer of power. With respect to British colonial rule in Africa, for example, the 'concept of preparation' (Schaffer, 1966:42–67), as a way of inducting a carefully selected and nurtured indigenous inheritance elite into the institutional and psychological intricacies of "good government," of "the British way of life", in the form of liberal parliamentarianism, was, in view of the authoritarian logic of colonial rule, a misleading and inappropriate one.

This apart, the inherited simple majoritarian model was, in a more fundamental sense, inappropriate to address the issue of historically deep-rooted mutual antagonisms between and among dominant/subordinate ethnic groups, in fluid and maturing conflict situations, which reached boiling points in several countries in the penultimate years of colonial rule, giving rise to the emergence and strengthening of ethnic-based political parties, more or less ensconced in, and deriving their electoral strength from their ethno-regional heartlands. Where, as in the Gold Coast (Bourret, 1960:187), "un-British" constitutional devices like federalism and entrenched bill of rights were proposed, as a condition for granting independence, in response to the ethno-regional problem, these were rejected

because of opposition from African nationalist leaders, who saw them as prescriptions for weak government and a further manifestation of the policy of divide and rule (Rothchild, 1966; Welch, 1969).

Indeed, as perceptive an early observer of the descent into authoritarian rule, political decay and centralising tendencies in post-colonial Africa, as Fanon (1962:113–114), was strident in his condemnation of "autonomist tendencies", engendered by "tribalism", "regionalism", "separatism", and "federalism", in opposition to "centralisation and unity" (Jinadu, 1985:214–218).

This situation was, in many respects, responsible for the hardening of ethnic suspicions, the deepening of mutual antagonisms, and, with electoral politics reduced to a zero-sum game, making power-sharing a less attractive option for those ethnic groups, who were assured of electoral victory, on the basis of either their numerical superiority over other ethnic groups or their power of incumbency, which is used to manipulate the electoral machinery and process in their favour.

In several African countries, reduced to a perpetual electoral minority, treated by and large as second class citizens, underrepresented in central and local bureaucracies and in the public services generally, their heartlands neglected, denied of infrastructural development, and seeing no prospect through the ballot box for capturing state power, these other ethnic groups sought and used various voice and exit options, including extra-constitutional ones, to challenge the hegemonic ethnic group(s) or coalition in government.

Pointing to the irreconciliable antinomies between majority rights and minority rights in deeply divided societies under parliamentary systems, Duchacek (1977:23, quoted in Thomas-Wooley and Keller, 1994:413) observed that:

> *The problem for most ethnic minorities is that they are permanent minorities and the ruling group a permanent majority. In interethnic relations therefore, the convenient democratic game of numbers...does not work since the unalterable power symmetry between permanent majority and permanent minorities impedes the formation of a consensual community.*

This problem goes to the heart of liberal democratic theory, with its assumptions of possessive individualism in its application to "ethnically split" African societies. Is Westminster-type parliamentary democracy an appropriate or an applicable democratic model, in the African or similar contexts in various parts of the world, now undergoing or experiencing "the ethnic resurgence"?

This is a pertinent question to pose in view of the new interest in global democratic transitions, beginning with those in Southern Europe and extending to Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa.

Propelled by the contemporary processes of globalisation and a resurgent, hegemonic conservative ideology, which represents a rejection of the dominant post-World War II 'butskellist' and Keynesian consensus of the welfare state as well as a reaction against the manifest contradictions of western capitalism and Soviet

Marxism, this new interest has also spawned new paradigmatic shifts and public policy concerns, reflected in the form of its theoretical expression in rational choice theory, with its emphasis on methodological individualism, so central to "the new institutionalism" (Apter, 1998), which have been applied to the study of these new transitions (Leys, 1996).

Although this new institutionalism, rightly sees the state in Africa, as the problem, locating the problem and processes of transitions in structural causes and in institutional weaknesses and failures, and viewing democratic transitions as design problems over which various endogenous and exogenous conjunctural social forces are in contention and requiring special artefactual political "invention" or "design" to solve, it has a serious flaw.

It has neither diagnosed correctly why the state is the problem, focusing, erroneously on the symptom, nor been able, as a result, to utilise the correct theoretical and policy framework to address the problem of the state as the central contested terrain of ethnic conflict for the reasons I have already given and elaborated. This is because the new institutionalism, the new orthodoxy in mainstream development studies, like the modernisation school, which it replaced, still views African societies as 'follower-societies', and the state-formation process in Africa as a replicative one, on the model of the new attempt in the West to restructure the state in a neo-liberal mould (Jinadu: 2000:9–11).

There is, therefore, some validity in Ake's (2001:125) characterisation of the cultural-ideological component of neo-liberalism, in its application to African democratic transitions, in the following words:

> *Scholars and agents of development tend to focus on ideologically derived answers to the problem of development that bear no relation to the nature of the problem. Their concern is not so much to solve a problem on its own terms as to realize an image of the world.*

Attributing the institutional failures and weaknesses of the African state, and the vicious cycle of recurring political instability and lack of accountability they engender, to market distortions and imperfections, in closed political systems, with their routinised denial or suppression of individual choices and options in the political market place, neo-liberal protagonists see the solution in the politics of individualism and self-interest, in other words, in political "exchanges among rational self-interested citizens" (March and Olsen, 1995:6).

At the level of economic and social policies, this market orthodoxy gave rise to unpopular structural adjustment policies, which ignited a tinderbox of popular unrest (Beckman, 1992; Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad, 1992; Laakso and Olukoshi, 1996). What it also did, among others of its effects, for example, was to heighten ethnic antagonisms in situations where market assumptions of competition and possessive individualism did not exist. This was due to historic access obstacles to capital needed to purchase shares in privatised companies, experienced by a

number of ethnic group members, especially in countries where a number of other ethnic groups control state and private banks.

As Laakso and Olukoshi (1996: 21) have observed, structural adjustment programmes, resulting in "the severe contraction of the state's social expenditure":

> *heightened the process of uneven development, which corresponds, in a lot of cases, to clear regional and ethnic divisions, thereby heightening political tensions. Nowhere has this latter dimension been more evident than in the consequences which public enterprise privatization has had in some cases. An intensive competition for the assets that are to be privatized together with an unequal capacity to pay for shares often takes on clear regional and ethnic patterns, thus deepening the feeling of exclusion among some groups with adverse consequences for the task of nation-building (See also, Adekanye, 1995; and Osaghae, 1995).*

If economic liberalisation was problematic because of ethnically-based market distortions and imperfections, it was even more problematic in the political arena where neo-liberalism has tended to conflate the problem of democracy in Africa with transitions to liberal democracy in which rational voters expectedly participate as individuals, having shed their ethnic togas or identities. In this way, it fails to address the implications of the cultural problem of ethnic pluralism in deeply divided African societies for electoral competition based on the simple majoritarian principle in liberal democratic theory.

Ethnicity and Political Architecture

If the state is the central contested hegemonic terrain in Africa, where ethnic conflict takes place and assumes, sometimes, deadly dimensions, what modifications or alterations in the constitutional and political architecture of the state are more appropriate than ones based on neo-liberal, individualistic assumptions to structure and direct the conflict to manageable proportions?

With negotiated or brokered democratic transitions that have taken place in Africa in the past 15 to 20 years, fresh opportunities have been thrown up, and particularly in Francophone African countries, where sovereign national conferences were convoked, to revisit inherited political and constitutional arrangements that followed the transfer of power, as a strategic design objective to strengthen and consolidate democracy in many African countries.

In many African countries, these transitions were manipulated, or brazenly and blatantly "stolen" by incumbents to remain in power, with the result, that "more often than not, people are voting without choosing" (Ake, 2001:137), in what Mkandawire (1995, quoted in Laakso and Olukoshi, 1996:27) describes as "choiceless democracies".

However, with notable exceptions in Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa, these brokered transitions have hardly addressed the fundamental issue of the management of ethnic conflict.

This leads to the question of the relationship between ethnicity and political architecture posed at the beginning of this section. What reasons are there to

believe that some other political and constitutional arrangements are more appropriate or better suited than those premised on neo-liberal individualistic assumptions to contain, structure and manage ethnic conflicts? Are there forms of government that accommodate ethnic diversity better than others? What strategic (confidence-building/confidence-reinforcing) institutional arrangements can best attenuate centrifugal ethnic competition?

To answer these questions, I begin by providing a theoretical framework for my answer, which combines elements of federalism (Livingston, 1967; Riker, 1957; Watts, 1999 and Wheare, 1963) and consociationalism (Lijphart, 1968; 1977).

First, there must be an acceptance of collective ethnic group rights as substantive rights, which require protection and must be entrenched in constitutional provisions.

Second, these ethnic group rights require entrenched power-sharing constitutional provisions, under some form of polycentric constitutional arrangements, like federal or similar devolutionist but not decentralist ones, which, emphasising 'diversity in unity,' create two juristic entities, two levels of government, within the country, with each having direct impact on the country's citizens, within its jurisdictional sphere.

*The power-sharing arrangements, as will be elaborated below, must reflect **ethnic**, as opposed to **geographical diversities**, and are premised on the explicit formulation of ethnic groups as rights bearing collective entities.*

For example, the U.S. federal system is based on geographical as opposed to ethno-cultural diversities, and affirmative action-type legislation has been typically justified, as a matter of *ad interim* public policy, not on the basis of constitutionally entrenched ethnic group rights, but on the need to redress historically based discrimination against blacks and members of other racial or ethnic minorities, in violation of their constitutionally guaranteed individual, and not group rights. This is, indeed, why the theoretical foundations of U.S. federalism on a framework of individual rights are inapplicable to managing ethnic conflicts in Africa, despite the conclusion of Thomas-Wooley and Keller (1994:427) that "...the American system may prove particularly well-suited to address the complex needs of heterogeneous societies in Africa".

These entrenched polycentric power-sharing arrangements, therefore, require, at a minimum the following:

(a) granting limited autonomy or self-government to 'significant' ethnic groups in their ethnic heartlands;
(b) constitutionally providing for their 'equitable' representation, under some agreed formula, in the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government at the centre;

(c) providing for a statutory/scheduled executive body, under the constitution, to monitor and apply sanctions for non-compliance with the power-sharing arrangements, especially in federal/central appointments in the executive and judicial branches;
(d) specially entrenched conditions, under which the constitution can be amended, for example for the creation of autonomous unit level government for other ethnic groups, or abrogated, or suspended; and;
(e) a constitutional arbiter to exercise judicial review, particularly to settle constitutional disputes arising from conflict over jurisdictional matters and fields of competence of each level of government.

The way I have formulated the framework for these polycentric arrangements makes no distinction between *majority* and *minority* ethnic groups, as *collective rights bearing groups*, as is done, for example by Kymlicka (1995), in his specific focus on national minorities, as rights bearing ethnic groups.

Culture, Autochthony and Political Architecture

Rather, it is based on a particular view, derived from the African experience, of how to structure the relationship between culture and rights, on the one hand, and political and socioeconomic development, on the other hand. Like Kymlicka's (1995), my formulation requires some form of *differentiated* or *fractured citizenship*. But in my own case, this fractured citizenship represents a form of *balance of terror*, to protect ethnic group rights *per se*, not of particular ethnic groups, under the polycentric arrangements I have sketched.

If ethnic groups are rights bearing, in the sense of their entitlement to home-rule under polycentric federalist or decentralist arrangements, then the differentiated citizenship rights deriving from the arrangements, relating for example to cabinet appointments, other top public political appointments, admission to public educational institutions, among others, must generally apply to all of them, not specifically to some disadvantaged ethnic groups among them, unless reasons of historically based disadvantage, for example in education, dictate otherwise as a measure of public policy.

Two further observations are relevant in the context of my argument linking the political framework or design sketched above to what I call "the African experience".

The first one is with respect to Amilcar Cabral's famous injunction about the need for the African political class to "return to the source", and Fanon's (1968: 99) injunction that, "the underdeveloped countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them". But they unambiguously situate their injunctions within the framework of a participatory democratic politics, which closes the gap between town and country through accountability mechanisms and polycentric political arrangements, which establish "...a large number of well-informed nuclei at the bottom" (Fanon, 1968:194).

What both Cabral and Fanon's position points to is the relevance of *tradition,* not *traditionalism* to modernity; in the sense that the state-formation processes in Africa, particularly the constitutional architecture, which frames the processes, must draw from African sources and tradition.

Of course, that tradition is itself a complex and contested one, and reconstructing a representative model of traditional African political systems, as Lloyd (1965:99–106) has pointed out, is problematic. But his "synthetically constructed" model of African kingdoms delineates three levels of political administration, the metropolitan area, the peripheral units and the sphere of influence, necessitating a distinction between the political structure at the centre and at the periphery, such that the villager is subject to two levels of administration (Lloyd, 1965:71).

The existence of a high degree of decentralisation in a number of African traditional political systems led Eisenstadt (1959), among others, to distinguish between the centralised monarchy, for example, the Zulu, Ngoni, Swazi and Tswana, and the federative monarchy, for example, Bemba, Ashanti, Pondo and Khoisa. According to him, the difference between the two kinds of kingdoms lies in:

> *the degree to which (a) the major groups regulate their own affairs in various spheres, and (b) the extent to which the major political offices are vested in various ascriptive groups or, conversely, the extent to which the political sphere is organized on a level different from that of local kin and economic spheres (Eisenstadt, 1959:211).*

The "*federative monarchy*", with its emphasis on decentralisation and power-sharing mechanisms or institutions provides a model, from which current democratic transitions in Africa can draw.

My second observation is that using ethnic groups as the autonomous units for the constitution of the power-sharing political arrangements I have sketched, is arguably justifiable by a reading of *The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights* (n.d.)

Article 20 (1) of *The African Charter* recognises and provides that,

> *All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.*

Article 22(1) stipulates that:

> *All peoples shall have the right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.*

In the following sections, I provide a brief account of two African countries, Nigeria and Ethiopia, to illustrate the power-sharing arrangements I outlined above.

Some Power-Sharing Examples: Nigeria

Historically, Nigerian power-sharing arrangements have been based on ethnic, as opposed to geographical, diversity. The roots of these arrangements lie deep in the administrative federalism, implied in the gradual division of the country into two administrative units, the Northern and Southern Protectorates, between 1900 and 1914, by the British colonial administration.

The dual administrative system created, over the years, and with the increasing intensity of nationalist agitation for independence, created its own dynamic logic, in the form of the regionalisation or ethnicisation of party politics, in the gradual emergence of the Nigerian federation through a series of constitutional developments between 1922 and 1960, and, to use Bates' (1983) expression, in another context, in the "differential diffusion of modernity", among the various ethnic groups, creating "advantaged" and "disadvantaged" ethnic groups, which saw in federalism the strategic advantage of preserving some form of home-rule, within their respective homelands in the Nigerian state, while remaining in the federation.

It was in the context of the dynamic logic of this administrative federalism that the emergent Nigerian political class, influenced by the Indian federal experiment, particularly the revision of its federal system along ethno-linguistic lines, under the States Reorganisation Act of 1956, adumbrated a theory of Nigerian federalism, based on home rule for significant ethno-linguistic groups in the country.

With the emergent federal system based on ethnic diversity, with its initial tri-polar constituent units, East, North and West, reflecting the region in which each of the three major ethnic groups was the dominant ethnic group (namely the Igbo in the East, the Hausa/Fulani in the North, and the Yoruba in the West), it was only a matter of time before minority ethnic groups, smarting under domination, began to advocate for home-rule within the Nigerian federation.

This is not the place to go into the turbulent, violent centrifugal trajectories of the numerous political movements demanding the creation of more states by minority ethnic groups and by sub-ethnic groups of fragmented ones in the country. What needs pointing out here is that the basic ethnic power-sharing structure of the country's federalism provided and continues to provide a constitutional and political framework, within which ethnic groups have articulated their demands; so much so that the constituent units of the federation have increased from the initial three regions in 1960 to the present 36 states, and a federal capital city, making it the country with the third largest number of constituent units among contemporary federations, coming after the United States with 50 units, and the Russian Federation with 86.

Yet sometimes, as during the events that led to the country's civil war between 1967 and 1970 (Jinadu, 1994), and the current clamour for the restructuring or re-engineering of the federal system, to make it reflect "true federalism", various ethnic groups have raised compellingly understandable concerns about the price

of federalism, arising out of their calculation and perception that the costs to them of staying in the federation is prohibitively high, and outweigh the benefits of their continued stay within it.

The following are some central elements in the power-sharing arrangements in the Nigerian federal system.

(a) **Federal System of Government**: Under this arrangement, ethnic groups are given home-rule in their heartlands, under a polycentric system of government which shares sovereignty between two levels of government, the central/national/federal government, and the unit/state governments, through specified legislative lists (namely, a federal exclusive list, a joint federal/state concurrent list, with the residue left to the states), which enable each level of government to impact directly on the citizen. The system guarantees rule of law, judicial review, and a separation of powers between the branches of government.

(b) **The Federal Character Constitutional Clauses**: These constitutional clauses guarantee representation in specified public political positions, in public service appointments, in public institutions generally, and in the allocation of national projects at the national/federal level to each of the constituent unit/state government.

The *federal character clauses* of Section 14(3) of the **1979 Nigerian Constitution,** repeated with appropriate modifications in the sections dealing with the executive and legislative functions of the unit/state governments, stipulate that:

> *The composition of the Government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or any of its agencies.*

Under Section 157(5), Section 197(2) and Section 197, *the proportionality or quota principle*, inherent in the federal character clauses, was extended to appointments and promotions in the public services, the appointments of chairpersons and membership of the Boards of Directors of parastatals, appointments and promotions in the armed forces, the allocation of public revenue and distribution of public projects, the composition of a number of federal executive bodies and admission to federal secondary schools and federal universities.

Section 153 of the **1999 Nigerian Constitution** established **the Federal Character Commission**, as a federal executive body, empowered in Section 8(1) of the Third Schedule of the constitution to oversee and monitor the implementation of the federal character clauses, as follows:

(a) work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service of the Federation and of the States, the armed forces of the Federation, the Nigeria Police Force and other security agencies, government-owned companies and parastatals of the States;
(b) promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principle of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government;
(c) take such legal measures, including prosecution of the head or staff of any Ministry or government body or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed by the Commission; and, as provided for in Section 8(3) of the Schedule,
(d) Notwithstanding any provisions in any other law or enactment, the Commission shall ensure that every public company or corporation reflects the federal character in the appointment of its directors. and senior management staff.

Some Power-Sharing Arrangements: Ethiopia

In Ethiopia the state-formation process, under Amhara hegemony, began with the unification of the Abbysinian Empire. It assumed the form of a centralised bureaucratic empire, which saw the expansion of the emergent, Amhara-dominated Ethiopian state southwards to incorporate other ethnic groups, Oromo, Gurage, Wollamo and Kefa.

However, the incorporation process involved the subjugation of the incorporated ethnic groups, who came under Amhara domination, with their languages, identities and cultures suppressed, and forced to identify with the Amhara ethnic group (Kefale, 2003:258–259; Mengisteab, 2002:179–180; Clapham, 1994: 31).

But Amhara hegemony did not go unchallenged, as the history of violent uprisings and resistance against Amhara hegemony makes too clear: the Raya-Azebo revolt in 1928, the Woyane rebellion of Tigrai, in 1943, the Eritrean Revolt in 1962, the Bale revolt of 1964 and the 1968 uprising in Gojjam (Mengistreab, 2002: 180).

The federal accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1952, brokered by the United Nations was ineffectual and no sooner had it been signed than it was suspended by Emperor Haile Selassie. This was the background to the Eritrean revolt which went on into the 1990s.

The military regime, the *Derg*, which came to power in 1974 after the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie, contrary to all expectations, continued the policy of Amhara domination, through military offensive against other ethnic groups, fuelling and further aggravating unrest and disquiet in the country.

It was in this context that a number of ethnic-based resistance movements engaged the regime in various ethno-regions of the country: the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF), and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF).

Contrary to Lustick's (1979; 1980) formulation of the control model of the management of ethnic conflict, the resort to military solution of the ethnic problem in Ethiopia by the *Derg* was counterproductive and contributed largely to its overthrow in July 1991 by a coalition of ethnic movements, made up of the TPLF, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement (EPDM), which later became the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), under the aegis of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

The EPRDF formed a transitional government, after earlier conceding Eritrea's right to secede, and endorsing a transitional charter, which provided as follows:

> *The rights of nations, nationalities, people to self-determination is affirmed. To this end, each nation, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to:*
>
> *(a) preserve its identity and have it respected, promote its culture and history and use and develop its language;*
>
> *(b) administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom and fair and proper representation;*
>
> *(c) exercise its right to self-determination of independence, when the concerned nation/nationality and people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated.*

A new federal constitution for the country was ratified in December 1994, with the following federal and power-sharing arrangements:

(a) The election of a 550-member Council of People's Representatives, from all electoral districts on the basis of population;

(b) Special representation on the Council of People's Representatives for minority nations, with 20 seats reserved for them;

(c) Creation of 10 ethnic-based states, with provision for the creation of more states on the basis of ethnic group right;

(d) Creation of the Federal Council, made up of the constituent nations of the federation, with each nation represented by one member, and another member for each million of its population. The functions of the Federal Council are to: deliberate and decide on claims by nations for self-determination, arbitrate in disputes between states of the federation, and determine allocation of revenues derived from joint federal and state taxes and subsidies by the central government to the state.

Some Concluding Remarks

How well these power-sharing arrangements can accommodate and manage ethnic conflict in such a way as to attenuate or make less salient ethnic conflict is a difficult question to answer. It is in fact not my intention here to answer that question.

My concern rather is, given my situating the salience of ethnic conflict in the character of the state as a partisan in, and a major source of ethnic conflict to

hypothesise that, if this is indeed the case, we may reasonably expect to lessen rather than deepen ethnic conflict by changing the character of the state and making access to it more inclusive. It seems to me that one strategic way of achieving this objective is through the type of power-sharing arrangements I have tried to sketch.

These arrangements divide and structure the sovereignty of the state in such a way that significant ethnic groups have their own "sovereignty" within their local spaces, while entrenching their participation within the national sovereign space through provisions for mutual control of the state at that level. This shared participation within this national jurisdictional space or sphere seeks to prevent the domination of that particular space by an ethnic group or coalition or combination of ethnic groups.

I am aware that there are bound to be problems with the arrangements. For example, in the Nigerian case, there is a raging controversy over citizenship questions raised by the differentiated citizenship created by the federal character clauses (Jinadu, 2002; Momoh, 2001; Toure, 2003). In Ethiopia, there is talk of a new ethno-imperial domination by the Tigray ethnic group (Mengisteab, 2002:184).

If we shift our attention from national spaces to the global space, we find similar identity-based contention over spaces, over multiple sovereignties and over differentiated citizenships, which create mutual antagonisms, breed discriminatory policies, restrict access, and impair competition, which would irritate world federalists and functionalists.

All of this is to be expected. It poses the enduring problem of how to seek and build peace and development on a global scale.

One solution leads to a new set of problems, requiring and giving rise to new solutions, which in their turn create new problems. And so the drama of human existence continues in a dialectical way. What else can one say?

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The State, Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democratisation in Ethiopia

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Abstract

Following the change of regime in 1991, Ethiopia has been undergoing a major political metamorphosis, the key elements of which are political pluralism and a decentralisation of power based on ethnic-linguistic criterion. As such, the twin objective of the Ethiopian transition is to effect a dual transition, i.e. a transition 'from an ethnic dominated empire state of unequals to an ethnically egalitarian nation-state of equals and from authoritarian rule to democracy'.

The central problem in Ethiopias democratisation is the contradictory policy of the TPLF/EPRDF regime, which has been democratisation on paper and authoritarianism in practice. Motivated by the propensity to dominate and the imperatives of recreating the Ethiopian state and society according to its own image, the ruling party has been advocating the policy of political pluralism, a liberal national constitution, decentralisation of the state structure to promote self-rule, etc., while in theory concentrating power in the hands of the ruling party. To this end, a strategy of creating the PDOs as instruments of central control has been followed, which have obstructed the various democratisation initiatives. As argued in this paper, the exclusive elections held in June 1992 and 1994, May 1995 and 2000, were all aimed at the institutionalisation of a de facto one-party state and have contributed little, if any, to the democratisation of the Ethiopian state and society.

This paper further argues that despite some measures related to political liberalisation, ending of a command economy, etc., the Ethiopian state has generally remained authoritarian and repressive, and in the same way the 'nation-building' project of the imperial regime for much of the 20th century and the 'garrison socialism' of the military regime in 1970s and 1980s failed to produce the desired result, the present attempt to democratise the Ethiopian State and society appears to be foundering, as a result of the continued adherence of the TPLF leadership to what they call 'revolutionary democracy', which is essentially based on Mao's dictum: 'power comes from the barrel of the gun' and the principles of democratic centralism, both of which seem to have a debilitating effect on the democratisation enterprise.

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Introduction

Since the 1960s the multi-ethnic empire state of Ethiopia has been experiencing a crisis of major proportions that have provoked two major upheavals in 1974 and 1991. The first revolutionary upheaval ended in the institutionalisation of "barrack socialism", which opened the way for a bloody military interlude that turned the country to a big prison house for 17 years.

The second upheaval, which came in 1991, has led to yet another major political metamorphosis. Following the regime change, institutions of the old order such as the omnipotent party, the parliament, the military and the civilian bureaucracy, the supportive mass organisations such as the peasant, women, youth as well as the workers associations were all dismantled to give way to the emerging institutions of the new regime. In other words, the Ethiopian state and the institutions of government thereof have been fully reordered in the image of the victorious elite. And in the remaking of the Ethiopian state ethnicity as well as multi-party democracy have become central. Here, in what appears to be a response to the century old ethnic domination, an ethnic-based federal formula has been introduced while political pluralism is expected to end centuries of autocratic rule and a bloody military interlude from 1974 to 1991.

This paper argues that notwithstanding the positive attempts to end ethnic inequality and democratise state and society, as a result of the hegemonic aspiration of the now dominant elite as well as the competing ethnic nationalisms that have obstructed the creation of a broad national consensus, the hoped-for democratic transition seems to be frozen while the federal formula that has been intended to democratise inter-ethnic relations by empowering the hitherto marginalised groups appears to be creating more problems than the ones it seeks to solve. Consequently, Ethiopia has continued to be rocked by ethnically precipitated crisis in much of the country.

Theoretical Discussion

The Elite and Competing Ethnic Nationalisms

There is an emerging academic consensus that political mobilisation is an essential part of competing ethnic nationalisms and that the role of the elites is central in such mobilisation. Put differently, the role of the elite is critical in synthesising the ideology of nationalism, setting the agenda, organising the nationalist movement and providing the necessary leadership to achieve the set goals. In fact, most studies in this field underline the centrality of the elite in such projects. For instance, they are 'ethnic entrepreneurs' for Esman (1994) and Eriksen (1993), 'inventors of nations' for Gellner (quoted in Hann, 1996: 106) and 'political gladiators' for Milazi (1995).

Furthermore, it is generally known that for any nationalist movement a mobilising elite is needed to articulate, appeal as well as inspire the masses in whose name the struggle is to be waged – what Nairn calls 'to invite the masses into

history' (quoted in Smith, 1986: 137). However, a word of caution is in order here: for the masses to be mobilised and be ready to make the necessary sacrifices for a given cause, there should be separate material or other interests of their own in the cause to be promoted. This implies the possibility of both convergence and divergence of the interests of the elite and the masses in any nationalist enterprise. Moreover, ethnicity and nationalism will arouse stronger popular sentiment and turn into a formidable material force if the interests of the leaders and that of the masses have found a meeting ground. In this regard, another important point to note is that ethnic nationalism, as ideology of political mobilisation, can be used to maintain a given *status quo* in the name of 'state-building' and/or 'nation-building' political ventures in order to defend the political, economic and socio-cultural interests of the dominant elite. It can also be equally used to change the existing *status quo* in favour of the subaltern ethnic groups. In other words, in multi-ethnic societies, an ethnic-based dominant political class can use political mobilisation to ensure the continuity of the structure of dominance and its privileges in the name of such national mottoes as 'nation-building' and 'national unity'. In the same way, marginalised groups can use it to end historical injustice, current exploitative relations and repression as part of popular struggles for the creation of democratic governance. This means that the role of nationalism can be 'state-making', 'state-breaking' (Ayoob, 1996), or serving political interests in the grey area between.

Competing Conceptions of Democracy

In its simplest form, democracy is generally understood to be, "government of the people, by the people, for the people". But such undertanding of democracy has been fraught with difficulties that arise from competing conceptions that run from liberal democracy, which is premised on the primacy of individual rights and free enterprise to socialist democracy, which calls for social justice and economic empowerment of the subaltern classes. For instance, Lipset defines democracy as 'a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office' (quoted in Vanhanen, 1997: 28). Similarly, for Pennock, democracy is a political system in which 'public policies are determined either directly by vote of the electorate or indirectly by officials freely elected at reasonably frequent intervals and by a process in which each voter who chooses to vote counts equally... and in which a plurality is determinative' (quoted in *ibid.*).

On his part, Vanhanen has conceptualised democracy as 'a political system in which different groups are legally entitled to compete for power and in which institutional powerholders are elected by the people and are responsible to the people' (*ibid.*: 31). In this connection, Bratton and Van de Walle (1997), who attempt to link it up with the problematic of transition write:

> *democracy is...a form of political regime in which citizens choose, in competitive elections, the occupants of the top political offices of the state. According to this definition, a transition to democracy occurs with the installation of a government chosen on the basis of one competitive election as long as that election is freely and fairly conducted within a matrix of civil liberties, and that all the contestants accept the validity of election results (1997: 12f).*

These conceptions of democracy are limited to 'formal' or 'procedural' definitions of democracy, and apply primarily to liberal democracies. In a sharp contrast to such definitions, Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1997) make a clear distinction between 'formal democracy' and 'social democracy'. According to them, 'formal democracy' is 'a political system that combines four features: regular free and fair elections, universal suffrage, accountability of the state's administrative organs to the elected representatives, and effective guarantees for freedom of expression and association as well as protection against arbitrary state action' (1997: 323). To them, such a system does not provide 'equal distribution of political power' and does not 'reduce social and economic inequality' (*ibid.*: 324). They further hold that a political system that meets the criteria of 'formal democracy' amended with 'equal distribution of political power' is a 'participatory democracy', while a political system that goes further still and includes the goal of reducing social and economic inequality would qualify as 'social democracy' (*ibid.*). Although less inclusive, Joseph also argues for a need to go beyond a minimalist definition of democracy and suggests that the 'dominant way of characterizing democracy according to a set of electionist, institutionalist, and proceduralist criteria must be expanded into a broader conceptualization' (Joseph, 1997: 365). Held (1996: 2) proposes what he calls 'democratic autonomy' (or 'liberal socialism'), which protects citizens both from the 'economic power' of accumulated capital as well as from 'the dangers of centralized political power' of the left.

These competing conceptions of democracy appear to be limited to and generally drawn from Western experiences of democracy. The key question in light of our study is – how much of such experiences can be related to the situation of multi-ethnic polities of the Third World such as Ethiopia? Or to what extent can the models of democracy developed in the context of the Western World solve the chronic problem of governance in the conflict-ridden, multi-ethnic societies of the Third World, which so far have had frustrating experiences with democracy? These are some of the questions that need to be addressed in any intellectual enterprise aimed at solving the riddles of democratising Third-World multi-ethnic societies.

Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and Democracy: A Tenuous Relationship?

Yet another difficult part in the study of ethnic nationalism in contemporary politics is to establish its relationship with democracy. In this regard, work on *Nationalism,*

Ethnic Conflict, and Democracy edited by Diamond and Plattner (1994) contains interesting debates that cover the whole range of possibilities, from 'marriage' between nationalism and democracy to the presentation of nationalism as a force 'allergic' to democracy. For instance, Nodia (1994: 4), who makes a distinction between 'home-grown' and 'imported' liberal democracies, forcefully argues that 'the idea of nationalism is impossible – indeed unthinkable – without the idea of democracy, and that democracy never exists without nationalism' and sharply disagrees with Fukuyama's view of the incompatibility of nationalism and liberal democracy (*ibid.*). Fukuyama (1994: 23–28) on his part, although recognizing the role nationalism played in the retirement of socialism, underlines what he calls the 'illiberal' and 'anti-democratic' aspects of nationalism. He further argues that nationalism is inherently anti-democratic. In the same work, Pesic (1994: 132–135) even goes further to show what he describes as 'the cruel face of nationalism'.

Mann, on his part, stresses that 'exclusionary nationalism' is a result of the 'failure to institutionalize democracy' and that the attempt to suppress it by authoritarian methods 'may result in aggressive nationalist movements'. To him, the solution is 'to achieve democracy, especially 'federal inter-regional democracy' (Periwal's summary, 1995: 233). Some intellectuals like Nnoli (1995) have attempted to show the complexity of ethnic nationalism and have underlined the need to differentiate between the legitimate demands of dominated ethnic groups and the chauvinistic tendencies of the hegemonic groups with the aspiration to dominate others.

McGarry and O'Leary (1993) illustrate, among other things, the wisdom of representation based on 'federation' and 'consociation or power-sharing' in regulating and mediating ethnic conflicts in divided societies. In the more specific African context, Nnoli (1995) addresses the two major currents in post-colonial Africa in terms of their history and their contemporary manifestations. He attempts to establish 'the conjuncture of ethnic conflicts and democratisation in Africa' by considering the mutual impacts of the two upon each other. He also suggests the need to mediate their contradictory aspects by institutionalising 'a democracy that guarantees both individual and group rights, balances them and provides an institutional framework for greater participation in decision making' (1995: 24). In a nutshell, the attempt to link ethnic nationalism to democracy and democratisation positively or negatively is not conclusively settled in either way. But experiences of Africa and most of the multi-ethnic societies across the Third World show that the model of democracy based on the primacy of individual rights seems not to work well. The same experiences also show us, as Joseph (1997: 366) observed, 'pluralist and competitive democracy in Africa has tended to take the form of competition among communities rather than individuals, parties, and administrative sub-units.' No less importantly, despite rallying cries in the name of 'nation-building' by every African leader – civilian or military – demands of ethnic groups not only persisted but even led to devastating civil wars and the collapse of some states. Furthermore, most

people across the Third World never totally abandoned their communal values and continued to act collectively despite the penetration of Western values. Hence, in spite of serious reservation shown by some academics to the introduction of group rights in situations like South Africa (Milazi, 1996; Szeftel, 1994) where demands for group rights are associated with people who had been beneficiaries under apartheid, a democratic model, which accommodates both individual and group rights seems to be more applicable in situations such as Ethiopia.

To sum up our discussion of the theoretical part, the following generalisation can be made regarding ethnicity and its impact on state transformation and the democratisation enterprise thereof. First, ethnicity and nationalism are generally better conceived as ideology of mobilisation of collectivities for political ends informed by the struggle for power and resources that may be resolved within or outside a given state. Secondly, the élites, who usually have their own vested interests but may also (claim to) represent the interests of the masses, play crucial roles in the mobilisation of collectivities. And as a result, ethnicity and nationalism tend to lead to competing, often contradictory demands on the state. Thirdly, as corollary to this, ethnicity and nationalism pit one ethnic group against another by creating the 'us' and 'they' divide, where issues of identity matter more than socio-economic questions. As in such cases staying in power depends on the ethnic balance to be forged. It generally tempts the ruling élite to devise a divide-and-rule policy, usually by manipulating ethnicity. Fourthly, under conditions of politicised ethnicity and/or competing nationalisms, the struggle for power involves convoluted alignments of the few and the many, and saddles ruling minorities with a sense of insecurity. This in turn causes distrust among the competing élites and so undermines the political consensus needed for democratisation to succeed. Fifthly, ethnicity and nationalism generally tend to fragment and weaken civil society organisations – the very pillars of democracy – by obstructing their unity across ethnic divides. Finally, although the conventional assumption that democracy is the better way to mediate conflicts that may arise from ethnic differences is acknowledged, plurality of ideas is seen as challenging the dominant status quo because ethnicity and nationalism tend to be exclusivist. Cumulatively these conditions are likely to have serious impact on the democratisation of multi-ethnic states such as Ethiopia, where politicisation of ethnicity and/or competing ethnic nationalisms already have a debilitating effect on the attempt to democratise state and society.

Competing Ethnic Nationalisms and the New Attempts at State Transformation

Ethnic Nationalism and the Rise of the TPLF

The rising expectations that followed the 1974 revolutionary upheaval in Ethiopia had led to the rise of many liberation and social movements, one of which was the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The original agenda of the movement

was to liberate Tigray from a century of Amhara domination (Aregawi, 1993; Young, 1997; Merera, 2002). To be sure, since its creation in 1975, it has pursued such a goal very flexibly and pragmatically as dictated by the political expediency of the day. Using the Marxist-Leninist principle of 'the right to self-determination of nations and nationalities, including secession', a principle that had been popular among the Ethiopian youth of the day, it effectively used both Marxism and Tigrayan nationalism to mobilise the Tigrayan peasantry.

Marxism was 'officially' discarded and replaced by 'liberal democracy' after the capture of state power by the group in 1991 while Tigrayan nationalism has continued to serve as a moving sprit in the post-1991 remaking of the Ethiopian state. And, as we shall see below, both ethnic nationalism and the official multi-party democracy ideology, have been fashioned to serve the hegemonic interest of the Tigrayan élite.[1] Here, the official discarding of the Marxist-Leninist ideology appears to be necessitated by the imperatives of the new 'World Order' whose twin criteria for legitimacy are based on political pluralism and the sanctity of free enterprise. The TPLF, whose ethnic support base is one of the country's minorities in the North constituting about 6 per cent of the country's population had to devise a strategy that could help it to outflank the major contending forces from the other ethnic groups. Consequently, the dual strategy of the TPLF leadership is to preach liberal democracy on the one hand to attract the support of the donors and continue to adhere to its Marxist past of 'revolutionary democracy' on the other. Arguably, its ultimate goal has been to ensure the centrality of Tigrayan nationalism in the reordering of the Ethiopian State and society (Leenco, 1999; Merera, 1994c). And, in the new scheme of things, 'the right to self-determination and secession' and the ethnic-based federal arrangement have been carefully designed in a manner they could serve the dominance of the new Tigrayan elite in power.

Thus, in the post-1991 period ethnicity has become the cornerstone of the major policy initiatives (see Charter, 1991; Constitution, 1994), i.e. political issues, economic matters or educational, linguistic and cultural domains. Put differently, the critical issues at the July Conference of 1991, the fundamentals of the Transitional Charter, the organisational basis of the Transitional Government and the decentralisation of the administrative structure as well as the constitutional engineering were all informed by the imperatives of competing ethnic nationalisms. Consequently, the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front/Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF), which achieved an impressive military victory in coordination with the Eritreans was able to extend the basic tenets in its own political programme to the basic tenets in the Charter of the July Conference, later the Constitution of 1994, where the basic principles such as 'the right to self-determination' has been canonised in line with the political philosophy of 'revolutionary democracy'.[2] In a nutshell, the central problem associated with the EPRDF-sponsored experiment at multiparty democracy is that it was born and matured as a guerrilla force under the guidance of 'revolutionary democracy', to which it covertly continues to adhere and

its overt shift to liberal democracy after assumption of state power. The sole purpose of such behaviour appears to be the promotion of the hegemony of the Tigrayan élite in the face of strong resistance from other competing ethnic nationalisms. Ethnic nationalism, which, thus, has become the new base for the restructuring of the Ethiopian State, ends up serving the hegemonic interest of the victorious Tigrayan élite rather than the hoped-for decentralisation of power and multiparty democracy', which, in theory, should promote stability and meaningful economic development.

The July Conference and the Remaking of Ethiopia

The TPLF/EPRDF marched to power in May 1991 with the motto of 'national struggle first' as opposed to class struggle, despite its background of revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. After capturing state-power, it moved fast with the wind of the day to embrace the philosophy of multiparty democracy more by the post-Cold War imperatives than by faith in the ballot box. And, contrary to popular expectation, it has remained loyal to its old principle of 'national struggle first', which has become the main base for state transformation. In the chain of events, the July Conference of 1991 became the first major act in the remaking of Ethiopian state and society by the new regime.

The objective of the July Conference as officially stated was to establish a 'legitimate and broad-based' transitional government that can prepare the country for a smooth democratic transformation as agreed at the American-brokered London Peace Conference (Cohen, 1991). But the EPRDF leaders, whose priority seems to be consolidation of their hard-won victory had selectively invited weaker political organisations most of which were instantly created and excluded the actual or potential real power contenders from the process.[3] Consequently, the more than two dozen political groups invited to attend the conference had neither the political muscle nor an agenda of their own, except the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which negotiated a junior partnership as well as the right to independently mobilise its own political support base (*Africa Confidential*, 1991; Merera, 1992). As such the major outcomes were two: the Transitional Charter and the Transitional Government. The former, which was approved with little or no resistance, was designed to serve as the supreme law of the land for the transitional period. Based on the Charter, 87-seat Council of Representatives (COR) was created mainly out of the representatives of the participating political groups based on a pre-determined quota set by the EPRDF itself. Of the 87 seats, the EPRDF took a lion's share (32 seats) and distributed the remainder as handouts to the more than two dozen political groups. The Council was empowered to make laws for the whole transitional period and, except the OLF, which was able to secure 12 seats, other parties mostly received one or two seats and had little, if any, political influence. The TGE was proclaimed by the COR while the executive branch of the TGE was also created out of the same COR. And according to many critics, with high level of political manoeuvres that was

supported by military muscle and tacit support of the Western donors, especially the Americans, who were delighted with the demise of Mengistu's regime, the EPRDF easily achieved two of its main political objectives: the approval of the Charter and the establishment of a transitional government that was comfortably controlled by itself (Merera, 1992; 1994a; b; Leenco, 1999)

To be sure, the EPRDF-authored Charter, which provided a legal basis for the new regime contained both positive elements that have opened the way for visible political liberalisation measures as well as provisions, which have had detrimental impacts on the country's quest for democracy. On the positive side it stipulated the new regime's commitment to respect the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, especially the "freedom of conscience, expression, association, ... peaceable assembly, ... right to engage in unrestricted political activity and to organise political parties". It also contained the provisions that promised to address the historical grievances of the hitherto marginalised ethnic groups. Above all else, the Charter promised the creation of a federal democratic republic that ends ethnic domination and ensures good governance. To translate the promises made on paper, a regionalisation policy was proclaimed and carried out while the country's command economy has been replaced by a more liberal economic policy.

As noted earlier, despite the more promising beginning, the hegemonic aspiration of the new elite on the one hand and the imperatives of transforming the Ethiopian state and society along democratic lines on the other have very quickly led to new types of contradictions that have had a negative impact on the transition. And, as it will be clearer further down, the rising expectations, which are inherent in competing ethnic nationalisms have further compounded the task of the democratisation enterprise.

PDOs and the Regionalisation Policy

Following the spirit of the Charter, a regionalisation policy was proclaimed at the beginning of 1992 on the basis of which the country was restructured into 14 regions.[4] This policy was basically aimed at addressing the demands for self-rule by the hitherto marginalised ethnic groups. Consequently, the framers of the regionalisation policy have hoped to implement it through the creation of the Peoples' Democratic Organisations (PDOs).[5] Put differently, it is the strategy of manufacturing a political support base by creating controlled ethnic-based organisations for the various ethnic groups of the country, which has helped the real ruling party to speak through the other ethnic groups, win elections and rule the country in the name of all the peoples of Ethiopia. The classical use of the PDOs system is a decentralisation of power on paper and centralisation in practice through the PDOs (Leenco, 1999; Aalen, 2000a).

Contrary to the spirit of democracy as well as genuine federation, the functions and the loyalty of the PDOs as instrument of central control are ensured both through the formal structure of the party and government and the parallel informal structures where cadres are planted in the PDOs and the regional structures at various levels. The formal party structure is that of the EPRDF, which has been fully controlled by the TPLF until the split of the TPLF itself in 2001. The TPLF as the creator of the PDOs that constitute the EPRDF has been at the top of the pyramidal informal power structure. And, according to inside-house information as well as testimonies of key defectors from the regime, decisions are generally made by the TPLF polibureau and/or central committee and taken to the EPRDF for rubber-stamping. The PDOs, which are controlled both through the formal application of the party rules based on democratic centralism and the TPLF assigned hard-core cadres implement the decisions made by the TPLF/EPRDF leading bodies without any serious questions that can be asked by real autonomous local leaders.

True to the *modus operandi* of a *de facto* one-party state, the government structure is controlled by and subordinate to a party structure. Hence, in the 5-tier government structure, i.e. federal, regional, *Zonal, Woreda* and *Kebele* levels, the TPLF practically controls the central government by occupying the key posts of the Prime Ministership, the Foreign Ministry as well as the key posts in the army, the police and security structure. In other words, the TPLF, which controls the PDOs through the EPRDF, in turn controls the regional and other tiers of local governments through the PDOs. Here, it is important to note that the regional governments are staffed and operated by the PDO officials, who are either appointed or assumed office through mock elections. As Young has observed, the activities of the PDO cadres are supervised and their decisions are cleared at the top while they "have little political or military experiences, generally have low levels of education, frequently appear to be motivated by opportunism, and not surprisingly, have little legitimacy among their constituents" (1997: 212)

The end result is as Aalen argues:

> *The centralized party structure of the EPRDF is clearly contradictory to the provisions of the federal and regional constitutions, which give these levels the right to self-determination. It promotes upward accountability to the party organs above rather than downward accountability to the people of the region,* Woreda *and* Kebele. *The constitutional rights for the regions to formulate and implement plans and policies are severely diminished by the fact that the regional governments, which are all under the EPRDF's hegemony, follow the centrally designed policies and five-year plans… in the Ethiopian case, the party structures are centralized, and when the state and party are the same this leads inevitably to a centralized division of state power (2002:80).*

Aalen further points out that there is the existence of "dual administration" where "politics outside of the legal framework" *(ibid.)* dominates the *modus operandi* of the

EPRDF federation. Here, it is important to note that according to the officially stated objectives of its authors, the regionalisation policy was designed to serve the larger goal of democratisation of the Ethiopian State by promoting the decentralisation of power where the hitherto marginalised ethnic communities are empowered to govern themselves and conduct their own affairs, develop their own economies, culture and language without interference (TGE Charter, 1991; Constitution, 1994). But the regionalisation initiative through the PDOs has quickly led to a new type of domination (Ottaway, 1995; Harbeson, 1998). Hence, the regionalisation policy, which was a positive initiative rather than satisfying the demands of the hitherto subaltern groups for self-rule appears to have served the divide-and-rule policy of the now dominant Tigrayan élite (see Hovde, 1994; Paul, 2000; Vestal, 1994a). Furthermore, it has led to the rise of many unanswered questions such as what type of federation – ethnically or territorially-based? Which rights are to have priority – collective or individual? What model of party organisation – ethnic or multi-ethnic? What type of electoral laws? What should be the national education and language policies of the country? etc.

The June Elections of 1992

Following its regionalisation policy, the new regime had undertaken the regional elections of 1992, which became the first acid test for the new regime's decentralisation of power as well as the democratisation initiatives. The legal framework for this election was laid down by proclamation No. 7/1992, which was enacted to serve as a basis for the restructuring of the country's regional administration along linguistic and/or ethnic lines. The twin objectives of these elections were to legitimise the EPRDF's rule and ensure local autonomy. The former objective hoped to be met by making the process 'free and fair' in the eyes of the Ethiopian public and the international community while the latter objective was to be met by establishing a popularly elected local government. Moreover, the largest international observer groups ever were invited to judge the fairness of the process and to legitimise it in the eyes of the international community.

Not surprisingly, as the stakes in the June 1992 elections were high for both the incumbent government and the major opposition groups, the already existing atmosphere of distrust and suspicion easily turned to that of confrontation. The OLF, the then major contending group, was forced to withdraw from the election process at the eleventh hour. With the boycott of legally registered parties like Islamic Front for Liberation of Oromia (IFLO), All Amhara People's Organisation (AAPO), the Southern Ethiopian groups and the exclusion of older parties like the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and All Ethiopian Socialist Movement (popularly known as MEISON), the June 1992 election turned out to be an affair of the ruling party. As a result, according to the National Democratic Institute/African American Institute (NDI/AAI) Report of 1992 (NDI/AAI, 1992: 7):

> *The June 21 elections did not contribute directly to Ethiopia's development as a democratic state. At best, the elections were premature, especially for the southern half of Ethiopia. Less kindly judged, the elections were ill conceived, dubious and counter-productive in their contribution to the democratization of Ethiopia. The elections, moreover, exacerbated existing tensions, reinforced the hegemony of the EPRDF while marginalizing other fledging parties and were a central factor in the withdrawal of the OLF from the TGE and the return to war in the Oromo region. Finally, the elections created new 'political facts'...the EPRDF dominated regional and district assemblies...that will remain controversial in regions where the elections are mired in doubt and suspicion.*

Following elections, the EPRDF quickly moved to set up local governments, which in the eyes of the opponents were neither democratic nor autonomous. Thus, in what seemed to be a new style of authoritarianism, the TPLF ensured its domination over Tigray while the rest of the EPRDF's constituent parts, the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Movement (EPDM) later Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) and the pro-EPRDF Southern Ethiopian group established a monopoly of power over the Oromo, Amhara and Southern Ethiopian regions respectively (Pausewang, 1992; Hovde, 1994; Vestal, 1994a). Consequently, the elections that were hoped to lead to power sharing and empowerment of local communities have led to yet another confrontation, which has obstructed the meaningful opening up of the political space.

Closing the Transitional Period Through Constitutional Engineering

As agreed upon during the writing of the Charter, the constitution-making process was central to both the consolidation of power and legitimacy for the new ruling élite. To this end, in the period between June 1992 and December 1994, the EPRDF worked out the technical aspects of the constitution-making process while the consolidation of power has continued more aggressively. The EPRDF-controlled Council of Representatives (COR) appointed a Constitutional Drafting Commission in 1993 pursuant to Article 10 for the transition period (Charter, 1991). To ensure the loyalty of the Commission to the incumbent regime, members of the Commission were mostly selected from members of the EPRDF-dominated Council of Representatives itself while the few Commission members who were appointed outside of the Council were subject to the approval of the same body (Merera, 1994a; b; Vestal, 1996; Paul, 2000).

Despite opposition to it from the various sectors of Ethiopian society, especially from the organised groups and lack of national consensus, the TPLF/EPRDF put the Draft Constitution to the vote of a Constituent Assembly controlled by itself in December 1994 (Pausewang, 1994b; Paul, 2000). No less importantly, many controversial articles such as 'the right to self-determination, including secession', the ethnic-based federal structure of government, continued government ownership of land, were all approved without a serious debate and no dissent voice. As

such, in the eyes of many observers the new national constitution of Ethiopia is a replica of the EPRDF programme in both letter and spirit (Cf. EPRDF Programme, 1991; EHRCO, 1995; Vestal, 1996). And, contrary to the claim of the framers of the Constitution for its being both liberal as well as one that can pass the test of time, as one foreign critic has argued even before its official approval:

> *the draft constitution embodies essentially what the EPRDF/TGE wishes the world outside and its own people to believe about the political order. It does not express political reality but instead is a façade behind which the true actuality of the Marxist-Leninist political order is hidden. The constitution does not restrain government because it is not an expression of a firm belief in the importance of doing so. Exercise of power in such a system is not subject to review by someone other than the holder of the power – the antithesis of constitutionalism (Vestal, 1996: 35f)*

To both Ethiopian and foreign observers, the making of the national Constitution appears to be the attempt by the TPLF leaders to ensure the permanency of the remaking of Ethiopia and their hegemonic position in the reordered state. At any rate, like the Charter, the Constitution contains important provisions that guarantee, albeit on paper, a pluralistic political system as well as rights of citizens.

The May 1995 elections, which followed the approval of the Constitution that opened the way for the country's Second Republic, were neither free nor fair. Put differently, they were held to bestow the much-needed legitimacy on the emerging *de facto* one party state. And, needless to add, the 2000 elections and the other measures taken by the new regime in the post-1995 period were all aimed at further consolidation of power in the face of stubborn resistance by the opposition as well as the public at large.[6] As indicated earlier, the central problem in the TPLF/EPRDF-sponsored hoped for democratic transformation is basically the contradictory aspirations of the leading Tigyaran elite, i.e. the aspiration to ensure its hegemonic position by any means necessary on the one hand while aspiring to create an open democratic society through free and fair elections on the other. What make such contradictory aspirations more difficult are that, ethnically speaking, the political support base of the TPLF is a minority from the North, which constitute about 6% of the country's population, compared to the Oromos and Amharas who share between them about two-thirds of the country's population.

A closer look at the *problematique* of the Ethiopian transition clearly shows that while some of the major bottle-necks to the Ethiopian democratisation have to do with the hegemonic aspiration of the TPLF leaders, some are more fundamental, emanate from and informed by competing ethnic nationalisms. As indicated in our discussion of the theoretical part, ethnic nationalism is mobilisation of ethnic groups for collective action in the struggle for greater share of power or the creation of separate statehood by the hitherto marginalised groups. It can also be for the maintenance of the existing *status quo* by privileged groups. Central to the moving spirit of ethnic nationalism is the collective aspirations and demands

advanced in the name of the collectivity where the role of elite is critical both in the articulation of the nationalist agendas and mobilisation of multitudes for the implementation of the agendas. In this regard, an important point to note is that collective rights, which are central in ethnic nationalism, do often contradict the idea of individual rights, the very foundation of liberal democracy (Fukuyama, 1994; Poluha, 1996). What has come out with the ethnicisation of politics since the change of the Ethiopian regime in 1991 has been the double pressure on the state very often to fulfill the contradictory demands of collectivities on the one hand and individual rights of citizens on the other. This has further raised the *problematique* of creating a political structure that is able to accommodate and harmonise the demands of competing ethnic nationalisms on the one hand and collective demands alongside with individual rights on the other.

In the Ethiopian context, there are several crucial issues related to the creation of such a political structure. First, the TPLF/EPRDF has recognised the right to self-determination both in the Charter of 1991 as well as the Constitution of 1994. This has led to a fear on the part of some Ethiopians that recognising such a right could lead to the disintegration of the country. Furthermore, the practical implementation of such a right has not been easy in light of the claims and counter claims of the various ethnic nationalist groups.

Secondly, the right to self-rule provisions enacted in the country's Constitution appears to be implemented through the PDOs. But, as indicated above, the PDOs, which were created for political expediency could not evolve as an embodiment of genuine autonomy and self-rule. The end result is a three-dimensional conflict, where the ruling élite together with its PDOs is pitted against the independently initiated political organisations of the various ethnic groups and the contradictions between the various independent groups themselves. The best examples of the latter are the Oromo and Amhara-based political organisations, which are against each other as much as, if not more, against the ruling élite.

Thirdly, competing ethnic nationalisms tend to create the problem of majorities and minorities with respect to basic rights in the ethnically reconstituted regions. An important matter to be noted here is that Ethiopia is a multi-ethnic state of not less than eighty ethnic groups of varying sizes, which have been mingling for centuries across the country's plateau where ethnic boundaries are very porous, especially in gerrymandered areas and major cities. Moreover, the descendants of the empire builders and other people who moved from the relatively exhausted North to the relatively richer South constitute several millions whose rights are difficult to ignore. Taken together, this raises the problem of guaranteeing the rights of minorities under a condition of acute competing ethnic nationalisms where minorities are generally pitted against majorities.

Fourthly, the TPLF/EPRDF, which has sponsored the Ethiopian democratisation enterprise has continued to adhere to the modus operandi of democratic

centralism, which has been part of its old socialist ideology now officially discarded to give way to the principles of liberal democracy. This has further complicated the task of democratising the Ethiopian state as the application of the principle has the tendency of obstructing power sharing and self-rule, both of which are central in the project of creating a federal democratic republic such as Ethiopia.

In summary, the TPLF/EPRDF upon assumption of state power in May 1991 has promised the three greatest needs of Ethiopia: stability, democratic governance and quick economic development by creating an egalitarian nation-state of equals in which all the country's diverse communities are empowered. And, if we have to draw the balance sheet of the regime's achievements thirteen years later against its failures, the latter clearly outweighs the former with visible discrepancies between the promises made on paper and the reality on the ground. In other words, despite four major elections as well as various policy initiatives, the *modus operandi* of the Ethiopian state has remained authoritarian. Hegemonic aspirations on the part of the dominant elite as well as the contradictory perspectives and claims of the other competing nationalist elites on the other has led to the derailment of the much-publicised 'democratic transition'. In fact, the big 'democratic' promise of the Charter on which the whole transitional process hinged, the transfer of power to a democratically elected party was pushed aside and a *de facto* one-party state was further institutionalised. Consequently, the massive violations of human and democratic rights, repression of political parties as well as civil society organisations and the harassment of the nascent independent press have continued unabated all of which have a debilitating effect on the hoped for democratic transformation (See EHRCO, 1995; 2000).

As ethnicity tends to lead to extremist positions such as who is an authentic nationalist and who is not, the Ethio-Eritrean conflict of 1998 had brought to the fore the tensions within the TPLF leadership that appear to have been building over the years regarding the Eritrean independence. Arguably, although the main cause of the split within the TPLF/EPRDF hard-core cadres seems to be power struggle, the leaders of both wings of this organisation have admitted making serious errors in the whole process of state transformation. The victorious wing, which is led by the Prime Minister, claimed to have launched a rectification movement code-named 'renewal' in which it has promised to hasten up the democratisation drive. But, despite much talk about the "renewal", the TPLF revolution has continued as originally modelled along 'revolutionary democracy' and seems to be the Ethiopian version of Mao's 'New Democracy'. (see EPRDF, 2001). Competing ethnic nationalisms, which tend to lead to a divergent conception of democracy, which in turn obstruct the creation of a broad national consensus are also additional burden on Ethiopia's democratisation. And with the third national elections less than a year away and little movement towards broad consensus among the contending nationalist elites, the democratisation process appears to be as frozen as ever.

Conclusion

Upon the assumption of state power in 1991, the new regime has made a triple promise in its project of state transformation: stability, democratisation and quick economic development by ending both ethnic domination and the command economy. To this end, in what appears to be a thorough surgical operation of the country's body politic, the EPRDF sponsored the July conference of 1991, authored the transitional Charter of 1991 as well as the national constitution of 1994 and conducted major elections in June 1992 and 1994, May 1995 and 2000. However, according to many critics, most of the initiatives along the opening up of a democratic space have remained a paper value (Vestal, 1994a; 1994b; Joseph, 1998).

As we have attempted to show above, the most serious *problematique* in the Ethiopian transition are the hegemonic aspiration of the ruling elite on the one hand and the pervasive impact of competing ethnic nationalisms on the other. Here it is important to note that both have given rise to multiple competing interests and contradictory visions, especially among the contending elites. Put differently, as has been indicated in our preceding discussion, the hegemonic aspiration as well as the contradictory perspectives have impacted on the democratisation drive at several levels. First, they have negatively affected the political will of the competing élites to reach a national consensus on the fundamental rules of the game of democratic transition as well as on the future fate of the country as a whole.

Secondly, they have fragmented the opposition, undermined their unity of purpose and action while giving advantage to the ruling party to continue to divide, harass, intimidate and weaken the opposition. Thirdly, the contradictory perspectives not only pitted one ethnic group against another, but have also affected the working of civil society movements and the independent press, which, as a result of this, are as fragmented as the political society. The central issue in these schemes of things is the competing demands on the state, which give rise to practical political questions such as what type of party formation – (ethnic or multi-ethnic), what type of federal model to be adopted – (ethnic-based or territory-based), and who is the authentic representative of a given group? The attempt to answer such pertinent questions would easily lead to competing conceptions of democracy. In other words, competing ethnic nationalisms tend to give rise to inter-élite and inter-ethnic rivalries and competition driven by competing interests, demands, perspectives and hegemonic aspirations of the various elites all of which undermine the broader agenda of democratising state and society on the basis of equality. Therefore, what needs to be suggested in conclusion as the possible way out of the present political quagmire is the creation of an accommodative political structure by the consent of the citizens where both power and resources are equitably shared and the imperative of development is commonly pursed.

Endnotes

1. To many observers, Tigrayan nationalism has been more of resurgence nationalism – to regain the centrality of Tigray in the Ethiopian State which the Tigrayan élite lost to the Amhara élite in the second half of the 19th century.
2. The TPLF/EPRDF leadership formulated revolutionary democracy based on Mao's New Democracy. The anomaly came when revolutionary democracy formulated for a socialist revolution was made to serve the cause of liberal democracy and free enterprise. The most serious pitfall in the Ethiopian democratisation enterprise is, therefore, the Marxist-Leninist philosophy of revolutionary democracy being made to guide a liberal democratic transformation.
3. For further discussion of what happened at the July Conference and afterwards, see among others, 'Ethiopia: Majorities and Minorities' in *Africa Confidential* Vol. 32, No. 14 (12 July 1991); EHRCO, (1995) Merera Gudina (1994)
4. Both before and after capturing state power, the TPLF has been creating one ethnic organisation almost for each ethnic group in the country under similar name 'peoples democratic organisation' to ensure its own domination in the reordered Ethiopian State. That is why all are referred to as PDOs. The PDOs are neither autonomous nor have any real existence of their own. As such they don't enjoy respect both by the TPLF leaders who created them or the larger Ethiopian public.
5. Initially fourteen regions were carved out. Twelve of them comprised several dozen 'nations, nationalities and peoples' and Addis Ababa and Harar cities were given regional status. Regions One, Two, Three, Four and Five were mainly designated for the Tigrayans, Afars, Amharas, Oromos and Somalis respectively, while the rest of the regions are cohabited by a number of ethnic groups of different population sizes. Later on, Dire Dawa evolved as a special region for reason of its being a bone of contention between Oromos and Somalis. Regions 7 to 11 have been lumped together to form a larger southern region, for reasons of political considerations and administrative expediency.
6. Most opposition parties, AAPO, Council of Alternative Forces for Peace and Democracy in Ethiopia (CAFPDE), Ethiopian Democratic Party (EDP) and Oromo National Congress (ONC), demanded a serious negotiation with a ruling party over the rules of the game for the conduct of 'free and fair' elections during May 2000. The ruling party, fully conscious of the implications, has remained adamant to the end.

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The Politics of Higher Education Reform: The Case of Makerere University

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Abstract

The political and economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s left an indelible mark on social services in Uganda. Using Makerere University as a case study, the paper shows how the adverse consequences of the crises unleashed on the educational sector were revised through reforms along 'liberal' lines. Under funding of education, a major outcome of the crises led to a brain drain and a deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning. Governance in the higher education sector was adversely affected as the central authority of the University increasingly found it difficult to demand or receive the co-operation of students, staff and faculty. However, from the early 1990s, an extensive institutional reorganisation of Makerere University was embarked upon. The paper argues that these reform measures in the areas of financing, administration and programmes, have put the University on a path of transformation that is radical and irreversible.

Background

Makerere University was established in 1922 as a Technical School. In 1937, the school was expanded into a college for higher education. By 1949, it had become a university college for the whole of East Africa. On July 1, 1970, by an Act of Parliament, Makerere University became an independent national university of the Republic of Uganda, offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses leading to awards.

When Politics Fell Apart: Underfunding, Mismanagement, and Academic Inertia

Within a year of MUK's independence from the University of East Africa, the country was plunged into the most turbulent years of its existence. The army coup of 1971 that brought Idi Amin to power marked the beginning of Uganda's slide to political and economic disintegration. The political and economic crises of the 1970s and 80s that are well-documented (Brett, 1990; Kajubi, 1989; Semboja

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et. al.,1995) left an indelible mark on the country's social services. Makerere University was no exception to the political and financial crises that paralysed every aspect of life in Uganda. Between 1972 and 1985, the country's fiscal position and performance was characterised by a decline in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a sharp fall of 35% in real per capita incomes. Embattled governments cut social sector spending to the bare minimum, leaving social service provision to individuals and groups. Education was hit the hardest by the cut backs in government spending (Kajubi, 1989; Mwiria, 1999).

The decline in government funding took place at a time when higher education was facing two other serious challenges. The first challenge concerned the ideological shift in educational funding away from tertiary education towards primary and secondary education. The second challenge related to the growing social demand for higher education and the resultant increases in enrolment.

Influenced by economic and social arguments that "public investment in Universities and Colleges brings meagre returns compared to the returns for primary and secondary education, and that higher education magnifies inequalities", donor support for the university declined (World Bank, 2000:10). The decline in the external funding to MUK came at time when the university was experiencing increasing pressures to expand. The increase in enrolments at Makerere during this period was not accompanied by a corresponding improvement in financial and material resources. The most obvious sign of this discrepancy was the sharp deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning; bare laboratories, empty library shelves, chronic shortages of scholastic materials and overcrowded halls of residence (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report 1990–1991). The state of the halls of residence perhaps best illustrates the extent of the financial crisis. Filled far beyond their capacity, halls of residences' libraries and common rooms, toilets and washroom facilities were converted into additional students' rooms, leaving students to make their own alternative toilet arrangements.

As a corollary to the deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning at Makerere, underfunding accentuated old problems and exposed new ones. The old problems related to financing, and the quality and relevance of higher education. The extensive brain drain at Makerere is largely attributed to underfunding by government and external sources. Meagre salaries that often came too late to have any meaningful impact on individuals' lives demoralised lecturers. For example, in December 1989, not one member of the entire University staff got their salaries and wages in time for Christmas (Ngobi's Submission: Makerere University Visitation Committee Report, 1990–1991:6). Many lecturers opted for greener pastures, both within and outside of Uganda. Those lecturers who remained, moonlighted as tutors for school children, taxi drivers, or 'business men' in order to survive, using University facilities as strategic operating bases. Although many gave the odd weekly lectures, they had little time for seminars, tutorials or

one-to-one student contact, let alone research or formal academic forums for academic staff to debate intellectual issues.

Testifying before the Makerere University Visiting Committee of 1990/1, the Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), argued that the dire consequences of this "under-funding secured a steady institutional regression with potential disastrous multiplier effects on national development...." (MUASA, Submission, 1990/91).

The new problems accentuated by the funding crisis related to governance issues, both within Makerere and between Makerere and the state. Underfunding insidiously undermined the University's authority making it increasingly difficult for central administration to demand or receive the cooperation of students, staff, and faculty. Between 1972 and 1986, there were a total of seven student and staff riots and protests, resulting in the university's closure in November 1989 (Makerere Visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991). Financially impotent to provide the very minimum and basic requirements to facilitate the teaching and learning process, the administration was rendered ineffectual. The administrative impasse was exacerbated by the archaic University Act of 1970, which gives government political control over the University administration. Although the Act states that the University Council is the supreme governing body and employer, its authority is undermined by Section 22, which creates an independent Appointments Board as a parallel authority. The Act empowers this Board, which consists of nine members appointed by the Chancellor, to make faculty appointments, promotions and removals and to discipline academic and administrative staff in the employ of the University (Makerere University Act, 1970).

A further constraint on the university's capacity to act is Section 25 of the Act which forbids the University to dispose of its surplus funds on fixed accounts without the prior approval of the Minister of Education. Section 35 gives the Minister of Education leeway to interfere in the University's administration:

> *The Minister may, if in his opinion it is in the public interest, give directions on any matter to the University Authority as to the exercise of any powers and performance of any functions under this Act and the Authority shall comply with such directions (Ibid. Also see Makerere University visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991:22).*

Empowered by the University Act, consecutive governments issued directives, and formulated and implemented policies for Makerere with complete lack of respect for and involvement of key stakeholders.

The shrinking of the political space for participation and consultation was evident in the government's relationship with the formal bodies representing student and staff interests (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report, 1991). For example, the banning of MUASA in 1975 and the abolition of Makerere University Students' Guild in 1978 were a serious abrogation of the democratic rights of students and staff. The effort to silence and curtail students and academic staff protest and

discussion of the conditions affecting them on campus marginalised and divorced academic staff, students and workers from the central administration. The Vice Chancellor remained, surrounded by Heads of Departments in the Main Buildings (the Central Executive), with almost no regular interaction with the academic staff and academic departments (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report, 1990–1991). Distanced from the realities of living and working at Makerere as experienced by students and staff, Central Administration was unable to effectively respond to emerging and long-standing problems. For example, the Central Executive's prognosis of the student boycott of lectures in 1989, was that:

> *It was a matter of indiscipline by "spoilt youth" whose treatment would be a firm hand of an experienced disciplinarian (Makerere University Visiting Committee Report 1990/91: 5).*

The solution to this display of discontent was to call in the police to keep law and order, serving to illustrate the high handed manner in which the university administration continued to deal with academic and administrative problems.

Despite a more favorable political climate, following the NRM's rise to power in 1986, students continued to feel constrained in exercising their rights. For example, students resented and reacted to the University Council's action in 1988/9 of handing them an "already made" constitution. Disenchantment and suspicion among the student body and university staff was in part responsible for the growth of active power centers on campus organised around MUASA, the Students' Guild, Makerere University Workers Union, MUK Resistance Councils (RCs).

'Back from the Brink'

In the academic year 2000/01, Makerere University recorded an unprecedented increase in its undergraduate and postgraduate admissions. Seven years after embarking on radical changes in its admissions, financing and teaching programmes, Makerere University's expansion has broadened its revenue base, and helped to bring it back from the brink of collapse (Court, 1999). Today, in addition to the expanded admissions, Makerere University administration boasts of having opened up the "ivory tower" and instituted an "open door policy" to dialogue and consultation with students and staff that has helped in solving problems on campus (Epelu-Opio, 1999). These developments represent a picture that is in stark contrast to the one hitherto associated with Makerere. Prior to 1993, Makerere was often portrayed as a university teetering on its last legs, an ivory tower that had virtually lost touch with its environment and was at odds with national development needs. The extensive changes at Makerere are the more remarkable because as Court and Mwiria note, they were 'achieved in a context of declining financial support from government' (Court,1999; Mwiria, 1999).

The changes at Makerere University, which have far-reaching educational and developmental implications, cannot be isolated from the broader political, social,

and economic reforms undertaken by the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government. Since 1986, the NRM government has sought to reconstruct the country's politics and economy along more 'liberal' lines. The processes of privatisation, decentralisation, and bottomup planning and decision-making, were given legal definition by the new constitution that was promulgated in 1995, and the Local Government Act of 1997. These processes are key elements in the government's development agenda. The salience of education to the sustainability of on-going reforms has been recognised and reinforced by government. The prioritising of education is evident in the government's Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP), the Education Strategic Investment Plan (ESP) 1997–2003] and in the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1997.

Since the introduction of UPE, the number of pupils enrolled in primary schools has more than doubled, increasing from 2,900,000 pupils in 1997 to 6,591,000 pupils in 2000. An important consequence of the rapid expansion of primary school enrollments, is the pressure this expansion is posed to exert on the country's secondary schools and correspondingly on the country's institutions of higher learning. Currently, there are twelve universities throughout the country including Makerere University. Ten of these universities are private. The proliferation of private universities is, in part, a reflection of the government's support for privatisation, and, in part, representative of a growing trend in the rest of Africa. While Makerere University no longer enjoys a monopoly on university education, it remains the preeminent institution of higher education. Makerere University's position in the current constellation suggests that it is likely to face the greatest pressures to absorb the increasing demand.

In light of the changes in the university's admissions and financing, in particular, the move toward greater privatisation, the issues of equity, quality, relevance and accountability (financial and academic) become significant. Thus, *Who Pays? Who Benefits? And, What Determines the Outcome?* become important questions.

Within the context of educational reforms, the institutional changes at Makerere University raise three important and interrelated questions with particular relevance to this case study.

- First, to what extent can Makerere University align expanded access with equity, and improvements in the quality of teaching and research?
- Second, how can Makerere University strengthen its capacity for institutional planning, programme implementation, performance monitoring and evaluation?
- Third, how can the changes at Makerere be sustained, improved upon and consolidated?

The following section outlines the main findings of the case study on Makerere University carried out in 2001. It highlights the most important areas of change at Makerere University between 1993 and 2000.

Summary of Findings

The underlying argument of this case study is simple and straightforward: Makerere University has undergone a transformation that is radical and irreversible. Over the last seven years, 1993–2000, the extensive institutional reorganisation of Makerere University in the areas of financing, administration, and programmes include the following main characteristics:

- admission of fee-paying students
- equity in admissions
- the expansion, diversification, and modification of teaching
- the creation of limited liability enterprises called commercial units
- expansion of staff development and welfare
- expanded checks and balances for quality
- greater correspondence between university programmes and private and public demands
- cooperative planning between government and Makerere University.

Admission of fee-paying students

In the space of seven years Makerere has moved from a situation where none of its students paid fees, to one where 80 per cent pay fees, accounting for over 50% of the university's total revenue. In 1999, the university admitted 10,000 new students as first year students to various undergraduate courses and 1,900 students to post-graduate programmes. Of the 10,000 under-graduate admissions only 2,000 (20%) were government sponsored, the remaining 8,000 (80%) were privately sponsored (fee-paying students). The increases in the university's undergraduate admissions between 1993 and 2000 are illustrated in Table 1 and the graph below.

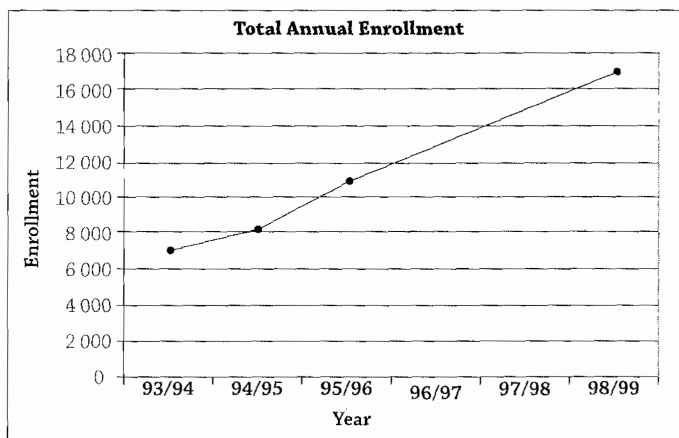


Table 1: Student Admissions, 1993–1999

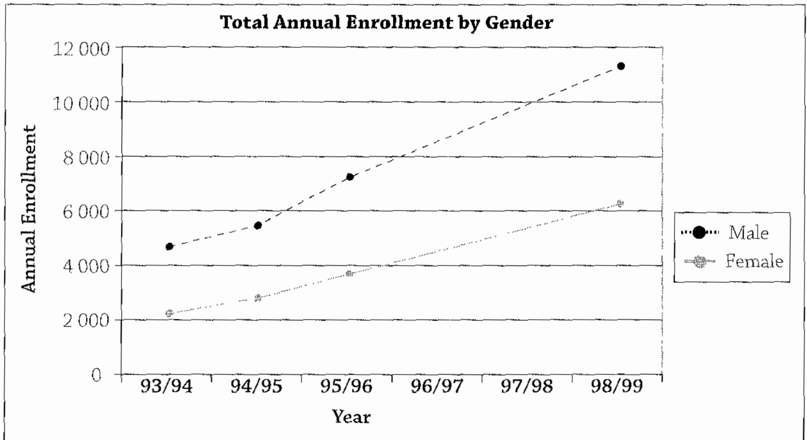
Academic year	Government	Private	Total	% Female
1993/94	2299	1062	3361	31.6
1994/95	2146	1106	3252	31.0
1995/96	2803	2521	4801	36.6
1996/97	2273	5631	7904	29.85
1997/98	2330	5919	8249	37.34
1998/99	2042	7348	9390	38.46
1999/00	1923	12316	14239	39.81

Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

As illustrated in Table 1, there has been an increase in the number of female students admitted to under graduate courses. While the increase is slight and still below an ideal female representation, it nonetheless represents 33% of the overall undergraduate admissions and is a positive trend.

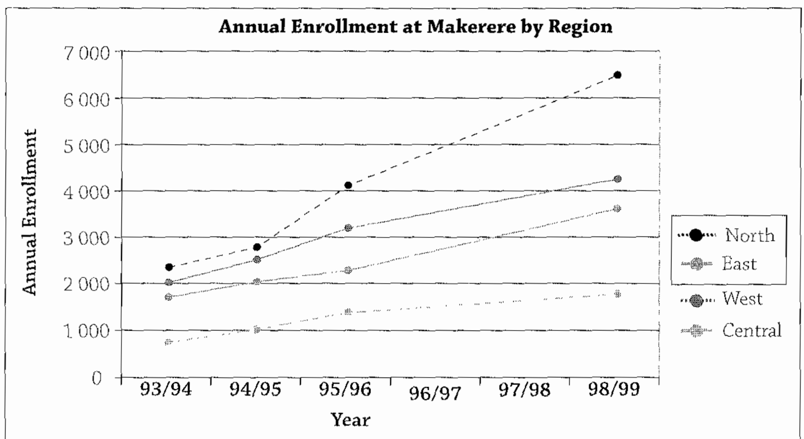
Equity in Admissions

The increase in female admissions could be attributed to university's sensitivity to gender imbalance and the disparities that exist in access throughout the educational system. In recognition of the importance attached to the education of women for both individual and national interests, the university continues to adhere to favourable selection of female students. Before the implementation of the affirmative action in 1989, only 12% of the admissions at the undergraduate level was female. The introduction of a weighting point system in 1989 was an affirmative action that enabled female students to gain access to the university on additional 1.5 points. However, as illustrated by the graph below, the initial increases in female enrolment seem to have reached a plateau.



Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

Another aspect of equity relates to regional imbalances in admissions. The regional distribution in admissions has also improved. Previously, due to several factors, including limited access to secondary education, political instability and war, many regions, particularly in the north and east were grossly underrepresented. However, while admissions continue to be dominated by students from the regions in the south, centre, and west, the following graph reveals a positive trend in regional representation in admissions.



Source: The Registrar Office, Makerere University

Expansion, Diversification, and Modification of Teaching Programme

Teaching programmes at the university have been greatly expanded, diversified, and modified. To ensure relevance and correspondence with private and public interest, new courses including professional courses, have been added to existing programmes. In 1999 alone, several demand-driven courses were established. For example, Masters of Agribusiness Management in the Faculty of Agriculture, Masters in Ethics and Public Management in the Faculty of Arts, Bachelor of Community Forestry; Bachelor of Science in Wood Science and Technology; Master of Arts in International Relations and Diplomatic Studies in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Diploma in Records and Archives Management in the East African School of Library and Information Science. These new courses have increased access by making the university more responsive to its immediate economic and social environment. In addition, the expansion and diversification of courses has opened up the university to income generating opportunities,

Furthermore, to align the university's expansion with teaching practices, the university introduced the semester system in 1998 in the place of the traditional term system that ran from October to June. The introduction of the semester system was aimed at improving efficiency and reducing 'dead time'. The university administration has argued that the semester system is more flexible for the students on a fixed study time, a view that is supported by many students. Responses on a questionnaire administered to a cross section of students show that 70 per cent of the students view the semester system as time efficient. Many of the students interviewed indicated that there were several reasons for favouring the semester system over the old term system. For example, they argued that faculty and students are kept busy and course assessments were easier and more realistic. Students are examined on fresh material and the assessment is more comprehensive than in the traditional setting where students are examined at the end of a full academic year on the materials accumulated. Another advantage cited was the cost efficiency of the semester system. The semester system enables students on a tight budget to have a flexible system of payment by staggering fees payments while, at the same time, they continue to acquire course credits.

Financial Mobilisation and Management

Prior to the innovations, Makerere University was solely dependent on government subsidies, a situation that has been overturned by broadening its scope for resource mobilisation. The Vice Chancellor's Report (1999) reveals that over 60% of the capital budget of Makerere University are currently resourced privately. Between 1993 and 1999, donor support to the university, through bilateral collaborations and grants, accounted for no less than US$5million annually (Musisi, 2000). This support in addition to private initiatives within the university substantially contributed to the university's financial resource base.

In 1999, the university raised Ug.Shs. 12 billion from its own resources (The Vice Chancellor's Report). The bulk of the money raised went into capital development including the construction of a new administration building (Senate House). Furthermore, in addition to the money raised through the admission of private students, the admission of foreign students has contributed to the university's source base.

Over the last seven years, the number of foreign students admitted to Makerere University has increased substantially. In 1993, there were 41 foreign students (mainly from neighboring countries) enrolled in courses at Makerere University. By 1999, the number of foreign students admitted to courses that ranged from Bachelor of Librarianship to Bachelor in Medicine and Surgery had risen to 188 students. The increase in foreign student admissions could be attributed to the comparative advantage of the fees structure at Makerere University. Nationally, when compared to private universities, namely, Uganda Christian University-Mukono and Uganda Martyrs University-Nkozi, and regionally with the University of Dar-es-Salaam, for example, the fees structure at Makerere University, for similar courses, is competitive. Tables 2 and Table 3 illustrate the comparative advantage currently enjoyed by Makerere University vis-a-vis other universities.

Table 2: Academic Fees, 1999/2000 for Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, and Uganda Martyrs' University

Course	Makerere University	Uganda Christian University – Mukono	Uganda Martyrs' University – Nkozi
BBA	1,500,000	1,000,000	1,900,000
BA/ED	810,000	910,000	Not Offered
LLB	1,200,000	1,200,000	Not Offered

Source: The Academic Registrar's Report 2000

Table 3. Academic Fees, 1999/2000 for Makerere University and the University of Dar-es-Salaam

Makerere University			University of Dar-es-Salaam	
Course	Uganda. Shs	US$	Tanzania Shs	US$
BSC ENG	1,650,000	1,092.7	1,200,000	1,485.1
MB.ChB	1,920,000	1,271.5	1,500,000	1,856.4
BSC	1,080,000	715.5	950,000	1,175.7
LLB	1,200,000	794.7	1,000,000	1,237.6
B.COM	1,200,000	794.7	900,000	1,113.9

Makerere University			University of Dar-es-Salaam	
Course	**Uganda. Shs**	**US$**	**Tanzania Shs**	**US$**
BA/ED	810,000	536.4	900,000	1,113.9
BA(Arts)	810,000	536.4	900,000	1,113.9

NB. 1US$ = Uganda Shs. 1,510 1US$ = Tanzania Shs. 808

Source: Academic Registrar, Makerere University.

Expanded Staff Development and Welfare

The expansion of the student body has been matched by the university's efforts to bolster staff capacity. The staff capacity at Makerere stands at approximately 911 senior members of staff. While, the number of senior staff is below the University's requirement, plans are underway to boost this capacity.

Staff Development

The university administration has used the internally generated funds to boost the staff development committee to ensure that the training and retraining of staff members continues to keep pace with the university's expansion. In line with the recommendations of the Mujaju Report, it is now a university requirement that all lecturers must hold a doctorate degree. Currently, only 25 per cent of academic staff hold a Ph.D. It is estimated that the funds available through the staff development committee can accommodate the retraining of a substantial number of lecturers wishing to undertake a Ph.D. Table 4 illustrates the university's current staffing capacity. The total number of staff with a Ph.D. is 221, 25 per cent of the total number of 911 teaching staff. In 1999, the university sponsored 82 Ph.D. students both at Makerere University and abroad in a drive to increase and upgrade its staffing capacity.

Table 4. Academic Staff with Ph.D. 1998/99

Faculty	Number
Faculty of Agriculture	36
Faculty of Arts	31
Business School	1
School of Education	20
Faculty of Law	8
Faculty of Medicine	13
Faculty of Science	47
Faculty of Social Sciences	18
Faculty of Technology	18

Faculty	Number
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	14
Institute of Adult & Continuing Education	1
East African School of Library & Information Science	1
University Library	–
Institute of Statistics & Applied Economics	8
Margaret Trowel School of Industrial & Fine Arts	1
Makerere Institute of Social Research	4
Total	221

Source: Chairman, MU-NORAD Task Force, 1999

Salaries

The salary structure for academic staff at the university has been revised to include 'top-up' allowances from the funds generated from the fee paying private students. While, the average salary for an academic staff still does not meet the demand for a "living wage", and is relatively low when compared to other government institutions, it has substantially increased over the last seven years. Academic staff currently earn between US$1,060 and US$ 1,600 (including a top up allowance) per month, compared to a previous salary of between US$300 and US$500.

Checks and Balances for Quality

Mindful that the expansion, diversification and modification of teaching programmes have to be supported by a tight rein on quality, the university administration has taken measures to ensure that teaching standards are not only maintained but are also improved. An ad hoc Academic Quality Assurance Committee that was set up in 1997 became the Senate Standing Academic Quality Assurance Committee in 1999. The establishment of this committee in addition to the long established practice of external examiners who audit examination standards provides the university with important checks and balances for monitoring and evaluating quality.

Correspondence of University Programmes with Private and Public Demand

According to government and university officials, the increase in private sponsorship has, *inter alia,* encouraged the university to address the relevance of its curriculum to the needs of the wider community. The courses currently offered at Makerere, including vocational and professional courses correspond to public demand.

Makerere University Business School (MUBS), for example, attracts professionals seeking to upgrade their skills. The Faculty of Technology has established a successful consulting business – Technology Consult. The firm has been involved

in a wide range of multi-disciplinary work in civil engineering, mechanical engineering, land survey and architecture, telecommunications and computers, both at the university and within the broader community. The Faculty of Law is largely responsible for making the country's new constitution accessible to the general public through its translation of the constitution into the country's indigenous languages. Furthermore, through its Human Rights and Peace Centre, the Faculty of Law has promoted a greater consciousness and awareness among Ugandans about individual and collective rights. The university's exposure to outside interests is healthy for its development, bringing it into line with wider interests and encouraging its scrutiny by stakeholders on matters both academic and financial.

Commercial Units/Business Enterprises

The commercial units at Makerere University comprise the guesthouse, a maize mill, bakery, a building unit, the University Press, and Makerere University Consultancy Bureau (MUCOBU). The aim of establishing various commercial units was to increase and diversify the University's revenue base.

A summary of operations of industrial and commercial units for the year 1997 suggests however, that performance among the various units for that year was average. The net profit before tax was Ug.Shs. 25 million for printery, and less than 5 million for the rest of the units. An income statement for 1997, calculated in Ug. Shs millions is summarised in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of Operations of Industrial and Commercial units

Particulars	Guest house	Printery	Maize Mill	Bakery	Building Unit	MUP
Total Sales Revenue	190	235	192	93	47	
Less cost of sales	78	110	166	67	41	
Gross profit	112	124	26	26	6	
Less Operating Costs	107	99	23	23	3	
Profit before Tax	5	25	3	3	3	

Source: Department of Planning and Development, Makerere University

The figures for MUCOBU are not included in the above table. MUCOB, incorporated in 1997, offers research, training, and consultancy services to both private and public institutions. Since 1997, MUCOB has successfully tendered for national training and research services. In 1999, MUCOBU earned close to Ug.Shs. 50 million before tax. However, despite financial assistance from the European Union towards capacity building, and a measure of success in its operations, MUCOBU needs to be nurtured to effectively compete for work.

The Challenges of Change

Despite the impressive rejuvenation of Makerere University, there is growing concern from a cross-section of the university's stakeholders, faculty, students, government officials, and donor agencies. The key development challenges to the ongoing decentralisation reforms in the country remain human resource capacity development. Many of the growing concerns about the sustainability of the innovations at Makerere University relate to the sustainability of the innovations and the university's capacity to contribute to the national development needs. Central to the challenges faced by Makerere is the concern of what has been referred to as the "over commercialisation" of the university, resulting in the lack of focus, leading to a gap between skills acquired and needs of the country. Specifically, the concerns link the rapid and unplanned expansion of the university with a decline in standards, quality and equity.

Standards and Quality

In a draft report, *The Future of Makerere University*, by the Secretariat of Makerere University Academic Staff Association (MUASA), September 1999, the authors noted that the unprecedented expansion of the university was cause for concern. They noted that the growing student population at Makerere, from 867 in 1960/61, 16,000 in 1997/98, to 22,000 in 2000/01 has not been matched by corresponding increases in facilities, notably, lecture halls, seminar rooms, laboratories and equipment for science-based subjects. They argued that more than half of the registered students in some courses did not attend lectures due to a lack of sitting space and audibility in the lecture halls. Consequently, according to the authors of the report, the serious shortages noted in addition to the high student /lecturer ratios, the quality of academic output is being compromised.

Similar concerns have become the subject of recent media attention. Newspapers reports have focused on the abolition of tutorial, reduction in course work, and the introduction of multiple choice exams in most departments except Political Science, as indicative of a decline standards of the "Harvard of Africa" (*The New Vision*, Monday, September 18, 2000).

Table 6 illustrates the burgeoning numbers and the lecturer-student ratio across faculties at Makerere University.

Table 6. Lecturer-Student Ratio per Faculty at Makerere University

Faculty	Number of Lecturers	Students	Students per Lecturer
Agriculture	87	539	6
Arts	107	4233	40
MUBS	63	2940	47
Forestry	22	157	7

Faculty	Number of Lecturers	Students	Students per Lecturer
Law	32	971	30
Medicine	243	82	3
Science	129	68	7
Social Sciences	95	27	31
Technology	88	6	8
Veterinary Medicine	82	211	3
School of Education	68	3769	56
School of Fine Arts	27	221	8
Librarianship	6	225	38
Continuing Education	22	183	8
Computer Science	13	***	***
Institute of Psychology	18	***	***
Institute of Statistics	37	487	13

Source: The New Vision, September 18, 2000

Although the overall university-wide student-lecturer ratio is 1:19, which is well within acceptable international standards, when differences in staffing levels among the various faculties are considered, the reality is quite different. For example, the average number of students per class for Business Administration is approximately 500 students, and 800 and upward for many courses in the Arts and Social Sciences. Student responses to questions on standards on the questionnaires suggest that there is a qualitative decline in teaching standards. Among many of the students, the decline in standards is attributed to more than infrastructure deficiencies. Many of the students viewed the decline in standards as linked to the broader issues of student welfare, including living and studying conditions that have worsened as a result of the huge numbers.

Equity

In the questionnaire administered to students, 65 per cent of the students were of the opinion that the 'privatisation' of Makerere has had an adverse impact on equity, in particular, along gender and social lines. An often-cited danger of 'privatisation' was the increasing of the gap between the 'haves and have nots.' The opinion among students and the wider public is that the introduction of fees at Makerere has increased but not broadened access. It is often argued that access to Makerere is for a small social group, once more making higher education, a preserve of the elite. The fact that secondary education remains by and large dominated by private schools means that the majority of those admitted to Makerere are the sons and daughters of parents able to pay the high university tuition fees.

An example of newspaper headlines in the local press provide some indication of the growing concern over the issue of equity:

Makerere Suspends Needy Students (*The New Vision*, 30/10/93)
Makerere Goes Commercial (*The Monitor* 12/07/94)
Makerere University Unfair to Peasants (*The Monitor*, 27/08/97)
Damned if you are smart but poor: forget Makerere (*The Monitor*, 12–14/08/96)
MUK-Mpigi Students Appeal for Bursaries (*The Monitor*, 17/08/99)

Furthermore, the growing concern over standards and equity highlight a danger in the disproportionate attention given to quantity over quality. If not addressed, the decline in standards in equity pose a real danger to the quantitative achievements and innovations in admissions and programming made by Makerere over the last seven years.

Prior to its virtual collapse, beginning in the mid 1970s, Makerere University's strength lay in its reputation, location in a vibrant and growing city, its old and well established infrastructure. The quality of its staff, the selectively high quality of its student body, sound and innovative management, and external linkages and support earned it comparisons to Harvard and Oxford. Today, Makerere University is facing a serious, albeit nascent, challenge from other higher education providers, principally the private universities. The challenge of these universities lies in the quality of their programmes and their representativeness. Some of the new universities, for example, the Islamic University in Uganda, Mbale and Uganda Martyrs' University, Nkozi, offer more focused programmes and have been evaluated as doing better than Makerere. For example, the Islamic University offers practical courses with internships and on the job training. Uganda Martyrs' University has excellent information and communication technology facilities that complement its specialised programmes in ethics and integrity. Furthermore, while admissions to these universities remain low compared with the intakes at Makerere, they have, in the short period of their existence, demonstrated a capacity to purposively address the gender gap in their admissions.

In future, Makerere's ability to sustain and consolidate the positive elements of change will depend on its response to both internal and external challenges.
The internal challenges stem from:

- observed persistent and entrenched elements of conservatism, and vestiges of bureaucratic red tape
- poor terms of service for both academic and non-academic members of staff
- a dose of government interference in governance matters, financial insecurity
- the archaic 1970s University Act
- the hierarchical organisational structure that is cumbersome

- the uncoordinated compartmentalisation of resources leading to duplication and wastage
- poor information and communication technology.

The external challenges Makerere University faces relate to:
- the rapid expansion of education at different levels
- inter alia, the increasing demand in the face of declining financial support from government
- lack of autonomy
- the emergence of new universities as centers of excellence in particular fields of study.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the changes at Makerere are part of an ongoing process. Therefore, the findings of this case study have to be treated as preliminary and will need to be updated as time and events put the changes at Makerere in perspective. There are however, several areas that were identified in the case study of Makerere University and which have subsequently persisted as areas of concern. These areas, which have a direct relationship to teaching and learning at the University, will also determine the extent to which Makerere can compete in the global knowledge economy. Those areas identified for strategic intervention by government, the private sector and funding partners are as follows:
- the relevance and diversity of academic programmes
- university's research capacities both at the Faculty and individual levels
- equity in admissions and recruitment of students and faculty members
- information and communication technology
- student welfare (including housing, career counselling, and remedial measures for needy students)
- staff development, welfare and terms of service.

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Communication and Development in Nigeria: A Discussion

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Abstract

Communication has been integral to Nigeria's development since the amalgamation which brought the country into existence as a corporate entity in 1914.

This paper discusses development communication in Nigeria based on the operationalisation of the twin concepts of communication and development. It examines trends from the pre-colony, through the colony to the post-colony and highlights the sub-optimal utilisation of development communication based on an inadequate grasp of its potentials or manipulation by participants in the process, especially government which dominates communication and development processes in Nigeria.

While there is a growing awareness of an increasing incorporation of development communication principles in various intervention programmes, a fundamental re-orientation and de-bureaucratisation of the processes relating to the utilisation of the concept, are critical to its greater relevance to the development of Nigeria.

Introduction

In 1914, Lord Frederick Lugard said, let there be Nigeria, and there was Nigeria. Although this is not a quote from the former colonial administrator of Nigeria, it is representative, in a sense, of the way the country came into existence.

The allusion to the creation story is indicative of the close relationship between the communication process and the development process in Nigeria. The British colonial authorities decided to amalgamate the northern and southern protectorates of Nigeria and this was implemented by Lord Lugard through a declaration backed by the necessary legal instruments. The birth of the geographical entity called Nigeria, therefore, was an outcome of communication and a measure of its effectiveness.

Before that historical landmark, Nigeria as a geographical land space was occupied by kingdoms and ethnic groupings and nationalities, so diverse, heterogeneous and sometimes fiercely protective of their identities, that amalgamation may have been considered impossible. Although there were commercial, socio-cultural

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and political relationships, these were structured along the lines of a political order which recognised boundaries and constantly responded to the shifting political climate and conflict situations. Existing cleavages along ethnic lines did not leave much hope for the rather dramatic political engineering fostered by British colonialism and climaxing in the amalgamation of 1914.

Developments since that epochal event, in the post-colony and since independence, further confirm the symbiotic relationship between communication and national development. The relationship is so natural that it is often understated, sometimes unacknowledged, but pervasive in its consequence .

A further analysis of this relationship in the Nigerian context will be preceded by a closer examination of the key concepts.

Communication

Communication is an evidence of life, a crucial indicator of existence. It defines a being and in whatever form expressed, reflects a communion, characteristic of the interaction which is expressed verbally or non-verbally – from the pulse of a person lying prostrate at the scene of a fatal accident, to the music star belting out hit songs to the rapturous ovation of a captive audience, to a mass medium interpreting and disseminating its version of the truth and its vision of the world.

In spite of similarities in the operationalisation of the concept, there are variations in its definition. While the International Broadcast Institute explains communication as the transfer by human or technical means of information between persons or groups of individuals (Moemeka, 1994A: 10), its interactive character is stressed by others (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991: 118). They explain it as a process which involves the impartation of ideas, values, information, knowledge and feelings within society. Lasswell describes the act of communication as “who says what, in which channel, to whom, with what effect” (Lasswell, 1977: 84).

These show that communication is a dynamic process (DeVito, 1992: 24) involving various actors who of necessity interact. Since it takes place at the interpersonal, group and mass media levels, communication is a social imperative which is characteristic of relations within society. It explains to a significant extent why society is shaped the way it is and why specific developments take place or fail to take place and why as Folger, *et al* put it, conflict interaction could assume positive or negative dimensions in society (Folger, *et al*, 1997: 11). The fact that communication is also intrapersonal, explains individual characteristics and contributions to the communication chain.

To state that communication is central to human and societal existence is, therefore, another way of acknowledging the obvious. The awareness by the public of the existence of a government initiative, or even the actualisation of such an initiative or the outcome of such an initiative, are significantly communication dependent.

However, it is important to make a distinction between communication and information in order to better appreciate the relevance of communication to development.

As Moemeka has noted:

> *Unlike in information, communication is not merely talking to people, it is not talking at people, it is not even talking about people. It is talking with people. It is an interactive activity directed at creating enlightenment, understanding and education through discussion in order that intelligent decisions could be made and relevant actions taken (Moemeka, 1994B: 7).*

Fisher has also highlighted the difference between communication and information in an analysis published by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO (Fisher, 1982: 13–14).

The functions of communication as enunciated by Lasswell (1977:85), further highlight this symbiosis. Since communication enables the surveillance of the environment, the correlation of the parts of society and the transmission of the social heritage, it enables a linkage between the past, present and the future in society, defines the currents and undercurrents of the present and facilitates the continuity which define the dynamic character of society.

It is therefore inconceivable to imagine development without communication, as the various denominators of development are moderated by the communication process. It will be difficult to imagine education, health and other intervention programmes without communication. In fact, the much chorused power of the mass media and their acknowledged relevance to national development, flow from their being channels of communication and crucial players in today's information society.

In their traditional roles of educating, informing and entertaining, mass media have moved from the hypodermic needle phase of unidirectional transfer of content through a passive audience to an interactive phase involving a most-often active audience and a cyclical flow. The latter phase of the highly interactive media is probably better exemplified by the current call-in programmes fad which has become the staple of electronic media in Nigeria.

Schramm provides a framework for mass media influence in the development process. He identifies areas such as the capacity of the mass media to confer status, focus attention on issues, create an enabling environment for development, and affecting attitudes, as measures of their influence on the development process (Schramm, 1964).

These influences are discernible from the increase in mass media organisations and the roles these media have played in the evolution of the Nigerian State. According to Akinfeleye (2003: 44–45, 52), there are 244 television stations in the country. Of this, 148 are owned by the federal government through the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), 64 belong to state governments and 32 are privately owned. There are 95 radio stations of which five are network stations belonging

to the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) which also has 32 FM stations, 36 state government-owned stations, and 22 private stations, four of which are specialised – covering French programmes, hard news, sports and education/academic programmes. As at December 2002, there were 67 newspapers and magazines, mainly privately-owned.

In the colony and the post-colony, mass media have been especially active in moderating the political process in Nigeria. They have served as instruments of war by other means. Media ownership patterns of concentration in the hands of the economic and political elite are indicators of their acknowledged impact in society.

The media are as much tools for raising individual profiles and lifting obscure local figures to prominence as they have become inseparable components of intervention programmes designed to promote development. These all show the primacy of communication to development.

Development

The central theme which run through the various attempts to define development is change. According to Obasanjo and Mabogunje (1991: 119).

> *Development (is) a process concerned with people's capacity in a defined area, over a defined period, to manage and induce change, that is to predict, plan, understand and monitor change. The more people develop, the more they become instruments for further change.*

Moemeka explains that,

> *It is a movement (change) from existing conditions that are no longer conducive to societal or group goals and aspirations to those that can meet those goals and aspirations (Moemeka, 1998)*

Adedeji sees development as a process and collective responsibility leading to fundamental and sustainable changes in society. It involves growth and is inclusive of aspects of the quality of life like democratisation, social justice, equality of opportunity, equity in the distribution of income (Asante, 1991: 5–9). According to him, the concepts of national and collective self-reliance and self-sustaining development are fundamental in a discussion of development. Both concepts suggest that internal needs should be the criteria or stimulus for development.

Teheranian (1977: 26–34) identifies key attributes of this process as increasing production, pollution, welfare, mobilisation, dislocation, participation, differentiation, bureaucratisation, integration, communication, cognitive dissonance, plurality, individuation, conformity, adaptation, rationalisation, alienation and innovation.

Five effects summarise the experiences of development in developing countries like Nigeria. These include:

i) Demonstration Effects, which are the outcome of attempts, through the adoption of the methods of the more developed by the less developed.

ii) Fusion Effects, involving a combination of the key attributes of different "developed" social systems by the less developed.
iii) Compression Effects, which are summarised by attempts by the developing to spend less time in achieving development than the developed ones.
iv) Preventive Effects, which are attempts by the developing to be more cost-effective in human, material and environmental terms than the industrialized countries.
v) Stylisation Effects, which are evident in the retention of the unique features of culture and national identity.

The progression of theory in the analysis of the concept of development is indicative of the natural interest in the subject as well as the dynamic phases in its development.

Servaes offers a broad overview of the various theories. The Modernization paradigm treated development as economic growth and supported the transfer of technology and socio-political culture from developed to the developing societies, while the Dependency Paradigm acknowledges the conditioning of a group of economies by the development of others. The Multiplicity and Another Development Paradigm targets the satisfaction of needs, is concerned with the eradication of poverty, is endogenous and self-reliant and in harmony with the environment. The Mixed Approaches reveal shifts in the three perspectives from, for instance, endogenous to exogenous explanations, to globalism and holism, from the prescriptive and predictable processes to change-oriented and less predictable ones (Servaes, 1994).

While there is a broad acknowledgement of these imperatives of national development, the African and Nigerian experience have raised questions on not just the operationalisation of the concept of development, but the processes and strategies deployed in attempts to achieve it.

This has called to question the role of the state as moderators of this strategic imperative. As Osaghae (1988:38) has noted, the dominance by government of the development process has seriously eroded the capacity of the people to actualise their potentials and meet their aspirations, with the consequence of unfulfilled dreams, legitimacy crisis and fundamental credibility problems for government. It has also stimulated a more rigorous and systematic discussion of the subject of communication and development or development communication.

Development Communication

The failures of the development process and the subordination of the potentials of actors in the process have fuelled a closer examination of how communication being inseparable from the logic of human existence in society, can be better deployed in the task of effecting desirable changes in the same society.

Development communication therefore transcends the mere transfer of desirable information. It is an encompassing term premised on the understanding of development in physical (material) and human terms. It emphasises access to the media, socio-cultural relevance of communication content and participation in the communication process by the subjects or beneficiaries of development initiatives. It generates empathy, raises aspiration, teaches new skills and facilitates a reorientation in the attitudes of the people (Moemeka, 1994: 9–15). It is therefore a systematic process leading to specific outcomes which ought to translate to development. The end products of development communication are conditioned by any or a combination of methods adopted in specific interventions.

Moemeka (1994C: 55) elaborates on these approaches which include:

- The Interpersonal which consists of two methods, namely the Extension and Community Development method which is primed at rural development, and the Ideological and Mass Mobilisation method which relies heavily on interpersonal channels like political party cadres.
- The Mass Media Approach also consists of two methods – the Centralised Mass Media method which stresses media control by a central authority – experts in urban media operating centres, and the Localised (Decentralised) Mass Media method which is hinged on interaction with the audience. The Integrated Approach combines both interpersonal and mass media as well as traditional methods of communication.

Patterns in the area of development communication approaches in Nigeria show fluctuations in the recourse to development support communication. While there is some evidence that the Diffusion Model still plays a role in the country's development process, there are also indications of the use of the Participatory Model and the poor management of the latter model in spite of proclamations by implementers, of the wholesale adoption of the Participatory Model in the increasing number of intervention programmes midwifed by either the government or other players in the development equation.

Contextual Considerations

The foregoing contextualisation of the debate on the roles of communication in national development is an attempt to establish the relevance of given elements to our focus. In spite of strides in the mainstreaming of communication, especially media content, in line with the new globalism, Nigeria has always offered an interesting scenario for the study of communication and national development.

In the pre-colony, socio-political structures allowed a context for the use of communication in societal development. That period witnessed a preponderant recourse to the use of traditional media and interpersonal channels. These structures allowed the dissemination of information and had feedback systems in place,

although, there was the logic of traditional authority exercised by often powerful rulers. Communication took on a diffusion approach with the local network guaranteeing the speedy flow of such communication to other sections of society (Ugboajah, 1989: 235–236). The level of participation of the citizenry in decisions affecting them, depended on specific cultural contexts and the degree of freedom of expression exercisable by the individual.

Till date, traditional media have remained important transmission belts for development messages. This echoes in the fact that in spite of rapid urbanisation, rural Nigeria where they are put to significant use still harbours most of the country's population. What is questionable is the use to which these media are put, the content of specific communication, the criteria for participation, and the commitment of such players to the goals of development.

The colony witnessed the entry and gradual growth of mass media in Nigeria. The formal media increasingly became the preferred option in official communication by the colonial authorities and right from the Newspaper Ordinance No. 10 of 1903, government showed the premium it placed on mass-mediated communication by trying to minimise the potential damage of the opposition. Other gag laws followed, but the political class also demonstrated its understanding of the power of information and communication through the establishment of private newspapers.

The defunct *West African Pilot*, owned by the late Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, first president of independent Nigeria under the Westminster system, was a key player in the struggle for independence. The *Nigerian Tribune* which was also active in the nationalist struggle and had as proprietor, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, former premier of Western Region, is, however, still surviving.

Gag laws showed the intolerance by government of other actors in the development process who, no matter their potential contribution to the task of development, were either partially or totally sidelined. This inevitably meant that right from the pre-colony and especially since the colony, a framework had been established which did not enable the total involvement of all participants in the process, to impact on the country's development. Whatever was then defined as communication did not conform with all the specifications of the concept. This may have led to the inevitable polarisation of the media along the establishment and opposition divide, even when there is a broad appreciation by the opposing players of the various development dilemmas which should be addressed.

Independence changed the guards but not necessarily the orientation in official attitudes to the role of communication in national development. Before then, the change in the early years of radio in Nigeria, from a Radio Distribution Service in 1936 to the Information Office in 1940 and to a Public Relations Department in 1947 (Owens Ibie, 1991: 209), provided indications of the thinking of government and its model of the role of communication in development. The bureaucratisation of information structures and laws like the Official Secrets Act of 1962, further mystified the machinery of government and narrowed the options in the use of

communication. The management of information appeared less systematic, and often reactive.

While government maintained a grip on the communication process, the public and journalists played secondary roles. Such dominance was evident at the policy level in media ownership patterns and in the virtual monopoly of the news by functionaries of government (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991:119).

There was however, evidence of the effective use of media in campaigns related to specific programmes of government. In the old Adamawa Province (covering about 885 kilometres) during the 1963 census, vital information was disseminated throughout the area within hours, using traditional media (Obasanjo and Mabogunje, 1991:118).

Various other uses of the media have recorded degrees of success. Officials of military regimes were known to reach out to civil society through various interpersonal channels. Governors organised People's Parliament where they communicated with civil society. One such session was held on January 30, 1986 by the then governor of Rivers State, retired Police Commissioner Fidelis Oyakhilome.

The granting of licenses to private operators in the electronic media in Nigeria has assisted the broadening of the base of participation in the communication process. The concentration of these stations in urban centres constrain their relevance to most of the population. As Olukotun (2002:101) explains, the urban and elite bias of the media and their neglect of the rural areas are reflections of the underdevelopment of the country's media. In a content analysis of Nigerian newspapers by Adigun Agbaje, cited by Olukotun:

> *49% of stories sampled focused on the central government, 41.3% on regional or state governments, while a mere 5.9% focused on local governments...873 stories (were) on national affairs, 97.6% were sourced from urban areas while a mere 2.4% were sourced sourced from rural areas*

Although this study was conducted in the 1980s, there is as yet no indication of a shift in this pattern of media coverage. However, the democratisation of the mass media space, in spite of concentrating ownership in the hands of government and a group of select elite, nevertheless represent a step forward, as call-in programmes show. It may be necessary, though, to determine how increasing popular participation in media programmes impact on government policies and programmes and responsiveness to consumer concerns.

Another noticeable development is the rapid subscription of media to the logic of the information superhighway. This is supposed to democratise the communication process in society further, but is constrained not only by economics but its still largely exclusive character as well as the often understated impact deriving therefrom and their implication for relevant development. Endemic poverty in society could only further alienate the mass of the people and exclude them from a communication process in which they are not supposed to be active players but

only net beneficiaries of outcomes. Increased evidence of internet use in urban centres and the introduction and growing popularity of the Global Systems of Mobile telecommunications (GSM), while representing major gains in the democratisation of the information space, are better appreciated in terms of their potential for re-ordering current patterns in development communication.

Considerable progress has been recorded since the promulgation of Decree 75 of 1992 establishing the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to facilitate private sector participation in telecommunications service delivery, promote fair competition, set performance standards and regulate the provision of telecommunications facilities and services (Aluko, 2003: 65). In a projection by industry analysts at the early phase of GSM services in Nigeria. BMI-Techknowledge (2001) Africa, had in an internet article, stated:

> *Cellular services market penetration is forecast to reach a level surpassing five subscribers per 100 people by the year 2010 – an equivalent to some 9 million subscribers, with roughly 60 & 40% split between rural and urban areas. Analysts further predict 30–35 million users of telecommunications services by 2005, and supply of services trailing demand.*

Globacom has been licensed as the second national carrier, since 1963 when Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) became a monopoly. Aluko (2003: 64) states that NCC issued four mobile wireless licenses, most of them in February 2001, 22 fixed wireless licenses were issued in July 2002, while by 2003, the number of landlines and mobiles had risen to about three million. This increase was achieved mostly between 2001 and 2003. The signing of the Telecommunications Act in July 2003 repeals Decree 75 of 1992. The new Act seeks the creation and provision of a "regulatory framework for the Nigerian Communications industry". These all point to the further democratisation of the telecommunications space.

Based on the pre and post-independence scenario, and given the logic of globalisation, it is increasingly likely that civil rule and the clamour for democratic reforms would lead to more mobilisation programmes to facilitate government by the people. In the unfolding era of minimum government and greater freedom of expression backed by technology, the development arena is likely to admit more participants. The "Us" versus "They" complex which has over the years positioned government and the people on different sides should hopefully give way to a new orientation which allows people to see themselves as very much part of the initiatives to improve their lot. The expectation is that such initiatives would be increasingly people-centred and focused. The top-down model of information dissemination would be replaced by a more participatory model.

Some current intervention programmes in health are proving the need for such approaches because of the relative success rates they have achieved. Such programmes, including those on family planning, adolescent sexuality, immunisation, Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and Acquired Immune Deficiency

Syndrome (AIDS), have involved jointly and/or severally, varying degrees of participation by governments at different levels, local and international agencies and non-governmental organisations.

Such participation flow from the logic of the acknowledged relationship between politics and the development process. As Dissayanake (2000: 48) paraphrasing Rule states:

> *There can be no formulation of a social problem that does not involve any political judgements and that there cannot be any solutions to such problems devoid of partisan interests...to pretend otherwise merely paves the way for the introduction of partisan measures and objectives in the guise of non-political technocratic problem-solving.*

The interpretation of this reality by governments in Nigeria has resulted in various interventions by it in the development process, as initiators of or collaborators in specific projects. The activities of some agencies, midwifed by government, have come under scrutiny in this regard, as they provide a platform for some analysis.

One of them is the Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF) which was established by Decree 25 of 1994 (amended by Decree 1 of 1995) by the military administration of the late General Sani Abacha, to utilise a percentage of revenue deriving from the increase in the pump price of petroleum products in October 1994. The PTF was mandated to rehabilitate public infrastructure and undertake other interventions in areas like health, education, food and water supply and security services.

General Muhammadu Buhari, a former head of state noted for being a disciplinarian while in office, was appointed to head the agency. This decision was interpreted as an attempt to shore up the credibility of PTF. However, and in spite of noticeable achievements, the agency was enmeshed in controversies deriving from its political character and antecedents.

According to Agbi (1996:6,40), by March 1999, the PTF had spent N198 billion on various projects in the country. Although it was a parallel and extra-constitutional agency which existed alongside ministries and parastatals originally charged with its mandate, the PTF's intervention in health, which was Agbi's research focus, was found to have been well received by patients and health personnel in Lagos State.

The achievements of the fund were highlighted by the Abacha administration as evidence of its progressive credentials and responsiveness to the yearning of the people for development. But as Agbi also found in her study, the PTF which by the grassroots character of its mandate was supposed to be communication-dependent, often was top-down in defining priorities and executing projects. One of the findings of this Lagos State Primary Health Care study was that there were no consultations with health personnel before drugs were supplied , with the consequence that " most of the drugs PTF supplied were not relevant to patients' needs" (Agbi, 1999:40). This pattern was typical nationally.

It was in the midst of controversies, amidst references to the PTF's success stories, that the Olusegun Obasanjo administration scrapped it after assuming office in 1999. The PTF example, like most development projects in the developing world, while showing the difference that the investment of resources could make to infrastructural development, brings to the fore, the need to operationalise the concept of participation and its meaningfulness within a convoluted development process. Braun (2003:188) captures the core of the dilemma thus:

> *Participation is 'in' and threatens to deteriorate into a meaningless buzzword...The reduction of participation to socio-technical methods resulted in – put in polemical terms – the people being instrumentalized, and proved in the main to be a developmental dead-end street. It appeared (no differently than in earlier projects without participation) to promote a 'recipient mentality', distorted the optimal allocation of resources and destroyed tried and tested social organisation patterns without replacing them with functional equivalents.*

Apart from providing a basis for further analyses of the relationship between politics, communication and development, the PTF model suggests the need for more transparency in popular participation, and a de-politicisation of the structures of development as well as a clearer acceptance, commitment to, and demonstration of, the logic of development communication.

Conclusion

The foregoing imply the need for precautionary and pro-active measures in the interaction between the communication and development process. There is the need to keep the overall development objective in focus so that communication and its role in national development do not translate to an uncontrolled and uncontrollable scenario of discordant voices which inevitably detract from the goals they were originally meant to achieve.

It is clear that communication, in spite of constraints rooted in orientations in society, have played key roles in national development in Nigeria. However, such contributions have never really been optimised because of structures in society and problems like poverty, which are cogs in the wheel. The question of what constitutes participation in the development process needs clarification.

While a dominant player like government has undertaken a number of development initiatives, its role in the overall process has often been misunderstood, sometimes acknowledged and at other times, appreciated. Government initiatives like the PTF, often a basis for assessing not only how government can capitalise on an initiative to score points, also illustrates how players in the process of development can better demonstrate an understanding of the close relationship between communication and national development.

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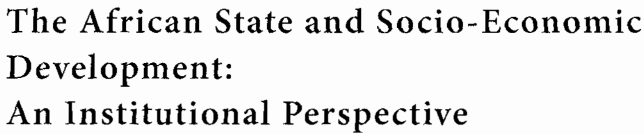

The African State and Socio-Economic Development: An Institutional Perspective

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Abstract

Africa's developmental failure has received a lot of schorlarly attention. Scholars, especially Africanists, have proferred numerous solutions for the continent's crises. These have been generally ill-suited to overcoming the crises. This failure, in part, is because the causes of the crises have been misdiagnosed.

This article attempts to situate the developmental failure of Africa within an institutional perspective. By so doing, it is argued that the institutional nature and character of the African state since independence primarily accounts for the continent's poor social and economic performance. The post-independent African state is not only disembodied, it is also disembedded. Consequently it is unable to articulate a transformative project or mobilise society around such a project. It is not equipped to respond to the needs of the African people. Policies adopted since political independence, from African socialism to neoliberalism, have reinforced the state institutional character and its inability to progressively enhance the living standards of majority of the African population.

Overcoming underdevelopment in Africa, to a large degree, depends on the ability of the continent to establish state and society institutions that can successfully engineer social and economic transformation.

Introduction

The last two decades have seen increasing emphasis being placed on institutional factors to explain variation in national economic performance. This resurgence of interest in institutional analysis is partly due to the remarkable economic performance of the East Asian Newly Industrial Countries (NICs) and partly due to recognition that the prescriptions flowing from the Washington consensus were worsening the development situation in developing countries. Consequently, the role of national institutions, especially state institutions and state-society institutions, was brought back-in into development discourse. The thrust of the

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institutional analysis is that the nature and character of the state as well as the nature of the relationship between state and socio-economic actors determine a country's economic performance, including its capacity to improve the welfare of its citizens, attract investment and become globally competitive. It is argued that states with robust, dynamic and flexible domestic institutions achieved better economic outcomes than those where such institutions were lacking. This theoretical approach has been utilised to analyse the economic performance of developing countries. The poor economic performance of most developing countries is attributed to their weak institutional structures. Evans (1995) typology of different states – predatory, developmental and intermediate – aptly demonstrates how differences in domestic institutions account for variations in national developmental outcomes.

In this paper, I will apply Evans' schema/typology to the post-colonial state in Africa in order to understand its socio-economic performance. This schema will not only allow us to characterise the post-colonial African state but also explain its role and consequently its performance. By adopting such an approach, the aim is not to be institutionally deterministic or state centric but to stress the centrality of national institutions, especially the state in development, especially at a time when neoliberal hegemony, both in the policy process and academic discourse, calls for a minimalist state, in spite of the fact that we are in the era of the so called post-Washington consensus.

In the first section of this paper, I discuss the predatory, developmental and intermediate states with a view to unpacking their institutional structures. In the second section, I proceed with an analysis of post-colonial African economy, its institutional underpinnings and impacts thereof. In the final and concluding section, I will draw attention to policy implications.

Conceptual Framework on Typology of States

In this section, I briefly review three typology of states as a basis to set out their institutional nature and characteristics. The central point is that it is state institutional characteristics that enable it to perform a particular role. In order words, institutional characteristics influence the behavior of a state. It is important to stress this point at the beginning because recent references in the continent to the developmental state have been made in terms of the expected role of the state and the goal it should have achieved. Little attention is paid to why states behave in particular ways.

The Predatory State

Predatory states are characterised by incoherent and inefficient state institutions with very little capacity to promote collective goals such as economic growth and other social development. In the words of Evans, the predatory state "has little capability of transforming the economy and social structure over which it

presides" (Evans, 1995: 45). Instead, office bearers use the state to pursue their individual political and economic interests. The predatory states are properties of dictatorial political leaders or a small group of political elite, be they military or civilians. Evans describes Mobutu's Zaire as an archetype of the predatory state. Such a state diverts resources from productive investments to their short-term political and economic interests. State institutions and economic activities are personalised in predatory state, and are characterised by an absence of institutions and rules that hold the rulers accountable for their actions, and even where such rules exist they are circumvented by the rulers who act with virtual impunity.

Predatory states rather than build, nurture or strengthen organs of society, purposefully disorganise it, in more ways than one. For example, the individualised and clientelistic ties do not provide incentives for society to organise collectively[1]. In addition, because an organised society will demand a level of accountability from the state, the predatory state penetrates society in a manner that destroys it. The result is that the predatory state is "suspended in mid-air over society" (Hyden, 1983: 7 cited in Martinussen, 1997: 248).

In summary, the predatory state is unable to engineer socio-economic transformation because it is overwhelmed by clientelistic interests. The state institutions are fragile and incompetent to the extent that they are unable to formulate coherent policies that promote collective goals. In most predatory states, rent-seeking activities are institutionalised rather than discouraged by the state. The state stands above society, suppressing its capacity to contribute to the developmental process as a valuable partner. In the end, you have a process of *economic implosion*, with the state eating away its resources.

The Developmental State

At the other extreme of the predatory state is what Evans calls the developmental state. Evans adopted this concept from the seminal work of Chalmers Johnson (1982) on the Japanese political economy. In this magisterial work, Johnson tried to explain the structures and institutional prerequisites that underpin Japan's remarkable economic performance. He summed this up in the concept of the capitalist developmental state.

The developmental state has four main characteristics[2]. The first feature of the developmental state is political stability and an insulated bureaucracy that is relatively independent from direct political pressure. This ensures that the state agencies can function technocratically.

The second feature of the developmental state is extensive and continuous investment in education, and the third is that it promotes market-enhancing rather than market-repressing economic policies.

The fourth feature of the developmental state is a clear division of labor between the state and the private sector under overall guidance of a super-ministry or a pilot

agency such as the Japanese Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI). This state-informed private-public partnership enabled the developmental state to set "substantive social and economic goals". In addition, it prioritised "industrial policy, that is, concern with the structure of domestic industry and with promoting the structure that enhances the nation's international competitiveness"(Johnson, 1982: 19). He describes the developmental state as a soft-authoritarian state that exercises considerable autonomy and even dominates the business sector. This attribute of the state, it is argued, is to ensure political stability and long-term predictability of economic goals. Successful economic transformation thus depends on the ability of the state to impose its will over society. Weak society or economic interest groups are thus seen as a source of state power. In the same logic, a strong business sector reduces the state's autonomy.

Scholars such as Wade (1990) have applied the concept of the developmental state to explain the miraculous economic performance of the Asian Tigers[3]. However, Wade's *Govern Market Theory* (GMT) can be described as a strong statist interpretation of the developmental state. According to him, GMT "emphasises the developmental virtues of a hard or soft authoritarian state in corporatist relations with the private sector" (Wade, 1990: 29). In his view, the state must *govern the market*. In his emphasis of state dominance, Wade introduced the state *fellowship and leadership* dichotomies. The former means when the state adopts programmes/policies proposed by business while the latter implies when the state takes initiatives and steers the private sector to adopt them. What he tries to demonstrate through these distinctions is that only when the state steers or prods business to do something it would not have done otherwise that counts as making a real difference to the investment and production patterns.

Network theorists such as Daniel Okimoto (1989) have criticised the strong statist conception of the developmental state. He emphasises the importance of complementary market structures for the success of the state's transformative project. He argues that both the state and capital utilise these networks as points of entry and to influence each other, resulting in a consensus building process rather than the dominance of the state. I will return to this point later.

Evans elegantly summed up the characteristics of the developmental state in the concept of *embedded autonomy*. His version of the developmental state complements and builds upon both the strong statist approach of Johnson and Wade and the network theory of Okimoto. According to him, embedded autonomy combines Weberian bureaucratic insulation with intense connection to the surrounding structures. Autonomy means the presence of coherent state agencies that are able to formulate and implement coherent developmental goals. Put differently, autonomy means the ability of the state to behave as a coherent collective actor that is able to identify and implement developmental goals. Implicitly, the developmental state is not overwhelmed by particularistic interest groups. State bureaucratic coherence

is achieved by, among other reasons, through meritocratic recruitment. Meritocratic recruitment engenders coherent networks within the state, which enhances its capability to identify and implement independent goals. It is complemented by predictable career paths and long-term rewards for bureaucrats both of which help to generate a sense of corporate coherence.

Caution must, however, be taken not to overemphasise the significance of bureaucratic coherence as the larger political environment also conditions the state capacity and the success or otherwise of a developmental project. In the absence of a political class that shares the same transformative project with the bureaucratic elite, the development project is likely to founder. Writers on the East Asian 'economic miracles' such as Amsden (1989) and Wade have alluded to the presence of a political class that shared a growth ideology with the bureaucratic elite. The politico-bureaucratic elite in the NICs was committed to the promotion of private property, productivity and market-conforming interventions. The symbiotic relationship that existed between the politicians and the bureaucrats engendered trust, making it possible for a division of tasks whereby the political elite set the broad policy framework while the bureaucrats undertook detailed policy formulation and implementation. Simultaneously, the former protected the latter from direct political pressures. In the words of Johnson (1987), the political class and the technocrats ruled and reigned respectively. A shared ideology of growth complements and fortifies the transformative capacities of the state bureaucracy. In fact, others like Manuel Castells, define the developmental state from the role it performs. To Castells therefore:

> *A state is developmental when it establishes as its principles of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development, understanding by development the combination of steady high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to the international economy (Castells, 1992:56).*

And to Pronk:

> *A developmental state is one which is able and willing to create and sustain a policy climate that promotes development by fostering productive investment, exports, growth and human welfare (Pronk, 1997:5).*

Bureaucratic coherence or autonomy is not a necessary condition for a successful transformative project. As Evans argues autonomy must be complemented by embeddedness as a necessary condition for successful economic transformation. Embeddedness implies a "a concrete set of social ties that bind the state *intimately and aggressively* to society and provides institutionalised channels for the continual negotiation and renegotiations of goals and policies" (Evans, 1995: 12). This connectedness is to a particular social group with whom the state shares a transformative agenda. Implicit in this argument is that the

success of a transformative project does not only rest on the internal structures of the state but also on the networks and institutions that link the state and other actors in the economy. In its original usage, embeddedness implies the state ties with the business sector to the exclusion, if not destruction, of civil society[4]. However, the state is simultaneously insulated from direct political pressure. Stressing the importance of insulation and embeddedness, Seddon and Belton-Jones note:

> *Effective insulation from immediate pressures of special interests enables policy-makers to respond swiftly and effectively to new circumstances; but the capacity to identify and implement appropriate policies to promote effective medium – and longer-term development requires the maintenance of strategic relations with wider civil society (Seddon and Belton-Jones, 1995: 326).*

The combination of autonomy and embeddedness by the developmental state is the basis of its efficacy. These seemingly paradoxical characteristics are mutually reinforcing and safeguard the state from piecemeal capture by particularistic interests, which are capable of destroying both the state's internal coherence and its ability to coherently interact with its economic partners. The cohesiveness of the state also enables interest groups with which it shares a transformative project to overcome their collective action problem. The networks between the state and its economic partners serve as platforms for information exchange, consensus building over policy and effective implementation and, by extension, enhance the robustness of the state apparatus. Embedded autonomy also enables the state officials to strategically and selectively intervene in the economy-focusing on sectors, products, markets, technology, etc, that they perceived as crucial to the future of industrial growth and transformation. Embedded autonomy is the institutional foundation for the developmental state to respond swiftly and effectively to rapidly changing global economic conditions.

Before concluding this section, I should draw attention to one basic assumption of the developmental state theory. Most writers on the developmental state, including Johnson, Wade and Evans, have concluded that as capital becomes internationalised and autonomous, the state capability will be reduced. Acording to the argument, the social actors that the developmental state brings forth becomes its nemesis. In other words, at maturation the social groups that the state helps to create develop a distinct interest from that of the state, hence they undermine the state's capacity. This assumption is fraught with several limitations. It assumes a static role for the state. Historically and empirically, across the globe, the state's role is an ever-evolving one. Evans acknowledged this evolutionary process when he identified demiurge, midwifery and husbandry as the categories of roles performed by the state. Unfortunately, he did not have this analytical frame in mind when he posited the gravedigger thesis. I argue that of critical importance is the evolutionary role of the state and state-society relations. Where there is a shared project of transformation, both the state and society influence each other complementarily.

The evolutionary process is what Linda Weiss (1998) had in mind when she formulated the *Governed Interdependence* (GI) thesis. According to her, "GI refers to a relationship that evolves over time, whereby the state exploits and converts its autonomy into increasing coordinating capacity by entering into cooperative relationships with the private sector, in order to enhance the effectiveness of its economic and industrial policies" (Weiss, 1998: 39). In other words, of central importance is the state's ability to use its autonomy to consult, negotiate and elicit consensus and cooperation from, rather than dominate, over its social partners. In this relationship, both the state and private participants maintain their autonomy within the confines of the goals set and monitored by the state. GI thus seeks to solve conceptually how to preserve state effectiveness when there is a strong capital sector. Its major contribution to the theory of state capacity is its emphasis on state-coordinated public-private cooperation rather than state-dominance conceptual fabric that dominates most of the existing literature.

The central thesis of *the developmental state approach is that because of its internal structure and its immersion in networks of ties with its socio-economic partner, the state is able to foster a transformative project*. Embedded autonomy is thus a necessary condition for successful economic transformation.

It should be noted that the East Asian developmental states were products of historical circumstances. Without going into detail, the factors that gave rise to embedded autonomy in the NICs include "ethnic homogeneity and the favorable climate in the world market, as well as the emergence of astute political leadership" (Edigheji, 1997: 27). These historical specificities simultaneously shaped and constrained the state institutions and relations to the surrounding social structures.

There is thus a need to re-emphasise the evolutionary nature of the role of the state throughout history. This is in order to correct the misconception, from academic and policy-makers of different ideological persuasions about the diminishing role of the state in the era of globalisation. It is all the more important for the African context at a time when efforts are afoot to revive the economy of the continent, through the *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD). Among others, *NEPAD* aims to reposition Africa as an equal player in the global economy, eradicate poverty and diseases, promote sustainable development and democratic governance. It is especially because of this that we need to stress the evolutionary nature of the role of the state. By so doing, we will shift the debate away from whether the African state is dead or alive to posing the questions, what role or roles can the state play in the current global conjuncture and what institutional characteristics/attributes would enable it to achieve developmental goals?

The Intermediate State

In between these two state forms is what Evans refers to as the intermediate state, with India and Brazil as examples. The intermediate state could be described as a paradox, combining both developmentalism and rentierism. The intermediate

state, unlike the predatory state, has a semblance of bureaucratic organisation, but not the degree of corporate coherence and efficiency enjoyed by the developmental state. Its bureaucracy has a degree of independence from the political elite and special interest groups. However, its internal structures are considerably fragmented, divided and unstable. Yet it contains what Evans refers to as *pockets of efficiency* resulting in better economic outcome than the predatory state. In the Brazilian case study by Evans, although the broad climate fostered a tradition of non-meritocratic recruitment and lack of career paths for civil servants, there were certain agencies within the state that promoted these bureaucratic norms and consequently were more effective in their developmental tasks.

Because of its lack of organisational coherence, there is little policy coordination within the state structure. Additionally, the state-society relationship fluctuates with time and in some instances from sector to sector. For example, state-society relations may engender rent-seeking behavior by state officials and its economic partners, and even make it impossible for both the state and society to construct a joint project of transformation. As in the Indian case study of Evans, the state may tilt more towards autonomy than embeddedness thus marginalising society in the policy process. The state on other occasions, might even be overwhelmed by special interests because of its lack of or limited corporate coherence. At other times, certain sections of the state may be embedded with society in a way that makes successful sectoral transformation possible, which could even have a positive spin-off on the rest of the economy. Evans describes this as reform by addition. Overall, however, reform by addition makes strategic and selective interventions near impossible. The lack of coordinated intervention has another negative effect: it further overstretches the capacity of the state.

Intermediate states tend to achieve some degree of developmental success due to the semblance of internal state cohesion and at other time embeddedness or a combination of elements of both. However, Evans' studies show that intermediate states achieve lesser rate of success than developmental states.

The Political Economy of Post-Colonial Africa

The political economy of Africa has been plagued by an ever deepening crisis of development, whatever indicators – economic, social, political and environmental – are used to measure this trend. In addition to a deteriorating food situation, diseases (including the ravaging effects of HIV-AIDS), low life expectancy, mass poverty, malnutrition and high unemployment, the continent has been characterised by political instability, low investment, low savings, low capital formation, primary sector based economy and highly informalised as well as a crushing debt burden. The crisis of underdevelopment has continued in the post-colonial period and Africa's socio-economic crisis has received extensive treatment in existing studies.

As a result, I will not undertake a detailed review of Africa's socio-economic performance. But to illustrate the state of the continent's development, Table 1 shows that Africa was the least developed region in the world by 1999 as defined by the Human Development indicators.

Table 1: Human Development Index (1999)

Region	Life Expectancy at birth.	Adult literacy rate (% age 15 and above)	Combined primary, secondary and gross enrolment (%)	GDP per capita (PPP US$)
Arab States	66.4	61.3	63	4,550
East Asia and the Pacific	69.2	85.3	71	3,950
Latin America and the Caribbean	69.6	87.8	74	6,880
South Asia	62.5	55.1	53	2,280
Sub-Saharan Africa	48.8	59.6	42	1,640
Eastern Europe and CIS	68.5	98.6	77	6,290
OECD	76.6	97.5	87	22,020

Source: UNDP Human Development Report 2001.

How did Africa end up in such a dire state? I will limit my focus to an institutional analysis in an attempt to address this question. As I noted earlier, this approach is not institutionally deterministic as there are a number of factors that shape socio-economic development. But as noted earlier, institutional analysis is a powerful explanatory tool in understanding national socio-economic performance. It is for this reason the analysis is focused on the African state and development.

The post-colonial African political elites conceived the state as the prime mover of development. As a result, the post-colonial African state adopted economic planning which placed the state as the main provider of goods and services required by the people. Thus at the initial phase after political independence, the African state was involved in all spheres of development, including agricultural production, industrialisation process (mostly Import Substitution Industrialisation – ISI) and provision of basic services to the population, as well as playing a regulatory function over socio-economic development. Consequently most African states established Ministries of Planning or Economic Development. An important point to note therefore, is that at the rhetorical level, most post-independent African political elites had a vision of promoting national unity and development – seeking to, at least, improve the welfare of their citizens. The crucial question though is whether they were able to establish institutions to actualise their vision?

The ruling elite that emerged in Africa did not encourage the development of the private sector as the latter was treated with suspicion. Instead, it sought comprehensive ownership of the means of production and also acquired a central role in the management of the economy. Toward this end, the African state set up public enterprises as a measure to assert its independence and to direct and dertermine the development agenda of the newly independent state. Through the public enterprises, the state became the major provider of basic services, and through the public service, was the major employer. Therefore, across the continent, including South Africa that has a relatively large private sector, government was the major employer. Thus at independence, there was a relatively small private sector in the continent.

As a result, the participation in governance of business associations, trade unions and broader civil society was limited as the newly independent states regarded themselves as the main agents of socio-economic transformation. As a result, the African state has treated other actors with suscipicion and attempted to prevent the emergence of independent societal actors whom state officials feared would erode their power and legitimacy. We are, however, reminded by Brautigam (1994) that:

> *State capacity is also shaped or determined by the capacity in society and societal linkages , including policy networks, that draw on private sector expertise and other institutions that allow for embedding or inclusion of societal capacity in the state.*

Consequently, the African state has been disembedded and disarticulated from its surrounding social structures. The developmental failure of the African state can thus be attributed to this disembeddedness, that is, the lack of institutions that facilitate institutionalised cooperation and dialogue between the state and other socio-economic actors over national development. Bratton and Van de Walle (1997) illustrate this point when they observed that, in post-colonial Africa, citizens and their organisations were seldom consulted about public policies. At best only societal interests with approved membership were consulted by the state. Citing Kasfir, they concluded that the post-colonial African state tried to circumscribe political participation by shrinking the public arena, and where relationship existed between the state and other socio-economic actors, such relationship was paternalistic rather than being programmatic – they were sources for the ruler to dispense favors to his loyalists, curry favors from potential opposition as well as an arena for primitive accumulation. In an earlier work, Bratton and Van De Walle (1994) have poigantly summed up the lack of embeddedness in Africa thus:

> *African leaders have rarely used bureaucratic formulas to construct authoritative institutions or granted subsidiary spheres of influence to occuptional interest groups within civil society. Contemporary African regimes do not display the formal governing coalitions between organized state and social interests or the collective bargaining over core public policies (Bratton and Van De Walle, 1994: 458).*

Political liberalisation which began in the 1980s, may have created a more auspicious climate for an increased emphasis on popular participation, at least at the rhetorical level. But in practice, most African states lacked institutional ties to civil society organisations, except with few exceptions such as post-apartheid South Africa, where the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLC) is established as a structure for dialogue and consensus-seeking, in addition to Presidential Working Groups set up under President Thabo Mbeki. But even in this context, the degree of participation and influence of societal actors on important policies is limited. Not surprisingly, therefore, most African states have yet to consult civil society groups around *NEPAD*, in spite of the resolutions by African Heads of State at the 2002 Durban summit requiring governments to consult with their citizens as a way of promoting the goals and values of *NEPAD*. Worse still, Nigeria and Senegal, two of the five countries in the *NEPAD* implementation committee, are yet to even formally brief the legistative arms about *NEPAD*. This mirrors the degree to which African leaders support and promote popular participation and consultation.

The period beginning in the early 1980s witnessed the introduction of a policy of outward orientation and liberalisation of domestic economies as the solutions to the continent's socio-economic malaise. This policy orientation intensified across Africa in the 1990s even among previously socialist-inclined governments such as Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and the newly elected African National Congress-led government in South Africa. This policy change was in most cases imposed by the IMF and the World Bank and, from the mid-199os, they were increasingly paraded in the name of corporate globalisation. (*Globalisation compels us to do it* becomes the often heard refrain by Africa political and bureaucratic elites).The argument was that for the continent to compete in the global economy, attract foreign investment, create jobs, there was an urgent need for liberalization of its economies including reduction of subsidies, privatisation and commercialisation of state owned-enterprises, fiscal restraints and an uncritical acceptance of a minimalist state. This new policy direction has led to a redefinition of the role of governments in Africa. As Mosley et al put it, this new policy direction

> *implies the roll-back of the state, both in terms of its ownership of industries, financial institutions and the marketing agencies and of its regulatory activities in trade, industry, agriculture credit and foreign investment. The economic arguments centre on the failure of the state to create the right system of incentives for an efficiently operating economy. This is sometimes expressed as the state's preference for macroeconomic policy instruments which are exercised at the expense of microeconomic rationality. The corrective measures are then privatisation and extensive deregulation, recommended in the belief that freely operating markets will conduce to the more efficient use of scare resources of the poor (Mosley et al, 1991 :11).*

The new policy thrust ironically places greater emphasis on popular participation and cooperative relations of the state, business and civil society. But as I will show

in the discussion that follows, the contrast has been the case. Economic liberalisation has been accompanied on the one hand by the shredding of the state institutions that further reduces its capacity to perform a developmental function, and, on the other, by precluding the important national policy from the purview of public participation. As Mkandawire and Soludo (1999:130) surmise, in the context of the new growth models the very weaknesses of African institutions are important determinants of their poor performance.

Indeed the autonomy of the African state is under attack by policy of economic liberalisation with the emphasis on a minimalist state and the introduction of new managerialism. In the context of the latter, the bureaucratic elites not only rule but they also reign with important implications for democratic governance and accountability. Important policies are formulated by unaccountable bureaucratic elites often against the electoral mandate of African governments, with important adverse implications for democratic governance and accountability. National parliaments are at the receiving end of this unfolding drama. They are either bypassed or made to rubber-stamp economic policies to which they have little or no input. Thus policy informed by the Washington Consensus has entailed an usurpation of the powers and roles of African political elite over national policy-making by both unaccountable domestic and international bureaucratic elites. The latter in most cases have taken complete control of the African economy. For example, it is now common to see international bureaucrats from the World Bank and the IMF having to approve national budgets, being posted to Central Banks and Ministries of Finance, and also not only have to approve macro-economic policies but in some instances have to draw up such policies for African countries without input from African governments. The African state is therefore unlike the developmental state where the political elites set and define the context for economic reforms, and bureaucratic elites have the leeway to implement such policies and are also held accountable to function within the defined framework. But in Africa, the bureaucratic elites, because they enjoy the support of the international bureaucrats from institutions and foreign donor community and in the context of the deteriorating economic situation in the continent have largely become unaccountable to the national political elites. In other words, bureaucratic accountability, a central tenet of democratic governance is being undermined by Washington Consensus-informed micro economic policies.

Besides, the new policy orientation was accompanied by the disbanding of planning ministries and the shift of greater role over economic management to Ministries of Finance, which, unfortunately, have narrow conception of development. With this comes limited coordination of government policies and programmes. Most Ministries of Finance conceive of development in terms of macroeconomic stabilisation. In the words of Pundy Pillay: (1999:5) "In recent decades, expenditure control considerations have borne heavily on budget making. More

importantly, it has heightened the risk of 'policy making by budget', i.e. of the budgetary framework dominating other policy frameworks. The result is a shift from strategic and systematic planning to "getting the fundamentals right". Thus rather than government priority determining the budget, it is the fiscal imperatives that seem to determine and shape national agenda in Africa. Pundy alluded to the fact that it is the wrong way to economic development. In his words: "Avoid policy making through the budget".

The implication of all of the above is that the policy of market fundamentalism not only leads to the *disembeddedness* of the African state but also its *disembodiment*. The state is being disembodied by the fracturing of the relationship between the political elite and the bureaucratic elite making it incoherent and unable to act with one voice and common purpose to formulate and promote a national agenda of development. The African state, therefore, departs from the experiences of the developmental state, and cannot indeed be described as a developmental state but rather as a predatory state. Thus even in the context of liberal democracy and the pervasive dominance of market fundamentalism, as Mkandawire (1999) has argued, these are *choiceless democracies* as African political elites are presented with a *fait accompli* over the policy path they have to follow.

Choiceless democracies in Africa, as elsewhere, lack the institutional attributes necessary to successfully transform the continent's economes from primary based to high-value added economic activities. It is therefore not surprising that the Africa economy has remained heavily dependent on the primary sector – agriculture, mining and oil, etc, and has consequently been unable to compete in a global economy driven by financial markets and information technology. In the same breath, the African, state is unable to respond to the needs and demands of the African people. Africans' needs and demands for a reform agenda that will lead to qualitative improvement of their material conditions/standard of living are ruled out, *a priori,* from liberal democracy and economic liberalisation that are being pursued simultaneously in the continent as from the 1980s. Abrahamsen (2001) aptly characterises these as exclusionary democracies because while they allow for political competition, they cannot incorporate or respond to the demands of the majority in any meaningful way. To further draw on Abrahamsen:

> *Not only was ... more social-democratic or welfarist vision of democracy rejected in favor of the more minimalist version of democracy promoted by external actors and domestic elites, but the return of political pluralism has also frequently signaled a renewed enthusiasm for economic liberalism and, by implication, further suffering for the poorer sections of society (Abrahamsen, 2001: 8–9).*

The erosion of the effectiveness of the African state, its autonomy and coherence, as well as its disembodiment comes through other means as part of the process of economic liberalism. As I have noted above, one of the key institutional requirements for a state to be developmentally effective is its capacity to recruit and retain

highly qualified bureaucrats. But in Africa, with worsening economic conditions, the working conditions of managers in public sectors have deteriorated. And in the face of increasing cost of living, top bureaucrats have resorted to moonlighting in order to supplement their wages with adverse implications for the state and development. Oluskoshi (1998), vividly captures this situation:

> *These activities (moonlighting) are almost always undertaken during office hours; offices have been used as informal market outlets...In addition, state resources... are sometimes mobilized in support of the multiple livelihood strategies that have become prevalent. The consequences on the effectiveness of the civil service have been telling. It is not surprising that the civil service all over Africa has found it increasingly difficult to attract and retain high caliber local personnel with the requisite experience and expertise. The resultant "capacity gap" has largely been tackled through a resort to the employment of consultants, mostly from abroad. (Olukoshi, 1998:42).*

Much has been said in existing studies about the role of the 'Weberianess' of the bureaucracy to economic development, that is, meritocratic recruitment and career paths, and the coherence and commitment to organisations goals that it engenders. Most of the existing studies including Evans and Rauch (1997) show that these institutional attributes are lacking in most Africa states. The post-colonial African states, with the exception of a few, have been characterised by personalisation of state power. And especially under authoritarian regimes, recruitment into, and promotion within, the bureaucracy have been based more on nepotism or loyalty to either the neopatrimonial ruler or his or her lieutenants. Even in such exceptions such as Cote d'Ivoire where highly qualified people were recruited into the bureaucracy and had relative longevity in terms of career paths, loyalty was not to the state but to the "life president", Houphouet-Boigny. Recruitment to the public service was a means of dispensing patronage to party loyalists (Crook, 1989). Indeed, in most of post-colonial Africa, recruitment and promotion in the bureaucracy are informed by personal ties to a political leader or a senior bureaucrat. As a result, the state agencies are overwhelmed by personal loyalty and connections, which has occasioned a lack of sense for collective goals, making it impossible to formulate coherent developmental objectives. The exceptions include Botswana and Mauritius, where the political elites seem to have a clear sense of purpose and consequently ensure that there are meritocratic recruitments and predictable career paths for bureaucrats. The Mauritian political elite, for example, has been said to be driven by an ideology of Fabian socialism and export –led growth. It recruited a bureaucratic elite that shares the same developmental goals and organisational norms and values (Brautigan, 1997). In general, however, as noted by Martinussen (1997) in Africa, state institutions function with little or no respect for bureaucratic norms and serve as tools of the political elite. The crisis of the state institutions is exacerbated by the fact that it is overwhelmed by particularistic economic interests, which further reduces its autonomy/capacity to formulate policies that promote collective goals.

Daniel Edevbaro (1998) characterisation of the Nigerian state is appropriate:

> *The ... Nigerian state has been based on patronage networks which have been sustained through corruption. Corruption has been made possible as a result of state 'capture', which has led to underdevelopment, as national resources had been diverted into private pockets of the militicians*[5] *(Edevbaro, 1998: 179) (emphasis added).*

This has created and entrenched a cult of personality that perceives leadership as being above the law and use the state as a platform to exchange and distribute favours. This phenomenon has engendered over-centralisation of power at the federal level, personified by the various military leaders. Under the Babangida and Abacha military regimes, the Nigerian state was run as a property of these two dreaded military dictators[6] who corrupted every domain of public life. Corruption and rent-seeking have become the norm rather than the exception. Civil servants were made to conform or be fired. In the face of the political uncertainty, job insecurity and rapid and high turnover of top civil servants with every successive regimes, bureaucrats lost all sense of collective goals and became uninterested to work for the collective welfare of the citizenry (Edevbaro, 1998). The consequence for Africa's most populous nation is poor political institutionalisation and uncertainty, circumvention of the decision-making process, personalisation of national resources, low investments and economic deprivation. Nigeria which was in the 1960s on par, in terms of development, with countries such as Malaysia, is now one of the poorest countries in the world, according to recent statistics of the World Bank. The Nigerian case might be an extreme case. However in most of post-colonial Africa, corruption and rent-seeking are the norm and is cancerous, destroying the productive base of the continent. These have adverse effects on the capacity of the African state as it complicates the process of building a professional, reliable, modern administrative apparatus, one capable of efficiently serving the long-term national interests (Harsch, 1993). In the exceptional cases of Botswana and Mauritus, state coherence was also ensured through bureaucratic accountability. In both countries, political elites have shown political will to promote their vision of development. They have also defined the context for the operation of the bureaucratic elites.

Needless to say that the problem *per se* is not about rent-seeking or even corruption by the state bureaucratic and political elites in Africa. Indeed it is generally recognised that rent-seeking and corruption seem to characterise the process of capital accumulation. All capitalist societies are marked by rent-seeking and corruption. The Enron episode in the US is illustrative of corruption in capitalist societies. Little wonder that the Asian developmental states have also been marked by high level rent-seeking and corruption, which have earned them the label of crony capitalism. For example, almost all former prime ministers of South Korea have had some run in with law enforcement agents after their terms. But what distinguishes the African state from the developmental state is that in the latter

corruption and rent-seeking are aberrations rather than the norms and have not destroyed the productive capacity of the economic system. In contrast, rent-seeking in the African context has been cancerous and the produce of rents has been used for consumption rather than for productive purposes. This is a crucial variable in understanding the nature of the African state. As K.S Jomo, one of the most authoritative scholar on Malaysian political economy, notes:

> *Rent transfers may well contribute to, rather than undermine, further investments in the national economy since rentiers can usually count on further advantages from such investments. If capital flight is thus discouraged, the greater concentration of wealth associated with such rentier actvitity may actually have the consequences of raising corporate savings, thus accelerated capital accumulation, growth and structural changes (1996: 12).*

The key point therefore is not whether or not the African political and bureaucratic elites are engaged in rent-seeking activities but that the produce of such rents has been diverted to "unproductive purposes" unlike the cases in the development states. Lastly, in the African context, rent-seeking and corruption exist in the bureaucracy, from top to bottom. I have argued that in contrast, in the development states context, pockets of rent-seeking exist, but there are institutional norms that discouraged especially "unproductive" rent-seeking behaviour. One significant point to note is that given the degree of rentierism in Africa, it is easy for particularistic interests to overwhelm the state and divert its attention from its goals. An important lesson therefore is for the African state to develop institutions that, at the very least, will minimise corruption and rent-seeking.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to situate African political economy within the comparative institutional framework. I briefly reviewed three typology of states. On the basis of that theoretical framework, the post-colonial African state has been labeled as predatory. It is argued that both the policies of the immediate post-independence period and those being pursued since the 1980s – in line with the Washington Consensus – have not been conducive for the development of state institutions that are capable of engineering both growth and development. The consequence has been that Africa remains a primary sector based economy, unable to compete in the global economy whilst the majority of its people live in abject poverty. It is also noted that there are few exceptions in Africa such as Botswana and Mauritius that require critical examination rather than mere generalisations about the African state. In that instance, there might be some lessons to be learned from both countries in terms of what can be emulated and what not to be replicated. Certainly, one of the lessons to learn from both countries, and the discussion on the developmental state, is the need to develop institutions that can promote development – recruitment of bureaucrats

being purely based on merit, predictable career paths and complemented by the need for top bureaucrats to share the same developmental agenda with the political elites. Further, a useful lesson from this discussion is that the political elites must set the developmental context and bureaucrats should then be given the necessary leeway to implement policies within that defined framework. A necessary condition therefore is that political elite must *rule* and bureaucratic elite must *reign*. This conception goes against the logic of the new managerialism. In addition, there is a very strong need for the African state to re-establish coordinating ministries to ensure systematic and strategic planning and coordination of government programmes and activities. Importantly, the injunction by Pundy Pillay that "avoid policy making through the budget" should be heeded. This point is particularly important in the context of *NEPAD*. For *NEPAD* to succeed, it must be anchored on national development programmes that individual governments must formulate in their respective countries. Budgets must then be the means to actualise the objectives of such programmes. In conclusion, the ability of Africa to overcome its dire state of underdevelopment is considerably dependent on its ability to establish institutions that can successfully engineer socio-economic transformation.

Endnotes

1 Where society is organised, for example, as in Nigeria, it is in opposition to military rule. In other words, the existence of society is in spite of the state, although the activities of the former continues to be undermined by the latter.

2 These features are not discussed in any particular order.

3 The Asian Tigers or Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs) are South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

4 Evans subsequently argues for the broadening of the concept of embeddedness to mean state-capital-civil society relations so that the state could take advantages that come with civic engagement in the transformation. He points to Austria and Kerala as examples where civil society engagement have contributed to the success of a developmental project. Woo-Cumings (1996) criticised the choice of Kerala as that developmental state because of its low per capita income. One could also add that because it is a state within a country, Kerala cannot be used as an example of a developmental state. Without the conditions provided by the Indian state, a different outcome would have been likely.

5 I appropriated the term *militicians* from Ayo Obe, president of the Civil Liberties Organisation, who, in a personal e-mail message to me so characterised the military and the political elite that have dominated Nigerian politics and plundered its resources since independence.

6 Under the Babangida regime, a \$12.4 billion Gulf War oil windfall was not deposited in any known official account of the Nigerian government (see Civil Liberties Organisation Press Release, 21 July 1998). The money is believed to have been deposited in foreign bank accounts of the military leader and his

collaborators. Similarly, a few weeks before the death of General Abacha, his security adviser, Alhaji Gwarzo withdrew millions of dollars from the government account. Only a fraction of this money was recovered by the military regime of General Abubukar. The government of President Obasanjo has recovered millions of dollars from the Abacha family but huge amount of funds that "went missing from the national treasury" including $2.8 billion dollars during Obasanjo regime as a military ruler are yet to be accounted for. Moreover, the looting of state resources has continued under the, current civilian government of President Obasanjo in spite of his so called avowed commitment to anti-corruption crusade. It will be near impossible for the anti-corruption crusade to succed when it is generally believed that the anti-corruption tribunal is being used to witch-hunt those opposed to the Obasanjo government.

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Seeing Like a Democracy: Africa's Prospects for Transforming the North Atlantic Paradigm

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Abstract

Africa holds the potential to successfully challenge the dominant technocratic, state-centered, market-oriented understanding of democracy that the US and European nations espouse. Despite prevalent "Afro-pessimism", especially in the West, fueled by poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence, water shortages, environmental degradation and other problems, the growing stirrings of the centrality of "the people" rather than "the state" in African democracy discourse creates foundations for a robust participatory alternative to Western democracy. The accent on bringing the people back to the centre of democracy is coupled with a growing emphasis on the centrality of the political, understood in richer and deeper ways than ideology, party politics, or narrowly distributive struggles over who gets what.

A new African paradigm of people-centered democracy and citizen-owned politics can energise a dynamic, people-oriented development project. The key is to inform the theory of participatory democracy and popular politics with insights from actual, real world experiences in such politics that have been spreading, largely out of public sight, in diverse settings in South Africa, Tanzania, and elsewhere.

These nascent stirrings suggest a new paradigm created from the combination of theory and practice. Such a paradigm points toward democracy not mainly as economic growth and free elections but rather as a flourishing way of life, balancing public goods with private wealth, embedding the market in democratic values.

If realised, the vision of democracy as a way of life in Africa and its animating, citizen-owned politics can help spark a rebirth of positive liberty in the 21st century across the world.

> *I challenged [citizens]. I did not patronize them. 'If you want to continue living in poverty without clothes and food,' I told them, 'then go and drink in the shebeens. But if you want better things, you must work hard. We cannot do it all for you. You must do it yourselves.'*
>
> *Mandela (1994: 614)*

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> *The first Big Idea for the next decade is to articulate an encompassing framework which not only helps better integrate the activities of government but also harnesses the efforts...of civil society...Government...need[s] to promote greater participation and interaction of people with the state.*

Towards a Ten Year Review (Aboobaker and Netshitenzhe, 2004: 106)

Introduction

For all the crises facing African democracies – from poverty to HIV/AIDS, from water shortages to corruption and violence – recent years have also witnessed a note of optimism at variance with the Afro-pessimism fashionable in the West. Stirrings of a renewed Pan-Africanism have taken shape, for instance, in the New Partnership for Africa's Development. Pan-Africanism, as the young Zimbabwean scholar Admore Kambudzi has put it, is fired by possibility. "A vision of the future and plenteous hope has always been at the center of the [Pan-African] movement", he writes (2001: 59). In a similar vein, Dani Nabudere speaks of a "new mood in the African intellectual community for a need for a new focus, a new vision and a new direction as we enter the new millennium" (Nabudere, 2000: 4). Peter Vale makes a compelling case that the African experiences of self-affirmation in the course of overcoming the all encompassing colonial legacy position the continent for an African Renaissance, as well as for leadership in challenging the dominant constructions of power, wealth, and human civilisation in the global economy (Vale, 2002).

Such hope is animated by what might be termed a "return to the people", recalling Amical Cabral. In 1990, the *African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation*, a high level gathering of more than five hundred non-governmental organisation leaders, scholars, government representatives and United Nations agency leaders met for five days in Arusha, Tanzania. The *Charter* strongly stuck the note of optimism tied to participation. "Popular participation is both a means and an end", it declared. "Popular participation provides the driving force for collective commitment for the determination of people-based development processes and willingness by the people to undertake sacrifices and expend their social energies for its execution" (1990: 2). Six years ago, in 1998, the Silver Jubilee conference of the African Association of Political Science in Mauritius similarly called for a renewed popular movement for democracy, different and deeper than the liberal or multi-party democracy of the West (Nabudere, 2000).

In a recent volume on *NEPAD*, Archie Mafeje observes a shift among African intellectuals "from abstract thinking to more pragmatic thinking" which helps to "narrow the gap between intellectual praxis and [everyday people's] practice" and is all about democratisation. In the 1990s, in his view, "the outcomes of the various attempts at democratization in Africa have proven a failure because those at the helm used the same methods and stratagems as their yesteryear opponents".

Mafeje argues the need to move from a state-centered understanding to a society-centered understanding of democracy, what he calls a "new democracy". "In Africa, civil society has not yet been able to assimilate into itself the political society whose ultimate incarnation is the state". Yet the issue is clearly on the agenda. "It is not as if this question had not been raised by some African scholars; the problem is that there are no easy answers" (2002:78).

There may not be easy answers but there is a growing body of practice in popular politics that provides resources for challenging the North Atlantic paradigm and for animating a practical alternative. A story from the work of the Institute of Democracy in South Africa (Idasa) can serve as an introduction.

What is Democracy? The Nigerian Election

In 2002, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa undertook a two year project in Nigeria known as the Programme for Civic Empowerment (PACE). The aim was to strengthen and build the capacity of Nigerian civil society in areas of electoral support, constitutional reform, transparency and peace-building. An Idasa office opened in Abuja, Nigeria, with a three person staff directed by Derrick Marco, a seasoned veteran of democracy work in Africa. The first effort was to monitor and respond to the threats of violence that could jeopardise the 2003 election.

Idasa, a broad NGO which played an important role in the transition to democracy in South Africa, is now one of the few democracy organisations working in the continent, according to Marco, "that have as the basic point of departure country-based initiatives". This meant, in particular, that Idasa worked in partnership with churches and trade unions to establish a 600 person "Alternative Information Network", aimed at constantly gathering information from communities, disseminating information, and working to develop strategies to minimise violence. The Idasa approach differed sharply from election observers from the European Union. According to Marco. Idasa's "angle of vision was Pan Africanism, and the commitment to make the broad democratic project on the continent work". According to the EU observers, questionable practices in some regions after the first round of voting meant a failed election. But Idasa's frame was fundamentally different. It asked questions such as "what is minimally needed to make the democratic process move forward?" "Is there progress in controlling violence?" "Do people feel involved?" Idasa was able to release a statement soon after the polls closed, before others, that the election, while not perfect, was an advance. Idasa's judgment had large effect on international opinion about the election's credibility. It could well have been the key factor in the government's holding of the next round (interview, 2003).

"Seeing Like a State"

All of us think with "frames", preconceptions about how the world operates. A key finding in work on conceptual frames, drawing on several decades of cognitive research about how people perceive and interpret political positions or issues, is that

deeply held preconceptions and frames, are often almost impervious to new information that contradicts people's views. "It's not enough to present evidence," says Susan Bales, president of the FrameWorks Institute, which works with citizen and progressive groups in the US to shift approaches from doomsday warnings to hopeful, practical alternatives. "You have to change the frame" (Bales, in Mooney, 2003).

The North Atlantic frame, or paradigm, for understanding democracy is especially powerful. After the title of James Scott's book, it can be called, "seeing like a state" (Scott, 1998).

Mainstream North Atlantic political and social theorists after World War II shifted the concept of "democracy". Democracy's definition as a "way of life" or as a "commonwealth" – a concept in America that had formed a nonsocialist alternative to the unbridled marketplace with appeal across ideologies into the 1940s – disappeared. In place of such views, theorists such as Joseph Schumpeter (1942), Seymour Martin Lipset (1960), and Robert Dahl (1961) recast democracy as a state centered system guided by technocrats in which citizens' role was voter and consumer.

Joseph Schumpeter gave stark formulation to what came to be known as "democratic elitism" in his *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, published in 1942. He argued that ordinary people are incapable of doing more than choosing their leaders in a competitive process: "Even if there were no political groups trying to influence him, the typical citizen would in political matters tend to yield to extrarational or irrational prejudice and impulse." Seymour Martian Lipset defined democracy in his 1960 work, *Political Man,* in ways that were less contemptuous of popular intelligence but still preserved the key roles for politicians and experts:

> *Democracy in a complex society…is a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among candidates for political office (45).*

Lipset and Stein Rokkan's *Party Systems and Voter Alignments,* published in 1967, tied the concept of *politics* itself to what they termed the "cleavages" of modern society, based on divisions between classes, church and state, and clashes between the national state and subordinate group identities based on regions, ethnicities, or language. They argued that these had solidified in the late 19th century and defined the nature of politics and political struggle, "freezing" political identities. Politics, in such terms, amounts to zero-sum battles over scarce resources conducted through the state. Or put simply, politics, in the famous definition by the American political scientist Harold Laswell, is "who gets what, when, and how" (Laswell, 1936).

Robert Dahl, in his study of political decision making in New Haven in the fifties, *Who Governs?*, expanded on the idea of elite rule by proposing that elites compete for support of different interests. The "economic notables" of the city, expressing their interests through the Republican Party, were ineffective in their

plans for development. Only a new Democratic mayor, guided by outside professionals, was able to put together a coalition of voting groups including "the working class and lower middle class ethnic groups, particularly Negroes and Italians and their spokesmen," that allowed progress (1961: 79, 129).

Whatever their differences, however, mainstream social scientists agreed that experts, working with political decision makers, were at the centre of the political universe. As historian Daniel Rodgers has described in *Atlantic Crossings*, a pattern of private alliance between politicians and experts grew up before World War I on both sides of the ocean that gave a technical quality to political discourse. In the late 19th century, American graduate students studying in Europe, fired with reformist zeal to tame the excesses of unbridled capitalism, absorbed the model of scientific objectivity and policy making in private consultation with political leadership, far removed from public involvement. Young intellectuals desired to temper the workings of the market. But they saw this as elite activity. "Students of the first German-trained economists…establish[ed] new forms of authority by colonizing the social space between university professorships and expert government service." In Rodgers' view, "their efforts came to define a central structural element of American progressive politics" (1996: 108).

"We all have to follow the lead of specialists", wrote Walter Lippmann, who set much of American intellectual fashion in the first decades of the 20th century. In his view, a growing body of opinion "looks to the infusion of scientific method, the careful application of administrative technique". In the modern world, science was the model for modern liberal political thinking and technocrats were the model actors. An editorial in *The New Republic* argued, "the business of politics has become too complex to be left to the pretentious misunderstandings of the benevolent amateur" (Lippmann in Jordan, 1994: 75; editorial in ibid.: 76).

Politics is the master language of decision making and power wielding in societies. When politics becomes the property of professional elites, most people are marginalised in the serious work of public affairs. Citizens are reduced to, at most, secondary roles as demanding consumers or altruistic volunteers. Moreover, with the transformation of mediating institutions – parties, unions, even congregations and local schools became technical service providers – citizens lost their stake and standing in the public world. The result, as John Kenneth Galbraith described in *The Affluent Society,* is growing public squalor amidst private affluence (1958).

In the 1950s, the Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal, a hero of progressive thought because of his seminal critique of racial segregation, *American Dilemma*, argued that "increasing harmony…[is emerging] between all citizens in the advanced welfare state. The internal political debate in those countries is becoming increasingly technical in character" (quoted in Zinn, 1972: 306). Social policies in welfare states of Europe were far advanced toward a technical rational and civically circumscribed politics. Myrdal depicted welfare-state populations as objects,

acted upon by experts and government – "like domesticated animals...with no conception of the wild life" (quoted in Galper, 1975: 113).

The triumph of technique created similarities across political systems. "From the standpoint of the employee", remarked the historian Arnold Toynbee, "it is coming to make less and less practical difference to him what his country's official ideology is and whether he happens to be employed by a government or commercial corporation" (quoted in Galbraith, 1967: 109). State owned businesses under social democratic regimes and even nonprofit organisations produce efficiency-minded management. "Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, discretion, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material costs – these are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic administration", Max Weber described, in prophetic fashion (1946: 214).

In *Seeing Like a State,* James Scott has traced how this frame, or way of seeing democracy and politics, spread across the world. Scott describes how the tools of administrative ordering of nature and society combined with a world view that emphasised science and technical rationality – what he called "high modernism." These became tyrannical when government had little opposition to its policies. The key was "an authoritarian state that is willing and able to use the full weight of its coercive power to bring...high-modernist designs into being...closely linked to... a prostrate civil society that lacks the capacity to resist". Scott describes the human toll worked by the combination of these forces in country after country.

> *'Fiasco' is too light-hearted a word for the disasters. The Great Leap Forward in China, collectivisation in Russia, and compulsory villagisation in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, are among the great human tragedies of the 20th century, in terms of both lives lost and lives irretrievably disrupted' (1998: 5, 3).*

Scott is neither anti-government nor an enthusiast for the unbridled marketplace. Indeed, he shows how markets can have disruptive impacts much like the high-modernist state. Scott seems implicitly to point toward a citizen-involving politics as the alternative both to the high modernist state and unfettered capitalism. But others, especially in the US, have tapped popular sentiments against high modernism in efforts to dismantle government in ways that threaten to destroy the public realm.

As Hedrick Smith observed in his coverage of the 1980 US election in *The New York Times*, Ronald Reagan was especially successful in making this kind of argument. "Thousands of towns and neighborhoods have seen their peace disturbed by bureaucrats and social planners through busing, questionable educational programmes, and attacks on family," said Reagan. In Reagan's words, it was a time for "an end to giantism" and "a return of power to the people" (in Smith, 1980). But Reagan's agenda was not simply antagonistic to government; it was also in the service of large business interests and imbued with the ethos of the market. During the Reagan years, acolytes of unbridled capitalism like George Gilder, equating marketplace values with Christianity itself, gained huge followings. In

the 1990s, out-of-power conservatives gave stark expression to anti-technocratic sentiments. "Americans are sick and tired of being treated as passive clients by arrogant, paternalistic social scientists, therapists, professionals, and bureaucrats", said Michael Joyce, president of the conservative Bradley Foundation, in 1992 shortly after Clinton's election. "Americans are clearly willing and eager to seize control of their daily lives again...to assume once again the status of proud, independent, self-governing citizens" (Joyce, 1992).

Joyce's call for a new citizenship expressed honest anger, but it became a resource for the dramatically privatising politics that surfaced in the Bush campaign. "I trust the people, my opponent trusts the government" was Bush's mantra during the 2000 election. His Democratic opponent Al Gore's calls for activist government reflected long standing progressive and technocratic politics that had little role for citizens except as voters and customers. Indeed, Gore had presided over the reinventing government initiative of the Clinton administration, where citizens were officially redefined as "customers" in every federal agency. Gore's progressive but technocratic and market-oriented politics failed (see Boyte, 2004).

After the election, privatised citizenship was central in Bush's Inaugural Address. "I ask you to seek a common good beyond your comfort," Bush proclaimed, "to be citizens, not spectators, to serve your nation, beginning with your neighborhood" (quoted in Schudson, 2003: 270). But George Bush counterpoises citizenship to politics, denying power and interests and eviscerating the commonwealth. For Bush, citizenship means individual acts of kindness and service. The irony of recent American politics is that the posture of anti-technocratic but privatised citizenship covers policies that are anti-democratic in the extreme, using all the tools of modern advertising and manipulation. These range from the war in Iraq, undertaken in the name of "promoting democracy" in the Middle East, to the education reform called "No Child Left Behind". The latter, culminating years of rhetoric about the need for standards and accountability, makes training students for economic roles in a competitive marketplace the only serious educational goal.

Deborah Meier, a proponent of renewing the democratic purposes of American education illustrates trends in the US pointing toward such an alternative. "The real crisis we face is not a threat to America's economic or military dominance but the ebbing strength of our democratic and egalitarian culture." Meier recalls the "traditional public function of schools: to pass on the skills, aptitudes, and habits needed for a democratic way of life", observing that these "are hard to come by; they are not natural to the species. They are as hard to teach as relativity" (Meier, 2003: 16).

Meier's insistence that education's aim is to teach capacities for a "democratic way of life" – a commitment embodied in the East Harlem schools she initiated in New York in the 1970s, from which almost all students graduate and most go to college – testifies to the continued existence of democratic politics. But these are secondary themes in the democracy discourse, in America and elsewhere in the world.

Crisis in the North Atlantic Paradigm

The landscape of democracy around the world in the early 21st century is freighted with contrasts that dramatise the flaws in the North Atlantic paradigm. Since the mid 1970s, a wave of democratic change has swept across the world. Seventy-six countries shifted from non-democratic to democratic electoral systems. Two hundred years, from the Age of Revolution to 1970, produced 50 electoral democracies. The decade after 1985 generated the same number (Holston, 2003: 2).

Yet just as the idea of free elections coupled with unbridled marketplace economics has triumphed, doubts have exploded about its adequacy to address social problems. Thus, the Latin Americanist James Holston documented the disjunctures between formal political democracy and "the civil component of citizenship," in many developing nations. In Latin America, increasing violence, growing poverty, and systematic violation of civil liberties after the advent of free elections have for many raised dramatic questions about "democracy" (*ibid.*) Similarly in South Africa, as Guy Mhone and Omano Edigheji put it, "economic liberalization and formal democracy tend to unravel the incipient contradictions... which had previously been suppressed under apartheid" (Mhone and Edigheji, 2003: 352).

In established democracies, public institutions are also in increasing disrepute. *The Economist* captured the contradiction. "New democracies are used to having well-meaning observers from the mature democracies descend on them", wrote the editors. "If opinion research is any guide, the mature democracies have troubles of their own." Cross country comparisons showed political trust in both politicians and political institutions has been declining sharply. World-wide polls conducted in 1981 and 1990 showed declining faith in parliament, the armed services, the judiciary, the police, and the civil service. Polling in the nineties showed steep declines in confidence in politicians, parties, and parliament in every nation except the Netherlands (1999).

"To what extent do theories of democracy anchored in North Atlantic history and culture remain adequate for understanding its global reach, experience, and quality?" Holston asked at a symposium on citizenship in Latin America (Holston, 2003: 2). It is a telling question that suggests another: What is the alternative?

Democracy in Recent African Scholarship

If North Atlantic theories of democracy are questioned in Latin America, Africa and elsewhere, there is still wide agreement, especially in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet bloc, on the need for *democracy*, more deeply understood. Mhone and Edigheji, who noted the problems that elite democracy has engendered, argue nonetheless that "democracy also provides the enabling environment for resolving these very same contradictions" (2003:352). Although by no means universally espoused, three strong trends in recent African democratic and political theory point toward fundamental challenges to the western paradigm.

In the first instance, there is a widespread questioning of centralised state power as the essence of democracy. In the second, there is an epistemological challenge to knowledge production detached from the life and experience of the people. In the third, there is the return of the political, understood in different terms than parties and ideologies.

Perhaps the major obstacle in the way of creating democratic societies is the tendency toward reliance on the strong central state. As Claude Ake has observed, postcolonial governments in most of Africa continue to reflect the legacy of colonialism, and colonial politics itself was constituted by an especially virulent power struggle outside the constraints of legality. "Colonial politics was reduced to the crude mechanics of opposing forces driven by the calculus of power. For everyone in the political arena, security lay only in the accumulation of power" (Ake, 1996: 3). The legacy continues. As Okwudiba Nnoli said, "The state structure bequeathed to independent Africa was still awesome in its power and wealth relative to other social forces in society." Thus, today, "African politicians will jump onto any political programme that gives them any hope…of coming to power" (2000: 179, 177).

Yet the growing emphasis on popular participation as the mark of democracy suggests a dramatic shift away from primary reliance on the central state, at least among significant numbers of public intellectuals. "The post colonial experience all over Africa was intoxicated with the power of the Central State," wrote Akin Mabogunje, a world famous geographer at the University of Ibadan who has been himself deeply involved in development work. Yet "no long-lasting process of development can come from such an over-bloated Central State apparatus while the rest of the society is paralyzed and powerless…[this is] the hard lesson we are learning from the crisis situation pervading all of Africa today" (1999: 31).

Related to excessive reliance on central state power, in the colonial period many African intellectuals absorbed elitist, technocratic values and identities in educational systems shaped by European political philosophy and pedagogy. Herbert Vilakazi has expressed this irony with poignancy:

> *The tragedy of African civilization is that Western-educated Africans became lost and irrelevant as intellectuals who could develop African civilization further. Historically, intellectuals of any civilization are the voices of that civilization to the rest of the world….Africa['s] intellectuals, by and large, absconded and abdicated their role as developers, minstrels, and trumpeters of African civilization… Uncertified Africans are denied respect and opportunities for development; they could not sing out, articulate and develop the unique patterns of African civilization (in Nabudere, 2003: 11–12).*

Yet this model of detached scholarship and intellectual work, too, is undergoing a sustained challenge. Many intellectuals call for an unromantic but also deep and appreciative look at African traditions of civic engagement and democracy. "The sociological reality of ancient Africa is too complex to be simplified through the lenses of Afrocentric romantics as a golden age of freedom, or those of Eurocentric Afro-

pessimists as an epoch of despotism", Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja has written. "[Yet] that many of the people of precolonial Africa experienced a measure of democracy at the village level and, indeed, beyond in larger political communities has been well established..." (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 1997:10). Akin Mabongunje, observing the tendency of African social scientists to "think and write as if we are dealing with a society without its own history or culture", contrasts contemporary neglect of patterns of informal civic engagement with "long histories of civic engagement and successful collaboration" in the African context (1999: 38; see also Mangcu, X., 2004).

Vilakazi calls for "a massive cultural revolution consisting, first, of our intellectuals going back to ordinary African men and women to receive education of Africa culture and civilization." Dani Nabudere, quoting Vilakazi, makes a powerful argument for "a Pan-African University" which will have as its overall goal the provision of opportunities for higher and advanced education for students and adult learners in the context of a new African-based epistemology and methodology" (2003: 4).

Third, many now call for a revitalisation of politics as the way to empower citizens and energise democracy. Admore Kambudzi puts this neatly, answering his own rhetorical question, "why center on political renewal?" in Africa when so much else is wrong, from poverty to cultural degradation: "Simply because politics is that arena of power games and plays that has influenced and determined life from time immemorial" (2001: 60). Adele Jinadu, intimates a new politics in calling for "the harnessing [of] a progressive and Afro-centric social science to a human-centred democratic development in Africa...centrally and primarily concerned with the African renaissance" (quoted in Nabudere, 2000:3). In more explicit and elaborated terms, Omano Edigheji has called for "a different kind of politics," citizen-owned and diffused throughout civil society. The objective of such politics, in Edigheji's view, is "self-empowerment of individuals, communities, and localities so that citizens can claim their right to develop themselves and society." Citizen-owned politics is the way people can "reverse the market's pervasive values of individualization, commodification, and monetisation of life" (2003:107). Mabogunje, using the concept of social capital with a far more political and public cast than most current western uses of the term, calls for attention to the way in which local governance structures enhance or erode civic engagement. "How well does the present system facilitate the emergence, growth, or consolidation of dense networks of civic engagement within our communities," in his view, is the "vital criterion for deciding the viability of any system of local governance" (1999: 33, 31).

While there are strong democratic currents emerging in African intellectual life, there are also real world examples, especially in South Africa, that suggest the quickening energies of a different understanding of democracy and politics.

Seeing Like a Democracy in South Africa and Beyond

In South Africa, with the remarkable democratic legacy of the freedom struggle against apartheid extending over generations, the impulse to transcend

inherited western categories mingles with the development imperatives of tapping the energy and talent of the whole society. Thus, a striking feature of the public discourse about democracy in South Africa is its participatory and productive flavor, even from the highest levels of government. "It is today impossible to imagine a South Africa that is not a democratic South Africa. It is similarly impossible to meet any of the enormous challenges we face, outside the context of respect for the principle and the practice that the people shall govern," said Thabo Mbeki in his 2004 inaugural address. Such themes are expanded elsewhere in government rhetoric. Joel Netshitenzhe and Goolam Aboobaker, editors of *Towards a Ten Year Review* report for The Presidency, describe the "dual role" of the state. "[It is] an actor in providing services and helping create an appropriate environment for development, and a leader in forging common cause among the variety of social actors". The *Review* is candid about failures of government practice. "Weaknesses include...lack of public involvement in the enforcement of these principles," they write. "Such public involvement would require a confident citizenry that holds officials to account" (2004: 10, 13).

In the 2001 South African conference on citizen action, Jayendra Naidoo proposed that the challenge is "how to engage effectively with a legitimate, democratically elected government without being either co-opted or needlessly confrontational". He argued that the need is for civil society organisations "to balance a creative tension on several points, being independent but remaining patriotic, supportive but not subservient, outspoken yet not malicious, respectful of the democratic mandate of government yet remaining a vigorous and independent representative of the views" of the citizenry (in Graham and Meyer, eds., 2001: 30).

Such a view implies a fundamental rethinking of the meaning and role of elections in a democracy. It suggests a shift from "seeing like a state," where citizens' fundamental role is to choose their leaders and then function as customers of government services, to continuing, co-creative roles for citizens in constructing democracy as a way of life. From such a perspective, the question in elections is not which politician will solve the problems of society, nor how politicians mobilise support for themselves. Rather, the question is how citizens choose the best partners and the best plans for undertaking democracy's work. Elections are acts of the people.

The view of democracy as a way of life does not devalue the mandate of successful parties, nor the convening, visionary, and other leadership roles of politicians. It does require far greater emphasis on citizen capacities: the habits, skills, confidence of citizens, as well as citizen power and authority. It also points toward the revitalisation of public wealth as a check and complement to private accumulation, another element that can be seen in current ANC thinking. For instance, ANC leader Saki Macozoma's article in the Interfund 10 year study, *The Real State of the Nation,* is remarkable for its valuation of public goods production. Macozoma

recalls, as a model in some ways, the positive contributions of the Afrikaner elite in the 1930s and 40s, which "delivered to the *volk* the public goods ordinary people needed to pull themselves out of poverty"(2003: 27).

Developing citizen capacities and appreciation for the role of public goods production requires retrieving and spreading a richer, deeper democratic politics. As Krista Johnson has observed, government notions of participation often conceptualise a depoliticised civic sphere (or "civil society") where citizens are seen as active, but not involved in the hard work of policy formulation. But the freedom movement generated a view of politics that was more robust, infused through civil society. Democratic theory out of this tradition challenges views which "ascribe to the state the role of knowledge producer, able to develop policy and set the agenda for social transformation" in the name of politics. Popular democrats see de-politicised versions of civil society as using a language of 'citizen participation' and 'people–driven development' to constrain citizens. "The role of civil society organisations [is restricted] to that of mobilization and the implementation of directives from above…based on a clear distinction between government or party experts who 'know' and the mass of the people who are supposed to apply this knowledge, leaving out of the equation the capacity of the average citizen to act and form his or her own opinion." In contrast, "scholars [like Neocosmos, Mamdani, Krista Johnson,, and others] working within the popular-democratic paradigm suggest that what is required is a redefinition of the relationship between ruler and ruled whereby the practices of government are no longer considered to be the privilege of the few, and the majority of citizens are not excluded from the public realm" (2003: 11, 5, 3).

Most importantly, such politics exists not only in theory but also at the grassroots level in practice, as well, both in North Atlantic nations and in South Africa. Lessons from practices of everyday politics, when better incorporated into contemporary African theorisations of democracy, hold potential to form a powerful and compelling alternative to regnant conceptions, which eclipse the citizen.

In the United States and in Great Britain, democratic politics has developed in the last generation with roots especially in the African-American freedom struggles of the 1950s and 1960s that offer a powerful alternative to state-centered, ideological politics. Effective civic efforts like the organisations affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF, US and Great Britain) and the Gamaliel Foundation also have counterpart networks in South Africa such as the Interfaith Community Development Association (ICDA), and the Church Based Community Organization (CBCO) (Sirianni and Friedland, 2001; Warren, 2001; Wood, 2003; Boyte, 2004).

These groups are animated by a philosophically oriented politics, not an ideological politics. Based on democratic and religious values such as participation, justice, concern for the poor, equality, and the sacredness of the person, they include a wide range of partisan and religious viewpoints and racial and cultural groups.

As the new generation of broad citizen groups have grown, experienced successes on issues such as poverty, housing, crime, and school reform, and considered their long range purposes, they added an emphasis on teaching politics. They described themselves as "schools for public life" and they also undertook projects like infrastructure improvement that benefited the whole community, while still advancing the everyday interests of poor, minority, and working class communities. IAF describes the cultivation of an ethos of "standing for the whole" among its members.

"Schools for public life" are self-funded citizen organisations where people learn the arts and skills of a multidimensional and citizen-centered politics. Such political education involves not only specific political information and skills; it adds a strong public relationship-building dimension that helps re-centre politics among citizens. Public relationship-building and understanding self-interests depends on the widespread practice of one on one, a continual process of interviewing. Leaders interview each other, across lines of difference in faith, culture, income level, or party affiliation, to discover what passions and core concerns motivate people. This "thickens" citizen organisations, in comparison with much activist politics that creates relationships based on issue stance or ideology. In teaching the complexity of others from different backgrounds, this political approach also cultivates what might be called a narrative imagination, seeing each person in light of their distinctive, unique histories and embedded identities. The stress on core concepts also generates a dynamic intellectual life, creating a practical theory of action by employing concepts like power, public life, self-interest, judgment, and imagination. Such concepts, in turn, are tied to discussion of the democratic and religious values and traditions that inform and frame their efforts. These emphases create a culture that values the public world and public goods.

The IAF and other broad based citizen groups believe that it is not sufficient simply to protest. To exert power on a continuing basis, citizens must also assume responsibility for their communities' basic public goods and for problem solving. Gerald Taylor, IAF's southern director in the US, describes this as "moving into power". "Moving into power means learning how to be accountable", said Taylor."It means being able to negotiate and compromise. It means understanding that people are not necessarily evil because they have different interests or ways of looking at the world" (in Boyte, 2004: 53). A story from the IAF affiliate in Baltimore illustrates politics that begins with listening and engagement, not advocacy. When BUILD leaders met for the first time with Paul Sarbanes, distinguished senior senator from Maryland, he welcomed them, took out his notepad, and asked, "what can I do for you?" "Nothing", was the answer. "We will be around for a long time, and you are likely to be as well. We want to develop a relationship. We need to understand your interests, why you went into politics, and what you are trying to achieve" (Boyte, 2004: vii).

Finally, broadly based citizen organisations' successes depend on a bold conceptual act: They *deprofessionalise* politics. This conceptual change goes against

the grain of 20th century developments that have seen more and more authority and decision making vested in experts, who in turn view themselves as a class apart from a common civic life. "Politics," in its older meaning, is absent from much of modern life in industrialised, technological societies. Formal politics itself reflects the same technical dynamic. Politics (from the Greek, *politikos*, of the citizen), in its original meanings is the activity of amateurs, not specialists. Politics, as Aristotle argued in the *Politics,* involves a pluralist world, people of different views, interests, and backgrounds interacting in order to accomplish some task. Politics is the opposite of relations based on similarity; Aristotle used the examples of military alliance and families to make the contrast (Aristotle, 1996). But in the expert dominated, marketplace oriented environments of today, both in technological, wealthy nations such as the United States and also in new democracies of the developing world, politics has become controlled by specialists and located in parties. Or, in citizen action efforts, politics is shaped by ideological mobilisers of the people. Progressive politics has often become a demand for more pieces of the pie, without asking who bakes it, how it is baked, or what the ingredients are (Boyte, 2004).

In sharp contrast, broad based groups like the Industrial Areas Foundation affiliates, the ICDA, or the CBCO groups reclaim politics as the activity of ordinary citizens, while they renew an appreciation of public goods. The issues that such groups address and the ways in which issues are defined and developed are the product of extensive discussion and debate within their ranks. The meaning of professional is recast in democratic ways: organisers are coaches and political educators while citizen leaders take centre stage. Citizen ownership of the activity of politics is constantly stressed, and politics is based upon a deep and unromantic respect for the capacities of ordinary people. What is called the "iron rule" of such organising, "never do for others what they can do for themselves", is reiterated to contrast it with a service approach. Meanwhile, politicians are respected when they produce results and are accountable, but are not allowed to dominate meetings or to single-handedly define issues. Interestingly, as recent scholarship documents, this process makes for better political leadership, as well as powerful citizen organisations. The pattern reframes the debate between "participatory" and "representative" democracy by highlighting the dynamic interaction between *both.*

One of the most important features of South African democracy is the development of similar understandings of politics in groups that cross boundaries and contexts, from NGOs to development activists. Everyday politics, for instance, is taught through Idasa's Community and Citizen Empowerment Programme, for instance, and communicated through its All Media Group. Thus, in the run-up to the elections in April, 2004, the Idasa-authored newspaper supplement for all the high schools in the nation illustrated both its reach and its philosophical orientation toward grassroots democracy and politics. Entitled *Youth Vote South Africa*, undertaken in association with the Ministry of Education and the Independent

Electoral Commission, the project consisted of 20 weekly supplements in the chain of Independent newspapers across the nation. "Democracy in its strongest form is really about citizens actively shaping their world, not just thinking about it and talking about it but getting out and doing something about it", read the issue, "Our Picture of Democracy". It continued with many examples and stories for young people to get active in "the public work of democracy, " some drawn from its own partnerships, as in an organising campaign about xenophobia in a township outside of Pretoria. "Regular elections and the freedom to vote are usually seen as the most basic criteria for determining whether a country and its government are democratic or not," said *Supplement #4* "But elections alone are never enough to guarantee democracy, whether it is in a country, a community or a school...How citizens participate in public life and how government exercises its power are more important tests of democracy than elections alone. The real test is whether citizens are able to act and help to shape what happens in society on an ongoing basis". The colorful supplement urged young people to "remember the roots of the word democracy...'people' (demos) and 'power' (kratos)" (Ström, 2003).

Idasa crosses lines in its activities – government, civil society, business, the press, higher education. It is practical, not ideological , committed to a philosophy of democratic change, social justice, and empowerment of those without standing in conventional public affairs. Idasa sees democracy as an ongoing work in which the talents of everyone are needed. "Our whole philosophy is that everyone needs to be included in the work of democracy", says Paul Graham, current executive director. "You can't exclude this group or that group because you think they're bad. You can't legislate them away. The people who are excluded will come back to act like the social problem you expect them to be" (interview, 2003).

This view of politics and democracy reflects the group's originating philosophy, which drew from Greek understandings articulated by theorists such as Bernard Crick and Hannah Arendt, explicitly against the grain of contemporary North Atlantic definitions of politics. Bernard Crick's classic 1962 work, *In Defense of Politics*, sought to warn emerging nations in Africa against ideas of "politics" that were current in Europe. Crick's aim was to rescue the concept of politics, in an older, Aristotelian sense, from its "enemies" such as ideological zealotry, mass democracy, and technocratic modes of thought. Crick's book, along with Hannah Arendt's, are key texts in politics for citizen groups in the US and South Africa. Politics here is what Crick calls "a civilizing activity," the way that people of diverse interests and views in heterogeneous societies negotiate across lines of difference to solve problems and live together without violence (Crick, 1962: 1; Arendt, 1958).

Everyday or citizen-centered politics has a strong justice orientation. Questions of social and economic justice are burning ones in a society where, as of 2003 according to the researcher David Everatt, between 45 and 55 per cent of all South Africans – some 18 to 24 million people – live in conditions of poverty (Everatt, 2003). But the democratic politics germinating in South Africa and elsewhere in

Africa combines a focus on the *distributive* side of politics with an emphasis on the *productive,* public wealth-generating, problem-solving, world-building side.

In adding productive dimensions to the concept and practice of politics, retrieval of African traditions point toward a challenge not only to modern western ideas but also more than two thousand years of political theory. Work, or productive activity, is absent from conventional theories of participatory democracy not only in recent versions (such as civil society and deliberative theories) but over the millennia. The western tradition conceives public life as the democratisation of aristocracy. As Benjamin Barber has observed, "To the Greeks, labor by itself defined only mere animal existence, while leisure was the condition for freedom, politics, and truly 'human' forms of being" (1998: 132).

Hannah Arendt's work, especially her book, *The Human Condition*, retrieved for modern audiences the memory of the vitality of ancient Greek politics. Yet by separating politics from work, she also added an episodic and heroic quality to public politics. Arendt believed that public life emerged for ordinary people only at extraordinary moments – during the American Revolution, the civil rights movement, or, she would doubtless add, the anti-apartheid struggle (1958).

Contemporary democratic theorists like Barber or Arendt simply failed to grasp the cooperative and deeply political qualities of much work. This public and cooperative quality, however, is illustrated in African traditions of cooperative labor that often inform contemporary struggle traditions. In Sesotho, the term *letsema* means cooperative village work on common projects; in isiZulu, *ilimo* is a close equivalent, while in Afrikaans, *saamspan* means "let's get to work". In Xhosa, *dibanisani* means "let's work together for a better future". In Kenya, *harambee* – initially meaning let's put aside differences to work on the larger task – came to be a central idea in the liberation movement. All of these, in turn, point toward a conception of democracy as a way of life built through public work.

The productive side of politics suggested by such traditions emerges clearly in the 10-year study of South African democracy edited by Edgar Pieterse and Frank Meintjies, *Voices of the Transition*. The study is based on two colloquia in which development activists from different arenas – NGOs and community work, academia, government, business, the arts, the media – reflected on their experiences over the decade, invited "to explore any issue of relevance and passion", and to express themselves through various genres, including poetry, fiction, photos, or essays. The collection opens a window into the turbulence and creativity of a decade of change infused with democratic energy. Jenny Robinson challenges the dominant "dismissal of the value of the moment of construction in social and political life that has taken hold in social theory" and calls for "a place for constructive moments" (272–3). Adam Habib takes issue with the misuse of racial categories that obliterate the concrete reality and stories of people's lives (237–48). Edgar Pieterse proposes attention to public places in development work, as well as "mundane aspirations of fun, safety, beauty, pleasure, desire, flirtatious demonstration, dignity, escapism, voice, presence

and so on that give meaning to subjectivity and sociality" (239–40). Metsi Makhetha is eloquent and also politically savvy in describing how she combined professional knowledge with deep respect for the intelligence and capacities of ordinary people, in her work for the Ministry of Housing (145–49).

Signs of a popular, pluralist, public and productive politics in South Africa have parallels elsewhere. For instance, a view of politics as about democratic empowerment, horizontal relations among citizens, and the negotiation among diverse interests, groups, cultures and perspectives, animates the education reform effort HakiElimu (Rights Education) in Tanzania. HakiElimu organises across government, civil society, and communities to involve citizens in school reform and governance structures in Tanzania, while it also impacts national policy. Rakesh Rajani, the director of HakiElimu, contrasts its *political* approach with what he sees as the dominant *technical* approach to school reform practiced by most NGOs and government. "Politics ('siasa' in Kiswahili) has become a bad word here in Tanzania, as elsewhere. We need to reclaim politics from the parties and from the leaders, to make it work for people", says Rajani. He proposes that this requires, above all, "an act of the imagination" (personal correspondence, 2003).

Conclusion

Democracy in western societies has been increasingly hollowed out. Politics has mainly become activity directed by specialists and professionals, often advertising campaigns with thinly veiled contempt for the intelligence and capacity of ordinary people. Policies, even those by political leaders espousing values of justice and equality, are largely cast in the language and the terms of the market.

There is urgent need for a compelling alternative to privatising politics of the sort espoused and practiced by the current American administration. But the technocratic, market-oriented politics of contemporary Washington, while extreme, finds counterparts in "Third Way" politics in Great Britain and analogous, expert-driven politics in Europe as well.

A very different view of politics and democracy is beginning to germinate in South Africa and African societies, and intellectual life. It has not yet formed an elaborated alternative to the North Atlantic frame, but practice of everyday citizen politics combined with the larger theoretical discussion about democracy in Africa clearly create foundations for such a challenge.

We may be at the threshold of understanding democracy as a way of life that balances public wealth with private wealth and understands citizens to be at the centre of politics, the constituting actors and creators of democracy. If so, South Africa and perhaps other African nations could well lead the way.

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Assessing Accountability in Cameroon's Local Forest Management: Are Representatives Responsive?

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Abstract

The paper presents an evaluation of democratic decentralisation of forest management in Cameroon. It identifies and examines the key innovations and 'instruments' on which the forestry management decentralisation process is rooted. Using a modified Ribot Framework Accountability Assessment (RFAA), the paper identified and analysed the local representative infrastructure and the process of downward accountability in the decentralised management of forestry in Cameroon. The findings indicate that elected or designated management committee members do not respond to the rest of the people in their villages. The prime concern of the majority of representatives is to obtain financial benefits from forests. Their impulses automatically transferred to intensive logging in community forests in order to generate important sum of money. Thus, those designated by citizens to represent them in the 'public sphere' of forest management at the local, regional and national levels are making the choice consisting in acting in their own interests. The paper offers some recommendations on how this trend could be reversed.

Introduction

Decentralisation is defined as a process by which the central State transfers clearly determined powers and responsibilities to non-state actors or to sub-national actors (Mawhood, 1993: 3–4; Oyugi, 2000: 3–6). Viewed as such, it can take several forms (Manor, 1999: 4–5): geographical decentralisation (in other words deconcentration); fiscal decentralisation; bureaucratic or administrative decentralisation (another version of deconcentration); and democratic (also known as political or functional) decentralisation, or devolution. Ribot (2001: 4–5) defines democratic decentralisation as a process through which powers and resources are transferred to actors who represent local populations and are accountable to the latter. This is the case for elected village representatives and for local governments. Democratic decentralisation generally suffers from overgeneralisations, and, accordingly, clarifications are necessary.

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Firstly, under democratic decentralisation, people talking in the name of the public are elected (Larson, 2000: 10–23). Secondly, this form of decentralisation, which is based on responsible representation and accountability, is supposed to transfer aspects of decision-making to local populations, thereby increasing public participation and efficiency of public service provisions, empowering local citizens at the occasion (Agrawal and Ribot, 1999: 4–8; Francis and James, 2003: 325–334). Thirdly, democratic decentralisation is a ground where local democracy should be promoted, fertilised and enhanced (Ribot, 2002). Since 1994, Cameroon has been experiencing a process of forest management decentralisation. This policy innovation aims at transferring rights to local communities for the management of forests (Diaw and Oyono, 22–23; Etoungou, 2003: 5–10), and for access to portions of financial benefits accruing therefrom (Milol and Pierre, 2000: 5–13; Carret, 2000: 44–49; Fomété 2001: 4–7; Bigombé, 2003: 12–27). In a domestic context marked by the weakening of central state capacities, Brown (2002: 1–3 and Oyono, 2004 forthcoming) note that forestry is the entry-point to governance reforms in Cameroon.

The paper focuses on democratic – not instrumental – decentralisation in Cameroon's forest management. On the whole, it presents an evaluation of accountability in this process. That is, how do representatives elected at the village level account – or not account – to those they represent? The first section defines accountability. The second section describes the local infrastructure set up for representation at the village level. The third section assesses accountability in this context, using the Ribot's Framework of Accountability Assessment (RFAA). In the conclusion, the author presents some ecological risks and makes some recommendations for policy designers and decision-makers.

What is accountability?

Numerous studies are focusing on the issue of accountability. Keohane and Duke (2002: 2) emphasise that accountability derives from Old French equivalent *comptes à rendre* (the rendering of accounts). Oakerson (1989: 114) notes that: "to be accountable means to have to answer for one's action or inaction, and depending on the answer, to be exposed to potential sanctions, both positive and negative." Accountability, as such, is a 'power relationship' based on "information and sanctions" (Oakerson, 1989: 115; Keohane and Duke, 2002: 2–3). When accountability is generated by a democratic form of governance, it fulfills a double requirement: it gives one both the right to be accounted to and the responsibility to account to others. Brinkerhoff (2001: 2–4) distinguishes three types of accountability: "democratic or political accountability"; "financial accountability"; and "accountability for the performance of services". Ribot and Veit (2000: 2–3) and Ribot (2002: 2–4) talk of "upward accountability", on the one hand, and "downward, or democratic, accountability, on the other".

'Upward accountability' is the accountability of non-State actors, such as locally elected bodies, to the administrative staff of political parties, regional governments and

the central State. Conversely, downward accountability, which is the central mechanism of democratic decentralisation, is when representatives and elected bodies are answerable for their actions to the citizens they represent. Schedler (Keohane and Duke, 2002: 2–3) notes that when there is democratic accountability, elected representatives are accountable to those they represent, and accordingly are obliged to keep the public informed of their actions. Francis and James (2003: 325–336) talk of "horizontal accountability" when democratically elected local politicians interact with local administrators. 'Downward accountability' is of particular importance in this paper, because it is the very essence of democracy. Downward accountability creates counterbalances by giving local people rights to demand accountability from those who have been given powers to make decisions on their behalf. It, accordingly, crystallises a social contract between representatives and those they represent.

Local Representation Infrastructure

At the local level, the decentralisation process in Cameroon is rooted in three key innovations and 'instruments'. First is the creation and the management of community forests at the village level. Second is the creation and the management of council forests for rural local governments. Third is the allocation of portions of forestry taxes to villages located besides forest concessions, and having customary rights on the latter. A community forest is a non-planted village forest, subject to a management agreement signed between the village community concerned and the Ministry of Forest and Environment. A council forest is a forest classified for a local government.

The enforcement decree of Forestry Law No. 94/01 of 20 January 1994, requires a village community to become a legal entity and "to make itself officially recognised" in order to acquire a community forest and to manage the forestry fees. Four years later, a joint order (No. 000122 of 29 April 1998) signed by the Ministry of the Economy and Finance (MINEFI) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) prescribed ways in which income destined for village communities from logging can be used. According to this order, villages located around or in forest concessions must create forestry fees management committees. Before that, the Ministry of Forests, through the Community Forests Development Project, had also prescribed the creation of committees for the management of community forests.

A stream of organisations was created in the whole 'forested' Cameroon in response to these requirements (Oyono 2003: 10–14). These organisations are of three main types: community forest management committees; forestry fees management committees and, as a third variant, council forests management committees. The community forest management committees and the forestry fees management committees function essentially at the village level, while the council forest management committees cover an entire council. The local representation infrastructure in the decentralised forest management is made up of these committees grouping elected and designated members.

The mandate of all these committees is to defend local peoples' interests. In the case of community forests management, committee members are responsible for the negotiation of prices of timber with town-based timber companies and for the management of revenue accruing therefrom, with a priority for the implementation of small-scale socio-economic projects. Forestry fees management committees are asked to define socio-economic priorities and negotiate with council authorities and town-based contractors for the implementation of micro-projects in villages. About 61 community forests are under exploitation to date in the country, with substantial revenue (in average $ 10, 000 annually for each community forest). In addition, in the last two years nearly $ 4,000,000 were given to local communities as forestry fees all over the 'forested' area of Cameroon.

Local Management Committees and the Exercise of Downward Accountability

To date, the only council forest already officially recognised is the Dimako council forest, in the East province. Its classification act was signed by the Prime Minister in June 2001. Logging operations planned by its management will start shortly. But an assessment of ongoing preparation phases, and of many other arrangements (Oyono, 2003: 20–21), shows that members of the Dimako council forest management committee do not account downwardly to the populations of the seventeen villages they represent. For local communities, this committee exists only "for show." It is dependent on the council, of which it is gradually becoming a component. Moreover, its statutory members (such as the mayor, the local representative of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, and the presidents of the council commissions) and the administrative authorities have appropriated decision-making power for themselves, depriving those members who represent the local communities of any substantive authority.

These community representatives, whose actions are subjugated to those of the council authorities, do not account for anything to the local populations. According to widespread local opinion, the council intends to deal with this forest as it pleases despite the fact that the villagers view it as historically their own. When the council forest will be logged, the local communities will henceforth be principally concerned with getting their share of forestry income. The question of an equitable access to profits is accordingly already being posed with acuity, and the absence of downward or democratic accountability practices is emerging as a serious treat.

The case of the forestry fees management committees is more interesting. As noted above, in April 1998 a ministerial order asked for the creation of village forestry fees management committees. This order says that the money representing forestry fees for local communities should be kept in town, at the council accounts services. This order places, *de facto*, the mayor and the *sous-préfet*, the regional level representative of the central state – a nominated administrative authority – effectively in control of the village committees. Although the latter are

responsible, at least on paper, for determining the socio-economic priorities to be financed in the villages and for monitoring their achievement (Bigombé, 2002: 33–40), it is very often the mayor (and/or the *sous-préfet*) who determines priorities, establishes community projects, and manages the funds paid by the logging companies. According to Efoua (2001: 3–6):

> *The mayor is everything: manager, president, treasurer.... We think that, if the local populations are to benefit from the development of the forests, they must truly assume all of the responsibilities that are attached to it. The mayor already manages the 40 percent of fees that is allotted to the Commune, according to the forestry law; now he takes our place in managing the 10 percent given to the local communities.*

The control of village forestry fees management committees by municipal and administrative authorities dilutes their role, and this in turn limits their downward accountability. Thus, since the committees have been stripped of actual responsibility, they cannot assure upward accountability; as they have nothing to say. Similarly, there is no comprehensive or regular downward accountability. Local communities are provided with no more than fragmented information, for example the dates when fees are due to be remitted. Assembe (2001: 3–5) notes that these committees are not downward accountable and do not publish reports of expenditures.

The community forest management committees experience similar problems of downward accountability. An example is the small-scale development of some community forests in Lomié region (East-Cameroon), which began slowly at the end of 2000 and accelerated in 2001/2002. The wood stocks, which are cut with a portable saw, are put on the market. The management committees are accused of diverting sums of money. Efoua (2002: 4–5) reveals that the committees do not know exactly how much profit comes from the wood sales. Since the community forest management agreements were signed, the external elite have invaded the committees, with the aim of manipulating them and diverting the profits. Etoungou (2002: 22–45) reports that community forests management committees do not account to the local populations: "There are a lot of wrongs being committed. What's shocking is that the committee leaders answer to absolutely no one."

It is clear that management committee members do not put downward accountability into practice in the exercise of their role. If these leaders are not responsive, one can conclude that there is no local democracy in the Cameroon's experiment of decentralised forest management. Middle-level actors (council and administrative authorities) dominate the committees. Working together, middle-level actors and various management committees form an alliance, with the objective of diverting the forestry fees allocated to the village communities for their own personal ends. No members of this strategic alliance – council authorities, administrative authorities, or village representatives account for their decisions, behaviours or actions to

the village communities. There is, therefore, a significant shift of representation and social leadership from the defense of substantive and collective interests to that of subjective and *instrumental* interests.

A Framework for Assessing Accountability

Ribot (2002: 78–83) identified mechanisms that promote downward accountability. To the Ribot's Framework Accountability Assessment (RFAA), Oyono (2003: 45) added two other mechanisms. In democratic decentralisation, such mechanisms act as counter-powers to minimise abuse of powers by those to whom the responsibilities have been transferred. This section gives concrete examples of some of these mechanisms in operation, in order to provide a greater understanding and appreciation of downward accountability in the decentralised management of forests in South Cameroon.

Legal Recourse

There are very few cases where people have opted for legal action to resolve local forest management issues. In the village of Toungrelo, in the Dimako region (East province), some important persons filed a complaint against the local forestry fees management committee to force it to account for the funds received (about $ 20,000), but the *sous-préfet* subsequently asked them to withdraw the complaint. In the Lomié region, despite a great number and variety of efforts to demand information on revenue from community forest management committees, in only one case have individuals resorted to legal recourse. This was a complaint filed by the people of Echiambor village against the president of the community forest management committee; the matter is currently under consideration. Similarly, although there is evidence of the diversion of forestry fees by mayors, representatives of the central State and sub-national authorities, the local communities have never sought to bring these authorities to justice.

Balance of Power

A 'balance of power' is a situation in which the powers given to elected officials or representatives of the society are counter-balanced by the rights of the represented to demand accountability. In the community forest management committees and, in particular, the forestry fees management committees, the many abuses of power by committee members (for example, financial misappropriation and private negotiations with the timber companies which do not benefit the community as a whole) attest to the weakness of the counter-powers at the village level. They also suggest that part of the problem is the absence of a set of rules with locally enforced penalties.

Third Party Arbitration

The management of forestry fees as it is currently structured lacks a system for resolving disputes between the committees and the communities they serve.

The politicians and regional authorities – that is, the mayors and the *sous-préfets* – could facilitate such a system, but they do not (cf. the case of Toungrelo, mentioned above, where the *sous-préfet* asked villagers to withdraw the complaint they had filed against the individuals who had diverted funds). Whenever communities approach the committees to get explanations for financial misappropriations, the administrative authorities and the police tend to protect the accused.

Public Debate and Dialogue

There is no evidence of such debate in the management of many community forests, nor in the management of forestry fees. The individuals in charge of the forestry fees management committees avoid all public discussion. For example, in the Ebolowa and Dimako regions, they refuse to engage in open dialogue and regularly instruct the public to address their issues to the mayors. In addition to our observations, Bigombé Logo (2003: 17) notes that, in the Ebolowa region, the forestry fees management committees do not publish written reports of fund allocations, thereby avoiding public debate.

Proximity of Representatives to the Represented

As previously shown, a good number of members of forestry fees management committees tend to orient themselves upward. Once on this path, they lose sense of their obligation to be answerable for their actions or fulfill their responsibilities to the people whom they are supposed to represent. Many committee members have thus created an ethical and social distance between themselves and those they represent when it comes to transactions tied to forestry fees management.

Dismissal and Renewal of Representatives

In both Bitouala (Mbang region, East province) and Adjap (Ebolowa region, South province), committees were forced to re-form as a result of popular pressure, and in Nkolandom (Ebolowa region), two committee members were dismissed due to their excessive abuse of power. In Moangué-Le-Bosquet, a pygmy village, the community forest management committee, called the *Communauté Baka du Village Moangué-Le-Bosquet* (COBABO), has already changed its leaders three times since 1999, as a result of internal conflicts. However, such cases are relatively rare. Moreover, the constitutions of the forestry fees management committees in Nkolembong and Toungrelo (Dimako District) fail to include any limits on the term of office of members. This entrenchment of the leadership of most forestry fees management committees is proof that despite numerous accusations of mismanagement, those in charge are strategically connected to the administrative and municipal authorities, and thus shielded from attempts to remove them.

Social Movements and Resistance

The shortcomings of the local forestry management committees have aroused a few such protests. For example, when the forestry fees management committee in Toungrelo was accused of diverting $ 20,000, the local people raised their voices in demonstration. Similar public reactions have been noted in Adjap, Kongo (Lomié region) and Kolembong (Mbang region, East province). They have been most effective when local communities, particularly their younger members, have opposed the extension of commercial forest exploitation activities when they have received no significant financial compensation. This was the case in Akok (Ebolowa region) in June 2002, when a group of young people blocked trucks carrying timber, protesting against the lack of "royalties" received locally. Overall, however, public protests have been minor in scope and impact.

Witchcraft as Recourse

Witchcraft, in the African psyche, is an essentially evil and harmful practice (Geschiere, 1995). For societies that function on the basis of maintaining an equilibrium, however, sorcery has an ambivalent aspect. Though considered an evil force, it is also a tool for "social leveling": villagers who enrich themselves illegally and to others' detriment should, quite legitimately, be "eaten" by sorcerers (Arens, 1979), or punished by ancestors with a "mysterious death" (Kiernan, 1982). Committee members who act as 'free riders' – that is without any control from the bottom – could find themselves in this category of potential victims. As the practices involved inhabit the symbolic realm, on the cusp of the visible and the invisible, case examples are hard to find. However, a case is reported in Feeyop (Ebolowa region), in which a witchdoctor threatened the president of the forest fees management committee with "reprisals" if he continued to divert monies.

Social Exclusion

The threat of social exclusion presents itself as another means of influencing representatives to account for their actions to those they represent. If an account is not provided, the person accused of withholding it is excluded from all public affairs, a dishonor in African villages. Even though there exist cases in which several committee memberships have been revoked by the villagers themselves for bad financial management and complicity in the diversion of funds, no case of social exclusion has been recorded so far.

Conclusion

As it comes out of this brief characterisation of downward accountability and from the use of the RFAA, elected or designated management committee members do not respond to the rest of the people in their villages. In such circumstances, and in the absence of strong internal shared rules – as cause of stable behavioral patterns

influencing individual choices (Castro Caldas and Coelho, 1999:2) – and downward accountability mechanisms enforcement, the prime concern of the majority of representatives is to obtain financial benefits from forests. Their 'impulses' are automatically transferred to intensive logging in community forests in order to generate important sums of money. Ambara (2003: 8) reveals that in 2003, two management committees have opted to sell off community forests for their own account. In fact more and more community forest management committees are ready to sign contracts – or to negotiate – with logging companies. Some of these companies (e.g SFID and PALLISCO, in the East province) are among the giants of commercial timber in Cameroon. They practice both intensive and extensive logging and can devastate a community forest within less than two months. All this enriches the thesis of the transformation of community forests management experiment into an 'ecological disaster', in the absence of relevant mechanisms leading committee members to account downwardly.

The success or the failure of local forest management – in other words decentralised management – depends closely on the issues of representation and accountability. Those designated by the citizens to represent them in the 'public sphere' of forest management at the local, regional and national level are making the choice acting in their own interest. Such an 'informalisation' of the process will certainly lead to its failure.

To reverse the trend, some key recommendations could be formulated: i) help local communities to build up strong internal arrangements for the functioning of local management; ii) identify and establish mechanisms and indicators aiming at monitoring accountability at the local level; iii) establish and promote, in this particular issue, a face-to-face communication between the local communities and external agents until then exclusively in connection with management committee members (mayors, administrative authorities, logging company directors, contractors, etc.); iv) incorporate local communities' expectations and public values into decisions; v) increase local communities understanding of the issues of powers transfer and of local representation.

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