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**Contents**

Comment: Aid Memoir <i>Richard Cornwell</i>	78
Women's issues in South Africa: 1990-1994 <i>Dr Y Sadie and Ms M van Aardt</i>	80
Political conditionality and structures of the African state <i>Prof Christopher Clapham</i>	91
Re-designing external policy for the next quarter century: The New World Order from a Botswana perspective <i>James J Zaffiro</i>	98
1994 and beyond: Parameters of change in Southern Africa <i>Dr Paul-Henri Bischoff</i>	108
The State and agriculture in Africa: Some lessons from the past <i>Prof Chris O Igodan and Prof Eghosa E Osaghae</i>	115
Development and Africa: Changing perceptions <i>Douglas Rimmer</i>	122
Local economic strategies in South Africa: Lessons from Britain's local enterprise boards <i>Prof C M Rogerson</i>	129
Bookshelf	135

# Aid Memoir

Richard Cornwell, Head of Current Affairs, Africa Institute of South Africa

THE Republican Party's determination to reduce substantially the US aid budget and rationalize the operations of various American organizations connected with the aid effort, has raised questions as to whether even the "peanuts" offered by the US government to President Mandela in support of South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme will actually materialize. The \$200 million housing insurance guarantee programme seemed under particular threat from the legislators at the Capitol, and the abolition of the \$800 million Development Fund for Africa would also impact upon this country. On a less parochial note, the American legislation will affect Africa and other developing regions as a whole, not only because of the reduction in the US aid budget, but because of its reflection of the changing national mood and the signal this sends to the remainder of the donor community.

President Clinton has warned Congress that he will veto legislation which, by demanding a 13% reduction in the aid budget and establishing firmer criteria for identifying recipients, attempts to curb his constitutional prerogative to conduct foreign affairs. He is also aware that this is only the first stage of a more thorough attempt by Congress to curb government spending, with the aim of balancing the budget by the year 2002.

The President has sought to muster public support for his position by characterizing that of his opponents as the most isolationist to come before Congress in fifty years. This misses the point on more than one score. First, public sentiment itself may well be isolationist now that the Cold War is won. The American public are only too conscious of the grievous socio-economic problems facing their own society, and are unaware that foreign aid takes up only 1.3% of the federal budget, as opposed to the 20% of popular myth. As far as aid to Africa is concerned,

African-American pressure groups are also unlikely seriously to tout programmes widely seen as diverting funds from the upliftment of their own blighted ghettos. Beyond the romantic vision of a historic African homeland, this continent makes little impression upon the broader American public, except when the news is spectacularly awful. Most, then, see Africa as a region of uncontrollable disaster.

Indeed, a substantial segment of the American public may incline even more strongly towards isolation than do the spokesmen for the Republican majority in Congress. Writing in the Spring 1995 issue of *Foreign Policy*, Senator Bob Dole revealed that the debate now is not between isolationists and globalists, but rather between unilateralists (who see the US defending its own interests) and multilateralists (who believe this can be done only by taking a broader view of US interests, and then in concert with allies and international organizations).

Dole also spelled out the limits to US interests, warning against confusing these with US hopes and desires.

Pollution or overpopulation in West Africa or South Asia are problems, but their effect on American interests is peripheral, at best. Famine and disease in Somalia or Rwanda are tragic. America should help in humanitarian disasters, consistent with our resources, and in a manner that does not undermine our military readiness. But events in Rwanda and Somalia have a marginal – at most – impact on American interests.

The promotion of free markets and fostering of democratic institutions are in America's interests, but they are not absolute goals. When democratic institutions are manipulated by enemies of America – as in the case of radical Islamic fundamentalists in Algeria – our long-term interests must take precedence over the short-term ideal of enlarging democracy.

Well, at least now we know where we stand, and can have little excuse for continuing in a miasma of self-deception about how many sacrifices we may expect the USA to make in the cause of consolidating South Africa's new democracy. American aid will be used where it can open new markets to American traders, and if the governments in those new markets also insist on close dealings with countries such as Cuba and Iran then they must take the consequences.

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has expressed alarm at what it sees as this sudden change in the official US attitude to aid provision. In almost unprecedented language it has attacked Washington sharply for a "seeming withdrawal from traditional leadership" so grave that it "poses a risk of undermining political support for development cooperation in other DAC countries". The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank have also taken fright at hints that funding from the USA (which currently provides 15% of the money for the International Development Association) may be slashed. But one is entitled to ask how much of this consternation is due to sympathy for the poor of the developing nations and how much to concern that there may be a contraction in employment opportunities among the donor agencies.

One does not need to support the Republicans' narrow view of things to call into question the whole issue of the efficacy of aid. Many seasoned observers of the developing world ask whether aid does what its proponents maintain. Put simply, the idea is that rich countries give money to poor countries to help their economic growth. Foreign aid is supposed to fill the gap left by poor countries' inability to save and finance investment. But, it is unclear whether developing countries actually do suffer from a capital shortage. In recent years many of the biggest aid recipients have also enjoyed large inflows of private

capital. Nor can low savings rates be explained simply in terms of absolute poverty, because even poor countries have rich people – though they choose either not to save or to save elsewhere.

Economists have struggled to find a firm causal link between aid and economic growth. Much of the variation in aid flows between countries is explained by the political interests of the donors rather than by the economic needs of the recipients: the Pergau Dam project is a recent case in point.

A detailed analysis of aid flows in the period 1971–1990 shows that almost all aid is spent on consumption, whether private or government – practically nowhere does it lead to an increase in investments. Only in those small countries where foreign aid contributes more than 15% of GDP is there a significant correlation between aid and investment, though even here it has little effect on growth. Even this would not be so bad if it meant the poor were consuming more, or the government was spending more on health and education. Yet there is no sign of this in the infant mortality statistics, suggesting the uncomfortable

conclusion that it is probably going to those who least need it. There appears to be no correlation between political systems and this result, though liberal democracies do have better human development indicators. Some conclude that aid therefore might be spent shoring up democratic governments, which tend to have a better overall long-term record.

Every year the rich countries of the world “donate” some \$60 billion to the poor. Not only does much of this largesse miss its target, some actually does damage, distorting tiny economies in the interests of big country security and status. For example, tied aid may force up the price of imports or be little more than a disguised form of export subsidy, often for the construction industry or consultancies who provided technical assistance. Oddly enough, the statistics reveal that the more a developing country spends on arms, the larger its aid receipts.

Large turn-key projects may suit donors seeking publicity and local politicians expecting kick-backs, but fine urban hospitals are expensive to run and difficult to maintain and many entice doctors away

from rural areas where they are needed most. Credit to mechanize farm production may throw labourers out of jobs. Universities create unemployable graduates where schools could have provided universal primary education.

Cynics claim that OECD trade barriers deny poor countries the equivalent of twice the annual flow of development assistance. In terms of this view aid is seen as a palliative for refusing to open rich-country markets to poor-country goods.

This is an avenue deserving of public investigation. It is neither fitting nor healthy that South Africa, or the rest of the continent for that matter, should plead for foreign charity. The very last thing Africa needs is to strive to perpetuate its dependency on an increasingly indifferent world. To say that Africa is morally entitled to some consideration when hard decisions are being made in the financial and economic capitals of the world is not to beg for charity but to demand equity. Then, other things being equal, Africans will be able at last to define and establish their own development paths, using their own resources, human and material.

# Women's issues in South Africa: 1990–1994

Dr Y Sadie and Ms M van Aardt, of the Political Studies Department at Rand Afrikaans University in Johannesburg, examine the current position of women in South Africa and identify a number of issues that require urgent attention.

IT is generally accepted that the single most important event which set the process towards irrevocable change in South Africa in motion, was the now famous speech by former State President F W de Klerk at the opening of Parliament on 2 February 1990. The unbanning of the African National Congress (ANC), Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the release of Mr Nelson Mandela paved the way for negotiations on a democratic future for the country, the abolition of apartheid and the first free elections held in April 1994. What is less often recognized, is that 2 February 1990 also proved a watershed for women in South Africa. For the first time women's concerns came to the fore.

This is not to imply that prior to 1990 women were not part of the political scene in the country. Black women, especially, have always been part of the struggle against white minority rule<sup>1</sup> and in the wake of the Soweto Riots of 1976 non-racial women's organizations such as Kontak and Women for Peace were launched in order to present a united, female opposition to apartheid. White Afrikaner women were instrumental in securing the franchise for (white) women in 1926<sup>2</sup> and the Black Sash has over many years presented liberal women's position against apartheid.<sup>3</sup> However, up to 1990 South African women, to the extent that they were involved in politics, were committed, in varying degrees and depending on race and colour, largely to national liberation, the struggle against racial domination and minority rule, and the struggle for majority rights. As political issues, women's issues *per se*, such as provision for basic needs,

family violence, rape, abortion, low wages and lack of legal or social status (to mention but a few), hardly received mention before 1990.

It would seem that for South African women the hegemony of patriarchy<sup>4</sup> defined the political domain, and issues related to the unsatisfactory conditions endured by the majority of women were pushed from the centre of the political agenda as not being "really political", or as issues that would have to stand back for the larger goal of national liberation. The process started in February 1990, therefore, seemed to herald the start of women's liberation. National liberation, the demise of apartheid and the prospect of universal franchise and democratic elections – in short, the whole process of transition – created the opportunity for women<sup>5</sup> to politicize women's issues and to ensure that these would be placed firmly on the political agenda. We believe that the motivation for insisting, from the start of the transition process in 1990, that the unequal power relations between men and women should be addressed as part of the broad negotiation process and all agreements with regard to the restructuring of South African politics, stems from the disappointments suffered by women in Zimbabwe, Mozambique and elsewhere. In these countries patriarchy and the suppression of women had been considered secondary to the liberation struggle and after independence was achieved, were largely ignored.<sup>6</sup>

This is not to say that the struggle for women's liberation – an end to patriarchy and a genuine empowerment of women – has been won, or even that it has been largely successful. The purpose of this



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article is to present an overview and analysis of the current position of women in South Africa, paying special attention to some of the most important issues which still need to be addressed in order to ensure effective equality for women. These issues will be discussed against the background of the position of women in 1990 and the changes brought about since then. The role of women in changing their position, as well as their demands and expectations with regard to continuing problems, will also receive attention.

A discussion of gender issues in South Africa only makes sense if the nature of other divisions in society is kept in mind.

Constant reference to the category *women* might be misleading, especially with regard to the various problems faced by women (discussed in subsequent sections), if the very real differences among South African women are not understood and accounted for.<sup>7</sup> Women differ in terms of race, colour, class, region, religion and party affiliation,<sup>8</sup> although these categories are not mutually exclusive. Race might seem to be an obvious and even "final" divider of women, yet it is often the case that religion and/or party political affiliation serve to form alliances, or, at the very least, sympathies among women cutting across the apparent racial or colour divide. Conversely, race is not necessarily a unifying factor. In this regard class and regional differences within the ranks of black women especially seem to play an increasingly important role; without doubt black rural women are, and still experience themselves to be, the most suppressed and impoverished women in South African society, with the extremely poor women in the squatter camps on the fringes of cities and large towns a close second. Over the past four years these women constantly have had to lobby and inform other women of their particular problems and expectations. In terms of these differences among women, one of the most serious and urgent challenges to the women's movement in the country (and one that has, so far, been met with a fair measure of success, despite problems) is that of preventing these differences from becoming divisions that could weaken and even render unsuccessful the struggle for women's emancipation and gender equality.

The period 1990-1994<sup>9</sup> was characterized by two broad developments regarding women and gender issues, namely decisive changes in the legal status and position of women and the development of a broad-based women's movement, and these developments have facilitated the "entrance" of gender issues onto the



political stage. Each of these will be discussed and treated separately in this article, although it is recognized that these processes are to some extent interrelated.

### Equal rights and empowerment

Before 1990, and actually as late as 1993, numerous laws discriminating against women were still in existence. As a preliminary measure aimed at improving the legal status of women, and also with a view to normalizing the country's relations with the international community, the South African government signed a number of United Nations conventions on women in late January 1993. Amongst these were the Convention on Political Rights for Women, the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Shortly afterwards the (then National Party) government published three draft bills covering the Promotion of Equal Opportunities, the Prevention of Domestic Violence and the Abolition of Discrimination against Women.

Up to the 1990s legal limitations on women of all races and irrespective of class, religion or other differences, were widespread, as is suggested by the above titles of the draft bills. Although it is impossible to list all these limitations here, a few examples would provide an adequate picture: in certain civil service departments, women employees who married or became pregnant, had their services automatically terminated; women were not deemed competent to sign certain documents or deeds as witnesses; in some civil

marriages the husband still had marital power over the wife;<sup>10</sup> women were prevented from performing high risk and underground (mining) work; women teachers had to retire at age 60 (men at age 65) and within common law the father of a child born of a marriage was considered the natural guardian of the child.

The amendments to various Acts contained in the Abolition of Discrimination against Women Act (passed by Parliament in late 1993) were stated clearly in the Act and repeatedly in the explanatory memorandum preceding the Act as being part of a comprehensive programme to abolish all forms of discrimination against women, to promote gender equality in terms of the law and to promote freedom of choice, although this did not necessarily mean, for instance, that "the Government is now in favour of women participating in boxing or wrestling tournaments".<sup>11</sup> These amendments were also necessary to bring legislation in line with the stipulations of the new constitution's section on fundamental rights.<sup>12</sup>

The two Acts dealing with discrimination against women and promoting equal opportunities clearly reflect the liberal standpoint that equality with men and especially equality before the law would provide the solution to women's inferior position and the various hardships suffered by them in a society structured and operating in terms of a patriarchal culture. After the promulgation of these laws, and the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence (the latter is discussed subsequently), the National Party, in whose term of office these Acts came into being,

basically withdrew its interest in women's concerns, believing that it "had done enough" for women and that no further involvement in the women's movement would be necessary.<sup>13</sup>

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act went beyond the assumption that equality is sufficient to provide for the particular needs of women and acknowledges implicitly that there are differences between men and women which are not accounted for by superficially legalizing equality for all. This Act presents a first step towards accepting that the "personal is the political" and overcoming the public/private divide that has for so long put women (and children) within the family beyond legal protection against rape and violence from husbands and live-in lovers. The Act provides for, among other things, the seizure of a fire-arm when it is used to threaten family members and the issuing of provisional warrants of arrest to be executed if an offending partner disregards an interdict against him.<sup>14</sup>

The passage of the above Acts from draft bills to acceptance by Parliament was, however, not without incident. The two main reasons for this were, firstly, that women were not consulted during the drafting of the various bills. The government reasoned that the draft bills were open for discussion and comments and that women therefore were given the opportunity of contributing to the final drafts. A round of fiery workshops was held countrywide, most of them organized and sponsored by the Department of Justice and the South African Communication Services, during which the draft bills were discussed and debated, and objections and suggestions formulated and referred to the Justice Department. The failure of the government to involve women *beforehand* indicated to some extent the conventional paternalistic and patronizing approach to women, implying that things had to be done *for* them, rather than *by* them or at least in consultation with them and therefore, inherently, these Acts aimed at equality had their origin in inequality and the disparagement of women.

The second point which is related to the government's heavy-handed approach to the formulation of the above legislation, is that the draft bills were almost immediately politicized in the sense that party political and other political groupings were used to combat the *fact* that these bills were proposed, rather than tackling the *contents* thereof. At issue was the fact that the draft bills were perceived by opposition groups, especially those operating on an extra-parliamentary basis, to have been both a unilateral action by

an illegitimate, minority government<sup>15</sup> and a ploy to woo the support and, in the longer term, the votes of women for the National Party.<sup>16</sup> However, in view of the high incidence of family violence in South Africa, the draft bill on domestic violence was passed in June 1993, well ahead of the other two, and with some significant changes to it, due to the lobbying of various women's organizations.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, the debates and discussions on the draft bills during March to May 1993 clearly indicated that South Africa was not to be the exception to the general experience in other countries: women's issues are still overshadowed by party political and other issues related to (political) power and dominance. Before the acceptance of the new constitution, this was again highlighted by the debate (in public and at the negotiation forum in Kempton Park) on the position and status of customary and traditional (indigenous) law in relation to the country's new constitution. Both the National Party and the ANC were keen to avoid alienating the various tribal chiefs.<sup>18</sup> Despite the fact that customary law often discriminates against women (especially in terms of access to land) and despite the various parties' commitment to equality of the sexes, it was proposed that customary law should not be subordinated to the new constitution. Again various women's organizations, to the left and right of the political spectrum, as well as legal organizations and research centres, voiced their opposition. Most women, especially black women who are the victims of discrimination under customary and traditional law, made it clear that although they did not want to demolish all these laws and customs, those aspects which perpetuated women's inferior position and status, would have to be subordinated to the constitution.<sup>19</sup>

Apart from the introduction of new laws and the amendments to other laws to legalize the principle of equality, the parties at the constitutional negotiations also agreed to make this principle part of the practical negotiation process. Women *per se* were brought into the process in two phases, although these phases were not related and not pre-arranged. After Codesa I (Conference on a Democratic South Africa) there was general dissatisfaction with the absence of women's representation. It was stressed that women form 54% of the population and after suggestions and submissions by women's organizations, political parties and other organizations, the Management Committee of Codesa decided to form the Gender Advisory Committee. This committee was charged with the task

of looking into the terms of reference, minutes and decisions of each of the working groups and advising on their gender implications. The second phase involved the requirement that each delegation to the negotiations should include a woman.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the Transitional Executive Council (TEC)<sup>21</sup> also included a subcommittee on the status of women, constituted and mandated in much the same way as the Gender Advisory Committee.

A few comments are relevant *vis-à-vis* the above process of incorporating women into the decision-making process. First, the incorporation was based, largely, on an assumption that equal treatment of women, eg 50% representation in some of the negotiation forums, or an equality clause in the constitution, would ensure fair treatment of women. The many outstanding issues regarding the position of women (see discussion below) belied the validity of such an assumption. Furthermore, equality as a starting point does not account for, nor does it reflect, the very real differences between the life experiences of women and men. Legislating against discrimination, or insisting on quotas of women's representation are necessary to improve the position and status of women, but are not in themselves sufficient. What is also needed is a change in attitude and an acceptance of the way in which gender, as a social construct, operates in society.

Secondly, the various ways in which provisions were made for women in terms of legislation, and in which women were brought into the decision-making process, and the dubious level of effectiveness of these approaches, echo the perennial question of how best to address women's issues. Debates around the success of women's ministries or bureaus within government departments and the search for legitimizing women's issues as politically important and serious are also, in the case of South Africa, not yet resolved.

### The Women's National Coalition

A second important development during the period 1990–1994 was the creation of a broad-based coalition of women's organizations. Apart from *bona fide* women's organizations, the women's groups or wings of various political parties, religious groups, trade unions, the business sector and other political and non-governmental organizations are involved and they all have one thing in common: they are concerned with women's issues, whether, like many predominantly black groups (including African, coloured and Asian people), with the basic needs and living conditions of women, or whether, like some

of the all-white Afrikaner groups, with the cultural aspects of women's lives.

In April 1992 the Women's National Coalition (WNC) was founded, comprising initially 70 organizations and increasing to more than 90 by April 1994. The importance of the establishment of the WNC cannot be over-emphasized. For the first time in South African history women from literally all walks of life got together: the Coalition includes women from different religions (Christian, Judaic, Buddhist, Muslim, African indigenous and animist churches), cultures, languages, races and classes. In the words of the convenors of the Coalition: "What seems to have held the women together was the fervent need to ensure that they were not marginalized out of the political process and have decisions about their future taken by men."<sup>22</sup>

The objective and mandate of the Coalition revolved around ensuring effective equality for women. In this the Coalition's approach to women's issues and concerns differed markedly from that of the government of the time and most of the parties represented at the negotiating table in that *effective* equality was defined as equality that took difference into account.<sup>23</sup> Becoming "honorary men" would prove to be unacceptable to the members of the Coalition and from the outset it was stressed that although the abolition of discrimination was necessary, this would not be sufficient. Gender oppression was to be addressed, and this meant going beyond equality to tackle issues also of a socio-economic nature. In other words, the Coalition approached women's issues from a gender perspective, based on the assumption that women's needs involved more than legal equality or proportional representation during negotiations or in Parliament. The process of achieving the mandate entailed a campaign to reach as many women as possible in order to find out what they wanted in a new democratically elected government, culminating in the Women's Charter for Effective Equality adopted during the WNC's national conference in June 1994.

Apart from drawing up the Women's Charter through an inclusive process (based on the results of an extensive research campaign) and generally acting as a lobbying group for and watchdog on women's issues, the WNC is also important in terms of the following:

- It provided South African women with the opportunity of getting to know each other and to develop an understanding of each other's needs and aspirations;
- it challenged women to overcome their differences in terms of culture, values,



background etc in order to realize a common goal;<sup>24</sup>

- it presents political leaders, as well as other decision-making structures of authority (government departments, tribal leaders, the business sector) with a force to be reckoned with when it comes to women;
- it consists of a well-organized, highly motivated structure through which women's concerns can be channelled in the long term; and
- it serves as a reminder to ordinary women that they as individuals are represented by an organization that has as its first and foremost goal the upliftment and empowerment of all South African women.

Despite these achievements, the Coalition has also suffered some drawbacks in terms of the dynamics generated by the sometimes vast differences that had to be accommodated,<sup>25</sup> the intense political activity surrounding the run-up to the April 1994 elections<sup>26</sup> and a lack of skills and resources in addressing post-election opportunities for empowering women and exercising the Coalition's potential influence.<sup>27</sup> The latter is of special concern in view of the various problems faced by women, as many, if not all of these can only be addressed effectively by the wielding of political power and, in practice, by government policy.

Despite the fact that women's subordinate status and position have now been made part of the political agenda, many issues remain unresolved. A few of these are discussed in the following section.

## Women's issues

### Issues relating to women in employment

Until the early 1990s, as pointed out above, women in employment in South Africa were restricted by either the existence of various laws, or the lack thereof, from participating equally in the workplace. No legislation protected women from discriminatory practices such as unequal salaries for equal work or provided job security for pregnant women. Employers have also always had gender- (and race-) based recruitment policies. In some instances, particularly in the craft unions, these have been supported by male workers. On the other hand women were legally discriminated against in respect of pensions, housing and other employment benefits.

The status of married female employees is reflected in laws such as the Public Service Act of 1984 which does not make provision for a married woman to be considered a "head of household" unless she proves that her husband is permanently disabled.<sup>28</sup>

Because of their race, African women have, in addition, been affected by former apartheid legislation such as the migrant labour system which restricted them to the bantustans until 1986. Those who did enter the labour market outside of these areas generally did so "illegally".

What is evident in South Africa, is that women will not be liberated only by entering the workforce on an equal basis with men, as liberal feminists would argue. Although the introduction of laws in 1993 banning every form of economic and educational discrimination is certainly

a step forward in empowering women, the former lack of such protection and the existence of discriminatory legislation is certainly not the only reason for the present status of women (as discussed below) in employment. As radical feminists would argue, women can be totally liberated only through profound changes in South African culture and institutions. A Conservative Party MP made the following apt remark during a parliamentary debate on the rights of women in February 1993 with regard to the fact that no single woman had been appointed to a senior policy-making position in the civil service in 1992. He said that women were discriminated against as a result of the "male chauvinist attitude which this government has been applying over years".<sup>29</sup>

In South Africa, women generally remain less likely to be employed than men, and those women who are employed are concentrated in the lowest-paid sectors. Although women constitute 54% of the population, they constituted only two-fifths of the paid workforce in 1991 (39.4%).<sup>30</sup>

In the formal economy, occupational segregation between women and men is clearly evident. Women workers are concentrated in particular sectors and occupations. Although women make up 39.4% of the workforce, they account for as many as 68.4% of all service workers and more than half of all clerical and sales workers. Women also occupy a significant majority of the so-called pink-collar jobs. They comprise: 96% of registered nurses, more than 90% of occupational and radiotherapists, 86% of social workers, 78.6% of hairdressers, 67% of teachers and 96% of domestic workers who are paid on average less than R400 (approximately US\$115) per month (73.3% of women in the above-mentioned service occupations are domestic workers).<sup>31</sup>

At the other end of the spectrum, women workers are obviously under-represented in the following categories: artisan, apprentice and related occupations 5.1% (0.2% of African women workers are artisans), transport, delivery, communications occupations 5.9%, registered engineers 3.1%, judges or magistrates 9.6%. In 1990, there were no women apprentices in the furniture, building or motor vehicle trades, and only 0.8% of those in the metal and engineering industry were African women. In 1992, there were 1 800 African apprentices in the metal and engineering sector and only seven women.<sup>32</sup>

With regard to women in senior positions in the corporate sector, 49 (1.3%) of the 3 773 directors of the Johannesburg Stock Exchange's 657 companies are

women. The 49 women share some 55 directorships among them. Fourteen of the women are either executive directors, chairwomen or managing directors. In the words of Dr Dlodlu of the Graduate School of Business Leadership at the University of South Africa, these figures indeed reflect "old boy" management strategies in that affirmative action has thus far concentrated on rectifying racial inequalities to the disadvantage of gender imbalances.<sup>33</sup>

The results of a three-year survey published in 1993 revealed disparities between male and female managers in the areas of responsibility and remuneration, even though average age, experience, qualifications and hours spent at work were equal. The survey found that male managers had twice as many subordinates as female managers. Furthermore, for every man earning less than R60 000 (US\$15 500) a year there were eight women, while twice as many men than women earned more than R100 000 (US\$26 500) a year. The survey found that these inequalities acted as "significant disincentives" for women managers to advance, as they were exposed to increasing discrimination the higher they rose in an organization.<sup>34</sup>

Another feature of South African women in employment is that, by virtue of the racial group to which they belong, they continue to enter the labour force under different conditions, with different levels of education and job training, and are incorporated into the job market at different levels. The 1991 population census showed that females have less education than males and that more females than males are illiterate. An alarming fact is that this difference increased between 1985 and 1991. Of all women, it is African women, and especially those in the rural areas, who have the least education and who are the most likely to be illiterate.<sup>35</sup>

Post-matric (post-school) degrees or certificates are held by 14% of white women, 4% of Indian women, 2% of coloured women and 1% of African women.<sup>36</sup>

Although women workers are generally concentrated, as indicated above, in the service, clerical and sales sectors, and professional, semi-professional and technical occupations, not all women are equally likely to be in the occupational categories listed. A vast difference exists between white and African women for example. White women (20.4% of all economically active women) are over-represented in managerial, executive and administrative occupations, where 77.6% are white. In clerical and sales occupations 57.8% are white and in professional, semi-professional and technical 45.4% are white. Only

5% of white women are in service occupations. African women (64.2% of all economically active women) are over-represented in service occupations on the other hand (where 83.4% are African) and in contrast, under-represented in other occupations.<sup>37</sup> Thirty-eight per cent of African women workers do menial work such as tea-making. The situation is also not improving. There is presently a larger percentage of African women in menial work than was the case in 1965, and a lower percentage doing semi-skilled work.<sup>38</sup>

It is thus clear that the South African labour market is very skewed: occupational segregation between women and men clearly exists and, from the differences between workers, it is apparent that women do not constitute a homogenous group. Women's subordination remains interwoven by significant race and class differences. White women generally have access to higher status and better paid jobs, whereas Indian, coloured and African women tend to be over-represented in lower status jobs as service, production and related workers.

### Problems presently experienced in employment

According to extensive research<sup>39</sup> by the Women's National Coalition during the period February 1993 to December 1993, which included the issue of employment, several problems and demands were elicited. Some of the major problems experienced by women will be highlighted.

The majority of respondents as well as almost every focus group raised the issue of equal pay for equal work. While white women wanted the same salary as their male equivalents, African, Indian and coloured women wanted, in addition, to be paid equal wages for work and qualifications equivalent to their white female counterparts. Furthermore, both colour and gender discrimination is experienced in the area of promotion in the workplace. Black women specifically also complained that they were the first to go when a company retrenched workers. In addition, women feel they lack equal access to skills development and training in the workplace.<sup>40</sup>

A second category of problems centres on the effect on women's employment of the lack of support services and social networks, for example maternity leave and job security. The lack of childcare facilities prevented women not only from being able to gain paid employment but to accept promotion which often comes with more responsibilities and time demands. Research showed that paid maternity leave for three/six months (women differed on

the time) as well as the same employment guaranteed on return from confinement were consistently demanded.<sup>41</sup>

The tension between calling for equal treatment on the one hand and insisting on women's special needs on the other, is clearly reflected in the problems alluded to above that women experience. In South Africa it is still very evident that the liberal equality principle with regard to women in the workplace is the goal. The biological "difference" aspect is as yet not simultaneously taken into consideration with the principle of equality. For women to have an "equal right" to work, they may actually need more than men. They need, for instance, paid maternity leave, workplace nurseries and extra safety conditions when pregnant. As Philips<sup>42</sup> rightly remarks: "liberalism pretends we can be equal in the public sphere when our differences are overwhelming in the private: it exhorts women to apply for good jobs while treating their babies as their private affair; it offers them equality with one hand and takes it away with the other".

The above lack of recognition of a woman's reproductive roles<sup>43</sup> is further reflected in women's complaints that they have a double workload when working outside the home for a wage. Not only do husbands not share responsibilities but, as statistics show, a large proportion of women are actually single mothers and/or primary breadwinners in their families: 43% of African children and 52% of coloured children, for example, are born to single mothers whereas 59% of rural households are headed by women<sup>44</sup> (this last will be discussed below). It is calculated that women often work between 15 and 18 hours a day, which includes paid work and unpaid domestic work at home.<sup>45</sup>

Lastly, according to the WNC's research, women in South Africa, particularly black women, frequently experience sexual harassment in the workplace. Not only is harassment from male colleagues widespread, but in gaining employment women were expected to provide sexual favours to prospective employers.<sup>46</sup>

As noted above, women in South Africa make up 39,4% of the workforce (excluding the former independent homelands). However, these statistics seriously underestimate in particular the number of women who are engaged in unpaid labour, which include: the large group of people (mainly African women) in subsistence agriculture, unpaid work in the informal sector and unpaid domestic labour performed by wives and other family members.

More obvious implications of taking unpaid labour into account are for example:<sup>47</sup>



- In divorce settlements a value would need to be imputed to all the labour time which the woman spent caring for and rearing the family. When deciding on the division of assets this would be added to time both partners have spent earning cash in the more formal economy.
- In social security provisions, maternity benefits, workmen's (*sic*) compensation, and other benefits would be calculated on the basis of a value which incorporates an imputed amount for unpaid work both in the home and elsewhere.
- With regard to taxes it could mean considering women's reproductive work in the home as a tax which women pay in unpaid labour rather than cash.

Although the central role of unpaid labour in the economy is not recognized, it was a commitment articulated by the ANC in May 1993: "Economic planning will take into account the contribution that unpaid labour makes to the creation of wealth. The ANC will progressively introduce an additional set of national accounts, reflecting the value of unpaid labour"<sup>48</sup>

Reflecting unpaid work in the national account will provide information which will enable planners and authorities to devise policies which will remedy the situation. In a progressive society the statistics are used to ensure that state policy helps distribute the burdens and benefits of society more equitably. By taking account of the burden of unpaid labour, account is taken of the hardships of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population - particularly rural African women.

According to sociologists, housework has been variously estimated as accounting for between 25 and 40% of the wealth created in industrialized societies.<sup>49</sup> If this could become common knowledge, much could be done in placing real value on a key area of what women do.

The gendered nature of unpaid labour is more acute in South Africa than in most other countries. There is so little concern about unpaid labour that people have been engaged in: for example, subsistence agriculture is not even included in official labour force statistics but is regarded as "unemployed". In the words of Budlender: "Race, class and gender combine to make them invisible". This is despite the fact that as early as 1966 the International Conference of Labour Statistics recommended that labour figures include "all persons of either sex who furnish the supply of economic goods and services", whether or not the work was rewarded in money.<sup>50</sup>

### Employment and rural women

Forty-three per cent of South Africa's population is rural. This excludes the former independent homelands.<sup>51</sup> One of the striking features about rural communities in South Africa is the large number of women who live in these areas.<sup>52</sup> In addition, as many as 59% of rural households are headed by women. Women play a vital role in the functioning of rural areas in that they maintain households, sustain agricultural production and are responsible for the day-to-day running of the communities. In the words of Lydia Kompe, founder member of the Rural Women's Movement, women in rural areas "face



oppression from four sides – because they are African, because they are women, because they are poor and because they live in rural areas.<sup>53</sup>

Rural women (the majority are African) lack the facilities and conveniences of their urban sisters. Issues that confront them are similar across the country. Despite their common concerns, it is very difficult for rural women to become organized. Because of the patriarchal system they live under, they do not have the experience in talking publicly or forming structures.

A major problem facing African rural women is their lack of access to land ownership. Traditionally land is owned and controlled by the male head of an African household. Since many rural men have to migrate to cities for work, women have taken on responsibility for the land but are given no formal control over decision-making regarding land and its use. As African customs do not recognize women as heads of households and landowners, African women in rural areas have little or no access to credit and other resources needed to participate in agricultural projects.<sup>54</sup> Another problem experienced by wives of migrant labourers is that their husbands often desert them for urban women, leaving them as breadwinners of their families, but with very little ability to earn money.<sup>55</sup>

A lack of resources such as health-care facilities, water, sanitation and education are further burdens to rural women. The standing committee on water supply and sanitation estimated that in 1990, only 53% of rural households had access to improved water supply ("improved" water supply requires upgrading before it can

be defined as adequate for domestic use), while only 30% had ready access to an adequate water supply.<sup>56</sup> In addition, only 11% of rural households had access to adequate sanitation (this includes pit latrines and flush latrines with on-site disposal). The level of access to electricity for Africans in rural areas is "very low". In the former homelands electricity is only available to between 5%–10% of the population. The Department of Forestry said in April 1993 that 30% of the population was dependent on firewood as its main fuel resource.<sup>57</sup>

The question now arises as to the impact of the lack of the above amenities on rural women and employment. Water and fuel must be fetched and carried great distances – tasks which can take most of the day. Many communities walk as far as 7 km daily to fetch water.<sup>58</sup> The lack of the above services leaves little time for productive work. Van Aardt<sup>59</sup> points out, for example, that it is due to these time-consuming demands on women that projects such as the Farmer Support Programme of the Development Bank of Southern Africa in the Northern Province region are starting to fail.

As mentioned above, lack of education limits rural women's options in all respects, making women not only dependent on men but restricting them in finding employment. Research undertaken by the Department of Local Government and National Housing in 1992 in Marabastad (near Pretoria) indicated that many rural women were compelled by unemployment to move to urban areas for survival, and hereby become part of the informal sector, which is composed mostly of women in South Africa. Hawking fruit and

vegetables is their common activity. The income generated is sent to families in rural areas, each woman supporting an average of seven people there. The women sleep illegally in wooden shelters which double as stalls during the day because they cannot afford township housing. Fifty-six per cent of the women interviewed had received no schooling at all. Illiteracy makes it impossible for them to keep records of their expenses and profits. Sixty per cent had never had any work experience in the formal sector – experience most would welcome because it would provide a more steady income. However, their lack of education makes formal employment virtually impossible.<sup>60</sup>

### Customary law and the status of women

Although the practice of customary law is subject to Chapter 3 (Fundamental Rights) of the constitution (see above), the lives of African (and Muslim) women are still very much determined by rules of customary law.

Owing to the status of African women in society (which can largely be attributed to patriarchy), the lack of knowledge about constitutional change and equality, and practical impediments such as lack of education (illiteracy), transport, money and knowledge of legal procedure, it is doubtful whether these women (particularly the rural women) would be in a position to make use of the clause in the constitution which overrules traditional law practices (see footnote 19).

As the research by the WNC revealed, many black women regard certain customary law practices as either oppressive or undermining of the status of African women and feel therefore that they should be abolished. Harsh comments were recorded, such as that "customary law and customs totally destroyed the life of black women in the society", "oppressive customary law should be done away with" and "lives of black women in South Africa would be easier without customary law".<sup>61</sup> Women who are in favour of retaining customary law believe that much of it could be changed in order to be fairer to women.

A brief overview of some of the major issues regarding customary law that give rise to outcries from women will now be given. One of the most serious problems is that women are treated as minors. Their access to land is limited and can usually only be gained through marriage, though not permanently. Not owning land means that women cannot keep their own cattle and grow their own crops. This in turn

means that they have no access to financial backing owing to the lack of collateral as has been mentioned above. They have no say in the home, yet they carry full responsibility there – particularly while their husbands are away as migrant labourers. As a result, these women tend to have low self-esteem and feel inferior to men.<sup>62</sup>

Customary law provides for the practice of polygamy, which is becoming a major problem in that men often have several wives in both rural and urban areas. Wives in rural areas complain that they receive less consideration than urban wives. Escaping such a marriage would mean surrendering their access to land or a house. African women in rural areas (and Muslim women) are often married not in a civil court but in a traditional ceremony. These women often cannot access the (limited) benefits and protection enjoyed by women married in civil courts. Women married under customary law are left with very few rights. They can, for example, be evicted from the home when the husband brings home a civil-law wife. For these and other reasons a large majority of African women in South Africa feel that polygamy should not be allowed.<sup>63</sup>

Related to the topic of marriage is the issue of *lobola*, a custom which the majority of women find to be outdated and oppressive. It is seen as a tradition that makes women servants rather than partners in a marriage.<sup>64</sup> The treatment of women as a possession continues even after a husband's death in that a woman has no right to choose the man she wants to live with, but has to live with the husband's brother.<sup>65</sup>

From the above it is clear that there is need for a thorough review of a number of cultural and traditional practices which hamper the development of women and keep them trapped in a mesh of taboos that serve to keep them in perpetual bondage.

### Women and violence

The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (discussed earlier) is an indication of the acknowledgement of the fact that many women experience violence and abuse within the home. It is also an attempt by the state to provide legal assistance to these women by criminalizing certain actions of male partners. However, this Act fails to come to grips with other forms of violence. Neither are Police Service members adequately trained to deal with the many manifestations of violence directed against women and children.

It is generally accepted, at least within a feminist perspective and more specifi-



cally utilizing a radical feminist approach to violence against women, that such violence is both a reflection of unequal power relationships in society while also serving to maintain this inequality: "It reflects and maintains the power that men have over women in society generally and also, therefore, within their personal relationships."<sup>66</sup> In this section, violence refers to more than the usual definitions of the term. Although all acts of hurting or degrading women and impairing their ability to control intimate contact are included, we also refer to acts of violence that fall under public violence; acts that are aimed at women in order to subdue, abuse or intimidate a community at large.

Violence against women can broadly be divided into private and public violence,<sup>67</sup> and each of these into the threat or fear of violence and the actual use of

violence.<sup>68</sup> Whether actual or threatened/feared, it remains one of the most serious problems facing women, not only owing to the physical or psychological damage done to them, but also because of the lack of support systems to back them up. In the words of a victim of political violence: "You are only a homeless refugee but you are *still expected to be a wife and mother*".<sup>69</sup>

Acts of violence against women take many forms. It is estimated that the approximately 32 000 rapes reported every year make up only 5% of the total number of annual rapes in the country. A particularly brutal and shocking form of rape is called "Jackrolling". It refers to gangs of young men who roam the townships intent on the kidnapping and multiple rape of young girls as part of a game that they play.<sup>70</sup> Serious assaults, including sexual abuse of

children under the age of 14, increased by nearly 55% in 1990 alone, the vast majority of the victims being girls.<sup>71</sup> In the public sphere political violence is rife. Women are often the victims of shootings, burnings and brutal assault because they are seen to be “soft targets who will not hit back”,<sup>72</sup> thereby presenting opportunities for being humiliated, subdued, intimidated and, ultimately, controlled. Witch burnings have become more common since 1985. These usually occur in rural villages where women – often elderly women – are held responsible for political or economic problems or crop failures and drought.

Neither the equality clause in the constitution, nor the various changes to the country's laws, nor the high percentage of women elected to Parliament seems to have changed the high incidence of violence against women. This is the one area within society where a large-scale change of perception through education and socialization is of crucial importance. It would seem that this is not very high on the government's list of priorities. The RDP refers to women only in terms of unlocking “boundless energies and creativity suppressed by racism and discrimination” and “ensuring a full and equal role for women”,<sup>73</sup> but in practical terms very little is being done to address violence against women or support the efforts of religious and charity organizations in providing care for, and counselling to, the victims.

### Reproductive decisions: Aids and abortion

Partly related to the issue of violence, is the right of women to have control over their bodies. This implies a choice for women in that they have to be able to control the access of men to their bodies.<sup>74</sup> In the South African situation this issue is crucial to the physical well-being of women, as well as to the status of women, especially with regard to Aids and abortion laws.

Women are increasingly vulnerable to Aids, largely owing to their low status in society and their subordination to male power, which makes it very difficult for women to refuse sex to their husbands' lovers, or to insist on the use of condoms. Yet Aids is fast becoming a feminized disease and the problem is compounded by the fact that women often transmit the HIV virus to their unborn children. By July 1994 approximately 600 000 South Africans were infected by HIV, a figure which is doubling every 13 months.<sup>75</sup> The most disturbing trend within these figures is the high incidence of HIV infection

among women: up to 1 in 25, compared to 1 in 40 for men. At Baragwanath Hospital (the largest in the southern hemisphere) in Soweto, 1 in 18 women attending the ante-natal clinic is HIV positive, compared to 1 in 250 five years ago.<sup>76</sup>

In South Africa, abortion is illegal, except in certain narrowly defined cases such as rape, incest or where the mother's life is in danger. The process of getting permission from a Supreme Court judge for an abortion is often lengthy and always expensive, making it almost impossible for poor women to get an abortion. Coupled to this is the widespread resistance to birth control by men in black society and women's ignorance about family planning and contraceptives.<sup>77</sup> The result is recourse to back-street abortions.<sup>78</sup>

Tackling the issue of women's right to reproductive decisions will not be easy, especially because of religious and customary resistance to and disapproval of abortion, and, in the case of sexually transmitted diseases, owing to women's inferior status and the distortion of personal relationships as a result of violence, poverty and social instability. A first step towards addressing these problems is the Women's Charter which demands the right for women to have control over their bodies. Yet this demand presents, at this stage, little more than symbolic resistance. From the side of the government there is a notable hesitation in formulating an official policy on abortion, because of the potential for conflict inherent in such a sensitive issue.

### Basic needs

It is difficult to do justice to the issue of basic needs in such limited space as is available here, but a short discussion is necessary to complete the picture on gender issues in South Africa. Although basic needs are experienced by all members of society, women are especially vulnerable because of their reproductive responsibilities.<sup>79</sup> Access to clean water, affordable energy sources, education, primary health care and other basic amenities is important to women as these needs pertain to their children or other family members for whom they care. The widespread unavailability of many of these basic services imposes a heavy burden on women, many of whom are also *de facto* or *de jure* heads of households and therefore often the sole breadwinners in their families.

The underlying problem of basic needs as related to gender issues is that these needs constitute so-called second- and third-generation human rights, notoriously difficult to guarantee and imple-

ment, not least because of the financial burden placed on the state. Although statistics relating to rural women were given in a previous section, an overall indication of the lack of infrastructure and other amenities is presented here. Out of a population of 40 million, 12 million do not have access to clean water and 21 million do not have adequate sanitation. Only 36% of households have electricity. In 1990 the urban housing backlog was estimated at between 1.3 million and 3 million units, growing by 200 000 per year. Approximately one-third of children under the age of 10 are malnourished or undernourished. Although South Africa spends R550 per capita per annum on health care (almost 10 times more than the World Bank's estimate to provide basic public health services), the health care sector is grossly inefficient and inadequate owing to fragmentation, mismanagement and uneven distribution.<sup>80</sup> This is a formidable list of challenges facing the new government and supports the viewpoint that although first generation rights as guaranteed in the constitution are necessary, women's lives are still very difficult and many issues remain unresolved, especially with regard to women's triple role (see footnote 43) and their low status in society.

### Conclusion

Although the first step in the direction of empowering women in South Africa has been taken with the abolition of discriminatory legislation against women and the entrenchment of a non-sexist society in the constitution, it is clear from the discussion above that gender equality has by no means been achieved, as the status of women in South Africa is largely a subordinate one both inside and outside the home. Women's choices are largely determined by the role society prescribes for them by customs and laws. These roles are perpetuated both in the home and in the workplace. When evidence contradicts a particular view of women, the traditional view still remains powerful. A good example of this is the notion of breadwinner which is ascribed only to men though this is contradicted by evidence.

Contributing to the problem of gender stereotyping is the church. This includes theological views on aspects such as the nature of women and the male-oriented leadership of the church. The roles and responsibilities of women in the church are those of playing supportive roles, providing teas, raising funds, visiting the sick and running welfare programmes.<sup>81</sup> Religion strongly reinforces traditional

role expectations and behaviour of men and women.

Culture and religion therefore provide ideological bases for the status and institutionalized roles accorded women in society. The roles women play and the restrictions on them are derived largely from such cultural and religious conceptions of women's basic characteristics. Because the tradition of men regarding themselves superior to women has found root in South Africa's socio-cultural norms, it is not possible to undo the injustice and imbalances with a mere stroke of a pen.

The role of education as a priority in emancipating women cannot be overemphasized. Education does much for a woman's status – in society, in the workplace, in the family. It also enables women to take control of their lives and respond better to opportunities. Not least, it puts wives on a more equal footing with their husbands in matters affecting their families. Education can also do much to eliminate the cultural and social barriers that block women's opportunities.

The value of coordinating efforts aimed at effectively identifying and meeting the needs of South African women has been recognized. The establishment and continuation of the Women's National Coalition is a major step forward in realizing the aim of an independent body of women serving as spokeswomen for all women in South Africa.

It is important, however, to recognize that socialization is one of the most crucial means through which transformation can come about. The notion that women's liberation is an issue for women and therefore that women must speak for themselves is misleading. It is a gender issue – an issue about relationships between people of different sexes. Women have to define their needs, but in addressing those needs men and women alike must be involved. In the words of the late Oliver Tambo, former Secretary General of the ANC: "The emancipation of women is not the task of women alone, but that of men and women alike".

Empowerment for women in the final instance means having a real choice in what women want to do – whether this is to have children, pursue a career or have a seat in Parliament – and establishing a society that affirms and values that choice.

## Endnotes

1 Cf C Walker (ed), *Women and gender in Southern Africa* to 1945. Cape Town: David Philip, 1991.

2 Cf M E R, *My beskeie deel* (My modest contribution), Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1972.

3 The Black Sash was formed in 1955 and has always voiced liberal concerns about instances of state repression.

4 The term *patriarchy* is used here to describe male domination over women, and the resulting institutions and culture that, owing to masculinist values and male-defined priorities, serve to restrict, control and belittle women. Cf C Walker, "Empowering women: A feminist perspective", paper delivered at the Standard Bank National Arts Festival, Grahamstown, July 1992.

5 S Hassim, "Gender, social location and feminist politics in South Africa", *Transformation*, no 15, 1991, p 67.

6 See for instance S Urdang, *And still they dance*. London: Earthscan, 1989.

7 These differences in turn might constitute a separate "issue" in terms of the problems faced by the majority of women, as it could be very easy to "forget" about the plight of, for instance, rural black women. Similarly, these differences often make for a lack of understanding by white, privileged women, of the needs and aspirations of black women. It was even observed that many women could not understand the "fuss" concerning family violence, obviously because they had never themselves suffered violence at the hands of a husband or other close male relative or friend.

8 We opt specifically for the term *differences* rather than *divisions* in this article, as the former implies a situation that could be overcome, while the latter refers to a condition that can (further) weaken the women's movement as a socio-political force.

9 From 2 February 1990 until the April 1994 elections.

10 That is, the husband had the power to administer his wife's property. This meant that women were still in some cases considered to be minors.

11 *Abolition of Discrimination Against Women Draft Bill*, "Explanatory Memorandum", Pretoria: Department of Justice, March 1993, p 4.

12 This position of equality, however, does not extend automatically to customary law and it remains one of the most sensitive gender issues to be addressed by the new government.

13 After the national conference of the Women's National Coalition (WNC) in February 1994, the women's wing of the National Party withdrew from the Coalition, giving these reasons. However, there were serious conflicts between the National Party delegation to the Coalition and other groups, such as those from the ANC, SACP and trade unions, mainly owing to charges by the National Party women that the Coalition was being "taken over" by the ANC and used for the latter's party political aims.

14 This Act is a direct result of the alarmingly high incidence of family violence experi-

enced in South Africa. It is estimated that one in four women in South Africa is abused in some way by her husband or boyfriend, *Beeld*, 26 July 1994.

15 Although the TEC was established only towards late 1993, the negotiation process implied that the unilateral exercise of power by the (then) government was unacceptable.

16 Both authors attended a number of discussions on the draft bills during which the actions of the government in formulating and proposing the legislation were severely criticized. Often the general feeling was that women's issues should be addressed only once a legitimate government had come to power.

17 The most important of these changes was the explicit acknowledgement that married women are often raped by their husbands. The new Act provides the opportunity for these women to lay charges of rape against offending husbands.

18 An estimated 10 000 traditional leaders and tribal headmen countrywide were on the government's payroll. Both the ANC and the National Party hoped to get their support, as these leaders could influence voters in their various constituencies.

19 Chapter 3 of the constitution deals with fundamental rights and now contains a clause on customary law establishing the right of people or communities to have their customary law recognized as the legal dispensation governing such communities. However, where a court of law applies such a system and finds its rules to be in conflict with the right to equality, the court is competent to determine such conditions as would bring customary rules into conformity with the right to equality.

20 In the Negotiating Forum each delegation consisted of four delegates of whom one had to be a woman. In the Negotiating Council (where most of the negotiations occurred), each party was allowed two delegates, one of whom had to be a woman.

21 The Transitional Executive Council (TEC) became operational towards the end of 1993 and had as its objective the facilitation, in conjunction with all legislative and executive governmental structures, of the transition to and preparation for the implementation of a democratic order in South Africa.

22 A Letsebe and F Ginwala, "Convenors' Report to the National Conference of the Women's National Coalition", Kempton Park, 25–27 February 1994.

23 Article 1 of the Women's Charter states that "similar treatment of women and men may not result in true equality. Therefore the promotion of true equality will sometimes require distinctions to be made."

24 The convenors (see note 22) noted: "It was unthinkable that women coming from such diverse backgrounds ... could hold together. The Coalition was described as a very ambitious project which might not live beyond its inception. We can thus

- justifiably say that we have made history by achieving the unthinkable.”
- 25 See, for instance, the example cited in note 13.
- 26 As has been noted earlier, women's issues are still very much subservient to party-political concerns.
- 27 The following example illustrates this problem very well: Minister Jay Naidoo, responsible for the implementation of the ANC-led government's Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), contacted the WNC early in June 1994 to set a date on which he could meet with the steering committee and discuss their concerns and inputs. On the day of the interview his office informed the WNC that Naidoo could not meet them at their office as originally planned and that they would have to travel to Pretoria for the meeting. Owing to lack of transport, other commitments and family duties, the delegates could not go to Pretoria on such short notice. Rescheduling of the meeting was still in process by late July, even though the implementation of the RDP had gone ahead.
- 28 *SA Labour Bulletin*, July/August 1993, p 74.
- 29 *Hansard* (A) col 1156–1157, 12 February 1993.
- 30 These statistics exclude the former independent homelands: Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana and Venda and women working in subsistence agriculture.
- 31 M Maconachie, "Patterns of women's employment in the 1991 census", *Agenda*, no 18, 1993, p 43 and WNC, *Women in South Africa*, 1993.
- 32 M Maconachie, *op cit*, pp 43–44.
- 33 *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 15 July 1993. Survey conducted by the Collaborative Working Group for the Advancement of Black Managers.
- 34 *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 15 April 1993.
- 35 D Hansson and B Hofmeyr, "Women's rights: Towards a non-sexist South Africa", *Developing Justice Series*, no 7, p 12 and South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), *Fast Facts*, no 2, February 1994, p 3.
- 36 WNC, *Women in South Africa*, 1993.
- 37 M Maconachie, *op cit*, p 44.
- 38 WNC, *op cit*.
- 39 Comprehensive research was undertaken by the WNC in SA in the period February 1993 to December 1993 reaching women across race, age, class and geographical area. Major methods used included: monthly focus questionnaires on single issues, of which 2 973 were returned, and 203 focus groups that involved 1 620 women.
- 40 WNC, *Interim research report*, 1994, pp 23–25, 84, 107.
- 41 *Ibid*, pp 27–28, 84.
- 42 A Phillips, "Introduction", in A Phillips (ed), *Feminism and equality*, New York: New York University Press, 1987, p 15.
- 43 C O N Moser, *Gender planning and development*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp 27–36, identifies three roles that women perform: reproductive, productive and community management. Reproductive refers to childbearing and rearing, productive consists of work done for income and community management comprises activities in the community which is voluntary and unpaid.
- 44 WNC, *Women in South Africa*, 1993.
- 45 *Speak*, 1993, p 29 and WNC, *Interim research report*, 1994, pp 25, 54, 107.
- 46 WNC, *ibid*, p 24.
- 47 D Budlender, "All work and no pay", *Work in Progress*, June 1993, pp 32–33.
- 48 *Ibid*, p 31.
- 49 A Giddens, *Sociology*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989, p 177.
- 50 D Budlender, *op cit*, p 33.
- 51 Central Statistical Service, *Population Census 1991*, Pretoria: Government Printer, 1991.
- 52 *Groundwork*, Border Rural Committee Newsletter, August 1993.
- 53 *Land Update*, September/October 1992.
- 54 *Race Relations Survey 1993/4*, Johannesburg: SAIRR, pp 255–256.
- 55 *Work in Progress*, April/May 1994, p 16.
- 56 *Race Relations Survey 1993/4*, *op cit*, pp 353–354.
- 57 *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 29 April 1993.
- 58 *Drought Monitor*, May/June 1993.
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- 75 *Beeld* (Johannesburg), 5 July 1994. These are the official figures, but according to the Department of National Health and Population Development, under-reporting of Aids and HIV infection is widespread.
- 76 *Sunday Times* (Johannesburg), 28 November 1993.
- 77 WNC Research Report, *op cit*, p 8.
- 78 An estimated 250 000 illegal abortions take place every year.
- 79 The research report of the WNC, *op cit*, pp 10–11 stresses the fact that women feel a very keen sense of responsibility to their children, to the point that "in questions where children's rights and needs are in question, these are seen to weight the responses quite heavily towards children's rights."
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# Political conditionality and structures of the African state

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**T**HE issues involved in what has been called "political conditionality" are central, not only to the relationship between democracy and development with which this article is concerned, but to the whole complex of questions that have arisen for international politics in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War: the new structures of global power, the globalization of values and the applicability of values derived from essentially European origins to different cultures and societies, the relationship between state sovereignty and the international system, and indeed the whole future of statehood during an era in which it is coming under increasing challenge. This article will seek to examine some of these issues in the context of the region of the world, sub-Saharan Africa, which by reason of its economic and political weakness has been most explicitly subject to the pressures of political conditionality, but many of the general themes with which I will be concerned are, I believe, of much wider applicability.

"Political conditionality" may, at its most specific, be defined as the imposition by aid-giving states on recipient states of requirements relating to the domestic political structure of the recipient state as a con-

dition for the allocation of aid. These requirements normally concern the recipient state's respect for "human rights", or in other words the treatment that it accords to its own citizens, and its acceptance of "democracy", conceived on the lines made familiar by Schumpeter as the allocation of state power through competition for the people's vote by two or more political parties.<sup>1</sup> More ambitious conditionalities may extend to "accountability" of the government to the governed through mechanisms other than periodic popular vote, and "governance", or the honest and efficient management of the state itself. Though several of these conditionalities are difficult to operationalize with any degree of precision, it is widely assumed that their implementation will coincide, so that governments which are freely elected by popular vote will at the same time respect the rights of their citizens, be accountable to them, and manage the state machinery in an honest and efficient fashion. Though in a strict sense, political conditionality may refer only to conditions for aid allocation, the term may also be more broadly extended to any form of pressure brought by more powerful and especially Western states, in order to influence the domestic political management of a subordinate state.

## Origins

The political conditionalities imposed by Western aid-giving states on African recipients in recent years derive from the coin-

cidence of a number of different factors, both in the West and in Africa.

The first of these, which accounts for the phrase "political conditionality" itself, is closely associated with the economic conditionalities imposed on African states by major institutional aid donors, notably the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, from the early 1980s onwards. The economic requirements for the receipt of structural adjustment loans are well known, and I shall not examine them here. Their political significance, in this context, derives from the fact that the intended economic benefits often could not be achieved, in the view of the donors, because of problems inherent in the political make-up of the recipient state. The conditionalities involved a direct attack on the sources of economic privilege enjoyed by unrepresentative governing élite groups: the maintenance of high levels of state expenditure geared especially to élite consumption, and sustained by the forced transfer of resources from rural producers to urban consumers by such mechanisms as an overvalued currency and state control over agricultural marketing. African governments could not be expected to implement policies from which they themselves would be the greatest losers, and the solution was to seek to install elected governments based on the support of the majority of the population which (in the donors' eyes, at least) stood to gain from structural adjustment, rather than the minority who would lose from it. Many African governments were in

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any event so lacking in popular legitimacy that they could not effectively implement adjustment policies, even had they wished to do so. In short, governments that were both efficient and accountable were judged essential for the achievement of economic development.<sup>2</sup>

A second major contributing factor was obviously the end of the Cold War, which not only removed the constraints on Western action created by the countervailing power of the Soviet Union and its allies, but also gave Western states an enormously enhanced sense of the universal validity of their own political and economic arrangements. In retrospect, Western states during the Cold War period were oddly hesitant about seeking to induce their Third World clients to adopt Western models, certainly by contrast with the Soviet Union, for which a commitment to "scientific socialism" was a critical element in any close alliance. However, the spectacular collapse of the USSR, and the revelation of the political and economic bankruptcy of the Soviet model, left only one viable blueprint in the field; and though the relationship between effective capitalism and multiparty democracy could certainly be questioned, especially by reference to the Asian experience of capitalist development under the aegis of an authoritarian state, it was closely attuned to the values and experience of most of the major aiding states.

A third element was the reaction in the West against African regimes which were, by any morally acceptable criterion, crudely indefensible. Whereas in the early years of independence, liberal or leftward-leaning Western opinion had been broadly sympathetic to the single-party systems and socialist economic policies espoused by African regimes, this attitude was difficult to sustain in the face of brutal and corrupt dictatorships such as those of Amin in Uganda, Bokassa in his short-lived Central African Empire, and Mobutu in Zaïre. Just as the experience of Nazism had helped to revive the idea of universal human rights after World War II, so regimes such as these helped to remove constraints on the external (and especially Western) criticism of African rulers. The growth of non-governmental pressure groups with explicitly political agendas, led by the long-established Amnesty International, both reflected and intensified the trend.

Finally, it became impossible to ignore the reaction from Africa itself, where increasing numbers of people demonstrated their hostility to their rulers, and their demands for political structures which

would reflect their own aspirations. These demands took the form, sometimes of demonstrations and other peaceful political protests, sometimes of insurgent movements that challenged incumbent regimes by force, sometimes of the withdrawal of individuals from the public sphere. The lesson to be drawn from this was that, far from being "imposed" by Western states on Africa, the new agenda of democracy and human rights could be regarded as supporting African aspirations against the oppression of indigenous regimes which were themselves often tacitly or explicitly kept in power by Western aid.

In short, the new agenda of political conditionality appeared to have something to offer to a wide variety of actors, both inside and outside Africa. International financial institutions, aid-giving governments, concerned Western citizens and the great majority of Africans had a common interest in reforming an African state system which had been hijacked by rulers whose policies were both economically disastrous and often politically horrifying. The dependence of such rulers on Western aid, itself the result of their political and economic failures, put an obvious source of leverage into the hands of would-be reformers.

This new agenda in turn held potentially revolutionary implications for the doctrines of state sovereignty which had been jealously preserved since independence by the governing élites of Third World states, and indeed for the juridical principles of international statehood which had been built into the charters of organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity.<sup>3</sup> It can readily be demonstrated that the doctrine of sovereignty was little more than a legal fiction, which was no more respected during the Cold War period than at any other time. Indeed, few if any alliance systems have demonstrated so clear a correlation between structures of domestic government and of international allegiance as the bipolar system of 1945–1989. Sovereignty nonetheless provided a mechanism through which Third World rulers claimed the right to manage their domestic power structures as they wished, and thus increased the bargaining power which they were able to exercise in international affairs. Just as the principle of government control over the domestic economy, enshrined in such documents as the Charter of the Economic Rights and Duties of States,<sup>4</sup> entitled them to nationalize foreign companies and extract a surplus from peasant production, so the assumption that the government of each state "represented" its people enabled them to strike

the most favourable bargain in their dealings with the major powers. The major powers were for their part generally willing to accept this system, since it provided a mechanism for regulating conflict between themselves, while meeting the demands of the client state rulers for whose support they competed.

Once the domestic political systems of tributary states, and the ways in which they treated their population, became a legitimate source of external concern, the way was open for outside powers to construct alliances with internal groups and interests, without passing through the previously essential intermediary of the national government. This had indeed already happened in the case of economic conditionality, which enabled international institutions to implement policies to the benefit of groups such as traders and primary producers which had previously been exploited by state élites. This in turn, however, extended to the political sphere the central dilemmas which were already implicit in the problems of structural adjustment. The first of these dilemmas concerned the question of whether a multiparty democratic political structure, any more than an efficient capitalist economy, could actually be implemented in impoverished African states which had been subject to the peculiar legacies of colonial state formation and incorporation as primary producers into the international economy. The second raised in the acutest form the paradox that ostensibly democratic and accountable political structures, answerable to the people of the country concerned, were being created through the mechanism of external dependence on dominant states within a highly unequal global economy and power structure. Before examining these dilemmas, however, it would be useful to look at the history and implementation of political conditionality in practice.

### The implementation of conditionality

Political conditionality in the modern era can be traced back to the determination of the Carter administration in the United States (1977–1981) to take account of human rights in the provision of US aid. Stemming from Democratic Party criticism of the support given by the preceding Republican administration to military dictatorships, especially in Latin America, it was strong on moral values but weak in implementation. Its most evident African application was to Ethiopia, where it enabled the US government to withdraw support from a Marxist military regime with an appalling record of brutality, which was in

any event seeking to switch alliance to the USSR; the fact that the application of the Carter Doctrine in Ethiopia provided the means by which the United States shifted its support to the almost equally unsavoury Siyad Barre regime in Somalia helped to indicate some of its operational weaknesses. The overthrow in 1979 of three of Africa's most highly publicized dictators, Amin, Bokassa and Macias Nguema, owed nothing to it; though the French were very closely involved in ousting Bokassa, this owed more to the embarrassment he was causing President Giscard d'Estaing than to any idea of conditionality.

The issue of African human rights abuse, though scarcely of democratization, nonetheless remained on the international agenda in the 1980s, as was indicated by Mrs Thatcher's unsuccessful attempt to have human rights conditions built into the criteria for allocation of European Development Fund aid in the renegotiation of the Lomé Convention in 1984.<sup>5</sup> Regarded with horror by the African, Caribbean and Pacific states which adhered to the Convention, and receiving little support from most of her European Community partners, the attempt was watered down into a pious and unenforceable aspiration. The World Bank, too, became increasingly aware of the political constraints on its own reform programmes, though any attempt to rectify these through explicit political provisions in its loan agreements was ruled out by the terms of its own Charter and the lack of support from its most influential member states. Western sanctions and other economic pressures on South Africa, exemplified by the US Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act of 1985, certainly fit explicitly into the definition of political conditionality, but formed part of a very different scenario.

The extraordinary transformation in the early 1990s thus clearly demonstrates the trigger effect of the end of the Cold War on conditionality in Africa. At the end of the 1980s, no more than an insignificant number of African states had multiparty political systems, and even then such systems were to be found only in countries – such as Botswana, The Gambia and Senegal – where the ruling party could be confident of winning whatever elections were held under them. Prior to the Benin presidential election of March 1991, no African government had ever been voted out of office as the result of a contested election. By the end of 1991, on the other hand, no more than a handful of African states lacked opposition parties, and long-established governments had been ousted by peaceful and democratic elections in anglophone (Zambia), francophone (Benin) and lusophone (Cape Verde) states.

The openness of African societies to external influence meant that changes in the international system aroused almost instant reactions in Africa. The fall of the Ceaucescu regime in Romania, aptly described by Jean-Francois Bayart as the most "tropical" of communist regimes,<sup>6</sup> appears to have had the strongest effect in arousing what President Bongo called the "wind from the east that is shaking the coconut trees".<sup>7</sup> A critical element in encouraging the upsurge of popular demands for democratization in Africa was however the indication that Western governments would no longer be prepared to give unrepresentative African governments the almost unquestioning support that they had received in the past. In this respect, political conditionality was self-implementing; or rather, as soon as Western states gave the nod, African peoples implemented it themselves. The role of France, notably expressed by President Mitterand at the June 1990 La Baule francophone summit, was especially important, not least because of the part which France had previously played in sustaining francophone African dictatorships. The United States, seeking to devise a global grand design based on the promotion of American values to replace the now redundant principle of anti-communism, was not far behind. The European Community, effectively reversing its earlier indifference, linked its aid to respect for human rights, democratization, a free press, and honest government in a charter signed in November 1991.<sup>8</sup> Even the Japanese, normally reticent on such matters, joined the bandwagon.

When one looks for explicit examples of conditionality, in the sense of clear threats to withdraw aid unless specific requirements for democratization and respect for human rights were met, cases are relatively hard to find. Very often, African leaders such as Houphouët-Boigny were quick enough to see the way the wind was blowing, and pre-empt overt external demands for democratization by devising their own version of it. Where they did not, demands from popular demonstrations (often articulated by élite figures seeking to enhance their own political prospects) generally served the purpose, without any need for foreign aid donors to show their hand. Certainly, it is very likely that covert pressure was exerted, notably through the informal channels of the francophone system, but it was only in a relatively limited number of cases where incumbent rulers proved especially recalcitrant that overt threats were required.

The most obvious of these cases was Kenya, where President Daniel arap Moi

had maintained control through a combination of Western aid and selective brutality, indicated by the murder of potentially threatening rivals. Coming from a small ethnic group, and having alienated several of the leading figures in the coalition that had secured his peaceful succession to President Kenyatta, Moi could understandably be worried about his ability to win a contested election. Kenya had a longstanding tradition of political activism, whether through opposition parties or through factional competition within the ruling one, and during the later 1980s the regime had faced increasing domestic dissent and charges of human rights abuse. The domestic credentials of the opposition, led by the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (Ford) were thus not in doubt. The United States ambassador, Smith Hempstone, nonetheless played an exceptionally public role in pressing for democratization, and it was only when bilateral and multilateral creditors led by the United States suspended aid in November 1991 that the government conceded that multiparty elections would take place. In the event, Moi was able to win them, aided both by the advantages of incumbency and by a disastrous three-way split in the opposition.

For a textbook case of political conditionality one might take Malawi, where President Banda had been in power since independence in 1964, and as president-for-life since 1971. Again, it took the suspension of all non-humanitarian aid in May 1992 to induce the regime first to hold a referendum on multiparty democracy which was overwhelmingly won by the opposition in May 1993, and then to hold the elections in May 1994 which led to Banda's peaceful removal from power. Other cases were not so clear-cut. In Zaïre, notably, a group of donor states including Belgium, France and the United States engaged in continuing attempts to pressure the Mobutu regime to accept democratic reforms, including the periodical suspension of aid and even the despatch of French and Belgian troops in September 1991 to maintain order in Kinshasa. More than anywhere else, Zaïre illustrates the way in which conditionality leads to the sucking of aid donors into the domestic politics of the states in which they have intervened.

In many cases, but by no means all, political conditionality could thus clearly be shown to "work", at least in the sense that multiparty political systems and contested elections were brought about in states where they would certainly not have been conceded without strong external pressures. The effect of these pres-

tures in turn depended, partly on the determination with which they were imposed, partly on the vulnerability of the target state, and to a significant extent also on the willingness of incumbent rulers to accede to them. In Cameroon, for example, the French were willing to resume their support for President Biya, despite the well-attested evidence of electoral malpractice in his election victory of October 1992. In Nigeria – whose politics is probably less subject to external pressures than anywhere else in sub-Saharan Africa – the military regime simply annulled the elections which it had itself brought about.<sup>9</sup> Overall, however, the case that aid donors could bring about significant political change within African states was convincingly made.

What is less clear is the ultimate effect of this pressure, in terms first of the sustainability of the democratization process that conditionality helped to create, and second of its impact on the states themselves and their position in the international system. These are the key issues that need to be examined.

### Political conditionality and sustainable statehood

The upsurge of popular political protest in Africa in the early 1990s certainly gave the lie to those condescending analyses which claimed that Africans neither wanted nor understood “western” democracy. It is indeed difficult to study politics in Africa without becoming deeply impressed by the courage and dedication shown by a great many Africans in struggling for democracy, and indeed in dying for it. No one, after all, was better qualified than African electorates to appreciate the specious claims of supposedly “democratic” single-party states, or to understand the effects on their own lives of extortion and autocracy. It is likewise the case that in almost every case where elections have been held – most recently and impressively in South Africa – electorates have shown enormous patience, understanding and maturity in casting their votes. In those few cases where elections have been badly disrupted, it has generally been easy enough to identify those specific élite groups which fostered violence in their own interests. In this very important sense, multiparty democracy is evidently not alien to African cultures, and may indeed now be regarded as part of the African political tradition; in those countries where free multiparty elections have once been held, they remain the ideal which even military governments have generally recognized.

It is likewise the case that fair and open multiparty elections have strengthened national identities within African states, and enhanced their prospects of survival as viable territorial units. This could by no means be taken for granted, and is indeed in some respects surprising. Given the artificiality of most African states, as a result of their colonial formation, it might well be assumed that any shift to participant political systems could destroy the very basis of statehood, in the way that both the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have been split apart by the collapse of the communist regimes that previously held them together. Democratization, on this view, could be expected to intensify internal ethnic, regional and religious divisions, and lead to a process of fragmentation even greater than that which has afflicted parts of eastern Europe, ultimately calling into question the existence of the state as the basis for government in Africa.

In practice, however, a very plausible case can be made for precisely the opposite conclusion: that it is only through democratization – even if this has to be imposed from outside – that African states can be rescued from the consequences of their own misgovernment. None of those African states that have collapsed into anarchy could remotely be described as democratic, and in most cases – such as Doe’s Liberia or Siyad Barre’s Somali Republic – political collapse can be directly related to the gross abuse of power. Conversely, even in a number of fairly surprising cases, democratization has provided the means through which some form of national political community has been re-established. Zambia, for example, is one of the most evidently artificial African states, and yet Chiluba’s victory in 1991 was achieved with support from across the country. Abiola’s evident (though aborted) victory in the 1993 elections in Nigeria marked the first occasion on which voting in that country has not turned on the mobilization of regional and ethnic constituencies: indeed, it was probably the failure of the Nigerian electorate to vote along the expected ethnic lines that induced the military incumbent, Ibrahim Babangida, to cancel the election. In the aftermath of that decision, it is becoming all too clear that the military’s disregard for popular opinion poses vastly greater dangers to Nigerian national unity than would have followed from a peaceful transfer of power. Peaceful and reasonably participant politics has been revived both in countries (like Benin) with a record of chronic instability, and in ones (like Malawi and Cape Verde) with no history of multiparty politics at all.

The greatest difficulties arise in cases where central government has in the past been associated with the pre-eminence of one ethnic, regional or religious group, and its dominance over other parts of the country. Open elections may then provide the opportunity for peripheral peoples to seek independence (or at least autonomy) from those who have previously ruled them. This is indeed the lesson of the USSR and Yugoslavia. Sudan is probably the clearest example in Africa, but even there, political party regimes have generally made at least some attempt at reconciliation between a northern and Moslem government based on the region around Khartoum, and the peoples of the south and other excluded communities. The worst excesses of northern domination have been associated with military rule, and the present Islamicist regime of General Omar al-Beshir may plausibly be regarded as having seized power precisely in order to abort the peace process which appeared to be on the point of success. Ethiopia is another state where power had been associated with a dominant ethnic community, and where the Mengistu regime’s attempts to maintain central control by force proved entirely counterproductive; the increase in political participation since the EPRDF regime took over in 1991 has indeed had a fragmenting effect, but this has been exacerbated by the EPRDF’s determination to emphasize ethnicity as the basis for party formation, in direct contrast to every other state in Africa, while at the same time seeking to impose its own tenure of power. Given that democratization has not, on the whole, had the destabilizing effect that might have been expected, the division of some African states may well be regarded as acceptable or even desirable.

The maintenance of multiparty democracy through external pressure is nonetheless problematic. For one thing, the interest of outside powers in maintaining democracy was always likely to be transient, and has already started to decline. The French have reverted to their time-honoured maintenance of African clients, as indicated by their support for Biya in Cameroon, and their equivocal relations with the Rwandan regime responsible for one of the most appalling cases of genocide in the post-1945 era. United States support for African democracy has been undermined by the aftermath of the mismanaged intervention in Somalia, and the paralysis of foreign policy making under the Clinton administration. In cases such as Kenya and Cameroon, Western states abandoned the quest for democratization once incumbent regimes had gone

through the formula of multiparty elections, even if this was seriously flawed. Military takeovers have taken place in Nigeria, Sierra Leone and most recently The Gambia, without leading to any effective response either from Western states, or from neighbouring African ones. In short, the pressures that induced African leaders to accept multiparty elections from 1989 onwards have now been greatly reduced, and rulers have started once again to consolidate their position.

The creation of democracies through foreign intervention in any event produces characteristic distortions of its own, aptly expressed through Bayart's idea of "extra-version".<sup>10</sup> External resources, whether of money, diplomatic support, or even military aid, form an essential element in the strategies through which African élites cling to power. The survival of those élites may indeed be seen as depending to a very large extent on the skill with which they can manage the exchanges between domestic and external arenas. The importance of political conditionality in this respect is firstly that it involves a greatly increased level of external intervention in domestic politics, and secondly that it encourages access by multiple and competing political actors to external resources, rather than permitting a monopoly of such access by the regime that is currently in power. The danger is then that political élites will become (or remain) oriented towards the outside world, because this is where their most important resources come from, and that in the process their links with their own electorates will atrophy.

There are plentiful signs of this, even in the current process of democratization. Opposition parties have often – indeed usually – been led by élite members from externally oriented professions such as the law, the church or academic life who are well placed to benefit from outside support, and who often enjoy a protected position within their own societies as a result. Though some, like President Chiluba of Zambia, had local bases in the trade union movement, there is little to suggest that the new generation of leaders are any more internally oriented than their predecessors in the nationalist movements. Even the well-meaning efforts of external aid agencies to promote "civil society" in Africa have had the effect of pulling potential leaders out of their own societies and into the international sphere. The search for counterpart human rights organizations and non-governmental agencies within African states, as part of the attempt to create the social basis for indigenous democracy, has in some cases

promoted the creation by entrepreneurial Africans of institutions designed to catch the aid funds that the drive for democratization has made available.

A viable democracy must be based in the domestic society itself, and draw on that society's sense of its own identity, and the pursuit of the interests and aspirations of its people. It requires political leaders to view themselves as answerable to their electorates. To a limited degree, external pressure can undoubtedly encourage potentially wavering regimes to respect the norms of democratic accountability: southern Europe during the democratic transitions of the mid-1970s, and other states such as Turkey and Mexico more recently, provide examples. These, however, were all states with a strong sense of national identity and reasonably well-developed economies. In African states with weaker national identities and crumbling economies, the external constituency is relatively stronger, and the domestic one weaker. A high level of external dependence is imposed by economic need, and is likely to corrode the authority even of elected leaders. Nor can it be assumed that the interests of elected African governments and dominant Western states will necessarily coincide: the vast gulf in wealth and outlook between African peoples and Western governments must inevitably result in a measure of political conflict, which is likely to force African regimes to sacrifice either external or domestic support. The attempt to create internal democracy through external pressure is ultimately self-defeating.

Nor can it be assumed that the requirements of democracy, human rights, good governance and development will necessarily coincide. Democracy and human rights do indeed generally seem to go together; I am not aware of any case where democratically elected governments have been guilty of human rights violations on the scale found, for example, in states such as Ethiopia, Liberia, Somalia, Sudan or Zaïre, let alone the systematic genocide of Rwanda: the worst excesses, including all those noted above together with Bokassa's Central Africa and Amin's Uganda, have almost always been committed by regimes whose leaders originated in the military. The relationship between democracy, good governance and development is, however, much more problematic. In the most general global terms, a broad positive correlation can plausibly be established; but in deeply impoverished African states, it is only too understandable that people should expect the transfer of power to an elected government to bring material rewards, at least

to those who have voted for it; and in economies declining in the way that they have done in much of Africa, those expectations are extremely difficult to meet. The need to place a high emphasis on satisfying popular expectations will then readily lead to an orientation towards consumption rather than investment, and to the allocation of government favours to those sections of the population that support (or may be persuaded to support) the governing party.

The assumption that democratic government will lead to measures that favour the long-term interests of the mass of the population is also undermined by the continued electoral influence of political bosses whose interests lie in the control of state patronage. In some cases, most notoriously in the Second Republic period in Nigeria, the transition to civilian rule has been followed by the massive misappropriation of funds by politicians anxious to reap the rewards of victory, and recoup the investments that they had made in order to get themselves elected. Public confidence in the democratic process is thereby undermined, and the claims of the military to represent a "national" interest, in contrast to the self-serving actions of elected politicians, acquire at least an initial plausibility – though the military, in Nigeria as elsewhere, have rapidly proved to be every bit as rapacious as their civilian predecessors.

The most basic problems of democratization and state viability thus depend on a complex of issues which relate political authority to state power and economic management. There is little problem about how this relationship ought ideally to work: the success of economic development strategies, most evidently in east and south-east Asia but also in Latin America, has discredited the theorists of "dependency", and established a model which should in principle be available to any developing state. It requires an effective government with a limited range of functions, concerned with the maintenance of security and a reliable legal order, the provision of the necessary physical and social infrastructure, and economic policies which encourage production while excluding the state from any substantial direct involvement in the processes of production and distribution themselves. This is the "lean, hard state" sought by Western governments and multinational institutions, in contrast to the "soft, fat state" which employs too many people to carry out functions in which the state should not be involved at all, and does them badly.

Once such a developmental state has been established, of course, its economic

effectiveness should in turn enhance the authority of the political institutions. There is certainly room for debate over the phasing of the economic and political elements of the programme, and it is possible to distinguish cases where authoritarian regimes have initiated policies which have led to economic success and political opening, as well as cases where an initial process of democratization has been necessary to install governments with the legitimacy required to implement economic reform. The problem in Africa is that neither approach has been evidently effective: authoritarian regimes have resulted, not in the developmental states found in south-east Asia, but in some of the world's most brutal dictatorships, with equally appalling economic and political consequences. Elected governments have been markedly less damaging in political terms, but have shown little ability to manage sustainable economic development.

The most thoroughgoing attempt to explain this impasse is to be found, implicitly at least, in Bayart's work on the state in Africa, which seeks to apply to Africa the approach developed in Europe by Fernand Braudel.<sup>11</sup> Placing a very heavy emphasis on the continuities transmitted through culture, this ascribes the characteristic features of African politics to a "governmentality", or set of attitudes towards authority, which is implicitly unalterable – and which precisely mirrors those "Asian values" to which south-east Asian rulers are prone to ascribe the success of their own economic transitions. The diagnostic elements of African governmentality are, if I understand Bayart correctly, the association of power with consumption (*je bouffe, donc je suis*), and the need for rulers to prop up weak authority structures by retaining personal control over economic distribution. This notably includes the control of those external resources which, in very poor societies, are often the key to survival.

If this view is accepted, then the attempt to alter the unalterable by imposing on Africa the political and economic structures of Western capitalism is inherently misconceived. To take one obvious example, the distinction between "public" and "private" implicit in Western ideas of capitalism and socialism (and equally in the distinction between one's role as an office-holder and one's role as a private individual) is out of place. There is no basic difference between a "capitalist" leader such as Kenyatta or Houphouët-Boigny who uses his power to get hold of resources, and a "socialist" leader such as Nkrumah or Sekou Toure who does exactly the same thing. The impact of an

IMF/World Bank privatization programme is most clearly demonstrated by President Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone, who used it to sell state assets to himself. Conditionality may make some difference to the external resources available to politicians, and may thus enable one leader to displace another, but it cannot be expected to bring about the structural change which its proponents are seeking.

Political and economic conditionality may well indeed have still more corrosive effects, in that by seeking to take away from African rulers their control over social resources, it removes the very basis for government itself. Rulers need to have something to offer to their subjects, in order to retain their obedience. If times are good, they may be able to share out patronage – which is then threatened by measures that remove economic management from their hands. If times are bad (or they are too greedy), they may have to rely on force – which then gets them into trouble with the human rights lobby. If neither is available, their impotence will be revealed, and – in societies where the appearance of power is essential for the exercise of authority – the confidence trick which goes by the name of the state will crumble too. In short, the effective yet limited statehood which the whole enterprise of conditionality is geared to seeking may not be a practicable goal.

Even if this dispiriting analysis is not accepted in its entirety – and I have some qualms about it myself – the capacity of elected African governments to reverse the vicious circle of economic decline and establish viable democratic political systems must still be recognised as extremely problematic. Democratization is much more evidently likely to succeed when it involves the extension of popular participation in an expanding economy and an effective state, than when it is introduced as a last-ditch measure to save collapsing states and declining economies. Nor is there much sign – though it is early days yet – that the recent burst of multiparty elections is resulting in the institutionalization of political systems capable of leading to a regular and peaceful alternation of ruling parties. It resembles, rather, the kind of change that took place at independence, when elections led to the installation of new governments which immediately sought to consolidate their rule by cowing or incorporating the opposition.

Even in those cases where governments have been elected with the evident support of most of the electorate, moreover, they occupy a position little better – and in many ways worse – than that of

the nationalist regimes which took over at independence, and whose legacy is the shattered Africa of thirty years later. Still more than the nationalist regimes, they have come to power as a reaction against their predecessors, rather than because of their own policies or political base. They inherit not only much weaker economies, but also much weaker state structures. There is little reason to expect the enthusiasm which greeted the downfall of their predecessors to sustain them through an extremely difficult period of political and economic reconstruction. The one substantial advantage that they have on their side is the disappearance of the exaggerated expectations of independence, which have been washed away by the experience of the last three decades – and more positively, one can only hope, an appreciation of the requirements for effective and accountable government.

## Conclusion

Political conditionality may be regarded as marking the end of the fiction that states with highly dependent economies can at the same time enjoy independent domestic political systems. That fiction has been revealed, both by the disappearance of the bipolar global political order which helped to sustain it, and by the revelation of the incompetence at best (and viciousness at worst) of the single-party or military regimes to which it led. The exposure of the myth of sovereignty is, at least in my opinion, little to be regretted: far from enabling representative governments to pursue the welfare of the people whom they ruled, it actually provided a facade behind which those governments could protect themselves from external intervention while ruthlessly seeking their own welfare. That a measure of accountability and political competition, and even respect for the most basic human rights, have had to be imposed on many African states from outside reveals the moral bankruptcy of the supposedly sovereign state.

Conditionality has certainly had some salutary effects, in facilitating the removal by their own electorates of at least a number of African regimes which had atrophied to a point at which a change of government was badly needed, and in reminding African rulers (despite the horrors of Rwanda and the disregard for the electorate shown by the Nigerian military) that their tenure of power depends on the way in which they exercise it. I nonetheless remain extremely sceptical about whether it can bring about the kind of transformation at which it is aimed, given the weak-

nesses of the political and economic structures on which it has been imposed, and the contradictions inherent in the enterprise of seeking to impose internal accountability through external power.

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- 2 See Richard Sandbrook. *The politics of Africa's economic recovery* . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
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- 6 Jean-Francois Bayart, *The state in Africa: The politics of the belly* . (English edition). London: Longman, 1993, p xi.
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- 8 Richard Sandbrook, *op cit* , p 3.
- 9 See P M Lewis, "Endgame in Nigeria? The politics of a failed democratic transition", *African Affairs* , vol 93, no 372, July 1994.
- 10 See Jean-Francois Bayart, *op cit* , pp 196–200.
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# Re-designing external policy for the next quarter century: The New World Order from a Botswana perspective

James J Zaffiro, of the Department of Political Science, Central College, Pella, USA, examines Botswana's changing strategies, goals, policies and constraints in the face of global and regional changes.\*<sup>1</sup>

**W**ITH Independence in 1966, the leaders of tiny, impoverished, land-locked Botswana decided that for financial as well as strategic reasons they could ill-afford to take the commonly accepted, sovereignty-proclaiming step of creating an army.<sup>2</sup> A decade later it was decided that territorial integrity and the security of its citizenry necessitated the creation of at least a symbolic armed defence force and the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) was born.<sup>3</sup> A decade later, at the height of regional instability and South African external military actions aimed against its neighbours, including Botswana, the BDF began to grow.

Within a further half decade, by 1990, most observers would have expected to see annual defence appropriations for the BDF begin to recede. They did not. Indeed, the late 1980s and early 1990s witnessed a massive, unprecedented growth in military spending, arms purchases, personnel expansion, specialized training, joint military manoeuvres, the creation of a more advanced air wing, and finally, in 1992, the international deployment of BDF troops in UN peacekeeping missions.

From "Switzerland of Africa" to "Sweden of Africa" in less than a decade! Botswana's heightened diplomatic and military profile

and visibility in a regional, continental, and even global context today is truly puzzling to all but those few who have watched its leaders and diplomats skilfully manoeuvre in troubled waters for the past quarter century.

How to account for such a shift? How to place it within a wider foreign policy context over the same significant half decade of change and transformation in Botswana's external relations? Here lies the task of this paper. More questions arise. How much of the change has been deliberate, by design, home-grown in scope? How many changes have been as a result of external incentives, pressures or promptings from nearby (South Africa, SADC) and/or from afar (USA, EC, UN)?

In external relations (as in domestic policy) must we tread carefully in interpreting Botswana's "exceptionality"? After all, how many other African countries today are sending emergency aid to their neighbours,<sup>4</sup> volunteering troops for international peacekeeping<sup>5</sup> and floating loans to the IMF?<sup>6</sup>

This article examines the changing strategies, goals, policies, opportunities, and constraints of Botswana's foreign and defence activities since the end of the Cold War and the release of Nelson Mandela.

As a small, poor, weak state in a hostile world during its first twenty-five years of regional and global politics, Botswana distinguished itself with a highly successful, pragmatic, external strategy. Today, a new generation of leaders finds itself

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about to take the helm. With nearly three decades of foreign and domestic policy success and stability behind them, and with the encouragement and support of its friends, the country is positioning itself to build upon these earlier policy successes. It is therefore doubly important to examine Botswana's recent foreign and defence policies. For they may hold instructive lessons not only for the new men of power in Gaborone but for leaders of other states in the global arena.

In the course of our analysis, we will see how a regional, and perhaps continental leadership role is possible for a state of limited means. We will examine the selected areas of current policy which most strongly capture the changing nature of external challenges, opportunities, and policy responses, including: 1) the deployment of Botswana Defence Force (BDF) units, through the UN, to Somalia and Mozambique; 2) the development of formal relations with South Africa; 3) changing relations with the US since 1989; 4) leadership in regional conflict resolution and diplomatic initiatives, as displayed in the Lesotho crises of 1994; and 5) the expansion of diplomatic and economic relations with Asia.

### Approach and data

The present study is part of a projected book on Botswana foreign policy, based on 1985 and 1991 fieldwork and on a variety of primary and secondary sources, including interviews with Botswana foreign policy decision-makers, recently released Botswana National Archives External Affairs Department documents, and press reports.

Emphasis here will be more on the content of policy than on the structure and process of policy-making.<sup>7</sup> Given the rapidly shifting circumstances experienced on the regional and global terrain, along with the fact that there has not been an in-depth analysis of Botswana foreign policy for some time, certainly not since the late 1980s, it was decided that patterns of change and continuity in foreign and defence policy content alone were more than enough – and of more than slight scholarly interest – to justify de-emphasizing structure and process in this particular analysis.

### Military expansion and deployment in the 1990s

During the early 1990s there was much critical talk, both inside and outside Botswana, concerning the continuing high levels of defence spending. In defending

continued military expansion,<sup>8</sup> national leaders have stressed the connection between national security and the uncertain regional situation. President Masire has argued that recent levels of spending, 12.7% of the budget in 1992, may seem high compared to other developed armies but reminded critics that the BDF did not inherit any physical infrastructure upon its creation in 1976 and that only now is this being created. He also made plain his belief that military spending and defence readiness remain essential to the country's stability and future:

Every country has a sovereign responsibility to look after itself. We were influenced by events around us, and they have not quite come to an end. It is difficult to shout *Halt!* when you don't know what would turn out tomorrow. We need a disciplined force able to protect people and their property.<sup>9</sup>

As a stable, economically well-off democracy on a continent characterized by political and economic transition, as well as by ongoing violence, conflict, and instability, helping strengthen and expand the capabilities and experience of the BDF is good policy. And this extends to encouraging an international role for the BDF.

African military or political factions locked in bloody conflict who eventually submit to international mediation and peacekeeping on their territory – as happened in Somalia from 1992 onwards, would most likely rather have fellow Africans serving in these operations than American marines, French or Belgian paratroopers, or other foreign (non-African) troops.

A Botswana cabinet member on a 1993 inspection trip of BDF troops in Somalia briefed parliament thus on his return:

As I drove around Mogadishu, I was touched by the frequent shouts of *Botswana! Botswana!* by young and old Somalis alike. The Somalis regard Botswana as blood brothers to whom they are willing to give information about arms caches, the discovery of which has been a major feature of the success of operations.<sup>10</sup>

High-profile inspection trips to Somalia have also been made by top BDF commanders and President Masire himself. Lavish national and international media coverage of the Botswana contingent in Somalia has been universally favourable, raising the chances of future involvement by BDF contingents. Emphasis in coverage is on the worthwhile nature of the country's decision to commit troops, their

exemplary success in carrying out their humanitarian relief and peacekeeping mission, and the international praise for Botswana.

As one of the few states to take membership of the OAU seriously enough to pay its share of the OAU budget on time, it should come as no surprise that the Botswana government was also among the handful of African states pledging troops to play a humanitarian role in Rwanda.<sup>11</sup> As early as September 1992, long before the 1994 ethnic bloodbath, Botswana had provided BDF observers to a UN force stationed along the Rwanda-Uganda border.<sup>12</sup>

Botswana's diplomatic and military role in Mozambique has been pivotal in helping to reach and maintain the unsteady ceasefire between the Maputo government and Renamo forces. In September 1992, with President Masire as host, President Chissano and Afonso Dhlakama of Renamo chose to meet in Gaborone "because of the confidence they have in the leadership [of Botswana]"<sup>13</sup> to discuss prospects for peace in Mozambique. It was at this meeting that a common understanding for building peace was reached.

The case of the BDF in Mozambique furnishes another strong example of the level of trust and respect which Botswana enjoys among African populations and leaders, in and out of government, of nearly all political and ideological persuasions. In 1993, following the withdrawal of Italian peacekeepers, Botswana sent forces as part of the Unomoz operation into the Tete region; and by mid-1994 extended operations to Chimoio, Quelimane, and the port and oil-handling facilities at Beira.<sup>14</sup> Frelimo, Renamo, and NGO officials have all expressed appreciation to Botswana for the BDF's "disciplined, human approach to its work".<sup>15</sup> There was even a request for the BDF to help train the new 30 000 strong integrated Mozambique National Defence Force along with Britain, Portugal, and France.<sup>16</sup> International praise for the BDF has been so extensive that commanders took to warning their troops not to "get carried away" by it.<sup>17</sup>

Reacting to domestic concerns that Botswana may be "burrowing itself deeper into civil strifes far away from its borders" through participation in such operations, BDF commander General Ian Khama has said that, as a member of the UN, Botswana "has an obligation to assist in bringing peace anywhere in the world."<sup>18</sup> This echoes the official position of the government, as laid out in a speech by Minister of Presidential Affairs Mompoti Merafhe:

It remains our duty to be always alert and vigilant in order to respond to

any calls on us, such as those of the United Nations peace-keeping force efforts. Today the main preoccupation of armies world-wide is the role of peace-keeping. As a member of the UN, it is fitting for Botswana to send troops and equipment to contribute to these missions.<sup>19</sup>

With five infantry battalions, armour, ground and air transport, and even a few used British jet fighters at its disposal, the BDF today is large enough, well-trained enough, well-equipped enough, and well-learned enough to be in a position to provide units which can effectively serve in peace-keeping missions, while still providing a limited domestic defence capability. Recent training and arming of the 4 500-member Force has emphasized rapid deployment and internal security.<sup>20</sup> By mid-1994, the BDF had efficiently rotated a total of 3 500 personnel for peacekeeping in Somalia, Mozambique, and Rwanda.<sup>21</sup> Projections for defence spending under the remaining years of National Development Plan VII (1991–1997) suggest that the country's present leadership is committed to building and maintaining a military force capable of future participation in UN and other multilateral missions.<sup>22</sup>

We will remark at this point that, from a domestic political perspective, perhaps the best argument in favour of maintaining a high external profile for the BDF in the years ahead is that it provides a clearly defined, prestigious role and mission, one which should help strengthen civil-military relations, justify a more gradual decline in defence spending, and promote regional and continental cooperation in a crucial field.

### Formal relations with South Africa

Given its land-locked position and extreme economic vulnerability, Botswana's primary external policy concern has always been its bilateral relations with South Africa. Informal relations have been evolving continuously over the entire life of post-independence Botswana. Until the 1990s, however, Botswana studiously avoided South African pressures to establish normal diplomatic relations, not wishing to exchange ambassadors with Pretoria because it did not wish to legitimize the apartheid state.

Indeed, Botswana officials interacted with their counterparts across the border only when an issue was perceived to be of direct benefit to central national goals of survival, security, or economic wellbeing, such as a renegotiation of the Southern African Customs Union (Sacu)

agreement, periodic high-level consultations over alleged ANC military infiltrations from across the Botswana borders, SADF raids into Botswana, and matters involving the treatment of Botswana citizens working in South Africa.

For both states today, opportunities for collaboration seem especially promising in the fields of mining, agriculture, education, the environment, Aids policy, labour issues, and drought management. The mutual goal of expanding economic relations overshadows diplomatic, political, or security concerns; yet successful expansion in economic matters will rest upon the ability of leaders to make progress across these other traditionally forbidden areas.

The possibility of closer, more harmonious aid, trade, investment, and commercial relations seem brighter now than ever before. Botswana's commerce minister recently mentioned plans to open new trade offices in Cape Town and Durban. The Sacu agreement will be renegotiated.<sup>23</sup> Botswana's tiny, new private industrial sector has begun to express concern about South African competition, however.<sup>24</sup>

On the diplomatic front, movement towards full normalization began in 1991 and intensified over the following two years.<sup>25</sup> Both countries opened representatives' offices in each other's capitals in June 1992.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, after some tough times in the late 1980s, Botswana's leaders were working hard to improve relations with the ANC. These efforts met with notable success. In July 1994 Botswana's Department of External Affairs announced that representative offices in Gaborone and Pretoria had been upgraded to full diplomatic missions "in recognition of the need to enhance relations between the two countries".<sup>27</sup> Botswana's first High Commissioner, veteran diplomat Oteng Tebape, presented his letters of credence to President Mandela in mid-September.<sup>28</sup>

Bilateral economic relations remain paramount. However, these will become increasingly interwoven with changing multilateral economic relations at regional level. For Botswana, a rapid but narrow economic growth, a maldistribution of national income, recurrent drought, and a capital-intensive, mineral-based domestic economy have resulted in a heavy dependence upon trade with Pretoria.<sup>29</sup> The need for imports of all kinds, especially food, fuels, and manufactured goods, plays nicely into the hands of South African producers and exporters, who have always been, and remain with or without apartheid, Botswana's main source and suppliers.

Even with an ANC-dominated Transitional Government, and with South Africa now formally a member of the SADC and the OAU, much of Botswana's future economic policy towards Pretoria will still depend mainly upon outside initiatives and actions rather than upon its own. Economic structures and legal linkages have not yet changed, for notwithstanding anything Gaborone may do, the extent of the country's long-standing, asymmetrical economic integration with its southern neighbour will continue to make it extremely vulnerable in the years ahead to South African government or multinational corporation activities in regional economic policy. A prime example is the near-total dependence upon South African road, rail, and shipping transport infrastructure for its exports.

There are specific ways in which both states' leaders can work to improve the relative economic position of Botswana, ultimately in the interests of the region. For example, in order to create employment and generate more balanced national economic growth, Botswana needs market access for its small but growing manufacturing sector, particularly textiles.<sup>30</sup>

ANC foreign policy statements have consistently stressed the need for closer regional economic relations built on mutual benefit and equity, not on polarization, and President Mandela's statements during visits to Botswana since 1990 have underscored this emphasis.<sup>31</sup> South Africa's new leaders seem to recognize that they are unlikely to fully benefit from closer economic relations unless they accommodate some of their neighbours' demands. Pretoria will thus have to make some financial and technical contributions to regional programmes, and, while recognizing the problems and limitations of the SADC, try to "confront regional economic interests and problems from the inside, rather than as an external force imposing conditionalities from without".<sup>32</sup>

From the other side of the fence, Botswana diplomats and political leaders must push for a meaningful voice in helping to redefine regional economic relations in the wake of post-apartheid realities. Former president Sir Seretse Khama's intention of "trying to achieve the ability to exercise some degree of choice [to] insure us against domination by one powerful partner"<sup>33</sup> when pushing for the creation of the SADCC must now be radically transformed into finding ways to *incorporate* that one powerful partner.

Regional trade and economic integration arrangements have not lived up to the initial expectations of those who made them. Indeed, Botswana today is

probably more economically dependent upon South Africa than it was when the SADCC was founded. In the wake of disinvestment and sanctions against Pretoria, Botswana went ahead with the massive Sua Pan soda ash project and the construction of a Toyota truck assembly plant, both with South African firms. These are two notable examples.<sup>54</sup>

In August 1992 the SADCC was transformed into the Southern African Development Community (SADC), its members signing the Windhoek Treaty and pledging to work along the same lines as the EC.<sup>55</sup> Member states and South Africa must continue to face the sticky issue of balancing national with regional interests, especially in areas of investment and trade.<sup>56</sup> That the new SADC Secretariat building sits in Gaborone is significant. Botswana has been a careful scrutinizer of regional and continental institutions, always examining their relative utility in serving its national interests. It was President Masire, in May 1994, who sent the formal letter of invitation to President Mandela for South Africa to join the SADC.<sup>57</sup> For Botswana and South Africa: "The real issue is to identify that combination of cooperation, coordination, and integration which can best contribute to growth and development."<sup>58</sup>

Botswana has put strong emphasis on the SADC connection. South African membership brings new investment capital, technology, markets, and economic power to the grouping. Much will ultimately depend upon what kind of new balance is struck between the traditional mission of the old SADCC (economic "liberation" and development via infrastructure rehabilitation and a reduction of the general dependency upon South Africa) and the new mission of the SADC, a more truly regional trading bloc, seeking to build a more globally competitive regional economy.<sup>59</sup>

President Masire's call for a Marshall Plan for the SADC countries<sup>60</sup> failed to elicit more than the most contentional of comment from key global economic actors. The recent EU-SADC Ministerial Conference in Berlin on joint cooperation, while hopeful, is still overshadowed by a clear preference for activity bilateral.

Botswana's leaders will need to strike a careful balance between bilateral and multilateral regional strategies in dealing with the fact of South African regional domination in the years ahead. In this region, for Botswana and all its neighbours, the shape of the new world order, more than from anywhere else, will be set by the actions and policies of South Africa which, *en passant*, will host the next SADC sum-

mit. Botswana can exert a certain influence, and help to shape that order, as well as its own destiny, by calling for South African *and* regional cuts in military spending and force levels,<sup>61</sup> and perhaps eventually the establishment of a regional military force patterned on the model of the West European Union (WEU).<sup>62</sup>

Closer economic ties with a democratic South Africa offer Botswana the best way out of the coning economic slowdown as diamond-driven development slackens by the second decade of the 21st century, particularly if such ties can generate employment-producing, self-sustaining domestic economic development. Botswana is better situated than any other SADC state to take advantage of South Africa's strong universities, sophisticated science and technology base, stock exchange, and economic power base in order to empower itself. Now that relations are politically acceptable, it should be expected to begin to do just that.

Progress in bilateral relations represents Botswana's best hope for a continued sincere pursuit of its four cardinal principles of democracy, development, self-reliance and unity into the next century. Basic policy constraints and continuities will remain in place. In President Masire's words: "As a small country, our future will, to a large extent, be influenced by events taking place around us."<sup>63</sup>

### Diamond-driven diplomacy: Reaping the benefits

Possessing Africa's only uninterrupted liberal democratic system and a strong economy offers Botswana's leaders advantages internationally which poorer, even larger, neighbours do not enjoy.<sup>64</sup> In the last 25 years Botswana's economy has grown at an annual rate of 8.8%, one of the world's highest.<sup>65</sup>

Botswana's present leaders clearly want to play significantly larger roles in conflict resolution and avoidance, regional security, and continental peacekeeping today than ever before.<sup>66</sup> In 1992, President Masire acted as mediator between Renamo and Zimbabwe concerning the disengagement of ZNA troops from the Beira corridor. Foreign Minister Chiepe played a key mediator role in Rome between the government of Mozambique and Renamo. Botswana also hosted talks between the PAC and the South African government in Gaborone.<sup>67</sup>

The country's reputation, resources, and experience in international diplomacy also help to explain Botswana's being selected as the host country for the 1993 APC/EEC Joint Assembly, in the year

when President Masire was serving as Chairman of the SADC. When the OAU established an observer mission to South Africa it selected Botswana's long-serving Joseph Legwaila (UN Ambassador since 1980) to head it. Mr Legwaila had served in a similar capacity in 1989–1990 as UN Assistant Representative during Namibia's transition to independence.

Botswana has maintained as a cornerstone of its foreign policy an emphasis on the proactive development and maintenance of friendly relations with a variety of states, including regional and international pariahs such as Libya, Malawi, Somalia, the former Soviet Union, Cuba, and the People's Republic of China.

One of the advantages of this strategy today, in the post-Cold War era, is that Botswana has a valuable, established network of diplomatic connections enabling it to assume a participatory role in virtually any African issue or conflict. In a recent interview with the Botswana press, President Masire pointed to the joint Botswana-Zimbabwe-South Africa mediation efforts in the 1994 Lesotho military rebellion:

People have come together and worked together. Look at the Lesotho issue. You can pick up a phone and within a day have four presidents sitting together.<sup>68</sup>

In January 1994, Presidents Mugabe and De Klerk, with ANC leader Nelson Mandela, agreed at an emergency summit in Gaborone, called by President Masire, the current SADC Chair, to set up a task force to assess the fighting within the Royal Lesotho Defence Force.<sup>69</sup> President Masire himself went to Maseru in February and met faction leaders. Masire and Mugabe emphasized strongly that the SADC must become more proactive in regional conflict resolution efforts.<sup>70</sup> Lesotho was proclaimed a test case for dealing with "renegade soldiers who threaten democracy", so that when violence flared again in April, despite the earlier mediation, a renewed effort was launched.

In a June meeting, the frontline presidents warned rebellious Lesotho military leaders that if they persisted in their actions "we will go further than just the political act of sending a task force: military action is not excluded".<sup>71</sup> A further round of meetings and negotiations in August, following the ouster of Prime Minister Mokhehle, led the governments of Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe to threaten economic sanctions unless the prime minister was restored within a week. He was.<sup>72</sup>

Botswana's foreign minister has played an important role in gaining support and

approval of a formal OAU mechanism for conflict prevention, management and resolution. Botswana also pushed for the creation of a sub-committee of the Ad Hoc Committee of Heads of State to seek a solution to the Angolan conflict. The group is based in Gaborone, an indication of the importance which the government of Botswana places on ending the latest round in the civil war between Unita and the Angolan government.<sup>53</sup>

In South Africa, too, Botswana has on occasion played a significant role, sending military and police officers to help train the new National Peace-Keeping Force (NPKF) in early 1994, accompanied by 23 election observers, including five MPs.<sup>54</sup>

Clearly, there is potential, and some momentum, for building a regional security apparatus for conflict resolution on to the SADC framework over the next decade. Botswana supports such a move.<sup>55</sup> Angola could well prove to be the next test case in the months ahead if warring parties agree to a ceasefire.

Following developments in Middle East peace talks and the recent accord between Israel and the PLO, Botswana resumed full diplomatic relations with Israel in December 1993, one of a handful of African states to do so.<sup>56</sup>

### Beyond mutual admiration: Botswana and the US

The brief Clinton White House press release following President Masire's visit in December 1993 was as follows:

The President expressed his deep admiration for Botswana's long tradition of democracy, its respect for human rights, and its successful market economy. The two Presidents looked forward to continued cooperation in the future.<sup>57</sup>

The text closely resembles a similar release after a 1966 meeting between Presidents Seretse Khama and Lyndon Baines Johnson. Surely relations have evolved beyond these polite, frequently voiced and splendid words of praise ...?

South African policy was the key factor in shaping US-Botswana relations until the arrival of Soviet-Cuban influence in southern Africa in the mid-1970s. The local complexities of "black states" in the region (to borrow the language of NSSM-39) were subordinated to US globalist-containment logic. Declassified documents deriving from the Ford administration strongly suggest that friendly relations with Botswana were explicitly viewed by Henry Kissinger as a tool for broader strategic objectives in the region and nothing more.<sup>58</sup>

From independence onwards, Botswana looked to the US, in the place of a retiring Great Britain, as an eventual major partner – specifically for development aid and diplomatic/strategic support. The relationship developed, slowly, largely as a result of Botswana's skilful diplomacy and initiatives, until the mid-1980s.

Then, faced with South African military incursions, Botswana's leaders made a big push for unprecedented levels of US high-technology arms transfers and high profile diplomatic support, through the United Nations and bilaterally. These efforts enjoyed only partial success and Botswana was forced to turn to Britain and India for some of its most pressing military needs, including jet fighters and pilot training.

During the Bush years Botswana expected little substantive change in US Southern Africa policy, resigning itself to "dealing with Reaganism at least a little while [longer]".<sup>59</sup> Particularly upsetting to the Masire government was the Bush pledge to continue "covert" military support to Unita rebels in Angola, despite expressed opposition from, including the highly effective ground-launched Stinger missile system, frontline states leaders. Botswana had asked the US to sell them Stingers and had been turned down.

By the early 1990s Botswana was faced with a decision. Should it make a renewed effort to develop and expand the economic and strategic relationship with America, or should it look elsewhere, further diversifying its dependence in these areas? The end of apartheid and the Cold War in Southern Africa strongly influenced Botswana's leaders to "try Washington once again".

This brings us almost up to the date of writing. With a diminished South African military threat, does Botswana need close strategic ties with the US? Does the US still need a stable, democratic, multiracial African democracy to support in this region? Does Botswana still need American aid and investment?

From a Botswana strategic standpoint, continued cooperation with the Americans is seen as necessary. Leaders view their ties with the US as the most important way of maintaining long-term national security and territorial integrity in a still volatile region. Such ties can continue to be counterbalanced by ongoing defence cooperation with Commonwealth countries, thus avoiding the appearance, or reality, of dependence on the US alone for major defence needs. The BDF's new international role, as described above, also fits well with the multilateralist emphasis recently emanating from some US foreign policy circles.

One should be careful not to attribute Botswana's recent willingness to offer troops for peacekeeping as an American-inspired policy, however. Botswana has a strong and consistent record of trying to do what it can to preserve and protect peace and stability in Southern Africa. National survival and interest dictate as much.

During the Clinton administration bilateral relations between Washington and Gaborone have changed little. Besides multilateral security coordination in Africa, bilateral cooperation in natural resources management, wildlife conservation, basic education, family planning, Aids prevention, private sector development, military training and regional security appear successful and important to both partners.<sup>60</sup>

Economic and commercial relations between the two countries have grown since the 1989 US visit of President Masire, who made the promotion of expanded commercial relations his top priority. Since then, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, commercial banks, and Botswana embassies abroad, including those in the US, have stepped-up promotion and information activities.

Like his recent predecessors, the current US ambassador to Botswana, Howard Jeter, has repeatedly singled-out the free market policies that have enabled Botswana to successfully attract foreign investment, including that of the US. USAID and OPIC have been providing substantial support for private sector development during the early 1990s, emphasizing foreign and domestic investment, business links, management and training, and job creation.<sup>61</sup>

By 1994, direct US private investment in the manufacturing sector was P300 million (\$US 150 million), three-quarters of which has flowed in since 1989.<sup>62</sup> Examples include diamond polishing, H J Heinz (cooking oil), Colgate-Palmolive (soap), and a clay factory.<sup>63</sup> Botswana was also recently preferred to South Africa for a new Owens-Corning glass-reinforced pipe factory. A company spokesperson contrasted Botswana's "political stability" and "rapid economic growth", with the continued uncertainty and violence in South Africa.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to previous US economic policy for Africa, the Clinton administration has pushed forward with regional initiatives in US investment and enterprise development, encouraging potential US investors in Southern Africa to work through the SADC and the African Enterprise Fund.<sup>65</sup>

A certain amount of US assistance continues to flow to Botswana, but the new emphasis is on regional, multilateral aid and development assistance. It was announced

in mid-1994 that the USAID bilateral mission in Botswana would be phased out by the end of the year. At the same time, US aid officials strongly urged Botswana and all SADC and PTA states to merge and "map a common path".<sup>66</sup>

The strategic connection seems to be stronger than ever, with continuing training, support, and assistance for Botswana, albeit quietly and in limited amounts.<sup>67</sup> Controversy still surrounds the alleged "American connection" with construction of the BDF Mapharangwane air base facilities, dubbed "Operation Eagle" in the Botswana press. The facility, about 60 km outside Molepolole, is estimated to have cost approximately P600 million, or \$US300 million. It was built by Spie Batignoles, a French concern, with LTA of South Africa a main subcontractor.<sup>68</sup>

Press criticism centres on the high cost,<sup>69</sup> secrecy, alleged US funding, and fears of a US military presence in the country using the base as a bridgehead for the Rapid Deployment Force in Southern Africa.<sup>70</sup> Joint military manoeuvres in 1992 further fuelled this line of thinking.<sup>71</sup> Matters reached such a point by 1993, with ANC and PAC representatives in Botswana joining with the private press in alleging an "American connection",<sup>72</sup> that Minister of Presidential Affairs Lt General Mompoti Merafhe laid before parliament certain Finance Ministry documents fully supporting the statement that the base was built "exclusively with Botswana public funds". He also stated that "there are no foreign military bases or personnel in Botswana".<sup>73</sup>

Ties between Botswana and the US can be expected to remain friendly for the immediate future. Depending on the outcome of generational leadership changes and presidential succession in Botswana after the 1994 elections, however, relations could cool. There are no more Seretse Khomas or Quett Masire on the political horizon. Foreign policy pragmatism and consensus may become harder to sustain in the wake of political instability or economic decline. Greater partisan division and disagreement about the country's proper foreign policy course may result. As long as leaders in Gaborone perceive sufficient US support, however, a major downturn is unlikely.

From a US standpoint, the Botswana connection continues to be perceived as an asymmetrical, donor-recipient relationship. The end of the Cold War and demise of apartheid have left the geopolitical opportunities and constraints of bilateral relations unaltered. So it is that the "fine words of mutual admiration" still describe the relationship.

## The lure of the Far East

A final area for foreign policy analysis is the expansion of relations with the states of East Asia, in particular China and Japan, but also with South Korea, Singapore and Malaysia. With the exception of China, relations with which date from the 1970s, and limited formal contacts with Asian members through the Commonwealth, this new Asian emphasis is mainly a phenomenon of the post-1989 period.

Diamond revenues and a well-managed governmental sector through the 1980s gave Botswana's leaders in the 1990s the luxury of seeking more "balanced worldwide representation" beyond Europe, Africa, and North America, by expanding formal diplomatic and commercial ties to selected states. In 1993, Botswana's foreign affairs budget grew by nearly 20% over that for 1992.<sup>74</sup> So at a time when other states were cutting back, Botswana opened new embassies in Namibia and the PRC, followed by a consulate-general office in Hong Kong "to take care of trade and commercial interests in the Far East".<sup>75</sup>

What does East Asia have to offer a land-locked Southern African cattle-and-diamond-based economy? What motives, interests, and goals are powering these trends? Well, a diversification of diplomatic partners continues to be a valuable goal in itself, along with new sources of foreign aid, trade and technology. This is more crucial than ever in the wake of the East-West Cold War, during which a handful of dependable partners, especially the US and Great Britain, could be relied upon to provide. In today's uncertain times, it is risky business for a small, dependent state to put its foreign economic and security interests in one, or even a few, western baskets.

Why Beijing? Why August 1991?<sup>76</sup> The break-up of the former Soviet Union was one factor motivating Gaborone to move closer to the PRC in the 1990s. (Another was the high cost of opening a mission in Tokyo, to represent its regional interests: China was less costly.) President Masire paid an official state visit to the PRC, too, his second, to underline the importance of the new links. Cooperation agreements were signed in trade, railroad construction and medical assistance.<sup>77</sup>

Since the late 1980s, official fascination with "Asian productivity" and admonitions to "learn the secrets of Asia's rapid economic success" seem sometimes to approach an almost mystical level. During his 1983 and 1991 China visits President Masire was deeply impressed with how hard Chinese workers apply themselves, and has since urged Botswana to emulate

their attitudes and work behaviour.<sup>78</sup> The same long-established pattern is evident in presidential statements concerning Japanese technology, worker productivity, wealth, and economic success.<sup>79</sup>

Sino-Botswana relations have always been friendly, given strong mutual interests in peaceful co-existence, state sovereignty, and nonalignment.<sup>80</sup> The PRC has been a small but dependable source of scholarships, medical aid, railroad construction, and other types of technical assistance.<sup>81</sup> And with changed Western aid priorities since the end of the Cold War, this aspect of bilateral relations is taking on added significance in the 1990s.

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Botswana stepped up efforts to woo Asian investment in manufacturing and increase trade.<sup>82</sup> In 1989 a major agreement was signed for a Chinese shoe factory to be built in Botswana.<sup>83</sup> These efforts were redoubled in 1991, with successes in clothing and cosmetic manufacturing.<sup>84</sup>

We turn to Japan. The most crucial factors in expanding Gaborone's relations here are development aid and investment potential. Beginning as early as 1981, Tokyo has steadily offered a growing variety of grants, soft loans and technical assistance. At a time when Western sources are drying up, Japan is now providing skilled volunteers, drought relief, infrastructure construction, such as the Morupule Power Station and portions of the Trans-Kgalagadi Highway, and donations of equipment.<sup>85</sup>

A major milestone in Japan's growing role in Africa came in 1993, when it sponsored the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. Promises were made of substantial Japanese Overseas Economic Cooperation co-financing of infrastructure projects with the IMF and World Bank. Botswana has been one of the early beneficiaries.<sup>86</sup>

Japan has been even more willing to go beyond preliminary expressions of interest and support for the idea of promoting Botswana as a site for investment. In this, Japan has differed from European and North American governments, from which few projects have actually been forthcoming. A Toyota assembly plant was opened in 1990.<sup>87</sup> Expanded Japanese trade and investment again topped discussion during President Masire's official visit to Japan in March 1992,<sup>88</sup> when emphasis was placed on inviting labour-intensive industrial investment, especially in leatherwork, textiles, and diamonds.<sup>89</sup>

The same holds good for recent efforts by Botswana to reach out to South Korea for additional technical assistance and investment. These efforts have led to the

construction of a Hyundai auto assembly plant.<sup>90</sup>

With Malaysia, diplomatic relations were established in 1990. Promising trends in trade and investment rapidly followed. A trade mission from Kuala Lumpur visited Gaborone in 1991 and expressed interest in Botswana's diamonds, beef, and other minerals. Botswana noted an interest in Malaysian help to develop its fledgling textile industry.<sup>91</sup>

A similar pattern was followed by relations with Singapore, established in 1993. The two states are currently collaborating on civil-service productivity and President Masire made an official state visit in March 1994. Discussions centred on trade and investment promotion.<sup>92</sup>

This account clearly demonstrates that Botswana foreign policy-makers are not simply waiting for the world to come to them. As the centre of power within the global economic order shifts east, to Asia, diplomats and politicians in Gaborone have gone further than most of their African neighbours in recalibrating their regional and bilateral commitments and priorities. In an age when political analysis continues to lament the destructive economic legacy of European colonialism in Africa, Botswana is throwing open its doors to some of the promising new global economic powers of the 21st century.

Convinced that the costs and risks of such a policy will ultimately prove to be outweighed by development benefits, a new phase of international commercial relations has been enthusiastically embraced. Within a decade, and under a new generation of political and economic leaders, Botswana will be in a position to better judge whether or not these were the right decisions for the times, or if they were overly unrealistic, even mystical, given the factors dividing Southern Africans and East Asians.

### Leadership and external policy after 1994

Credit for the notable continuity, stability, and success of Botswana's external affairs must go, in large part, to the able presidential leadership of the country's first two presidents.<sup>93</sup> The current officeholder, 69-year-old Sir Ketumile Masire, squelching rumours of retirement, led his party to yet another national election triumph in 1994.<sup>94</sup> The real questions concerning the security of his position and power began immediately.<sup>95</sup>

Presidential succession and civil-military relations remain key elements in any future balanced – or unbalanced – foreign and defence policy equation. President

Masire has had to contend with more than his share of factional strife within the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), aggravated by corruption scandals and the forced resignations of top cabinet officials, especially since the 1989 elections.<sup>96</sup>

The two principal BDP factions have significantly different domestic economic policy agendas, each with important external policy implications. It will matter a great deal which of the two eventually emerges victorious under a new presidential patron. The so-called "Big Five" leads what one informed analyst labels "a trained mandarin class with a firm commitment to developing the economy"<sup>97</sup> in the context of a Western-oriented, market-based, bureaucratic state structure.

The other faction could be labelled as "populist politicians". They are led by Agriculture Minister Daniel Kwelagobe and former vice-president Peter Mmusi and oppose what they take to be a heavy-handed, bureaucratic governance and development emphasis.

At the time of writing, the Big Five seem to be in firm control of the most powerful government positions. Presidential Affairs Minister General Mompoti Merafhe is also *de facto* minister of defence, internal affairs and mass media. His portfolio includes the BDF and he was previously its commander. Vice-President Festus Mogae is a bureaucrat (Finance and Development Planning), as are Kedikilwe (Commerce and Industry, Public Service), Chiepe (External Affairs) and Mogwe (Mineral Affairs, former External Affairs minister).

BDF Commander Ian Khama, son of the late president Seretse Khama, although not yet a political actor, would seem to have a strong, natural interest in siding with Big Five technocrats if a choice had to be made – both for the sake of his own political stature and for peace, stability, and a continuing tradition of the clear separation of civil and military affairs. He is a firm believer in professionals making relevant decisions rather than politicians making political decisions concerning national security and the future of the BDF. The same must be said of other top BDF officers, including Ian Khama's number two, Major General Moeng Pheto.

In August, prior to the October 15 national election, the only viable opposition party, the Botswana National Front, issued its first new manifesto since the 1960s. It contains brief sections on defence, security and foreign policy. Among its specific pledges are calls for a citizen army to replace the BDF, deep cuts in defence spending, and close ties with "all progressive and social democratic governments around the world".<sup>98</sup>

### Conclusions

New world order or old, for states like Botswana, foreign policy is and must remain the pursuit beyond their own boundaries of vital domestic economic interests. Thus, the patterns and trends presented above must be understood in the context of continuing external vulnerability to global economic forces largely beyond the control of Botswana's leaders. Diversified dependence is still dependence. A successful mineral-based export economy has yielded economic growth in the short run, but guarantees little in the way of equitable and sustainable development in the long run.

Ultimately, Botswana's future foreign policy will be shaped by the country's long-term economic strategy. Cattle and diamonds must go. Even raw economic growth cannot continue indefinitely without an expansion of exports; without the creation of a productive sector for goods and services destined for the region and the global market. To build such an export capacity requires foreign investment. That is why future relations with South Africa, East Asia and the US, and within the SADC, are so crucial. Failure in this endeavour means economic instability, greater unemployment and underemployment, the declining ability of government to fund social welfare programmes and, ultimately, political instability.

Foreign aid for development from traditional bilateral and multilateral sources is in decline, and may be expected to further decline, as Botswana's needs shrink relative to other states and world regions.<sup>99</sup> In the face of this trend, it certainly makes good sense for Gaborone to cultivate relations with Japan, now the largest aid donor in Africa.

Until recently, Botswana's foreign policy continuity has generally been accepted by the world as evidence of success. But with the end of regional and global paradigms (apartheid and the Cold War), continuity is no longer a virtue. Change and policy adaptation are necessary. Botswana's national goals and interests have begun to be re-examined from a new vantage point: external policies are being redesigned accordingly.

US support for a more active regional and continental leadership role for Gaborone in security, economic development and diplomacy, is a welcome development; although, based on its past performance in supporting the SADC, its support for the SADC should be taken with a grain of salt.

Botswana has a regional, continental, and global role to play as it reshapes and

fortifies its foreign and security policies for the 21st century. A stronger Botswana is good for the region and for Africa generally, if for no other reason than the strength of its continuing success. It is well-placed to help manage many of Africa's most pressing problems: conflict, economic collapse, lack of democracy. Part of its contribution will continue, one hopes, to be delivered by example.

Ali Mazrui recently asked: "Is Africa ready to deal with its own civil wars?" Can Africa construct a peacekeeping force of its own? Peace-making? Peace-enforcing? Should mechanisms and institutions be continental or regional?<sup>100</sup> Already, only half a decade from the end of the Cold War in Africa, Botswana has taken exemplary strides, both diplomatic and military, towards a "Pax Africana" in its efforts to promote conflict prevention (Lesotho, 1994), containment (Mozambique and Rwanda, 1993), and resolution (Somalia, 1992–1994). The years ahead will offer many more opportunities, though none without substantial risk, for Botswana's diplomats and soldiers.

Gaborone's contribution to the success of African conflict resolution efforts in the years ahead will undoubtedly remain significant. The country's stature in Africa has never been higher. But simply having the diplomatic and economic resources, at a time when most African states cannot even afford to attend summit meetings and pay OAU dues, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for explaining this pattern of external behaviour. What has been done diplomatically and militarily in recent years has been done sincerely, based on the belief that even a small state can make a difference. Such contributions should be seen as logical extensions of the country's long-standing commitment to principles of accommodation, tolerance and respect for human life.<sup>101</sup> witness Botswana's refugee policy over the years.

National interests, of course, are also involved. In the words of Botswana's foreign minister, Dr Gaositwe Chiepe:

We also do what we do for what you may call enlightened self-interest or common survival. Botswana is too small to push its weight about, but we are prepared to play our part.<sup>102</sup>

One of the most important tasks in the years ahead will be the push for disarming the continent after decades of Cold War arms imports. Botswana has pushed to make the OAU and SADC confront this issue and may be expected to continue to do so.<sup>103</sup>

Finally, one cannot fully avoid the "structure and process" aspects of foreign

policy-making and implementation in the wake of the changing external policy context in which Botswana finds itself today. Gone are the days when simplicity and scale allowed for the luxury of presidential micro-management of foreign and security affairs. The Department of External Affairs (EA), still an arm of the Office of the President (OOP), subject to political pressures and non-expert direction, has recently patiently endured yet another reshuffling of key foreign affairs experts at a time when such professionals could have proven most useful.<sup>104</sup> Pressures for the creation of a separate Ministry of Foreign Affairs can be expected to increase. Without organizational specialization, professional diplomatic, managerial, and language training, and a more explicit division of responsibility, the next president and cabinet of Botswana risk being poorly served, in terms of information and advice on important external affairs and security matters, by an increasingly unprepared Office of the President bureaucracy and by confusingly complex and wasteful duplication of function by EA and OOP.

Having the resources to expand diplomatic and commercial representation abroad is necessary, but not sufficient, for success. Botswana's foreign embassies and missions are some of the most "skeletonally staffed in the world, some staffed with only two diplomats", as noted by Minister Chiepe.<sup>105</sup> Chiepe recently noted a need for another mission somewhere in Europe and a permanent presence at OAU headquarters in Addis.<sup>106</sup> Professional recruitment and training efforts will also need to be stepped up or the potential economic benefits of new locations in Asia and elsewhere will never be realized.<sup>107</sup>

Botswana's foreign policy in the decades ahead can be expected to reflect domestic needs and interests. Future leaders, whoever they are, will be constrained in their range of choices by the same national, regional, and global factors which have set the parameters for external relations and security policy since independence. Decisions and commitments made today, in times of diplomatic and economic wealth and leverage, however, may allow the country's next generation to continue to enjoy for a while longer a measure of unparalleled political stability and economic growth, the latter carrying with them a disproportionately greater ability to continue pursuing vital national goals – democracy, development, self-reliance and unity: *Kagisano* (social harmony) – than most of Botswana's African neighbours.

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# 1994 and beyond: Parameters of change in Southern Africa

Dr Paul-Henri Bischoff, of the University of Papua New Guinea, considers the influence of the “new Pretoria” on the nature of regional cooperation in the subcontinent, with particular reference to the SADC, Sacu and Comesa (PTA).

**F**ORECASTING South Africa's external relations within the Southern African region is currently the object of a great deal of professional interest: tangible cooperation among this group of states would be a post-apartheid dividend. The general wish is for regional security and political stability, for open recognition from donors and investors. In regional terms, the role and status of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), inheritor of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference's (SADCC) mantle, the South African Customs Union (Sacu) and the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) will be decided to a large degree by how power is won and exercised in a “new Pretoria”. It will also depend upon the recognition this power finds abroad.

## South Africa from 1990 to 1994: an ever-present past

The legalization by De Klerk of the entire black national liberation movement in February 1990, ushered in by South Africa's sharing in the Namibian settlement, presented the state with an international, regional and domestic base of goodwill and support. There were confidence-building consequences on the domestic front, too. For events had challenged the claims built up by the ANC to be the sole representative of the African majority and, by definition, those of a nation about to claim power. Obvious political potential existed in the war between the United Democratic Front (UDF) – identifiable with the then still

banned African National Congress (ANC) – and Inkatha (later the Inkatha Freedom Party). An anti-ANC coalition of forces and/or a neo-colonial solution became a possibility.<sup>1</sup> Other factors were the unsettling diversity of the ANC as a movement and the organizational challenge it would face after a thirty-year absence once legalized. The lack of adequate breathing space<sup>2</sup> might also serve to inhibit and obstruct the maturing of political activity and the demand for immediate, palpable change.

Looking more widely, the De Klerk government could now, internationally, count on regaining the full support of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) states.

Meanwhile (1990 to 1993) the ANC was drawn into a lengthy process of negotiation which brought about a new middle ground in South African politics, the state benefiting along the way from the precarious political situation produced by extremist terror and violence. The ANC indeed was forced into a partnership of sorts with the National Party government. The general perception here was that, in order to end the violence, both parties must push ahead with negotiations. The ANC often found itself negotiating as an opposition party rather than as a liberation movement.

This unexpected turn of events favoured the status quo in the sense that it made what had been immovable principles (such as the unitary state) subject to negotiation. Domestically, it ensured that there was to be a great deal of continuity in the legal traditions of the new South

African state. For the region as a whole it signalled that South Africa would continue to play more of the same – economic – role as before.

## The future: Outward or inward regionalism?

South Africa constitutes the heartland of Southern Africa and is thus crucial in influencing the nature of regional cooperation across the subcontinent. There are certainly other forces at play here, notably the OECD countries and the present SADC member states. These influences work, broadly, as follows.

First, as we have indicated, the entire region continues to be defined by the dominance and nature of its interaction with what remains the racially structured and capitalist order in South Africa. Left to itself, this power will simply define the development of the region in terms of its own narrow national interests.<sup>3</sup>

Second, the overall course of regional development will be characterized by the region's self-limiting participation in the world economy and its relations with the OECD countries.

Third, the region is seeking to define itself on the basis of a protracted, difficult and often frustrated process of decolonization and liberation based on an obvious need for equity and participatory development.<sup>4</sup>

In outward regionalism, South Africa and the OECD states are predominant in determining change in the region. There is complementarity between the two in that

**TABLE 1 Structural openness\* of Southern African economies towards South Africa and the international economy (percentage)**

Country	Year	Foreign trade
<b>Group 1: most open</b>		
Lesotho	1985	137,4
Swaziland	1984	143,6
Botswana	1984	147,3
Namibia	1985	87,8
Angola	1981	84,0
Zambia	1985	69,7
<b>Group 2: intermediate</b>		
Malawi	1985	45,3
Zimbabwe	1985	44,7
South Africa	1985	39,7
<b>Group 3: least open</b>		
Tanzania	1984	23,7
Mozambique	1985	13,4

\*Note: Openness means export and import values in relation to GDP.

Compiled from: U Witulski, *Macroeconomic linkages among Southern African countries*, Munich, 1990, p 145.

both uphold free market development and the international economic specialization of the region. Their paths diverge at points where South Africa seeks to protect its regional trade and investment against international competition.

The most likely kind of change the South African economy and those of the OECD states will tend to want is one based on an "outward regionalism". Such a policy would wish to see states build on pre-existing or established capital interests in the region and overseas, and promote growth based on the private (free) market.

How far this move to true interdependence goes will depend largely on how and where South Africa perceives its future economic interest to lie. For South Africa capital, after the transnational corporate disengagement of the 1980s now nominally more independent than before,<sup>5</sup> remains reliant on the protection afforded by SACU. And although a South African offer to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1993 makes concessions to OECD expectations on a reduction in tariffs, the question as to what extent South African industry will be brought to either cooperate with or compete with overseas capital in the development of the region, remains unresolved.<sup>6</sup>

An allied matter: how open are the economic policies of South Africa and other Southern African states likely to be in their accommodation of transnational company (TNC) capital (see Table 1)? What stability will newly introduced forms of pluralist democracy offer, given an economic climate of corporate transnational-

ism and its preferred pattern of growth – which is selective, superprofitable and self-limiting? Newly elected governments, which must first and foremost respond to the strictures concerning an "open door" policy by bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), will find themselves on a collision course with electorates highly expectant of immediate and tangible change.

The adoption of "outward regionalism" depends, partly, on the extent to which different governments see regional development based on market forces as useful in underpinning their domestic political establishments. The future prevalence of "conflictive regional-domestic relationships", the popular reaction at home to the paucity of benefits to be obtained from openness to a region of TNC interests (including South Africans ones),<sup>7</sup> – these are likely to constitute an important regional issue of the future.

### Inward regionalism

An ANC-led government knows there is popular opposition to TNC-led growth. Depending on the force of demand for accelerated reform, its own social support base may steer it in a direction that would at least offer the option of "inward regionalism". Such an option, if it were to be taken up, could secure the backing of some South African businesses reluctant to find themselves in open competition with the great transnationals.

Such an "inward regionalism" might create a regionally protected market, per-

haps by means of an investment code for foreign investors.

An approach on these lines would ensure that TNC investors import rather than borrow investment on the local financial market, that an actual transfer of technology and know-how takes place, and that environmentally attuned investment projects are undertaken. In addition, it could comprise trade agreements to modify the present terms of trade that favour industrial producers such as South Africa or Zimbabwe and the exchange of expertise to build up the region's public service sectors.

Despite the ANC's announced intentions to avoid large-scale borrowing from the World Bank, it is fair to ask whether the ANC-led government will have the breathing space to develop such a position.<sup>8</sup> In the interests of stability and international investor confidence, a concerted effort by the OECD grouping of interests is already being made to lock the states of the region into policies of free market economics and externally oriented government.<sup>9</sup>

### The SADC and its SADCC legacy

The dominant influence on the new Southern African Development Community (the SADC) is that of the former SADCC. Like its predecessor, but at a higher level of integration, the SADC wishes to create a framework for regional cooperation. It aims at harmonizing the foreign and economic policies of member states in order to bring enduring security to the region as a whole.

At the time of the SADCC, a framework for regional cooperation was limited by the influence on it of forces not clearly committed to equitable regional development. The SADCC's very origins were, it is suggested, such that it was, all good intentions to the contrary aside, never brought into existence to promote regional development of a sort alternative to that centred on South Africa, the region's market centre.<sup>10</sup> It did in fact (1980–1992) principally define itself by its exclusion of apartheid South Africa, the region's dominant member. Such a definition was always tenuous in that Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (and, latterly, Namibia) remained or became members of the other principal regional body, the South African sponsored Southern African Customs Union (SACU); while Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, voluntarily or involuntarily, always retained strong bilateral economic ties with the apartheid economy.

The outcome of these anti-apartheid efforts, however, was not (as the Frontline

states and the SADCC had anticipated) an immediate transfer of power to the liberation movement by a mortally weakened minority government, possibly under international supervision. Instead, while the push for change in South Africa had come from both the international community and the disenfranchised majority, the pre-emptive initiative ultimately came from the minority government itself, still in visible control of the country.

The SADCC states hoped for immediate advantages from South Africa's abandonment of a policy of sanctions and its replacement by free political, diplomatic and economic interstate contact. Thus South Africa found that the real response to its initiative came bilaterally, through other fellow states, rather than – notwithstanding the Harare Declaration – through any multilateral coalition of anti-apartheid state and non-state actors. This conventional, government-led response has favoured the South African diplomatic initiative.

It should be noted at this point that the international economic and political climate of the 1980s had weakened the potential for regional coalition politics. In sub-Saharan Africa, as elsewhere, the rapid emergence of a world economy of greater productivity, changing terms of trade, fewer opportunities for commodity producers and greater competitiveness, had been accompanied by a drop in growth, stagnation, a growth in Third World indebtedness, and the adoption of forced structural adjustment programmes (see Table 2). Coupled with the South African policy of destabilization, this led everywhere to a revision of domestic and foreign policy dispositions.<sup>11</sup> The Nkomati Accord of 1984 between Mozambique, hitherto the most militant of the Frontline states, and the Botha regime at its most repressive, was probably the most visible demonstration of this malaise.

The influence of donor states and its own internal diversity pushed the SADCC further down the road. Rather than interpreting regional cooperation in terms of inward-looking development, the SADCC favoured projects that were in general purely national, thus diverting the region from embarking on a redistributive framework of cooperation that would have sought grassroots support and addressed popular, mass needs.<sup>12</sup>

The anti-apartheid coalition of the SADCC, the Frontline states and the liberation movements had, in a word, coalesced around the lowest common denominator, a moral condemnation of state-sponsored apartheid. They had failed to give attention<sup>13</sup> to the issue of what regional structures to put in place to guarantee the

**TABLE 2 Rates of real change in GDP 1980–1988**

	%
Botswana	11,3
Swaziland	4,1
Zimbabwe	3,9
Lesotho	2,5
Angola	2,4
South Africa	2,2
Malawi	1,8
Tanzania	1,6
Zambia	0,8
Namibia	-0,2
Mozambique	-2,1

Source: S Smith, *Frontline Africa*, 1990, p 178.

SADCC principle of South-South development<sup>14</sup> against the time when a democratic but militarily and economically dominant South Africa would join them. As a result, no agenda concerning post-apartheid regional cooperation has been developed.<sup>15</sup>

The SADCC's legacy, then, is a situation in which state and non-state donors no longer see interstate cooperation as the most appropriate response to development in the region. Instead, the new South Africa's presence is expected to change the parameters for regional development. In world economic terms, South Africa is sub-Saharan Africa's preferred centre of accumulation; and future development in the area will invariably be slanted towards this regional focus. It will be standard market-oriented development. This will affect the SADC's future role and status. Commenting on the situation inherited by the SADC, President Mugabe noted that the business community had in the past not been sufficiently involved.<sup>16</sup> Donors for their part believe that the SADC states are unable to lessen the interstate barriers that inhibit market development. They continue to suggest a merging of the SADC and Comesa (PTA).<sup>17</sup> The SADC, somewhat precipitously perhaps, has begun work on a protocol on free movement in order to show that it is capable of building a structure for regional economic community.<sup>18</sup> It remains to be seen whether the intentions of the Treaty of Windhoek of 17 August 1992 (that the SADC be the focus of a more intense level of regional cooperation) can in fact come to anything.

### What role for South Africa?

"Realism" dictates the view that any real change in the sub-Saharan economic

regime is unlikely, the continuing regional dominance of South Africa reflecting long-standing historical processes.

The regional division of labour built up during the colonial era is an important ingredient here. The South African economy with its system of migrant labour, its transport network, its encouragement of long-established trade relations and its concentration of capital, has long reached out into its surrounding countries and thus contributed to the defining of the present-day peripheral nature of their economies and the political economy of their development.<sup>19</sup>

For these and other historical reasons, South Africa remains a centre point for multinational investment and a focus in the setting of the terms and conditions of exploitation of the region's human and material resources. It structures the size and nature of domestic markets and the accumulation of wealth. The entire region's physical and financial infrastructure, its industrial capacity, its health and veterinary sectors rely on inputs from South Africa.<sup>20</sup> If the region, therefore, is to rely increasingly on exports it will need to harness South Africa's intellectual and technological-cum-industrial capacity to make its products competitive.<sup>21</sup> And such a reliance is likely to consolidate the inequality between a dominant regional core and its weaker periphery and thereby strengthen South Africa's political dominance in regional matters – if not in African affairs further afield, too.

In this transitional phase Sacu maintains its role as a regional instrument for the unilateral espousal of economic policies pursued by the South African state. It can, therefore, only continue to reproduce past experiences for other member states.<sup>22</sup> It continues to act unilaterally in the imposition of tariffs and chooses to override other national positions, since its prime concern, inferrable from the Sacu agreement of 1969, remains with certain South African economic lobby groups.<sup>23</sup> To this, doubtless encouraged by South Africa's recent associations with the IMF, has latterly been added the licence to remove tariffs without consultation, regardless of the effects this may have on other and more frail economies.<sup>24</sup>

For the weaker states of the region, the opportunity to have a hand in making policy will be provided by the changed political environment in South Africa: the application of Pretoria's superior military force and its power threateningly to project its regional security concerns are no longer a policy consideration. We are thus entitled to suppose that established relations, especially within Sacu, may well

become open to new political interpretation. A closed political system will become accessible to regional policy-makers. More opportunity will exist to insist on a greater freedom of choice, to conduct real negotiations and to expect economic incentives – in short to question the exercise of South African power.

The employment of the rand as a regional master currency has in part been based on the readiness of the South African state to intervene against any challenge to the economic and political status quo. Such a projection of power will now no longer apply to influence policy-makers. The monetary arrangements with Lesotho, Swaziland and Namibia that have South Africa setting its own (and, by default, all other) currency exchange rates may be more easily reviewed. Without the big stick, and operating through a currency which is likely to further depreciate, inducements will have to be offered in open political negotiation to secure the rand as the region's master currency.

In some future Southern African Customs Union one would expect that South Africa will no longer act in quite the same unilateral manner as at present. This is already implied in South African suggestions for multilateral regional talks on the lines of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe.

In addition, should the present ANC-led government come to be seen by the OECD states as unreliable, neighbouring states such as Botswana, which is currently developing important military relations with the United States and France,<sup>25</sup> will be in a position to obtain Western diplomatic and military support.

Similarly, the "realist" prediction that South African dominance and regional polarity are set to continue, should be set against the issue of the region's present mass needs, intensified over the past fifteen years or more by active destabilization (1,3 million dead, losses an estimated US\$60,5 billion);<sup>26</sup> proxy battles of the East-West conflict; the policies of creditors; and the restructuring programmes of the IMF.

In South Africa itself apartheid has left a legacy of economic, institutional and social degradation for the majority. Thus, overall, destitution and unemployment, displacement, illiteracy, and the deskilling and brutalization of large numbers of people, have resulted in a state of social insecurity throughout the region.<sup>27</sup>

Externally, the ANC will not assume liability for the deeds of its predecessor government.<sup>28</sup> Internally, with its Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), it intends to adopt economic poli-

cies that address mass needs by concentrating on domestically propelled growth, rather than by relying on the export-led growth favoured by the powerful South African corporations backing the National Party's agenda for change. It is only in the light of this constraining domestic context that South Africa can be seen to have an interest in co-determining the parameters of peace building in the region.

We must recall that the identity and views of the ANC were born out of the international political and ideological struggle and that this experience will be the basis for a reorientation in the country's foreign policy disposition. As we may see from the diplomatic interventions of President Mandela in the Angolan and Mozambican peace processes during 1994, amounting to far more than "mere sentiment",<sup>29</sup> there is clearly the potential here for much-needed formal interstate partnerships<sup>30</sup> based on conditions of "peace, friendship and cooperation"<sup>31</sup> and a genuine system of security and prosperity.

An ANC-led government will need to expand its manufacturing base. With time, state industries<sup>32</sup> could make the economy industrially more self-centred and decrease its dependence on the export of raw materials and semi-processed goods to the world market. This would entail a greater reliance on a sub-Saharan market. And in order to absorb South African manufactures in this way, the economies of the other Southern African states would in turn have to be given an economic lift,<sup>33</sup> while being allowed to protect their infant industries.<sup>34</sup> Only South Africa, herself a recipient of project aid to the tune (1992) of \$US1 billion,<sup>35</sup> has the human resources to coordinate a regional effort in such transnational areas.

Optimistically, we can posit an active South African role as a facilitator guaranteeing stable political, social and economic conditions. Its preliminary expression might well be an already mooted regional conference on peace and security, a council of states. The ANC has stated that a regional conference is needed to draw up an economic plan ensuring that a democratic South Africa does not undermine the economic development of any SADC member state.<sup>36</sup> Buttressed by a social and economic charter as basis of any regional organization, such a conference would (could? should? might?) allow the region to limit any advances in South Africa's military capacity<sup>37</sup> and also offer at governmental level the context for regional economic equity and opportunity for all.<sup>38</sup>

Using the expertise accumulated through Sacu's regional administration of

tariff policy, the conference/organisation envisaged could, for example, involve the merger between Sacu and the SADC – possibly combining regional tariff policy with interstate cooperation on common issues of development. Aided by a formula to distribute tariff income, it could serve to address both common functional problems and those associated with polarized development.

This would be one way of soliciting international donor support for a phase of true reconstruction.<sup>39</sup>

Striking a more cautious note, we can still state with some confidence that, at its most nominal, South Africa's preoccupation will be with some limited form of domestic restructuring in which the benefits of intercourse with the region will be based on mutual advantage, and on the openness of the region's economy to mutual trade and movement of capital and expertise. This would be to increase the scope for trade with the outside world and to re-establish the competitiveness of Southern African exports *vis-à-vis* the economies of the North. It would imply a just left-of-centre ANC and the building of a series of reformist class alliances across the region. This would anticipate the creation of new social and political networks among regional forces sharing a commitment to pragmatism, technocratic solutions and the building of a regional free-market economy.<sup>40</sup> South Africa would plainly remain the dominant economic and military power in the region.

There is of course a midway position, though one still involving a substantial scaling down of South Africa's military establishment. Secure within a democratic regional forum, the potential exists for all regional states to reach consensus on the issue of equity in regional development. This could translate into a common approach to donor states, multinational banks and Western exporting states and their propagation of "IMFism",<sup>41</sup> and set the agenda for the selective nurturing of regional production, investment and development.

### **For the short term: How much bilateralism, what kind of multilateralism?**

South Africa is presently preoccupied with restructuring its political, social and economic system. After May 1994 it became a member of both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the SADC. But indications are that South Africa will initially participate only nominally in these organizations. Narrow national economic interests are likely to dominate Pretoria's

thinking. As a result, the country will, in the medium term, rely more on bilateralism than multilateralism in relations with in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Such a strategy relies on bilateral trade agreements and tends to favour the kind of cooperation that is based on matters concerning trade between market economies rather than on public projects involving states. The SADC could well see itself displaced in favour of South African trade concerns and the PTA, with its preoccupation with intraregional trade and external forces, sidelined by agendas concerned with free trade and market driven reform. South Africa, wishing to protect her industry, may yet find that a refashioned Southern African Customs Union with its limited agenda can continue to be relied on as an instrument of national interest.

### The Southern African Customs Union

Sacu may, as we have said, be the vehicle demonstrating South Africa's interest in the promotion of a regional interdependence centred on its own economy. Suitably refashioned, it would certainly serve as a tool to implement regionally agreed upon policies on tariffs and trade.

A renegotiated formula governing the distribution of tariff revenue could, for example, see Sacu's tariff fund used, not to provide direct grants to member governments as at present, but as "programme funds" to build up the competitiveness of members alongside that of the dominant South African economy.

A refashioned Sacu, again, strong in its new-found political credibility, would continue to allow South Africa to advance its economic interests in the region, yet insist on target measures such as the industrialization of all member states and the first proper implementation of the Sacu agreement's otherwise viable, but hitherto overridden, protection-of-infant-industry clause.

Such a scheme would not find favour with the current free world market views of an OECD-IMF regime in the region.

### Comesa (PTA)

Continuity in change implies the goal of a freer regime of trade, aid and investment. In Southern Africa's regional development this would favour a modified Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA), its rules of origin changed to allow for greater foreign content and foreign management and with an emphasis on the promotion of trade. A viable PTA could render the development of a regional market of key importance in interstate cooperation and in so doing displace the SADC.

Politically, Comesa (formerly only the PTA) has become more prominent since 1991. There are several points of interest here, including the need to ensure its survival (the organization is experiencing financial difficulties), its growing support from the European Community and the nature of Swaziland's recent stewardship. "Mediator states" such as Swaziland have deep experience of organisations such as Comesa, Sacu and the SADCC. It was their presence within the SADCC that contributed to its depoliticization and invited Western backing.

Similarly, these mediator states (plus Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique and Angola, who have still to join) could act as catalysts in transforming Comesa (PTA) into the cornerstone of regional intercourse. Note that this would possibly be yet another factor influencing the redirection of policy away from interstate cooperation and the SADC and towards integration in terms of trade.

It is clear that since the lack of complementarity in the region's economies does not favour mutual trade at present,<sup>13</sup> an emphasis on Comesa (PTA) would largely favour commercial South African and OECD designs. Plans by South Africa's Electricity Supply Commission (Escom) for a regional electricity grid is focused on Comesa (PTA) rather than on the former SADCC grouping and growing assistance to Comesa (PTA) is promised from the EC's European Development Fund (EDF). In early anticipation, what was then the PTA in 1992 decided to contemplate the absorption of the SADCC – followed by that of its successor the SADC.<sup>14</sup>

The ANC, on the other hand, argued prior to the elections that the promotion of domestic market growth ought to precede plans for export-led growth.<sup>15</sup> We repeat this point because, on such a view, the kind of economic integration put forward by a modified Comesa (PTA) ought to *follow* rather than precede the achievement of greater economic balance. This view naturally favours the present pre-eminence of the SADC, with its inheritance of interstate cooperation and state-led coordination in the setting of broad developmental goals.

### Conclusion: The focus for change

Change in Southern Africa is conditioned by the social and political context in which a particular economic order is allowed to function and by the structure of the greater world order. The present trend in Southern Africa, as elsewhere, is towards a developmental focus that opts

for market mechanisms, stability, borders open to investment, capital transfers, trade and export-led growth. Such a setting for the region's affairs assumes the dominance of the West, the ascendancy of a hegemonic South Africa, and the logic of current macroeconomic arguments. A realism based on the political need for some form of economic stabilization punctuates the analysis of events and of change.

During the 1980s, in its pursuit of a "Total National Strategy", South Africa politicized regional development for its own parochial ends. It drifted away, consequently, from a Western vision of how regional development ought to accommodate the economics of transnational corporate organization. It became more of a regional force acting in defence of its own preservation than a power able to uphold a regional order identifiable with the securing of broad Western interests.

Will South Africa want to become (or be able to become) an enabling power for transnational capitalism? Will South Africa exploit its part in having brought about a number of "broken-backed states"<sup>16</sup> which it can now, in the wake of that great leveller – structural adjustment – incorporate into a new, politically changed, but nonetheless still polarizing and exploitative South African domain?<sup>17</sup>

The answer here largely depends on the degree to which the present Pretoria regime can preserve something of itself during this time of transition. Can the present state credibly project itself as a regional economic and political power? In its last two years of power, the De Klerk administration made considerable efforts to promote relations with both Western and African states. The intention was twofold. To persuade both the OECD bloc *and* the states in the region that South Africa would be able to sustain a regional pattern of relations for further, TNC-based OECD aid and investment.

Running parallel to this was an attempt to preserve, strengthen and expand the existing social and economic establishment in its relations at home and abroad, to plan ways in which to take policy instruments and leverage away from a future government, to limit the policy options of a future, ANC-led government.<sup>18</sup>

There is always the hope that the South African economy and the minority that owns and manages it, will, with social peace under a majority government, act as a locomotive to initiate growth both inside and outside South Africa – and so come to play a truly progressive role. This is a purely technocratic view influenced by the

prevalence of a "primitive functionalism"<sup>49</sup> which sees solutions in conceptualizing grand schemes for the resolution of regional problems. But will the region be able to shape its relations with the outside or will the outside continue to do the shaping? A democratic South Africa, if it wishes to make a concerted effort at addressing mass democratic concerns, will simply have to move away from such immediate technocratic concerns and set its own terms and conditions as part of a policy of domestic as well as regional transformation.

Here we are talking about a leadership role that has to come to consider the long-term rather than the short-term opportunities of power. South Africa could make a decisive contribution to the establishment of an economic and social council – one that would see, among other matters, to the mechanisms of cohabitation of Sacu with the SADC or the merger between the SADC and Comesa (PTA). This council would be part of a conference on mutual security, with a bill of rights;<sup>50</sup> and it could, over the long term, provide regional consensus on the region's military, economic, social and political development. Such a commitment would allow it to contribute to a regional framework of cooperation and peace building whose specific aim would be to narrow rather than widen regional inequalities in development.

There are a number of factors that may make such a regional setting for the management of political and development issues necessary. In addition to the dislocations of economic restructuring, there are the threat of personal and military dictatorships – Lesotho after the royal coup in August 1994 is a case in point – that could supersede urban élite-based pluralist political systems; the heightened threat of social and economic instability provided by massive migratory trends towards the South; malnutrition and disease (including Aids); and environmental deterioration. In such circumstances, the provision of a regional social, economic and institutional network, of formal inter-state cooperation, promoted by South Africa and assisted by OECD funding, would seem to be in the interests of all in the subcontinent.

Whether South Africa succeeds in keeping her developing relations with the region as a whole happily on course will much depend upon her success in reaching suitable accommodation with some of her neighbouring states. The response from sub-Saharan Africa is cautious. The full recognition of the sovereignty of such states, greater democracy in relations with

South Africa, and the latter's acceptance of mutual political and economic interdependence would seem to mark the bottom line. The SADCC warned that it did not wish to accept further economic domination by South Africa – whatever the political complexion of the new state.<sup>51</sup> Its successor, the Southern African Development Community, could by its very existence constitute a response to that statement. A change of nexus in the region may be possible; but, with a sense of judicious balance in mind, it will have to be worked for by all.<sup>52</sup>

## Notes and references

- 1 A Stadler, *The political economy of modern South Africa*, Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1987, p 182.
- 2 L Cliffe and D Seddon, "Africa in the New World Order", *Review of African Political Economy*, vol 50, no 3, 1991, p 13.
- 3 G Mills and S Baynham, "Changing the guard: South African foreign policy into the 1990s", *Africa Insight*, vol 20, no 3, 1990, pp 176–188.
- 4 Described as the choice between socialism and barbarism. S Amin, "The future of South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Affairs*, vol 2, no 3, 1974, pp 355–374.
- 5 On the relative autonomy of South African capital from overseas capital, see A Seidman, N Seidman, *US multinationals in South Africa*, Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1977. In total there were, according to the United Nations, 1 068 TNCs in the country in 1984. Of these, 154 US corporations disinvested during the 1980s, though the degree of separation often varied. Starnberger Institute, *The economic impact of sanctions*, Harare: Starnberger Institute, 1989, p 11; *South Scan*, vol 6, no 6, 15 February 1991, p 60.
- 6 Robert Davies notes how, in the case of Mozambique after the signing of the Nkomati Accord in 1984, South African capital, much in need of overseas assistance, could not attract the backing of Western capital for its plans, directed as they were at highly selective forms of investment in the Mozambican economy. R Davies, "South African strategy towards Mozambique since Nkomati", *Transformations*, no 3, 1984, pp 4–30.
- 7 R T Libby, *The politics of economic power in Southern Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987, p 316.
- 8 On the ANC's *de facto* foreign investment code, the comments of the ANC's economic affairs specialist Tito Mboweni, *South Scan*, vol 7, no 24, 24 June 1992.
- 9 A fundamental shift in the way Western aid donors treat Africa is underway. Donor states now make clear demands for political reform to accompany their own prescriptions for economic policy reform. *The Economist*, 22 February 1992.

- 10 I Mandaza, S Amin and D Chitala (eds), *SADCC: Prospects for disengagement and development in South Africa*, London: Zed Press, 1987, p 214.
- 11 Parallel with domestically undertaken structural reforms, there has been a general move towards technocracy and a sense of "realism" in the conduct of foreign affairs. See J Fearon, "International financial institutions and economic policy reform in sub-Saharan Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol 26, no 1, 1988, pp 113–137.
- 12 I Mandaza, *op cit*, p 218.
- 13 D Anglin, "SADCC after Nkomati", *African Affairs*, vol 84, no 334, January 1985, p 163.
- 14 I Mandaza, D Chitala and S Amin, *op cit*, p 13.
- 15 Not unimportantly, this loss of initiative is also fed by the character of events at national level. It appears as if the option of development by revolutionary, social-democratic or state interventionism has for the time been removed from the political agenda of the region; and the notion of liberation considerably circumscribed. Instead, pluralist democracy essentially to serve the needs of an urban élite characterizes the present transition. In Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, national liberation movements have been party to a process of negotiation that has accepted a framework for managed and gradual change which, in effect, has sought to primarily accommodate the *petite bourgeoisie* within the existing economic structure and has narrowed rather than widened popular access to policy-making. The other states of the region, with the possible exception of Botswana, are subject to the IMF's restructuring programmes which marginalize the importance given to meeting mass needs. The effects of restructuring are to depoliticize economic issues, linked as these are in many minds at present to redistribution and change through popular participation. The reference to this period as one that is post-apartheid rather than one of post-liberation is an instructive one and denotes the limits to change regardless of mass needs at this point. See J S Saul, *Socialist ideology and the struggle for Southern Africa*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990.
- 16 *Africa Institute Bulletin*, vol 33, no 3, 1993, p 3.
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *South Scan*, vol 8, no 28, 16 July 1993, p 214.
- 19 A Stadler, *op cit*, p 22.
- 20 P Vale, *Integration and disintegration in Southern Africa*, Occasional Paper, Cape Town: Idasa, 1989.
- 21 Under an export-led regime, the creative imagination of South African designers, scientists, managers and entrepreneurs will be important in rendering the products of the region responsive to the increased demands for raw materials.

- These must nowadays increasingly be tailor-made to suit particular (and ever-changing) buyer and consumer needs in today's world market. On this world trend, see Peter Robinson, "After 2000", *Australia Now*, vol 15, no 1, p 10; The region's principal exports and earners of foreign exchange include meat, tobacco, coffee, tea, sugar, cashewnuts, cotton, timber and wood pulp, plus copper, petroleum, chromium, asbestos, sisal and diamonds.
- 22 P H Bischoff, *Swaziland's international relations and foreign policy*, New York: Peter Lang, 1990, pp 351–356.
- 23 Landell-Mills, "The 1969 South African Customs Union", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol 9, no 2, 1971, pp 263–281.
- 24 Sacu introduced new rules on local sourcing for automobile manufacturers after determined lobbying by the National Association of Automobile Manufacturers of South Africa. Citroen had proposed building a plant in Namibia. Citroen, as a result of these new rules, decided not to make the investment. Investment that seeks to diversify the mining industry in Namibia is likely to come from the European Community. *South Scan*, vol 7, no 11, 20 March 1992, p 85; vol 7, no 12, 27 March 1992, p 94. In Swaziland the important textile industry has come under threat dating from Pretoria's unilateral decision to lift restrictions on textile imports from the Far East in 1991, *South Scan*, vol 7, no 7, 21 February 1992, p 55.
- 25 Botswana is currently spending US\$350 million on an air base at Molepolole at a time when both the US and France are expanding their military links with the country. *South Scan*, vol 7, no 3, 24 January 1992, p 23.
- 26 The SADCC's total external debt in 1987 amounted to \$19.5 billion, of which \$1.4 billion was owed to the IMF. S Smith, *Frontline Africa*, London: Oxfam, 1990, pp 177, 190.
- 27 B Nsiband, "Swaziland's security concerns in a changed South Africa: The issues", *Research Paper Security Studies Project II*, Roma: ISAS/NUL, 1991, p 25.
- 28 *South Scan*, vol 6, no 19, 17 May 1991, p 169.
- 29 G Evans, *Continuity and change in South Africa's present and future foreign policy*, Occasional Paper, Johannesburg: South African Institute of International Affairs, July 1991, p 12.
- 30 D Geldenhuys, "Ten crises in South Africa's external relations", *International Affairs Bulletin*, vol 13, no 3, 1989, pp 89–95.
- 31 Adopted Resolution on the Foreign Policy of the ANC, 48th National Conference of the African National Congress, 6 July 1991.
- 32 T Young, "South Africa's foreign relations in a post-apartheid world", *South African International*, vol 21, no 4, April 1991, pp 240.
- 33 R Davies, "South African regional policy before and after Cuito Cuanavale", in G Moss and I Obery (eds), *South African regional policy: contemporary analysis: South African Review* 5, Oxford: Hans Zell, 1990, p 175.
- 34 S Chan, *Exporting apartheid*, London: Macmillan, 1990, p 88.
- 35 *South Scan*, vol 8, no 2, 8 January 1993, p 10.
- 36 This was in reference to the then still SADCC member states. See "Thabo Mbeki of the ANC", *South Scan*, vol 6, no 19, 17 May 1991, p 169.
- 37 P Vale, *op cit*, p 11.
- 38 This could involve a contribution to the encouragement of international colloquiums in order to increase understanding of mutual policy considerations and so build consensus on issues affecting the region. This could then facilitate the exchange of expertise and the promotion of technical assistance. Initiatives such as these would cost relatively little but count for much.
- 39 Cooperation in a context of development that does not primarily concentrate on export-led growth will, in the short term, not be as conducive to the removal of regional, interstate barriers to the movement of goods, capital and labour. There will, however, be scope for functional cooperation of an intergovernmental and non-governmental kind that can strengthen the building of a common institutional and policy framework for governments and public organizations. A similarity in policy outlook and a greater unity in the region's response to outside forces could result from this. In the long term this would be of help in establishing regional terms for outside aid and investment.
- 40 The scheme to build a Constellation of Southern African States (Consas) was unsuccessful in addressing this issue because of its inability – despite a modicum of internal reform – to dispose of institutional racism at home, while at the same time employing a strategy of politically unproductive state terrorism rather than a fruitful *Realpolitik*, abroad.
- 41 A Seidman, "Towards ending IMF-ism in Southern Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol 27, no 1, 1989, p 19.
- 42 President Mandela at the 1994 OAU summit signalled that South Africa's initial role in African politics will be minimal. This was underscored during a later visit to Mozambique when South Africa refused to sign an African multilateral scientific cooperation agreement.
- 43 W C Peters, *Regionale Kooperation und der Konflikt im südlichen Afrika*, Hamburg: Institut für Afrika Kunde, 1987, p 116.
- 44 See R Davies, "South African regional policy before and after Cuito Cuanavale", *op cit*, p 175; Commission of the European Community, *Southern Africa and the European Community*, Brussels: EC Commission, 1990, p 19; *South Scan*, vol 7, no 33, 4 September 1992, p 253.
- 45 *South Scan*, vol 6, no 6, 29 March 1991, p 117.
- 46 R Davies, "South African strategy since Nkomati", *op cit*.
- 47 The game would seem to be to create class alliances inside and between states which would make for new forms of élite accommodation and neo-colonialism. See O Abegunnin, *Economic dependence and regional cooperation in Southern Africa*, New York: Edwin Muller, 1990. In the words of J S Saul, "the progressive vanguard has now become part of the terrain of international capitalism" See J S Saul, *Socialist ideology and the struggle for Southern Africa*, *op cit*, pp 128–129.
- 48 It necessitates also seeing to it that the national liberation movement's diplomatic, military and political presence in the region ceases, and that it puts its resources at the disposal of the state in order to win the surrounding states to this cause of regional leadership. See G Mills and S Baynham, "Changing the guard: South African foreign policy into the 1990s", *Africa Insight*, vol 20, no 3, 1990, pp 176–189.
- 49 A du Pisani, "Ventures into the interior: Continuity and change in South Africa's regional policy (1948–1991)", Paper delivered at the Conference, Southern Africa into the 1990s and Beyond, Magaliesburg, 15–19 April 1991.
- 50 Such a bill has been proposed by Angola – *South Scan*, vol 6, no 11, 22 March 1991, p 110; Such a bill could incorporate a regional workers' bill of rights, a draft for which was discussed in 1991 by the Southern African Trade Union Coordinating Council (SATUCC).
- 51 A du Pisani, *op cit*, p 32.
- 52 My special thanks to Jackie Kalley, librarian at Jan Smuts House Library, Johannesburg, for her assistance in the provision of research material for this article.





life whose mainstay was farming and food self-sufficiency.<sup>4</sup> Note that while solutions such as the green revolution based on advanced technology promise to increase the dependency of African states on world capitalist centres and so heighten the food-agriculture dichotomy, returning to the continent's traditional way of life would be perhaps the most inward looking, Africa-based suggestion. Here lies the point of departure of this paper. For we are going to examine the ways and means in which the post-colonial African state can learn and benefit from the traditional role of the state in agriculture with a view to bolstering an African rather than a foreign solution. In the process of doing this, we will touch on the historical factors that have resulted in the present crisis, especially as these crystallized during the colonial period.

The paper itself is divided into three sections. In section one, it examines the nature of the state-agriculture relationship in traditional African society. Section two is an exposition of the nature of agriculture in traditional societies. Finally, in section three, it identifies and elaborates on the important lessons to be learnt from the traditional state-agriculture nexus.

### The role of the state in agriculture in traditional African society

Perhaps the first point to be made is that, notwithstanding the rather established state-stateless classification of traditional African political systems, certain necessary state functions, including in the main those of law and order, security and welfare of the citizenry, were indeed performed in all

African societies.<sup>5</sup> Although in many of these societies, there was little differentiation of social institutions, and few manifestly political institutions could be identified, it is difficult to conceive of any of them as strictly stateless. This is the sense in which the traditional African state is being addressed: as one founded on certain basic notions of the state, latent though these may have been. Of course, from one society to the other, these notions and their corresponding institutions differed in elaboration. Thus, while centralized systems such as those in Benin, Oyo, Ghana, Mali and Songhai had well differentiated and sometimes highly complex forms of state institution, others such as the Ibo, Akan and the Gikuyu were

relatively lacking in such manifestly political institutions. Nevertheless in all these societies, basic notions converged in many areas, especially as concerns the form of the primary unit of political organization. (This primary unit, which Osaghae has referred to elsewhere as the "village community" or the "community-state", underscored the state-stateless distinction.<sup>6</sup>) It is this primary unit – the community-state that is – which is taken here to be the epitome of the state in traditional Africa.

The community-state was self-sufficient.<sup>7</sup> There was little production of surplus, so little large-scale economic development. One consequence of this was that, except in a few instances, agriculture was not a commercial enterprise.<sup>8</sup> Here we have nothing more than a self-sufficient farming state. Indeed, it is difficult to talk of the traditional state outside the context of agriculture and farming. And as the primary duty every individual owed the state was to ensure its survival, so it was that everyone in the society was a "worker", more precisely a farmer. Working, Nyerere says, was the basis and justification of traditional African socialism.<sup>9</sup> But the notion of "worker" did not here include the employer-employee distinction (arising from a "capitalist attitude of the mind") because everyone had an equal right to the land and to the resources it yielded; "it did not occur to anyone to claim it".<sup>10</sup>

Nyerere elaborates:

In traditional African society everyone was a worker. There was no other way of earning a living for the community. Even the elder, who appeared to be enjoying himself without doing any work and for



whom everybody else appeared to be working, had in fact, worked hard all his younger days.<sup>11</sup>

So important was the premium placed on work that there was room neither for indolence nor for laziness, nor was there much luxury, even for a visitor. Again, Nyerere cites a Swahili proverb "*Ngeni siku Mbili, siku ya tatu mpe jembe*" – or, in English, "Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day give him a hoe".<sup>12</sup>

Work then, like religion, was an integral part of the mechanism for the maintenance of solidarity, survival and continuity. According to Orite, "Land and religion consolidate community relations in indigenous Africa. The agricultural occupation and the systems of land tenure call for social interdependence, full employment, and non-deprivation".<sup>13</sup> The approach to work was more communal than individualist, since members of the community farmed together as a group on their individual farms or on one farm which they collectively owned. When they collectively farmed on individual farms, there was always the much needed additional labour available to meet individual (and collective) needs, including community expenses.

Understandably, the environment and low level of technology compelled cooperation; the survival of the community depended upon it. But the most plausible explanations for the communal approach to work are to be found in the communal ownership of land, which was the major means of production, and the extended family system. Not only was the ownership of land communal and held in trust by the ruler who symbolized the commu-



nity's solidarity and integrity, but the right to the products of land and labour was also communal. As Nyerere puts it:

To people in Africa, land was always recognized as belonging to the community. Each individual had a right to the use of land, because otherwise he could not earn his living, and one cannot have the right to life without also having the right to some means of maintaining life. But the African's right was simply the right to use it; he had no other right to it (nor) did it occur to him to try and claim one.<sup>14</sup>

Second, we must consider the extended family system. This ensured and gave impetus to the communal approach. A

man's children, his cousins and distant relations constituted the labour unit which tilled the soil and took charge of the livestock.<sup>15</sup> In short, the extended family was the core of communal responsibility for corporate survival. What is interesting in all this is the important fact that, except as a guarantee of community survival, agriculture was not generally a political issue. Like most other elements in the community state, it was seen in largely ritualistic terms because religion permeated the African system of thought. Consequently, as Busia could point out, "The gods or ancestors were believed to provide good hunting or fishing grounds; or help to make fishing or hunting successful; or increase supply; or ward off evil from the flocks or crops or man".<sup>16</sup> In times of famine or shortfalls in agricultural production the people found succour in sacrifices and other religious rites to appease the gods and the ancestors who were believed to be the spiritual owners of the land, responsible for soil fertility.<sup>17</sup> In terms of political economy, however, largely because of the communal conception of production, there was little status or class/power differentiation in relation to agricultural production.<sup>18</sup> The only exceptions occurred in those highly centralized systems where clear rulers/ruled distinctions had already been established and some measure of private ownership of land and farms existed.<sup>19</sup>

Three important aspects of traditional state-agriculture relations should be noted for the differences they presented when compared with present-day realities.

First, traditional food culture was inward-looking rather than outward-look-





ing. What this means is that the people were satisfied with their staple foods and sought very little variety beyond what their soils could produce. Thus, while common staples were to be found in many parts of the same geographical region, there was little man-directed diffusion of foods. It is instructive to note that many of the present-day African staples, including rice, cocoyam and cassava, were imported, and that their introduction marked the beginning of the problem of food dependency in Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Second, agricultural enterprises were on a small scale. Apart from food crops and livestock, present-day cash crops were unknown in terms of exchange value. There were no industries to be fed with agricultural raw materials, and very little inter-community trade and exchange involved food crops. The point to be noted here is that some of the present-day uses of agricultural products, as raw materials for home and foreign industries and as cash crops exported for foreign exchange, resulted from the integration of African states into the world capitalist system as mere producers of raw materials.

Third, the traditional attitude to agriculture involved little or no effort to conquer nature by applying scientific methods to boost production, control plant and livestock diseases or even increase the food yield per acre.<sup>21</sup> This is not surprising, because the mode of thought in traditional society was Platonic rather than Aristotelian, emphasising as it did the unity of all things – man, food crops, land, pebbles and rivers. Consequently, agriculture was perceived more in spiritual and ritualistic than in scientific terms. When there was drought, or famine, or shortfalls in production, the gods and ancestors were believed to be angry and

had to be appeased. At best, these agriculturalists stuck to the practice of shifting cultivation, leaving the land fallow to once again receive the blessings of the gods. This unscientific traditional attitude suited the circumstances of a small and self-sufficient community-state. The point we should note here is that the present-day scientific approach to agriculture (which necessitates the importation of fertilizers, tractors and other implements) is a product of Africa's entry into a technology-based world system.

To sum up, the community-state was basically an agrarian state. The state, as it were, "owned" the land only as the symbol of the people and gave everyone a right to use it for his own good and that of the entire community. Apart from the land itself, the state developed no other special relationship to agriculture except at times of emergency or natural disaster, such as drought and famine, when rulers had to invoke the spirits of departed ancestors (those who actually "owned" the land<sup>22</sup>) and the gods themselves. The primary role of the state that can be extrapolated from what we have said was to provide the means of livelihood for every citizen and guarantee his and the community's survival.

### The nature of agriculture in traditional African society

Traditional African agricultural arrangements can be studied as they were, first, prior to colonialism, and second, from colonial times onwards. Originally, as we have seen, the African way of life was communal, with close lineage and kinship ties. Woven on such a communal warp, the local chief of village head's web of responsibilities guaranteed the rights of all

community members to all communal resources, especially land. Broadly, decisions on the allocation, disposition and use of all land lay with the village community acting either as a body (a ruling council of elders) or through its chief. However, land could be redistributed among village members either as a result of population increase or calamities such as drought, floods, famine, war or disease. Within such communities, families had a basic right to cultivate land for their own use: they could not be evicted – put off the land – except after deliberation and decision by the entire village community.

Since the basic variable in traditional African agriculture was the farm family and its labour within a small community, the system, as Todaro points out, was characterized by three major themes.<sup>23</sup> The first was the importance of subsistence farming. Subsistence economies are usually described in negative terms because they are not exchange, or money, economies.<sup>24</sup> In all subsistence farming, however, there is generally a network of labour, land and product transactions – a local and contained economic system which integrates community life. Second, there existed in those times an abundance of land in excess of immediate requirements which permitted the general practice of shifting cultivation, which, in turn, diminished the value of land ownership as an instrument of economic and political power. Third, every family, nuclear and extended, had a right of access to land and water in the intermediate territorial vicinity – excluding those families that did not "belong" to the community even if they were members of the same tribe.

In summary, the emphasis in pre-colonial and, to some extent, early post-colonial society in Africa was on the individual farmer in the community; the state was interested in the production of food for the people without any element of intervention.

As has been emphasized in the preceding sections, agriculture featured very small on the African political grid. And it was relatively easy for people to acquire land for farming. The only exceptions were outcasts and those who had been formally ostracized, thereby losing the rights that went with membership.

Evidence abounds that the overwhelming majority of village dwellers remain, today, small-scale farmers. The advantages of small-scale farming have been recognized to include in the first place the absorption of the large labour force, since, by nature, small-scale agriculture is labour- rather than mechanization-intensive.

At this point we might with advantage look beyond the African dilemma. The Japanese experience, for one, shows that any technology can be adopted to fit small-scale farms – *if* research is specifically directed to their situation and its constraints.<sup>25</sup> As Heady argues, it is difficult to make a case for large-scale labour-intensive units in farming at the early stages of economic development, especially in states with a high manpower-land ratio.<sup>26</sup> Heady further argues that the romance of African governments with large-scale agriculture, to the detriment of small-scale agriculture, will lead to the collapse of traditional community farming and living. Such a collapse compels rural dwellers to migrate to urban centres, a move which, as we have seen in most parts of Africa, proves overburdensome to government's resources and dissipates energies required for tackling the urgent tasks of development.

### Overcoming the African food crisis: Lessons from the past

Given the wide divergence between the objectives and material conditions of traditional society and present-day realities, the temptation to dismiss any attempt at recreating the present on the basis of the past can be understood. Certainly, the circumstances and requirements of the agricultural sector today differ widely from those of traditional society. For while food was not regarded as a political variable in traditional society, it is at the heart of national and international politics today; while agriculture was not monetized in the traditional economy, for most African states today it is the mainstay of the national economy since cash and food crops constitute the major sources of wealth and foreign exchange; while traditional agriculture, again, emphasized mainly food crops for human consumption, agricultural products today feed both man *and* industry: in many instances, more agricultural produce goes into industry as raw materials than is consumed as food; while the food culture in traditional African society was inward-looking, Africans today have imbibed an "international" food culture which makes them outward-looking and dependent for part of their food requirements; while small-scale farming using elementary tools suited the traditional community, what seems to be required today is large-scale mechanized farming to meet the increased demands for food and agricultural raw materials. The list of contrasts is almost endless.

In spite of these marked differences, two facts justify an attempt to draw important lessons from the past. First, in



many parts of Africa, traditional village communities have survived in various forms, notwithstanding the profound transformations they underwent during the colonial period. One important indicator of this fact is that up to 70 per cent of the total population in individual African countries continue to dwell in villages and, in some cases, have undergone very little in the way of modernizing influences. For most of these people, agriculture remains the primary occupation, the only difference being that nowadays they have to produce enough food to feed themselves *plus something over to sell for cash with which to acquire the barest modern amenities*. Second, in searching for solutions to any problem, the analyst must always interest himself in the antecedent circumstances. In the present instance, any meaningful examination of the agricultural crisis in Africa must perforce look at the African peoples' heritage – especially since, as we have said, certain traditional structures have survived in various forms until today. On this point we must indeed agree with Olisa Awogu that present-day social formations in Africa are a product of continuity and change:

Continuity relates to the fact that the social formations have, from their inception, retained basically their traditional roots, even though they may appear "new" as the result of their development over the years. On the other hand, "change" represents the "new" in this evolutionary process.<sup>27</sup>

Having established the rationale for searching for lessons in the past, an

attempt must be made to account for the transformation in the agricultural sector in Africa and for the present crisis. Colonialism provides the most useful paradigm for this account. The major effect of the colonial regime in the agricultural sector was the increased involvement of the state. Since the *raison d'être* of the colonial enterprise was to establish a base for the provision of raw materials for metropolitan industries, the colonial state became actively involved in agriculture, especially in the production of cash crops – cocoa, rubber, timber, palm oil, and so on. Research institutes and marketing boards were set up to boost production of these crops and market them. And thus was set in motion the deleterious involvement of the state in agriculture. The concern was with *cash* rather than *food* crops. Post-colonial states acquired this unfortunate legacy and could not afford to rectify it because their leaders were obsessed with "development" – for which they needed ever more cash crops with which to purchase foreign technology. This is what has resulted in Africa's present food crisis.<sup>28</sup>

Although it has been argued by some that the African food crisis is not recent, its contemporary origins are to be found in the increasing involvement of the state in agriculture. This involvement and the emphasis on cash crops have served to erode the power and autonomy of individual small-scale, subsistence farmers; and this has greatly discouraged food production. When the food crisis manifested itself in Zambia's rice riots, in the devastating food pogrom in Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan, and in the garri queues in

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Nigeria – it was easy for governments to allude to drought and other natural disasters. But the truth is that, for too long, food production had been neglected. At best, African states have only succeeded in increasing the volume of their food imports, a move which has further compounded the problem. Our urgent task today is to surmount the crisis.

### Concluding remarks

In concluding this paper, we will identify and elaborate on important areas in which agriculture in traditional Africa can provide leads to the direction we should take. In so doing, we are not losing sight of the international or foreign dimensions of the crisis, especially as food has become a crucial variable in the calculus of national security. Happily, many scholars have addressed this aspect of the problem.<sup>29</sup> Our concern, however, is with African initiatives, in the spirit of the resolution of African leaders who formulated the Lagos Plan of Action, wherein was stated that the time has come for Africa to be inward-looking and search for indigenous solutions to the continent's crises.<sup>30</sup>

First, African states have to distinguish as clearly as possible between food and other agricultural production. If the distinction between food and raw materials is made very clearly, and efforts are concentrated separately on each sector, it will be possible to boost food production. In this way, too, multinational agricultural enterprises whose primary concern is not with food but with raw material production can be checked.

Second, as land remains the primary means of production for farming, govern-

ments should learn from the liberal land tenure systems in traditional societies. The commercialization of land in many parts of Africa today has produced a situation in which bourgeois and absentee farmers (whose primary interest is making profits) are the major farmers. The genuine farmers have been dispossessed of their lands and forced into becoming employees of the big-time farmers, a practice inconsistent with the traditional African concept of "working the land". Although the traditional view cannot well suit present circumstances, when money is required for virtually every basic need, land ownership, we believe, should be liberalized in order to give every citizen an optional right to a livelihood derived from subsistence farming. This liberalization of land ownership and use would also check the increasing erosion of the autonomy of individual farmers and reinforce the communal approach to farming.

A third point: African states should, like the traditional community-states, involve the people meaningfully in overcoming the food crisis. They should be encouraged through extension workers to return to communal farming. This will serve to reduce the high level of government involvement in food production which has failed to produce the desired results. It will also serve to check the alarming taste for foreign foods which heightens Africa's food dependency. People will re-learn to eat, in the main, what they cultivate – as they did in the past.

Finally, the introduction of mechanized agriculture should be adapted to traditional African systems of agriculture, as has been done in India. To do this efficiently, African states must encourage and fund

more research into the traditional forms of their own local agriculture. They must look especially into the question of how the traditional community state was able to sustain itself, historically, in situations of near anarchy. Here lie great challenges and great lessons.

### Notes and references

- 1 This is the major thesis of N J Vaviloff's "genetic centre theory" cited in J A A Ayoade, "Food and African survival", *Problems of Non-Alignment*, vol 2, no 3, September–November 1984, p 233.
- 2 For an elucidation of the dependent food culture, see E E Osaghae, "Food culture and the development process in Nigeria", paper presented at the National Conference on Nigerian Food Culture, Ibadan, November 1986.
- 3 In the words of P L Sharman, "... the whole sum of man's activities, the successful fulfillment of all his needs, and the creation of new needs that play so important a role in the evolution of civilization depend largely on his food requirement being met". See P L Sharman, "Population in relation to the development of agriculture", in FAO, *Studies in food and population*, Rome: FAO, 1976, p 1.
- 4 For a summary of these proposed solutions, see E E Osaghae, "The African food crisis and the crisis of development in Africa: A theoretical exploration", *Africa Quarterly*, October 1987, pp 23–51.
- 5 For this argument, see E E Osaghae, "The passage from the past to the present in African political thought: The question of relevance", paper presented at the International Conference on Traditional African Political Thought and Institutions, Ibadan, August, 1998.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 See F O Awogu, *Political institutions and thought in Africa. An introduction*, New York: Vantage Press, 1975, pp 69–92.
- 8 The only exceptions are to be found in the area of inter-community trade by barter which sometimes involved the exchange of food items. In general, however, such transactions were undertaken by strangers and women.
- 9 See J Nyerere, "Ujamaa – The basis of African socialism", in G M Mutiso and S W Rohio (eds), *Readings in African political thought*, London: Heinemann, 1975, p 513.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*
- 12 *Ibid.*
- 13 O Otite, "Issues in African Socialism", in O Otite (ed), *Themes in African social and political thought*, Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 1978, p 148.
- 14 J Nyerere, *op cit*, p 513.
- 15 As Otite puts it, "The family institution exists ... to produce the social capital for the continuity of society ...". See O Otite,

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"Issues in African Socialism", p 146. It was precisely for this reason that a high premium in traditional society was placed on having many wives and children.

- 16 K Busia, *Africa in search of democracy*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971, p 7.
- 17 Thus, in many parts of Africa, planting season and harvesting season festivals are held to appease the gods and pray for bounteous yields from the land.
- 18 Again, to cite Otite, "African societies recognize ruler-ruled, not master-servant, relationships and the contributions which society makes to the economic and political relations come within a scheme of respectful mutual involvement" See O Otite, *op cit*, p 149.
- 19 For example, among the Akans, a distinction was made between stool land – which belonged to the chief and could only be farmed by his express permission, and administrative land – which belonged to the people and was held in trust for them by the chief. See W E Abraham, *The mind of Africa*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962, pp 68–69.
- 20 See E E Osaghae, "Food culture and the development process in Nigeria".
- 21 This is not to say however that Africans had not developed or applied basic farm implements such as the hoe, pangas and the plough. In Egypt, even irrigation systems had been developed.
- 22 As Senghor puts it, "Negro-African animism makes the earth, the principal means of production among peasant peoples, into a person, a spirit. The Ancestor of the clan, the first to clear and occupy the ground, has made a pact with this



spirit, sanctified by a ritual sacrifice" See L S Senghor, "Constructive elements of a civilization of African Negro inspiration", *Présence Africaine*, nos 24 and 25, 1959, p 282.

- 23 M P Todaro, *Economic development in the Third World*, New York: Longman, 1977, pp 204–233.
- 24 G Dalton, *The development of subsistence and peasant economics in Africa*, Northwestern University Program of African Studies, Reprint Series No 6, 1964, pp 1–12.
- 25 See P Dorner and H Felstehausen, "Agrarian reform and employment: The Colum-

bian case". *International Labour Review*, 102, September 1970, pp 221–240.

- 26 E O Heady, "A recipe for meeting the world food crisis", CAED Reprint no 28, Ames: Iowa State University, 1966.
- 27 F O Awogu, *op cit*, p 9.
- 28 See E E Osaghae, "The African food crisis and the crisis of development in Africa", *op cit*.
- 29 See *ibid*.
- 30 See OAU, *Lagos plan of action for the economic development of Africa, 1980–2000*, Geneva: International Institute for Labour Studies, 1981

# Development and Africa: Changing perceptions

Douglas Rimmer, visiting Research Fellow at the Africa Institute of South Africa based at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham, examines the changing perceptions of development, especially after World War II.

**C**HANGING perceptions of economic development in Africa have mostly to do with how it can be achieved, a matter which has long been controversial and no doubt will continue to be. This article addresses the different, although closely related, question of what development has meant.

## Semantics

This term has become common currency only since World War II. In the ordinary vocabulary of economics, its place was previously filled by expressions such as "material progress". Admittedly, Marx did write about "the development of the capitalist mode of production", and about countries being more or less "developed industrially", and Schumpeter in 1911 published *The theory of economic development*. But they used the verb intransitively, just as did the more orthodox economists who wrote of progress – to refer to what happened, rather than to what was done; to outcomes, rather than to intentions; and, indeed, according to Marx, to what must inevitably occur, whether or not anyone sought it.

For the transitive verb, used in an economic context, H W Arndt tells us that we must look first to Australia about the middle of the nineteenth century. The poor and scanty population of Australia, the enormous distances and the hostile natural environment provided no grounds for expecting progress to happen there of its own accord. Rather: "It was always seen to need government initiative, action to 'develop' the continent's resources by bringing people and capital from over-

seas, by constructing railways, and by making settlement possible through irrigation and other 'developmental' public works."<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, similar views were taken of tropical Africa when it was appropriated by European powers. Joseph Chamberlain, for example, believed the private initiatives of traders inadequate to realize the full potential of tropical Africa, and argued for the building of railways and other public works by colonial governments backed financially by the British Parliament. Africa was to be actively developed.<sup>2</sup> Historians subsequently perceived this to have been the case in Canada, South Africa and India, as well as in Australia.<sup>3</sup> Further development of "the imperial estate" was frequently urged in Britain. Indeed, in 1929 Parliament passed a Colonial Development Act, primarily in the hope of promoting British exports, especially of mining equipment. Development in a transitive sense thus found its way into colonial policy and colonial history much sooner than into economics. But it meant in these contexts the exploitation of natural resources, the "opening up" of new commercial opportunities, which was not quite what development came to mean after World War II.

## Welfare

What development then came to mean was mass welfare: the undertaking by a government directly or indirectly to create material welfare for the population it governed.

While no such undertaking had been given in Africa before the 1940s, it will be

recalled that the welfare of the indigenous peoples was said to be guarded, since the imperial power acted toward them in the manner of a trustee.

But by 1940 confidence in colonial trusteeship was ebbing, and a need was being acknowledged for a more active explication of the doctrine. Popular discontents had arisen in the British empire, most notably in the West Indies, but also in the Gold Coast, where producers had held up their cocoa supplies. The colonial agitation in the later 1930s of Germany, Italy and Japan, the so-called have-not nations, had heightened sensitivity to how the "haves" were discharging their trust. Later, during the war, there was diplomatic pressure from the United States for standards to be raised in the British and other European colonies, and there was some anxiety lest America should press at the end of the war for realization of "a favorite dream of Roosevelt's",<sup>4</sup> the replacement of all colonial possessions by mandates.

In addition there were positive reasons for promoting colonial welfare. One derived from the so-called "international food movement" that was initiated at Geneva in 1935, and the object of which was to lift world demand for foodstuffs by raising nutrition nearer to the standards laid down by medical science as necessary for healthy living.<sup>5</sup> This strategy for recovery from the world economic depression was quickly widened to encompass other elements in living standards such as housing, clothing, medical care and schooling.<sup>6</sup> Having regard for grossly under-used productive capacity during the depression of the 1930s, and a belief

that this condition could well persist in peacetime, it seemed that the ideal of a better life for everyone was no longer constrained by scarcity. The constraint lay rather in demand. So: "If welfare policies mean more purchasing power", wrote Keith Hancock in 1942, "welfare policies should be encouraged from China to Peru." "Here," he continued, "among the slums of western Europe and the crowded peasantries of eastern Europe, in backward Africa and impoverished China, a vast work of development and welfare is waiting to be done: here are the new markets to be opened: here is the new way to wealth."<sup>7</sup>

About the same time, Lord Hailey was expounding "a new philosophy of colonial rule", a "constructive interpretation" of what trusteeship was becoming. Hailey acknowledged the predominant influence secured in Great Britain, through the extensions of the franchise, by sections of the population that saw the chief function of the state as "the service of their own social needs and the promotion of their physical and material welfare". He argued that, if the colonial trust was to be adequately discharged, "the function of the State for domestic purposes must apply equally to its function with regard to our Dependencies"; there too the overriding justification of government must be the serving of such material ends as higher living standards and security in employment.<sup>8</sup>

Such were the several causes by which development in its transitive sense acquired a welfare connotation. The shift in perception from exploiting resources to uplifting people is neatly caught by the enactment at Westminster, in 1940, of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act in place of the Colonial Development Act of 1929. The 1940 Act marked the end of the traditional Treasury wisdom that colonies must be financially self-sufficient. Henceforward the UK government would make loans and grants available, both to develop colonial resources and to raise up social services in the colonies. Parallel changes in the French imperial dispensation occurred soon after the end of the war; indeed, the French were readier than the British to accept the doctrine that what was done for metropolitan peoples must be done also for the colonial.<sup>9</sup>

So seriously was the work of colonial development and welfare undertaken that historians have subsequently written, with reference to East Africa, of "a second colonial occupation" as technical and administrative personnel multiplied in the early postwar years.<sup>10</sup> In the French territories, the raising of standards in the pub-

lic provision of schools and hospitals was so marked as soon to arouse controversy about whether those standards could possibly be judged appropriate to African conditions.<sup>11</sup>

So far as development was being financed by inflows of metropolitan grants and concessional loans, the direct delivery of welfare could remain its primary object.<sup>12</sup> And even greater amounts of easy public money were secured, more particularly in the British territories, through the taxing of the gains won from steeply improving terms of trade in the first postwar decade – a fiscal take that was greatly enhanced through the device of statutory export monopolies. In these benign financial conditions, the belief that government existed primarily to deliver welfare was not seriously contested: it was no less appealing to politicians eager to win elections or to retain power than to the people who hoped to benefit from public largesse. In Nigeria, for instance, leading public concerns in the 1950s were the rapid extension of primary schooling and the creation of more, and better-paid, wage-earning jobs. That development of this kind might be constrained by resources was not officially acknowledged in Nigeria until 1959, and the architect of the first national plan of 1962–1968 still found it necessary to argue that more education and better health care could be attained only through a more productive economy.<sup>13</sup> In Ghana, economic infrastructure and social services, rather than the direct production of marketable goods and services, continued to dominate planned public investment even during the supposed "big push" toward socialist industrialization in the early 1960s, just as in the last years of colonial rule.<sup>14</sup>

The political uses of welfare delivery, in cementing the nexus between rulers and ruled, explain only partly the tenacity of the welfare orientation in public spending for development. Another part of the explanation is that African governments, if and when additional resources came into their hands, spent those resources on the objects they could most readily accomplish. Such objects included more extensive public administration, the building of schools and universities, the construction of more roads and other improvements in communications, and the provision of water supplies, hospitals and clinics. Perhaps one should add military expenditure.<sup>15</sup> Much less easy to accomplish were directly productive investments in industry and agriculture; when such investments were nevertheless ventured in the public sector, the results were commonly disappointing, and sometimes disastrous.

A reason, therefore, for the generally low productivity of investment in Africa is that a large share of total investment has been public investment.

### The growth objective versus equity

By around 1960, the time of independence in most of tropical Africa, the favourable trend in the terms of trade had been checked and the reserves that had been accumulated in the early postwar years were being run down, while on the other hand government spending became more abandoned than under colonial rule. Fiscal stringency consequently appeared, along with the argument that further gains in welfare would have now to be secured indirectly through economic growth – through an increasing flow of real output, achieved by the more productive use of resources.

This argument, whose application was not of course limited to Africa, led to what came to be called the sovereignty of the growth objective: the belief that what development meant, above all, was a bigger GDP. Such sovereignty was perhaps to be found more in the development literature than in government policies, since in practice there were surely few governments that could afford to be single-minded about growth, to the exclusion of distributive concerns. Nevertheless, by the early 1970s opinion had reacted strongly against the growth objective; there occurred then a rapid transition among new development nostrums.

The initial inspiration was the failure of wage-employment to keep up with the growth of production in the "modern sectors" of developing countries. An "employment problem" was perceived. But empirical studies were paradoxically to show that involuntary unemployment was not widespread. Attention was therefore shifted from unemployment to under-employment. The latter became an ascribed status, denoting not people who worked less than they wished to work, but those who, however hard they worked, obtained only a "poverty level of returns". In this way the employment problem was transmuted into a poverty problem. The objection to a single-minded pursuit of economic growth was not that it had failed to create enough wage-employment but that it had failed to remove widespread poverty. The burden of a new approach to development became the designation of poorer people as "target groups", toward alleviation of whose condition policies ought to be directed and their success judged. Then, as means of identifying the poor, the universal

and basic human needs that had been canvassed in the later 1930s were revived: the poor were those whose actual nutrition, housing, clothing, education, health care and the like fell short of the standards established, either by science or the consensus of opinion, as necessary for health and normal human fulfilment. Satisfying these basic needs ought, it was argued, to be the first objective of development and the first charge on increments to national income.<sup>16</sup>

It became customary to speak of this new approach to development serving an "equity objective" since it would "improve" the distribution of income. These terms were ambiguous. Ideas may well differ about what distribution of income is equitable. The usual assumption was that "improvement" meant a lessening in inequality. But less inequality was neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition of poverty relief or the satisfaction of basic needs. Inequality was probably reduced in Ghana during the economic contraction of the 1970s and early 1980s in that country, but only because nearly everybody became poorer.<sup>17</sup> Conversely, the poverty of some people can be relieved by absolute increases at the low end of incomes, while as a result relative inequality actually deepens – as may well happen in the future in South Africa. Only under rather special assumptions can the link be retained between reduction in inequality and poverty relief.

The attack on the "growth objective" was in any case muted by recognition of the political difficulty of redistributing income from the richer (and more powerful) to the poorer (and weaker) sections of society. The solution was to propose that only increments of national income should be so dispensed. This solution had the interesting implication that economic growth became more, rather than less, necessary once the "equity objective" was accepted. As the title of a notable publication of the time had it, there was to be *Redistribution with growth*, or through growth.<sup>18</sup> Strenuous effort had then to be devoted to arguments purporting to show that redistributive "equity" was compatible with further growth and could even lead to its acceleration. It need hardly be said that the validity of these arguments matters greatly in South Africa today. Chief among them was the contention that the productivity of labour would be raised by a better nourished, healthier and more educated labour force. So it might, but only, unfortunately, with a lag, since it seems that capacities can best be raised by improved nutrition, health care and education among young children.

In retrospect, the arrival of the equity objective in the early 1970s may be seen as meeting the need of development agencies for a new challenge. Because of the rapid expansion of world trade since 1945, the economic growth of underdeveloped countries had not been such a desperately difficult task as had been foreseen. Growth had exceeded expectations, belied prognoses, and even defied fashionable prescriptions such as the necessity of effective central planning. The new challenge for the development agencies was found in unemployment and under-employment, the persistence of poverty, the tendency of growth to bypass the masses, inequality, and unsatisfied basic needs; and a new lease of life was given the agencies as providers of aid, advice, research and expertise. Thus the vast expansion of World Bank lending in the 1970s under the presidency of Robert McNamara was ostensibly based on the alleviation of poverty in the borrowing countries.<sup>19</sup>

The enthusiasm of the international agencies for equity objectives in the 1970s was not shared by African governments. Lip-service might be paid to these objectives, but real shifts in policy were not much in evidence. This is not to say that the growth objective was, after all, sovereign. Distribution remained central to the business of government. Supporters of the governing party had to be rewarded, opponents penalized, ethnic interests balanced, the army kept sweet, and so on. The poor, however, were not among the constituencies that had to be courted, or the pressure-groups that had to be placated. Little political pay-off could be foreseen from serving "equity" in the sense in which the ILO or the World Bank understood the term. Further, egalitarianism was not a popular cause; few people confused a desire to be better-off with policies that would make them as badly off as everyone else. There were also practical difficulties in delimiting the poor in countries where most people were badly off, and in finding policy instruments that could bring relief.

### Structural adjustment

In the 1980s equity concerns were superseded by a perceived need for the structural adjustment of most African economies. The trigger of this new perception was external indebtedness. In the 1970s the terms of trade of tropical Africa had trended upward – by 76%, according to IMF estimates.<sup>20</sup> African governments had borrowed abroad heavily on the strength of their rising revenues and the

expectation that the favourable movement of the terms of trade would continue.<sup>21</sup> The governments also followed highly expansionary fiscal policies, which increased demand for imports. Even when African export prices broke about 1980, the momentum of government spending was for some time maintained, with consequential increases in fiscal and external deficits – and this at a time when real interest rates rose sharply. The trend in the terms of trade was now reversed; between 1980 and 1987 they are said to have fallen by 32%. The coincidence of rising commitments for the service of external debt with falling export revenues obliged many African governments to seek financial support from the IMF and the assistance of the Fund in rescheduling their other foreign debts. Debt totals were increased in these ways, as they were also by arrears in payments due, the capitalization of missed interest payments, the refinancing of uninsured import credits, and fresh borrowings from the World Bank Group and bilateral aid donors. Debt burdens grew as the capacity to carry them shrank.

Both the Fund and the World Bank stipulated macroeconomic conditionalities. While the former stressed fiscal and monetary stabilization, the latter, along with bilateral donors, insisted on structural adjustment, weaknesses more fundamental than a debt crisis having been identified. African economic structures were held to have become distorted by discriminatory tax and subsidy policies, some of them applied implicitly through price fixing. Comparative advantage had thus been sacrificed, market shares in established exports diminished,<sup>22</sup> export diversification checked, and dependence on imports increased. Maladroit economic controls and subsidies had caused resources to be diverted from their socially most productive uses. In short, the tenor of policy had been anti-growth. For a return to economic growth, deregulation was needed.<sup>23</sup> Resource allocation must be governed more by the economic criteria of market-determined costs and returns, and less by politics. The implications usually included devaluation of the exchange rate, import liberalization, removal of price controls, and winding-up or privatizing state enterprises.

The medicine being prescribed, although the consultants never quite expressed it in these terms, was "growth through redistribution". In this therapy causation was reversed, by comparison with the earlier recipe through which redistribution was to be an outcome, rather than being a requirement, of

growth. The object of that earlier programme had been to shift income and assets toward "underemployed" individuals, the poorer sections of society, people whose "basic needs" were unsatisfied. The object of the new therapy was to shift income and assets toward the more productive, and away from the more parasitic, economic actors. The means to this end were deregulation. The gainers from deregulation would be those whose enterprise, efficiency and output were no longer constrained by bureaucratic controls; along with society more generally if economic growth was the outcome. The losers would be those whose livelihoods had previously been nurtured and protected by statutory monopolies, tariff protection, cost subsidization, fiscal subventions and political office or influence.

Such was the pattern of subsidization and protection in the unadjusted economies that the losers from deregulation were to be found more in the towns than in the countryside and, within urban society, were especially concentrated among the upper strata. The reforms were opposed, therefore, in just those places and among those people where opposition could most readily and effectively be organized, while popular support for the reforms, from those whom they benefited, lacked both organization and public expression. This asymmetry partly explains the weakness of the adjustment in many countries.

While the external donors have urged adjustment on African countries, their courage has not been entirely commensurate with their convictions. They have been sensitive to the pains of adjustment and the lobbying of the victims – to the loss of jobs in protected industries and public employment, the sudden increases in the living costs of people highly dependent on access to foreign exchange, the imposition of user charges on public services that were previously free or nominally priced. That these pains are balanced by the removal of burdens that were previously being carried somehow and somewhere in the form of subsidies is not regarded as sufficient compensation. The pains are rather regarded as net sacrifices made as the price of reform, and which must be abated by greater attention to "the Social Dimension of Adjustment" or, to take the case of Ghana, by the "Programme to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment".

According to critics of the work of the Washington agencies in Africa, "the burden of adjustment has fallen regressively on the poor and weak social groups".<sup>24</sup> This view is certainly incorrect; if it were

true, we should have heard much less by way of complaint against adjustment policies. In contradiction of it, the World Bank argues that "the poor" have benefited, or, at least, have been made no worse off than they were before.<sup>25</sup> Both criticism and rejoinder rather miss the point of structural adjustment, which was neither to penalize nor to benefit the poor but to shift resources toward those who could use resources more productively. Admittedly, because the internal terms of trade in the unadjusted economies were rigged against the rural areas, there might be some overlap between those who were poor and those who were potentially more productive. It must be acknowledged, however, that not all those who were poor could realistically be expected to exploit the opportunities presented by deregulation.

Structural adjustment in Africa now has a record longer than a decade.<sup>26</sup> The World Bank has attempted to show its effectiveness – those countries judged to have adjusted most having also performed best economically. For methodological reasons, these demonstrations are bound to be less than totally convincing, but more important is their failure to show great success. Thus, in the latest demonstration, which is focused on the period 1987–1991, the pay-off that is claimed from making large improvements in macroeconomic policies depends, according to the criterion principally used, entirely on three countries – Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria – in the last of which the adjustment programme has subsequently been abandoned; and on average the few countries credited with making large improvements gained little more than those that made only small improvements.<sup>27</sup>

One reason for the absence of dramatic results is that, in practice, not a great deal of structural adjustment has actually been achieved. Intractability to reform is in evidence even among the countries claimed by the World Bank to be strong adjusters.<sup>28</sup> And strong adjustment has been rare; the majority of African countries following adjustment programmes have done so partially, fitfully and without real commitment. Although progress has been made in reducing fiscal deficits and establishing more realistic exchange rates, little had been done by way of reforming the financial sector, privatizing state enterprises and improving management of the public sector. The physiognomy of African economies remains much what it was. This unresponsiveness appears to be chiefly explained by the tenacity of political control and state institutions within the economic life of Africa.

As the editors of a collection of case-studies of adjustment in Africa have ruefully concluded, "The global wind of change that is redefining the role of the state has not yet swept these countries."<sup>29</sup> Consequently, as the World Bank suggests, the disappointing economic performance of the last decade in Africa might be attributed less to "the failure of adjustment" than to "the failure to adjust".<sup>30</sup>

A second reason for the absence of dramatic results is that domestic economic policies are not the only determinant of economic performance, even in the short term. If any evidence is needed, it is shown by Africa's pre-adjustment experience. Policies then became increasingly perverse, price relationships increasingly distorted, yet until 1980 or thereabouts the economies mostly expanded, and did so briskly in some countries and at some times. Evidently, the failings of policy were more than compensated by exogenous factors like expanding world markets, the trend in the terms of trade, the ready availability and cheapness of external credit, capital inflows into mining and manufacturing and the favourable rainfall of the 1950s and 1960s.

Those exogenous factors subsequently turned sour. Droughts reappeared from the early 1970s. The momentum of world economic growth was checked in the mid-1970s. By about 1980 the terms of trade had shifted adversely. External credit became no longer easily available, nor cheap. These negative changes exposed policy mistakes. But changing the policies – so far as they were changed – could not restore the palmy external conditions of the earlier years. Structural adjustment could not, for instance, produce a new boom in African export prices. Indeed, through increasing the production of African export commodities, it tended toward the opposite effect, as has often been pointed out,<sup>31</sup> unless that increased production displaced supply from elsewhere in the world.

The World Bank makes light of adverse movements in Africa's terms of trade, arguing that they contributed only marginally to the reduction in growth rates in the 1970s and early 1980s, and in any case were partly compensated by higher external transfers.<sup>32</sup> Different judgements about the significance of the terms of trade can be reached if a different time-period is chosen for comparison, and if the experience of individual countries, rather than that of the region as a whole, is considered.<sup>33</sup> As to the higher external transfers, they are in a sense bad news for Africa, no matter how desirable they may be in order to maintain public services, to

relieve need and to meet emergencies. For the flow of these transfers testifies to the lack of creditworthiness among African governments. And it is also a tacit acknowledgement of the absence of risk capital, which would be used for productive investments driven by an expectation of profit, and which, if successful, would produce growth in the long term, rather than immediate relief.

Inflows of commercial loans and risk capital to Africa were other things that the Fund and the Bank and the bilateral donors could not deliver, albeit there was perhaps some expectation that they would accrue as a reward for structural adjustment. Although there has occurred in the early 1990s a rise in private investment flows to developing countries so remarkable as to call into question the need for public development agencies, Africa has not shared in this revival. Even including North Africa, the region accounted for only 6% of foreign direct investment in all developing countries in 1992, according to Unctad; such as it was, this investment was largely confined to the oil industries of Nigeria, Angola and Egypt. Even the IBRD (the World Bank proper) has shrunk from lending in Africa, and nearly all the support from the World Bank Group has instead been provided through the highly concessional International Development Association.<sup>34</sup>

Several factors deter foreign direct investment. One is the debt overhang. So long as the debt obligations of African countries remain greatly in excess of their ability to pay, so long there will be uncertainty that exchange transactions will remain free enough, or exchange rates stable enough, for foreign investors to remit profits and repatriate capital. A second factor is lack of confidence in African governments, both in the continuity of their current policies and their ability to provide a legal and administrative environment that is sufficiently enabling for business enterprise. A third is the costliness of production in Africa relative to other places, which is partly the result of a need to make good deficiencies in the publicly-provided infrastructure. A final, composite, factor is the shortage of investment opportunities, a shortage which has been temporarily exacerbated by such steps toward stabilization and adjustment as have been made.

These factors inhibit domestic as well as foreign private investment. Investment ratios have been low in Africa during the era of structural adjustment. The chief cause is the run-down in public capital spending as a result of falling revenues, efforts to reduce fiscal deficits and the

loss of external creditworthiness. While this contraction is frequently deplored, its effects on economic growth are ambivalent, public investments in the recent past having been less a cause than a result of increases in the GDP. The depressed levels of private investment are more a matter of concern. Except in enclaves such as oil extraction, they can be expected to persist so long as confidence remains low and uncertainty high.

### Conclusion: Growth and redistribution

To summarize, development since World War II has been interpreted as the purposive actions of governments to deliver welfare and raise living standards. Favourable external conditions during the last phase of colonialism in most of tropical Africa allowed the welfare to be delivered directly and at little political cost. As external conditions became less favourable, it appeared that additional welfare could be secured only through economic growth. Speaking as it did of current sacrifices, austerity and the deferment of hopes, this perception lacked political appeal and was accordingly embraced less than wholeheartedly in practice. It also aroused academic disapproval for its alleged inattention to distributive issues – more particularly, to under-employment, poverty, and unmet basic needs. The growth objective was then qualified in the development literature by a concern for “equity”. In practice, it is unlikely that any African government ever lost sight of distributive concerns, albeit its ideas of an equitable distribution might well differ from those of the international development agencies.

In the 1980s the debt crisis and its exposure of the distortions which policies had wrought in African economic structures produced another perception. Instead of redistribution being made possible by growth, it was now seen as a prerequisite of growth. And the poor were no longer, except rather adventitiously, to be the group favoured by redistribution. Rather the redistribution that was needed would be in favour of the more economically efficient, enterprising and productive sections of society.

The structural adjustment of African economies has not been a conspicuous success. One reason is that exogenous factors have not been helpful. More importantly, there has not been a great deal of structural adjustment. A dilemma is intrinsic in the reform proposals: execution of the prescriptions for adjustment, like execution of the earlier prescriptions in favour of “equity”, lie in the hands of

just those people whose own power and livelihoods would be thus put at risk.

In the literature can be found the argument that this dilemma could be resolved by delegating the design and implementation of economic policies to powerful “technocrats” who are insulated from social pressures and political exigencies, and able therefore to effect a switch from “distributionist logics to productionist ones”.<sup>35</sup> This idea that policies may be entrusted to Platonic guardians and kept apart from politics is one that has long attracted both academics and administrators. It underlay the vogue for development planning in Africa. It tends to resurface in the aftermath of every military coup. Arguably, it was actually observed under colonial rule, at least with respect to the domestic politics of the colonial dependencies, and until internal self-government was introduced.<sup>36</sup> And attempts have to been made to restore it, during the era of structural transformation, by the appointment to key posts of men who, having previously worked for the Washington agencies, are thus thought to be inoculated against the political pathogens of their own countries. The idea is nevertheless consonant only with extraordinary social conditions, and in the ordinary case must be considered Utopian. As Schumpeter observed, “Nobody has attained political maturity who does not understand that policy is politics.”<sup>37</sup>

Where considerations of growth, rather than of distribution, become politically paramount, the reason is not that policies have been entrusted to Platonic guardians but that power is concentrated in those social groups whose interests are best served by growth. Such was the case, according to Marx, in nineteenth-century England, and such is the case, perhaps, in the newly industrialized countries of South-Eastern Asia. In England, however, and elsewhere in the older industrialized world, the parameters of economic policies shifted in ways that increased the importance of distribution relative to growth – first, as a result of the extension of the franchise; second, and more rapidly, through the impact of the great depression of the 1930s. This shift was communicated to Africa through the “constructive interpretation” of colonial trusteeship in the 1940s, and African politics were such as there to entrench it.

### Notes and references

- 1 H W Arndt, “Economic development: A semantic history”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol 29, no 3, 1981, p 462.

- 2 The parallel between Australia and Africa was noted by S Herbert Frankel, *Capital investment in Africa*. London: Oxford University Press, 1938, p 14n.
- 3 H W Arndt cites L C A Knowles, *The economic development of the British Overseas Empire* (1924) and Vera Anstey, *The economic development of India* (1929).
- 4 William L Neumann, *Making the peace, 1941–1945*. Washington, DC: Foundation for Foreign Affairs, 1950, p 91.
- 5 See John D Black, “The international food movement”, *American Economic Review*, vol 33, December 1943. The movement led directly to the establishment in 1945 of the Food and Agriculture Organization as the first of the specialized agencies of the United Nations.
- 6 See Douglas Rimmer, “Basic Needs’ and the origins of the development ethos”, *Journal of Developing Areas*, vol 15, January 1981.
- 7 W K Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth affairs: Vol II problems of economic policy 1918–1939*, Part 2. London: Oxford University Press, 1942, pp 326, 327–8.
- 8 Lord Hailey, “A new philosophy of colonial rule: The state and its overseas dependencies”, *United Empire*, vol 32, no 8, 1941, pp 163–9. Hailey went on to state the implications of this doctrine that were to become familiar in Africa after the war – official responsibility for mobilizing the assets of a territory, for promoting secondary industries, for organizing internal marketing, for stabilizing earnings from export commodities. Even the legal compulsion of dependent peoples to secure adequate subsistence or follow approved methods of cultivation might be warranted, being analogous to the safeguarding of “sanitary or hygienic conditions” in the UK. Attitudes characteristic of the aftermath of the great depression can be perceived in these statements.
- 9 The French constitution of April 1946 and the first *Loi Lamine Gueye* declared all French Africans to be citizens of a French Union, within which they were possessed of the same political and legal rights as the French themselves. While this principle was to be quickly retracted, the labour legislation of 1950 and 1952, requiring the equal remuneration for equal work of Africans and Frenchmen in the colonies, and attempting to equalize the conditions of wage-employment between the colonies and France, may be seen as measures that were consonant with it.
- 10 D A Low and J M Lonsdale, “Introduction: Towards the New Order 1945–1963”, in D A Low and Alison Smith (eds), *History of East Africa*, Vol III. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976, pp 12–16.
- 11 See Rene Dumont, *False start in Africa*. London: Andre Deutsch, 1966, especially cc 3, 6 and 7 *L’Afrique noire est mal partie*, the French original, was published in 1962.
- 12 Another powerful, but – as it turned out – transitory, reason for the heightened interest in colonial development was the “dollar shortage” of the later 1940s and early 1950s, in response to which attempts were made to substitute African for American supplies of primary commodities.
- 13 Douglas Rimmer, “Development in Nigeria: An overview”, in Henry Bienen and V P Diejomaoh (eds), *The political economy of income distribution in Nigeria*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981, pp 41–42. A reversion to the belief that resources did not constrain development was made possible by the boom in oil export revenues between 1974 and 1981.
- 14 Douglas Rimmer, *Staying poor: Ghana’s political economy, 1950–1990*, Oxford: Pergamon for the World Bank, 1992, pp 87–88.
- 15 The Nigerian army in the 1970s was described as a vast system of out-door relief.
- 16 Leading items of the literature include David Turnham and Ingelies Jaeger, *The employment problem in less developed countries*. Paris: Development Centre of the OECD, 1971; *Employment, incomes and equality: A strategy for increasing productive employment in Kenya*. Geneva: ILO, 1972; the first biennial review of *The International Development Strategy*, New York: UN, 1973, by the Secretary-General of the United Nations; and *Employment, growth and basic needs: A one-world problem*. Geneva: ILO, 1976.
- 17 D Rimmer, *Staying poor, op cit*, pp 170–177.
- 18 Hollis Chenery *et al*, *Redistribution with growth: Policies to improve income distribution in developing countries in the context of economic growth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank and the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1974.
- 19 Another explanation of the appearance of the “new approach” to development is that rapid economic growth in the Third World, as previously in the First and Second Worlds, had awakened populist sentiments – as shown, for instance, by the prominence now given to the urban informal economy, the efficiency attributed to peasant farming, the claims made for “intermediate” or “appropriate” technology, and the complaints against “urban bias” See Gavin Kitching, *Development and underdevelopment in historical perspective: Populism, nationalism and industrialization*. London: Methuen, 1982, c 4. A third explanation is that the green revolution engineered by agronomists, plant-breeders and geneticists had obliged social scientists to reassert the value of their own contribution to development.
- 20 Joshua Greene, *The external debt problem of sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, DC: IMF Working Paper, 17 March, 1989.
- 21 Or, in the case of such mineral-exporting countries as Zambia, Zaïre, Liberia and Mauritania, an expectation that the price movements for copper and iron ore were about to emulate those for agricultural export commodities.
- 22 In primary products other than oil, by one-half between 1970 and 1983, according to the World Bank: *Africa’s adjustment and growth in the 1980s*. Washington, DC: World Bank 1989, p 2.
- 23 An opposing view, expressed most notably by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (*African alternative framework to structural adjustment programmes for socio-economic recovery and transformation* (Addis Ababa, nd)) was that the policy-contrived structural transformation of African economies was in the long run more “developmental” than their adjustment along the lines of current comparative advantage. See Douglas Rimmer, “Growth versus transformation revisited”, *African Affairs*, vol 89, January 1990.
- 24 Bade Onimode (ed), *The IMF, the World Bank and the African debt*. London: Zed Books, 1989, vol 2, p 192.
- 25 See *Adjustment in Africa: Reform, results and the road ahead*. Oxford: Oxford University Press for the World Bank, pp 162–174, and the concluding sections of the country chapters in Ishrat Husain and Rashid Faruque (eds) *Adjustment in Africa: Lessons from country case studies*. Washington DC: World Bank, 1994.
- 26 In Kenya and Senegal since 1980, in Côte d’Ivoire since 1981, in Tanzania since 1982, in Ghana since 1983.
- 27 *Adjustment in Africa: Reform ...*, *op cit*. On the median average, six strongly improving countries increased their annual rate of growth in GDP per head by 1.9 percentage points between 1981–1986 (denoted, somewhat arbitrarily, the pre-adjustment period) and 1987–1991, but for three of these countries (The Gambia, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe) the median change was in fact negative. In nine weakly improving countries, the median increase was 1.5 percentage points, not much less than in the first group. Admittedly, not to improve at all spelt retrogression. Among eleven countries in this category the median rate of change appears as *minus* 2.6 percentage points. But they included seven of the countries saddled, through their monetary arrangements with France, with the over-valued CFA currency. They also included Mozambique.
- 28 See the chapters on Ghana, Tanzania and Nigeria in *Adjustment in Africa: Lessons from country case studies, op cit*.
- 29 *Adjustment in Africa: Lessons from country case studies, op cit*, p 427.
- 30 *Ibid*, p 16.
- 31 As the “fallacy of composition” argument, much used by critics of structural adjustment programmes, and in turn criticized by defenders of adjustment. See Elliot Berg, “Reappraising export prospects and regional trade arrangements”, in Douglas Rimmer (ed), *Action in Africa*. London: Royal African Society with James Currey, 1993.

- 32 *Adjustment in Africa: Reform ... op cit*, pp 26–31. Oddly, while the text addresses a deteriorating trend between 1970 and 1986, the data used in an accompanying diagram show this trend as occurring between 1977 and 1991 for Sub-Saharan Africa excluding Nigeria, and between 1984 and 1991 if Nigeria is included.
- 33 In *Economic adjustment in low-income countries: Experience under the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility*. Washington, DC: IMF, 1993, favourable changes in the terms of trade are shown to have enhanced the success of ESAF loans in Malawi and Senegal, but unfavourable changes to have counteracted the facility in Uganda and Madagascar.
- 34 Of total lending by the World Bank to borrowers in sub-Saharan Africa, the IDA provided 64% in fiscal years 1985–1989, 84% in 1990–1994 and 97% in the last two years, 1993–1994: *World Bank Annual Report 1994*, Washington, DC: World Bank, 1994, Table 5–2, p 80. It may be added that very few sub-Saharan governments are now considered eligible for loans from the African Development Bank: for support from Abidjan, most must seek access to the concessional African Development Fund.
- 35 Thomas M Callaghy, "Political passions and economic interests: Economic reform and political structure in Africa", in Callaghy and John Ravenhill (eds), *Hemmed in: Responses to Africa's economic decline*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp 470–475.
- 36 As Guy Hunter disarmingly put it: "A colonial civil servant can follow policy – what is felt to be best for the country; an African politician must also follow politics – what his constituents will support. Much of the alarm of the Colonial Service at the vote-catching statements of African politicians sprang from this difference": *The new societies of tropical Africa*, London: Oxford University Press, 1962, p 273n.
- 37 Quoted by Arthur Smithies in his memorial of Schumpeter, *American Economic Review*, vol 60, 1950, p 644.

# Local economic strategies in South Africa: Lessons from Britain's local enterprise boards

Prof C M Rogerson, of the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of the Witwatersrand, examines the lessons for developing local economic strategies in South Africa from the experience of important British initiatives concerning local enterprise boards.\*

## Introduction: The rise of local development initiatives

LOCAL economic strategies are a key aspect of the broader issue of local economic development planning. It must be acknowledged, however, that the development of local economic strategies and of place entrepreneurialism is not a new phenomenon in South Africa. A history of local development initiatives may be traced back as far as the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, a striking feature of the early 1990s has been the emergence of a range of new local economic development initiatives across the country.<sup>2</sup> Among these initiatives are those for "Growing the Cape", Operation Jumpstart in Durban, the Stutterheim initiative and Johannesburg's strategic vision for developing as a "world city".<sup>3</sup>

In contemporary South Africa the question of local economic development

planning has emerged as a vital policy issue for, at least, three reasons. First, initiatives for local and subregional development planning grew in the context of the transition towards political democracy. The Reconstruction and Development Programme, for example, stresses the crucial importance of establishing representative local institutions in order "to foster the growth of local economies" and "to address local economic development needs".<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the White Paper Discussion Document on the RDP reiterates the significance attached to local authorities as potentially key agencies for extending local control and managing local economic development.<sup>5</sup> A second vital factor undoubtedly was the central government's historical retreat from a failed "top-down" regional development policy to favour instead a system of deregulated regional development planning which made room for local entrepreneurialism.<sup>6</sup> Finally, South African moves towards a greater emphasis on local economic development initiatives reflect also international trends in the 1980s and 1990s, particularly in Western Europe and North America, where a shift in the locus of responsibility for development is occurring from national to local levels of government.<sup>7</sup>

The rise of this "new localism"<sup>8</sup> in development planning is attributed to a series of changes occurring in contemporary capitalism which "are at present heightening the economic, social and political significance of each locality"<sup>9</sup> One vital theme has been that, despite trends towards internationalization, local economic initiatives must become stronger rather than weaker. In an era of global economic restructuring, when localities are increasingly being affected by social forces beyond their borders, "the desire is actually growing for regions to become more active protagonists rather than passive recipients of external change".<sup>10</sup> Further boosting the scope for local initiatives have been the new openings for local economic intervention that arise from the relative demise of Fordist production systems and the vertical disintegration of production to "flexible" small firms.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Sengenberger suggests that considerable inducements to activate the local level of policy intervention "came from the spread of success stories featuring local development", particularly of industrial districts in Italy.<sup>12</sup>

Internationally, local authority response has involved the evolution of several key programmes, one of the most important being the crystallization of local develop-

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ment strategies. Although municipal actors and authorities have been involved in economic promotion, boosterism and industrial development work for many years, much of this activity was of a fragmented character. As one critic noted, only on the most imaginative base could this activity be described as a local economic strategy.<sup>13</sup> In a useful intervention, Cochrane makes the important point that only recently has it realistically been possible to speak of local economic strategies, whether in USA, the UK or Western Europe. The term strategy is understood here to mean "a more or less integrated set of initiatives directed towards the achievement of relatively clear goals".<sup>14</sup>

Broadly speaking, the shift from fragmented policy-making and the accumulation of activities towards the development of conscious local strategies is dated to the period of the late 1970s and early 1980s. This watershed phase coincides with a "policy revolution" in both North America and Western Europe consequent upon the election of the first Thatcher government in 1979 and of Ronald Reagan in 1980.<sup>15</sup> Until the 1980s the dominant policy direction in the USA and across Western Europe was to seek to insulate their economies and more especially, their declining regions, cities and localities from the consequences of global economic restructuring.<sup>16</sup> However, following major shifts in the directions of urban policy on both sides of the Atlantic, introduced by Thatcher and Reagan, "adjustment rather than resistance to global economic change became the new *leitmotif* of national policies".<sup>17</sup> Since the 1980s new scholarly perspectives have appeared on the relationship of cities to processes of international restructuring. Instead of merely cataloguing the systematic forces in the international economy propelling many older industrial cities and regions into decline, seeing them as passive victims of restructuring, new emphasis is given to the role of human agency in accelerating, retarding, or reversing processes of economic change. It is stressed that "most cities are not the helpless pawns of international finance, industry and commerce. They are in a position to mediate and direct their own destinies".<sup>18</sup> Some critics argue, however, that proposals for intervention assume that the local economy is a coherent entity which can be influenced by strategic policies; yet, in many instances, "the 'local economy' is something of a myth" being really "so fragmented that they are not meaningful economic units" for strategic intervention.<sup>19</sup>

The objective in this article is to draw together and review certain major debates surrounding the development of local

economic strategies. Specifically, the focus is upon extracting certain lessons from the British experience for local economic development planning in South Africa. In several regions and cities of Britain the effects of international restructuring were dramatic in terms of the demise of the traditional economic base. Indeed, the effects of restructuring on the traditional urban-industrial bases of cities such as Liverpool, London, or Birmingham reveal just "how rapidly industrial centres can become depressed areas and how deeply seated the barriers to reversing industrial decline can be".<sup>20</sup> As Fainstein observes: "One of the main lessons of the past two decades is that the economic composition of places seems to have become less and less permanent".<sup>21</sup>

It is important to acknowledge that at the core of much new thinking since the 1980s has been an attempt to forge true local strategies for regeneration. It is these strategic interventions in Britain that constitute the discussion focus in this article. More particularly, the task is to examine the workings and activities of one specific set of strategic initiatives which grew in strength in the UK during the Thatcher years, namely the activities of local enterprise boards.

### Local enterprise boards: Workings and activities

One of Britain's leading analysts on local economic development issues, Phil Cooke, avers that "one success story of British local government in the recent past has been the innovative Local Enterprise Board idea".<sup>22</sup> Enterprise boards emerged during the 1980s in a number of Labour-controlled local authorities in the face of the Thatcher government's hostility to planning by such local authorities.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the central government decided that the private sector rather than local authorities should lead the economic regeneration of Britain's declining regions and cities, and introduced such initiatives as city action teams, enterprise zones and, most importantly, urban development corporations.<sup>24</sup> Against these policy initiatives to accord leadership roles to the private sector and "market forces", a number of local authorities developed a range of alternative initiatives which first "introduced the notion of economic strategy to the language of local economic policy-making".<sup>25</sup> Despite significant differences between the actual direction of the new strategies, they were grounded in a common three-pronged critique of:

- old local government policies which were largely interpreted as subservient

to private capital and unlikely to challenge its priorities;

- the old national policies of the Labour Party which were criticized for being more concerned with the demands of employers than of the interests of workers or communities; and
- the Thatcher government policies which blamed state involvement for economic decline, suggesting that the harsh medicine of the market and of enterprise zones could revive flagging urban economies.<sup>26</sup>

Taking the lead in developing the new initiatives were a group of metropolitan counties and a few metropolitan districts. The best known were the Greater London Council (GLC) (and Greater London Enterprise Board), West Midlands County Council (and West Midlands Enterprise Board), Lancashire Enterprises Limited, Derbyshire Enterprise Board, and the West Yorkshire Enterprise Board (later to be renamed Yorkshire Enterprise Limited).

Local enterprise boards were at the "cutting edge" of new initiatives for developing local economic strategies.<sup>27</sup> Although these agencies varied somewhat in their organizational structures, political outlook and functions, essentially they were "economic development companies set up by local authorities to provide corporate investment".<sup>28</sup> Enterprise boards were "able to invest in local companies and cooperative enterprises – through loans or equity shareholding with the longer-term aim of sustaining a healthy economy and maintaining local employment, while at the same time generating financial returns healthy enough to ensure their own long-term survival".<sup>29</sup> In particular, their core focus was direct "investment in local jobs and industry".<sup>30</sup> One aspect of the philosophy underpinning the boards' establishment was that traditional local authority support to private industry, through property development and place boosterism, was an insufficient response to economic decline.<sup>31</sup> Instead, what was required was a coherent intervention and involvement in economic planning which, in two cases, at least, extended to influencing the process of economic restructuring. In the case of the Greater London Enterprise Board (GLEB) the concern was to achieve a "restructuring for labour", promoting a new socialist market economy with investments geared to create "high quality long term jobs" that were linked to the specific social priorities of the GLC. These priorities included the particular needs of women and ethnic minorities, and the development of new forms of industrial organization and

control.<sup>32</sup> In the case of the West Midlands Enterprise Board (WMEB) the goal was to facilitate a process of economic restructuring which would strengthen the regional industrial base.<sup>33</sup> In contrast to the activities of these two high-profile agencies, other enterprise boards developed largely as investment agencies with a remit that extended sometimes to skills training and technology initiatives.<sup>34</sup>

A distinguishing feature of enterprise boards was their venture capital activity.<sup>35</sup> In particular, support was directed at the needs of indigenous industry, rejecting the approach of redistributive regional policy and of "beggar-my-neighbour" local authority promotion of areas for footloose capital.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, priority was accorded to supporting manufacturing industry in recognition of the importance of this activity in the authorities' local economies, rejecting the notion that service-led development or sunrise high technology sectors could compensate for the demise of the urban-industrial base. In the West Midlands case it was acknowledged that while there might be new firms and industries developing in the region, these would exert only a marginal role in regenerating the local economy; the key was to be a commitment to restructure the existing manufacturing base.<sup>37</sup> It was argued generally that support for local industries should focus on direct capital investment, generally in the form of shareholdings and long-term loans. In addition, as low levels of investment were interpreted to be the key reason for the decline of UK manufacturing, partly as a result of "unfavourable investment policies" pursued by the major financial institutions, the need was seen for "regionally based investment agencies to provide development capital for local manufacturing industry".<sup>38</sup> In contrast to private sector venture capital funding, the functioning of enterprise boards in providing venture capital was motivated by the "capital-gap" explanation of industrial decline. More specifically, in the case of London, the task was to invest in private companies as a means of pursuing the specific economic and social goals of the GLC, the governing charter enabling the board to invest according to a *social* and not a private rate of return.<sup>39</sup>

The new initiatives were towards reconstruction of local economies through the renewal of indigenous firms and sectors and strengthening of linkages within the local economy. Such "reconstructionist" interventions were to be based on detailed analysis of the structure of local activity and strategically informed by the nature of economic restructuring.<sup>40</sup> As Marshall

stresses: "Enterprise board investments are set within the context of an analysis of, and strategy for, whole industrial sectors rather than the individual enterprise".<sup>41</sup> The sector strategy approach, which was most strongly developed in the West Midlands, centres on "developing intra- and inter-firm organisational responses to industrial decline" and premised on the view that "competitive advantage is not pre-given but can be created".<sup>42</sup> In London the emphasis for enterprise board interventions centred on investments to search out firms "that could become catalysts for sector intervention".<sup>43</sup> Approved investment criteria included intervention in key firms that could influence strategic planning of an entire sector, intervention where sector-wide competitive advantage could be created, and intervention to promote industrial districts.<sup>44</sup>

By contrast to the pro-active role undertaken by these two particular enterprise boards, the investment approach of other boards was reactive as typified by the activities of the West Yorkshire Enterprise Board. In this particular example, the enterprise board promoted its services actively as an answer to the "funding gap" which existed in the regions catering primarily for the risk-finance needs of small and medium-sized industrial enterprise.<sup>45</sup> In a similar vein, Lancashire Enterprises Ltd functioned to overcome the problem of lack of finance for many local enterprises.<sup>46</sup> Overall, the role of the British enterprise boards in respect of stimulating local SMEs was noteworthy. Even in London, where it was evident that the enterprise board was "not an agent capable of generating restructuring", its investments were significant in assisting "small new enterprises which can take advantage of new markets created by existing restructuring processes or by the invention of new products".<sup>47</sup>

The final aspect of enterprise board operations concerns their public accountability and funding. The activities of enterprise boards were democratically accountable to elected local authorities which furnished the majority of their board's directors.<sup>48</sup> Financing for enterprise boards was obtained from local authority rate monies and council pension funds; in the cases of the larger boards the available funds were substantial with GLEB receiving £60 million and WMEB £16 million. The financial situation of these agencies was radically altered after 1986 with Thatcher's abolition of the metropolitan councils (such as the GLC) resulting in the winding-up of some smaller boards (eg the Merseyside Enterprise Board) and the drastic curtail-

ment in the activities of others.<sup>49</sup> Several boards sought external funding through bank loans guaranteed by the local authority; others formed unit trusts jointly managed with private sector institutions furnishing a facility whereby pension funds can be applied within regions.<sup>50</sup>

### Assessing the record of local enterprise boards

Scholarly assessments of the experience of enterprise boards have been broadly favourable. Several observers stress the successes of the main boards.<sup>51</sup> These have demonstrated "that it is possible to identify profitable investment opportunities in areas and regions which have previously been rejected by more traditional investment institutions based in the City of London. They have shown this so efficiently that ... they have begun to meet increased competition from specialist (regionally oriented) agencies based in the private sector".<sup>52</sup> In particular, Gunnell highlights the record of Yorkshire Enterprises Ltd in remaining "both profitable and able to invest four years after it last received public funding because, like other venture capital companies, it has made investments which have been very successful in commercial terms as well as in retaining jobs".<sup>53</sup> In addition, the records of all "the enterprise boards stress the 'leverage' they have been able to achieve - succeeding in getting anything from £3 to £5 from financial institutions for every £1 they invest".<sup>54</sup>

It is argued that a list of successful initiatives "from science parks to product development and management buy-outs, can be put together to illustrate the achievements of the enterprise boards ... new forms of training have been developed and targeted on disadvantaged groups and equal opportunity policies have begun (in a modest way) to improve access to better jobs for ethnic minorities and women".<sup>55</sup> This assessment is confirmed by the experience of Lancashire Enterprises Ltd (LEL) which "continues to go from strength to strength" seemingly having overcome the problem of lack of finance by raising funds from the cooperative and other banks.<sup>56</sup> Overall, Cooke avers that "LEL may have shown the way to developing the local assets which can enable relatively successful locally-responsible and accountable partnership arrangements to develop and flourish".<sup>57</sup> Although the circumstances of the 1980s were extremely hostile to local intervention policies in the UK another observer asserts that "there are some distinct achievements suggesting that the provision, but not nec-

essarily the management, of venture capital is a proper and positive role for those local authorities with a large resource base".<sup>58</sup> Further, it is concluded that "Enterprise Boards have shown that there is a very practical role to be played in improving market mechanisms in the supply of capital to the smaller firm at the sub-national level".<sup>59</sup>

Against the commercial success of the enterprise boards and their roles in local job creation must be set their limited successes as agents of local economic restructuring.<sup>60</sup> It is argued that even in the case of the GLEB the majority of investments were more "opportunistic than strategic" in the sense of contributing towards the restructuring objectives of the GLC.<sup>61</sup> It is important that the purpose of enterprise boards should not simply be "to fill a finance gap".<sup>62</sup> As Best urges, if "enterprise boards are to become an instrument of industrial revitalisation they must transcend the lender-of-last-resort role and become a catalyst for sector restructuring".<sup>63</sup> In the case of the GLEB, unintentionally it "slipped into the role of a lender of last resort and, in the process, played only a limited restructuring role"; "it became overwhelmed by efforts to save client firms to the neglect of promoting the adoption of new principles of production organisation which involves changing relations between worker and manager, worker and machine, and between firm and firm".<sup>64</sup> Best argues that an effective local industrial policy depends upon "flexible specialisation" and that there should be a separation of institutional functions. In detail, "enterprise boards should specialise in developing sector strategies and promoting sector infrastructures; financial institutions should specialise in the provision of finance. But rather than locating both activities, and others as well, in one organisation, they should be in separate networked organisations".<sup>65</sup>

Against the London experience must be set, however, the greater success story of the West Midlands Enterprise Board (WMEB) in developing a sectoral policy for regional economic restructuring. As Elliott and Marshall state, the "WMEB has gained widespread recognition for the implementation of its approach to sector strategy and for the lessons the West Midlands' experience might yield for other regions and localities".<sup>66</sup>

### The experience of the West Midlands

The West Midlands region exemplifies the activities of what is, perhaps, the most successful enterprise board in the United

Kingdom experience. In particular, as regards local development strategies, the experience of this particular enterprise board is highly instructive. Totterdill suggests that the "West Midlands Enterprise Board probably offers the clearest link between restructuring and intervention with its heavy emphasis on sectoral strategy".<sup>67</sup>

During the 1980s the West Midlands Enterprise Board was the agency responsible for developing and implementing a wide-ranging strategy to regenerate the region's ailing manufacturing base.<sup>68</sup> One of the major aims of this enterprise board was "to encourage the restructuring of industrial sectors in order to make them more competitive in the world market".<sup>69</sup> The WMEB was founded by the County Council in 1982 as a source of development capital for investment in the local manufacturing economy. After the abolition of the County Council in 1986 it "took on a wider range of economic development functions enabling it to fulfil the role of a strategic, conurbation-wide agency for economic regeneration".<sup>70</sup>

The most distinctive and innovative aspect of the work of this enterprise board was its "reliance on a sector-based industrial strategy".<sup>71</sup> This sector strategy was evolved as an alternative to the Thatcher government's anti-interventionist stance towards industry but also to the attempts at sectoral intervention pursued by previous Labour governments. The sector strategy was based upon an analysis that disclosed a history of underinvestment, technological backwardness and a collapse in skills training in the inter-linked complex of manufacturing activities that traditionally formed the heart of the West Midlands economy. As argued by Marshall, the "single most important factor in the decline of West Midlands manufacturing has been underinvestment in the new products, productive techniques and skills required to preserve the region's competitive position in world markets".<sup>72</sup>

The WMEB was to lead an explicit industrial strategy geared to revive investment and employment in West Midlands manufacturing "while making all public investment accountable to those who lived and worked in the area".<sup>73</sup> Instead of the former practice of providing grant aid to industry, the WMEB provided investment in the form of equity stakes and long-term loans to indigenous manufacturing firms initially with over 100 employees, a size requirement subsequently reduced to fifty employees. Moreover, in terms of technology, the emphasis in the West Midlands Technology Transfer Centre was "to support the tech-

nological upgrading of *existing*, indigenous manufacturing sectors rather than to foster the development of new, high-technology industries".<sup>74</sup> Seven principles for economic regeneration guided the strategy of the WMEB. These were:

- The region's future prosperity rested upon the survival and strengthening of its indigenous industries.
- There was an urgent need to increase the flow of long-term investment funds into the region.
- There was a need for public accountability and a return on investment from public funds.
- There was a need to invest in human skills as well as industrial and economic infrastructure.
- There existed within the community a series of energies and talents that could be mobilized to forge new employment opportunities.
- Poverty was an integral part of the region's problems and direct measures were required to reduce it.
- Positive steps were needed to redress inequalities by promoting equal opportunities for women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups.

Guided by these seven principles the WMEB was to implement a strategy through a combination of intervention, research and analysis, and advocacy.

The WMEB strategy was based upon an analysis of industrial restructuring and decline in the region, identifying those sectors of industry where intervention was required and likely to be most effective. The sector strategy "is founded on an appreciation of the dynamic interlinkages between firms and industries, sectors being constituted as groups of firms with common inputs, outputs or production technologies".<sup>75</sup> The key feature "is that sectors are conceptualized as embodying economic relationships which extend beyond the performance of individual enterprises or industries and which transcend geographic boundaries".<sup>76</sup> The sector approach was viewed as having the advantages of coherence, offering a sound basis for consistent research and analysis, and furnishing a base for building consensus.<sup>77</sup> The sector approach means the "opposite of 'piecemeal', implying that strategic sectoral intervention must take into account the combined effects of a range of particular interventions to address interrelated issues within and across industrial sectors".<sup>78</sup>

The clothing sector provides one example of the WMEB's sectoral approach. It

was recognized at the outset that "any programme of intervention in the sector had to assist not only firms through investment, management advice and training provision but also labour by tackling low wages and poor conditions, especially among homeworkers".<sup>79</sup> The WMEB undertook a range of interventions: it made direct investments in some of the larger established firms, established a business advice centre for ethnic minority (Asian-owned) businesses, set up a clothing design project, and began training courses for operatives and senior staff. Further measures were undertaken to improve pay and conditions in the industry with a specific action project targeted at homeworkers.<sup>80</sup> The overall aim of these interventions was to upgrade the industry as a whole from a low-wage, low-investment and low-productivity sector to one where higher levels of investment and productivity could support improved wages and work conditions. It is important to note that the WMEB targeted clothing for intervention because in other industries, such as vehicles and engineering, local initiatives could have only a limited impact as meaningful intervention would require policy change at the national level and much greater regional resources. The WMEB addressed the problems of these key sectors through its advocacy work. By contrast, in clothing meaningful intervention was feasible "within the constraints of regional and local authorities".<sup>81</sup>

It is concluded that the WMEB experience furnishes "a practical demonstration of the contribution which local and regional agencies might make to a more ambitious national strategy for economic and industrial regeneration".<sup>82</sup> Moreover, it is argued by these observers that the West Midlands experience of sectoral intervention can offer a model for other regions.<sup>83</sup> Elliott and Marshall aver that, as an approach to economic intervention, sector strategy is universally applicable but the precise *form* of that intervention will depend upon the industrial and institutional structures, the resources available and, above all, the degree of consensus and political will needed to pursue the wide-ranging and integrated programme of research and intervention which necessarily stems from a sectoral analysis of problems and potential in the economy".<sup>84</sup>

## Conclusions

The objective in this article was to open up South African debates concerning the development of local economic strategies for reconstruction. It has been suggested recently by Bernstein and McCarthy that in future: "Successful local development is

the foundation on which the country's prospects for stability and a sustained democracy will rest."<sup>85</sup>

It may be argued from this review of British experience that certain lessons can be drawn from the record of the enterprise boards, which might be adapted to the South African situation. First, it is evident that the institution of local enterprise boards, which can "either command or effect the deployment of long-term finance, can potentially function as catalysts to assist local economic renewal."<sup>86</sup> Second, such institutions can function as important vehicles, in particular for assisting the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises. The work of Best provides a compelling case for local sectoral intervention which might help bring together small and medium-sized enterprises in a set of collaborative activities (such as training, marketing, shared technology).<sup>87</sup> Third, the development of local sectoral strategies can provide an approach to policies for local intervention which seeks to anticipate and guide local economic changes, not simply to react to them.<sup>88</sup> In order to develop such strategies enterprise boards would need to conduct audits of the resources of particular localities, identifying both human resources (existing and potential) and the "social competence" embedded in a region's culture. Fourth, the British experience points to the conclusion that in order to maximize the impact of a local initiative, enterprise boards must identify and target "points of maximum strategic influence within a sector".<sup>89</sup>

In the final analysis, the record of the British enterprise boards offers a number of useful fresh ideas for institutional restructuring and local economic development, which might contribute towards implementation of the national Reconstruction and Development Programme. Local enterprise boards and the development of local economic strategies are issues that deserve a place on the reconstruction agenda in South Africa.

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**Senegal: A state of change (an Oxfam Country Profile)**

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**Taking democracy seriously: Worker expectations and parliamentary democracy in South Africa** by

David Ginsburg and Eddie Webster (eds). Durban: Indicator Press, 1995. 114 pp. ISBN 1 86840 132 4

Although unions are widely recognized as key actors in the transition to democracy in South Africa, remarkably little research has been done on their expectations. This book reports on the finding of a nation-wide survey, conducted in April 1994, into worker expectations of democracy. It is the first in a three-part study. The second survey will be conducted in 1996 and the third in 1998.

This study argues that a gap has opened up between worker expectations developed during the struggle against apartheid and the particular form of representative parliamentary democracy under the Government of National Unity.

It becomes disturbingly clear from most of the responses that there are growing signs of a "democratic rupture" between union leaders drawn into corporatist structures and rank and file members.

The authors conclude that the Congress of South African Trade Unions is likely to emerge as a left pressure in its alliance with the African National Congress. But two conditions are necessary if the alliance is to survive. Firstly, unions will have to shift from the antagonism that characterized their relations with the apartheid state to a closer working relationship with their allies in Parliament and in the Government. Secondly, there will have to be a programme that supplements and extends, rather than destroys, representative parliamentary democracy.

This will require integrating the principles and practices of direct participatory democracy with indirect parliamentary democracy. In this way South Africa will be taking democracy seriously.

**Wars in the third World since 1995 (second edition)**

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**National Day:** 30 September (Independence Day)

**Leader:** Sir Ketumile Masire, b 1925, President since 1980.

**Capital:** Gaborone (pop 18 000)

**Area:** 581 730 km<sup>2</sup> Population: 1,5 mn (1995).

**Religions:** Christianity (about 50% of population) and tribal beliefs.

**Languages:** English and Tswana (both official)

**Life expectancy at birth:** 68 years.

**Foreign trade:** Imports: \$1 438 mn; Exports: \$1 606 mn (1993).

**Principal exports:** Diamonds (87%), copper-nickel, beef.

**GNP:** \$3 797 mn (1992), **GNP/capita:** \$2 790 (1992).

**Currency:** \$1 = Pula (P) 2,7 (Oct 1994).

**Background:** Traditionally based on cattle ranching, the economy has grown rapidly since the 1970's as a result of large-scale diamond mining. Diamond sales account for the bulk of foreign earnings and, together with copper and nickel production, for about 40% of GNP. Botswana also has large coal reserves. The economy has recorded the highest sustained real growth in Africa over two decades and per capita GNP is among the highest in the continent. Expansion of the mining sector has stimulated the rest of the economy, especially manufacturing, but not to the extent that enough jobs are being created for the growing labour force. Unemployment and alleged corruption have never prevented the ruling Democratic Party (DP) from scoring landslide victories in the elections that have been held regularly since independence. However, in the National Assembly election, held in October 1994, the National Front of Dr Kenneth Koma won about one-third of the elective seats.



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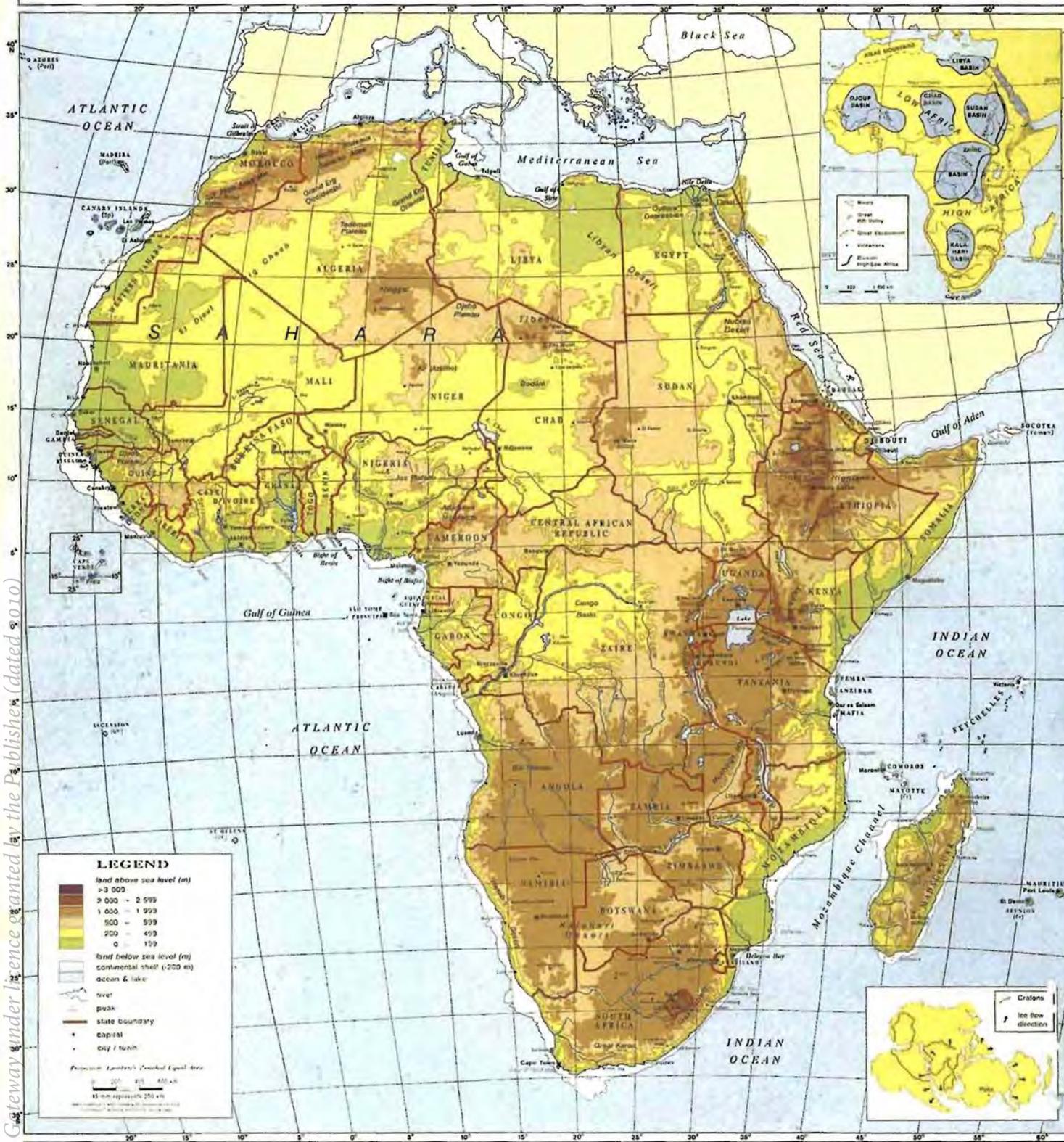
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