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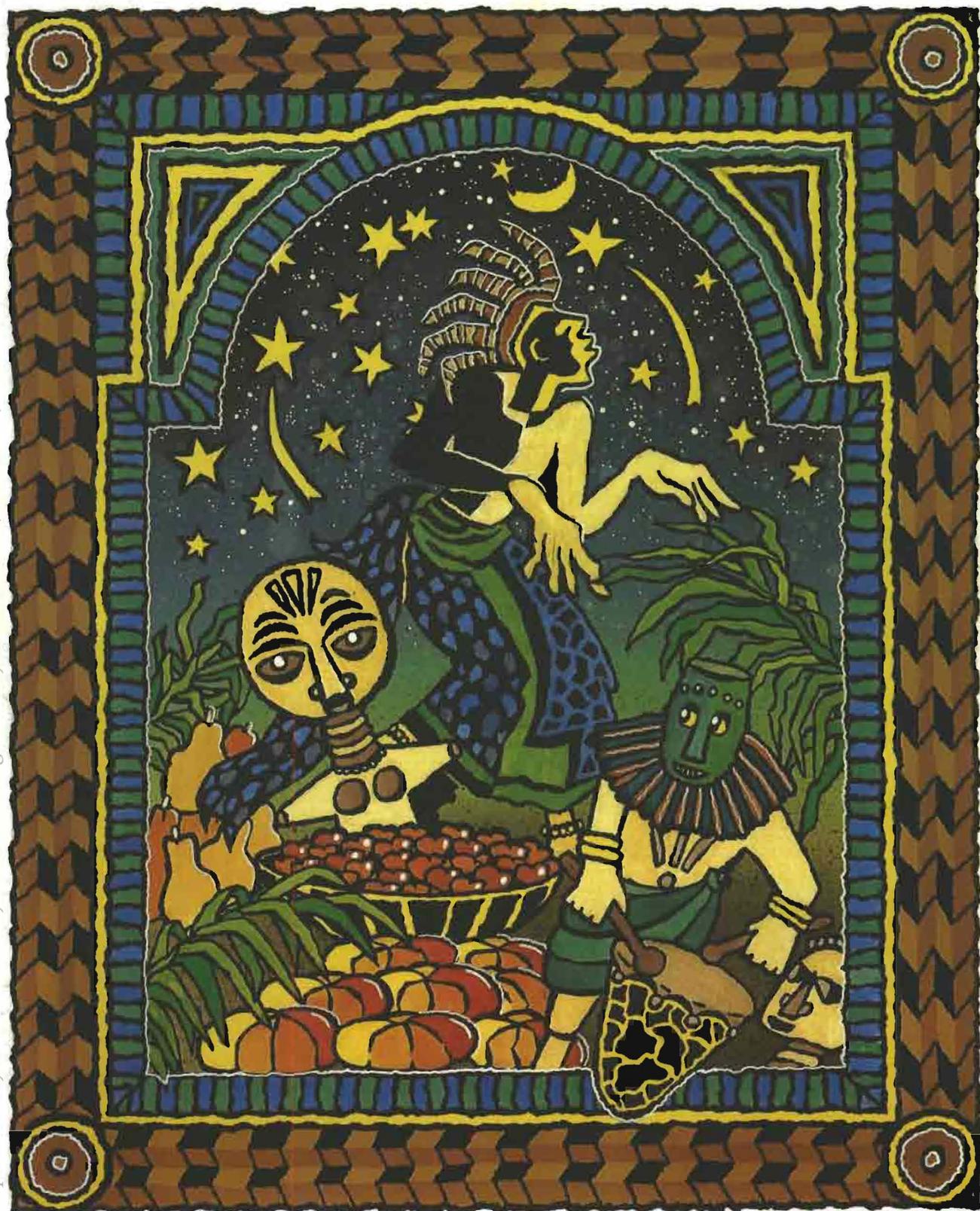
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Contributions and subscriptions should be sent to:

The Editor
P O Box 630
PRETORIA 0001
Republic of South Africa
Telephone: (012) 28-6970
Telefax: (012) 323-8153

Editor: Richard Cornwell

Assistant Editor: Marita Snyman

Managing Editor: Madeline Lass

Editorial Committee

Dr Simon Baynham
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SADCC into SADC: Plus ça change

Erich Leistner

The signing, on 17 August 1992, of the treaty to transform the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has evoked widely divergent reactions. Though hailed as "one of the pivotal events in the history of Southern Africa, setting the course ... for decades to come"¹ by the Zimbabwean *Herald*, others disparage it as "a flamboyant pan-Africanist gesture"² and "a futile facelift".³

It could indeed prove to be an historical event if the ten signatories were actually prepared to put into practice what they have signed. Regional co-operation and closer union are essential if the countries of Southern Africa are to realize their economic potential. What the SADC envisages goes well beyond co-operation and closer intra-regional ties. It has committed itself to economic and political integration – apparently by 2034 in step with OAU plans for an African Economic Community. The SADC intends first to harmonize macro-economic policies, then to work towards a free-trade zone, a customs union, and, ultimately, full economic union with integrated monetary and fiscal systems, and a regional parliament.

These objectives are presumably modelled on the European Community (EC). However, if nothing else, the obstacles the EC itself is encountering *en route* to economic and political union suggest that SADC is trying to run before it has learned to crawl. The record of African integration schemes in general and the SADCC's performance in particular gives no cause for optimism concerning SADC's ambitious designs.

In the twelve years of its existence, the SADCC has not made significant progress with its foremost objectives: to reduce external dependence, mainly, but not only, on South Africa, and the forging of links to create a genuine and equitable regional integration. Dependence on South Africa has increased rather than decreased; about 90 per cent of funding for its projects came from overseas donors; intra-SADCC trade amounts to a mere 5 per cent of total trade; no noteworthy progress has been made with industrial development; and narrow national interests generally take precedence over regional interests among members.

As against these weaknesses the SADCC may be credited with creating a sense of regional identity and some success

in focusing international attention on South and Southern Africa. These are valid points, though regional solidarity clearly had much to do with opposition to apartheid in South Africa and with the benefits from a joint approach to overseas donors. There are increasing signs that the emergence of an internationally accepted South Africa and changing global priorities on the part of Western donors are responsible for a diminishing flow of funds to the organization.

These developments and the weaknesses referred to above have impressed on the SADCC the need for reorientation. Its response was the theme document, *SADCC: Towards economic integration*, accepted by the organization's conference in Maputo in January 1992. The central message of the document is that the current policy of co-ordination and co-operation cannot meet the demands of the post-apartheid era and needs to be replaced by a deliberately formalized and more *dirigiste* approach to regional interaction. Integrated policies on trade, investment, labour mobility, and so on are considered essential in order to promote economic development and its more equitable distribution among member countries. Special arrangements are called for to ensure that South African membership of the SADCC will not harm present members but rather serves to benefit them.

The establishment of SADC is designed to realize these aims. The SADC treaty itself, however, is no more than a declaration of intent. Concrete measures, including a timetable for their implementation, will have to be formulated by way of protocols.

Given the SADCC's past record, as well as the uncertainties surrounding South Africa's domestic situation and future policies, it seems safe to predict that the SADC's progress towards its proclaimed goals will at best be slow and uncertain and that the future pattern of regional interaction will actually be shaped by the constellation of economic power and interests in the region rather than by SADC planners.

References

- 1 *The Herald* (Harare), 19 August 1982, p 6.
- 2 *Weekly Mail* (Johannesburg), 21 August 1992, p 23.
- 3 *Business Day* (Johannesburg), 19 August 1992, p 8.

Between the lines: African civil societies and the remaking of urban communities

Dr Abdou Maliqalim Simone, Foundation for Contemporary Research, Bellville

The role of civil society assumes increasing importance in current thinking about political development processes in Africa. In recent years, the nature of the relationship between state and civil society has been a key part of attempts to address the question: who has the right to assert leadership, to organize people and allocate resources in the governance and development of a people? The thrust of this question seeks direction on where political and social organizational efforts are placed to promote development and ensure access to information and the basic resources of physical and psychological survival.

Conventionally, civil society has referred to a vast array of both formal and informal community organizations, religious institutions and movements, voluntary associations, trade unions and guilds, cultural institutions, co-operatives, fraternal and ethnic associations and human service delivery systems. But as clear distinctions between state and civil society have blurred, the notion of civil society may need to be reframed.

The aim of such reframing goes beyond generating a more precise conceptualization of objects and entities. The definition of civil society must be expanded to include the loosely configured social practices which make up a discourse of manoeuvres on the part of peoples shut out of official economies and forms of governance.

Civil society in Africa embodies the imprints of Western domination, as well as resistance to it. The legacy of colonialism was not just something that happened to Africans as passive victims. It was a reality engineered out of the risks, vulnerabilities, commitments and passions of African societies themselves. Incorporation of these societies into the orbit of the Western metropole was just as much a function of the directions pursued by African states as it was an external imposition.¹

Now that colonialism has ended, Africa is perhaps, at one and the same time, more trapped by and removed from Western agendas. As such, civil society becomes a space of reformulation, mutation and realignment of social bodies,

individual capacities and desires. It is a frame of elliptical efforts to maintain competing agendas and aspirations in some kind of functional and parallel existence – where the need to survive does not take precedence or swallow up the need to imagine; and where the need to imagine does not impede completely the ability to survive.

These orientations come from somewhere. In the following pages I want to outline some ways in which African civil societies reflect the configuring forces of Western domination, how these forces have been resisted and how the shape of social structure exceeds that of economic or political contingency alone.

Development as moral dilemma: In the face of power

Anyone who has spent time in African cities, sees life “pouring over”. Decades of wars between desert clans may have reduced Ndjemena, for example, to barely disguised rubble, but music is everywhere, people sell everything they can get their hands on, everyone respects and violates cherished rules, traditions are meticulously respected as they are being kicked in the face, and it all hangs together with good-naturedness and constant intrigue.

African societies may have been underdeveloped by their relatively frozen position in the networks of advanced capitalism, but they have not been fully captured by Western domination and are slipping further out of either comprehension or control. Regimes in Khartoum and Kinshasha have limited ideas about who even lives in these cities, let alone how thousands of unemployed residing in nearly impenetrable shanty towns survive. All this vicarious autonomy comes at an enormous price in terms of the concrete indices of well-being.

But on the level of the social body – its characteristics, desires, resiliencies and productivity – a more ambiguous picture emerges. Within the sprawling shanties both the horror and creativity of contemporary African life are obvious.

Africans find ways to survive against the odds, but what does this “imagination” mean, what value does it have? What are non-Africans, and even Africans themselves to learn from it?

When outside observers look upon the contemporary sprawl and impenetrability of urban shanty Africa, both resilience and hardship are made frozen parodies of themselves. What is missing are the connections people have with the outside, the pathways out into highly diversified exchanges that make communities achieve at least a small measure of viability.

When Africa's towns and its few cities were colonized, European administrators frequently built a new “modern” quarter around them. By cutting off the “old” city from an external web of commercial, political and cultural relationships, the colonial administration could freeze the “old”, the “indigenous” quarters into pale reminders of themselves, force them into permanent compensations, disruptions, preferences and clandestinities that make traditional cultural arrangements have to “watch themselves” (as a parent says to a child, “you’d better watch yourself”).

Today, the realities of the African slum seem only exotic or desperate. Despite being zones of incarceration for the absolute poor, urban shanty towns in much of Africa keep people alive by becoming spokes in a network of highly variegated, if tenuous, transactions with other sectors, communities and nations. By constituting new modes of social interconnection – clubs, syndicates, church groups, secret societies, gangs – to supplement existing affiliations of kin and ethnicity, new sets of claims and resource-sharing mechanisms can be applied to individuals whose income derives from activities located far afield from the community itself.

In Angola, France, a peripheral area in the massive shanty town of UmBaddah, Khartoum, people of different ethnicities, regions and religions are crammed into a dense neighbourhood of hastily constructed mud dwellings.

Whatever is available becomes part of a network of circulation. A man will place a few bills in the hands of a woman for a bottle of local gin fortified with battery acid. The woman will give the money to her husband who will pay the customer's daughter for sex. The daughter will give the money to her father who will return to the woman for more drinks. The circuit is interrupted only by the proceeds of a son who has siphoned off gasoline from police combis and bought tea and sugar for his mother to sell to itinerant preachers who do their best to convert the son to their religion.

Once in Mayo Gatai, a shanty town outside Khartoum, I asked a young man, Ateh Niyo, sitting in front of the White House – a prostitute encampment – whether shanty towns like this had any purpose. “Yes”, he replied, “God will be forced to intervene at an earlier date than was originally intended, not because he will be angry, but because he is filled with curiosity”.

For the residents of Angola, France, feeding the household largely depends on going to where opportunity exists. Where once immigrants came looking for work in the city, they now come to city to look for information about how to take things in and out.

Trucks making runs from Khartoum as far as Kano are hijacked; caravans of young men set off by foot to intercept marijuana shipments coming from large private estates financed by government banks. Others set off for Port Sudan

to steal food stocks and medicines from warehouses along the docks. Baggara nomads, once renown for handling cattle, now make their reputation driving small trucks stocked with Zairian gold and coffee across impossible roads and war zones. Equitorians and Rheizegat – arch enemies in Sudan's civil war, run a lucrative smuggling operation between the Central African Republic and Khartoum, exchanging red mercury for radios and cameras stashed in tattered sheepskins.

Although the amount of income generated from these activities is small, it is circulated through complex channels of exchange and mutual obligation. Because many residents are travelling and working through various parts of the world, local drinking houses and gathering points are constantly abuzz with information about new opportunities and situations. The community also becomes a receptacle of diverse practices and points of view. Since there are few economically productive activities within the shanty area that can provide an ongoing sense of social cohesiveness, coherence must continuously be reinvented.

The postcolonial state has done little to foster a sense of social coherence; it has repeatedly acted in parasitical fashion upon the energies and resources of its people. There are few contexts for productive accumulation or meaningful group action. There is intense competition for means to insert oneself into trade circuits that, with both the political and macroeconomic constraints on production, fail to significantly expand.²

Since the state has few moral roots in society, the often erratic and idiosyncratic efforts of small groups and individuals in the civil sector become the primary means of positing some kind of moral basis for everyday social life.³ Whereas shanty life might be characterized by a chain of tragedies ensuing from the insidious practice of everybody sticking their nose into everything, involvement in the lives of others has been maintained no matter what. Individuals may be shunned, but they are never expendable.

Markets, buses, compounds, offices, roadways are full of arguments, challenges, bickering. Of course people protect their interests, gain advantage, try to pull the wool over another's eyes. But these disputes are mostly aimed at bringing balance and rightness to the incessant flow of words, exchanges, obligations and privilege.

Outsiders may be frustrated by the tedious deliberations which frequently accompany the introduction of innovations, but the process of change is seen as necessitating the continuous formation of new moral arguments. As an elderly Malian imam once commented in terms of putting an end to female circumcision, “change must discover unexpected reasons for its existence; it too, must be surprised at what it brings about”. Only in the tension between the old and new does the elaboration of a moral practice occur.

Much emphasis is placed in both the West and Africa on the need for a new sense of morality. Africa has been battered by corruption – a practice that enabled European economic interests to shed few tears at independence ceremonies. These interests have poured so much money into the pockets of individual politicians that they end up frequently deciding which laws get passed, which opposition figures get eliminated.⁴

Behaviours that seem corrupt may indeed be corrupt when assessed only on an individual level. But in most African societies, the capacity to treat people well – your neighbours,

kin and friends – requires maintaining the ability to give, to contribute even in moments of absolute scarcity. In this way, a sense of possibility is continuously maintained no matter the objective conditions. Corruption is then often simply a means of stretching mechanisms of exchange in response to the expanding interconnectedness of people, all doing their best to maintain good neighbourliness.

Obviously massive corruption has hurt African societies a great deal and has widened the chasm between rich and poor. Yet, it is likely, on the other hand, that the everyday welfare of most Africans would have been significantly worsened if local economies played by the rules.

More importantly, when governments and businesses fail, African societies reinvent and revise a host of institutions – in religious practice, healing, trading – that seek to make sense out of populations all seemingly hedging their bets about where to place their loyalties, money, orientations.⁵ Increasingly, urban Africans hesitate to make irrevocable investments in clear identities, locations or ways of making a living – despite vociferous allegiances to ethnic or religious groupings.⁶

Religious institutions, ethnic clubs, healers, secret societies and homeboy groups have played an important role in enabling urban Africans to manoeuvre from their ghettoized positions. The thrust of African religious practices has largely been sustained, partly because the nature of those religious practices enabled them to operate under many different guises and to sustain themselves by “occupying” and living through the images the West had of them.⁷

People may be hustling for pennies. The threads that hold local communities together may be severely strained by the dispersion of bodies and the infusion of diverse influences. But civil sectors have been able to reinforce a certain tactical ability, on the part of both individuals and communities, to base actions on maximizing sources of information, build intricate interdependencies that cut across all social classifications, and create economic bases on the arbitrary boundaries which divide administrative units, categories and nations.

In what follows, I offer some examples of the often idiosyncratic ways in which this process takes place – this balancing of the need to be opportunistic at all costs, yet reconfigure a sense of social connectedness. Cultural tradition must be allowed to take a new course, but the old ways must never be left too far behind. Whatever security is provisionally attained can only be preserved if it is risked. This goes for family bonds, community ties and national identities.

Transforming scarcity

Throughout West African cities, young adolescents make plans to migrate to the West as soon as possible. The destination was historically France, England, Germany. Now: Canada, the US, Italy. Young Ghanaian gangs steal for a year to save up money for tickets to Taiwan and Thailand. Part of growing up now seems preparing to leave home and the continent as well.

For decades Africans have cleaned toilets and streets, driven taxis and worked in restaurant kitchens, often living ten to a room. They run errands for the Mafia and are at the pinnacle of European fashion. In New York, the growth of the African community has quadrupled in five years. They are at the service of others, but also search for ways to methodically take charge of their situations, design their own services.

In a dilapidated corner grocery in the Bronx, a steady stream of West Africans move past the instant cassava and Nescafé to a cluttered back room with a large map of America on the wall. Hundreds of pins designate a wide range of medium-size cities, such as Topeka, El Paso, Montgomery, Tacoma, Fresno. On a large workbench, the son of a well-known Malian marabout compiles manilla folders for his visitors.

The contents are a collage of minutiae with no obvious coherence: clippings of local newspapers, annual reports of charities, notes scribbled on cocktail napkins from midwest truck stops, church bulletins, anniversary cards, guest lists of rotary club barbecues, ripped-out pages of telephone directories and high school yearbooks, police blotters, etc. The phone rings constantly as the Malian chats long distance in several languages; the two fax machines appear overworked. But there is no recognizable business being conducted, no fancy corporate headquarters with receptionists and secretaries.

All that is visible are a bunch of ex-taxi drivers, cooks and traders coming and going, folders in hand. There may simply be illusion of activity that gives these African immigrants some psychological conviction that they are managing. But in the end, they come to know the US better than most Americans – not only its big city ghettos, but often places where no one else wants to go. In the end, a large network of small business ventures – here and there – is pieced together.

Africans have been compelled to become experts at making something out of nothing – a process exemplified by the way they have supplemented simple acts of trading with complex dimensions. Take the following example:

Say you are Nigerian and you like a certain rice that import duties make impossible to buy at home but is cheaply available in neighbouring Benin, where it can't be sold for export; and you're not always sure if it's really the rice you like because it's repackaged to make it seem like local rice. You don't have the money to bribe the ninety police checkpoints along the 80 km stretch of road from the border to Lagos, so you have to get the rice back across an area full of thieves and informants.

Say you are from Benin and want to buy one of the radios that glut the Nigerian market but your overvalued currency makes their purchase expensive at official import rates. In addition, each country throws duties and taxes on goods and restricts what brands can be sold. Governments take the fun out of shopping, so traders have taken matters into their own hands.

Along muddy back roads near the Benin/Nigerian border, shopping takes on a new dimension. This is the African night market where people come for hundreds of miles and risk getting cheated or put in gaol just to get a bargain.

Although officially illegal, these night markets are well-known throughout the region. Officials turn a blind eye, since they can not only beef-up their incomes by taking bribes, but depend on the markets to feed and clothe their children.

Lit by hundreds of kerosene lanterns, almost everything is available. Dirt bikes and pick-ups ferry goods and passengers to unpatrolled border crossings and near-by towns. Although the risks are greater, the bargaining more intense, everyone agrees that shopping at night creates a more festive atmosphere. Flutes are played, people gather to greet friends and relatives from other towns.

Because of the money to be made, alliances between traders, officials, police and consumers are always shifting. It becomes impossible to tell who is who or what is likely to happen. As such there is a lot of information in circulation – gossip and rumours about the latest deal or alliance. Since the veracity of this information is always in question, a host of magicians are continuously consulted both in an attempt to find out what's going on and to originate new deceptions – to finger a person who may extort too high a price for transport, receipts, stamps, or conversely, for selling their services too cheaply.

The murkiness and uncertainty of the border provides a text for magicians to decipher – is it a propitious time to buy, and if so, what items? Magicians are consulted as to the right time to cross the border. Owing to the important role these magicians play in the border economy, many people come to see them even though they have no intention of buying anything. People come to settle disputes, seek cures for fevers or put curses on neighbours. With the acquired wealth, magicians frequently become traders and many traders are forced to become magicians.

Magicians foster disparate allegiances among the border police, often making national designations irrelevant. The resulting disarray is the only protection available to both buyer and seller. Instead of reconciling hostile factions, the magician's strategy is to render alliances and bonds of kinship and patronage so ambiguous as to make it unclear why anybody is doing anything. Although governments repeatedly try to bring order and normality to these border markets, they find it difficult to change a situation where everybody can win some of the time (without even trying).

Because of the intense competition among the magicians, every night there is a spectacle. Some magicians walk on water, others start sudden fires that sweep across the muddy thoroughfares and quickly disappear, others make it rain rice. Many people come to the night markets simply for the show, to take a chance that something, whatever it might be, will happen.

In other contexts, Africans eke out a bare sustenance. Women walk sixteen miles in search of firewood, five hundred miles in search of their husbands. Yet even for refugees in search of safe places away from civil war and famine, portions of food are set out for djinn and ancestors. These offerings to spirits reaffirm that there is always something more than the existence of these people alone which must be nurtured. When there is almost nothing available, neither debts to the past or hopes for the future disappear. Especially in times of extreme destitution, the imagination needs to remain alive. Cut-throat cruelty might remain, but the plenitude of death rarely produces either cynicism or self-pity.

What is important is that connections among people, clans, ancestors, spirits, the mighty and the low must be maintained and reinvented. There may not be a microwave in every mud hut or tent, but there are openings to an abundance of pathways out – in what the Hausa call “the walk of the world”.

Sorcery and religion

There are times when people need to be reminded of the connections that exist among them, when these connections need to become visible so that people can tell their “stories”, explain their situations. Sorcery is a narrative which lends such visibility.⁸

In Abidjan several years ago, a highly respected professor at the university and his driver were killed in a car accident. People from all walks of life were gathered at his wake, including a large group of the Ivorian élite. Talk focused exclusively on how Professor Dialle's death was brought about by witchcraft, as people argued about and added new details to the story.

Apparently it was a case of witchcraft gone awry, since the intended victim was the driver's brother who had surreptitiously re-entered the country two days before from Liberia. The brother was a well-known merchant who was rumoured to have embezzled millions of CFS (francs) from a parastatal in co-operation with his purported mistress, the wife of the President, Felix Houphouët Boigny.

On Boigny's way to Yamoussoukro, his ancestral home, Boigny had made an unexpected stop in his wife's village, something which he had not done for decades, ever since a minister who had suddenly filled in for him on a speaking engagement collapsed dead in the centre of the town. Meanwhile, the President's wife had sent her nephew to a wedding in Man, at the far west, where much of the growing opposition forces were based.

For the first time in two years, the President did not take his seventeen-year-old Togolese mistress with him, and her whereabouts remained unknown, although she was reportedly spotted on the tarmac at the airport next to a plane leaving for Paris. Her brother, in turn, drove hurriedly through the night to reach the village where the uncle of Dialle's wife was constructing a large cocoa warehouse that had burned down the previous week in a mysterious fire.

All these events were taking place as a still illegal political party was meeting secretly in a hotel basement next to the spot on the freeway where the car crashed. And the story went on.

In this narrative almost everyone gathered was “written” into the event in some way, connected to each other as co-participants in a process of fundamental social change underway. By attributing the deaths to witchcraft, they became meaningful in terms of what everyone gathered did or failed to do. The occasion of loss restored to people a re-worked sense of their ties with each other – reaffirmed the conviction that the course of events can be affected from all angles and from all social positions; that destiny cannot be controlled because one is many things and identities simultaneously. The best one can do is to keep the connections in view as much as possible.

Such a perspective doesn't mean, however, that Africans are to simply stay home and count their blessings. Religious practice in much of Africa affirms the necessity of risk-taking, of trying to put together forces and aspects of life that don't belong, of disrupting the appearance of a stable life and making use of the subsequent situation where nothing is clear. How to balance bringing order to community life and at the same time engaging an array of visible and invisible forces disrupting that life is something never readily apparent.

In the end, all attempts to make things better, to make social life more orderly and coherent end up making social life more capable of hurting you. The disorder which people commonly think they need protection from may be, according to many African cosmologies, the very thing that offers them their only protection. African traditional societies, far from embedding individuals in stolid norms and procedures,

generated their own highly plural and contradictory forms of engaging different situations.

Colonialism was disruptive because it rigidified the fluidity in the African relationship between self-assessment, world view and social order. Cut off from the political frameworks and economic cohesion that would permit the incessant transformations necessary to sustain the former orientations of traditional world views, the contemporary search for a sense of African authenticity seems frequently hollow.⁹

But despite the very real liquidation of cultural orientations perpetrated by the colonial legacy and postcolonial dependence, any assessment of African societies must in large part be based on the recognition and saliency of its religious heritage – its attempts to rework it in new forms.¹⁰ The often anarchic and repressive ways African states push to exceed themselves, the hastily negotiated deals with transnationals that deplete or go nowhere, the manipulative improvisations compensating for bureaucratic ineptness, the rampant disregard for borders or legal transactions, and the apparently wasteful expenditures on pomp and frivolous testimony, all contain within them a desire to upend and enlarge every conceivable social, political, interpersonal and economic relationship. Like the lesson of a favourite Sudanese adage: Sometimes it is better to play the fool, to look stupid in face of problematic realities, than it is to know exactly what to do – for once one is committed to pursue a specific plan, he or she becomes blind to the fact that they may be really going nowhere.

The future of civil societies

Whether the responses of civil society help empower on anything more than a symbolic level is difficult to assess. They are certainly not revolutionary in any conventional sense, nor are they merely complicit in maintaining or revising existing forms of domination. These reactions are at times imaginative, effective and display great tactical wisdom – providing a small measure of balance to competing agendas.

But they have in the past been forced to operate with relative invisibility – something which sustains the ability of civil society to resist domination but leaves it unable to socialize outlooks and behaviours explicitly within institutional contexts that are able to cohere diverse interests and agendas over the long term.

Yet the responses of the civil sector do point to alternative spaces of political formation – never able to fully bring them about but, nevertheless, serve as indications that political life remains fluid and that the future in Africa is not over before it begins.

While it is clear that African states must find ways to maximize the participation of its peoples in the process of governance, the emphasis on multiparty democracy may simply solidify their capture in an international division of labour mediated by IMF and World Bank dictates. Additionally, it may simply be a smokescreen to legitimate and resuscitate existing regimes, for example Cote D'Ivoire, or amplify ethnic loyalties, for example Kenya. Internationally, the trend is toward the amplification of ethnic, religious, and local particularities – in part, as a response to the massive homogenizing forces of Western domination.

The distortions and resiliencies generated by economic scarcity, the degree to which individuals have been sepa-

rated from clearly defined material and cultural contexts, and the colonization of the imagination by visual and symbolic artifices which only refer to themselves – all thoroughly break down clear visions of what African realities should be.

Democratic movements in Africa may not generate functional governance. But they may provide an opening that allows people to at least show what they are doing and how they are doing it; to be more conscious of the practices they have used to survive and, conversely, that have impeded a better way of life. Macro-level ignorance and micro-level resistance have combined to render much of what is significant in terms of how people actually govern themselves, invisible – in the domains of households, neighbourhoods, institutions, dance halls, street corners, bars, shrines, churches, mosques and cafés. For it is in these places where the bulk of Africa is governed, the important decisions made.

Increasingly, African kin groups find themselves spread out over distance and continents, zones of activities and agendas, yet, in most cases, they seem to co-ordinate their efforts, come together as some cohesive body. Little is known about these efforts; given existing political climates their survival is probably predicated on little being known about them. Invisibility may have been the key to the continuation of thousands of local initiatives and organizations, but it precludes them from operating as provisional models for the generation of institutions on a larger scale.

Ironically, if African states would legitimate the autonomy of the civil sector, it may find it less of a threat, since the autonomy would now be incumbent upon its ability to produce, mobilize and develop, and not simply serve as contexts for the circumvention of state controls. As it is, there is seemingly little for the state to preside over any longer. Maximizing the productive capacities of the civil sector might at least generate substantial areas of social and economic activity to co-ordinate so as to ensure a judicious use of resources.

In order to cohere a form of national governance that is accountable to and morally consonant with the sensibilities of its people, African states may have to give free reign to its particularities, to a process where various groups and sectors provisionally explore collaborations, modes of exchanging information, forming production units, providing services.

One will have to look in small spaces and thoroughly understand what is happening within them.¹¹ For example, individuals working in grassroots religious and welfare organizations have at times played key roles in managing ongoing dialogues between localities and the states and in brokering agreements with national regimes to leave districts – usually their home territories – alone to work out the terms for the reproduction of social life.

The Miri-Nuba area in the Sudan, Zinder Province in Niger, and the Labe district in Guinea come to mind as examples of localities that have gained substantial autonomy in investing the remittances of urban migrants, retaining and rechanneling tax revenues, structuring technical inputs, and rationalizing marketing and trade.

The interesting aspect of this autonomy is that residents of these districts who go to live in urban areas become the most adept at integrating themselves into urban life, most able to accommodate rural development and the urban

labour market, and most able to structure the diffusion of information in ways that maintain the integrity of local life and accelerate the introduction of new ways of doing things. Instead of devolving into debilitating conflicts and competitions, these agreements seem to have heightened the ability of localities to be sensitive to national issues and constraints, and facilitate a substantial co-ordination of state-civil society interests.

Whether such small examples can serve as prototypes for larger policies remains a question. So does the prospect of Africans being able to engender a life free of overwhelming scarcity and tribulation. Yet, the strength of Africans has been their ability to make themselves into something else – both when they have to and also, perhaps more significantly, when there is no reason to do so.

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Cameroon: One party, many parties and the state

Dr Jonathan Derrick considers recent developments in Cameroon against the background of the move towards multipartyism in Africa

After its first multi-party elections on 1 March 1992, Cameroon merits study by all analysts of the movement towards democracy in Africa. Obviously the movement has taken different courses in different countries, but there are recurring patterns. Cameroon's case is both special and filled with lessons valid for other parts of Africa.

The outstanding facts about the political changes in Cameroon are:

- One of Africa's most durable one-party states, headed by Ahmadou Ahidjo and then by Paul Biya over thirty years, accepted multi-party democracy in 1990 and has now held multi-party elections.

- Having agreed to this, President Biya's regime sought to guide the change along its own lines, remaining in full charge in the interim; but the new opposition parties, unwilling to accept this, defied the regime with a call for a national conference.

- Government and opposition confronted each other in a serious crisis from May to November 1991, in which the division followed regional lines; but the confrontation ended with victory for Biya's government.

- Elections were therefore held very much on the government's terms, and the previous single party, the *Rassemblement Démocratique du Peuple Camerounais* (RDPC) or Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM),¹ dominates the government formed after the elections. Biya is still firmly in power himself, until presidential elections due in 1993, with a fair chance of being re-elected then.

The short lesson from this is a simple one: the power of the state is stronger in Cameroon than some thought, and may be equally strong in much of Africa. The term "one-party state" now seems not entirely satisfactory, since in authoritarian states so described a single party may normally be a subordinate and dispensable part of the apparatus. It has usually, if not always, been as subordinate to the state as the RDPC and its predecessor the *Union Nationale Camerounaise* (UNC)/Cameroon National Union (CNU) always were in Cameroon. Thus a state can easily abandon a one-party system without real power changing hands at all.

That has happened in Cameroon, and it ought not to cause any surprise. The supremacy of the state power in Cameroon was obvious under Ahidjo's presidency, and was thoroughly studied then in J-F Bayart's classic work, *L'Etat au Cameroun*.² It might seem at first sight that Ahidjo's party, the UNC, could have been different from parties overtly and obviously created from the top downwards, such as Mobutu's *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (MPR) in Zaire; for it was created in 1966 out of the merger of several parties formed spontaneously with grassroots support in both the two parts of Cameroon – East (ex-French) and West (ex-British) – united in 1961. In fact the UNC was imposed on those other parties and on the population by the state.

Thus, as Bayart shows, the party was firmly subordinated to the state, an arm of the government and particularly of the President: "it is the party that emanates from the person of M. Ahidjo, not the other way round";³ "the UNC, in practice, is subordinate to the territorial administration".⁴ This was the inevitable result of the process, complete by the early 1960s, of concentrating power in the central government and central power in the President. The "concentration of almost all power in the hands of the head of state"⁵ was so thorough that even senior ministers had little real power. The presidency was the seat of power and Ahidjo's most powerful lieutenants were the senior officials in the presidency and notably the Secretary-General there.⁶ They were able to handle much of the government because everything was centralized in Yaounde – even the French tradition of centralization was improved on by Ahidjo, so that, for example, the top regional officials had distinctly limited powers: the six *inspecteurs fédéraux d'administration*, then the seven governors of provinces after the change from a federal to a unitary state in 1972 and the subsequent creation of provinces, then ten governors of provinces from 1983. West Cameroon lost all real local self-government in 1961, even when it had a semblance of autonomy in the Federal Republic; as there was not really a federal system at all then, the practical change when the United Republic came into existence on 2 June 1972 was limited. But all Cameroonians have experienced the effects of centralization. Under Ahidjo only

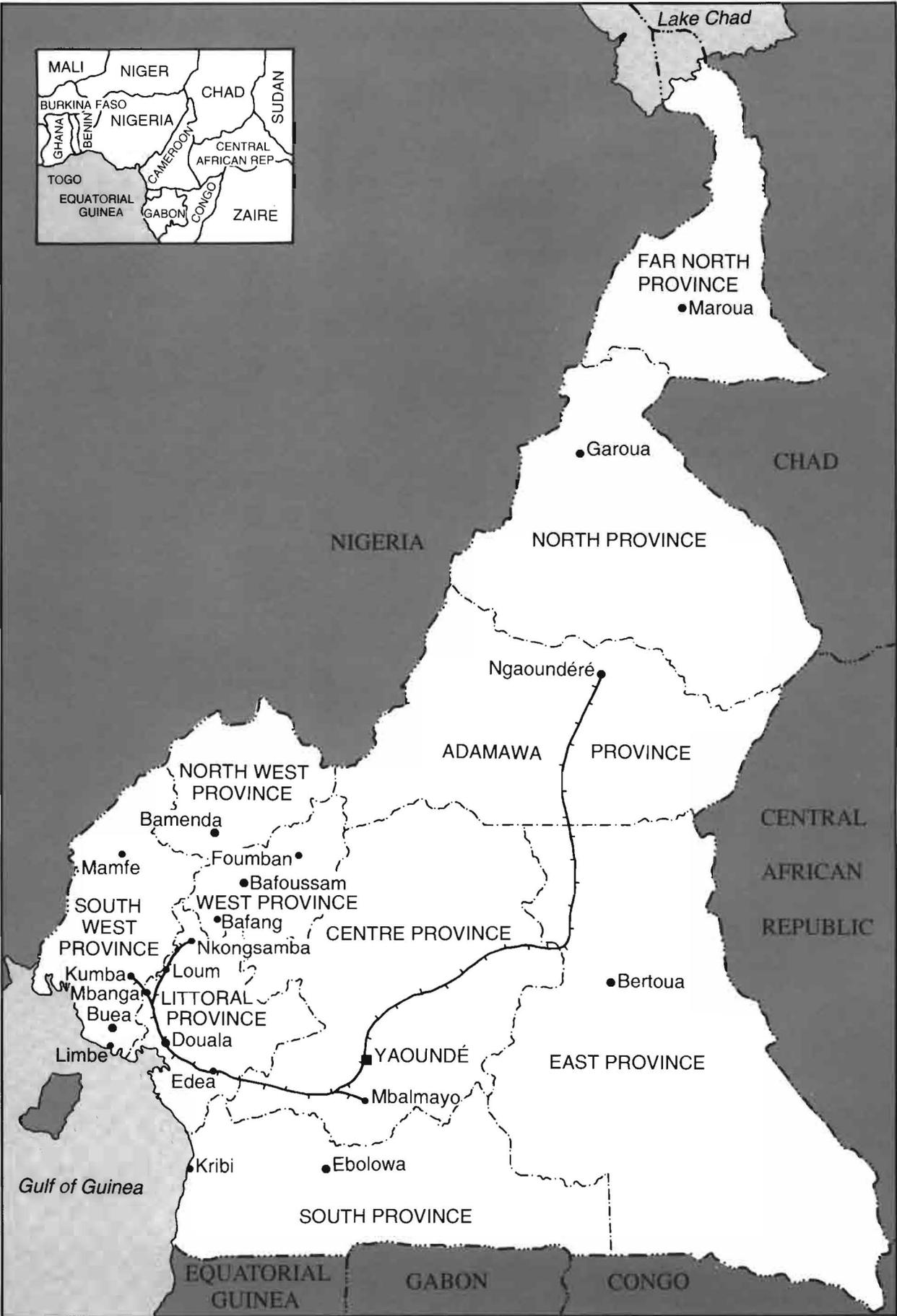


Figure 1 Cameroon Provinces.

Source: Mark W DeLancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and independence*, Boulder: Westview, 1989.

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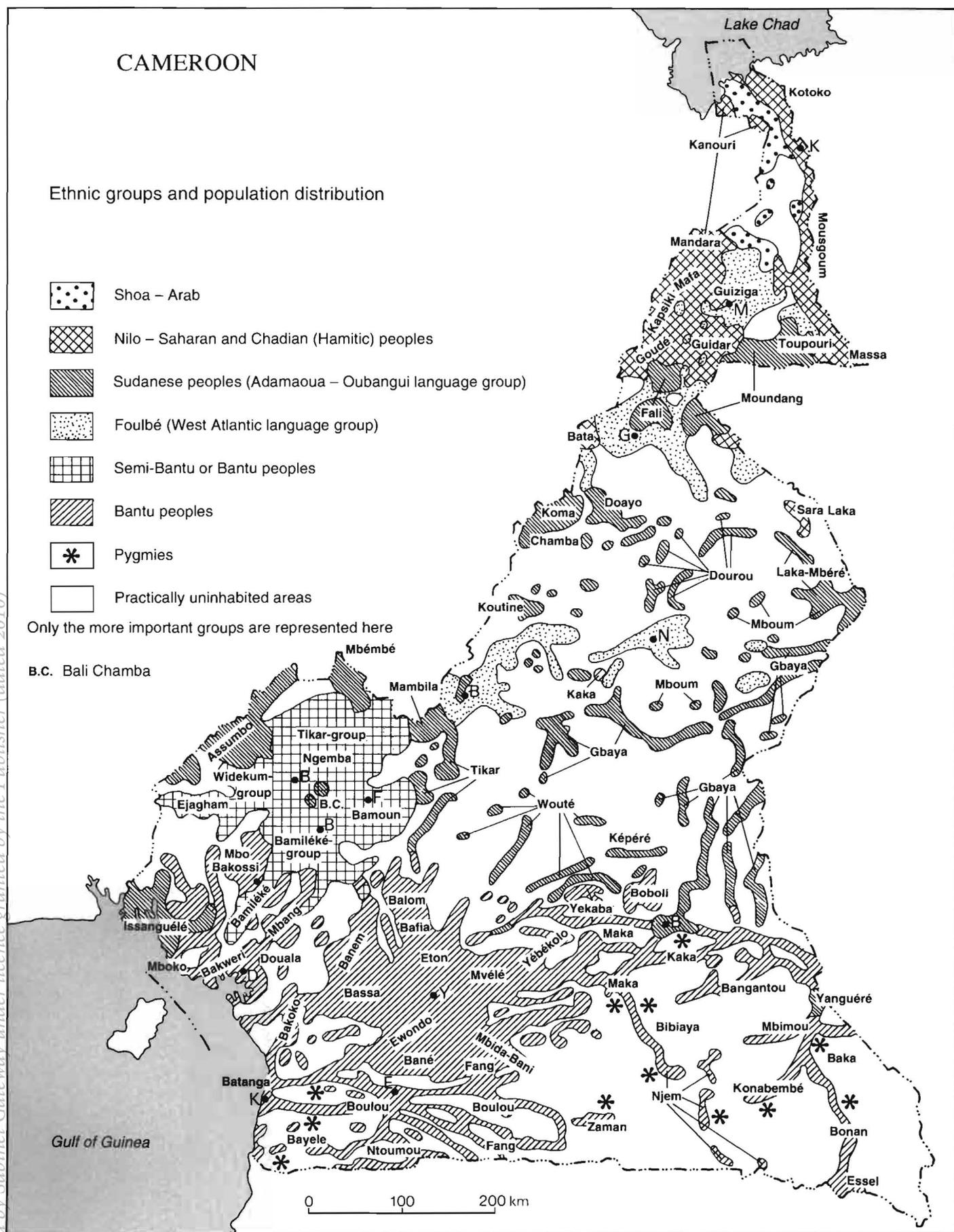


Figure 2 Cameroon: Ethnic groups and population distribution. Source: Drs PHJ van der Boorn, *Kameroen*, Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1984.

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the central government mattered, and one man controlled that government.

But that did not mean, as some thought, that the entire fabric of government depended on the life of one man. Ahidjo in fact created a system of government that continued working after he left office in 1982. To a great extent, it is still working today.

This was achieved by several means including outright repression and secret police activity, and an effective control over the armed forces, which has ensured that in 30 years Cameroon has had no military coup and only one serious attempt at one (in 1984; *see below*), though there have for long been regular rumours of military plots. But besides those negative efforts, Ahidjo worked positively to build up the territorial administration as a solid base for support. Governors, prefects, and other civil servants have formed the regime's backbone, not at all dislocated by the introduction of a multi-party system. The Cameroon civil service, with its widespread inefficiency and corruption, and above all its extreme centralization which forces citizens to go "file-hunting" in Yaounde over all sorts of business, is not good at serving the public; indeed Cameroon has one of the world's most bureaucratic bureaucracies. But it serves itself and the state well. Civil servants have power in their little domains, they assert it over citizens as much as they can, they benefit from it in ways, legal and illegal, which give them a stake in the system. Equally important, the public submits in a sense to this situation. Not that anyone can like the regular bullying and extortion, but those who often practise those things have social prestige,⁷ and a common public reaction to the civil service – possibly the normal one – is to seek to benefit from its power and privileges. Cameroonians who suffer from officialdom want to join it, or educate their sons to join it. A government job is considered the most desirable by school-leavers and graduates, and the family rejoices when someone gets such a job, expecting that many of them will get – as they will – better access to education and other benefits from his employment. Obviously this common public attitude reinforces the administration as a power base for the regime.

Civil servants anywhere are in principle ready to serve any political authority, but the Cameroonian ones have acquired the habits of serving and enforcing an authoritarian system. Besides this situation, which is not peculiar to Cameroon, there is in Cameroon an effective wielding of power at top levels by a small group of people. This has been studied by the Cameroonian political analyst Pierre Flambeau Ngayap.⁸ In his study published just after Ahidjo's resignation, he estimated that a *classe dirigeante* of about 950 senior office holders – ministers, secretaries at the presidency, governors, UNC leaders, senior army officers, etc – ruled Cameroon, and that this group had close links among its ranks: people often moved from one category of office holder to another: ministers, for example, including former governors, secretaries-general of ministries, prefects, ambassadors, etc.⁹ Ngayap confirms the importance of the administration, mentioning the prominence of graduates of the *Ecole Normale d'Administration et de Magistrature* in Yaounde, *énarmarques* as he calls them.¹⁰ Ahidjo, he concludes, "found stability for his regime in achieving union at the top".¹¹

Biya: New man, same regime

Ngayap published his work soon after Ahidjo's surprise resignation, which took effect on 6 November 1982. There has never been a complete explanation of this resignation, though it seems certain that the cause was some illness; one account strongly suggested a nervous collapse, which is an occupational risk for any ruler handling everything himself. Ngayap wondered whether Ahidjo had created a system able to last without him.¹²

The answer came soon afterwards. In mid-1983 there was a major crisis between Ahidjo, who had remained chairman of the UNC, and President Biya. Ahidjo apparently sought to retain some power or regain more with the backing of the UNC. The outcome was an easy victory for the head of state. Ahidjo went into exile and was sentenced to death *in absentia* for a plot in February 1984. There was a groundswell of public support for Biya against his predecessor, but the main reason for Biya's victory was that the single party had no independent power whatever. It is very strange that Ahidjo, who had created that state of affairs, should have thought that the party could be a base of support for him against the state which he himself had made all-powerful.

In all essential respects Ahidjo's system was continued under Biya's leadership from 1982 to mid-1990. The repressive aspects were maintained, after a false dawn of relaxation in 1983 when police state controls were eased a little. After an attempted *coup d'état* by the Republican Guard on 6 April 1984 the police state was reimposed in full, with censorship, secretive government, and a powerful secret police. Jean Fochivé, who had headed the main secret police force under its different names (SEDOC 1961-1969; DIRDOC 1969-1975; then CND) for much of the regime's history, suffered some years of eclipse after April 1984, but in March 1989 he was to regain his former position, heading a force now called CENER. But neither under Ahidjo nor under Biya could stability be ascribed to fear of the police alone. Essentially the system created by Ahidjo continued, including the "union at the top".

Certain prominent colleagues of Ahidjo, his *barons* as they were called (such as Victor Ayissi Mvodo), were out of office and favour for some years after the period between 1982 and 1984, but within a few years they were back in prominent positions again, often as heads of parastatals. A major change that did occur early in Biya's reign was ethnic. There was a reaction against the favoured position enjoyed for long by Ahidjo's fellow Northerners, who, under a policy recalling in some ways that followed in neighbouring Nigeria, benefited from reverse discrimination. The groundswell of support for Biya against Ahidjo was due probably to reaction against this among the southern Christian peoples – the Bulus (Biya's own people), Betis, Bassas, Bamilekes, etc. There had been a widespread feeling among them of discrimination at their expense under Ahidjo. There was a reaction against *Nordistes* in 1983-84, which may account for the apparent acceptance of the harsh repression (46 executions, hundreds gaoled after secret trials or no trials at all) after the April 1984 crisis among liberal-minded southern Francophone Cameroonians.¹³ In the immediate aftermath of that crisis there were mob attacks on Northerners and mass flight by Northerners settled in the south and Southerners settled in the north. This extreme situation did not last long and life soon returned to normal.¹⁴

Normally, in Cameroon, there is harmony among the different ethnic groups, and when tension does arise it seldom goes to extremes; some of the worst fears of ethnic violence during the 1991 crisis were not realized. An "ethic of unity" opposed to ethnic feeling was at the heart of Ahidjo's philosophy:¹⁵ like other African heads of one-party regimes, he believed that a one-party system made for peace among different peoples. It is highly unlikely that the relatively good feeling among Cameroonians of different groups is due to one-party rule alone or even principally. Such a suggestion fits in with Ahidjo's paternalistic attitude to his people.¹⁶ The Ahidjo regime's constant repetition of the theme that it stood between Cameroon and bloody civil war seems to have impressed some foreign commentators, for in the 1983 crisis there were suggestions in *Le Monde* and *Jeune Afrique* of Paris that Cameroonians would revert to tribal war without Ahidjo.¹⁷ Ahidjo himself made similar suggestions, but such suggestions – heard in respect of many other parts of Africa also, the myth of Africa being forced to choose between authoritarian government and anarchy being a widespread one – ignored important realities in Cameroon: the forces making for continuity and normality among the population as a whole, and the special strength of the state structure created by Ahidjo.

That structure was never totally above ethnic feeling under either president. The Ahidjo regime's claim to be anti-tribalist was far from the view held by many Cameroonians. Among the Bamilekes and Bassas, two major southern peoples of ex-French Cameroon who widely supported the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC) in its insurgency from 1956 to 1963, there was a widespread belief that they suffered discrimination long after the defeat of the UPC. There was some foundation for this belief, though some claims of persecution of Bamilekes were exaggerated (they have remained predominant in all sectors of trade and business not dominated by expatriate firms, while the Bassas retain their long-standing prominence in the civil service). Then there was the reverse discrimination in favour of *Nordistes* in the civil service, while Ahidjo's presidential guard consisted almost entirely of Northerners (this guard, inherited by Biya, revolted against him in April 1984).

The major change under Biya was that the southern Francophone peoples acquired a more predominant role. While Biya, who is from one of those peoples, presided over the change, it might have happened anyway because they, with their high level of education including tens of thousands of graduates, had a built-in strength which had to be acknowledged. In the first years after taking power Biya ordered a massive recruitment into the civil service¹⁸ (almost doubling its numbers according to one estimate).¹⁹ This was carried out without any publicity, and its financing was also secret; it is said to have come from the special secret fund from oil revenues set up under Ahidjo, the *Compte Hors Budget* (CHB).²⁰ There can be no doubt that Biya organized this because of the great need for government jobs among great numbers of qualified people in a country where, as noted earlier, government jobs are the usual preference. An analysis of the intake according to ethnic origin would probably show that most came from the southern, largely Christian areas of ex-French Cameroon. The losers, it seems, were the Francophone Northerners and the Anglophones of West Cameroon (North-West and South-West Provinces).

Certainly the last-named have consistently accused Biya's regime in general terms (not specifying the civil service expansion) of discrimination, particularly in favour of the Beti and Bulu peoples, said to be Biya's own people.

Thirty years after "reunification" the Anglophones remain a distinct community even though English or French is only a second language for a Cameroonian, and Cameroonians on both sides of the former Anglo-French border are closely related. The reason is the continued English-language education system. Graduates of that system have much in common, and this includes a common experience of discrimination, for whereas in the "bilingual" state they are supposed to have equal opportunities with products of the French system, in practice they do not. Nothing can alter the fact that, with or without highly centralized government in Yaounde which in fact exists, Cameroon is 80 per cent Francophone – in terms of the language of schooling, of course. Many Francophone Cameroonians now speak good English, but the plain fact remains that those who do not, have much fewer problems than Anglophones who do not know French.

This situation was brought home on Anglophones under Ahidjo, who, in addition, imposed many authoritarian ways – such as identity cards and the paramilitary gendarmerie – which West Cameroonians found initially shocking after their different experience in association with Nigeria. Ahidjo, too, ended the outward appearance of Western self-government with the unitary state of 1972, having ended the reality of it some time earlier. But although Anglophones had many complaints against Ahidjo, their general view, expressed constantly,²¹ is that things have been worse for them under Biya. This feeling played a major role in the run-up to democratization in the period 1990 to 1992 and needs to be examined.

The root of most Anglophone complaints is the education question, which has brought them on to the streets regularly, even when demonstrations were officially banned. The failure in practice to give equal opportunities to English-language school-leavers and graduates is shown, so Anglophones say, by their experience in seeking government jobs (once again, a very basic question). True, other Cameroonians also tell the same stories about the job-hunt: endless red tape and delays, plus nepotism, favouritism and corruption, or allegations of those things. But in the situation of stiff competition there is no reason to doubt that Anglophones have a special disadvantage.

Connected with this – some would say at the root of it – is the politically marginal situation of West Cameroon under Biya. In the later 1980s Anglophones commonly said that despite some of their people holding prominent posts (but, it was said, being unwilling or unable to assert real influence in holding those posts), they did not matter in a political sense. Under Ahidjo it was often said, when he was in power and later, that West Cameroonians were useful allies to him as against the Francophone south which had never liked his rule, and derived some benefits as a result. Anglophone views of a changed situation under Biya confirm the impression that the in-built dominance of the southern Francophones was fully asserted under the Bulu president. This could indeed have made Anglophones feel more than ever that their two provinces are an appendage – an appendage useful for oil (drilled off the coast of South-West Province) but not for its people. There has been, in addition, the feeling found in oil-producing parts of other countries

(the oil-producing states of Nigeria, for example, or Scotland) that they do not benefit from the wealth coming from under their soil or offshore waters. Whatever its basis, the Anglophone perception of worse discrimination at their expense under Biya has been a major political factor.

The beneficiaries of that discrimination, as already noted, are said to be not southern Francophones in general, but the Betis and Bulus. This allegation, not made by Anglophones only, has been a central theme of Cameroonian politics for years, behind closed doors before 1990, openly after that. It therefore merits examination, which makes it seem, like many such allegations in African politics, to be too sweeping.

The Betis are one of the major ethnic groups of Cameroon, occupying most of Centre Province; divided into three sections, Ewondos (the biggest) and Banés and Etons, they are known all over Cameroon simply as “Yaounde people” or “*les Yaoundé*”. Contrary to what many other Cameroonians believe, the Bulus of South Province are not the same as the Betis, though they are closely akin. Both peoples have nearly universal primary education, huge numbers of sons and daughters educated up to *baccalauréat* level, and hundreds or thousands of university graduates. Thus their situation cannot be compared, as it is, with that of the less educated *Nordistes* under Ahidjo. Betis and Bulus would have many senior positions even on the strictest considerations of merit. One has to doubt many of the stories of Biya promoting “his people” everywhere. One cannot rule out favouritism, but suggestions that every “Yaounde man” in a high post is a mere Biya placeman are hard to accept.

The favour Betis and Bulus probably do enjoy (living in or near the capital cannot be a handicap) affects other Francophones as well as West Cameroon, and indeed other southern Francophones did make the same allegation when free speech returned. But Biya does seem to have enjoyed wider sympathy in the southern part of ex-French Cameroon than his predecessor. The widespread feeling against Ahidjo for years after 1984 suggests this; while never proved, Ahidjo’s involvement in the Republican Guard rising was commonly assumed, and there was a constant fear of new plots by him, sometimes reaching absurd lengths, as when the Lake Nyos underground gas explosion in North-West Province in 1986 was rumoured to be due to an air raid arranged by Ahidjo but missing its target. In contrast, the regime was seen more negatively than before in West Cameroon and in the north, which Biya divided in 1983 (probably for political reasons, though there could have been good administrative reasons for breaking up the huge former Northern Province) into three new provinces.

It is of course rare for any government, even democratic, to be equally accepted all over a country, and the Cameroon regime is not unusual in being seen as an imposed and alien one by parts of the population – among Bamilekes and Bassas and some others under Ahidjo, among Northerners and Anglophones under Biya. Such perceptions of the regime under Biya help to explain the voting pattern when free elections came in 1992. But they do not explain the decision to allow free elections. Authoritarian regimes have survived while suppressing stronger regional dissidence than Cameroon ever had after the UPC insurgency.

The key question for all political analysts of Africa now is what internal causes underlay the widespread move towards free elections from 1989. It is an all the more interesting

question for Cameroon because one-party rule there was firmly re-established after initial false hopes following Biya’s accession.

At a congress at Bamenda in March 1985 the UNC was replaced by the RDPC/CPDM. This was not legally made the sole party under the constitution; unlike Kenya, Angola, and many other African states, Cameroon never had a constitution establishing a single-party monopoly by law; Biya did not introduce such a monopoly in the 1984 constitutional changes,²² or later. But he was in practice no more willing to allow another party than Ahidjo had been, and political dissent continued to be suppressed. The spread of such dissent in West Cameroon was not affected by Biya’s choice of a city there for the launching of the new party (nor by his own good command of English). But dissent emerged and was suppressed in other areas also; in 1985 Dr Joseph Sende tried to seek a court declaration that the UPC was not legally banned, but had no success.

To anyone who had doubted, it was clear by 1985 that the system created by Ahidjo, and concentrating powers in one man, was working much as before now that the one man was not Ahidjo. But Biya did continue to talk of greater freedom and openness,²³ and in retrospect this seems not to be the empty language some thought it was. From January to March 1986 contested elections were held for local leaders of the renamed ruling party, at all subordinate levels up to that of department, and over half the previous office holders were defeated. This was a limited reform in a party with limited power, but it was the first exercise of some degree of choice in politics that Cameroonians had had for 20 years.

In addition, there was widespread freedom of speech among citizens, in contrast to the resumed censorship of the media. Among Anglophones there was always more freedom of speech in everyday conversation, even under Abidjo, and this continued under Biya. But in ex-French Cameroon, at least in the south, the real widespread fear of the police and informers prevailing under Ahidjo largely disappeared under Biya. People began to speak quite freely about many subjects, notably the economic situation which began to worsen in 1987. This may have been connected with the genuine support Biya had, at least for a time, in that part of the country. By the late 1980s an independent newspaper, *Le Messager*, was appearing in Douala, and speaking openly about the still banned UPC and its past; books dealing objectively with the UPC and with Ahidjo’s rule were freely on sale.²⁴

Biya continued, even so, to assert his personal ascendancy – early in 1987 he summarily sacked his foreign minister, William Eteki Mboumoua, and told an interviewer asking about this: “The head of state can dismiss holders of [the highest] posts at any time, at his absolute discretion, without having to give explanations to anyone”²⁵ – and that of the RPDC. He told the same interviewer in 1987:

We cannot ask or expect the Cameroonian people overnight to understand that it is a people entirely ripe for democracy. That is why we have taken precautions to put up ... railings (*garde-fous*).²⁶

But the actual practice of a limited dose of greater freedom may have been as important as words expressing the undiluted paternalism of Ahidjo. In April 1988 elections to a new National Assembly were held with only one party contesting, but more than one candidate for each seat under the RDPC

umbrella. Over 90 per cent of the previous deputies failed to secure re-election. This change only followed the precedent set long before by other one-party states such as Tanzania, and was definitely limited; President Biya, on the same occasion, was re-elected unopposed. Even so, there was another choice of a sort, unheard of a few years earlier. The unwilling teetotaler had been allowed a sip of beer; that usually means craving a little more.

Precedents form all over the world suggest that great political changes, including revolutions, follow periods of a previous regime becoming less severe, not more. The whole decolonization of Africa is an example. South Africa has recently provided another; changes under President Botha, very limited as they were, can now be seen as paving the way for the great changes begun in 1990. Cameroon fits the same pattern.

The transition to democracy

Grievances may have become greater in the 1980s. The economic crisis which became the main talking point in 1987 was above all a budgetary crisis, in which excessive expenditure on the civil service was particularly highlighted; while the massive recruitment a few years before was not mentioned in public in Cameroon, excessive or illicit fringe benefits, which the regime highlighted, were real enough. They were an inevitable consequence of the administration's importance and privileges under Ahidjo and Biya, and Biya may have risked support in a key power base when he ordered much publicized actions such as the confiscation of excess government vehicles and the laying off of officials over the retiring age. However, he did not dare to order serious retrenchment in the civil service. Recruitment had been frozen in 1985, and with the ever-increasing flow of graduates, excess of supply over demand for government employment caused problems enough without retrenchment. The earlier mass recruitment left many qualified people still jobless and Biya personally intervened several times to cut through red tape and get hundreds at a time appointed to the civil service. This situation must have caused discontent and the measures taken in 1987 against certain people must have caused more. But as there was neither any mass retrenchment of the civil service, nor any real action against the overmanned and inefficient parastatals (such action, long promised, has still not proceeded very far today), discontent in this dangerous area was within limits. Money-saving measures, such as the ban on use of office telephones for private international calls, have been accepted by the public as fair and effective.²⁷

There may have been more grievances connected with Biya's actions or proclamations of action against corruption and malpractice, under the slogan of "moralization". Many Cameroonian businessmen were reported to have been hit by strong measures against customs evasion and other malpractice. This may not have been a simple case of lawbreakers resenting law enforcement; Cameroonian businessmen, being mainly Bamileke, had always found the regime unfriendly to them, and they may have thought the "clean-up" was a cover for measures directed against them for other reasons than law enforcement. Anti-corruption measures are often seen in Africa, and probably elsewhere, as a weapon used to attack people (who may be really corrupt) out of political favour,

while (it is often said) crooks on the right side of the government, or serving in it, escape. In Cameroon, certainly, corruption in Biya's entourage is said, and has been said for years, to be massive. If this is true, anti-corruption measures sparing such well-placed racketeers would reduce rather than enhance the government's reputation.

But corruption was not new, and if the economy was in a less good state than before, ordinary people living in what is still one of Africa's better-off countries were not affected by severe new measures in recent years. Such major hardships as very high urban house rents are not new, and while Biya's government was obliged reluctantly to make an agreement with the IMF in 1988, this did not lead to the hardships normally associated with IMF structural adjustment programmes; there has been little government service retrenchment, and devaluation with all its consequences is precluded as Cameroon belongs to the Franc Zone. Cameroon, did, however, have to agree with the World Bank in 1989 to reduce the cocoa producer price by nearly half;²⁸ with devaluation impossible, no other way was seen to produce cocoa at a price competitive on the world market. This must certainly have caused widespread hardship, but interestingly, two-thirds of cocoa farmers are in Centre and South Provinces.

Apart from the possible impact of the cocoa price cut, the only major cause of discontent that was new in the later 1980s was the freeze in civil service recruitment. All told, what happened in Cameroon can best be seen, not as a reaction to new grievances, but as the result of popular remembrance and expression of grievances going back decades. While the economic situation caused many people – not just in the north and the two Anglophone provinces – to say things had been better under Ahidjo, more powerful feelings developed against the whole system as it had been under both Ahidjo and Biya.

Among many Anglophones restless under that system, Albert Mukong, a veteran campaigner who had spent years in prison, gave an interview to the BBC criticizing the recent elections in June 1988, and was arrested. Others continued enough protest activity for the newly appointed Delegate General for National Security, Gilbert Andzé Tsoungui, to warn on 4 May 1989 against what he called abuses of freedom of expression, and to say that the 1962 decrees on subversion were "still in operation and extremely topical". This warning by the head of the very powerful *Sûreté Nationale* coincided with the appointment of Fochivé to head the also powerful CENER; the message was unmistakable. But that same month Mukong was freed, and no charges under those 1962 decrees followed against anyone else for the moment. The government in fact responded to growing criticism with something between full repression and understanding of the public mood.

While not severely suppressed, criticism of the system of government did not seem, in mid-1989, likely to have much effect either. Few Africans or others foresaw then the mass movement towards pro-democracy reform that was under way a year later. One event that happened in that year was the wave of revolutions in Communist Eastern Europe, and it is commonly asserted that this inspired the similar movement in Africa. On closer examination that theory needs revision.

The abandonment of one-party systems in many African states did follow closely on the Eastern Europe revolutions;

but so did the great process of change begun by President de Klerk in South Africa on 2 February 1990, and few would suggest a connection there. Events in both Eastern Europe and South Africa must have had some influence on African states; winning of freedom, or major steps towards it, can only encourage those seeking it elsewhere. Some special effect on Africa from Eastern Europe can be accepted as likely because, among the Francophone states that were the first to go through major changes then, the first, Benin, and the second, Congo, were ruled by left-wing regimes with close ties to the former Soviet bloc; close ties among Francophone Africans could then ensure that the effects spread quickly to other states such as Zaire, where President Mobutu accepted a multi-party system on 24 April 1990. But the idea that Africans had no reasons of their own to oppose one-party regimes but suddenly got the idea on hearing the news from Prague and East Berlin is incredible.

It is all the less likely in the case of Cameroon as the ordinary people there have little contact with and little interest in the former Communist states. In contrast they have large-scale contact with France, where thousands of Cameroonians live and many others travel regularly, and with other Western countries. After 30 years of following free elections in France and other countries but yet submitting to one-party rule at home, is it likely that Cameroonians changed their attitude just because of democratic change in Eastern Europe? The changes in Cameroon can best be attributed to internal considerations.

It happened by coincidence that, on the eve of those changes, Ahidjo died in exile in Senegal on 30 November 1989. Thus Cameroonians were spared the sight, which would probably have been seen, of Ahidjo backing a process of democratic change which he would never have allowed even to begin when he was in power. His death did not alter, and may even have encouraged, the increasing praise of his memory in opposition to Biya when freer politics arrived.

One advocate of such freer politics, the lawyer Maître Yondo Black of Douala, was arrested on 19 February 1990 for taking part in a discussion group, *Coordination for Democracy and a Multi-Party System*. He received a three-year sentence on 30 March, which aroused many protests. While saying Yondo Black had not been sentenced for starting a new party (which was not against the law), the government was not willing to agree to new parties, and on 9 April Biya said calls for a multi-party system were "manoeuvres for diversion, intoxication and destabilization". But that now traditional propaganda, equating a single party with peace and harmony and a plural system with strife and discord, now fell on increasingly deaf ears. In West Cameroon a Social Democratic Front had been founded by then and, according to its leader John Fru Ndi, had given details of its formation to the authorities on 16 March. On 26 May 1990 the SDF held a huge rally at Bamenda, at which police opened fire, killing six people.

Instead of starting more serious oppression, this police action was followed, a few weeks later, by President Biya's surrender to the multi-party system demand, when at a congress of the RDPC at Yaounde he declared that the party must be ready to face competition and added: "Consider also that other schools of thought exist which must be taken into account, fought against or integrated" (28 June 1990). What happened in those weeks? Even though that was the

very time that Cameroonians were absorbed in the good showing of their national soccer team in the World Cup in Italy, and seemed to think of nothing but football, in fact decisive pressure was brought to bear during those weeks. Public expressions of it were a pastoral letter from the Catholic bishops at Whitsun, calling for an end to single-party rule, and the resignation of John Ngu Foncha, the former prime minister of West Cameroon who had led it into the federation in 1961, as an honorary vice-chairman of the RDPC (9 June). Foncha condemned the shooting and expressed the demand being made by West Cameroonians for a return to a federal system.

There must have been other internal pressure also, and probably pressure from France also, which a regime so close to France for 30 years could not ignore. France had backed African governments in many ways during that time, and although there was no French base in Cameroon and never any blatant military intervention there, there was plenty of useful discreet French help for Ahidjo and Biya in many domains, including that of security and intelligence (the full story of outside aid in those fields to help dictatorial African regimes retain power has not been told), France's role in helping the Ahidjo-Biya regime was denounced by the novelist Mongo Beti,²⁹ who returned to Cameroon in 1991 after 30 years' exile. Like other radical critics of Third World regimes tied to the West, Mongo Beti exaggerated the importance of Western aid and depicted as "puppet" a regime that had in fact solid internal sources of support. This is true of many other regimes also, and for that reason difficulties arise when Western governments, deciding to stop their much-criticized unconditional aid to certain regimes, start to insist on more respect for human rights or greater democracy in aid recipient states.

The main difficulty arising then is quite simply that regimes can, because they are not really "puppets", ignore lectures about democracy and tell the donors: "Now what are you going to do about it?" Carter's policy towards US allies in Latin America ran into that problem. In 1981, when President Mitterrand came to power in France and was widely expected (though on slight evidence) to cease France's unconditional support to conservative dictatorships in Africa, the same problem arose, with the governments of Zaire and Gabon angrily reacting to the very idea of France concerning itself with African human rights. In fact no policy based on such concern was even begun at that time. But the idea was revived a few years later, and at the 16th Summit of France and African States, held on 20 and 21 June 1990 at La Baule in France, the declaration agreed on by those attending, including Biya, spoke of "the need to associate the relevant population more closely with the construction of their political, social and economic future".³⁰ Mitterrand, speaking for himself, went further and said French aid would be "less enthusiastic" to "regimes which behave in an authoritarian fashion and fail to accept the move towards democracy".³¹ This warning may well have been repeated to Biya in private; and it must have reinforced the internal pressure.

After the surrender in principle, months passed before a new law was passed by the National Assembly on 5 December 1990, formally allowing creation of several parties on certain conditions. But in the meantime, there was relaxation in many other ways. Exit visas, for long needed by any

Cameroonian leaving the country legally, were abolished, and the procedures for obtaining passports, which had previously been treated as a privilege and not a right and made very difficult to get, were altered to make them easily obtainable. Censorship of the press was greatly eased and by late 1990 Cameroonians were reading things they had not seen for decades in their country's newspapers.

Although this greater freedom was very welcome to Cameroonians (only those who knew the country before can tell what a difference it made), it encouraged a people waking up after years of submission to want more, while on its side the regime wanted to keep the process under its control. The situation resembled that prevailing for some years in the former Soviet Union under Gorbachev; in both cases there was a confused mixture of repression and relaxation. A new government formed on 8 September 1990 included Andzé Tsoungui as Minister of Territorial Administration; he had a reputation of being a hard-liner, which he soon showed that he deserved (it was noted by all that he was also a Beti). New laws passed in December 1990 on emergency powers and on the press retained many severe restrictions on freedom. After *Le Messager* published an "open letter" to President Biya by Célestin Monga on 27 December 1990, Monga and the editor, Pius Njawe, were arrested and charged. They received suspended gaol sentences on 18 January 1991, which were met by strong protests with many demonstrations.

This signalled the start of many months of free political activity on the streets of Cameroonian cities, with many demonstrations and meetings. They expressed the new-found freedom and pent-up feelings about decades without freedom. Similarly, a free press blossomed, until after a few months there were about 60 newspapers in circulation, including about 15 dailies (instead of just one only a few years earlier – *Cameroon Tribune* – which still toes the government line). The government did not like all this unrestrained freedom and met it with repression, but fitful repression that failed to check it. So as soon as new parties were formed, hundreds of thousands of people were waiting to rush to join them.

In the first months of 1991 new parties received their registration; the new law laid down quite severe conditions, which aroused protests, but these were not applied consistently and the major new parties complied anyway. Before the new law only the SDF, largely an Anglophone party but proclaiming its aim to be a nationwide one, appeared to the public to be well organized. But within a few months several others were registered and operating, and gathering support in areas now showing open opposition to the regime.

Those areas included, first, West Cameroon. The SDF rapidly became the leading party there, but under the terms of the law on parties could not openly support the widespread demand for a return to a federal system – or the installation of a true federal system, which had not really existed between 1961 and 1972. Many Anglophones continued to follow Foncha and others in this demand, and Mukong, after another spell in prison in 1990, went after his release to seek support from the United Nations, saying it should intervene because the federal system to which West Cameroon's voters had agreed in the UN-organized referendum on 11 February 1961 had been illegally abrogated in 1972. His proposal never had a chance of success, but the

feeling of dissatisfaction with rule from Yaounde was and is very widespread in West Cameroon.

In other parts of Cameroon opposition parties did not challenge the centralized state in the same way, though there was widespread support for a more decentralized, but not federal system. Among the areas of strongest support for the new parties was Western Province, home of the Bamilekes of whom, however, great numbers live elsewhere in Cameroon. Njawe and Monga are Bamilekes; another, Joseph Kadji Defosso, one of the top businessmen in Cameroon, emerged as an opposition sympathizer. The Bamilekes are often lumped together with people of neighbouring North-West Province by other Cameroonians, as "Grassfields" people, and in the developing political situation government supporters said that the Bamilekes and Anglophones together were the cause of the trouble.

When the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* was re-founded some Bamilekes joined it, and very many Bassas did. There was some dissension among leaders of the old UPC, largely in exile until all exiles were able to return in 1990 and 1991, and prospective founders of the new one. But Prince Dika Akwa emerged as effective leader of the new party. He is of the Duala people, still an influential though small group and long since vastly outnumbered in the city named after them. A Duala prominent in politics from the 1930s to the 1950s, the property tycoon, Paul Soppo Priso, took part in the events of 1991, though not as a party leader.

Douala city, with over a million inhabitants of whom the Bamilekes are the biggest ethnic element while Bassas are another major one, is an opposition centre now as it was in the 1950s. Much has happened to recall the last period of free party politics in the 1950s, with the UPC, for example, recalling its leader Reuben Um Nyobe, killed in 1958. But among many differences now is the role of the north. It emerged in 1991 as a major centre of opposition to Biya; memories of Ahidjo, and anger at Biya's refusal to allow his burial in Cameroon, were one cause of public feeling there, but a more important one was the continued imprisonment of many soldiers and others gaoled after the 1984 events; after many were freed in April 1990, others remained in prison.

Northerners joined in large numbers one of the new parties, the *Union Nationale pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (UNDP). Its leader, Samuel Eboua, was one of Ahidjo's closest colleagues and is of the small Mbo people of Nkongsamba in the south. Soon the UNDP came to be clearly one of the leading opposition parties. Another was the *Union Démocratique Camerounaise* (UDC) headed by Adamou Ndam Njoya, a former education minister who had won respect among Anglophones (he being himself a Francophone from Bamoun) for his handling of the sensitive education question; his party was thought likely to be able to compete with the SDF in West Cameroon. Those three parties and the UPC were the main contenders with the RDPC by mid-1991. Many other parties were authorized, to make a total of no less than 48 (with about 20 others operating but not legally registered) by early 1992. The legalization of many small parties was suspected, in Cameroon as in Zaire where the same happened, to be intended to split the opposition to the government party. But their formation was a spontaneous result of enthusiasm for free politics after the long dictatorship.

The confrontation of 1991

From early on opposition parties generally called for better social justice, cleaning up of public life, an end to secretive government, and measures to restore the economic situation.³² But, of course, they also wanted to hold power. Cameroonians fed up with the established system realized that it remained almost intact even when many parties were allowed to operate, until one of them took power in elections. Thus the formation of new parties marked not the end, but the beginning of popular protest.

The full story of the protest movement which took to the streets of many large cities from January 1991 need not be told here.³³ There were demonstrations, for example, in Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam (the main Bamileke city), Bamenda, Kumba (South-West), Kumbo (North-West), Garoua and Yagoua. A striking general feature was that fear of the police, a feature of Cameroonian life for 30 years, had largely vanished. This was all the more remarkable in that the gendarmerie and other police did not receive, or did not obey, orders to avoid violence. There was a great deal of police violence, such as shooting with many killed at Groua in January and the violent break-up of a meeting of a new political group in Douala on 17 March. But people continued to take to the streets and organize meetings even so; students at Yaounde University, who had made many protests since 1989, launched a major protest action on 26 March, and taxi drivers all over Cameroon went on strike on 8 April.

Some protests were over non-political grievances, such as the taxi strike, or over local issues, such as the Kumbo protests which led to several people being killed in April. But the main focus was the political future. In the north, where some of the worst clashes between police and demonstrators occurred (serious battles at Ngaoundere and Maroua in April, for example), the release of the remaining April 1984 prisoners was a particular demand. However, by April party leaders and their followers were uniting around a specific demand for a national conference. Biya had agreed by then (April 11) that elections due in 1993 would be brought forward, for the National Assembly but not for the presidency, to later in 1991. But for the opposition the apparent prospect of taking over the country's legislature later that year was no longer enough.

A "national conference" as envisaged by the opposition would have been like those organized in Benin and Congo during the transition to new multi-party regimes: conferences bringing together religious, business, trade union and other leaders with political ones, and assuming power to decide radical constitutional and other change. In Benin the conference assumed sovereign power and ordered application of the changes decided, and this was what the opposition wanted in Cameroon. The popularity of the national conference device in ex-French Africa in the recent democratic changes has been thought to have been inspired by the 1789 States-General in France, as Francophone Africans are commonly steeped in the history of the French Revolution. But the main reason for that device is to deprive a long-established authoritarian government of the power to organize or thwart change as it thinks fit; to force it to accept possibly radical constitutional changes, and to make it possible to expose misgovernment and corruption without fear.

Augustin-Frédéric Kodock, secretary-general of the new

UPC, explained the idea (later, when it had been successfully resisted) in this way:

A National Conference allows a country to do an autopsy on itself. There are so many things to sort out; all that must be excised. Cameroonians must know that there are things which must no longer be done. Everyone must say 'That must never happen again!' to turn our backs on that past which does not make us proud We do not need bitterness, or settling of accounts. Every country has in its history periods of which it is not always proud. Well, let us excise that situation, so that generations to come know there are things which can no longer be done.³⁴

Such ideas were a challenge to the whole state structure, and Biya was not alone in opposing them. He repeatedly refused to consider a national conference, saying essentially that there was no need for it. In a broadcast on 11 April he said Cameroon did not need such a conference because "democracy is already a reality", and asked the advocates of a conference, "Who will attend this national conference? How shall we organize it, and who will elect whom?"³⁵

Biya announced on that occasion that elections would be brought forward. He seems to have assumed that every concession would leave everyone satisfied. But while he said on 11 April that a new prime minister would be appointed after elections, on 22 April the National Assembly voted to recreate the post of prime minister (abolished in 1984) straight away. This was clearly intended as a further sop to the opposition, as a seeming reduction in the president's absolute power, while the choice of the new prime minister four days later – Sadou Hayatou, a northern Fulani – was probably an effort to appease hostile feeling in the north. On 22 April the Assembly also passed an amnesty law whose main beneficiaries were the 1984 northern prisoners. These gestures did not in fact appease opposition in the north or elsewhere. Hayatou was a leading figure in the authoritarian regime and was seen as such. Biya took a long time to understand the extent of popular rejection of the whole authoritarian system.

But he did understand correctly that the national conference question was a question of power. That was clear to all concerned. In response to government allegations that the opposition wanted a conference as a "short cut" to power, Fru Ndi said, "We want a short cut to power". Others wanted a conference because they honestly saw it as the best solution, notably Cardinal Christian Tumi, Catholic archbishop of Garoua, an Anglophone who was a leading backer of the opposition from 1990. And not all politicians who called for a conference simply sought power for themselves as the regime suggested. But to deprive the regime of a good deal of its power was indeed what they wanted, as a first step. In this wish the opposition parties had massive popular support, whose strength can be explained by long-repressed feelings against dictatorial rule. Those seeking a complete end to such rule saw rightly that the regime had in fact given up very little and wanted to retain control.

Popular feeling was illustrated by an incident in which the opposition in fact overstepped the mark. About the time of an undoubted police raid on the dissident Yaounde University campus in early May, there were detailed reports of the murder of 58 students by police, in revenge for the killing of a student by others accusing him of being an informer. But although a detailed list of 58 allegedly killed students' names was circulated, and an inquiry was ordered, all the indications are that this atrocity never took place at all.³⁶ However

the fabrication arose, the fact that it was so widely believed was a sign of the government's lack of credibility – an inevitable result of decades of control of the media.

The confrontation between the authoritarian state system and parties and people determined to end it was truly launched by a demonstration demanding a national conference at Bamenda on 11 May, and the start of mass civil disobedience on 13 May; there was also a general strike on 16 and 17 May, widely followed in the west and north. From 24 June the most intense phase began, with the opposition's extension of civil disobedience to become a total shutdown in the cities. The *villes mortes* campaign involved the stoppage of all work, all trade, all traffic in the cities, except for Friday evenings and Saturdays. The campaign was effective in cities of West Cameroon, and above all in Douala. For about three months, for five or six days a week, hardly any shops or other businesses opened, hardly any taxis or private vehicles ran. Government offices stayed open but people had to walk to work. Ships still went to Douala harbour, which handles almost all Cameroon's overseas trade, but goods could be moved from there only slowly. The shutdown of Cameroon's economic centre was estimated to have cost 4 bn FCA francs per day. There was of course great cost to the ordinary people also. They could only buy food once a week; any taxis or private cars breaking the shutdown, or any shops opening except on the permitted days, could be attacked by strong-arm enforcers; it was very difficult to travel out of the city except by train.³⁷

This sort of shutdown had considerable effect in India during the independence struggle, where it was called a *hartal*. The opposition in Cameroon, which formed a National Co-ordination of Opposition Parties and Associations (NCPOA) to organize the campaign, hoped to force the Biya government to agree to a national conference. That it failed to do so was because the government had its sources of support.

While Douala was at a standstill, life went on normally in Yaounde. All the central and southern provinces remained loyal to the government while large parts of the rest of Cameroon opposed it. The RDPC, forced on to the defensive everywhere else and affected by the opposition mood itself (Jean-Jacques Ekindi, Douala boss of the RDPC, supported the national conference call and then left the party, on 23 May, and founded a *Mouvement Progressiste*), remained strong in the centre and south. Thus the country was dangerously polarized on ethnic lines: Betis and Bulus versus the rest. While Betis and Bulus probably did not support the President one hundred per cent – the cocoa price cut had hit them hardest since 1989, while almost all Betis are Catholic and must have been influenced a little by the stand taken by Cardinal Tumi³⁸ (though the Archbishop of Yaounde, Jean Zoa, was said to be pro-government) – there was a real division on ethnic and regional lines. This led to tension against Bamilekes in Yaounde, some of whom left the city; while the opposition campaign included efforts to stop food supplies to the capital from West Province, a major agricultural area. Eboua, acknowledged as the major opposition leader, said there was “de facto partition”.³⁹

The state apparatus might or might not have broken down if Biya had not had that solid regional backing. In the event it never broke down altogether. In Douala and other cities affected by the shutdown the police were always on duty, always able to break up demonstrations, raid houses and

newspaper offices, and fire on crowds. While the streets of Douala seemed outside government control, they were not entirely under the NCPOA's control either (the opposition leaders did not order, but could not prevent, the violence used to support the shutdown). Repressive actions never ceased, such as the violent breaking up of a UPC meeting in Douala on 3 August and another big meeting the next day, with hundreds arrested; harassment of *Le Messager*, which had to go to Nigeria for printing for a time, and was banned on 17 August and again, with five other newspapers, on 4 September; the house arrest of Monga in Douala, and, in the same city, a police search at the home of Kadji Defosso, who had joined about 20 other businessmen to meet the opposition leaders on 6 August; and a clampdown on opposition activities in Bamenda on 2 October. Some of those actions ordered by the Yaounde government, especially by Tsoungui, were ineffective in opposition zones, such as the ban on the NCPOA on 19 June. But the government never lost control totally anywhere.

The situation thus had some parallels with the South African “Township War” of the 1980s: the police could lose control of the streets but remained intact, under discipline, and able to act; they could be bypassed, but not defeated. One cannot take power by creating that sort of situation. In Cameroon the government just responded by not giving in; the opposition then just had to keep on hitting a brick wall. Military intervention could have ended the stand-off, and the possibility of this was discussed for months. Somehow Biya kept the army under control, no doubt with the help of the Beti general Asso'o Emame who was one of his closest colleagues in the battle. The other eight generals might have done something if they had wanted, but the will to intervene was not there.

Although the opposition leaders decided at a meeting in Bamenda on 21 September to continue the campaign and extend it to include a boycott of schools, by the following month it was clear that the campaign and, above all, the strength of the sympathetic population had exhausted themselves. An offer of talks by Biya on 11 October was accepted and the “dead cities” campaign petered out, while the schools boycott never went far. The state apparatus created by Ahidjo and headed by Biya had won – won by simply remaining in operation and refusing to give in. The victory had been won at the cost of huge financial losses all round, scores dead, and extreme ethnic tension which nearly led to civil war – but, typically of Cameroonians, drew back from that prospect.

Talks held from 30 October to 17 November 1991 in Yaounde, attended by government and opposition representatives and other prominent personalities who mediated and advised (including Cardinal Tumi and Soppo Priso), led to agreements on 17 November which confirmed the government victory under a polite disguise. It was agreed that elections for a new National Assembly would be held on 16 February 1992, and all protest campaigns were called off. The national conference idea was dropped (the UPC continued vainly to suggest it).

Among those satisfied with the agreements was the government of France. Biya attended a Francophone states' summit in Paris soon afterwards and was said to have had a good reception and approval from Mitterrand. Although some of Mitterrand's Africa policy-makers were said to

have favoured a national conference in Cameroon,⁴⁰ an opposition delegation headed by Eboua in late August had failed to win support in Paris, and clearly French policy still did not involve any serious pressure on African governments over political reform.

The new electoral law governing the promised elections was promulgated on 16 December 1991. It provided for a system of multi-candidate constituencies with elections combining list and majority principles: a party winning an absolute majority in one of the 49 constituencies would take all the seats there, while otherwise the parties winning most votes would be allocated seats proportionately. Some other provisions were said by opposition leaders to be contrary to the decisions of the "tripartite" conference; Ndam Njoya said this, and so did Maigari Bello Bouba, the former (1983-1984) prime minister who had gone into exile after the 1984 events and returned to Cameroon in August 1991. After joining the leaders of the UNDP, Bello Bouba replaced Eboua as the head of that party in December 1991. Criticizing parts of the electoral law, he called for postponement of the elections.⁴¹

The government agreed to postponement from 16 February to 1 March, but no further. Now there were limits to what dissatisfied parties could do. Of the four major opposition parties – the SDF, UNDP, UDC and UPC – two, the SDF and UDC, decided to boycott the elections. For the SDF, which had refused to sign the Yaounde agreements, Fru Ndi said there was no guarantee of "just and fair" elections: "We are boycotting the elections because the Code is bad, because it opens the way to fraud and vote rigging."⁴²

The government could afford to remain unmoved by such criticisms, backed up by no more than the threat of a negative and self-defeating boycott. However, the crisis had probably shocked it into realizing the extent of public opposition, which Biya had to all appearances never expected. This could explain the law passed on 18 December to rehabilitate Ahidjo and three historic UPC leaders, Um Nyobe, Ernest Ouandié and Félix Moumié. This gesture must have pleased some, Ahidjo's memory was now widely respected, and not only among his fellow Northerners such as Bello Bouba, who asked "Is it a crime to share the ideas which were Ahidjo's?" (adding correctly that President Biya's government followed those ideas).⁴³ As for the UPC founders, feelings about them were expressed by Thomas Melone, later elected a UPC deputy, who said after that, "I am thrilled to be ... a deputy carrying the banner of Um Nyobe".⁴⁴

The new UPC chose as its leader, to replace Dika Akwa, an Anglophone veteran of the early UPC struggle, Ndeh Ntumazah, just back after a long exile in Britain. Elected in late December 1991, Ntumazah declared on 8 February that the UPC would boycott the elections, but this was cancelled by a decision of the steering committee two days later to follow the advice of Kodock to participate. Besides the UPC and UNDP, and of course the ruling RDPC, 29 other parties presented at least some candidates. Among them was a party not considered important before the elections, the *Mouvement Démocratique de la République* (MDR) headed by Dakole Daéssala, former chairman of the city bus corporation SOTUC, arrested as a Northerner after the April 1984 crisis and held for six years without trial. He is one of the Kirdis, the minorities (of many ethnic groups) in the north who were historically subordinate to the Fulanis and

remained pagan or became Christian rather than Muslim; and he appealed for support among other Kirdis (from whom, incidentally, the rank and file of the former Republican Guard had been recruited). That differences between Fulanis and Kirdis might find political expression, on the lines of what had for long happened in neighbouring northern Nigeria, does not seem to have been widely expected.

In the event, the elections of 1 March 1992 distributed the 180 National Assembly seats among four parties: the RDPC won 88, the UNDP 68, the UPC 18 and the MDR 6. The UNDP, which had seemed even more a northern party after Bellow Bouba became leader, indeed won overwhelming support in the north, winning all the seats in Adamaoua and North Provinces; in Far North Province, however, the RDPC won most seats and the MDR won its six. Winning most seats in the Bamileke homeland of West Province and one Anglophone province, South-West, as well as seats in every other province except South, the UNDP is a fairly nationwide opposition party. The UPC did well in its areas of traditional support in Littoral Province, the Bassa homeland and Douala city.

The RDPC won all seats in South Province and the great majority in Centre Province, confirming the trend seen for years; and some seats in all others except North and Adamaoua. For a party which had the full support of the government in power and its local officials, and which was the only party to field candidates in all 49 constituencies, the RDPC's showing was not too impressive. Its secretary-general, Ebénézer Nijoh Mouelle, lost in his Littoral constituency. The relatively poor RDPC performance indicates that the elections were generally fair, and in fact there were no serious complaints of large-scale cheating.

The RDPC was three seats short of a majority in the Assembly, but after several weeks of discussions it agreed on a coalition with the small MDR. Thus an overwhelmingly RDPC government was formed in mid-April, headed by an Anglophone of North-West Province, Simon Achidi Achu. A former minister of justice under Ahidjo, he is the first West Cameroonian to be prime minister of Cameroon; his appointment was no doubt a gesture to please the Anglophones. Biya indeed owes them many thanks, for their following the SDF call to boycott the polls ensured the RDPC's victory.

While the UNDP picked up enough anti-government votes in most of South-West Province from the absent SDF candidates, it was not so in North-West. There the SDF boycott call led to low turnouts, below 50 per cent in all constituencies and down to 11.87 per cent in one (the national average was 60.58 per cent). Without challenge from SDF candidates who would have won all or nearly all seats in North-West, the RDPC won 15 out of 20 of them. In effect the SDF cost the opposition as a whole the election; without those 15 seats handed it on a plate, the RDPC might not have been able to rule even in a coalition.

As things are, the same areas most alienated from Biya's regime in the single-party era still are – West Cameroon and the three northern provinces. Anglophones in particular experience – regardless of the fact that it is very much their favourite party's fault, the feeling of Scots in Britain today – seeing a democratically elected government as an alien one in their home region. The idea of a return to greater autonomy in West Cameroon is gaining in popularity; leaders of a Cameroon Anglophone Movement were arrested after a

demonstration at Bamenda on 11 February. Achidi Achu's appointment may not change many Anglophones' feelings. And indeed the prime minister, though responsible to the Assembly, has limited power under the present constitution, which resembles that of France's Fifth Republic. One major cause of opposition discontent has been that National Assembly elections were never going to affect the real seat of power anyway. Nor have they done so; while municipal elections are coming next October and the RDPC has accepted (so it says) the need for decentralization, and revisions to the constitution are expected to be discussed, what really matters is the coming presidential election. It may be held before the due date of April 1993; whenever it is held, the key question is who will stand against Biya.

Even a change of president might mean little real change. A new president might find he liked the system he inherited. That system, an authoritarian one with concentration of power, has survived remarkably. After introduction of free party politics and many other freedoms, after a serious confrontation with popular discontent, after free parliamentary elections, the Cameroonian state remains very much as it always has been. Democracy has yet to prove that it can really influence the system.

In many other parts of Africa, too, the end of a single party monopoly has proved to be of limited importance in itself – so much so that one wonders why Biya and others were so reluctant to give it up (force of habit, perhaps, or an acquired taste for fake unanimous support). Multiple parties alone do not change authoritarian states fundamentally – Togo and Zaire illustrate this as well as Cameroon, though in those two states regimes have held on by more crudely military means. It is not easy for anything to affect such authoritarian states fundamentally. Cameroon's case suggests that all analysts who have theorized about the "fragility" of state power in Africa should rethink their ideas. Many other states are as un-fragile as Cameroon, and the dreadful breakdowns in Liberia and Somalia are no more typical of Africa than Yugoslavia is of Europe. The state, in Africa, can look after itself rather well.

Cameroon's case also suggests that although Africans have developed effective ways to govern each other, the governed are not normally satisfied with authoritarian government. All ideas that submission to such government involves genuine acceptance, rather than mere resignation and desire for a quiet life, should be revised. After years of arbitrary rule Africans remain free in mind, submitting to censorship but not to real thought control; when the time comes, they reveal long-concealed feelings just as the peoples of the former Soviet Union did.

That those feelings have come to the surface in Cameroon, that real freedom has been enjoyed by its citizens for two years now in many domains, is an undoubted gain; to suggest that the change to democracy has brought no benefits would be wrong. But now the biggest test of all lies ahead: coping with the economic problems that are the most important in Cameroon and all over Africa.

Notes and references

1 French and English are both official languages in Cameroon. In this article I use French names for all parties except the Social Democratic Front.

- 2 J-F Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun*, Paris: Presses de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979.
- 3 *Ibid*, p 163.
- 4 *Ibid*, p 209.
- 5 *Ibid*, p 143.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 156; P F Ngayap, *Cameroun: Qui gouverne?*, Paris: Harmattan, 1983, p 96.
- 7 J-F Bayart, *op cit*, pp 223-224.
- 8 *Ibid*.
- 9 P F Ngayap, *op cit*, pp 10-14, 329.
- 10 *Ibid*, p 7 & n.
- 11 *Ibid*, p 339.
- 12 *Ibid*.
- 13 For example, the detailed account of those events in Cameroon: Quel avenir? by the journalist and banker Célestin Monga showed sympathy for Biya against Ahidjo, regardless of Biya using methods like Ahidjo's.
- 14 Personal information.
- 15 J-F Bayart, "One-Party government and political development in Cameroon", *African Affairs*, vol 72, no 287, 1973, pp 125-144.
- 16 J-F Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun, op cit*, p 253.
- 17 J Derrick, "Things don't fall apart", *West Africa*, 3 October 1993. The reader will note in that article my excessive belief in the false early hopes of liberalization under Biya.
- 18 *Africa Research Bulletin*, Economic Series, 31 July 1987.
- 19 *Jeune Afrique*, 8 July 1987.
- 21 Observation confirmed what was reported, in, for example, *West Africa*, 30 January 1984, 13 August 1984, 6 May 1985, 12 August 1985.
- 22 These changes gave another grievance to Anglophones by renaming the country simply the République du Cameroun, the name given to ex-French Cameroun alone in 1960/61, in place of the name "République Unie", which had recognized two different parts being united.
- 23 M W DeLancey, *Cameroon: Dependence and independence*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1989, pp 74-76.
- 24 I saw the French version of R A Joseph's *Radical nationalism in Cameroon* (originally published by Oxford University Press, 1977); and Bayart's book, not liked by the Ahidjo regime.
- 25 *Cameroun Tribune*, 20 February 1987.
- 26 *Ibid*.
- 27 Personal information.
- 28 *Africa Research Bulletin, Economic Series*, 31 October 1989.
- 29 Mongo Beti, *Main basse sur le Cameroun*, Paris: Maspéro, 1977.
- 30 *Le Monde* (Paris), 23 June 1990.
- 31 *Ibid*.
- 32 *Jeune Afrique*, 3 April 1991.
- 33 See *West Africa*, *Jeune Afrique* and *Africa International* for all this period.
- 34 Interview in *Africa International*, special issue on Cameroon elections, February 1992.
- 35 *West Africa*, 22 April 1991.
- 36 Personal information.
- 37 *Ibid*.
- 38 Cardinal Tumi became Archbishop of Douala on 23 September 1991.
- 39 *Jeune Afrique*, 11 September 1991.
- 40 *Jeune Afrique*, 27 November 1991.
- 41 Interviews, *Africa International*, special issue on Cameroon elections, February 1992.
- 42 *Ibid*.
- 43 Interview, *Jeune Afrique Economie*, July 1991.
- 39 *Cameroun Tribune*, 11 March 1992.

African transitions to democracy: An interim (and mostly pessimistic) assessment

Dr René Lemarchand, Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida, sounds a note of caution on Africa's current transition to democracy.

In much of Africa the demise of authoritarian rule has been greeted with a mixture of euphoria and apprehension.¹ The initial burst of popular enthusiasm ignited by the flame of democratization is giving way to a growing realization among Africans that, as one wag put it, "at the end of the light is the tunnel". Widespread evidence of political liberalization notwithstanding, there are equally compelling reasons to fear that the movement towards democracy may contain within itself the seeds of its own undoing. This is by no means intended to add to the prevailing mood of Afro-pessimism, or to underplay the progress of democratic forces in countries like Benin or Zambia. Rather than to issue warnings of impending setbacks, a more fruitful exercise is to critically assess the areas of vulnerability laid bare by the complex and manifold processes of change associated with "transitions to democracy".

Although the challenges ahead are legion, three are particularly worth sustained attention. One stems from the crises and uncertainties that have accompanied the demise of autocratic regimes, and which inevitably mortgage the transition from liberalization to democratic consolidation. For, if by "liberalization" is meant the dismantling of dictatorships, there are good reasons to agree with Bratton and van de Walle that "liberalization can occur without democratization, and (that) in some parts of Africa the disintegration of authoritarian rule may be followed by anarchy or intensified corruption".² It is one thing for an urban mob, a guerrilla army or a national conference to bring about the fall of a dictator; the construction of a democratic polity is an altogether different and far more arduous undertaking.

Another source of uncertainty, which feeds upon the internal crises and conflicts generated by liberalization, stems from the strategic counteroffensives mounted by African autocrats in the face of growing threats to their hegemony. Nowhere is the phenomenon more evident than

in neo-patrimonial regimes: where the state is but the extension of the ruler's household, and where office-holders are cast in the role of vassals or retainers, resistance to democratization is the instinctive reaction of leaders and followers to insure their own political survival. Recent events in Zaire, Togo and Malawi, only to cite the most obvious examples, bear witness to the decisive role played by neo-patrimonial rulers in foreclosing the options raised by the advent of liberalization.

Yet another unknown in the political equation concerns the impact of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) on newly emergent power configurations, and how these in turn may affect the prospects for democracy. Although there is no gainsaying the short-run contribution of SAPs to the overall process of economic and political liberalization, their long-run consequences on the structure of civil society are very much in doubt.

To these dimensions of analysis we shall return in a moment. If only to put the issues in proper perspective, and as a point of entry into their theoretical implications, it may be useful to turn briefly to some African perceptions (or misperceptions) of the liabilities involved in democratic transitions.

Before going any further, however, a few preliminary observations are in order. The first concerns the historical specificity of African state systems and the obvious risks involved in trying to generalize from a few individual cases. Questions are bound to arise, for example, as to whether one can meaningfully assess the chances of democracy in, say, Gambia, Burkina Faso or Portuguese Guinea, from the lessons drawn from the more familiar cases of Zambia, Nigeria or Senegal. What follows, therefore, must be seen as a provisional set of hypotheses, subject to further refinement and possible falsification. Furthermore, although little is said of the play of external forces militating for or against democracy, this is not meant to underplay their significance.

Especially noteworthy are the forces at work within the African continent, whether in the form of “refugee-warrior” communities³ seeking to fight their way back into their homeland (as in Rwanda), of regional hegemony bent upon asserting their influence upon their neighbours (of which Libya and the Sudan are prime examples), or of individual African leaders in search of external clients (as exemplified by Houphouët-Boigny’s “peace initiatives” in Liberia and Burkina Faso, or Qadhafi’s intervention in Chad). Crucial as these forces may be in any attempt to assess the course of democratization in specific arenas, space limitations, coupled with the paucity of reliable information, make it impossible to do full justice to their relative weight in the balance of forces at work in domestic arenas.

Finally, while much of this discussion assumes that Western conceptions of democracy – meaning in essence the willingness and ability of the ruled to exercise effective control over the rulers at regular intervals, through competitive elections – are the principal frame of reference for assessing the chances of a successful transition to democracy, this is not to say that the transfer of Western models to the continent is either feasible or desirable.⁴ The propriety of such models for Africa is for Africans themselves to decide; and so, also, are the alternative forms of democracy which might best be suited to the needs and conditions of particular societies.

The voices of Afro-pessimism

Although the term is of recent coinage there is nothing new of course about “Afro-pessimism”. Its underlying theme was already captured in René Dumont’s melancholy diagnosis of Africa’s economic predicament in the early 1960s. In its present-day version, however, the phenomenon is traceable to specific African concerns about the future of democracy in the continent.

One such concern has to do with the inability of opposition forces to achieve a measure of internal unity. Seen by one African analyst as a key element behind “the present failure of African movements towards democratization”,⁵ this absence of unity, we are told, is to a considerable degree a reflection of the unbridled ambition of opposition leaders. Hence their inability to put together a coherent political programme: “Ambition, more ambition, still more ambition! There is nothing in this frenetic urge to exercise control that resembles a programme, a set of ideas, a project or a structure”. Thus, “by eliminating the authoritarian systems of the anciens régimes the advent of democratization has set loose contradictory demands (*des appetits contradictoires*) which nothing, for want of solidly established institutions, can bring under control”. Ultimately, the divisive pull of “contradictory demands”, together with the weakness of existing institutions, are traceable to the inherently fractious character of African societies. Echoes of Ivor Jennings’ aphorism come to mind: “The people cannot decide until somebody decides who are the people.”⁶

Another and equally legitimate source of preoccupation centres on what some might describe as the relative neglect of civic virtues among leaders and followers. This is the thrust of the argument set forth by Adebayo Adedeji, the former head of the Economic Commission for Africa, at a recent conference on democracy in Africa: unless Africans learn how to internalize what he called “the five C’s” – consent, consensus,

conviction, commitment and compassion – democracy is bound to founder on the shoals of “divisiveness and polarization”.⁷ Specifically, “consensus politics is involving the people in the process by which policies are developed. ... The policies of consensus and consent, conviction, commitment and compassion are the practical corollary of a common concern for the nation as a whole, not just for a particular group ...”.⁸

A third set of constraints relates to the absence of suitable economic conditions for democracy to flourish. “With nothing to eat, the right to vote is derisible!”⁹ Ziyad Limam’s lapidary formulation finds a compelling echo in the warning issued by President Nicephore Soglo of Benin at a recent Francophone summit: “Such is the level of aspiration of our people in relation to the weakness of our economy that a forceful comeback of the conservatives and the collapse of the democratic process are not to be excluded.”¹⁰ Implicit in these statements is the familiar notion, long treated as dogma by the World Bank and US aid officials, that democracy will remain a very distant objective as long as minimal standards of economic well-being are not met. Even where democracy disproves the economic odds, as in Benin, the all-too-familiar gap between want formation and want satisfaction, to use Huntington’s language, may still prove the Achilles’ heel of the process of democratization.

The global dimension of economic development is also cited as a major constraint on democratization. In the words of the Secretary of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), Salim Ahmed Salem, “while Africa must democratize, our efforts will be hamstrung by the nondemocratic international economic system in which we operate”.¹¹ Adding to Salem’s lament, Richard Joseph warns that serious handicaps are likely to arise from “a world trading system, now directed by transnational companies, into which the continent has been integrated for centuries as a supplier of raw materials and agricultural products”.¹² In short, given the facts of economic dependence, and regardless of their ability to institutionalize the formal trappings of democracy, Africans will still have little or no say in shaping their economic destinies.

The conditions of democracy: Requiem for requisites?

Underlying these uniformly disquieting diagnoses is the assumption that certain basic conditions have to be met if democracy is ever to become reality: a minimum degree of national unity and socio-economic well-being, a civic culture and a fair measure of freedom from external constraints. Each brings to mind venerable theoretical references in the literature on democratization, beginning with Dankwart Rustow’s classic 1970 article on “Transitions to democracy”. National unity, according to Rustow, is the indispensable, “single background condition” to the genesis of democracy, and thus “must precede all the other phases of democratization”,¹³ a statement over which few Africans would quibble. Adedeji’s “five Cs” model is strongly evocative of Almond and Verba’s seminal discourse on the implications of the “civic culture” for democracy. And Lipset’s celebrated thesis on the “social requisites” of democracy provides an appropriate theoretical backdrop of African contentions that hunger and democracy simply do not mix. Again, few dependency theorists would hesitate to endorse

Salim Ahmed Salem's indictment of the "nondemocratic" aspects of the international economic system.

Exactly how to reconcile these assumptions with the empirical realities of African states remains unclear, however. For if national unity is to be treated as a basic precondition, what is one to make of Mauritius, surely one of the most culturally fragmented societies anywhere in the world – and one where democracy has shown remarkable vitality? Or take the cases of Benin, Senegal or even Zambia, where poverty is among the most grinding in the continent: fragile as their claims to democracy may be, they are likely to further erode what little credibility the Lipset thesis may still have among scholars. As for the "Civic Culture" or "five Cs" argument, one is impelled to wonder why it might conceivably apply to countries like Senegal, Botswana or Mauritius, and not to others. The same logic prompts one to wonder why external economic constraints appear to raise formidable obstacles in some settings and apparently not in others.

A major difficulty with the "preconditions of democracy" approach is that it tends to confuse causes and consequences; another is that no single precondition is either necessary or sufficient (as distinct from "conducive") to instigate processes of democratization. Both points are cogently argued by Terry Lynn Karl in her analysis of democratic transitions in Latin America, and many of her conclusions hold equally well for Africa. The argument, in brief, is that "patterns of greater economic growth and more equitable income distribution, higher levels of literacy and education, and increases in media exposure may better be treated as the products of stable democratic processes, rather than as the prerequisites of their existence. A civic culture characterized by high levels of mutual trust, a tolerance for diversity, and a propensity for accommodation and compromise could be the result of the protracted functioning of democratic institutions that generate appropriate values and beliefs rather than a set of cultural norms that must be present before these institutions can emerge".¹⁴

But if there is no such thing as a single precondition to democracy, what is it, then, that sets in motion the wheels of democratization? "Not trust and tolerance", Karl argues, but "very uncivic behaviour, such as warfare and internal social conflict".¹⁵ No one familiar with the agonies of liberalization in states like Benin, Burundi, Rwanda, the Congo or Zaire, not to mention the case of South Africa, would seriously dispute this contention.

The dynamics of transitions to democracy are inseparable from the conflict situations in which they arise, unfold and sometimes abort. How the structuring of conflict impinges on processes of democratization, the character of opposition forces, and the threats arising from external arenas are critical aspects of transitional politics in much of the continent. It takes little imagination, for example, to realize that the structure of conflict in states like Burundi or South Africa is patterned along very different lines from what can be observed in, say, Nigeria or Kenya. In one case we are dealing with a vertically structured conflict, revolving around the exclusion of an ethnic or racial majority from a meaningful share of power; the central issue hinges around how to reconcile the rights of the politically dominant minority with the exigencies of majority rule; consociational formulas are often seen as a necessary ingredient of democracy. In states like Nigeria or Kenya, on the other hand, conflict is

horizontally structured, involving the competing claims of juxtaposed rather than hierarchically ordered communities; where it occurs ethnic violence seldom carries revolutionary connotations, because the logic of majority rule does not necessarily imply the domination of one group over another.

Conflict situations generate different forms of opposition. Unless proper attention is paid to their specific characteristics – their ideological orientation, symbolic texture, ethno-regional underpinnings and mobilization strategies – the threats they pose to the process of democratization are difficult to assess. It stands to reason that where opposition to the regime evolves into a protracted armed insurgency (as in the Sudan, Niger and Chad), with the lines of conflict rigidly drawn around ethnically and religiously distinct communities, stalemate and continued repression are the most likely outcomes. Armed insurrection is not the only avenue of societal disengagement and contestation. Religiously inspired social movements of a Mahdist or fundamentalist stripe (as in Northern Nigeria during the Maitatsine rebellion), millenarian cults (as in Uganda during the Alice Lakwena insurgency), sorcery and witchcraft (as in Mozambique, Burundi, the Cameroon) are also part and parcel of the symbolic arsenal through which opposition movements try to challenge the authority of the state. To this must be added the "everyday forms of peasant resistance" chronicled by James Scott, which uncover a range of tactics and strategies that are seldom taken into account in discourses on democracy.¹⁶ Exactly how these highly diversified and generally violent forms of opposition can be deradicalized, pacified and harnessed into the process of democratization remains unclear.

Contextual factors as they affect the fortunes of opposition movements are also the key to an understanding of the threats originating from external arenas. Here the standard scenario is one in which "refugee-warriors" or armed opponents to the regime use a neighbouring state as a staging ground for armed attacks into their country of origin. Thus the incursions into Rwanda by Tutsi refugees affiliated to the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), based in Uganda, continue to pose severe threats to the process of democratization currently under way in both Rwanda and Uganda; the same can be said of the repeated attacks launched by Renamo guerrillas from Malawi, and at one time from South Africa, against the civilian population of Mozambique; the armed invasion of Sierra Leone by guerrillas of the Liberian warlord, Charles Taylor, resulting in the seizure of several towns and ultimately in the overthrow of the Momoh government, fits into much the same pattern of destabilization by proxy. Finnegan's telling metaphor about Malawi – "a sort of geostrategic dagger in the heart of Mozambique"¹⁷ – also applies to Uganda in relation to Rwanda, to Liberia in relation to Sierra Leone and Guinea, to Libya in relation to Chad, to the Sudan in relation to Ethiopia and so forth. Few situations are more threatening to the process of democratization than the violent feedback of ethnic strife from state to region and back again into the domestic arena.

In sum, insofar as they illuminate different historical trajectories, each pointing to a different path to salvation, social conflicts are critical aspects of the contextual specificity of African states; as such they constitute major variables in any attempt to grapple with the "the specific calculations and processes ... involved in moving away from authoritarian to democratic rule".¹⁸

Divergent paths to democratization

If the contextual problems faced by African states vary greatly from one case to the next, the modes of transition are essentially reducible to two basic patterns: “transitions from above”, where incumbent rulers respond to actual or anticipated crises by initiating democratic reforms, with a view to controlling both the pace and substance of such reforms; and “transitions from below”, where mounting popular pressures eventually shift the initiative to national conferences, the latter acting as surrogate constituent assemblies (in the manner of the *etats généraux* at the time of the French revolution) designed to set the pace and procedures of democratic transitions. Broadly illustrative of the second model are the cases of Benin, Togo, the Congo, and Zaire, while Nigeria, Guinea, Burundi, Rwanda, Kenya are typical of the first. Within each of these categories, however, there is room for further distinctions.

A plausible case can be made for the view that transitions from above are the more promising in terms of their ability to “deliver” democracy in that they tend to be rather specific about the time frame, procedural steps and overall strategy of transition. Unlike what often happens with transitions from below, the net result is to reduce uncertainty. The argument that “democracies that are the least likely to survive tend to be those in which no clear strategy of transition is apparent at any given time”¹⁹ is generally supported by the disappointing record of national conferences – with the notable exception of Benin. Only in Benin were the delegates to the national conference able to outline a clear, step-by-step strategy of transition. Elsewhere strategic and procedural issues took second place to inquisitorial investigations of presidential misconduct (as in the Congo) or bickering among delegates over their qualifications and authority (as in Zaire), or were simply pre-empted by presidential moves (as in Gabon and Zaire).

This is not to say that transitions from above are inevitably met with success. Just as national conferences have given birth to very different kinds of experiments – as shown not only by their very uneven performance, but their relative costs, duration, and size of their memberships²⁰ – transitions from above have yielded mixed results, ranging from unmitigated disaster in the case of Kenya to relative success in Burundi. Perhaps the most promising formula is that of “transplacement”, to use Huntington’s term to designate situations where the government and the opposition try to negotiate a mutually acceptable compromise. Cameroon, Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa clearly fit into this category, albeit with notable variations. In each case a complex dialectic unfolds between the government and the opposition, where the former initially tries to impose its priorities on the latter, until a point is reached where the costs of obduracy are believed to exceed the benefits of compromise. Through a give-and-take process the gap between opposition and government is gradually reduced, a compromise solution hammered out, procedural steps outlined and elections held. The position of the government is likely to be strengthened by its ability to capitalize on divisions within the opposition, and its control of the armed forces and police; on the other hand, the opposition may use the threat of further social unrest and violence to induce a change of attitude on the part of the government. In such circumstances, “the risks of negotiation and compromise appear less than the risks of confrontation and catastrophe”.²¹

Once this is said, and regardless of the mode of transition adopted, it is in the nature of transitional processes that they tend to unleash rising social demands, thereby sharpening political competitiveness among ethno-regional entities. The Nigerian formula for transition to civilian rule – providing for only two broadly based, ideologically oriented parties – is of course specifically designed to exorcize such demons; yet the gap between constitutional design and reality is made dramatically clear by the existence of deep ethnic and sectional fissures within each party, the sudden resurgence of ethnic and religious violence, continuing corruption in high places and an extraordinary degree of public cynicism about electoral politics. In case after case, from South Africa to Burundi, from the Congo to Rwanda and Kenya, the evidence shows that democracy is generally perceived as a zero-sum game, where specific ethno-regional communities stand to gain and others to lose. This is where the movement from autocracy to liberalization makes the advent of the next stage, the construction of democracy, extremely problematic.

The other side of the ethnic coin is one in which ethnicity is deliberately manipulated by incumbent élites as a means of fostering social conflict and demonstrate the futility of democratic transitions. Which brings us to a consideration of the strategic moves made by individual rulers to either subvert democratic transitions, or retain ultimate control over the timing, agenda and outcome of the negotiations.

The umpire strikes back

Not only contextual factors and institutional procedures but also, and most importantly, personalities make a difference. The point hardly requires elaboration. One only needs to reflect on the decisive role played by Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, Amadou Toumani Toure of Mali, Pierre Buyoya of Burundi in paving the way for a relatively smooth transition (the first two by hastening their own demise, the latter by introducing a major train of reforms), and compare them with Life President Ngwazi Dr Hastings Banda of Malawi, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Daniel arap Moi of Kenya, all of them monuments of “standpattism”, to realize the magnitude of the states involved in questions of leadership and personality.

What needs to be stressed is, first, that resistance to liberalization tends to correlate with the salience of neo-patrimonial characteristics in any given regime; and, second, that in their efforts to thwart democratic transitions patrimonial leaders use widely different strategies, involving a variable mix of carrots and sticks.

If personal rule is indeed the hallmark of neo-patrimonial states, it is in the nature of such states to impede the growth of associational ties other than those based on patron-client nets, ethnic and kinship affiliations, personal favours and kickbacks. Neo-patrimonial states are conspicuously uncongenial to civil society.²² Where clientelism, nepotism, corruption, and the application of brute force figure prominently in the repressive arsenal of African autocrats, civic organizations are unlikely to flourish. Not only does this raise obvious obstacles in the way of a democratic consolidation, but the strategies used by neo-patrimonial leaders to hang on to their privileges make it unlikely that this stage will be reached without considerable bloodshed.

Among such strategies, at least three are worth noticing. One revolves around the manipulation of ethnicity for purposes of creating social unrest, so as to demonstrate that there is simply no democratic alternative to the status quo. Kenya is a prime example. The part played by President Moi in stimulating ethnic unrest is well established. Ethnic violence, as one observer noted, "has involved attacks by armed and well organized members of the minority Kalenjin – President Daniel arap Moi's tribe, which over his time in power has become the nation's ruling elite – against largely defenceless members of bigger ethnic groups"²³ – most notably Kikuyus. Togo, Zaire and Rwanda offer similar examples of ethnic manipulation. Nor is South Africa an exception to the rule. The linkages, both financial and military, between the state security forces and Inkatha, are irrefutable, and so also the contribution of this covert partnership to rising levels of ethnic violence. To quote from a reliable source:

There were 2 582 people killed in political violence in 1991 Most disturbing are the persistent allegations and mounting credible evidence that the military intelligence department of the South African Defence Force, and some elements in the police, are centrally involved in the political violence.²⁴

In each case ethnicity emerges as a major vehicle of state-instigated violence, designed to intimidate the opposition and/or thwart all attempts to effectively challenge the status quo.

Another strategy, in some ways related to the foregoing, involves the use of the armed forces as a counterweight to the forces of liberalization. A case in point is Togo, where the Kabre-dominated army, in a highly destructive show of force, has all but undone the work of the national conference and reduced the Prime Minister to a figurehead. Or take the case of the Congo, where Mbochi elements of the army, whose loyalty to President Sassou Nguesso is not in doubt, have turned against Lari and Kongo elements from the south, largely identified with the government of Prime Minister Andre Milongo. Again, much the same scenario can be observed in Zaire, where key units of the army, most notably the Division Speciale Presidentielle (DSP), are not only dominated by Nbandi elements (Mobutu's own group of origin), but have repeatedly demonstrated their loyalty to the "Guide" by shooting civilians and looting the capital city. Although corporatist reflexes are not to be excluded, any more than a renewed sense of ethnic solidarity within the armed forces, in all three instances military interventions were clearly designed to bring to a halt the march of democracy.

A third strategy involves the buying off of political clients, either to weaken the forces of the opposition or to pave the way for the organization of "loyal" political parties. Here pride of place goes to Mobutu, whose skills in co-opting opposition figures remains virtually unmatched among his peers. His long apprenticeship in the arts of co-optation and repression explains his impressive performance during the national conference. In the best tradition of neo-patrimonial rulers Mobutu was able to satiate the appetite of enough presumptive clients to drive a deep wedge into the forces of the opposition and make the so-called Union Sacree sound like an egregious misnomer.²⁵ Again, Zaire is an extreme but by no means a unique example. Other cases come to mind of leading opposition figures being bought off or "induced" to join the ranks of the government. For example, Konan Bedie,

Lancine Gon Coulibaly and Emmanuel Dioulo in the Ivory Coast; Father Paul Mba-Abessole, at one time a leading figure of the *Mouvement de Redressement National* (Morena) in Gabon; or Wougly Massanga in the Cameroon, one of the historic figures of the *Union des Populations du Cameroun* (UPC).

That these are not mutually exclusive strategies comes out with reasonable clarity from the methods used by Mobutu to stage-manage the national conference. While confronting the regime with a major challenge, the conference also served as a privileged arena for testing Mobutu's political skills, and when these proved unavailing, as a pretext to engage in a ruthless display of force. As we have tried to show elsewhere in greater detail, Mobutu's basic moves to emasculate the conference are essentially reducible to the following: (a) packing the conference hall with loyal supporters; (b) sponsoring pro-regime parties; (c) buying off opposition members and renegades; (d) stimulating ethnic tensions among delegates; (e) nepotism and selective rewards within the military; (f) the use of force, resulting in February 1992 in the killing of some 60 peaceful demonstrators.²⁶ In the past Mobutu never shrank from the use of repression in dealing with his domestic foes; the point is now fast approaching where it will be the only resource left at his disposal.

In Zaire as elsewhere in the continent the devastating effects of neo-patrimonialism on African societies will probably long outlast its fragile institutional frame. This is where Zaire's predicament serves as a parable for the impact of patrimonial rule on civil society. What needs to be underscored here is the extent to which political clientelism, as a central and pervasive feature of neo-patrimonial polities, conspires to obstruct the emergence of a civil society. For if by civil society we mean "the presence of intermediary organizations and arrangements that lie between the primary units of society – individuals, families, extended families, clans, ethnic groups of various kinds, village units – and the ruling collective institutions and agencies of the society",²⁷ it stands to reason that patron-client ties are hardly compatible with the autonomy, corporateness and capacity for self-governance that one has come to expect of such intermediary organizations. It is in the nature of political clientelism, as Sylla reminds us, that it generates "a certain structural confusion between the state and society, a confusion between the private and public realms".²⁸ Because of the linkages it creates between the primary units of society (families, clans or ethno-regional clusters) and certain key institutions of the state, most notably the armed forces, it makes the bargaining between state and society a singularly futile enterprise. In brief, even more disquieting than the short-run effects of resistance to liberalization are the long-term consequences of patrimonial rule on the texture of civil society, including the destruction of broadly-based social networks capable of effectively bridging the gap between state and society.

Adjusting to structural adjustment

The ongoing debate about the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAP) on processes of democratization has once again focused attention on the issue of external economic constraints, and the extent to which these may hamper or ease democratic transitions. While some see in

SAPs the promise of an “enabling environment” for democracy, based on economic decentralization and competitiveness, others draw attention to the social costs and consequent political liabilities involved.

The argument that SAPs contribute in important ways to ease transitions to democracy rests on two basic assumptions. One draws attention to the dismantling of state-centred patronage networks as a consequence of privatization. This is how Jeffrey Herbst sets forth the argument:

Structural adjustment involves not only the switching of constituencies by African governments (a feat that most governments find exceptionally difficult) but an entirely new mechanism through which leaders relate to their clients. Under the political systems established after independence, governments were able to provide a variety of resources – jobs, low prices for basic goods, preferential access to government projects – to favoured constituencies. The whole point of structural adjustment is to eliminate, or at least significantly curtail, governments’ ability to offer these kinds of advantages to their constituencies In the long term, governments under structural adjustment will be less able to buy ethnic peace through the distribution of patronage and resources.²⁹

In short, to the extent that it brings about a drastic change in patterns of resource allocation, structural adjustment erodes the clientelistic basis of African state systems, thereby creating the conditions for an enabling environment more compatible with the promise of a pluralist democracy.

Another assumption is that structural adjustment works against the concentration of power.³⁰ To the extent that SAPs aim at economic decentralization-cum-privatization there is, in theory at least, a substantial area of compatibility between the implementation of such programmes and the dispersion of political resources that some would consider essential to the flowering of democratic habits. Of particular relevance here Robert Dahl’s classic thesis about “polyarchy”. “Polyarchy”, for Dahl, “is strongly associated with societies marked by a host of interrelated characteristics”, including those associated with what he calls a “modern, dynamic, pluralist society” (MDP), namely “a dispersion of political resources, such as money, knowledge, status and access to organizations; of strategic locations, particularly in economic, scientific, educational and cultural affairs; and of bargaining positions, both overt and latent, in economic affairs, science, communications, education and elsewhere”.³¹ Insofar as they contribute to bring about a dispersal of political resources SAPs help create the structural conditions normally associated with democracy, or polyarchy.

With regard to the first point the least that can be said is that the evidence is not entirely convincing. In fact, in a subsequent article, co-authored with Henry Bienen, Herbst appears to have substantially modified his earlier assessment, noting that “even if the structural adjustment reforms are adopted, the state will still play a major economic role”, the reason being that “many resources from the outside, including most of the foreign aid flow, go through the state”.³² The reason why SAPs may have little effect on existing power structures is that the key decisions concerning who should benefit from what and under what conditions are in most instances made by African rulers, irrespective of supply and demand considerations.³³ The implication is that if SAPs sometimes end up “zapping” some clients, most notably those for whom public enterprises offered cushy sinecures, they also provide ample opportunities for a

restructuring of patronage relations around informal private/public sector connections. The clientelistic arsenal at the disposal of the incumbents thus remains potentially mobilizable against the “enemies of the state”. Habits of the heart die hard

The second point, concerning the dispersal of political resources, again calls for major reservations. The impact of privatization on patterns of exclusion and access among indigenous and foreign communities may indeed result in a very lopsided distribution of economic and social resources. The question of “who stands to gain and who stands to lose”, though seldom raised in IMF or World Bank reports, is nonetheless crucial to an understanding of the kinds of social conflicts that may ensue. As Waterbury and Bienen have argued, “privatization is likely to mean, in the short term, outside Nigeria and a few other countries, foreign ownership or citizenship ownership which is politically unacceptable because the citizens are of Asian or Middle Eastern extraction or may be indigenous but from the ‘wrong’ ethnic group, e.g. Kikuyus in Kenya today”.³⁴ The case of the Kikuyu is only one of several examples that come to mind. An equally compelling illustration is offered by the very uneven performance of the Beti and Bamileke, in the Cameroon, in terms of their ability to cash in on the economic opportunities of SAPs. Their mutual rivalries, as one observer notes, “are not unrelated to structural adjustment policies”.³⁵ For if the Beti have relied heavily on state intervention for their professional and economic advancement, the Bamileke have essentially been self-reliant. Their proverbial ability to engage in capitalist accumulation through a complex combination of self-help and market-oriented activities, makes them highly receptive to privatization. They stand to gain a great deal more from SAPs than the Beti. The issue of access and exclusion is even more acute where two different cultural aggregates face each other in the context of what each sees as a zero-sum game – as in Burundi, Rwanda and Mauretania.

Nor can one ignore the contribution of SAPs to the hardening of class cleavages. Although the evidence is admittedly fragmentary, there are reasons to assume that the net result, in specific instances, has been to increase the vulnerability of the poor to conditions of extreme economic scarcity. Where public enterprises were once expected to provide basic social services, these may no longer be forthcoming once privatization gets under way. In his carefully argued discussion of privatization in developing countries, Nicholas van de Walle notes that “some transportation routes to remote regions may no longer be serviced. Prices for services may increase dramatically after privatization, notably if cross-subsidization practices common to public enterprises are abandoned. In the agricultural sector, private input distribution and marketing agents may pay less attention to smallholders than did public institutions, and concentrate instead on the bigger commercial farmers. Provision of such public goods as research and extension may falter – these services tend to benefit the smaller farmers more”.³⁶ Although the author warns that “these effects should not be exaggerated”, their existence cannot be left out of the accounting.

In a recent assessment of Africa’s hopes for democracy, Michael Clough concludes his *tour d’horizon* on a decidedly upbeat note: “The prospects for democracy in Africa”, he writes, “are now unquestionably better than they were three

decades ago, if for no other reason that Africans know all too well the cost of the failure of democracy".³⁷ Although the foregoing suggests a rather more sobering prognosis, some benefit of the doubt may be extended to situations where domestic and international actors are willing to join hands to nurture an incipient process of democratization. After all, the prospects for democracy are not everywhere as sombre as they appear to be in Zaire, the Sudan or Mozambique. Nor is the removal of cold war issues from the African scene the only bright spot on the horizon. If there is such as thing as a "possibilist" view of democracy in the continent (which we endorse), it ought to be anchored in a conception of the civil society that rules out an "either/or" formulation and instead stresses the "more or less" discernible in its empirical manifestations and potentialities. Seen from this perspective it would be the height of folly to reduce to the same "uncivil" common denominator states as different as Ghana and Liberia, Nigeria and Somalia, Zimbabwe and Burundi. Again, even where the prospects for the emergence of a civil society seem the least promising, there are significant seeds of hope in the active "watchdog" role played by human rights and Church organizations in denouncing the abuses of the patrimonial state, in challenging its claims and pointing to alternative ways of safeguarding individual and group rights. Furthermore, as has been recently argued, nurturing the seeds of democracy is not beyond the will or capacity of international actors, including the United States.³⁸ Rather than to try to make the continent safe for democracy – a quixotic agenda at best – a more sensible approach is to provide inducements for Africans to think constructively and imaginatively about the forms of governance that are best suited to their socio-cultural heritage, about the kinds of constitutional mechanisms that can best contribute to the management of ethnic conflict, about ways of strengthening the civil society, and with these priorities in mind, invest appropriate assistance (financial, economic, educational) in the most promising sectors of those polities which, like Senegal, Zambia or Mali, make the promotion of democracy a key item on their agenda.

Clearly, given the general drift of the argument presented in this discussion we stand little risk of being accused of what Albert O Hirschman called "a bias for hope"; nonetheless, and with the reader's indulgence, we would hope to be given some credit for not entertaining a bias for utter despair.

Notes and references

- 1 I wish to record my indebtedness to the participants of the National Academy of Sciences Conference on Democratization (Benin, 14–17 January, 1992) for helping me frame the issues discussed in this paper. I owe a similar debt to Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, whose works have prompted me to look at the evidence from Latin America, and to Kristen Nordhaug of the Centre for Development and Environment of the University of Oslo for giving me the opportunity to present a preliminary version of this essay in his seminar on *Democracy and economic development* (Oslo, 10 February, 1992). And I also wish to thank Larry Diamond and Nick van de Walle for their pertinent comments and suggestions on an earlier version of this article.
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- 17 William Finnegan, "There is something wrong in the paradise", *Transition*, 55, 1992, p 20.
- 18 Terry Lynn Karl, "A research perspective", *op cit*, p 32.
- 19 *Ibid*, p 37.
- 20 The Benin national conference cost approximately \$1.4 million, lasted ten days and was attended by 488 delegates; in the Congo the price tag was \$7 million, the conference lasted three and a half months and was attended by 1 200 representatives of the "civil society" (all of whom received handsome "indemnities", and thus had a vested interest in prolonging the debates); in Zaire the conference has been in session off and on for the last year or so, and was attended by some 4 000 delegates. The costs of the operation are anybody's guess.
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- 23 Jane Perlez, "Kenya, a land that thrived is now caught up in fear of ethnic civil war", *The New York Times*, 3 May 1992, p 3.
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- 25 For further details, see R Lemarchand, "Mobutu and the National Conference: The arts of political survival", a paper presented at the State Department conference on Zaire (Washington), 12-13 March 1992.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Philippe Schmitter, "Society", *Transitions to democracy: Proceedings of a workshop*, *op cit*, p 16.
- 28 Lancine Sylla, "Genèse et fonctionnement de l'état clientéliste", *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol 26, 1985, p 30. The story carried in the issue of 6 January 1992, of the Zairian newspaper *La Référence* provides a telling illustration of the phenomenon under discussion. The Zairian Ambassador to Madrid, Kina Kuntala, who also happens to be the son in law of the spiritual head of the Kimbanguist Church, Papa Digenda, is reported to have recently converted the embassy into a Kimbanguist chapel, at which point, we are told, "all the embassy personnel who wished to keep their jobs had to convert to Kimbanguism". Unable to meet the operating expenses of the embassy, including a phone bill amounting to \$12 000, Kuna Kuntala then proceeded to sell a wing of the embassy to the highest bidder - a form of privatization entirely consonant with what we know of Zairian varieties of capitalist accumulation.
- 29 Jeffrey Herbst, "The structural adjustment of politics in Africa", *World Development*, vol 18, no 7, 1990, pp 952, 955.
- 30 *Ibid.*, p 956.
- 31 Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- 32 Henry Bienen and Jeffrey Herbst, "Authoritarianism and democracy in Africa", Dankwart Rustow and Kenneth Erikson (eds), *Comparative political dynamics*, *op cit*, p 225.
- 33 For a substantial body of evidence in support of our argument, especially with regard to the Cote d'Ivoire, see Thomas Callaghy and Ernest Wilson, "Africa: Policy, reality or ritual?", Raymond Vernon (ed), *The promise of privatization*, New York: The Council on Foreign Relations, 1988, pp 179-230.
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The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and the future of North Africa

Eduardo Serpa

“The victory of the FIS demonstrates that, after the failure of all the other ideologies of the region, the Muslim peoples want to be ruled by Islam” – Ibrahim Massoud, spokesman for the parliamentary caucus of the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.¹

Introduction

This study provides an analysis of the political impact of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism throughout North Africa from Suez to the Atlantic. It discusses the present situation and evolutionary prospects of fundamentalism in these countries and attempts to forecast possible developments at regional level – and the broader political and geostrategic implications. Particular attention is given to Algeria and Egypt. This is because of their demographic importance² and Egypt's level of industrialization and technical and scientific development.³

This is not a topic that can be thoroughly understood without a rounded knowledge of the philosophical, theological and juristic tenets of fundamentalism: these all contribute to the inseparable connection between religion and politics in traditional Islam. Limitations of space, however, preclude even a summary discussion of these matters here.⁴

Algeria: The Islamists continue their revolutionary preparations

On 26 December 1991 the FIS (*Front Islamique du Salut*/Islamic Salvation Front) was the party that secured the most votes in the Algerian legislative assembly elections. Three weeks later a military coup established a junta and cancelled the second round of the elections, scheduled for 16 January 1992. The objective was to prevent the FIS from securing a huge parliamentary majority.

The results of the December elections had come as a shock to the Algerian establishment. Ever since the riots of May and June 1991, the Western media and, possibly, the

Algerian government itself had been convinced that the FIS had lost its position as a leading political force. Several factors had contributed to this error of judgement. One of these was a faulty interpretation of the riots of May-June 1991 themselves. The results of the June 1990 municipal and wilaya (regional) elections may also have given rise to the media's misinterpretation of the way the country was moving. In these local elections the FIS received more than half the votes; and this enabled it to gain control of 853 out of 1 541 municipalities and 32 out of 48 wilayas.⁵

Some authors were of the opinion that the manner in which the FIS had conducted local affairs in the municipalities entrusted to it had since then brought disappointment to the people – hence the riots.⁶ This view led certain observers to consider that the Islamist leadership, convinced that their loss of popular backing had been enormous, had decided to gain by violent means what was now beyond their reach at the ballot box.

But careful analysis of the period June 1990 to May 1991 seems to contradict these explanations. After the June 1990 elections, the FIS made considerable progress in the building up of parallel hierarchies that could be used as a tool to expand its electoral clientele.⁷ That the FIS had not been reduced to a desperate electoral situation also seems to be confirmed by an opinion poll held in May 1991 which indicated that the FIS was still leading the electoral race, backed by 33.4 per cent of the electorate, while the ruling FLN was backed by 24 per cent, and the third strongest party, the FFS (*Front des Forces Socialistes*/Socialist Forces Front) could hope for no more than 8 per cent of the votes.⁸

These figures make it difficult to understand why the FIS opted for violence in May and June 1991 instead of waiting for an election that could have been won by its candidates. Recent statements made by Abdelhamid Brahimi, who was President Chadli Bendjedid's Prime Minister between 1984 and 1988,⁹ may help to explain why the riots took place. Abdelhamid Brahimi is of the opinion that all Algerian political parties were opposed to electoral laws devised to

protect the government's position; but that the FIS was the only party with enough power to mobilize publicly and defend democratic principles on the streets.¹⁰

This explanation makes sense, particularly if one believes that the FIS intended to move beyond mere electoral victory. It is just possible that the Islamist leaders may have feared that a narrow success in terms of seats at the elections of December 1991, disproportionate to the enormous number of votes collected at the ballot box, could thwart their ability to impose radical change.¹¹

In power or out, the same kind of error is often committed by Westernized Third World politicians who, having adopted alien philosophies, become unable to understand the state of mind of their own peoples and are thus inclined to overlook the fundamental role still played in their societies by traditional forces.

The FLN government seems to have fallen into this trap. Statements made by the then Prime Minister Hamrouche, shortly after the June 1991 riots, provide the evidence:

With the Islamists, we are fighting a war. Our trump is represented by their intransigence and their violence, which will generate the reaction from a large part of the public opinion, which presently does not want to listen to the government. If we will be able to solve the country's problems, which are above all economic ones,¹² Islamism will be reduced to its true dimension.¹³

Hamrouche's proposed approach to the threat posed by the fundamentalists to his FLN government would of course, be stillborn unless the West proved willing to supply Algeria with the assistance required to raise the population's living standards.¹⁴ And it is a fact that an international community only too interested in avoiding the expansion of fundamentalism in the Maghreb did make a considerable effort to help the FLN government minimize the dangers of its financial predicament.

Following the riots, Crédit Lyonnais supplied Algeria with rollover finance to the tune of US\$ 1.5 billion. This loan, the first of its kind granted in many years to an African country, was aimed at "re-profiling" credits falling due, mainly to Japanese banks.¹⁵ A group of eight international banks has also been trying to complete external funding which the country's central bank, Banque d'Algérie, needs to service the US\$ 26 billion national debt until 1993.¹⁶

Nevertheless, international assistance could not solve the ordinary Algerian's predicament. His purchasing power continued its dramatic fall as a result of a vertiginous rise in the prices of basic foodstuffs. With the inflation rate running at 227 per cent from September 1991, the 60 per cent increase on minimum salaries granted by the government proved insufficient to solve the predicament of the working class.¹⁷ Shortly before the December 1991 elections this plight had become a heavy burden. High unemployment rates, overcrowding, inflation, lack of transport and even drinking water had called forth the wrath of the people. The cost of food became staggering: a kilogram of meat cost 15 per cent of the minimum monthly wage.¹⁸

The man on the street reacted to this situation by losing interest altogether in the December 1991 elections. This reaction was coupled with a loss of confidence in anyone and everyone in politics.¹⁹ The behaviour of the ruling clique contributed greatly to this reaction by revealing the contradictions and the hypocrisy characterizing Algerian socialism. As expressed by Chérif Belkacem, who held various portfolios in the Algerian government between 1963 and 1975:

... the Algerians cannot bear any more that some of their citizens build 5 billion-dinar mansions, hold accounts in Switzerland and drive Mercedes, while they are packed at seventeen in a two-room flat and cannot afford even a piece of meat to give some aroma to their soup.²⁰

The failure of the authorities to solve the material plight of the ordinary Algerian was matched by their inability to destroy the FIS as a coherent political force.

On 30 June 1991 Abassi Madani was arrested. It was not long before five other top leaders of the FIS joined him in gaol. The government's strategy seemed to be based on the idea that by keeping the more "radical" leaders of the FIS behind bars a new and more moderate Islamist leadership could emerge. But this strategy achieved very limited success. On 19 August the two FIS weeklies were banned after the "moderate tendency" in the party failed to gain control of these publications. What happened was that the FIS found itself undermined by a division between "legalists" and "legitimists" (Madani's followers). The latter were able to gain the upper hand and so elect an interim executive bureau excluding legalists.²¹

Ultimately the 26 December elections indicated that the FIS, even weakened by the split between legalists and legitimists, remained the strongest political force in Algeria. Its candidates gained 167 out of the 430 seats contested, against 15 only taken by the FLN. The democratic parties collapsed, with the exception of Hocine Aït Ahmed's FFS, which took 25 seats within its Kabyle fief. The "greens" felt secure, thanks to an analysis of figures from those constituencies indicating that the second round elections would give to them two-thirds of the assembly.²²

The repetition of the low turnout registered in the municipal and regional elections²³ makes it difficult to assess the exact size of the Islamists' following. However, the fact that the number of votes received by their candidates increased by some ten thousand when compared with their figures for the June 1990 elections – without there being any increase in the total number of votes cast – shows that the FIS had been consolidating its position.²⁴

The coup that interrupted Algeria's democratization was only to be expected, given the military cadres' outlook and the army's attitude to politics since Chadli Bendjedid initiated the democratization process.

The officer corps, to a large extent trained abroad, has a modernist outlook and includes many officers opposed to the legalization of the FIS.²⁵ The army's position *vis-à-vis* politics was clearly expressed in September 1990 by the Minister of Defence, General Khaled Nezzar:

The Army is ready to put an end to abuses which may present a danger to national unity. We shall intervene without hesitation to restore order.²⁶

After the June 1991 riots the army had stuck to their promise of withdrawing from political life, made that March after the inauguration of the multiparty system. Over the June/July period the army played a most important role, behaving correctly from a constitutional point of view: the military establishment limited itself to a strict maintenance of order, but did not intervene in the political controversy. It should be remembered, however, that the present constitution, approved by referendum in February 1989, entrusted the army with the role of guarantor of "the constitution and of democracy".

This explains why the army's commanders demanded that Chadli dismiss Prime Minister Hamrouche, and that elections be held before the end of 1991, as conditions for its action against the Islamists. By demanding elections, the army affirmed its independence in matters party political: it "intended to preserve the State, not the FLN State".²⁷

This mission became particularly important when the political and moral decadence of the FLN strengthened the army's conviction that it had become the only institution entitled to identify itself with both the state and the Algerian nation. Recent developments produce the impression that the military adopted the model followed by its Turkish counterpart after that country's democratization in 1945: in the absence of political consensus, the army felt entitled to intervene in political life whenever there was open confrontation, to restore order and prepare for elections, before returning to barracks.²⁸

According to a senior Algerian official, the army, in order to attain its objective concerning the Islamists, adopted the following strategy:

It is a same strategy that the new authorities are employing against the FIS integrists. This method – which was used by the Soviets after the Second World War in order to dismantle in successive layers the non-Communist parties of Eastern Europe – consists in pulling the wings off an adversary, before breaking it into pieces and applying the final coup. ...²⁹

A combination of propaganda and legal repression was used by the junta to break the Islamist threat. By the end of January 1992 the new Algerian authorities were busy scrapping all the parallel structures built by the FIS. The Front was presented as a seditious party and the tool of foreign powers and its leaders were accused of fraud during the legislative elections. But psychological action was insufficient to attain the objectives pursued by the government. Imams were appointed to mosques lacking them in order to prevent religious premises being used by Islamist non-licensed preachers to recruit new followers.³⁰

Repression became stricter after the incidents in several urban centres on 8 February. More than forty people were killed and some hundred wounded in clashes between fundamentalists and security forces. On the following day a twelve-month state of emergency was imposed by the High State Committee, and security forces were granted broad powers of arrest and detention in terms of the emergency regulations.³¹

Legal action culminated on 4 March 1992 when the Supreme Court banned the FIS on the grounds that the party was violating the constitutional rule forbidding political parties based on religion, race or regional identity.³²

The outcome of the High State Council's repression package seems to be an increasingly confusing no-win situation, for the arrest of most of the FIS leaders contributed to the removal from the political stage of the only people who could prevent the growing radicalization of Islamist grassroots supporters.³³

This radicalization cannot but feed the expansion of fundamentalist terrorism and guerrilla activity both in urban and rural areas. On 10 February 1992 six policemen were killed in the centre of Algiers. On the same day two policemen were killed in Bordj Menaïel, a small town on the edge of Kabyle. In both instances the terrorists were able to escape without being arrested.³⁴

There were good reasons to believe that these incidents are no more than the beginnings of sustained terrorist action. There are a large number of radicals congregated around the Egyptian-inspired movement *Al Takfir Wal Hijra* (Exodus and Repentance), which seems to have been deeply infiltrated by the security services. More serious is the threat posed by small groups of young men who received guerrilla training in Afghanistan. These are estimated by the security forces to number some 800. Over the past few months four autonomous guerrilla organizations have given proof of their existence. For the moment very little is known about their structures, numerical strength, roots among the population, or weaponry. The security service believes that the mountainous region of Aurès, which offers ideal conditions for the conduct of rural guerrilla activity, could slip gently into the extremists' lap.³⁵

The four months between the proscription of the FIS and the dramatic murder of President Mohamed Boudiaf on 29 June 1992, confirmed fears that the incidents of February merely marked the beginning of the radicalization of fundamentalist action.

Between February and June 1992 more than seventy policemen were killed by the "Tools of God", mainly in the region of Algiers. The tempo of these events quickened as the date for the trial of the two principal leaders of the FIS, Abassi Madani and Ali Benhadj, approached. On 20 April, for the first time, an FIS communiqué called upon Algerians "to look for rifles". In early June a previously unknown group, the Jihad, threatened "We are going to kill a thousand policemen and burn down 3 000 hectares of forest".³⁶ On 15 July a court martial, sitting at Blida, sentenced both Madani and Benhadj to terms of twelve years imprisonment.³⁷

The government responded in kind to this radicalization of the fundamentalist threat. During Boudiaf's presidency 6 000 FIS militants were detained in desert camps, where several apparently died.³⁸

On the other hand, the government boasts several assets. An army of 140 000 men, apparently very homogeneous, is backed by a 50 000-strong constabulary. And the government is fortunate in that, if need be, it can make effective use of these forces without having to fear sanctions or other unfavourable reactions from the major powers. The cancellation of the second round of the elections – a flagrant violation of democratic rights – elicited only restrained or muted criticism from the same West that is strongly demanding multiparty democracy throughout Africa. The United States behaved in a particularly strange way. Washington claimed that the High Security Council was constitutional in spite of clear evidence to the contrary. After a rethink, the Bush administration admitted its mistake – but decided not to take sides in the matter at all.³⁹

It is clear that some Western governments were prepared to accept as a lesser evil an undemocratic, military-dominated government in Algiers. To them it constituted a barrier to the establishment of a radical Islamic state that would have prevented any return to secular government.⁴⁰ That multilateral development institutions have allocated more than US\$6 bn for the next five years, simply underlines this interpretation.⁴¹

It is too early to predict what will be the medium to long-term implications of Boudiaf's murder. It is clear that his

death elicited a wave of revulsion from that section of the Algerian population opposed to the fundamentalists. It is even possible that this act of terrorism might influence the political choices of those who, though opposed to the present form of secular government, also fear an explosion of political violence.

This position was expressed by a 28-year-old railwayman from Belcourt, one of the most integral regions of Algiers, who said: "Last December, I voted for the FIS and I will do so again tomorrow if there are elections. But I'm against terrorism. Those who went underground and kill, are fools." A foreign diplomat explained: "After the legislative elections, the people became very scared of the big split (*fitna*) that threatened to develop into a civil war." The FIS itself admits that it can no longer move in Algiers as a fish through water. This crisis of popularity is also reflected in the fact that when almost half the municipalities won by the fundamentalists were dissolved by the authorities, there were no demonstrations.⁴²

A great deal may hinge on the outcome of the investigations into Boudiaf's death. Many Algerians doubted from the outset that the assassination was the work of fundamentalists. About a thousand young people congregated outside the Grand Mosque awaiting the funeral cortege shouted "Chadli murder! FLN murder! Boudiaf, the youth will avenge you!" Others commented that the FIS was behaving well.⁴³ Over the next few days suspicions mounted over the authorities' continued insistence that the murder had been the work of a single assassin.⁴⁴

Boudiaf constituted an obstacle to a number of interest groups, any one of which could have had a motive for eliminating him.

The Islamists were threatened by his opposition to the use of mosques as political platforms and the introduction of an Islamic state. Only weeks before his death, Boudiaf had told TV reporters that he would not hesitate before imprisoning thousands more integralists if this was required to stop terrorism and restore the authority of the state.

The "mafia", civil and military, who had been stealing and taking bribes for the previous thirty years, felt threatened by a man who had gone into voluntary exile in Morocco shortly after Algerian independence, because he had been revolted by the dishonesty of the "new class" running the country. Boudiaf believed that if the state could destroy corruption it could recover the support of those people won over by the fundamentalists' promises of social justice.

Some senior military men also felt threatened, not just by the anti-corruption drive but by the prospect of early retirement to open up posts for disgruntled officers in their forties.

That no fundamentalist group claimed responsibility for the assassination also suggests that responsibility must be sought elsewhere.

Over the last six months, anti-government action has been restricted to fundamentalist militants. Nor did Boudiaf's death trigger any popular unrest. This indicates that the government should be able to weather the fundamentalist storm for the present. The government's passage

could even be eased if the new president, Ali Kafi, and his prime minister, Belaid Abdesselam, are able to provide some continuity to the non-party movement that was coalescing around Boudiaf. The late president had been floating the idea of a "patriotic rally" to formulate ideas for governing Algeria. In April 1992, the High State Council appointed a 60-member "think-tank" to draft a new constitution. Early in June Boudiaf rejected the secular democratic parties' call for the formation of a government of national unity. Instead he invited Algerians to join his "rally", where political parties could discuss the return to democracy.⁴⁶

In the long term, however, the situation is more complex. While it would be wrong to see economic problems as the root cause of the fundamentalist movement, these may well swell its ranks.

Prime Minister Abdesselam has said that he would like to see Algeria with a "war economy".⁴⁷ He could well have difficulties with a number of obstacles. According to Pierre Beylau, Algeria faces seven plagues.

- The number of unemployed growing at 200 000 every year, and the security valve of emigration blocked.
- A demographic explosion that is difficult to contain given the FIS support for high birth rates.
- An economy paralysed by French-style bureaucracy, Eastern negligence and Soviet-inspired centralism. Debt service and food imports that consume the entire revenue generated by exports. Manufacturing clogged by lack of spares and raw materials. A collapsing public sector on which 80 per cent of salaried workers depend.
- Pervasive corruption endemic to a state-controlled economy.
- An education system in ruins, the result of Boumediene's Arabization programme and of literary syllabuses that become factories producing jobless graduates. A shortage of competent teachers of Arabic compelled the government to recruit from Iraq. The Arabization programme is being resisted by students, particularly in Kabyle.
- A heterogeneous society unable easily to define its identity. The FIS has found it easy to substitute a real Muslim identity for an imaginary Algerian one.
- The FLN state died without an heir. At present the army remains the backbone of the central power: for how long?⁴⁸

Tunisia: A vicious circle of agitation and repression

The democratization process initiated in 1987 by President Ben Ali offered new opportunities to the fundamentalist movement which had been brewing in Tunisia since the 1980s. The April 1989 general elections showed that the RDC (*Rassemblement constitutionnel démocratique*/Constitutional Democratic Assembly) had little to fear from the secular opposition. Neither the Progressive Socialist Party nor the Progressive Socialist Rally could win a single seat in the legislature. The strongest challenge came from Harkat Nahada, another fundamentalist group whose militants run as independent candidates.⁴⁹ They received 13 per cent of the votes – and up to 30 per cent in some urban areas.⁵⁰ Because Islamists boycotted the municipal elections of June 1990 it is impossible to assess the numerical evolution of their following after April 1989.⁵¹

The 1989 elections were followed by anti-fundamentalist repression. In June 1990 the fundamentalists formally applied for the registration of *En-Nahda* as a political party. Their application was turned down on the pretext that they were a religious organization rather than a political party. The most they could obtain was permission to publish the newspaper *El Fejr* (The Dawn).⁵²

This government refusal was not surprising: the Islamists' political goals are irreconcilable with those of President Ben Ali, who defends the "need" for a separation between religion and politics. Thus what he terms the "non-existence" of a place for a religious party.⁵³

The conflict between the government and the Islamists includes a fundamental cultural component. This was made clear in April 1990 by the Minister of National Education, Mohamed Charfi, a 53-year-old jurist. Charfi, who labels himself a "modernist Muslim", is a man with old left-wing roots whose ideas landed him in prison in 1968. He said:

The Tunisian conflict has cultural foundations arising from the ideology of Arab nationalism, of Islamism or, simply, of 'Tunisianism'.⁵⁴

This aspect of the conflict explains why many students and academics can be numbered among the fiercest opponents of Ben Ali's regime.

It is interesting to recall that the introduction of fundamentalist action into academic circles was eased by the then President Bourguiba himself when, as long ago as the late 1970s, he allowed Islamist action on the country's campuses in order to counter left-wing forces which, at that point, were in control of the UGTE (General Union of Tunisian Students/*Al Ittihad Al-Am Al-Tunisi Li Al-Talabah*).⁵⁵

As a result, there was a rapprochement between the UGTE and *En-Nahda* and since the end of 1989 they have been conducting a protest movement at schools and tertiary education institutions. The level of success achieved by this campaign was demonstrated in February 1990. A general strike called by fundamentalist students paralysed the universities in spite of opposition from secular-oriented student groups. The government reacted with repressive measures of a kind that recall the atmosphere of the final phase of Bourguiba's regime. More than 1 000 students were arrested and parents of absconding strikers were detained. These February 1990 incidents played an important role in the shaping of Islamist strategy, since it was then that fundamentalists learned that accommodation with the government had become impossible.⁵⁶

In April 1990 Professor Mancef Ben Salem was detained after publishing an article claiming that some of his colleagues had been tortured. Tunisian officials denied these accusations.⁵⁷

The failure of this repressive policy adopted by the government towards the academic establishment was demonstrated by the incidents experienced at several campuses on 8 May 1991. At least two students were killed (five according to the UGTE) and some hundreds arrested.⁵⁸

Islamist penetration of the academic world was accompanied by Islamist penetration of the armed forces. In May 1991 the Minister of the Interior, Abdullah Kallel, disclosed that the authorities had foiled a fundamentalist plan to overthrow the government and replace it with a theocratic state. He added that some 100 servicemen and 200 civilians involved in the attempted coup had been arrested.⁵⁹

The fundamentalists are thus confronting the Tunisian government with a dangerous situation, although *En-Nahda* lacks either the means, or the following (at least for the time being) to constitute a threat comparable to that posed the Algerian government by the FIS.

On the other hand, the task of the Tunisian Islamists is eased by the fact that the government, although dealing in a repressive manner with their movement, has been unable to conduct its repression in accordance with a clearly defined strategy. This lack of clear direction is the natural result of the successive cabinet reshuffles that have been a characteristic of Ben Ali's regime. Ministers, feeling unsure of their tenure, run their departments on a day-to-day basis, the outcome being improvisation and its concomitant errors. To worsen matters, Ben Ali is inclined to act impulsively when social and/or political protest reaches critical levels.⁶⁰

The first reaction of the government to the phase of political violence that started after the April 1990 legislative elections was an attempt to win through conciliation. Fundamentalist militants were released from prison; and their leaders were invited to engage in dialogue with the authorities. But after all his promises failed to produce results of any substance, Ben Ali opted for harsh treatment. The registration of the fundamentalist movement was refused in July 1990. And this was followed by rising tension. The government's policy appeared to many as contrary to what the relationship between religion and politics should be in an Islamic country. In February 1990 Prime Minister Hamed Karoui stated:

Nobody has the right to speak in the name of religion, of acting as judge of piety or impiety among the Tunisians or to use religion for political purposes.

Karoui's words were interpreted to mean that the state was claiming to be entitled to run the country's religious life. Street violence restarted on 1 March. Two days later, the Minister of the Interior was replaced by a former Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces.⁶¹

The Gulf War provided a first test of the results of the repressive policy adopted by the government. The legal parties and the UGTT labour movement played the key role in the pro-Iraqi and anti-Western demonstrations, authorized or not, that took place. Meanwhile, the Islamists remained on the sidelines. Pro-government circles claimed that the low profile assumed by the Islamists showed that they were disorganized following the arrest, in December 1990, of more than 100 of their cadres and militants.⁶²

Fundamentalist sources presented a different explanation, saying that their passivity represented an attempt to avoid any further poisoning of a situation already of particular sensitivity in the Arab-Muslim world.⁶³ The explanation given by pro-government circles seems to be the more plausible of the two, particularly if one considers the openly pro-Iraqi attitude assumed by the exiled leader of *En-Nahda*, Rached Ghannouchi.

Between the beginning of the Gulf crisis and its escalation into full-scale war, Ghannouchi became a convinced supporter of Saddam Hussein, heading fundamentalist delegations to a number of Middle Eastern capitals at that time and warning local fundamentalist leaders that, as a result of the West's total adherence to the anti-Iraqi crusade, they would be deserted by their grass-roots supporters unless they sided with Baghdad.⁶⁴

En-Nahda's behaviour after the Gulf War seems to confirm the view held by pro-government circles. In March 1991, the three members of its executive bureau who remained free in Tunis issued a communiqué giving the impression that their movement was in a state of disarray. And they later announced, after several acts of violence committed by their political allies, that they were "putting their movement's activities on ice".⁶⁵

The same document proclaimed the authors' "attachment to peaceful methods" and their "strong conviction that irresponsible behaviour would not lead anywhere, went against the grain of the values of our society, and serves nothing for the future of our dear country ...". They added that the acts of violence committed by some *En-Nahda* militants were "moreover contrary to the precepts of our religion and to the morals of our civilization".⁶⁶

The post-Gulf War period remained characterized by a continuation of Ben Ali's relentless anti-fundamentalist action. The strategy he has adopted appears to be based upon an effort to continue building a multiparty democracy from which the fundamentalists are excluded, yet concurrently transform opposition parties into his allies in the struggle against *En-Nahda*. His thinking seems to be that the government might be able to form an "internal front" with those opposition parties sharing the RCD's modernization policies. These parties might also be used as a canal to express in an "acceptable manner" social and economic grievances that might, otherwise, be seized upon by the fundamentalists.⁶⁷

The policy followed by the government in the administration of the judiciary seems to reflect this strategy. In July 1991 Ben Ali announced a reform of the criminal procedure code, to be based in future on liberal principles. But the new provisions do not seem to have been called upon when dealing with fundamentalist militants. In August 1991 certain Nahdahouist "plotters" were tried by court martial,⁶⁸ and in spite of the new code's provisions for a reduction in preventive detention periods, Amnesty International accused the Tunisian government in March 1992 of encouraging the illegal detention and torture of people suspected of being Islamists. Amnesty's report stated that some 8 000 people had fallen victim to these practices over recent months.⁶⁹ This view of Ben Ali's strategy seems to be confirmed by the severity of the sentences imposed on fundamentalists. On 10 October 1991 an official source announced the execution (by hanging) of three members of *En-Nahda*.⁷⁰

The Tunisian government justifies this policy on the grounds of its claim that the fundamentalists are making use of violent means to attain their ends. On 28 September 1991 the Minister of the Interior announced that a conspiracy had been uncovered and that members of a group affiliated to *En-Nahda* were involved. According to the Minister, the plotters had three main goals: to cause a political vacuum by assassinating the head of state; to create disorder through terrorism; and to exploit a chaotic situation to set up a transitional government including prominent members of *En-Nahda*. On 22 October the Minister disclosed that further arms caches belonging to the movement had been found. He added that the security forces had succeeded in dismantling the fundamentalist "subversion apparatus".⁷¹

Repression and co-optation in Morocco

It appears that King Hassan's title "Commander of the Believers" has been insufficient to prevent the development of fundamentalist opposition in Morocco. This stream of thought, however, never posed the Chérifian monarchy a threat equivalent to that posed the governments of Algiers and Tunis by the FIS and *En-Nahda*. The religious and social policies followed by the Rabat government explain this lack of fundamentalist agitation. For although the Kingdom of Morocco is not a genuine Islamic state ruled by the *Shari'ah*, its level of secularization lags far behind that of its neighbours. Over and above this, King Hassan has sufficient personal charisma to minimize any negative reaction that might possibly be occasioned by his mild modernization measures.

This set of circumstances explains why the sovereign of Morocco is viewed in a somewhat benevolent manner by fundamentalist figures. This is an important political factor, as it paves the way for a possible co-optation of Moroccan fundamentalists by their sovereign, thus avoiding the violent and widespread conflict that presently characterizes Algeria and Tunisia.

An Islamist as radical as Abbani Madani stated in April 1990, shortly after the banning of the fundamentalist movement, *Adl oua Alihsane*: "I perceived, I saw, myself, His Majesty the King, God bless him, coming in person to the mosque to direct the prayer himself. I don't believe that ever an imam refused entrance to him." Speaking to the press on 10 June, Madani said: "We never received from the Alaouite government [anything] but loyalty and fraternity."⁷²

Fundamentalist action in Morocco may be traced back to the foundation of the Islamic Youth Movement in 1974. Some of its militants were arrested in 1984 and subsequently tried on charges of plotting to overthrow King Hassan's regime and establish an Islamic state. Four of them were sentenced to death.⁷³

Another fundamentalist movement, *Adl oua Alihsane* (Justice and Spirituality), was established in 1980 but its request for official registration as a party was never accepted by the authorities. As has been mentioned, it was banned in January 1990, a few weeks after King Hassan, in a French television broadcast, had attacked the intolerance of the fundamentalist movement. He also used this opportunity to state that Muslim men and women enjoy the same rights, and that nothing in the Koran obliges women to accept an inferior status.⁷⁴

It does not seem that *Adl oua Alihsane* ever gained deep roots among the population. On 8 May 1990 the movement held a demonstration in Rabat, opposite the Appeal Court, while judges were about to hear the appeal against sentences imposed in March on a number of fundamentalists. This gathering, a mere 2 000 people or thereabouts, was considered to have been the biggest Islamist demonstration ever held in the Moroccan capital.⁷⁵

The sentences imposed on 27 August 1991 by the Appeal Court on fundamentalist students involved in disturbances that paralysed the Faculty of Medicine for more than a year were the first sign of the government's attempt to avoid outright confrontation with the Islamist opposition. Nine of the fifteen defendants were acquitted, the others being given suspended sentences of three months' imprisonment. At that

very moment there were rumours that the government was talking secretly to the present leader of the banned *Adl oua Alihsane*, Abdelassam Yassine.⁷⁶

Lately, fundamentalist violence appears to have been mainly directed against the extreme left. In October 1991 fundamentalist students, armed with knives, steel bars, nail-studded clubs and bicycle chains, gathered in Fés and Oudja, where they launched "punitive expeditions" against leftists. Sixty fundamentalist students were arrested as a result of these incidents.⁷⁷

Egypt remains stable for now

Several things make the Egyptian fundamentalist movement particularly important. Not only is Egypt one of the cradles of today's Islamic revival; it is also the place where fundamentalist thought developed as a direct response to the conflict of ideas dividing the Arab world. This happened when the founding father of Egyptian fundamentalism, the academic Sayyid Qutb, attempted to formulate a coherent ideology to set against Colonel Nasser's secularized regime.⁷⁸

Furthermore, that Egypt is, from a cultural point of view, the most developed Arab country, created the right conditions for the development of various schools of fundamentalist thought. Each of them holds equally varying views on political strategies at both national and international levels. The importance of Egypt, too, in both demographic and technological terms makes it vital to ascertain the prospects of fundamentalist success there: the international implications of a fundamentalist take-over restricted to the Maghreb would be completely different from those attending the creation of an Islamist block including Egypt.

According to Barry Rubin, the history of fundamentalism in Egypt has been characterized by

a series of periods of growth cut short by strategic incompetence, limits to public support, and government repression. Thus, while fundamentalism enjoys a base of support in Egypt, it has never gained a position of ideological or political hegemony.⁷⁹

Egyptian fundamentalism can be divided into two main streams: reformist and revolutionary. The Muslim Brotherhood constitutes the principal reformist force. The Brotherhood, founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1929, expanded quickly throughout the 1930s. It had a violent character and deeply infiltrated the police and army. By the late 1940s the Brotherhood had more than half a million members and was playing a leading role in the armed struggle in Palestine. From 1948 onwards the Brotherhood became the target for strong government repression, ending with its eventual dissolution under emergency regulations. In spite of this, its militants played a major role in the campaign against the British military presence in the Suez Canal Zone. In collaboration with the Free Officers group it worked for the fall of the monarchy. But this success turned to defeat: Arab nationalism gained the upper hand in Nasser's regime and propelled political Islam into oblivion until the late 1970s.⁸⁰

Repression alone, however, is insufficient to explain the eclipse of the Brotherhood. It remained in eclipse because Nasser was able to fill his country's ideological vacuum with an aggressive Pan-Arabism, with major social reforms, and with the regime's visible ability "to re-interpret and

dominate Islam as a pillar ... [of] ... its own rule". There was an increase in the number of mosques and religious radio programmes; and examinations in religion were made compulsory in the schools. In 1964 repression was relaxed for the first time. More important, however, for the future of fundamentalism in Egypt was the crisis of legitimacy experienced by Nasser's regime as a result of the 1967 defeat in the Six Days War and of its failure to solve the country's major social problems.⁸¹

Nasser's successor, Anwar al-Sadat, adopted a policy of co-operation with the Brotherhood – to the extent of consulting them about the drafting of some sections of a new constitution. Nevertheless, a vital split concerning the concept of law remained. The constitutional provision considering the principles of the Islamic *Shari'ah* as "a principal source of legislation" fell short of satisfying the Brotherhood, which accepted the *Shari'ah* as the sole source of jurisprudence. It also rejected Article 3 of the constitution, which stated that the people were the sole source of authority, this being in contradiction with the fundamentalist belief in Allah as the sole and ultimate source of power. Nevertheless, the Brotherhood backed Sadat in the democratization process he initiated in 1976.

Sadat's acceptance of peace with Israel generated a new phase of conflict between the government, backed by the followers of a moderate interpretation of Islam, and the Brotherhood, opposed to the Camp David accords. It was this conflict that led to Sadat's assassination in 1981. Contrary to fundamentalist expectations, the assassination terminated a second wave of fundamentalist growth, many Egyptians fearing that religious radicalism might destroy national unity.⁸²

This anti-fundamentalist reaction did not, however, prevent the Brotherhood from profiting from the policy of reconciliation adopted by the new president, Husni Mubarak, in an attempt to tame the opposition. Before the 1984 legislative elections, in fact, a marriage of convenience took place between the Wafd socialists and the Brotherhood, which provided the former with the "Islamic vote". Running for election under the Wafd's banner, Brotherhood members took eight seats in the People's Assembly.⁸³

In the mid-1980s Brotherhood members did "particularly well" in elections held in professional organizations – those of lawyers, journalists, engineers – and in student unions, in spite of the measures taken by the government to minimize their progress.⁸⁴ The Brotherhood scored further advances in the April 1987 elections, when a religious coalition boasted a presence, for the first time at the Egyptian ballot boxes. The "Islamic Alliance" won 60 seats in the legislature, after collecting 17 per cent of the vote. Many of the voters who backed Alliance candidates belonged to the Brotherhood, as did 36 of the deputies elected for the Alliance. An analyst of the daily *al-Ahram* concluded that the Brothers supplied the opposition with over 420 000 votes. This was equivalent to more than one-third of the Alliance's backing and constituted about 8 per cent of the votes cast.⁸⁵

An assessment of the Muslim Brotherhood's present level of influence, objectives and strategies is of the utmost importance for an evaluation of the prospects of fundamentalist success in Egypt.

The 1987 elections demonstrated that the Brotherhood had started a new phase of expansion. On the other hand, the

election figures indicated that opposition to a secularized political system remained restricted to a minority of the population. Religious voting was roughly equivalent to 24 per cent of that of the ruling National Democratic Party and 20 per cent of the total number of votes received by secular parties (NDP and Wafd socialists). These figures seem to indicate that the establishment of a Muslim state in Egypt by legal means is, in the short term, an impossibility.

On balance, these several factors appear to indicate that the expansion of the Brotherhood, and of the fundamentalist movement as a whole, might, for the time being, have either reached its ceiling or entered a phase of slow growth only.

It appears that although Islam is considered by most Egyptian citizens to be the foundation of Egyptian life, the majority of them do not favour a revolutionary Islamic state. Nevertheless, fundamentalism could gain support from the continued failure of the regime to find solutions to the country's many serious social problems. On the other hand, the state and the majority of the Egyptians follow their "own interpretation of Islam" and behave in a manner that conflicts with fundamentalist concepts. We must always remember that Western values and principles have been making deep inroads in Egypt for more than a century. Several groups – the 10 per cent Coptic Christian sector of the population, the Westernized intellectuals and urban women – feel personally threatened by the possibility of a fundamentalist takeover. This prospect appears politically threatening, too, to a number of powerful interest groups – the leadership of the ruling party, senior civil servants and military officers.⁸⁶

It is important to bear in mind that a combination of personal and group interest is not the only consideration behind the ruling élite's fear of the implications of a fundamentalist takeover. Many of this élite also perceive the coming to power of a fundamentalist regime as a threat to Egypt's national interests which, in their opinion, require the continuation of compromise policies such as peace with Israel and alignment with the USA.⁸⁷

All these facts indicate that a fundamentalist victory seems to be out of question within the near future. Nevertheless it must be expected that the Muslim Brotherhood will continue to play an important role in Egyptian political and social life in the role of a non-violent pressure group: a pressure group following a strategy imposed by the government and accepted by the Brotherhood as the only viable way for them to operate.

According to Professor Saad Eddin Ibrahim, the Brotherhood's need to adopt a non-violent strategy as a condition of gaining the government's acceptance was first recognized during debates held both inside and outside prison in Nasser's time. This approach was rejected by some of the younger members, who became the founding fathers of the violent *Jama'at* and *Jam'iyat* movements.⁸⁸

Whether the Brotherhood would or could follow this line was successfully tested when the new radical groups resorted to terrorism.

The Muslim Brotherhood's leadership has detached itself from other Islamic groups which engage in violent confrontations With this tactical caveat, which is reiterated in nearly all issues of al-Da'wah, the Muslim Brotherhood has not spared any occasion to highlight the corrupt practices of the regime, often without mentioning Sadat by name.⁸⁹

This strategy made it possible for the Brotherhood to rebuild its structure and restore its social influence in the 1970s and 1980s. Once these goals were achieved, the Brotherhood could act as an Islamic pressure group, playing the self-defined role of "watchman" or "guardian" and thus guaranteeing that the government would not deviate from Islam and its laws.⁹⁰

It seems that the important role presently played by the Brotherhood in Egyptian life cannot be in jeopardy as long as it does not stray from its present strategy and goal. As stated by one of its activists, Ma'mun al-Hudaybi, it is "in the state's interest" to recognize the Brotherhood's right to existence, and even encourage the movement to develop its activities within legal channels. The value of this policy was shown when the Brotherhood remained quiescent after defeat in such vital matters as the non-application of the *Shari'ah*.⁹¹

The extent of the government's potential gains arising from its tolerance of the Brotherhood was confirmed during the severe economic crisis that hit the country in the 1980s. The fundamentalists remained silently on the sidelines instead of attempting to make use of its country's economic difficulties, unlike the FIS in Algeria.⁹²

The Brotherhood's rejection of violence, with its concomitant exclusion of any short-term establishment of an Islamic state in Egypt, paved the way, as we have seen, for the development of *jama'at*, or "Islamic Fundamentalist groups which seek to institute an Islamic government by violent revolution". These represent a serious threat to public order although they have failed to build a broad following or create the structures necessary for revolt.⁹³ Their lack of following should be ascribed to ideological tenets that conflict with the concept of Islam upheld by most Egyptians. They reject the Egyptian state and Egyptian society, considering both as being in a situation of unbelief (*jahiliyyah*) and being, consequently, un-Islamic. This to them justifies the fighting of a *jihad* or holy war for the creation in the land of a new Islamic society.⁹⁴

The *jama'at* ideology, and the associated impossibility of the movement's building a broad base of support, explains the movement's *modus operandi*, which is characterized by a proliferation of underground groups led by charismatic leaders. Each of the four main *jama'at* (it is thought that there are several dozen such groups in Egypt) started its active career with some spectacular act of terrorism, which was followed by the arrest and execution of its leaders and leading activists. The failure here to create the structures necessary for an uprising should be ascribed to conflicting ideologies which throw the various leaders and their groups into opposition with each other. The theological views held by some of these groups limit their expansion even within fundamentalist circles. By claiming that the Koran and the Sunna are the sole sources of Islamic law, and by rejecting the teachings of the first four caliphs and of the founders of the principal schools of legal interpretation, some of these groups place themselves outside the Sunni tradition.⁹⁵

The *Jama'at Islamiya* or Islamic associations are particularly strong in the slums of Cairo, which are overcrowded with immigrants from the countryside. These areas appear cut off from state authority, which ends when one leaves the tarred roads. The murder of Christians in Upper Egypt and of "apostates" in the capital by *Jama'at* militants threatens

the social fabric of the most important country in the Arab world. In June 1992 a militant gunned down Farag Foda, a secular intellectual and advocate of the separation of church and state.

Although the *jama'at* movement still lacks the structures essential to the conduct of a successful revolution, this situation might well change soon in a country with 3 million unemployed graduates with little prospect of finding jobs. These could become the natural leaders of an army of unemployed, who could look for meaning in militant fellowship and Islamic revolution.⁹⁶

Fundamentalism rules Sudan

On 30 June 1989 General Omar al-Bashir toppled the civilian government of Sadiq El-Mahdi, replacing it with a fundamentalist junta. The new Sudanese regime is characterized by a power-sharing arrangement between the military and the National Islamic Front (NIF), which constitutes the political arm of the Muslim Brothers (the *Ikhwan*) of Dr Hassan Turabi, a jurist trained at the Sorbonne. As a result of al-Bashir's coup, Sudan became an Islamic Republic and the *Shari'ah* was made the source of law.⁹⁷

Female students and teachers found themselves obliged to wear traditional Islamic dress. In Khartoum, bus seats were segregated by sex. In November 1991, *Al-Quwat Al-Mussalaha*, the junta's mouthpiece, reported official plans to restrict women to jobs in hotels, hairdressers and stores. Committees were at once organized to enforce female dress regulations. As many women protested that the new dress code entailed huge expenditure, the government promised loans to help all working women buy the garments required.⁹⁸

It seems relevant to consider that this event (without precedent in Africa) occurred in a country where non-Muslims (Christians and Animists) constitute about 35 per cent of the population. Furthermore, the results of the 1986 elections had produced the impression that, at that time, fundamentalism enjoyed only minority backing of an élitist character, the Muslim Brothers winning no more than 28 seats out of 236, including 23 in constituencies reserved for graduates.⁹⁹

Al-Bashir's success shows that a fundamentalist revolution may be implemented without majority backing, even in a country with a large non-Muslim population. The Khartoum government intends to deal with this complex situation by applying a particular statute in the southern Sudan, where Muslims form only 19 per cent of the population. This region will be exempt from the *Shari'ah*, which will apply only to those Muslims demanding to be subject to its rules.¹⁰⁰

The difficulties of the political process taking place in Sudan are not being ignored by the Khartoum junta. Turabi argues that an Islamic republic can be a "parliamentary democracy", with citizens enjoying all the rights granted by Islamic law "without discrimination on the basis of race or religious belief". Furthermore, any citizen should be able to rise to the highest public offices, with the exception of those of president and prime minister, which should be reserved for Muslims. The attempt to transform Sudan into "a bastion for Islam in Africa" implies, in this country's particular circumstances, the need to accommodate a large non-Muslim minority.¹⁰¹

The outcome of the religious and political experiment taking place in Sudan will be a determining factor for the

future of fundamentalism in North Africa. The importance we assign it here may be justified on the following grounds:

- Eventual success will be an indicator of the viability of fundamentalist revolutions without majority backing.¹⁰²
- The high level of co-operation reached by the Khartoum and Teheran governments shows that *Sunni* and *Shiite* forces can co-operate in action aimed at expanding fundamentalism.¹⁰³
- Sudan, by controlling a large section of the Nile Valley, occupies a strategic position *vis-à-vis* Egypt. This may play a decisive role in any possible conflict between a fundamentalist Maghreb and a moderate Egypt.

Libya: Islamic extremists fight among themselves

Libya has been ruled since 1969 by a Muslim regime that, though strict, cannot be labelled fundamentalist.

Gaddafi's regime is characterized by a blend of Arab nationalism and a selection of imported ideologies. These are considered obstacles to the construction of a society based on the tenets of the Koran. Gaddafi's philosophy, the "third international theory", has a lot in common with fundamentalism. The revival of certain features such as the forms of punishment prescribed in Koranic law, contribute to reinforce this impression.¹⁰⁴

Gaddafi's emphasis on nationalism and the fact that his *Jamahiriyah* is not ruled by the *Shari'ah* suffice to deny his regime the fundamentalist label. This reality seems to have been understood by the country's real fundamentalists, who have consistently opposed the Libyan government. Many of the political prisoners held in Gaddafi's gaols are members of religious groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Liberation Party.¹⁰⁵

Fundamentalist action at regional level

There is co-ordination between fundamentalist and anti-fundamentalist forces in North Africa at regional level. There is also intervention by actors based outside the region, the importance of their role being expected to grow.

The conjugated action of the various integrationist forces is a direct result of the international logic of the (integrationist) movement. According to the President of France-Plus, Arezki Dahmani, Muslim (integrationism) is moving along two geographical axes. In the north it runs from Iran to Europe through Afghanistan and Turkey; in Africa it runs via the Sudan towards Mali, Niger, Senegal and Mauritania. These two axes are closing, as a pair of pincers, to compress the Maghreb, the importance of which was mentioned by Khomeini, who has stated:

If we want to realize one day the big dream of an Islamic bloc, we have to solve the Maghreb problem: we need to politicize Islam in order to destabilize the Maghreb.¹⁰⁶

The Sudan seems to be fulfilling the important role assigned to it in Iran's strategic planning: Teheran's military and economic assistance cannot be ignored by the junta in Khartoum, even if a heavy price must be paid for it. The Sudanese authorities, struggling with international isolation, need both to service their debt and win their war in the south.¹⁰⁷

That the process of Sudanese-Libyan integration is being accelerated constitutes another cause of concern to anti-fundamentalist governments. According to the Secretary-General for Sudanese-Libyan Arab Integration, Dr Farouq Al-Bushra, the Sudan has reaped major economic benefits from the integration process, which is now reaching a phase of concrete political decisions.¹⁰⁸

Since mid-January 1992 both the Algerian government and the Algerian media have been accusing Teheran of involvement with illegal activities conducted by the FIS. El Moudjahid mentioned that "on 13 January a secret meeting was held 20 km outside Damascus, under the chairmanship of a Shiite dignitary, which approved seven recommendations with regard to multiform aid to the FIS".¹⁰⁹

Let us now look at the opposition. Effective co-operation between anti-fundamentalist forces has been taking place in North Africa since mid-1991 at least.

In July 1991 an anti-fundamentalist agreement was signed by Tunisia and Egypt. The main goal of this agreement was to fight any form of crime or terrorism aimed at the security of the two signatories. In order to implement this, several measures were agreed upon to strengthen co-operation in the field. These included a regular exchange of information by the governments of Cairo and Tunis designed to stem extremist and terrorist activities. (The two governments had already instituted common training for security agents.)¹¹⁰

The success achieved in December 1991 by the FIS accelerated the development of tripartite anti-integrationist co-operation by Tunis, Cairo and Rabat. In the words of a Tunisian official: "It is useless to cover one's eyes: the victory of the FIS radically changes the whole situation in the Maghreb."¹¹¹

The military coup that prevented a clear Islamist victory on 16 January 1992 removed the danger of an immediate and radical change in the balance of forces in North Africa. But the medium-term threat subsists, as indicated by the beginnings of guerrilla activity in the Aurès. This, allied to the escalating unrest in Libya and the evolution of the situation in Sudan, makes regional co-operation more than ever necessary.

The situation, in Sudan in particular, is becoming of increasing concern, with its leaders making contradictory statements. The junta in Khartoum expressed its "will not to intervene in Algeria's domestic affairs", while Dr Turabi told a Moroccan diplomat in late 1991: "the Islamist movements of the Maghreb are inevitably called to conquer power within a near future". Dr Turabi does not hide his desire to become the future president of an "Islamic republic from Cairo to Rabat". The level of Iranian involvement in the Sudan also gives great reason for concern. Shortly before the end of 1991 President Rafsanjani visited Khartoum accompanied by his Minister of Defence and a large number of experts (157 persons at least). More, the authorities of Khartoum issued diplomatic passports to Maghrebian Islamist leaders and to senior Lebanese notables in the military wing of Hezbollah. The political isolation into which the Sudan fell as a result of having backed Saddam Hussein might also contribute to make of Khartoum an Iranian stronghold in the centre of the Arab world.¹¹²

In early January 1992 Tunisian, Moroccan and Egyptian officials held discussions on frontier security. Bilateral co-operation between Tunis and Rabat is also being consolidated.¹¹³

Conclusion

The spread of fundamentalism in North Africa constitutes an event of the utmost political and strategic importance. Its implications might, ultimately, even transcend regional boundaries.

The manner in which the situation evolves in Algeria will be the decisive factor influencing short-term developments at regional level. The military coup of January 1992 put brakes on what appeared to be an irreversible march towards a fundamentalist takeover in that country. But it does not seem that the conflict between the secularized forces led by the government and army and the Islamists is over.

Recent developments suggest that a vicious and irreversible cycle of violent resistance and repression is already in motion, though this process will probably be protracted and permit the regime's survival for the present. If the Islamists win, the reverberations of their success might have an impact, both local and regional, greater than would have been that of an electoral victory in January 1992, as a result of the radicalization process normally associated with armed resistance.

The outcome of the present struggle for power in Algeria seems fated, then, to have decisive implications at regional level. Failure by the fundamentalists would have adverse, even fatal consequences for the expansion of fundamentalism in the whole of North Africa. The contrary outcome would be bound, it seems, to initiate a situation of regional unrest that might prove difficult to control, even if neighbouring countries were to co-ordinate their efforts to stem the fundamentalist tide.

In Tunisia, for the time being, repressive measures have been sufficient to keep the situation under control. But it is doubtful whether Ben Ali's government could or would resist the psychological impact produced by a fundamentalist takeover in Algeria. The possibility of this forecast proving correct will be particularly strengthened if Tunisia continues to experience economic difficulties. And this situation is unlikely to change while the country's demographic explosion continues.

Any regional impact resulting from the establishment of a fundamentalist regime in Algeria would seem bound to be greatly enhanced were something similar to happen in Tunisia. Then it is possible that Morocco might either assume a neutral position or even look for some accommodation with the fundamentalists. King Hassan's talent for political manoeuvre,¹¹⁴ allied to the absence of basic differences between his government and the Islamists,¹¹⁵ seem to back this hypothesis.

Two different scenarios are possible if a fundamentalist bloc takes shape in North Africa: it might either be restricted to the Maghreb and Sudan; or it might cover the whole of North Africa, including Egypt. It seems out of the question that the second of these scenarios will come to anything in the near future: Egypt's large fundamentalist minority does not seem to pose, for the time being, a real threat to that country's stability. This could change in the next decade if a continued demographic explosion were to generate social and economic problems of a sufficient magnitude to preclude their effective solution by government.

Egypt's political evolution is a matter of critical importance in the evolution of the geostrategic situation in the

Mediterranean and Middle East. It is possible that only the inclusion of Egypt would lend a North African fundamentalist bloc the demographic and technological dimensions necessary for it to play a significant role on the international stage.

It is also difficult to forecast what the behaviour of the "Fundamentalist International" would be towards Egypt if the latter is able to resist the fundamentalist temptation. Is the possibility of armed conflict between Egypt and its neighbours a hypothesis to be considered? Present data and their projections indicate that, for the foreseeable future, Egypt will remain in all respects stronger than all the Maghrebian countries put together. This balance of forces might of course be changed by Iran's attempt to build a fundamentalist stronghold in the Sudan.

It is also possible that tension between Egypt and its neighbours will be exacerbated by the complications of a religious conflict coinciding with a dispute over natural resources. Ethiopia controls the Blue Nile, from which flows 80 per cent of the Nile's waters reaching Egypt. The government in Addis Ababa claims that it is entitled to divert up to 40 per cent of this water for domestic consumption. This constitutes such a serious threat that Egypt's former foreign minister, now UN Secretary-General, Boutros Ghali, said: "The next war in our region will be over the waters of the Nile, not over politics."¹¹⁶ Libya's ideas of closer links with the Sudan to divert the waters of the Nile are also nothing new.

It is not impossible that Ethiopia, although not a Muslim country, might enter into an agreement with a Libya-Sudan fundamentalist block, on a water-sharing project that could spell total economic ruin for Egypt.

It also seems relevant to look at the possibility of co-operation between a fundamentalist North Africa and other Muslim countries and regions. In sub-Saharan Africa Islamic fundamentalism is expanding fast. It does not seem, however, that the fundamentalist philosophy has a real appeal to black Muslims, who tend to keep to the distinction between religion and political life, and to follow symbiotic forms of Islam in which Koranic principles are to be found combined with beliefs handed down by traditional African religions.¹¹⁷

The prospect of co-operation between a fundamentalist Maghreb and non-African countries also deserves to be considered. Iran's present involvement in the Sudan shows that this trend holds promise. It is clear that the trend will be determined, to a large extent, by events taking place east of Suez.¹¹⁸ Iran's presence in Sudan might provide Egypt's southern neighbours with the means to acquire the necessary material strength to contemplate a successful confrontation with Cairo.

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- 23 This factor certainly favoured the FIS, since radical parties always benefit from a large number of abstentions.
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Call for Papers

INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Editors:

Professor D Michael Warren, Director, Center for Indigenous Knowledge for Agriculture and Rural Development, Iowa State University.

Professor Peter Blunt, Director, Centre for Development Management, Northern Territory University, Australia.

Dr David Marsden, Centre for Development Studies, University of Wales, College of Swansea.

To be submitted to Kegan Paul International for publication in its International Library of Development and Indigenous Knowledge.

(Series Editors-in-Chief: D Michael Warren, L Jan Slikkerveer, Evelyn Mathias-Mundy, Adedotun Phillips.)

Development aid has long recognized that management and organizational systems devised by the industrialized nations have not always worked particularly well in developing countries. This lack of fit has been to the detriment of many development projects. Recently, a number of cases have come to light that establish the cost-effectiveness of utilizing indigenous organizations for development. Increasingly, theory and practice suggest that "sustainability", "capacity" and "institution-building" are all to a considerable degree at the mercy of our ability to marry what is already known and accepted by indigenous peoples with modern innovations and techniques that can make things better in mutually acceptable ways.

Unfortunately there is no text on these subjects available to development practitioners. Accordingly, this call for papers is intended to elicit contributions that consider these broad questions. Case studies that demonstrate clearly how indigenous systems of organization and management can contribute to the process of development, and illustrate how such systems can be made accessible to well-intentioned interventions from outside will be particularly welcome. Examples of indigenous organizations include traditional councils, irrigation associations, community development associations, occupational groups, ethnic associations, traditional credit unions, and social, sporting, and religious groups. Specific topics that might be addressed include:

- Detailed ethnographic accounts of the structures and functioning of indigenous organizations and management systems concerned with development activities.
- Models and methodologies for gaining access to and analysing indigenous forms of organization and management.
- Case studies of development projects that have either ignored indigenous organizations or have worked with and through them.
- Case studies illustrating how indigenous organizations can be strengthened for development.

Papers, which should be unpublished, or expressions of interest, should be sent to:

Prof D Michael Warren
CIKARD
318 Curtiss Hall
Iowa State University
Aimes, Iowa 50011
USA

Fax: (515) 294 1621

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An education to fit a changing world: A challenge for African cultures

Richard L Hopkins, Associate Professor, Department of Education Policy, Planning and Administration, University of Maryland, College Park

There is one highly probable future for societies in the modern world that has profound implications for education. We live in a world of continually, and it seems increasingly, changing technological, social, and cultural possibilities and patterns. Our tools, our occupations, our knowledge, our living arrangements, our relationships, even our most basic values are constantly and fundamentally being altered, developed, invented and discarded.

Developing technologies that are always bringing new and powerful possibilities seem to fuel these changes, but the technological changes are so rapid and profound that social and cultural changes are no mere readjustments: they are also profound, if not always so rapid. Agriculture settles people in essentially different cultural patterns than hunting and gathering or herding require. Literacy added to a spoken language brings not only books but new forms of relationships, education, thinking and social organization that eventually work great changes in cultures and peoples. Transportation revolutions, communications revolutions, medical revolutions, agricultural revolutions, industrial revolutions change society fundamentally and permanently.

As the first examples above suggest, such changes have been with us since time began, of course, but whereas it once took millennia for profound changes in human society to occur, such changes seem now to occur over centuries or even decades. A fundamental change can be a single occurrence, of course, but this only necessitates a single adjustment. Wars and transformations from colonial to independent status fit into this category. But continual and rapid change that causes fundamental differences between succeeding generations or in each person's lifetime is a different situation. This seems to be the modern condition. It is relatively new for all societies, having appeared with the rapid development of science and technology in recent centuries. It has serious implications for our societies, cultures and psychologies – and most certainly for education. And in our increasingly interconnected world, no society can long escape those implications.

Education in a relatively stable world

All of our educational systems, whether informal or formal, grew out of relatively stable societies. Human societies and cultures have long been complex creations that took centuries to evolve, yet must be replicated or at least continued in each new generation to survive. Teaching and learning have always been central to that process, whether done at the mother's knee or in a formalized school setting. True, the societies and cultures continued to slowly evolve and to absorb sudden shocks, but basically a major goal of society – and the major goal of education – was to preserve and transmit the cultural heritage. Each individual had to use, and perhaps in some small way alter or improve on, this cultural heritage, but the overwhelming emphasis was on the preservation and transmission of that heritage. The consequences of losing it threatened the survival of the society and of the individuals in it. Stability of one's society, perhaps at the expense of surrounding societies, was an overriding goal. Conformity to the beliefs, values and skills of the society into which one was born was required either explicitly by the people one was born related to or implicitly by the social and environmental conditions that surrounded that individual. All this does not mean that all societies were alike, of course, nor that escape from them or change in them was totally impossible, but rather that the transmission of the cultural heritage was a characteristic of all of them and that escape from that cultural heritage and great changes in it were the exception rather than the rule.

Education that focuses on the transmission of a cultural heritage must isolate the essential knowledge, values and skills of that culture and devise means of transmitting them to the next generations. In order to function well in the society every individual must have attained the knowledge, values and skills necessary, so education and child-rearing were often indistinguishable. Adults used the cultural heritage, passed it on, and perfected it, the elders typically being the most expert in the knowledge and values aspects,

if not any longer some of the physical skills. An individual's fit into the society into which he or she was born depended on learning an appropriate portion of the cultural heritage, and a learning childhood generally passed to a teaching adulthood.

The goal of education in such a system was primarily to teach the individual not only understanding but also an appreciation of the culture she or he has inherited, complete with the skills necessary to carry on that culture. The emphasis was on the attainment of knowledge, values, and skills developed before one was born, so that the individual could use them and pass them on as an integral member of society. Sometimes to a limited extent an individual might have been allowed or even encouraged to think about and perhaps even experiment with the cultural heritage, but never to an extent that threatened damage to or loss of that heritage. Cultural stability was generally not only the norm but also the educational ideal. One might conquer other societies to expand one's power and culture, or trade with them and even borrow from them. Perhaps one could even tinker with improvements in one's own culture or readjust it to meet new conditions. But the emphasis always remained primarily and heavily on preservation and transmission of the basic cultural heritage.

There are many variations in educational systems that have served to transmit cultural heritages. Certainly which cultural heritage was valued and transmitted, how, to whom, and by whom varies considerably. In all systems, however, there was an emphasis on the attainment of knowledge deemed basic, values that were socially accepted, and skills deemed appropriate for the individual given his or her social situation and, perhaps, individual abilities. The larger and more complex the society, the more varied might be one individual's education from another, but it was the social situation that determined that difference much more than the individual's talents or desires.

In Africa all traditional educational systems fit into these patterns, so did the educational systems that came from the colonial powers – at least those versions that were imported into and developed in the colonies. More than that, however, all traditional educational systems around the world fit into these patterns. Such an educational system focusing on the transmission of the cultural heritage was the hallmark of all traditional societies, with only minor exceptions. In fact, many today believe that this is the hallmark of all educational systems. This, however, is becoming less and less true.

Even in African colonial times the world's societies that were the scientific and technological development leaders were beginning to include in their educational systems a greater emphasis on teaching thinking and problem-solving skills. The colonial powers among them, however, did not typically export such new emphases to their colonial educational systems. By the 1930s, for example, this difference likely helped in some small way to create social reforming leaders of the Africans from the colonies who went to the metropolitan country for higher education. This is not to say, of course, that other factors were not at least as important in this process. Cross-cultural contrasts and the selection of the brightest and most able of a downtrodden people to go on to higher education were obviously important in creating leaders who would help catalyse social change rather than social stability. However, thinking and problem-

solving to change and develop cultures and societies and not just preserve them were slowly becoming an integral part of technological, social, economic – and educational – systems in the societies leading world development and generally not in the societies that were being exploited or who were caught reacting to that development. The process of development implies change, and such change rather than stability has become the ideal in the modern world.

Education in a changing world

In an ever more rapidly changing world, where change, at least in the form of “development”, becomes an ideal, education is profoundly affected. How can one teach “basic skills” that become obsolete tomorrow? How can one teach socially accepted values as absolute when they are later repudiated by that same society? As change becomes more rapid and profound it becomes increasingly apparent that cultures evolve, even fundamentally within one's lifetime, and that cultural heritages are no longer absolute and unchanging but subject to amendment and alteration in even basic ways. Education, defined for millennia as essentially the transmission of a cultural heritage, struggles to adjust.

The adjustment generally is from a process that focuses mightily on the transmission of a cultural heritage to a process that takes an active role in the evolution, development and creation of a culture. Knowledge, values and skills are seen not essentially as given to pass on but as cultural elements in a process of cultural transformation that must be continually re-evaluated, modified, created and improved. The worry left over from previous times that seems still obviously valid is that we may lose something that may still prove to be important, but an ever-increasing and at least equally valid worry is that we may fall behind and be left with obsolete skills, knowledge and values that render us unable to survive, let alone compete, in an ever-changing world. A continually changing world is deeply disturbing to those who hunger after stability but exhilarating to those who see it as dynamic and developing. To the extent that we are or want to be in such a world, education must help.

At this point in history it is possible to see at least three basic ways of adjusting education to more effectively deal with a rapidly changing world. They involve changing the priorities of educational goals in profound ways so that goals other than the transmission of the cultural heritage become top priority. Which of these other three goals becomes the top priority serves to identify these three broadly different basic philosophical approaches to education; but all three would hold the other three goals as secondary or tertiary goals, lower in priority but still present, as would the traditional educational philosophy focusing on the transmission of the cultural heritage as the primary goal.

Here these three broad alternative philosophical approaches to education will be associated with three names that exemplify one well-known variation within each of these three approaches. This will enable the reader to refer to the works of these writers for a more complete rendering of what a philosophy of education within each of these three general approaches might look like. There are many various philosophies possible within each general approach and many overlapping beliefs even between the general approaches. What distinguishes the general approaches is their top priority.

Social application

Over the past century various educational systems around the world have been struggling to transform themselves in order to focus not so much on the transmission of the cultural heritage as on the application of that heritage to the social situation. This can take the form of focusing on social problems – ecology, economic development, overpopulation, health and nutrition, neocolonialism – on vocational education, on present day and local issues, or on the student's immediate environment and social life. It can emphasize fitting into a given social situation or reforming it. It can focus on the group or on the individual in the group. The variations and conflicts in approach are many, but always the touchstone is the relevance and application of the knowledge, values and skills taught in the existing social situation. As that social situation changes, so too does the curriculum. Education is to be always useful. The students are taught not so much to know but to apply, to solve practical problems.

A well-known educational philosopher whose beliefs fit into this broad alternative view of focusing primarily on the transmission of the cultural heritage was John Dewey.¹ Part of the so-called progressive education movement from the late 1800s through the middle 1800s, such views transformed the educational philosophy of the US educational system and variously affected European and other educational systems around the world. Such a transformation does not mean that teaching the cultural heritage is totally ignored, it rather takes a back seat to practical social application. The "basics" of the cultural heritage are still taught, but the relative amount of learning that is "basic" and memorized shrinks; what is basic is judged by its social relevance, and teaching methods focus on active exploration and discussion, practical application and social problem-solving.

Such philosophies of education stress learning to live in a society. Education focuses on each individual's interests and capabilities as a member of society and builds on this. If education does not help the individual find or develop a useful role in society it has failed. Knowledge, values and skills are continually related to and readjusted to fit social concerns and one's personal and vocational life in society. Application to everyday life and to careers are constantly the focus. Application is emphasized over knowledge or experimentation.

Those who focus on teaching the cultural heritage would insist that its value is its use in life and that they include such use in their considerations, and those who focus on teaching social application would insist that they do not ignore or lose that part of the cultural heritage that is useful, and they both would, hopefully, be correct. The priorities are weighed oppositely, however. Teaching the cultural heritage focuses on accepted truths, correct values and inherited skills, even when the immediate social relevance is not obvious. Teaching the social application focuses on understanding the prevailing social conditions in order to guide both teacher and student in the selection and adaptation of the cultural heritage for immediate and practical use in involving individuals in the social situation while developing and improving that situation. Changing social situations, of course, make a cultural heritage ripe for selection and adaptation, rather than simple transmission.

Processes of thinking

In the past few decades a further change in emphasis has characterized a basically new approach to creating an education that more effectively deals with continual and rapid social change. Here the primary focus becomes not just the selective application of the cultural heritage to the current social situation but the continual addition to and revision of that cultural heritage itself. Rather than application and social problem-solving, the emphasis is on thinking and intellectual inquiry in order to develop new knowledge, new value patterns, new skills. The social changes are perceived as so rapid that even a selective application of a cultural heritage is not enough. The cultural heritage itself must be continually extended and rebuilt by all members of society.

One well-known name that is associated with this view is Jerome Bruner.² There could be many variations on this overall theme of independent inquiry as the highest priority, of course. One obvious variation would be in the selection and definition of thinking or inquiring processes appropriate for the development of new knowledge, value patterns and skills. The variation that so far has had the widest impact has been one that emphasized scientific methodologies. In the past decades this has had wide impact in the US and in other developed countries around the world in science and mathematics teaching, at least. It has also been experimented with widely in the developing world, including, as we shall later note, in Africa. Again, of course, the other goals of teaching the "basics" of the cultural heritage upon which one is to build and of keeping in mind applications to the social situation are not ignored, they just become of lower priority than training the mind and soul for independent inquiry. And this would be the major goal from the beginning of an individual's child-rearing and education. Developing new ideas, new patterns, new life styles would no longer be reserved for leaders but would become the way of life for all.

Such a philosophy of education stresses excellence in the processes of thinking and of developing new patterns and possibilities. Education might include some basic knowledge, point to some important social situations and applications and relate to a student's interests, but the emphasis would always be on analysis, synthesis, abstraction, investigation – the methodologies of creating new knowledge, new understandings, new ways of dealing with the world and with each other. The overall goal would be to help individuals and societies understand change and guide it, rather than merely react to it. This includes changes in our culture, in its knowledge and values, as well as changes in society that might be dealt with by mere application of the knowledge and values in our inherited culture. Such emphasis on the transformation of the cultural heritage can obviously be in great conflict with desires to preserve and transmit an inherited culture.

Those who would teach the cultural heritage as the primary focus might well insist that they would include a hefty emphasis on thinking about that cultural heritage, as well they might. Again, the difference is essentially in priorities, whether one is to think about the cultural heritage within limits prescribed by that cultural heritage, or conversely to focus on thinking up new ideas and new ways that go beyond the cultural heritage, change it in basic ways, take nothing

for granted. Similarly, those who focus primarily on social application know that thinking about the social situation is a part of problem-solving, but the difference with those who would focus on processes of thinking is roughly between using the existing social situation as one's touchstone and starting point and revelling in dreaming up new situations to explore out of an alien environment or one's imagination.

We have not yet seen the full flowering of this educational philosophy throughout the educational curriculum. Science and mathematics have so far been its stronghold, where there has been much experimentation and development in teaching the scientific method, mathematics theory, laboratory work, experimentation, theory-building and theory-testing. In other areas such a focus on teaching methodologies of developing knowledge, value patterns, or skills rather than their content or application have not yet been so fully developed or widely supported. In history, for example, it would emphasize for all students the methods of discovering historical evidence and of making historical interpretation. In language it would emphasize the methods of communication – perhaps nonverbal as well as verbal, between different animal species, and between animals and machines – and the patterns for creating a language, perhaps even a computer language, not just fluency in a particular set of already developed human languages. In social science it would focus on the evolution and creation of cultural patterns and of intercultural relationships, not just on the learning of the accepted patterns or the application of them to societal issues.

It is probably basically the perception of ever more rapid and continual social and cultural change that encourages education to focus on creating thinkers to step out in front of such changes and lead them. However, such basic differences in educational philosophy imply even basic differences in the perception of human nature. Those who focus on transmission of the cultural heritage seem to see humans as most essentially cultural animals. Lose that culture and we cease to be human. Those who focus on social application seem to see humans as essentially social animals, using a culture to support and improve but not undermine appropriate social conditions. Those who focus on the processes of thinking seem to see humans as essentially thinking animals, who have developed and continue to develop advanced cultures and societies through the high-powered use of that special ability. Such differentiations are too simplistic if taken as discrete and distinct categories, of course, but the differences in emphasis seem clear.

Individual freedom

In the past couple of decades a third different primary emphasis has emerged to be also somewhat widely influential. Even more controversial, since it seems to many to threaten even more directly the preservation let alone transmission of a cultural heritage, it can be seen at least partially as also an attempt to deal with ever more rapidly changing societies and cultures. Perhaps this is especially so because these rapidly changing cultures and increasingly large societies become also ever more diverse, since such rapid changes can be very uneven and in different directions, especially in a large interconnected world society.

In this third alternative the primary focus for education is on individual freedom. Educational systems would actively

facilitate the transmission of the cultural heritage, the application of it to current social problems, and the evolution and development of new cultural knowledge, values and skills, but none of this would be forced on the students. Influence, not control, would be the mode of education. Rich opportunities, vital advocacy, and honest, equal relationships, not requirements, would be its essential characteristics. One reason for this emphasis on individual freedom is the belief that as rapidly changing societies become ever larger and more diverse, as well as fluid, the individual should and could be free to find a comfortable fit within that ever-changing diversity.

Such a primary focus on individual freedom in education obviously sets more comfortably in a politically democratic society, and its appeal seems to have been limited so far to such societies or to those individuals who would develop such societies. It assumes a political philosophy of individualism and individual freedom among adults and extends such a moral philosophy of relationship to include children as well. Perhaps the best known proponent of one version of such a philosophy is A S Neill.³

Such a focus on individual freedom for children in no way means absolute or unbridled individual freedom for children any more than it does for adults in a political democracy that focuses on individual freedom. License, the interference with another's rights, is always a possibility that limits any individual's choices or actions. Freedom rather means that others do not have the right to choose for an individual that which affects only or primarily that individual. The line between freedom and license is always debatable, but the emphases on equal rights and the right to determine one's life are clear. What makes this educational philosophy unusual is that it applies all this also to children as much as it seems to be humanly possible.⁴

In this philosophy the emphasis is on allowing each individual student the freedom to learn and develop his or her abilities as that individual's interests, beliefs and concerns direct. In essence, this educational philosophy holds that all the other two philosophies above have a claim on what is important to learn, but that generally the student should decide what is most important for her or him at each moment, not society or the teacher. The emphasis is on creating a rich educational environment with a variety of learning opportunities in which the teacher helps and supports a student's self-directed and intrinsically motivated exploration. The teacher actively influences but does not control, except in cases of licence. The belief is that attainment of knowledge, applying knowledge to life, and learning how to think are important but secondary to the individual freedom that maximizes human happiness. Each individual should be equally free to determine her or his life, but not to interfere in another's self-determination, and each should be responsible for his or her own actions and for finding an appropriate contribution to society in return for society's support. The goal is independent, self-regulated, responsible and fair individuals in a complex, diverse, and changing world full of many choices and possibilities.

In some ways this philosophical set of priorities has appeared in elements of education reform in several societies even when the philosophy as a whole is not explicitly being proposed. Two examples can, hopefully, clarify this. The emphasis on teaching creativity typically emphasizes

individual freedom as an essential requirement for fostering creative thinking. The connection claimed is that divergent thinking which explores unknown areas flowers best in an environment of freedom and encouragement to explore untried and perhaps previously unapproved alternatives. In a way, an emphasis on creativity could be seen as an emphasis on independent inquiry expanded beyond thinking to include feelings as well. The independence or freedom thus becomes also the freedom not to focus solely on thinking processes to expand and develop cultural patterns, but to follow feelings as well.

The second example is multiculturalism. When the value of tolerance of cultural diversity is argued in the modern context, it is increasingly argued in societies that no longer have such discrete and closed subcultural groups as before. More and more multicultural diversity comes to mean a variety of cultural heritages or patterns or elements that individuals are and should be free to choose among. Multicultural education becomes then not so much simply teaching tolerance and understanding of cultural groups other than your own, but exposure to a rich environment of cultural options in a diverse society that include value choices and unique combinations possible for each individual.

The world-wide challenge to education

The evolution of modern philosophies of education that can deal with an ever more rapidly changing and complex world is not just a challenge to developing countries. The developed countries, too, have come from traditional, relatively stable societies that for millennia perfected educational systems to transmit cultural heritages. The struggle to meet the modern challenge of rapidly changing societies has been going on in more developed societies for a century or more, but it is by no means finished. Every era that reforms education in some small way to better meet that challenge is typically followed by a period of fear and reaction to where this may be leading. Different societies have reacted in various ways, though in this increasingly interconnected world they often affect each other. The struggle and resulting conflicts continue into the present in all countries, and even the most developed are no more than halfway to creating a widespread educational system that effectively deals with and leads societal change in ways that these three broad philosophical approaches suggest we must. And these three may well not be all the approaches we eventually develop.

Some societies, however, are clearly more entrenched in the belief in the ideal of a stable culture and in an educational system that perpetuates that stable culture. Black African countries typically fall into this pattern. Both traditional African and imported colonial societies and educational systems were essentially of this pattern, and modern African child-rearing and educational systems are still typically combinations of these inherited systems. The desire to survive the single transformation into independence and to develop a new stable culture based on some happy combination of inherited traditional African and Western colonial patterns is strong. In the modern ever-changing world, however, it seems clear that this is not enough.

One difficulty is that even the most modern, developed societies in the world do not yet have all the answers for how to live in our modern ever-changing world – certainly

not in education. Another difficulty is that in the desire to develop societies in Africa that are both modern and African, the conflict between those two goals is deep and difficult to resolve, since our modern future means ever-changing and traditional African meant relatively stable. The challenge to African educational systems is great.

The challenge to Africa

Africa has been struggling with this difficult challenge with attempts to incorporate at least some elements from these new educational philosophies outlined above into its educational systems. To a great extent this has happened as a part of worldwide educational reform movements. Between the two world wars the progressive education movement swept around the world carrying the messages of social application goals in education with various effect. In black Africa, to the extent that it was felt, this effect was generally filtered through a colonial system that tended to interpret social application in education to mean teaching useful education to a conforming mass and a ruling élite in a perpetually colonial society. Although the masses did not totally conform and did develop leaders to work to overthrow the colonial system, using this new philosophy of education to teach ways of dealing with a continually changing society was neither institutionalized into the colonial education system nor fully understood by the evolving new African leaders.

Since independence, African countries have been variously involved in worldwide educational reform movements to institutionalize the teaching of thinking skills into education systems, mainly in mathematics and science education. Here the filter of colonialism can no longer be blamed for lack of success in these efforts. To some extent there has been or at least was some success, though in the long run the results have been very disappointing. As in the developed countries, one would expect reaction to and some retreat from any reform movement, but the comparatively weaker initial penetration, the strength of the reaction and resistance, and the arguably less residue of educational reform in Africa compared to more developed societies suggest additional factors working against reform. One of those factors probably was the failure of the earlier progressive education movement to begin a transformation in the African educational systems toward more effective means of dealing with an ever-changing world by focusing on a more practical rather than academic education.⁵ Another factor seems to be the inherited traditional African educational and child-rearing systems, which still generally retain the ideal of a stable culture transmitted through the generations.⁶

Several African countries have experimented in the past few decades with reforming mainly their mathematics, science, and primary level teaching to focus more on teaching the processes of thinking.⁷ Much of this came as influence from the US and Britain through the process of international aid and reflected similar reform movements in those countries. Initially there seemed to be much success in this reform, even though it was obvious from the beginning that implementation in the many remote schools was slow at best. Teachers generally kept to their old ways of authoritarian drill in the content to be transmitted in spite of the flurries of reform activity, and eventually widespread teacher and social resistance typically slowed the reform movements to the point of seemingly stopping them altogether and minimizing their

residual effects. In Kenya, for example, a presidential decree rather dramatically abolished the School Mathematics Project of East Africa in 1981.⁸ Such reaction to reform also has taken place in developed countries, but whereas in these countries some substantial residue of the reform remains out in the educational system on which to build the next reform movement, continuing a slow long-term transformation, in Africa the belief in a traditional child-rearing and education that emphasizes the transmission of correct beliefs and behaviours seems much stronger and more widespread and, therefore, more effective in resisting reforms that emphasize creative problem-solving and thinking skills.⁹

There have been those who have called for the teaching of more problem-solving and critical thinking, and for the individual freedom to be independent and creative, not just in mathematics and science but throughout the African educational system.¹⁰ However, in Africa such arguments seem to be isolated and generally unheard and unheeded rather than public voices of more widespread hopes for reform, as they often seem to be in the developed countries. In the specific areas of mathematics and science there has been more argument for teaching critical thinking skills as a part of the recent reform movement,¹¹ and there have also been the more recent and expected reactions that argue for a combination of the old and the new.¹² All this may be a promising beginning, but it seems to reflect ferment in the world of the educational and social élite, often educated abroad, more than in the educational and child-rearing practices in the schools and families of Africa. Those practices remain generally authoritarian, aiming to transmit cultural beliefs and correct behaviour. In our rapidly changing world this will not do.

The challenge to African cultures is to develop African versions of educational philosophies that teach thinking skills, problem-solving, and creative independence, not to become Western or even modern or developed, but simply to deal effectively with the likelihood of constant societal change in the future. Educational systems that attempt merely to transmit culture, whether African or Western, will not accomplish this. The cultural conflict is deep, the challenge is great.

Notes and references

1 A good short summary of Dewey's educational philosophy is contained in John Dewey, "My pedagogic creed", *The School Journal*, no 54, 1897, pp 77–80. A more complete exposition of his philosophy is John Dewey, *Democracy in education*, New York: Macmillan, 1916.

2 Bruner directly contrasts his educational philosophy with Dewey's as Dewey outlined it in the article "My pedagogic creed" noted above, in the chapter entitled, "After John Dewey, what?", in Jerome S Bruner, *On knowing: Essays for the left hand*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1962. Other chapters give a more complete exposition of his philosophy.

3 A good, edited collection of Neill's writings is presented in A S Neill, *Summerhill: A radical approach to child rearing*, New York: Hart, 1960.

4 Such philosophy has been outlined in Richard L Hopkins, "Freedom and education: The philosophy of Summerhill", *Educational Theory*, vol 26, Spring 1976, pp 188–213, and expanded more fully in Richard L Hopkins, *Freedom and education: The beginnings of a new philosophy*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1979.

5 There has been much written about mostly failed efforts between the two world wars to make education in African colonies more practical. For an account of the efforts in Ghana, for example, see C H Ahiabele-Addo, "Education reform and failure in Ghana, 1920–1951", *West African Journal of Education*, vol 21, October 1980, pp 107–134.

6 Much that has been written about traditional African child-rearing and education practices is in the anthropological literature, though, as later footnoted, recent educational literature has noted the conflict between education for thinking and problem-solving and traditional African child-rearing goals and practices (see footnote 9). Some examples of anthropological accounts of traditional African child-rearing and educational practices are: Helen Callaway, "Indigenous education in Yoruba Society", in G N Brown and M Hiskett (eds), *Conflict and harmony in education in Tropical Africa*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975; N K Dzobo, "Values in indigenous African education", in G N Brown and M Hiskett (eds), *op cit*; Jomo Kenyatta, "System of education" and other chapters in *Facing Mount Kenya: The tribal life of the Gikuyu*, London: Martin and Warburg, 1938; Otto F Raum, *Chaga childhood: A description of indigenous education in an East African tribe*, London: Oxford University Press, 1940; Margaret Read, *Children of their fathers: Growing up among the Ngoni of Malawi*, New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1968.

7 A survey account of such reform movements is outlined in H W R Hawes, "Curriculum development and implementation in English-speaking Africa", *Zambezia: The Education Supplement*, 1978, pp 9–26.

8 An account of the rise and fall of mathematics reform in Kenya based on teaching thinking skills is given in Kevin M Little, "Processes of secondary curriculum innovation in Kenya", *Comparative Education Review*, vol 29, February 1985, pp 80–96.

9 The strong resistance of traditional African cultures, educational philosophies and teaching practices to the teaching of independent thinking and problem-solving is noted by many. Some analyses focus on the inherent conflict between educational curricula and methods that teach thinking and problem-solving and traditional African cultures that make resistance to the new methods inevitable. See, for example: John Gay and Michael Cole, *The new mathematics and old culture: A study of learning among the Kpelle of Liberia*, New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1967; Stafford Kay, "Curriculum innovations and traditional culture: A case history of Kenya", *Comparative Education*, vol 12, October 1975, pp 183–191; Samuel Tunde Bajah, "A Nigerian case-study of perceptions of science", *Prospects*, vol 15, 1985, pp 577–582. Others note the resistance of teachers in their ideals as well as practices. See, for example: Colette Senami Houeto, "Benin: Training teachers to implement reform", *Prospects*, vol 11, 1981, pp 193–203; Nancy M Ohuche, "The ideal pupil as perceived by Nigerian (Igbo) teachers, and Torrance's creative personality", *International Review of Education*, vol 32, 1986, pp 191–196. Still others see the conflict in terms of the traditional authoritarian values young people are taught and the demands of a modern democratic society for creative individualism. See, for example: Richard O Ulin, "African leadership: National goals and the values of Botswana university students", *Comparative Education*, vol 12, 1976, pp 145–151; C R Harber, "Development and political attitudes: The role of schooling in northern Nigeria", *Comparative Education*, vol 20, 1984, pp 387–403.

10 The following are some examples: Zacchaeus A Ademuwagba, "Education for social change", *Ghana Journal of Education*, vol 2, October 1971, pp 36–46; E O Fagonabe, "School authority and the secondary school student", *West African Journal of Education*, vol 17, October 1973, pp 399–408; D Sifuna, "Some factors affecting the quality of teaching in the primary schools of Kenya", *Education in East Africa*, vol 4, 1974, pp 215–222; A Wandira, "Education, enlightened discontent and the change of society", *Education in Eastern Africa*, vol 4, 1974, pp 63–78; A R Thompson, "The quest for relevance in education in Africa: Some considerations", *Zambezia: The Education Supplement*, 1977,

pp 43–53; Dent Ocaya-Lakidi, “Towards an African philosophy of education”, *Prospects*, vol 10, 1988, pp 13–25.

- 11 The following three examples are typical: R A Fakuade, “The case for modern mathematics”. *West African Journal of Education*, vol 17, June 1973, pp 285–294; G S Eshiwani, “The new mathematics in Kenya secondary schools”, *Education in Eastern Africa*, vol 4, 1974, pp 263–271; Hubert M Dyasi, “A primary science education project in Africa”, *Prospects*, vol 8, 1978, pp 82–92.
- 12 Many examples can be found in African newspapers, but the following are examples in more academic journals. The first two

are also interesting because they are later arguments by the first two authors cited in the previous footnote, written after strong reaction to the reforms had caused great controversy: George S Eshiwani, “The goals of mathematics teaching in Africa: A need for re-examination”, *Prospects*, vol 9, 1979, pp 346–352; R A Fakuade, “The controversy about mathematical education in Nigeria”, *West African Journal of Education*, vol 21, June 1980, pp 29–41; S A Lutterodt, “The definition, design, utilization: Some problems associated with integrated science curricula, with special reference to the Project for Science Integration in Ghana”, *International Review of Education*, vol 27, 1981, pp 301–314.

The human right to free association and assembly and multi-party democracy: A study of the law and practice in Swaziland

Dr John Baloro, Associate Professor, Head of Department of Mercantile Law, School of Law, University of Bophuthatswana

General introduction

In most of Africa, the first thirty years of independence has witnessed a movement from the independence constitutions to one-party, military and even no-party regimes. The independence constitutions of the newly decolonized African states were based on the models devised and practised in the Western metropolitan countries. For instance, all the English-speaking former dependencies of the United Kingdom had constitutions that were fashioned along the lines of parliamentarianism and governance as practised in the Palace of Westminster. The underlying goals of all such constitutions were to enshrine what have been perceived to be essential institutions and features of liberal democracy as practised in the major Western countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom. A few of these institutions may be mentioned:

- universal adult suffrage (ie one person one vote);
- representative government;
- a system of local government;
- an independent judiciary;
- a competitive or pluralistic political party system which is designed to operate within the context of regular free and fair elections.

These liberal democratic institutions are also designed to achieve certain principles, some of which have been stated by F K Drah to be the following:

- The right to life and personal liberty.
- The right to work and the right to a fairly decent living.
- Freedom of thought and of expression, which ensure the

security with which every man may make his claims and arguments known.

- Freedom of association and of assembly: the freedom to express opinions on public issues entails the right to organize opinions.
- The rule of law which, among other things, demands that: first, the laws of the land properly enacted should be supreme and should be obeyed by everybody including the rulers; secondly, the authorities should hear both sides of a case and should not be judges in their own cause; thirdly, not only shall justice be done it shall be seen to be done; fourthly, the individual should be protected from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment or detention without proper trial; and finally, there should be speedy trial of accused persons and adequate judicial control over police methods of securing confessions from accused persons.
- The responsibility or accountability of the rulers for their policies and actions to the governed, ie the right of the citizen to have the reasons, assigned and published, of almost every act of power and authority that is brought to bear upon them.
- And lastly, constitutionalism, which briefly means limitation of power and the absence of its concentration in the hands of one man, or a group of men whether they are few or many, in order to prevent arbitrary rule.¹

As is now well known, in the 1960s and 1970s many of these constitutions were overthrown and replaced by one-party and military regimes. Perhaps the only exception to this phenomenon has been the Republic of Botswana, which

has been able to retain its independence constitution and a political order permitting plurality of political parties and opinions. But for much of Africa the movement towards what has now come to be known as multi-party democracy did not commence until the end of the 1980s. The current political ferment that has been unleashed on the African continent (from Algeria in the north, Kenya and Tanzania in the east, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Benin, Togo and Ghana in the west, to Zaire and Zambia in the central and southern regions) has been largely due to an intense popular struggle. In all of these countries the struggle for freedom of political association and pluralism was promoted by trade unions, student movements and various professional associations. Perhaps it is fair to add that these groups were emboldened in their resolve to struggle for change by the momentous changes that occurred in the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries.

The intention of this article is to briefly examine the impact of the continental changes on the small Southern African Kingdom of Swaziland. It examines the evolution of legal and political developments in the Kingdom in as far as they affect free political association, opinions and activity. For a very long time now, the political and economic stability in the Kingdom of Swaziland has become proverbial. What is the nature of the legal framework within which this stability has been achieved, or, some might claim, imposed? What potential challenges to this legal framework have emerged or are likely to emerge in the future?

The right of free association and assembly: The human rights dimensions

One of the better-known civil and political rights that has been recognized and enshrined as a human right in both universal and regional human rights conventions is the right of persons to freely associate and assemble for political purposes. There is a very intimate link between the right and ability of a people to form civil associations, organize themselves politically either to oppose or support government policies and the emergence, growth and blossoming of democratic institutions and culture. In any political dispensation where divergent political views cannot interact, democratic culture will never be fostered. The right of free association and assembly has been expressly recognized in the universal Declaration of Human Rights² and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.³ At the continental level, the right of free assembly and association has also been recognized as a human right worthy of legal protection. The first continental effort to recognize and protect human rights can be found in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, which was adopted in 1981 and came into effect in 1986. Article 10(1) provides that every individual shall have the right to freely associate provided that he abides by the law. No one shall however be compelled to join an association he does not support. Article 11 recognizes and protects the right of every individual to assemble freely with others. It, however, goes further to state:

The exercise of this right shall be subject only to necessary restrictions provided for by law in particular those enacted in the interest of national security, the safety, health, ethics and rights and freedoms of others.⁴

Often an effective exercise of the right of association requires individuals or groups to be able to freely assemble. Such assemblies may take various forms, for instance political meetings, or rallies, and demonstrations. Other important rights that are prerequisites to the effective enjoyment of the rights of free association and assembly are the right to freedom of movement and expression including the dissemination of one's political and other views.

The Charter vests in the contracting states the right of derogation from these rights in certain circumstances, which are spelt out in the latter part of article 11. Unfortunately, the liberal provision of "claw-back" clauses is a regular drafting characteristic of the Charter. This is regrettable as the record of the non-observance of human rights norms by African governments has been plainly massive. "Claw-back" clauses will simply be one more excuse for African governments to impose enactments whose effect will be to take back with the left hand what the charter has rightly endowed African people with the right hand. It is therefore to be hoped that contracting parties to the Charter will invoke their right to enact limiting legislation on the grounds stated in article 11 only on very few occasions, as was intended by the founding fathers of the Charter.

At this stage, a pertinent question which arises is the legal effect of all these international norm-setting instruments on states such as the Kingdom of Swaziland. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights was not formulated in the form of an international convention or multi-lateral treaty and therefore does not have the legal force normally attributable to such instruments. Nevertheless, it represents not only moral but also normative values universally subscribed to by the member states of the United Nations Charter. It represents an elaboration of standards broadly formulated in the United Nations Charter itself. It therefore enjoys a status far weightier than an ordinary recommendation of the United Nations General Assembly. On this score, a commentator has observed as follows:

Although some states abstained from voting on the Declaration in the General Assembly the Declaration has gradually come to command increasing authority throughout the world, and, despite its omissions, its importance sets it at the same level as the charter. At the very least it is considered today to be one of the cornerstones of the United Nations structure. Some states go so far as to refer directly to it in the preamble to their constitutions, and every international document, and even some national documents which are concerned with human rights unfailingly start off from the Universal Declaration or lead logically to it....⁵

In practice, therefore, where questions of human rights are concerned, states and various non-governmental organizations have invoked the provisions of the Declaration. Its provisions have not only been referred to in the preambles of national constitutions but have also inspired the inclusion of chapters protecting fundamental human rights in such documents. The standards set in the Universal Declaration have now assumed such general recognition that it would be extremely difficult for any state to attempt to flagrantly violate them without incurring any censure from the community of nations.

The position is rather different regarding the international covenants on social, cultural and economic rights, civil and political rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. These are multi-lateral instruments or

conventions of international law containing human rights norms. By the process of ratification, states expressly and solemnly undertake to implement these norms within their territories. Thus the effect of state ratification of or accession to these instruments has been stated as follows:

These are multi-lateral instruments of international law, and upon ratification, the states concerned expressly undertake to guarantee the rights included in them and to include in their municipal law the human rights which have been formulated in other words, to ensure to all inhabitants of the state concerned the enjoyment of the human rights set forth in those conventions.⁶

Currently, the evidence is that the Kingdom of Swaziland has neither ratified nor acceded to any of the UN conventions or the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. This notwithstanding, it is submitted that it cannot simply disregard them as the norms enshrined in these instruments are so fundamental and generally accepted that they constitute an important part of general international law binding on all states.

The emergence of political parties and their demise since 1973

As head of the Dlamini monarchy in Swaziland, King Sobhuza II always distrusted Western-style political institutions such as political parties. It is therefore not strange that he was wary of the political parties that were founded to spearhead the movement for independence by leading Swazi commoners who had been educated in the West. Gradually, his attitude became hostile even if realism convinced him to sponsor a political party, the Imbokodvo National Movement (INM), to contest the elections for representatives to the Legislative Assembly. It is said that it is his distaste for political parties that accounted for the nomenclature of "movement" rather than "party" for his own political organization. In both the 1964 elections and those of 1967 held under the independence constitution, the Imbokodvo National Movement won all the seats in parliament. None of the opposition political parties won a single seat, though the National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) received about 20 per cent of the vote.

The 1968 independence constitution⁷ ushered in to Swaziland a government based theoretically on a constitutional monarchy with a bicameral legislature, a prime minister, who was the leader of the majority party in parliament, and an independent judiciary. Chapter II of the constitution enshrined a bill of rights that protected the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual. For instance, article 2(b) provided that every individual shall have the freedom of expression. The article spelt out the constituent elements of this freedom as follows:

... that is to say, freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference, (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.⁸

Furthermore, article 13 articulated the constitutional protection of the individual's freedom of assembly and association. The article provided as follows:

13(1) Except with his consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of assembly and association, that is to say, his right to assemble freely and associate with other persons and in particular to form or belong to trade unions, or other associations for the protection of his interests.⁹

The foregoing rights may only be derogated from by a law enacted to ensure national defence, public safety, public order and health. The article also specified certain other cases of derogation, for example restrictions on public officers which is not considered to be inconsistent with a democratic society. Apart from these constitutional restrictions, Swaziland regained its independence with the traditional liberal democratic rights of free expression, association and assembly guaranteed. Formally, the activities of political parties and trade unions were not hindered or curtailed by law. Thus at the formal constitutional level, multi-partyism thrived in Swaziland. The reality was somewhat different, as the King's party, the INM supported by the European settlers in the country, enjoyed total sway in parliament. None of the opposition parties was represented in parliament even though they remained free to organize outside it.

Things, however, changed dramatically after the 1972 elections when the biggest opposition party the NNLC led by Dr Ambrose Zwane won three seats and for the first time registered a presence in parliament. Even though the INM still retained an overwhelming majority in parliament, the victory of the NNLC sent shock waves across the country, especially among the traditionalist elements in Swazi society. This development aroused and to a certain extent confirmed the traditionalists' suspicions and hostilities against the independence constitution which was seen as having been imposed by the departing colonialists. The authority of the monarchy had been challenged. The INM government reacted to this by disqualifying Mr Ngwenya, one of the NNLC MPs, on citizenship grounds and by boycotting parliament. After the Swaziland Court of Appeal struck down as unconstitutional a decision of a citizenship tribunal to the effect that Mr Ngwenya was not a Swazi national, the King acted by suspending the constitution, dissolving parliament, banning all political parties, including the INM, all trade unions and all political activities and meetings. In the proclamation which was read to the nation on 12 April 1973, the King gave some of the reasons for his action as follows:

- the constitution has indeed failed to provide the machinery for good government and for the maintenance of peace and order;
- the constitution is indeed the cause of growing unrest, insecurity, dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in our country and an impediment to free and progressive development in all spheres of life;
- the constitution has permitted the importation into our country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with the way of life in our society, designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity: increasingly, this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society ...¹⁰

The proclamation then went on to prohibit and dissolve all political parties and movements. Meetings and processions of a political nature could not be held without the prior written consent of the commissioner of police. Section 12 of the proclamation, which is still in force, provides in part:

... and consent shall not be given if the Commissioner of Police has reason to believe that such meeting, procession or demonstration, is directly or indirectly related to political movements or other riotous assemblies which may disturb the peace or otherwise disturb the maintenance of law and order.¹¹

Under section 13, it is a criminal offence punishable by a six-month term of imprisonment for any person to form or attempt to form a political party, or organize or attend a

meeting, procession or demonstration in contravention of the proclamation.¹² Thus, together with the power of the prime minister to detain any person for 60 days without trial, there are today enough legal weapons in the government's armoury to stifle any form of political activity and opposition, that is even if one discounted the existing state of emergency which was imposed in 1973.

The 1973 proclamation vested executive, legislative and judicial powers in the Ngwenyama (Lion). He was to rule by decree with the assistance of the libandla of the Swazi National Council (SNC), the prime-minister and the cabinet, all of whom were appointed by the King himself. The end result of the events of April 1973 was to enable the King to complete the full circle of transforming himself from a formal constitutional monarch, with relatively broad executive powers, to an absolute executive monarch, unbridled by the limitations of any constitutional provisions. This was largely the position until 1978, when the King decided to again establish a bicameral parliament elected through a system of Swazi traditional electoral methods known as tinkhundla.

The Tinkhundla system: Parliamentary representation without political parties

After consultation with the Swazi National Council and on the basis of a report submitted by the Royal Constitutional Commission in 1975, King Sobhuza re-established parliament in 1978.¹³ Under this legislation a bicameral parliament was established, comprising a House of Assembly of fifty members and a Senate of twenty members. Forty members of the House are to be elected by the electoral college by secret ballot, while the remaining ten members are nominated by the King. Once constituted, the full House would then elect ten members of the Senate. The remaining ten members are then nominated by the King. He enjoys absolute discretion in his nominations to both the House and the Senate. However, this discretion is normally exercised subject to the following proviso in section 38(3) of the King's order-in-Council 23/1978:

Provided that without in any way fettering such discretion, the remaining ten senators shall be so appointed after consultation with such bodies as the King may consider appropriate in an endeavour to appoint such persons who are by reason of their special knowledge or practical experience, able to represent economic, social or cultural interests not already adequately represented in parliament or who are by reason of their special merit able to contribute substantially to the good government of Swaziland.¹⁴

For the purposes of electing the electoral college, the whole country has been divided into forty tinkhundla or electoral districts. In an election, each of these tinkhundla elects two representatives to form an electoral college of eighty members, which in turn elects the members of the House of Representatives. The notable feature of this system is that the candidates for election into the electoral college and the House of Representatives are not sponsored by any political party or organization. The candidates for election to the electoral college cannot canvass for support as the electorate is not expected to know anything about their political or class backgrounds. Furthermore, the members elected to the House of Assembly do not represent any particular constituency or electoral district as they are expected to represent the interests of the national as a whole.

The electoral committee, established under the electoral law, has been charged with the responsibility of supervising all elections which are to be conducted, "having regard to the traditional practices at meetings and elections of the Swazi nation ..."¹⁵ It is in pursuance of this provision that open, rather than secret, ballots are held: the electors simply file past the gate of the candidate of their choice so that they can be counted. At the end, the candidate through whose gate the greatest number of electors have passed is then declared elected.

Swaziland's unique system of political participation has been criticized on a number of grounds. Even though it may lay claims to being traditional, it is clearly undemocratic. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the electorate do not know the candidates they choose to constitute the electoral college. In so far as election of the House of Assembly and the Senate is indirect, the members of parliament and senators do not feel accountable to any particular constituency. A positive aspect of this may be that it tends to reduce the temptation on the part of members of parliament to propagate parochial rather than national interests. The absence of party-political discussion and activity does not augur well for the development of properly thought out socio-political agendas for scrutiny by the electorate. That there is a strong body of opinion in the country that seriously questions the tinkhundla system of government became clear during the last elections held in 1987. As part of a pre-election campaign, Mr Mndeni Shabalala, the Indvuna Yetinkhundla, or electoral commissioner, visited many districts throughout the country in order to "educate" the people regarding the system. For instance, at meetings held at two of these centres, Mayiwane and Madlangempisi, the people complained that some of the procedures laid down by King Sobhuza II were not being followed with regard to the election of members of parliament. They wanted to know from Mr Shabalala who actually elected members of parliament? Furthermore, they wished to know why it was that the two members elected at the tinkhundla level did not directly represent them in parliament, "because we elect them as a result of trust and hope that they will represent their Tinkhundla in Parliament". At the same meeting, one man complained:

We do not know these members of Parliament because we do not elect them. When King Sobhuza II introduced these elections under the tinkhundla system, he said it was not permanent and that the system should be changed if it be proved unsatisfactory.¹⁶

Recent trends: The emergence of clandestine political movements

Until fairly recently, the view of the Swazi ruling class was that the system of tinkhundla had worked perfectly well for the country. Indeed, the Indvuna Yetinkhundla, who is also a sort of constitutional development minister, has on several occasions assured the nation that the system did not call for any review. Nevertheless, unsurprisingly in such circumstances, the Kingdom has begun to witness the emergence of underground political activities apparently co-ordinated by the more educated and politically conscious classes in Swazi society. For about two years now, there have been numerous incidents of the distribution of politically flavoured pamphlets in the main urban centres of Manzini and Mbabane. Some of these pamphlets have called for the

unbanning of political parties in the country. It is the emergence of such underground political activities which culminated in the treason trial of 1990 involving ten defendants. The case in point was *In the Matter of The King vs Dominic Mngomezulu and 9 Others*.¹⁷

The accused were charged on various counts of treason, sedition or alternatively subversion, and the unlawful organization and attendance of a meeting of a political nature. One of the particulars of the charge of treason was that the accused conspired to form a political party known as the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), with the intention of unlawfully overthrowing King Mswati III and his government. Also, the accused were alleged to have held meetings at several places to organize trade unions, students and others to help them overthrow the government. The legal basis of these charges were sections 5(c) and 4(a) and (i) of the Seditious and Subversive Activities Act of 1938 (as amended), and section 12 of the King's Proclamation to the Nation of 1973.¹⁸ The Court acquitted and discharged the accused on the charges of high treason, sedition and subversion as the prosecution failed to adduce sufficient evidence to support the charges. Except for one of their number, the accused were convicted on counts 5 and 7, which alleged that they had unlawfully and intentionally organized and/or attended a meeting of a political nature. Alternatively that they had participated in such a meeting without the prior written consent of the commissioner of police¹⁹ on 1 and 28 January at Mawelawela and Ekukhanyeni, respectively. It is instructive to read the judicial reasoning behind the conviction on these counts and it is set out below in extenso as it describes the ingenious forms of political expression and organization that may be devised where the normal channels have been closed. On counts 5 and 7 the court found as follows:

I have already said, when dealing with Mango's evidence, that all the indications are that the braai of 1st January was specifically organized so as to provide a forum for debate on political matters. None of the accused attended with members of their families, or with girl friends, as might be expected if it was intended as purely social occasion. A variety of political matters were discussed and I think it is fair to say that political matters must have dominated the afternoon. Then there is the mixture of persons present. This was not a gathering of friends come together to celebrate the New Year, but a gathering of people with a particular interest in political matters. Then there is the slogan chanting which was common cause. I take account of the denials of the accused, but I am satisfied that the braai was simply a pretext or disguise for a political meeting ... I have said that the evidence is such that a positive finding cannot be made that it was a PUDEMO meeting, but if it was not a PUDEMO meeting, it was certainly a meeting of a group of radicals sympathetic to the cause of PUDEMO. It is admitted that the prior consent of the Commissioner of Police was not obtained and with the exception of the tenth accused, the accused must therefore be found guilty on count 5.²⁰

The Court also went on to hold that the braai of 28 January was also an illegal political meeting. However, at a recent sitting of the Swazi Court of Appeal, this conviction was overturned.

Recently, the Swaziland government responded to these developments by the fulfilment by the King of a promise to review the tinkhundla system. Last year a committee headed by a senior prince was appointed to collect views from the public regarding the current system. This committee started

its work in early September by touring various tinkhundla centres throughout the country.²¹ Initially the public response to the appointment of the committee was mixed as some people were either critical or sceptical, since the committee comprised personalities whose political views strongly supported the status quo. Others welcomed its appointment despite some reservations. At the various tinkhundlas people have appeared before the committee and many have severely criticized the present system and called for the institution of changes such as the introduction of multi-party politics and a constitutional monarchy. Judging from press reports, the initial suspicion and mistrust of the committee has been justified. On numerous occasions, members of the committee have unabashedly defended the tinkhundla system and at one stage attempted to remove the proceedings from the glare of public scrutiny by banning the press from covering them. It took the intervention of the Prime Minister to have this banning order reversed. The attitude of the committee drew the following editorial response from *The Times of Swaziland*.

The purpose of establishing the review committee, was for them to go out to the people, and find out what the people want. Initially, this is what they did, that is in the first meetings. However, what has prompted this comment, is the apparent deviation by members of the committee from their objective, that of gathering suggestions and comments on how the system could be improved.²²

This turn of events has created a crisis of popular mistrust and lack of confidence in the committee. This has been further accentuated by media reports of secret plans by the Minister of Justice, who is a member of the powerful Central Committee and also the Review Committee, to amend the Sedition and Subversive Activities Act by increasing the penalties stipulated therein in respect of persons convicted of illegally forming political parties or organizing or attending political gatherings.²³ If such reports are true, there is not much hope of creating an environment in which it will be possible to debate the future constitution and political system of the country.

Conclusion

It is a fundamental pre-condition for the establishment, growth and blossoming of a democratic culture and practice in a community that there should be freedom of association and assembly. This may be expressed in various forms, such as the formation of political parties for the purpose of political mobilization, or trade unions for the defence of workers' rights. The right of individuals or groups to associate and organize themselves for political ends, is a generally recognized human right that is enshrined in all the universal human rights instruments and also some regional instruments such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It is to be found prominently located in all the independence and post-independence constitutions of African states, including that of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

The expression of the right in the form of political parties and other associations for political ends has not been a welcome guest in the Kingdom of Swaziland. The monarchy and its supporters from the traditional élites, such as the chiefs and privileged commoners, have always distrusted political parties and were prepared to suppress them at the least excuse. The opportunity came five years after independence

when King Sobhuza banned all political parties, associations, meetings, and even trade unions. After 1978 all forms of political participation in the Kingdom's political life had to be channelled through the tinkhundla system of government. However, this ostensibly authentic system of government has been seriously criticized and there is great pressure for it to be radically reviewed or even jettisoned altogether. As open expression of political views and political organization have remained legally banned since 1973, the existing system is, unsurprisingly, being challenged by underground political movements. In recent times, the government has responded to these developments by establishing a committee to review the tinkhundla system of government. So far, many people have appeared before it and expressed views very critical of the status quo. The unashamed defence of the current political dispensation by some members of the committee has left its credibility seriously impaired.

It is therefore very doubtful whether its work will herald an era of meaningful democratic change allowing for participation in the political life of the country by the majority of the population.

Notes and references

- 1 See K A Ninsin and F K Drah (eds), *The search for democracy in Ghana (A case study of political instability in Africa)*, pp 21–22 Accra: Assempra, 1987.
- 2 See articles 19, 20 and 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, quoted in I Brownlie (ed), *Basic documents in international law*, Oxford: OUP, 1978, pp 144–149.
- 3 See International Covenant On Civil and Political Rights, quoted in I Brownlie, *op cit*, pp 162–181.
- 4 See *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*, CA/LEG/167/3/Rev 5, Articles 10 and 11.
- 5 See Iure Szabo, "Historical foundations of human rights and subsequent developments" in Karel Vasak (ed), *The international dimensions of human rights* vol 1 at p 24. Westport, CO: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- 6 *Ibid*, p 33.
- 7 See *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act 50 of 1968*, Statutes of Swaziland, vol 3. It came into effect on 6 September 1968, but was suspended by King Sobhuza in April 1973.
- 8 See article 17(1), *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Swaziland Act 50 of 1968*.
- 9 See article 13 of the *Constitution of Swaziland Act 50 of 1968*. On the structure and distribution of power under the 1968 independence constitution see Annual Survey of Commonwealth Law, 1968, p 113; A R Booth, *Swaziland Tradition and Change in a Southern African Kingdom*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1983, p 66; J R A Ayee, "A note on the machinery of government during the Sobhuza II era in Swaziland", 5 *Research Review* no 1, 1989, pp 54–68.
- 10 See Proclamation by his Majesty King Sobhuza II, *King's Proclamation 12 April 1973*, section 2(a), (b) and (c).
- 11 *Ibid*, section 12.
- 12 *Ibid*.
- 13 See *The Establishment of the Parliament of Swaziland Order*, 1978, King's-Order-in-Council.
- 14 See section 38(3), *King's-Order-in-Council*, no 23/1978.
- 15 See section 4(d), *King's-Order-in-Council*, no 23/1978.
- 16 See *The Times of Swaziland*, 6 October, 1987.
- 17 See *The King vs Dominic Mngomezulu and 9 Others*, Criminal Case no 93/90.
- 18 See *Sedition and Subversive Activities Act 46 of 1938*, Statutes of Swaziland.
- 19 See Proclamation by His Majesty King Sobhuza II, *King's Proclamation 12 April 1973*.
- 20 See *The King vs Dominic Mngomezulu and 9 Others*, Criminal Case no 94/90 at p 29 Per Hannah C J.
- 21 The committee consists of the following persons: Prince Masitsela Dlamini (Chairman), Dr Zonke Khumalo (Minister of Justice), Mr A K Hlophe, (Member of the Central Committee), Prince Majahane Dlamini, Councillor K Magagula, Gawulela Zwane, Gavu Dlamini and Sukusula Khumalo.
- 22 See *The Times of Swaziland*, 18 September 1991, Editorial Comment, front page.
- 23 See Pat Jele, "Strong law to block parties", *The Times of Swaziland*, 29 September 1991, front page.

Towards a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa

Laurie Nathan, Senior Researcher, Centre for Intergroup Studies, University of Cape Town*

An international train to greater security, stability and prosperity is leaving the station. Africa is not on that train.¹

Since late 1990 African leaders have been debating the possible formation of a Conference on Security, Stability, Development and Co-operation in Africa (CSSDCA). The debate arises from a deep and widespread concern that the region is being increasingly marginalized in international affairs and the world economy, that Africa stands on the brink of a political, economic and social crisis of monumental proportions, and that an urgent, continental-wide effort is required to address that crisis.

The initiative is the brainchild of General Olusegun Obasanjo, former Nigerian president and currently chairperson of the Africa Leadership Forum (ALF). In November 1990 the ALF and the secretariats of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Economic Commission for Africa invited a select group of leaders from the non-governmental sector to discuss the idea at a "brainstorming meeting" in Addis Ababa. The discussions resumed in May 1991 in the Ugandan capital of Kampala with eight national leaders and 300 delegates from virtually every African country, and concluded with a detailed proposal for the establishment of a CSSDCA.

The proposal is modelled on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), also known as the Helsinki process, which, for the past 20 years, has provided a forum for the United States, the Soviet Union and 33 West and East European countries to formulate guidelines on inter-state relations and a range of other issues grouped in three "baskets" – security, economic co-operation and human rights. The forum is credited with having contributed to the development of a more stable security environment in Europe, promoted co-operation across ideological divides

and raised human rights standards in Eastern Europe and the former USSR.

In the African context the CSSDCA is envisaged as a process comprised of the following elements: a charter of principles grouped in four "baskets" or "calabashes" – security, stability, development and co-operation – that would be endorsed by signatory states; a set of concrete policy measures intended to give effect to these principles; a permanent secretariat to facilitate the implementation of a programme of action in conjunction with relevant regional and international bodies; and periodic review conference to assess the extent of compliance with the charter by participating states.

The broad objectives of the CSSDCA would be to address the problems of the continent in a co-ordinated and systematic way, create mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of national and regional conflict, arrest Africa's growing marginalization, regulate inter- and intra-African relations and allow the content to set its own agenda for political and economic reform without external interference. Above all, the process would seek to promote democracy and respect for human rights as necessary preconditions for political stability and socio-economic development.

The first step towards establishing the CSSDCA will entail lobbying the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government to commence negotiations on the proposal. Simultaneously, efforts will be made to secure the interest and involvement of key sectors of civil society. The Addis Ababa meeting stressed that youth, women, NGOs, professional associations and grassroots organizations should be mobilized to help shape the direction of change and prod governments, that may lack the requisite will, into action.²

The international community is also seen as a key player, although in this respect the CSSDCA proposal is contradictory. It repeatedly advances the strategies of "collective self-reliance" and "self-sustained growth and development" as the only viable response to Africa's international isolation, but at the same time it clearly constitutes a bid to attract substantial

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foreign investment and aid. It deliberately resembles the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in the hope that this, together with the emphasis on democracy, will ensure the "commitment and contribution of major economic and military powers to the realization of the process".³

This article seeks to contribute to raising awareness of the envisaged "new arrangement for security and co-operation in Africa". The sections that follow, outline the motivation for a CSSDCA, summarize its proposed content and assess its significance and viability.

Continental drift

The primary motivation for the CSSDCA is the imminent economic and social catastrophe facing the continent. According to Nigeria's Adebayo Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa:

The establishment of viable and integrative political order has eluded many African countries. In fact, a few have come close to being destroyed by civil wars or bad government, or both, while in some it can be argued that the very basis of effective government hardly obtains. At the same time, the economic condition of Africa, especially that of sub-Saharan Africa, has become almost universally grim, if not tragic, as many countries are threatened by a systemic economic breakdown.⁴

Numerous critical problems present dire threats to the security of people and states: political instability, civil wars and border disputes; gross inefficiency and corruption in the public sector; the diversion of scarce resources to defence; drought and environmental degradation, particularly deforestation and desertification; abuse of human rights and lack of democracy; economic stagnation and crippling external debt; chronic unemployment, poverty and hunger; ravaging disease and an Aids pandemic, unsustainable demographic growth; and large populations of displaced people and refugees.

The severity of these problems is dramatically illustrated by the following facts and figures:

- In 1990 the UN Development Programme ranked sub-Saharan Africa as having the world's highest infant mortality (110 in 1 000) and lowest life expectancy (51 years) and rate of literacy (48 per cent).⁵
- Of Africa's 650 million people, 235 million are poor and 100 million suffer from malnutrition.⁶
- Africa is the least developed continent, with the lowest share of world industrial production (2 per cent) and world trade (3 per cent), lowest per capita income and largest number of least developed countries (30 out of 47).⁷
- According to the World Bank, Africa's external debt stands at US\$ 260 billion; in 1988 debt service obligations represented 47 per cent of export revenues. Sub-Saharan Africa's official debt is US\$ 140 billion, an amount equal to its GNP and 3.5 times its annual export earnings.⁸
- There have been more than 60 coups in the post-colonial period. Fifteen border disputes involving 30 countries, and at least 10 civil wars, of which six were still raging in mid-1991, have left the continent with 18 million refugees.⁹

The proposed CSSDCA is seen by its sponsors as an essential and comprehensive response to Africa's gradual disintegration under the collective weight of these problems. It is also a reaction to two more recent developments that will have a critical bearing on the future of the continent.

First, the ending of the Cold War has profound but mixed implications for Africa. On the one hand, there has been a marked decline in external support for authoritarian regimes and military involvement in regional and national conflicts as the superpowers withdraw from surrogate battlegrounds. There has been a concomitant "attenuation of ideology as a source of conflict within and among African countries".¹⁰ Especially where these trends are accompanied by a willingness on the part of the international community to assist in the resolution of long-standing disputes, the potential exists for a significant reduction in tension and armed hostilities.

On the other hand, Africa, already on the outskirts of international politics and the world economy, stands to be even further marginalized. The continent has never presented an attractive opportunity for foreign investment, and with the easing of superpower rivalry what little strategic value it had is now rapidly diminishing. The situation is exacerbated by the emergence of major economic blocs in North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim, with which Africa cannot possibly compete. At the same time, international aid is increasingly being diverted from the Third World to assist in the reconstruction of Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Gulf.

There is a pervasive fear in Africa that the net result of these developments will be the complete political and economic isolation of the continent. The warning bells were sounded loudly at the Addis Ababa meeting, where key speakers declared that the region was "drifting almost to the point of delinkage from the attention of the rest of the world"¹¹ and had "moved from being at the periphery to the periphery of the periphery of the global economy – the permanent political underdog, the world's basket case for which there is little hope".¹²

The second contemporary phenomenon that has given rise to the CSSDCA initiative is wholly positive. Brimming with frustration at the economic failures and oppressive policies of authoritarian governments, and inspired by events in Eastern Europe, popular forces throughout the continent are mounting concerted challenges to one-party rule. Supported at times by trade unions and intellectual, middle class and business strata, the pro-democracy movement is strengthened by the international community's insistence on political liberalization as a pre-condition for development aid. African observers frequently invoke Harold MacMillan's "winds of change" metaphor to describe the movement, the fervour and potential impact of which parallel the anti-colonial struggles of thirty years earlier.

While some African leaders continue to cling fiercely to power, dramatic changes have occurred in many countries over the past three years: dictators in Ethiopia, Liberia, Chad, Somalia, Benin and Mali have been ousted; ruling parties in Cape Verde, São Tomé, Algeria and Zambia have been defeated in free elections; colonialism in Namibia ended with the introduction of a pluralist parliamentary system; and tentative steps towards multi-party democracy are currently underway in Angola, Mozambique, South Africa, Nigeria, Niger, Togo and Burkino Faso. According to Samuel Decalo:

If at the time the Berlin Wall fell fully 38 of 45 sub-Saharan African states were governed by one-party systems of varying authoritarian hues, 18 months later half had pledged competitive elections and limitations on executive powers, with more committing themselves to change every month.¹³

Nevertheless, as Decalo acknowledges, "Africa's democratic strides are too recent to be assessed, and may in some countries prove to be cosmetic or temporary".¹⁴ A primary goal of the CSSDCA is thus to buttress the pro-democracy movement by encouraging and securing transitions to multi-party rule.

The four calabashes

The conclusions reached at the Ugandan forum on the proposed CSSDCA in May 1991 are summarized in a report, referred to as the *Kampala Document*, which recommends the adoption of "binding principles" for the four "calabashes" of security, stability, development and co-operation, and proposes a number of concrete policy measures in each of these areas.

Security¹⁵

At the heart of the CSSDCA initiative is the view that the myriad problems confronting Africa relate largely to questions of security. The erosion of security and stability is identified as a principal cause of the continent's continuing crises and an major impediment to the creation of sound economies and effective regional co-operation. The conviction follows that "Africa cannot make any significant advance on any other front without creating collectively a lasting solution to its problems of security and stability".¹⁶

National and regional security are seen as not being restricted to military matters but as having political, economic, social and environmental dimensions. Underdevelopment, the lack of self-sufficiency in food and energy, the abuse of human rights and other critical issues are regarded as grave threats to the security of people and, since they invariably give rise to conflict between communities and countries, to the security of states. Genuine and enduring security is consequently defined as an all-encompassing concept that enables people to live in peace and harmony, enjoy equal access to resources and participate fully in the process of governance.¹⁷

This broad definition marks a fundamental departure from the militarist conception of "national security" which African states have historically invoked to justify one-party rule. The CSSDCA documents in fact make a point of distinguishing between the security of people and governments. The former is understood to derive from the satisfaction of social, cultural, economic, political and human rights needs, and to be an essential precondition for the latter.¹⁸

Another key principle is that of "common security", which flows from the belief that most of the problems experienced by African countries are shared problems and that instability in one state inevitably reduces the stability of other states. In short, there exist "organic links between the security of African states as a whole and the security of each of them, arising from their common history, culture, geography and destiny"; this necessitates "collective responsibility and action" which can be achieved only through a continental-wide institutional framework.¹⁹

The final guiding principles are that of "good neighbourliness" and "peaceful resolution of conflict". The first tenet requires, above all, that "every African state respect the rights inherent in the territorial integrity, freedom and political independence of all other African states".²⁰ The

second tenet refers to the management and resolution of disputes through both "peace-making", in the form of negotiations, mediation or arbitration, and "peace-keeping", which entails the deployment of armed troops and unarmed observers on the ground.²¹

The following policy measures are proposed to give effect to these principles:

- The OAU's Reconciliation and Mediation Commission should be resuscitated and a continental mechanism for the arbitration and adjudication of disputes should be established.
- A continental peace-keeping machinery should be set up to respond to situations of actual or potential conflict. An earlier proposal to form a permanent Pan-African force for this purpose²² was rejected in favour of *ad hoc* operations involving the rapid mobilization of pre-agreed military forces and financial contributions from participating states. These states should implement special training in peace-keeping for a contingent of their armies.
- Confidence-building measures between African countries should be introduced. Such measures could include exchanges of information on troop locations and movement, joint military training and manoeuvres, and joint studies and seminars on sub-regional and regional security issues.
- A non-aggression treaty among African countries should be concluded and incorporate a commitment by states to defend each other in the event of external military aggression.
- A process of demilitarization should be initiated through collective reductions in military expenditure, manpower and armaments. Agreement on the type of weaponry that is justifiable for procurement or manufacture by African countries should be reached, and relative self-reliance in the military field should be developed through selective manufacturing of appropriate equipment for defence.
- An African Peace Council, comprising distinguished elder statesmen, should be formed as a pro-active instrument to ensure peace, and an African High Command should be established under its control to co-ordinate the defence of the continent or any CSSDCA member or group of members against external aggression.

The Kampala proposals envisage that many of these policy measures will be implemented within the framework of the Organization of African Unity. Yet the proposals also acknowledge that the OAU has been singularly ineffective in managing inter- and intra-African conflict. The primary reason for this is identified as the reluctance of African countries to surrender part of their sovereignty to the regional body. The CSSDCA initiative affirms the principle of sovereignty but insists that parties to disputes have to accept an enhanced role for the OAU and be willing to relinquish some degree of autonomy in submitting to mediation or arbitration.²³

A second reason for the OAU's lack of success in resolving conflict is attributed to the inadequacy of its structures and logistical, administrative and financial arrangements. The *Kampala Document* therefore recommends that the organization re-evaluate its systems with the view to adopting United Nations practices, and that peace-keeping mechanisms acquire permanent secretariats and formulate set rules, procedures and techniques.

Stability²⁴

African states have typically opposed the relaxation of authoritarian rule on the grounds that this would lead to chronic instability in ethnically heterogeneous societies. The CSSDCA initiative, on the other hand, embraces the new spirit of democracy sweeping the continent so enthusiastically that the key principles of the "stability calabash" are all political characteristics of liberal society: adherence to the rule of law; public accountability; popular participation in governance; respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; and open debate on public policy-making.

A number of specific practices and mechanisms are regarded as necessary to foster internal stability and cohesion in accordance with these principles:

- a freely promulgated constitution, adopted by an assembly of democratically elected representatives, with a Bill of Rights;
- a pluralist political system which allows open competition between alternative ideas, parties and leaders, and which requires the separation of party and state;
- constitutional limitations to the tenure of elected political leaders and periodic renewal of their mandate;
- independence of the judiciary, guaranteed by security of tenure for its officers and non-interference in their decisions by the legislative and executive branches of government;
- the signing, ratification and implementation by CSSDCA states of African and international legal instruments for the protection and promotion of human rights, and annual publication by the African Commission on Human and People's Rights of records of compliance with these instruments;
- the establishment of organs for monitoring accountability in the public sector, such as ombudsmen, independent audits of public expenditure and code of conduct bureaux;
- independence of the civil service by ensuring that its members have security of tenure, are nominated on professional grounds by an independent civil service commission and may be dismissed only by that commission;
- the individual right to own property, enshrined in the constitution;
- free and fair elections based on universal adult suffrage and conducted by secret ballot; and
- freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention without trial and all forms of inhuman and cruel treatment, codified in law.

Development²⁵

The "development calabash", described as the *raison d'être* of the CSSDCA, is underpinned by four principles: self-reliance as the only viable basis for sustained economic growth; rapid physical and economic integration of the continent; equal opportunity and equal access to resources; and popular participation in development.

The last of these points is stressed repeatedly. In contrast to Africa's anti-poverty campaigns in the 1960s which did not fully include the public in their conception and execution, the new perspective emphasizes the importance of grassroots involvement in the design and implementation of socio-economic programmes. The CSSDCA initiative calls for a "truly people-centred" approach on the grounds that people are both the desired beneficiaries of development and the means to achieving it.

The Kampala Forum decided that the strategies employed to give effect to the above principles should concentrate in the short term on Africa's "immediate struggle for survival in order to address the more excruciating long-term imperatives of socio-economic transformation". Furthermore, to have a realistic chance of success the CSSDCA process should concentrate on a limited number of key issues.²⁶

The areas identified as development priorities include the following: human resources, especially in the fields of literacy and education; governmental, administrative and entrepreneurial expertise; agriculture and food self-sufficiency; science and technology; alternative and conventional forms of energy; inter-African trade; transport and communication networks; population control; environmental protection; and the structural integration of African economies. In each of these areas specific policy proposals are made and emphasis is placed on collective regional endeavours.

The acquisition of financial resources for development is highlighted as an additional priority. The *Kampala Document* notes in this regard that it will be crucial to establish a common position on Africa's crippling external debt, seek favourable debt policy shifts by major creditors and influence the lending conditionalities of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in particular. The desired results are a moratorium on external debt, a reversal of the net outflow of capital from the region and a greater measure of independence for African countries in the utilization of foreign loans and aid, currently tied to prescribed political and economic reform.

Co-operation²⁷

The CSSDCA process as a whole is intended to create a framework for collective policy and action in different spheres. The fourth "calabash" elaborates on the overarching strategy of continental co-operation and integration. This strategy is seen as vital if Africa is to address its socio-economic problems effectively, implement the development proposals outlined above and participate fully in an international economic system increasingly dominated by regional blocs.

The *Kampala Document* proposes a number of practical measures to intensify co-operation between African countries in such areas as the development of natural resources, management of the environment, trade, transport, communications and joint production ventures. The Document also calls for the strengthening and rationalization of inter-governmental organizations to facilitate co-ordination in these areas. Most importantly, the CSSDCA would seek to accelerate the economic integration of the continent and the formation of an African Economic Community.

Finally, the CSSDCA would promote links with Third World and industrial nations. The latter are expected to continue to be a vital source of industrial and finance capital for development, but the ultimate objective of arrangements with them should be "to remove the basic structural weaknesses of African economies [and] elevate the continent from its status as an exporter of raw materials to a producer of manufactured and other processed goods".²⁸ To achieve this objective, international co-operation in the fields of science, technology, food, agriculture and the environment are seen as essential.

Linking the baskets

Although the *Kampala Document* deals separately with the four "calabashes" of security, stability, development and

co-operation, it insists throughout that these goals are inextricably linked, each dependent on the others for its realization. More specifically, it is argued that a sound national economy is the only durable foundation for national security and political stability, and that democracy and pluralism are in turn prerequisites for economic development.²⁹

The document maintains that the failure to understand this relationship and the absence of a framework to give it effect have contributed significantly to the calamitous situation on the continent.

Part of the reason we have remained enmeshed in the mess in which we now find ourselves is because we have chosen to ignore the mutually reinforcing negative consequences of political and economic crises in Africa, and because we stubbornly refused to allow our policies and programmes to be influenced by the full realization that political and economic reforms are necessarily interlocking and intertwining.³⁰

A question of political will

The convenors of the CSSDCA initiative believe that its implementation will lead to a radical departure from existing practices in Africa and provide a comprehensive response to the continent's political, economic and social problems. However, the initiative is not especially innovative at either a conceptual or policy level. Many of its key ideas and proposals have previously been advanced in other African declarations and fora.

The CSSDCA documents themselves make positive reference to such antecedents: the OAU's Declaration on the Political and Socio-Economic Situation in Africa and the Fundamental Changes Taking Place in the World (1991); the African Charter and Commission on Human and People's Rights (1987); the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation (1990); the Khartoum Declaration on the Human Dimension of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development (1988); Africa's Common Position on External Debt (1987); the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment for Socio-Economic Recovery and Transformation (1989); the declaration of the 1990s as the Second Transport and Communication Decade for Africa; and the Final Act of Lagos (1980) which motivates phased continental integration leading to an African Economic Community.

This lengthy (though not exhaustive) list raises two obvious questions: why have these declarations and the efforts of the OAU and various sub-regional organizations, inter-governmental bodies and UN agencies not been effective; and why should the establishment of a CSSDCA have any better chance of success? The "brainstorming meeting" in Addis Ababa posed the dilemma and challenge succinctly:

It is important to remember that the problems of Africa are very well known. It is not for lack of knowledge on their nature or indeed efforts at their resolution that they persist. It is imperative therefore that any consideration of a new initiative must be preceded by a critical evaluation of past efforts and why they failed. This will make it possible to avoid duplication and past pitfalls.³¹

The delegates to the Addis Ababa and Kampala conference attributed the dire circumstances in Africa to a combination of the legacy of colonialism, a "hostile international economic environment" and the failure of internal policies. The exceptional feature of their discussions was the emphasis placed on the last of these factors. In sharp contrast to Africa's tendency to apportion blame for all its ills on neo-

colonialism, the conference was marked by a high level of self-criticism. The prodemocracy movement had clearly given rise to a new confidence to challenge authoritarian governments. In the words of one participant: "In the past, at OAU meetings for example, people took great care that no offence should be given. Now people are speaking out."³²

In the course of the Kampala Forum, African leaders were slated for their greed, for equating their hold on political power with national security, for neglecting issues of social and economic justice and for attempting to maintain control by keeping their countries weak and divided. Delegates representing the continent's institutional elite acknowledged responsibility for acquiescing in this state of affairs. They berated themselves for having become "intellectual flunkies", "self-seeking, opportunistic and sycophantic".³³

Two policy failures in particular were highlighted as major causes of the continent's plight: the absence of a firm commitment to pursue economic integration and sustain successful subregional models (like the East African Community which collapsed in 1977), and the chronic inability of the OAU to build unity among member states and provide an effective co-ordinating forum.

Yet both these failures were seen as symptoms of a third, more fundamental problem that is essentially political in nature. According to Nigeria's Adebayo Adedeji:

We are never going to understand the current crisis in Africa much less contain it as long as we continue to think of it as an economic crisis. What is before us is primarily a political crisis; its economic consequences are serious enough, but they are nonetheless incidental. Not only is the crisis entirely political in character, it is also political in origin.³⁴

The political dimensions of the crisis were identified as the reluctance by African countries to surrender a measure of sovereignty to the OAU, corruption and inefficiency, disregard for human rights and, most importantly, the lack of public accountability and popular participation in governance and development. Former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere summed up the dominant theme of the Kampala Forum when he said:

The worst deficit we have is of democracy, not of foreign exchange We tried to build democracy without democrats. ... We thought we could develop without the involvement of our people.³⁵

The question of sovereignty is likely to plague a CSSDCA as much as it has the Organization of African Unity. Moreover, the OAU secretariat is itself resistant to the formation of a new regime that threatens to assume many of its functions. Although OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim is one of the sponsors of the new initiative, he believes that there already exists a continental institution that "embodies the collective political will of African countries to work together in furtherance of their common objectives". Salim has explicitly cautioned against "a duplication of effort and resources [by seeking] to create parallel institutions".³⁶

The initiative is also likely to encounter great difficulty in attracting substantial material support from the international community. In March 1991 its sponsors convened an "international roundtable on a CSSDCA" in Cologne with the aim of securing a commitment to the process from senior European and North American policy-makers.³⁷ Participants in the discussion report that the mission was largely unsuccessful and that a significant increase in foreign investment

and aid will depend entirely on the actual performance of African economies and governments.³⁸

In assessing the viability of the CSSDCA, it is worth questioning too whether the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe is an entirely appropriate model for Africa. The CSCE was predicated on the division of Europe into antagonistic ideological and military blocs; the “basket” approach reflected the different interests of the two sides and represented a form of bargaining between them. Furthermore, the CSCE covered a region considerably smaller than Africa and involved considerably stronger states. For over 20 years the European process functioned without a permanent secretariat, an organizational infrastructure and conflict-resolution mechanisms, all of which would be essential in Africa.

Against the many obstacles facing the envisaged CSSDCA, however, there are a number of factors in its favour: it combines a clear conceptual framework with concrete policy measures and an institutional arrangement to facilitate their implementation; its programme of action seeks to address questions of security, democracy and development in an integrated manner; it is unique in bringing together government and NGO leaders in a dialogue on these issues; and it has placed firmly on the agenda the need for African states to relinquish some degree of autonomy to a regional body.

In addition, the initiative is taking place in an atmosphere of growing continental support for radical political and economic reform. The manifestations of this, according to Adebayo Adedeji, are the “democratic winds of change blowing through Africa”, the efforts to end internal and border conflicts, the African Economic Community treaty signed by heads of state at the annual OAU summit in June 1991, and progress in South Africa towards dismantling apartheid and minority rule.³⁹

There is great enthusiasm about South Africa’s eventual entry into the African fold. With the election of a democratic government, the erstwhile pariah state is expected to join the OAU and CSSDCA,⁴⁰ and its integration into the African economy is expected to have a “tremendous positive impact”.⁴¹ It makes for an interesting footnote that in November 1991 President de Klerk called for the establishment of a Conference on Security and Co-operation in Southern Africa. Coinciding with this call, a senior official in the Department of Foreign Affairs quoted at length from the *Kampala Document* in a speech outlining Pretoria’s perspective on future relations on the sub-continent.⁴²

Declarations of intent by South Africa and other African governments give cause for optimism about the potential of a CSSDCA. Nevertheless, the bottom line remains the same. Whether a Helsinki-type process in Africa ever gets off the ground, and whether it succeeds in meeting its objectives, ultimately depends on the one critical ingredient missing in previous, similar endeavours: the political will to translate good intentions and lofty ideals into the requisite action.

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British military training assistance in Southern Africa: Lessons for South Africa?

Dr Simon Baynham of the Africa Institute and Dr Greg Mills of the Department of Political Studies, University of the Western Cape, examine London's military training programme for Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Namibia and the lessons those countries' experience may hold for transitional South Africa.

Although official figures are not made available, the British government provides in-country military assistance to a large number of states world-wide. Currently, Her Majesty's armed forces have some 300 officers and senior NCOs on loan service or secondment in approximately two dozen countries. These teams provide long-term military assistance, their strengths varying from more than 60 down to three, two or even single appointments. In some cases, the teams are long-established, remaining in the host country for years or even decades. In other instances, teams are assembled for specific tasks – sometimes for only a few months – disbanding once the job in hand has been completed. In addition, large numbers of British servicemen (and some women) are deployed on short-term advisory and training visits.

The objective of every team is to develop local standards of training and efficiency to a point where loan service personnel effectively work themselves out of a job. This was the case during 1986, for example, with the Uganda National Liberation Army (now the National Resistance Army) and also the staff college in Kenya. Across the globe, tasks vary from country to country but the main ones include:

- advice on establishment of staff systems and procedures
- administrative and technical advice
- aircraft repair and maintenance
- instruction and training assistance in support of sales projects, for example, the Rapier missile system
- establishment and training of medical mobile groups
- training aid to special forces

At the time of writing, in mid-1992, British military training teams are working in twelve African countries. In most cases, the host state pays "in-country" costs while "out of country" expenditures (salaries, pensions and so on) are financed not by the British Ministry of Defence (MOD) but

by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). This article will focus on such assistance in Southern Africa, with particular reference to the military experience in Zimbabwe and Namibia. The final part will discuss those countries' experience of integration and consider lessons that may be of value for the transition in South Africa.¹

British policy in the region

Before describing London's military assistance programmes in Southern Africa, it is important to sketch wider British interests and objectives in the subcontinent during the past dozen years or so. As noted in an earlier issue of this journal, British interests can be broken down into four overlapping elements (investment and trade, British passport holders, military and strategic considerations, and minerals), the relative salience of each fluctuating over time.² In order to pursue its objectives in the region, the United Kingdom adopted a dual-track approach throughout the 1980s. One side of the strategy was the refusal to pressurize Pretoria by the application of comprehensive economic sanctions – although a number of limited, largely symbolic, economic sanctions were in fact introduced.³ This dimension was complemented by a parallel policy of financial assistance aimed at strengthening the economies of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC) states and reducing their dependence on South Africa, together with security assistance to eight of the (then) nine SADCC countries.⁴

Briefly stated, British action during the 1980s was designed to encourage a "positive" policy of reducing the Frontline States' (FLS) dependence on South Africa as an alternative to what was seen by Whitehall as a dangerous and destabilizing strategy of punitive economic sanctions which – if pursued by the FLS – were deemed likely to lead to a

dangerous escalation of South African "tit-for-tat" retaliation.⁵ For these reasons, providing military and financial aid to the FLS was viewed by London as a more practical and realistic option than sanctions for helping South Africa's neighbours – a point privately accepted by all of the Frontline leaders who were fully aware of the disaster that full-scale sanctions would have brought to their economies.

In the 1980s, more than £1 billion (approximately R5 billion) of bilateral economic aid flowed from London to the SADCC countries and British military training teams were operating (as they are still) in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland; while armed forces personnel from the BLS countries, but also from Malawi, Tanzania and Zambia, regularly attended officer cadet and staff training courses in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, it is in the former colony of Rhodesia – and more recently in Namibia – that the impact of British military training assistance was greatest.

Zimbabwe

The history of British military assistance and training in Zimbabwe goes back to February 1980 – following the December 1979 cease-fire and the subsequent concentration at designated assembly points of the various armies. At the war's end, the Rhodesian Army numbered some 15 000 regulars, plus about four times as many reservists and auxiliary forces.⁶ Robert Mugabe's Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (Zanla), and the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (Zipra) headed by Joshua Nkomo, together comprised an estimated 50 000 guerrillas in internal and external bases.⁷

In terms of the cease-fire, it was agreed as a matter of priority that the three armies should be brought together in a joint training establishment. The first steps were taken on 25 February 1980, when all the occupants of assembly point Lima were re-located to the Essexvale training camp near Bulawayo. Rhodesian, Patriotic Front (PF) and British generals attended the opening of the joint Essexvale facility and, in spite of a multitude of teething problems, the experiment proved successful. An additional training camp with British instructors was established at Rathgar. It was from these tentative beginnings that the concept emerged of retaining a British Army training team after independence.

Following the 4 March 1980 election results, Prime Minister Mugabe requested that Britain should continue to play a significant role in the process of training and amalgamating what had been three armed forces into a single national army. As a temporary measure, an arrangement was made for a number of volunteers from the Commonwealth Monitoring Force to remain in the country until independence to supervise joint training of Rhodesian and PF forces. This group was replaced in mid-April by a 58-man unit of British servicemen who were to be known as the British Military Advisory Training Team or BMATT. Such a team – made up entirely of volunteers for the job – has operated in Zimbabwe ever since.

BMATT was headed initially by Major-General Fursdon, and the idea was that it should remain in the country for six months, providing training mainly for officers and future instructors of the Zimbabwe National Army (ZNA). However, it soon became apparent that a body of this size was incapable of meeting the training requirements of the

Zimbabwean military in so short a time. As a result, an agreement was reached to expand BMATT – all of whose members have been officers or senior NCOs – to 137 personnel by October 1980, by which time command had been transferred to Major-General Palmer.⁸ The closing months of 1980 revealed a new Zimbabwean government objective: the provision of training opportunities not only to the military core but to *all* ex-combatants who registered their wish to remain in the army. This meant that the potential number of men who would require basic training numbered some 65 000.

For obvious reasons relating to differing traditions of recruitment and training – but also because of memories of a recently contested and bitter civil war – the prospects for an effective integration of the three separate forces did not seem good.⁹ In the event, however, the programme proved an outstanding success.

The initial process was relatively straightforward. On BMATT's arrival in 1980, Zanla and Zipra were asked to select 300 potential leaders for each battalion envisaged. The programme is best described by the former Commander BMATT Zimbabwe, Brigadier (now Major-General) Toyne-Sewell:

These men were intensively trained and were then commissioned as lieutenant colonels, middle-rank officers and non-commissioned officers. Each of these two armies then provided 400 men as the rank and file of the new battalions before the two, leaders and led, were forged together at depots under the guidance of our instructors. Finally they were despatched to work up into fully trained and integrated battalions. ... By the end of 1980, twelve fully trained battalions were complete.¹⁰

Following the end of this phase, BMATT moved to set up long-term training establishments, the first one being the Basic Training Centre at Inkomo Barracks in Harare. Set up in early 1982, it was responsible for the training of officers and senior NCOs who then returned to their various units to form the nucleus of the training organization at that level. Training at Inkomo continued until August 1983, by which time some 1 400 ZNA personnel had passed through the centre. During this period, a number of other specialized programmes were running. These involved a considerable number of BMATT instructors/advisors in fields such as the logistic training units, personnel and records, the Military Police and the pay services. In addition, two specialist teams arrived in Zimbabwe for 15-month tours from 1985, the first to continue training begun by the Chinese Military Training Team with the Field Artillery Regiment, the second to train the Tank Regiment and the Armoured Car Regiment.

Currently, BMATT Zimbabwe is tasked with providing advice on the future development of the ZNA and instruction and training at the ZNA Staff College and Arms Schools. Assistance is provided in a number of ways. The main part of the team is involved, firstly, in "hands-on" training, mainly at the Staff College. Previously under the direction of Commander BMATT, the college is now run by a Zimbabwean officer, though he relies upon a number of British directing staff. It is interesting to note that the Zimbabwe Staff College is the first country in black Africa to use the Tactical Trainer (indoor war games). Secondly, BMATT's advisory functions are facilitated via their headquarters at the ZNA HQ in Harare. There they have close and regular contact with senior Zimbabwean officers. During 1989, agreement was reached between London and Harare regarding the establishment of a Logistics School

near Army HQ. BMATT provides the chief instructor and a team of instructors. Although some of the logistic problems of the past have been rectified, recent reports clearly indicate that many remain.

For instance, in a Parliamentary debate on the Second Report of the Departmental Committee on Security Ministries, Mr T H Maluleke, MP for Chiredzi/Zaka had the following to say:

In the field of accommodation, evidence received from the Secretary of Defence indicate that the armed forces live under squalid conditions. ... In the area of transport and vehicle maintenance, your Committee was shocked at the state of immobility of the armed forces. Throughout its tours your Committee encountered hundreds of unserviceable vehicles, engines and other equipment in what has been termed graveyards.¹¹

The desperate state of logistics and repairs/maintenance was described even more unambiguously by the MP for St Marys, Mr J J Macheke:

But our visit to the various brigades and various battalions were an eye opener ... some of our armed forces actually are squatting ... we found some of [them at Gwanda] actually lodging in the village because of the shortage of accommodation. And yet that base is very close to South Africa. ... This also affects our Sixth Brigade and the Presidential Guard. ... But what is probably most disturbing is ... the state of immobility of the armed forces. Throughout our tours, we encountered hundreds of unserviceable vehicles, engines and other equipment ... In every unit we visited [the soldiers told us] that if war were to break out today, we would find it very difficult to defend the country. The situation is so bad that barely a unit or a brigade has got more than a third of its requirements and even that is an exaggeration. I would say a quarter of its fleet of vehicles is on the road.¹²

One lesson here is that – despite the widely acclaimed professionalism of the British military instructors – standards cannot be raised across the board unless attitudes and corruption at the most senior levels of the indigenous political/security hierarchy are faced up to and addressed.

To move on: BMATT also assists in running Zimbabwe's Military Academy, both in terms of course design and in instruction. And at Nyanga in the Eastern Highlands, it helps to run infantry brigade and battalion continuation training. All ZNA units utilize Nyanga before deploying on operations in Mozambique, the idea now being to provide a short, sharp, refresher course, rather than the previous two-month programme in which "the whole gamut of conventional and low intensity techniques were practised. The Army is not keen to lose its conventional professionalism but accepts that this must take a lower priority until the war in Mozambique has ended."¹³

Specific lessons from Zimbabwe, many of which have been put into effect by BMATT in Namibia, include:

BMATT would have preferred to concentrate advice and training at a more senior level (as in Namibia). In other words, with the "wisdom of hindsight", as one interviewee put it, BMATT would train not only from the bottom up, as it has done, but rather should have concentrated on training officers, had this been offered.

The use of civil servants would have enabled the development of a much-needed strategic and budgeting plan for the ZNA.

Logistics and maintenance are a key area that needs emphasis in the transformation from a guerrilla to a regular force.

- Other problems relate to the distinction between regular and irregular (guerrilla) forces and to the particular situation prevailing in Zimbabwe. BMATT found that former Zanla officers in the ZNA were promoted over the heads of better qualified colleagues who were either white or Zipra. The highest ranking white member is a lieutenant-colonel, and there are only a handful of very senior ex-Zipra officers. Many senior officers have not attended or completed senior training courses, unlike their professional counterparts in other armies. The completion of certain courses is not a prerequisite for promotion as is the case in South Africa, the United Kingdom and elsewhere.
- Much has been learnt, according to BMATT sources, about the "African way of doing things". One difference was explained as follows: "In the British Army, men get fed before the officers, in Africa it's the other way around". Also, corruption is a top-down problem. Many ZNA officers are reputed to be looking continuously for kickbacks or perks from deals over equipment and so on, all of which undermines the authority of the army, particularly in the eyes of the wider community. Indeed, in February 1992, President Mugabe announced sweeping changes in the ZNA, partly designed, it is thought, to put a stop to widespread corruption. There appeared to be a general belief amongst former guerrillas that "to the victor, the spoils," to the detriment of standards. Nepotism and political appointees should have been expected as a result of the long struggle, some argue, though an integrated South African army would do well to stamp this out from the start.

Mozambique Training Team

Since February 1986, Mozambican troops have also been trained at a separate complex – Border Camp – within the ZNA Nyanga training area. The programme followed a request in early 1985 from the President of Mozambique, Samora Machel, to Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher for some form of military assistance. As a consequence, the British military attaché in Harare visited Maputo and recommended that such assistance should be in the shape of basic military training for selected individuals and that, ideally, it should be conducted in Zimbabwe. Such an arrangement has now been in place for more than six years.

While the agreement between London and Maputo forbids British military personnel from involvement in operational duties inside Mozambique, the United Kingdom has provided the country with millions of pounds worth of non-lethal military aid. Also of interest is the fact that Mozambique is the only non-Commonwealth state in Africa receiving such military training assistance on the continent itself.¹⁴

As noted in a previous issue of *Africa Insight*:

Three factors lie behind the level of military support given to Mozambique – a country whose army was recently trained solely by the Soviet Union, East Germany and Cuba. The first reason is that Britain owes Mozambique a debt of gratitude for helping to bring about the Zimbabwe settlement. Secondly, aid to Mozambique is seen as a more practical option than sanctions for helping the SADCC states, seven of which are members of the Commonwealth. Thirdly, London hopes that the Frelimo government will be incrementally weaned from its socialist orientation and dependence on the Eastern bloc.¹⁵

For some time now, of course, the Eastern bloc has ceased to exist and the authorities in Maputo have moved a long way from Marxism-Leninism, towards free market economics and in the direction of political pluralism and more open government. These developments have contributed to a greatly improved relationship between the two countries and the possibility exists for Mozambique to join the Commonwealth if and when a peaceful settlement can be brokered and, much more important, implemented.

Since 1986, Mozambique Training Team's (MTT) task has been to teach selected Mozambican officers basic tactics and military skills up to platoon level with a view to improving existing knowledge and training. Initially, the courses lasted fourteen weeks, after which the students returned to active service in Mozambique. However, following agreements by the Mozambican and Zimbabwean authorities to British proposals to extend the scope of the programme, infantry company training started in September 1987. Two years later, the MTT was enlarged to train the double intake of Company training promised by Mrs Thatcher at her tripartite meeting with Presidents Chissano and Mugabe in March 1989. Although British MTT personnel are funded by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, they come under the command – and are in fact officially part – of BMATT Zimbabwe.

In addition to the MTT courses run at Nyanga, the Zimbabwe National Army has been involved in training Mozambican military personnel *inside* Mozambique at a number of locations in the Sofala and Manica provinces.¹⁶ Early in 1989, Enos Nkala, Zimbabwe's then Minister of Defence, commented "that Mozambican troops would be able to relieve their Zimbabwean counterparts if all of them could benefit from the skilled training offered by the British instructors."¹⁷ That Britain's commitment has fallen well short of this has been no fault of the BMATT/MTT staff themselves, first-class soldiers with an excellent working knowledge of the region. According to Zimbabwean and British officers interviewed in Harare, the main problems encountered in the training programme have been inadequate facilities and the language barrier, since the courses are conducted in English. Another factor – especially evident during the early years of training assistance to Mozambique – has been the "very, very basic and limited knowledge" of Mozambicans arriving at Nyanga.¹⁸ In the words of sources at the camp, this means that often they do not at first recognize a map or compass.¹⁹

The Namibian experience

BMATT Namibia was set up at the request of President Sam Nujoma immediately following independence in late March 1990. It was tasked with the establishment of a "structured, disciplined and effective military force".²⁰ The team initially comprised 55 officers and NCOs, as well as two civil servants from the British Ministry of Defence to provide managerial and logistical support and advice.

The BMATT staff were dispersed according to the two main functions of the team: the provision of advice on the creation of the Ministry of Defence and Army Headquarters; and second, to assist with the training and selection of officers and NCOs. These leader groups have gone on to train rank-and-file soldiers under the supervision of the British.

BMATT Namibia has been divided up numerically according to these different functions. During the first year of operation, the group was tasked as follows. Under the overall command of a brigadier, twelve officers and the two civil servants (only one remained at the end of the first year) were based at Defence HQ in Windhoek. Approximately 25 British personnel were stationed at the principal training school at Okahandja, the remainder dispersed at other bases. Immediately under the brigadier were four lieutenant-colonels, one as BMATT Chief of Staff, another as his deputy, one as Chief Instructor and a fourth at Army HQ. Initially the senior officer was appointed for 12 months, the training officers for 6 months on a rotational basis, one civil servant for 12 months and the other for 6. With the exception of the one civil servant, these tours have been extended in line with the renewal of the invitation from the Namibian government. In 1991, the BMATT number was tailored to 17 and from April 1992 it was reduced to 11 under the command of a colonel. The decision to extend BMATT's presence beyond the original concept of one year was a clear vote of confidence in the programme on the part of Windhoek.

The BMATT training programme consists mainly of a continuous series of eight week "leaders cadre training courses".²¹ The aim was to "produce instructors capable of training their own battalions, and leaders capable of commanding soldiers in barracks and in the field". The syllabus covers physical training, weapon handling and firing, tactics, administration and leadership. Logistic officers had a separate three-week course running concurrently with the last stage of the training course.²²

The training course is deliberately designed to provide a happy medium between the South African and East bloc techniques previously employed. The use of British Army methods in this role is also seen as placing a new stamp on the Namibian Defence Force (NDF), inculcating a clear sense of identity for the soldiers: as the NDF Public Relations Control Officer put it, the idea "of one Namibia, one nation".

A total of 68 officers and 174 NCOs completed the first leaders' training course at Okahandja on 2 June 1990. Training in specialist skills, administrative and otherwise, was to commence only after the process of forming battalions was complete.²³

BMATT Namibia has drawn substantially on the lessons learned in Zimbabwe, though it has realized a number of its own along the way. These include:

- As mentioned, BMATT Namibia was the first such team worldwide to have civil servants to assist with administration and to provide specialist advice, but it is now not the only team to do so.
- Similarly, the Namibian BMATT is much larger than that in Zimbabwe in terms of its ratio relative to the home forces. In Zimbabwe at its initial peak, BMATT numbered over 160 against a ZNA strength of some 46 300. By comparison, the 55-strong Namibian BMATT served a Namibian Defence Force which, in 1990, numbered only 5 000 (though it is envisaged that the NDF will be around 10 000-strong ultimately).
- BMATT receives a larger contribution to its "in-country" costs than is the case in Zimbabwe. The Namibian government pay fuel, transportation and accommodation costs, while the FCO meets salaries, travel and so on.

Lessons for South Africa

There are two sets of lessons from BMATT's experiences in Southern Africa. The first concerns the possibility of BMATT's involvement in the integration process that will almost certainly take place in some manner between the SADF, the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda and Ciskei (TBVC) armies, *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and other para-military groupings. The second concerns lessons from the region for that process itself.

BMATT officers see a number of important differences between the South African on the one hand, and the Rhodesia-Zimbabwean and Namibian situations on the other. In Zimbabwe, they argue, "Rhodesia" had basically capitulated. Moreover, many of the ex-Rhodesians who were in the security forces left, and this assisted with integration. Those who stayed were ones who were prepared to "bend with the system", fully aware of the lack of promotion prospects and other limitations they faced within the new army.

In addition, unlike the guerrilla cadres in Zimbabwe, who had the numbers, training and, in some cases, the equipment to wage conventional or semi-conventional warfare, the standard of training of anti-government forces in South African is currently far below that of the SADF. Where Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo had relatively secure bases in Mozambique and Zambia, guaranteed means of outside financial and military assistance, and had also placed substantial number of trained men in Rhodesia by the war's end, the non-aggression pacts concluded by Pretoria with the neighbouring states during the 1980s severely hampered guerrilla operations. Again in contrast to the Rhodesian situation, neither the ANC nor the PAC and Azapo/BCMA have large numbers of trained and heavily armed men inside the country.

Although the Namibian experience is a more recent and "closer-to-home" illustration of the process of integration, again there are a number of obvious differences between the Namibian case and that pertaining in South Africa. For one, the returning 10 000 or so Swapo (South West African People's Organization) guerrilla forces (those of the People's Liberation Army of Namibia-Plan) outnumbered the 8 000-strong South West African Territory Force (SWATF). Both forces were demobilized, the new NDF starting virtually from scratch: or as one BMATT man put it, on their arrival all they had "was a building with desks, chairs and empty filing cabinets". Furthermore, as a territory proceeding under international supervision towards independence, the role of third parties in Namibia was somewhat greater than might be expected in the case of South Africa.

In the light of these factors, there would appear to be less need for a BMATT-type organization in South Africa. The SADF has remained largely intact and is many times stronger than the guerrilla forces than was the case in Zimbabwe regarding the Rhodesian Army *vis-à-vis* Zanla/Zipra by 1980. Clearly – and from a number of perspectives, though not all – South Africans are in a better position to run the integration process themselves. It is acknowledged, however, that an outside agency could play a key "monitoring or umpiring role" as a "trusted partner" or "impartial observer" in the process.

It is interesting to note that some BMATT officers see the recently agreed programme of training of *Umkhonto we*

Sizwe cadres and the Transkei Defence Force (TDF) by the Indian Army as a small step in the integration process. The "philosophy, tactics, ethos and approach to leadership" of the Indians is Western-based and would present fewer problems than training say, by the Chinese or North Koreans. Also, the Indian Army was structured by the British in a way that deliberately did not mix Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and other caste or religious groups. This is not unlike what the SADF has done in the creation of separate ethnic battalions. This policy of "privileged communal recruitment and communal formation of regiments"²⁴ was partly reversed by the post-colonial Indian government. Outsiders have been brought into previously "pure" ethnic, religious or caste regiments. Religious differences (which might arguably equate with ethnic differences in South Africa) in such units have been diluted by loyalty to the regiment, as may happen in South Africa.

Lessons about integration

Despite all the differences, some of the lessons that can be learned from BMATT's experiences may be applicable to the transformation and integration of guerrilla armies and other units into the SADF. In addition, though there is no comparable colonial power to assist with the integration of forces as was the case in Zimbabwe, the Namibian experience has perhaps given the British a greater likelihood in undertaking this sort of advisory role. Many problems within the Zimbabwean and Namibian defence structures, some of which have been explained earlier, are also likely to be encountered in the formation of a new SADF. These include:

- Transforming the former guerrilla forces into a national army which requires strict routines of financing, accountability and logistical organization.
- A lack of discipline in a guerrilla army with much fraternization between the ranks.
- A lack of civil-military distinction in activities arising from the involvement in politics of nearly all guerrilla fighters. According to traditional (and in particular, British) civil-military sentiment, this is undesirable. Or as the Namibian shadow (DTA) Minister of Defence, Alois Gende, put it recently: "The NDF is, unfortunately, extremely politicised and almost all ex-PLAN commanders and soldiers openly identify themselves with the ruling party, SWAPO". He went on to say that "A soldier is a public servant and as such, he should not be loyal to any political party"²⁵.
- Deciding upon rank designations and dress where existing uniforms carried unacceptable political implications. In Zimbabwe, it is ironic to note that the Rhodesian Defence Force uniforms and insignia (which were largely British-based) have been adopted. The paratroopers, for example, wear the distinctive red berets and wings of the British "paras". In Namibia, designations are now a mixture of Commonwealth and former Eastern bloc countries, the SWATF uniforms being deemed to carry unacceptable political implications.
- The difficulty in translating one rank structure with strict school and military educational requirements into another. In Namibia the foreign qualifications of returnees are said to have often "not been worth the paper they were written on".

- The difficulty in implementing a decision not to exclude any person from the security force because of prior involvement in government or anti-government forces. The controversial appointments of Generals Peter Walls in Zimbabwe and Solomon Hawala (the alleged “Butcher of Lubango”) are but two examples.
- Also of relevance to South Africa is the outcome of the racial, ethnic and political composition of leadership within the ZNA and the NDF. The leadership of the ZNA is dominated by former-Zanu (that is, Shona) combatants at the expense of former Zapu (Ndebele) and RDF (both white and black) soldiers. However, although the leadership of the NDF is mainly in the hands of former Plan (Swapo) members, of the five director-level appointments in the Namibian MOD, three are held by senior ex-SWATF officers (two directors and the Chief Procurement Officer). Namibian government officials have dismissed the significance of such discrepancies, contending that an exact split is impossible since “the best qualified will get the jobs going”.
- Perhaps the most contentious issue concerns the maintenance of standards in armies that have undergone such an integration process. The “maintenance of standards” has been interpreted in some quarters as a block mechanism against integration or affirmative action. It does, however, have implications for the professionalism of integrated armies, especially in an uncertain and volatile political climate such as South Africa’s. As mentioned earlier, there are signs that the ZNA has degenerated from what appeared to be a professional amalgam of forces in the early 1980s. Despite the best efforts of BMATT, and as previously noted, a recent parliamentary committee found the ZNA “in such chaos that its ability to guard the nation is dubious”. The eight-member committee reported seeing an “acre of unserviceable vehicles, graveyards of equipment, troops living in inhuman condemned accommodation, secret documents and equipment left insecure, and structures that were likely to fall apart at any time”.²⁶ On the other hand – and with reference again to the South African case – it is important not to define professionalism in too narrow a technical sense.²⁷

Conclusion

The presence of BMATT has undoubtedly promoted a spirit of reconciliation between the bitter enemies of two long bush wars in Namibia and Zimbabwe. It also demonstrates the continuing commitment of the Western powers to the creation of a stable, peaceful order in Southern Africa. In this sense, the use of BMATT in Namibia and Zimbabwe has served both a military objective in attempting to create effective and professional defence forces, and provided a display of political support.

The use of such foreign methods of training and tactics, and the presence of such an impartial outside force as a “buffer”, has greatly assisted the integrative process. Though it is unlikely that South Africa will have to integrate on quite the same scale and in the same manner as its two neighbours, BMATT could be utilized hand-in-hand with a firm policy of reconciliation to assist in the formation of a “new” SADF which, whatever its actual composition, would

enjoy the support and trust of the majority of South Africans. The creation of a stable, integrated defence community in South Africa and elsewhere in Southern Africa, such as in Mozambique and Angola, has important implications not only for domestic, but also for regional security.

Finally, two observations from a former British Director of Military Assistance Overseas may serve as a useful conclusion to this essay:

I repeat again my view that if a BMATT type operation is envisaged all its functions should be provided by one country. Diversification will result in the introduction of differing and probably incompatible military philosophies. This will impede, not assist, integration. I am, of course, talking about integration. My comments about single nation assistance would not apply if peace keeping was the task. In that case, multi-national forces have positive advantages to offer – not the least of which is a demonstration of concern by the international community as a whole. And lastly, while I do not speak with any official authority, I would be surprised if the UK would agree to provide a BMATT unless the request came as a joint one from all interested parties.

Notes and references

- 1 Because of undertakings given by the authors to interviewees, some of the sources for material appearing in this article are not identified here. Dr Mills’s contribution to this article is based on an earlier essay of his entitled “BMATT and military integration in Southern Africa”, *South African Defence Review*, no 2, 1992, pp 1–10.
- 2 For a lengthy discussion of these domestic, trading and strategic factors, see S Baynham, “British policies towards South Africa: The regional context”, *Africa Insight*, vol 19, no 3, 1989.
- 3 In the face of a harsh barrage of domestic and international criticism, Downing Street’s case rested on a number of closely-argued points: (i) that sanctions were a prescription for black unemployment and poverty (ii) that Pretoria’s resolve would be stiffened, rather than undermined, if the economic screws were tightened (iii) fear of South African counter-retaliation against the Frontline States and (iv) the difficulties of enforcement. A fifth factor, of course, related to the financial, trading and employment damage that would have resulted for the UK economy.
- 4 Namibia became the tenth member of the Conference after attaining independence in March 1990.
- 5 The policy was explained more fully by the then Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Mrs (now Baroness) Lynda Chalker: “Britain has long been involved in working to strengthen the economies of SADCC states, to reduce their economic dependence on South Africa and, through the SADCC organisation, to restore the natural pattern of transport in the region by rehabilitation of regional routes through Mozambique”. *Hansard*, London, 3 February 1988, col 640. The transport networks referred to are discussed in greater detail in S Baynham, “SADCC security issues”, *Africa Insight*, vol 19, no 2, 1989, especially pp 88–89.
- 6 By the war’s end, the Government’s security forces in the field averaged about 25 000. This scraped the bottom of the white barrel. All reasonably fit men between the ages of 38 and 50 were required (by 1977) to spend a maximum of 70 days a year on military duty; those above 50 were encouraged to volunteer for special police duty; those under 38 could serve for up to 190 days per annum. In addition, much use was made of black troops and foreigners. For instance, at one stage there was an American contingent of 500 military personnel, while a French unit was led by French officers. For details, see P Moorcraft, *A short thousand years*, Harare: Kheny Press, 1979, p 214; and M Meredith, *The past is another country*, London: Pan Books, 1980, p 304.
- 7 K Flower, *Serving secretly: Rhodesia’s CIO chief on record*, Johannesburg: Galago, 1987, p 248.

- 8 For about twelve months in 1981/82, and in order to cope with the initial training demands, the team grew to over 165 servicemen. By early 1983, there were still more than 100 members of BMATT but that figure had been reduced to just over 60 by the end of 1989/early 1990 and to approximately 30 (composed mainly of majors and lieutenant-colonels) by 1992. In 1991, four seconded Royal Air Force personnel arrived in Harare to provide advice on administration and logistics to the Zimbabwe Air Force.
- 9 "For one the Chinese philosophy of warfare adopted by ZANLA contrasted with the Russian tactics of ZIPRA and the British *modus operandi* of the Rhodesian security forces. And the Sandhurst training of many Rhodesian military officers was far removed from what their adversaries had received in the Soviet Union, Cuba, North Korea, the People's Republic of China (PRC), German Democratic Republic (GDR), Tanzania, Uganda or Libya. In a situation of mutual distrust engendered by nearly 20 years of warfare, the problems faced appeared intractable". G Mills, *op cit*, p 2.
- 10 T P Toyne-Sewell, "Zimbabwe and the British Military Advisory and Training Team", *Army Quarterly and Defence Journal*, vol 121, no 1, January 1991, p 54. For further details, see Major-General A W Dennis, "The integration of guerrilla armies into conventional forces: Lessons learnt from BMATT in Africa", paper presented at the conference on Changing dynamics: Military-strategic issues for a future South Africa, Pretoria, 6 August 1992, especially pp 1-4.
- 11 *Parliamentary Debates*, Harare: Government Printing and Stationery Office, vol 18, no 57, 4 March 1992, cols 4111-4113.
- 12 *Ibid*, cols 4114-4116. Macheka went on to say (cols 4116-4120) "Most of the vehicles in most cases have broken down. We found out that when we went to visit three brigade in Mutare, there are many engines scattered about which have been lying there for the past five or six years unrepaired. The engines and the crank shafts are supposed to be repaired at the Harare Base Workshop and that is the procedure in the Army. The explanation is that they can no longer send these engines to Harare, because they never come back to their original place. After visiting all the areas, that is most of the battalions, including the one in Gwanda, we realised that the situation is the same and this also prompted us to visit Harare Base Workshop to see for ourselves. It was shattering to say the least it will be of interest of Members of Parliament appreciate the reality of problems experienced by our Army. It will only be proper if Members of Parliament take some time to visit the place.
- "We got at the Harare Base Workshop, and there were about a thousand engines, some of them which are repairable and others have been lying there for about eight years and cannot be repaired any more. The reason is that there are no spares and it was suggested that they cannibalise and this they said was contrary to the regulations of the Army. The various vehicles of different types, some of them with proper timing would have fetched larger sums of money, but because of the bureaucracy and the tender procedure they took long to clear, and by the time they are cleared they would not fetch a larger sum of money.
- "The Army itself is not short of skilled manpower who can put these vehicles back into the road, this regards every single station we went to, but unfortunately they did not have any spares. At times, the problem is compounded by sheer negligence, in that when we visited the Harare Base Workshop for some 110 Mercedes Benz engines which were ordered, they did not have the correct crank shafts to fit on the blocks and the engines have been lying there for about three years. We appreciate the assistance given to the Army personnel by Lonrho in order to facilitate the repairing of these vehicles, but in the absence of spare parts, your Committee feels that the Army is paying money for nothing. As a solution your Committee forwards the following recommendations:
- "Your Committee commends attempts being made by the Zimbabwe National Army in protecting the nation and guarding vital installations but at the same time wonders how this could be achieved given the poor transport situation facing practically all units of the army. In the light of the above, the Committee recommends the overhauling of the whole transport situation in the army through the provision of once off allocation of the purchase of army vehicles.
- "Given the sound artisan base in most brigades, the Committee recommends the upgrading of workshops and the provision of equipment and tools at those levels in order to make them full repair, refurbishment and overhauling units. This would cut incidences of components and vehicles accumulating and congesting Harare Workshops where not much work is being done on them because of shortage of spares.
- "The Committee also feels that there should be adequate provision of foreign currency to expedite the repair and maintenance of army vehicles with a view to making the army more operational.
- "Your Committee was concerned with hundreds of unserviceable vehicles it saw at all army workshops it visited and wishes to recommend that a speedy way of disposing the vehicles be adopted while money can still be gained from such disposals. The Committee also wishes to recommend that Treasury reviews its rules regarding the disposal of public property with a view to ploughing back the proceeds of such disposals towards servicing the existing fleets."
- 13 T P Toyne-Sewell, *op cit*, p 59. Zimbabwe's involvement in the Mozambican civil war is explained in S Baynham, "SADCC security issues", *op cit*, p 93.
- 14 However, a number of non-Commonwealth African countries such as Senegal and Zaire send their officers to training establishments in Britain itself. Mozambican officers also train at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, an arrangement now into its seventh year.
- 15 S Baynham, "SADCC security issues", *op cit*, p 92.
- 16 J MacBruce, "Domestic and regional security", in S Baynham (ed), *Zimbabwe in transition*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell and the Africa Institute of SA, 1992, p 228. In-country training has also taken place in Tete Province.
- 17 *Ibid*.
- 18 Brigadier Robert Hodges, then BMATT Commander in Zimbabwe, to *The Times* (London), 11 March 1987.
- 19 *Ibid*.
- 20 *Ministry of Defence Press Release*, Windhoek, 24 July 1990.
- 21 *Ibid*.
- 22 *Ibid*.
- 23 L Nathan, "Marching to a different drum", *Southern African Perspectives*, Working Paper Series 4, Centre for Southern African Studies, University of the Western Cape, February 1990, p 13.
- 24 R G C Thomas and B Karnad, "The military and national integration in India", in H Dietz, et al (eds), *Ethnicity, integration and the military*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1991, p 133.
- 25 "The experience in Namibia: Fears, perceptions and expectations regarding regional security". Paper presented at the conference on Southern African security relations towards the year 2000, University of Pretoria, 26 November 1991, p 2.
- 26 *Cape Times*, 5 March 1992.
- 27 For a wider discussion on this, see R Williams, "Of skills and subordination: Revisiting professionalism", *South African Defence Review*, no 4, 1992, pp 22-30.
- 28 Major-General Dennis, *op cit*, p 6.

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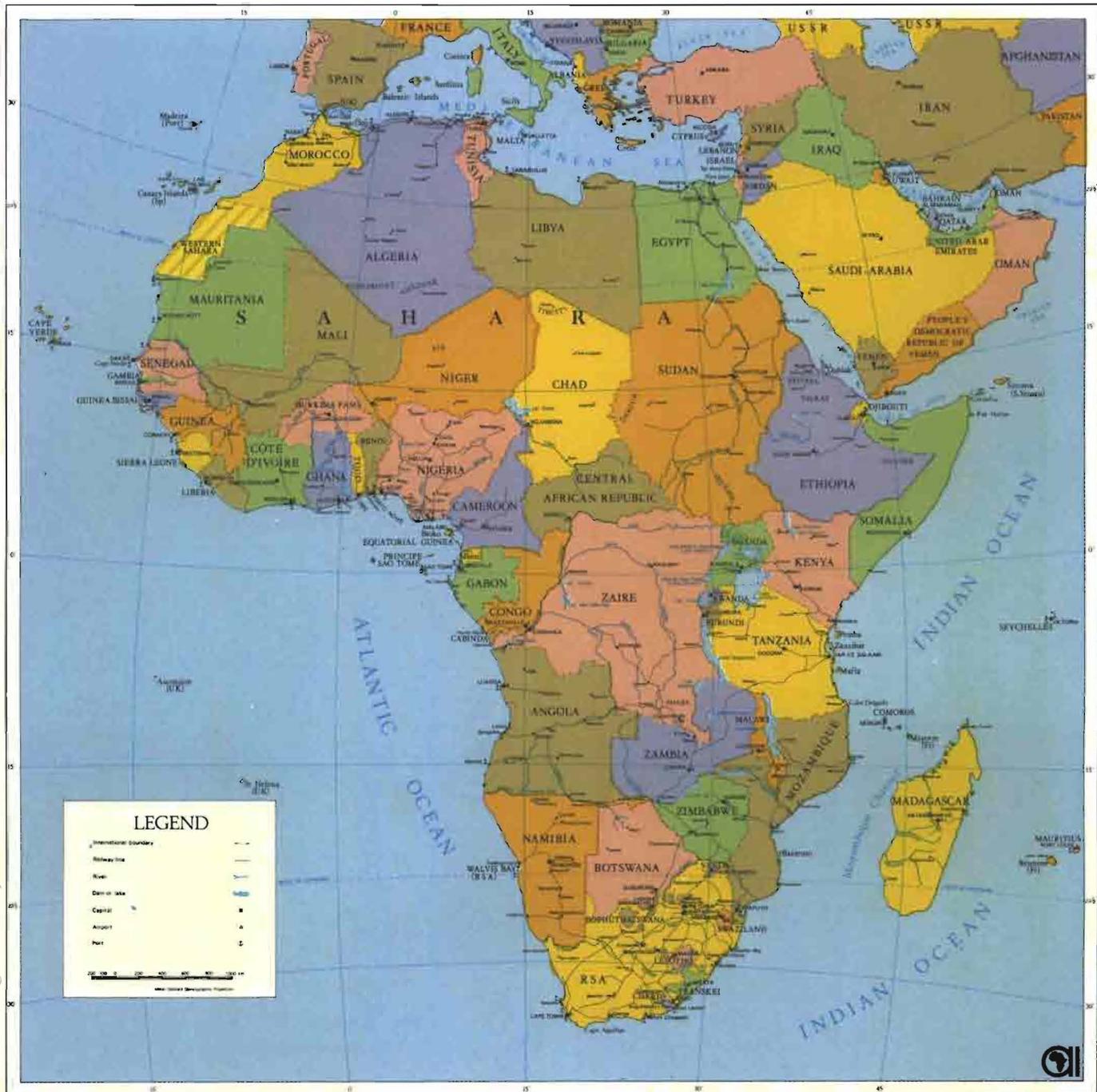
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