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Africa in the Age of a Global Network Society: The Challenges Ahead

PATIENCE AKPAN

Abstract: This paper considers the discourse that links African development with new information and communication technologies (ICTs). It begins with an examination of classical modernization theories of development and communication. It poses the following questions: Are the new ICTs the solution to many of the challenges that face sub-Saharan Africa? What are the immediate and future consequences for the region if these new technologies are ignored? The paper attempts to resolve the tension between the need to be part of the global network society and the urge to provide basic needs for sub-Saharan peoples. It argues that assumptions about the new ICTs and their prospects as instruments of economic development in Africa may be extremely exaggerated.

Nigeria's president, Rtd. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, has never been a favorite of Nigerian journalists. His disdain for them when he was head of state the first time around was returned in full measure, with regular reports and cartoons about his famous "uncouthness." Days before the February 27, 1999 presidential elections, Obasanjo's reputation as a "bush" man (Nigerian for an "uncultured" man) received a boost from the man himself. During a televised interview with journalists, Obasanjo reportedly reacted to questions regarding the Internet by playing on the words "download" and "upload." If he is to download, he asked, when does he upload? On a serious note, he said, he did not particularly care about technologies that download unless they meet the basic needs of Nigerians. He was quoted in a Reuters report as saying that he was not against the Internet or information technology, "but (acquiring) it ... should not be a priority over the technology to produce food or pound yams" ¹. This indication of his future policy direction--a preference for "appropriate technology over newfangled ideas of globalization and information technology"--generated vociferous attacks on Obasanjo from Nigerians at home and abroad ². One subscriber to Niajanet, a US-based Nigerian Internet discussion forum, expressed concern over Obasanjo's "warped policy preference" and the "need for enlightened people in leadership positions" ³.

This episode is symbolic of the two major perspectives of the coming of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to Africa. Frequently the debates are framed in either/or language, slotting advocates into uncomfortable positions of sounding either too elitist or not "enlightened" enough. This structuring of the debate has been replicated at the scholarly level. It becomes a "war" between the pessimists, such as Jegede ⁴, and the optimists, such as Olivier Coeur De Roy ⁵. But there are also those who argue that it is not an either/or position and present a middle ground between becoming "cyber-struck" at the perceived wonders of the new ICTs and articulating policy strategies aimed at meeting the basic needs of African populations.

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i2a1.pdf>

The debate is clearly rooted in the classical theories about the role of communication in development. The present focus may be on new communication and information gadgets, but the debate goes as far back as the 1950s and 1960s when modernization theorists were engaged in intellectual speculations on how to transform the newly emerging, formerly colonial states into western-type societies. Although many modernization theories of economic growth and political development have since been abandoned, or reformulated, their assumptions structure much of the current debate on the prospects for African countries advancing to industrialization and modernity via their modem connections.

This paper examines the classical arguments on the causal link between communication and development. It also considers the possibilities and constraints for sub-Saharan Africa in acquiring and utilizing the new knowledge and information technologies. It addresses the following questions. How important is it for Africa to get "connected" when juxtaposed with the urgency to provide basic needs for most of its populations? Are the new ICTs the solution to many of the challenges that face sub-Saharan African or are they mere distractions? If one takes the position, as Nigeria's Obasanjo does, that the priorities should be about addressing the basic needs of the population, can these states afford not to be part of the global network society? In the first part of the paper, I will explore some of the arguments that represent the two extreme positions: the need to be part of the global network society and the urge to provide basic needs for sub-Saharan Africans. In the second section, I will attempt to resolve the tension between the two approaches by pointing to a third way, one that does not sacrifice the basic needs of the people and at the same time does not place the region in an even more disadvantaged position by ignoring the implication of the new ICTs. First, it is necessary to define some of the concepts.

DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

First used by Manuel Castells, "the network society" refers to "movements, linkages, and flows which reshape and often undermine the integrity and coherence of borders and spatial entities" ⁶. "Network" is a word spun from the actions of a spider and its web creation; it literally refers to any system of lines that cross, or a group of people who work together to promote common goals. More relevant to ICTs, a network is a system that links together a number of computers ⁷. In a network, there is the potential for parts to become an intrinsic to the whole. To understand the function of global in this context, it is necessary to seek its definition in the larger process of globalization.

Globalization is not new, but it has become one of today's buzzwords. David Held and Anthony McGrew define globalization as a multifaceted process manifested most vividly in four issue areas: security, economy, politics, and law ⁸. The effects of globalization are felt most deeply and extensively in the economic sphere. "The internationalization of production and the globalization of financial transactions, organized in part by a relatively small number of powerful transnational corporations" ⁹ have drastically shrunk the economic world. This process has been hastened by advances in transport, communication and information technologies that facilitate the rapid movement of capital around the globe.

Ron Kasmir refers to globalization as the "unprecedented volume of flows of capital, people, commodities, microbes, cultural images, technologies, religious and political ideologies,

weapons, drugs, and pollution--all cutting across political and cultural borders"¹⁰. While geo-spatial boundaries have disappeared to the point where the world is truly a "global village," sub-Saharan Africa seems ever more distant from the core of economic and political processes. The African continent in general seems to occupy a complex position in the global system.

"In one sense, [Africa] is the system's most marginal geographical region. But in another sense, Africa is central to how the system constitutes itself, whether as a harbinger of doom in Robert Kaplan's apocalyptic vision; the moral focus of humanitarian concerns; a laboratory for peacekeeping, epidemiological, and environmental interventions; or the source of pride and commitment for diaspora communities."¹¹

This complexity fuels the debate on the need for Africa to be part of the global society--to create a niche for itself, if it is ever to escape its poverty and marginalization.

The notion of "society," as used here in the classic Grotian sense, seems to resolve the tension between Africa's location on the periphery of the global process and as an integral node or unit in a global network with its implicit assumption of equality. In the Grotian image of the world, states in the "societies of states" are not only equal through sovereignty, but they are willing to cooperate with each other in the pursuit of common goals¹². This means that, despite their marginality, African states still belong to this society of states, although their role and participation are necessarily constrained by their structural location on the margins of the global society.

Taken together, therefore, these concepts produce the idea of a "global network society," also variously referred to as the global information society, the information society or the postindustrial society. In a global network society, "boundaries and borders of all sorts are being re-imagined or re-figured in complex political and cultural ways"¹³. One effect of this process is the shrinking of the global network society, with geo-spatial boundaries giving way to digital spaces where distance is measured in time--the number of seconds it takes to transmit data across cyberspace. In this global network society, new and wider spaces have opened up, prompting many Africans and Africanists to argue that it is time sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest region in the world, finally shared a spot in the sun.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AS DEVELOPMENT TOOLS FOR AFRICA

One side of the debate on the implications of the new ICTs for development in Africa argues that entering these new spaces will depend on how connected, or plugged in, the region is. The region's ability to take advantage of the "information revolution"¹⁴ will depend on how it engages with the high-tech world of information and communication technologies. Hence the push for the region to accord high priority to the acquisition of the new ICTs if it hopes to be part of what is approximating not only an empirical global village, but a planetary village.

These technologies include, at the basic level, the telephone, and, at the more advanced level, satellite communications. In between is the Internet, a technology developed in 1969 by the US military for the purposes of protecting strategic military information in the event of a nuclear attack. The Internet came into public usage in 1974, starting in the academy and spreading rapidly, to general usage in North America and Western Europe. While all the

information and communication technologies do feature in the debate on sub-Saharan Africa's entry into the global network society, many of the references to ICTs in this paper are specifically about the Internet and related hardware and software--telephone, computer, modem, access to the Internet itself, databases, and all aspects of the World Wide Web.

In many countries in the West, having an e-mail account to exchange data over the Internet has become very common, but even in the industrialized world, the new ICTs have not lost their novelty. As Michèle Martin writes, "The print media [in Canada] often tend to highlight the grandiloquent aspects of the project (massive job creation, mammoth investments, revolutionary home services, etc.) ..." ¹⁵. Vincent Mosco also argues that "as is common with any new technological innovation, the current discourse surrounding the information highway tends to focus on the 'novelty' aspect of the project" ¹⁶.

The technology assumes an astronomical level of grandiloquence and novelty when discussed in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, a region that has the lowest telephone density in the world. By comparison, 99 per cent of the population in Canada have access to a telephone ¹⁷. There are more telephone lines in Manhattan, New York than there are in all of Africa. But then, with the highest infant mortality rate in the world, sub-Saharan Africa can be forgiven if access to telephones is the least of its headaches. This attitude toward communication technology in Africa is being challenged in the current discourse by those who argue that it is important for the region to link up with the global network society. While the end-goals are not always well articulated, the idea is that when sub-Saharan Africa arrives at the cyber El Dorado, all other things will follow. This echoes the Biblical injunction to "[S]eek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." ¹⁸. Therefore, all that sub-Saharan Africa needs to do is get connected first and worry about other things later. The central argument around the need for this is based on two major premises. Much of the debate on the new technologies is rooted in the first premise, which focuses on the new ICTs as means to economic growth in other sectors of national economies. The second, and less articulated, is an analysis of ICTs as ends in themselves, as revenue earners.

As means or avenues to economic development, ICTs present sub-Saharan Africa with an opportunity to participate in the production of knowledge about Africa and about the world. This argument resonates with the "knowledge is power" rhetoric. It also echoes the exposure and diffusion theories of development communication. Accordingly, if African countries have control of and access to knowledge, they will be in a stronger position to compete with the rest of the world. Through access to information about events and issues in the "outside world," the region will be exposed to "industrial values" that will motivate people to change by transforming their attitudes. Viewed from this perspective, information plays the dual role of empowering and transforming.

Also, the new ICTs can be the means to development because access to information and data in other parts of the world will lead to the creation of an African scientific community. This community will then produce knowledge about the continent and make the knowledge available to the rest of the world, while also appropriating useful knowledge from other parts of the world.

The need to be producers of knowledge harks back to the 1970s debate on a new information world order. The South was rejecting the unidirectional flow of information from

the North, which distorted information and knowledge about the South. The new ICTs provide an opportunity to reverse the trend. This is a highly contested claim. In the first place, the technology still comes from the North in the language of the North, and is financed, in large part, by aid or investment funds from the North. The US, for instance, in 1997, promised to spend \$15 million on a project to get Africa connected. Already six countries have been linked to the Internet with this assistance.

The link is tenuous, but it is expected that by bringing the continent in to the information age, economic development will be stimulated. In the global economy, the argument goes, information and communication technologies are vital variables in the growth process. Olivier Coeur De Roy (1997) stresses the need for information in the development process in Africa, referring to it as a first and necessary objective:

"these technological developments in networking and communication infrastructure are not a luxury—they are a priority for Africa as they comprise considerable and tangible stakes: stakes of power, because nowadays being on the information highway gives power, economic stakes because of the huge investments involved with new information technologies; technological stakes in the choices being made over infrastructure and methods of connection in Africa; and stakes in the research sector to develop the new information technologies according to the priorities, needs and expectations of the African continent" ¹⁹.

The assumption here is that the problem of African underdevelopment is tied to lack of access to information. The Internet provides a window to the world in cheaper and more accessible ways than ever before. The cost-and-accessibility aspect of this argument is highly disputable. For example Internet access in Zimbabwe (the country with the third highest number of Internet users in Africa) costs US\$300--the equivalent of the minimum annual income for an average worker in the country ²⁰. This does not include the cost of acquiring the basic phone line or the hardware and software required to access the Internet.

It is indisputable that access to information facilitates research in a variety of sectors. For education, ICTs allow both students and educators to access databases and libraries worldwide, including full-text academic journals and textbooks. Through telemedicine connections, medical practitioners in sub-Saharan African countries can access information and consult with specialists. Information on pest control and seeds can also help local farmers achieve bumper harvests. The greatest beneficiaries of the new ICTs, of course are, entrepreneurs who reap the optimal benefits of the new technologies by increasing their productivity with the help of time and laborsaving communication and information devices. Business, and especially financial speculators and stock traders, can access on-the-spot information in real time that enables them to make profit-maximizing decisions.

There are many other specific examples that highlight the importance of the Internet and other new ICTs in everyday life in Sub-Saharan Africa. In an article which first appeared in the Nov. 25, 1995 issue of the Dutch weekly *Vrij Nederland*, Michiel Hegener quotes research staff with the Association of African Universities in Accra, Ghana as saying:

"...Yesterday, I received a postal query from a lady in Nigeria. She sent it four months ago! The postal services in Africa are extremely slow, the delays are endless, and many letters never even reach their destination. Whenever I'm outside Africa and I see the Internet working--as at a recent conference of the Internet Society in Hawaii--I know that this is what we need! It's as

clear as day. For education in Africa, you need the Internet--it'll give you all the information you can possibly desire" ²¹.

Nat Tanoh, adviser to Ghana's minister of communications, sums up the views expressed by many Africans about the Internet: "There is an absolute need for us to lay our hands on state-of-the-art technology that will allow us to do a bit of catch-up . . . with the developed world" ²². Tanoh was interviewed during an Information Society and Development Conference attended by representatives of 39 developing countries in Midrand, South Africa, in May 1996. The conference was aimed at "exploring how to bring the developing world into what has been dubbed the global information society." At that forum, South African Deputy President (now President) Thabo Mbeki remarked that:

"The continuing growth of the Global Information Society, as it is being termed, will have profound implications for African countries. Some fear that it will only accelerate the marginalization of Africa, as the pace of growth accelerates even more and the gap between those who are linked up and those who are not grows larger. Africa's disadvantage is a function of its underdevelopment in general, and of the low density of telephone connections in Sub-Saharan Africa" ²³.

From the need to facilitate personal communication in the face of bad roads and poor postal services to the need to access information for research, the new ICTs are considered to be the tools that will enable sub-Saharan Africa to get connected, both literally and metaphorically, with the rest of the world. But within the countries themselves, ICTs have the potential to generate growth in the high-tech sector. Like the Industrial Revolution, the explosion of information and communication technologies has created employment opportunities and increased productivity in industrialized countries. Much of the sectoral growth in Western economies has occurred in the high-tech industry. As someone puts it, "revenue from information technology could be larger than life in the next few years" ²⁴. This assertion might be exaggerated, but, stripped of the hyperbole, it nonetheless stresses the need for sub-Saharan Africa to purposefully engage with the global network society by taking advantage of these new ICTs.

THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION IN DEVELOPMENT

The debate on the central role of information or communication in the development process in Third World countries dates back to the modernization discourse of the 1950s and 1960s. The original theory that linked communication with development revolved around assumptions that exposure (exposure theory of communication) to "modern" values through the mass media would transform behavior and attitudes and in the process create a political and economic actors who would sow the "right seed, use credit efficiently, voice political views and demands through the appropriate channels, and organize the institutions needed to push traditional societies over the threshold of modernity and into the twentieth century" ²⁵. The actor's modern attitudes and influence would diffuse to the rest of the traditional society through the media which would adopt "modern" attitudes about savings that would in turn usher in economic development (diffusion theory of communication). "Classical and

neoclassical economic thinkers saw communication as a necessary factor for economic development and growth" ²⁶.

Also arguing from this perspective, Daniel Lerner wrote in 1958 that communication changes attitudes by transforming "traditional" people into modern; and Lucian Pye (1963) added that communication was a prerequisite for development because "it can destroy traditional societies" ²⁷. Presumably, the problem of underdevelopment is traditionalism.

Alex Inkeles and R.H. Smith in their famous work, *Becoming Modern* (1963), enthused about the role of the mass media in effecting modernization. The media, they argued, were the inculcators of individual modernization. The theories that linked communication with economic (and political) development were primarily based on two major assumptions. First, it was assumed that there was a correlation between underdevelopment and the lack of information technology. That is, one could tell the difference between a developed and an underdeveloped country by simply looking at the number of western-type ICT gadgets that each country had. Local means of communication, such as the use of the gong man for public announcements, or the marketplace as a forum for exchange of information and views did not count ²⁸. To prove the point, Stover (1984) presented a statistical analysis of the penetration of mass media gadgets in countries and their levels of economic growth ²⁹. He concluded that "poor countries have fewer means of communication than rich ones, and the lack of information correlates with a low level of development" ³⁰.

Stover does not critically analyze his data to explain the causality between the level of development and the presence of mass media gadgets. That is, he fails to explain whether some countries have many communication gadgets because they are developed and can afford them, or whether they developed because they had communication gadgets prior to achieving development which he implicitly conceives as a static plateau that industrialized countries have reached. He also leaves unexamined the assumption that poor countries are poor because they do not utilize communication gadgets in their development strategies. This line of argument was so prevalent in the 1950s that UNESCO established a threshold of access to media of communication. For a country to seriously begin the process of development, the UN agency suggested, it had to "provide ten newspaper copies, five radio receivers and two sets of cinema seats for every 100 inhabitants" ³¹. It did not matter if the "100 inhabitants" could read, or if the community had electricity.

Exposure to these media was expected to automatically enable people in "traditional society (to) ... gain new skills and attitudes" that would usher them into the dawn of a modern (western) era of development. This thinking is replicated in the current discourse on new ICTs despite the fact that the development theory of communication, just as many classical modernization theories, has since proved unable to explain underdevelopment in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, the UNDP is now at the forefront of projects aimed toward getting Africa "connected." In 1992, the agency initiated the Sustainable Development Networking Program (SDNP) with 12 countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. "The program emphasizes the importance of sharing information at all levels of society in developing countries. Access to information sources by decision makers and by different members of society is the essential element in understanding and furthering the concept of sustainable development" ³².

Other facilitators of African communication networks include the World Bank (All in One) and the US Agency for International Development, which in 1997 set aside \$15 million to fund the Leland Initiative, a program that aims at getting some African countries hooked up. Private transnational communication corporations, such as AT & T, are considering the business opportunities that Africa offers.

John Fleming, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, sums up the interest of the UNDP and other development agencies in giving Africa Internet handouts: "The message of all institutions and other organizations involved in development programs emphasizes the urgency of providing Africa with ways to enter and participate in the world economy, where information and communication technologies are a factor of economic development" ³³. This statement sounds eerily familiar. In 1964, Wilbur Schramm argued that "it was the duty of advanced countries ... to provide communication expertise, hardware, and software to less developed countries, thus stimulating their quest for modernization" ³⁴. More than 30 years later, the western scholarly community is still pondering underdevelopment in Africa. Obviously, radio and television sets did not succeed in transforming the continent into an industrial society. If previous efforts by aid agencies and donor countries to provide access to now traditional media outlets (such as radios) to Africans did not work, the current optimism on the miracle-working powers of the new ICTs seems eminently utopian.

A related assumption about the linkage between communication and development is that communication can facilitate change in less developed countries. And in contemporary development discourse, "information technology can help organize a development project, letting *primitive* [italics added] villagers know that shovels exist, can be ordered, delivered, and used to accomplish the goal of obtaining ground water to increase agricultural production" ³⁵. This statement presupposes that the primitive villagers have access to telephone lines and computers with modems -- all necessary items before they can place an online order for a shovel. It also assumes that they are all literate in the mainstream language of the new ICT--English. Why, then, are they still "primitive?"

While the earlier assumptions about the potential of communication to assist in the development implied transformation from one level to another, there was also concern that communication could be used to maintain the status quo. This was a critique that emerged in the 1970s, mainly from neo-Marxist perspectives. The argument was that western communication tools might actually help in not only perpetuating the gap between Africa and the rest of the world, but also widen the domestic income gap. This point was clearly rooted in the emergence of military and authoritarian regimes in 1960s Africa and the use of the media by these regimes as propaganda tools. The concern about the perpetuation of inequality through communication is even more acute now because the development of new ICTs is creating another level of disparity--that between the information haves and information have-nots ³⁶.

A glimpse at the distribution in the use of the Internet indicates the new power structure that is emerging in the world. About 41 million of the 68 million Internet users in 1997 were based in the US, with 68 percent of all Internet servers based in the US ³⁷. Meanwhile, the whole of Africa accounts for less than one percent of Internet activity in the world ³⁸.

Within Saharan African countries, the gap between those who have access to the new ICTs and those who do not also widens. With a teledensity of one telephone per 1,000, slightly higher

in South Africa and Ghana (3:1000), clearly the new ICTs will be accessed by the very wealthy, a factor that will invariably maintain the status quo in areas of inequality and distributive justice. It is hard to imagine that the elite in urban areas who have access to ICTs would be willing to share the "gains" accrued from their access to electronic knowledge and information, unless it serves their interest in maintaining the power structure. Getting the general population connected to the Internet is a more arduous task than providing everyone with access to basic needs. And 40 years after many sub-Saharan African countries gained political independence from their colonial masters, that task has not even begun.

Ironically, while focus on the external pervades discourse about the new ICTs, the top fifteen obstacles to economic growth in Africa in 1997, as published in the *Africa Economic Report*, were all internal. The report listed corruption at the top, with terrorism at the bottom. An "inadequate supply of infrastructure" placed third. While one may read new ICTs into "infrastructure," there is no indication in the report that lack of access to the new ICTs was a factor in the slow economic growth recorded for the continent in 1997. "Thus one can safely conclude that high priority must be given to eliminating corruption and regulating taxes in all African countries, in order to help businesses flourish" ⁴⁰. Admittedly, one could insist that the countries performed as poorly as they did because they did not pay adequate attention to the role of communication in the development process.

AN OLD DILEMMA EMERGES IN A NEW FORM

It could be argued that increased activity in the information and communication high-tech sector will result in economic growth that will eventually trickle down to the masses. Through taxes and high levels of employment leading to increased savings and investment of foreign and local capital, new ICTs will generate revenue that would accrue to national governments. But this raises some pertinent questions. First, has the income gap between the poor and rich in industrialized societies diminished as a result of growth in the high-tech sector? One may argue empirically that Western societies attained their levels of economic growth because of their use of communication and information technologies--both old and new. Secondly, and more relevant to the allocation of scarce resources, should African governments give priority to this sector and hope high-tech wealth will trickle down and benefit all, or, should they focus on projects that more directly affect the majority of their populations? These questions are not new; they were asked during the oil boom era, when oil-producing countries in Africa (for example, Nigeria) gave priority to grandiose projects in their strategies for development. Peter Enahoro, a Nigerian journalist and political analyst, had this to say about the dilemma then which vividly mirrors the current dilemma:

"We now have some of the best roads in the world, but it is questionable whether the money we spent building new expressways should have been used that way.... Nigeria imports millions of dollars worth of rice, yet we are a tropical country and could grow our own food. On the other hand, if we had not built highways, someone would say, they have magnificent mechanized farms but they cannot transport their produce.... So there is a debate over whether we have chosen the proper priorities" ⁴¹.

Enahoro made this statement in 1982, shortly before the oil crash, when the effect of the debt crisis began to hit home. Interestingly, those expressways that were some of the best in the world are now some of the worst. And the country does not have the mechanized farms either and can now hardly afford to import rice. Although times have changed, the dilemma expressed by Enahoro seventeen years ago still applies as many sub-Saharan African countries engage in the debate over local needs, on the one hand, and getting plugged in on the other. Stover attempts to resolve the dilemma by arguing that "communication is essential." For him, a cause of underdevelopment is the inability of rural people to "communicate their needs effectively" and in so doing become part of the development process. But does giving them e-mail accounts help, when the only account they have is with the local money lender?

Even if sub-Saharan African countries do succeed in getting connected to the global network society, they still confront many infrastructural obstacles. According to Jegede:

"[T]hree quarters of [the] African population is illiterate (so hooking them to the Internet is out of the question); three quarters of Africa is rural without basic facilities of electricity and telephone (so hooking up to the Internet can only be restricted to the urban areas); three quarters of universities in Africa have depleted library resources, have overworked academics and run computer science departments without computers ... And there are currently 200 million personal computers world-wide but less than one percentage of them are located in Africa" ⁴².

Besides, argues Jegede, even if everyone in Africa was electronically connected, this would not necessarily develop Africa. In fact, it would divert attention from other problems of development ⁴³. "Most Africans are concerned about having enough to eat and worry little about choosing the best Internet service provider. The digital revolution has indeed opened the vast world of Internet information to Africa, but only to the rich and privileged. Ironically, this availability actually widens the already huge gulf between the rich and the poor" ⁴⁴.

FEEDING THE POPULATION FIRST; HOOKING THEM UP LATER

The optimism about the new ICTs may be misplaced. Scarce funds should be applied to development projects that actually tackle the enormous poverty that exists among African populations. About 80 per cent of African populations, many of whom have never used or seen a telephone, do not need to be part of a global network society. They do need clothes to wear, roofs over their heads, and food to eat.

In obvious response to the failure of mainstream theories of economic growth, development theorists are returning to the theoretical drawing table. Indices of growth were incorrectly anchored on macro-economic indicators that had nothing to do with how ordinary people lived. If one must insist on the linkage between development and communication, then the emphasis should be on how to use communication tools to get people to actively participate in the development process, in what John Brohman (1996) refers to as the popular development model ⁴⁵.

In this vein, Stover proposes a new concept of participatory developmental communication that integrates the social, political and economic aspects of development. It is characterized by a two-way flow of information "where information is shared rather than simply disseminated

from the top downward. It must also be horizontal in nature, where relative equals exchange messages and link themselves together, and it must be decentralized so that villages and rural areas can participate." He then goes on to define participatory, developmental communication as "a process that involves understanding the audience and its needs ... planning around democratically selected strategies,' producing, disseminating, and receiving messages, encouraging interpersonal discussions with peers, and feedback" ⁴⁷.

This is a definition designed for a global network society. Nevertheless, we can still see some new spaces opening up for the type of development strategies that straddle the need to go global and the need to stay local. Perhaps the new ICTs can help, as the old media were expected to, in changing the mindset of African peoples so they can move away from a conceptualization of development and modernity as being synonymous with macro-economic indicators and westernization. There is nothing wrong with "becoming modern", but tastes must match locally available resources. Otherwise, sub-Saharan Africa will never break away from the disempowering relationship of dependence that currently ties the region to the apron strings of industrialized countries.

If development is conceived of as "the fulfillment of the necessary conditions for the realization of the potential of human personality, which translates into reductions in poverty, inequality and unemployment, (and as)--the increasing satisfaction of the basic needs such as food," then African governments need to get down to the real business of development--addressing the basic needs of the people⁴⁸. While the new ICTs should not be completely ignored, there should be greater emphasis on the development of appropriate technology and integration of imported technology in local ways of doing things. This departs from the mainstream development strategies that focused on "top-down diffusion of development impulses" ⁴⁹. In this new strategy, priority is given to "employment creation and basic-needs provisions, rather than economic growth per se" ⁵⁰. The assumption here is that a "healthy" GNP is meaningless if the most vulnerable of the population lack access to basic health care.

On the other hand, the region can not afford to be left out of this information revolution. As Hamid Mowlana (1997) points out,

"A new power structure is emerging based on information, data, and knowledge and leaving behind it leveling effects on traditional and existing social strata. Many decisions affecting the global sociocultural environment are now largely occurring outside local and even national political and economic systems. Not only are communication networks as cultural ecology affecting the sociocultural environment, but information and cultural relations are becoming ever more central to the conduct of international and global systems" ⁵¹.

To navigate its way from the margins to the center of human progress, sub-Saharan Africa needs to actively engage with the "outside world," politically, economically and socially, but it must do so on its own terms. Underdevelopment in Africa has shown that, there is no empirical causal relationship between development and communication. Rather than pump scarce resources into more white-elephant projects that meet the needs of a fraction of the population, governments should turn to the private sector. Leaving this new technology in the hands of the private sector has its own drawbacks, but for now, this should not be a major concern, as long as it frees up public funds for spending in areas that meet the needs of the greatest number of people. Already, private businesses, donor countries, and international nongovernmental

organizations are getting actively involved in the process of getting Africa connected to the global network society.

Governments' only role should be the creation of an enabling environment to facilitate the production of local communication infrastructure, software and basic equipment. The goal should be self-reliance, rather than dependency on industrialized and donor countries. The region must meet its basic needs and rely less on external linkages. This is a paradox in an era when the boundaries between the domestic and international are becoming increasingly blurred. But globalization should not be another excuse for sub-Saharan Africa to continue to lag behind the rest of the world. The region must negotiate the terms of its engagement with the global network society in ways that benefit its populations. Sub-Saharan Africa cannot successfully go global until it has met its local obligations.

Conclusion

Classical theories that link communication with development structure the current discourse on the place of sub-Saharan Africa in the global network society. Communication by itself does not lead to development, but should communication and development become fused as Hamid Mowlana suggests, it should not detract attention from what really matters: access to basic needs ⁵².

It is in Africa's interest to formulate national policies that will promote the allocation, integration and development of the ICTs in locally appropriate ways. It is hoped that in the near future satellite communications will eliminate the need for telephones in accessing the Internet and thus open up access to the global network society to a greater percentage of the population. This optimism, however, overlooks one crucial factor: the high illiteracy rate in many African countries. Introducing software in local languages does not eliminate illiteracy as an obstacle because a minimum threshold of literacy is needed in order to make meaningful use of the new ICTs. As a policy prescription, therefore, African states should invest heavily in education, and the infrastructure required for ICTs. A systematic focus on development-oriented education and the provision of basic technological infrastructure will diffuse to other spheres of the society and thus spur development. This will in turn facilitate entry into the global network society.

Africa first needs to define development for itself in order to determine how the new ICTs can assist in that project. In the end, Nigeria's Obasanjo may have found the right balance. Technology is of no use to Africans, unless it can enable them to meet their basic needs.

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Achieving Human Rights in Africa: The Challenge for the New Millennium

PAUL J. MAGNARELLA

Introduction

Fifty-one years after the United Nations adopted the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and almost nineteen years after the Organization of African Unity (OAU) adopted its own African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the human rights situation on the African continent is decidedly bleak. Indeed, achieving genuine respect for human rights may constitute the greatest challenge facing Africans in the new millennium.

In June 1999 UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor expressed his deep concern over the ever increasing number of African countries afflicted by war and associated human rights abuses. Fighting has raged in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Angola, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi, Ethiopia and Eritrea ¹. The same month, a report by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers estimated that more than 120,000 children from ages seven to seventeen were being exploited as soldiers across Africa. Some of these children voluntarily joined government or revolutionary armed forces, but tens of thousands of them were forced to become soldiers at gunpoint ².

Amnesty International also reported that twenty-four African countries had serious and widespread human rights violations in 1998 and that armed conflicts, social and political unrest continued unabated, leading to appalling human rights abuse throughout the continent ³. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that in 1998 there were about 3.5 million refugees in Africa, eighty percent of them women and children under the age of five ⁴. In its 1999 survey, Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that Africa's refugee population had increased to 6.3 million ⁵. "Of the ten top refugee producers in the world, five were African: Burundi, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Somalia, and Sudan" ⁶. In general, HRW concluded that "much of Africa made little headway in adjusting to the imperatives of democratic rule and respect for human rights" ⁷.

THE GENERAL CAUSES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

What are the causes of extensive human rights abuses in Africa? A recent OAU report attributed Africa's poor human rights record mainly to racism, post-colonialism, poverty, ignorance, disease, religious intolerance, internal conflicts, debt, bad management, corruption, the monopoly of power, the lack of judicial and press autonomy, and border conflicts ⁸. Poverty is certainly an endemic factor. More than seventy-five percent of the continent's 700 million

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i2a2.pdf>

people live below the poverty line, and ten of the world's thirteen poorest countries are in Africa. Africa's troubling situation, however, is not unique. As I have pointed out elsewhere, in many of the world's poorer countries, the following elements comprise the system leading to human rights violations:

- undeveloped economies, with limited resource bases and insufficient employment/income opportunities for large segments of the population resulting in wide-spread poverty
- high population growth rates further straining the natural environment and local resources, while intensifying competition for resources
- ethnic diversity and/or regional factionalism promoting local/particularistic identifications, while hindering the development of a national identification;
- ethnic and/or class politics involving competition among leaders of different language, cultural, or regional populations for state positions of political and economic power with the spoils of victory going to supporters;
- lack of regime legitimacy as those large segments of the population not culturally and/or politically affiliated with the ruling elite and not sharing in the spoils refuse to recognize the regime as legitimate;
- resort to military/police force to maintain power by suppressing political opponents and disgruntled civilians;
- violation of economic, civil, and political rights by the regime on the pretext of "national security" ⁹.

Unfortunately, most African countries share these elements. Part of the reason stems from the negative impact that colonialism has had on Africa's indigenous ethno-political traditions.

COLONIALISM AND THE AFRICAN STATE

Because state creation in Africa differed so markedly from the European experience, the Western liberal conception of individual-state relationships does not easily apply to Africa. European imperialists imposed the state structure on collections of ethno-political communities that historically lacked intercommunal coherence. The imperialists forced communities that lived independently of each other to live together in the newly-created colonial state. Most of these new citizens lacked any nationalistic bond to the colonial state. Today, only a few African states bear any territorial resemblance to the political communities that existed prior to European colonialism. The resulting disconnection between Africans and the modern African state has created a crisis of cultural, social, and political identity.

As African scholar Makau wa Mutua points out, the post-colonial "African states have largely failed to forge viable, free, and prosperous countries....The new African states have failed to inspire loyalty in the citizenry; to produce a political class with integrity and a national interest; to inculcate in the military, the police, and the security forces their proper roles in society; to build a nation from different linguistic and cultural groups; and to fashion economically viable policies" ¹⁰. This historic, psychological process has adversely affected many

African political leaders, who, lacking a genuine national commitment and sense of obligation, exploit state budgets and power to strengthen their ethnic power bases, enhance personal privileges and thus retain power. Such a strategy ignores the human rights entitlements of common citizens without discrimination.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE CLASSICAL FORM

Many African leaders have thus relied on ethnic support in order to achieve and maintain positions of power. In return, these leaders have often favored their supporters with privileged access to the limited available resources. Such politics, by favoring the few over the many, has not and cannot generate the generality of legitimacy necessary for regime stability and internal security. Some African leaders believed that, despite a country's ethnic, cultural, and regional diversity, the development of a shared national identity and state stability could be achieved if ethnic, regional, or other particularistic affiliations were eliminated. Hence, these leaders supported strong central governments, often without tolerance for an independent judiciary or effective local governance.

In the twentieth century, however, ethnonationalism or politicized ethnicity represents a major legitimator and de-legitimator of regimes. A government's legitimacy rests, in significant degree, on its ability to convince the governed that it shares, represents, or respects their ethnicity. In many countries with multi-ethnic populations, the classic "nation-state" has proved to be a dangerous fiction. Attempts by state governments to force diverse cultural populations into a dominant ethnic mold have led to human rights abuses ¹¹. Clay, an anthropologist, concludes that "Post-independence efforts to eliminate tribal identities may have contributed significantly to Africa's catastrophic problems" ¹².

The bias of the UN and existing states against autonomy or secessionist movements by cultural minorities seeking self-determination and political independence from dominant ethnic power-holders could very well prove detrimental to both the stability of states and the human rights process. Historically, diverse ethnic populations with a tradition of mutual animosity have not found common citizenship in a single state a sufficient basis for social harmony. On the contrary, the state form has simply become the new arena for interethnic political and economic battles.

In cases of intrastate, interethnic strife involving cultural populations who are numerically dominant in different regions of the country, at least two political paradigms or structural alternatives to the pluralistic state are possible. One structural solution involves replacing the state (which in the developing world has commonly been dominated by the military or a single political party) with autonomous, ethnic cantons that can opt for confederation on the Swiss model. Another possibility is the creation of small independent ethnic states whose leaders may (after feeling sufficiently secure) opt for some form of interstate integration on the European Union model. Both the Swiss cantons and the states comprising the European Union opted for forms of legal integration to achieve anticipated political and economic benefits.

The above solutions reverse the historic sequence experienced by most post-colonial peoples who have had the state form thrust upon them without regard to their political preferences. The above solutions first offer regional ethnic populations political autonomy.

Secondly, they offer the resulting ethnic political entities the option of voluntarily forming larger political units for the purpose of attaining mutual political and economic benefits. Parties can negotiate additional legal forms on a relatively equal basis. Hopefully, the mutual benefits of the resulting interethnic cooperation will foster mutual respect for each population's human rights.

However, in cases of intrastate, interethnic conflict involving populations intermingled within the same territory, a culturally pluralistic, single-state solution may be necessary. In order to significantly reduce and, hopefully, eliminate the causes of minority oppression and state instability, the following minimal measures must be taken:

- states must establish an independent judiciary
- states must incorporate the various UN human rights conventions into its domestic law
- state constitutions must place a duty on the state to guarantee all citizens legal equality and non-discrimination, while also granting injured citizens standing in court to initiate claims when these guarantees have been broken;
- state constitutions must guarantee minority cultural rights, including the rights to speak, teach, and write their own language; practice their own religion; and practice other aspects of their cultures to the extent that such practice does not infringe on the rights of others;
- government and military officials as well as the powerful elite must be responsive to judicial decisions;
- minority populations must be permitted some effective means of participating in the political process (this may involve the institution of weighted rather than strictly numerical voting, however the particular mechanisms chosen should vary somewhat with each state's special conditions);
- minority populations must be permitted some effective means of participating in the economic process (in the case of underclass minorities, special programs such as land redistribution, vocational and special education, housing, cooperative formation, etc. may be necessary).

In exchange for the above guarantees and special programs, minority populations must accept the inevitable fact that the majority or plurality population and culture will be predominant at the national/state level. For example, in states where numerous minorities and languages exist, the selection of a single, official national language will be necessary for the practical purposes of facilitating national and international communication ¹³. Despite the political problems outlined above, most African leaders have opted to work within existing state structures and fashion a pan-African human rights charter that distributes rights and duties between citizens, peoples and the state. It is now necessary to explore how the suggestions listed above could be integrated into the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

THE AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS CHARTER

Created under the auspices of the OAU, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights entered into force on 21 October 1986¹⁴. With the ratification of this Charter, Africa joined Europe and the Americas as one of three world regions with its own human rights convention¹⁵. The great majority of African states had previously ratified the United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Since most African states had already committed themselves to respect a broad range of human rights, why was an African Charter deemed necessary? Okoth-Ogendo argues that it is because many African leaders felt the "need to develop a scheme of human rights norms and principles founded on the historical traditions and values of African civilizations rather than simply reproduce and try to administer the norms and principles derived from the historical experiences of Europe and the Americas"¹⁶.

The African Charter both resembles and departs from the other regional conventions. Charter articles 3-17 list a fairly typical array of individual rights, including rights to equal protection of the law, to life and security, to due process, to education, to own property, to work under equitable and satisfactory conditions, to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health, and to assemble with others. These articles also promise individuals freedom of expression, movement, conscience, religion, and political participation.

These individual rights are followed by a catalog of peoples' rights. The Charter grants "all peoples" the rights to equality (Art. 19), to self-determination, to freely determine their political status and economic development (Art. 20). In addition, "All peoples shall have the right to national and international security" (Art. 23) and "the right to a general satisfactory environment favorable to their development" (Art. 24).

Additionally, the Charter lists obligations that states incur, including the obligation to eliminate every form of "discrimination against women and also censure the protection of the rights of the woman and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions" (Art. 18); the obligation to eliminate all forms of foreign and domestic economic exploitation of natural resources (Art. 21); the obligation to promote and ensure the Charter (art. 25); the obligation to guarantee the independence of the courts (Art. 26); and, what is especially African, the obligation to "assist the family which is the custodian of morals and traditional values recognized by the community" (Art. 18).

Articles 27 to 29 spell out the duties that an individual incurs "towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community" (Art. 27). More specifically, these include duties to exercise rights and freedoms "with due regard to the rights of others, collective security, morality and common interest" (Art. 27); to respect "fellow beings without discrimination" (Art. 28); to respect the family and parents at all times, and "to maintain [parents] in case of need", to serve the national community, both physically and intellectually; not to compromise the security of the state; to preserve and strengthen national solidarity, independence and territorial solidarity; to pay taxes; "to preserve and strengthen positive African values"; and to promote African unity (Art. 29).

This section spelling out a citizen's duties to the state distinguishes the African Charter from other regional human rights conventions and has earned it serious criticism. Some critics

have warned that politicians might use these duties to the state to trump individual human rights and freedoms when the two sets of obligations are in conflict. Donnelly, for example, points out that the former Soviet Union, a totalitarian state, frequently used duties to abrogate individual rights¹⁷. Although he does not disagree with critics such as Donnelly, Mutua argues that those duties to the state enshrined in the African Charter "are inspired by the continent's history of domination and occupation by outside powers...[they] represent an extension of the principle of self-determination" by demanding citizen loyalty as a shield against foreign exploitation¹⁸. For example, "the duty to place one's intellectual abilities at the service of the state is a legitimate state interest, for the 'brain drain' has robbed Africa of massive intellect....the Charter [also] asks individuals to promote African unity, an especially critical role given arbitrary balkanization by the colonial powers"¹⁹. The remainder of the Charter is devoted to the establishment and operation of a human rights commission, an issue to which we now turn.

AFRICA'S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

In 1987, the OAU created the African Human Rights Commission, in accordance with Charter Article 30, to promote human rights and to monitor compliance by African States with their obligations under the charter. The commission is comprised of eleven persons "chosen from amongst African personalities of the highest reputation, known for their high morality, integrity, impartiality, and competence in matters of human and peoples' rights; particular consideration being given to persons having legal experience" (Art. 31). The Assembly of Heads of States and Governments of the OAU elects members of the commission from a list of persons nominated by States Parties to the Charter (Art. 33). Commissioners serve for a renewable term of six years (Art. 36). The commissioners elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among themselves every two years (Art. 42). Members of the commission are elected to serve in their individual capacities (Art. 32) and should, therefore, act independently. "In practice, as with other international institutions and mechanisms, the process of nomination and election to the Commission minimizes the likelihood of the body being composed of persons who may be substantially or rigorously impervious to state pressure"²⁰.

Each State Party to the Charter is obligated to cooperate with the commission and to submit to it a report every two years in which the state explains the measures it has taken and needs to take to ensure its citizens the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the charter. As of 1998, however, thirty of the fifty-one States Parties to the Charter had failed to submit a single report, and all other states, except Zimbabwe, were in arrears²¹. Odinkalu notes that African states generally have not given the commission significant co-operation. In addition to failing to fulfill their reporting obligations, many refuse to respond to the commission's requests for information. In one case, the commission sent twenty unanswered inquiries to Zaire requesting a response to allegations contained in complaints of gross violations of human rights²². There also have been cases in which State Parties have refused to admit the commission on missions into their territories to investigate complaints of gross human rights violations²³. Critics charge that the OAU itself has failed to support the commission with an adequate budget. The commission has had to rely on grants from West European countries for basic operating

expenses. Given these and other criticisms, Mutua has dismissed the commission as "a facade, a yoke that African leaders have put around our necks" ²⁴.

The charter allows for an interstate complaint procedure whereby one state can charge another state with human rights violations before the commission. Yet, despite the existence of widespread and grave violations in many countries, not a single state has ever filed an interstate complaint. The commission has received petitions only from a limited number of individuals and NGOs. Once the commission reaches a decision on the merits of a case, it has no effective mechanism to enforce its judgment. Consequently, some African states have ignored the commission with impunity.

OAU Secretary General Salim maintains that the absence of adequate institutions to monitor, promote and protect human rights has tarnished Africa's image, so that many view it as being a continent without the rule of law. He maintains that Africa's human rights charter has failed because politicians and strong men have refused to support it ²⁵. Despite or because of the shortcoming in human rights achievements under the Charter and Commission, African leaders have decided to begin the process of creating a human rights court, similar to what exists in Europe and the Americas.

PROBLEMS IN CREATING A HUMAN RIGHTS COURT

On 8 June 1998, members of the OAU meeting in Burkina Faso voted to initiate the process for the creation of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. To come into effect, the protocol for the proposed court requires the ratification of fifteen OAU member States ²⁶. As of late 1999, only Burkina Faso and Senegal had ratified it. According to the protocol, the court shall consist of eleven judges elected by the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the OAU from a list of nominees proposed by OAU member States. The assembly shall ensure that there is adequate regional and gender representation among the selected judges (Art. 14). The judges, who may serve two six-year terms, are to function independently and shall enjoy the immunities extended to diplomats in accordance with international law (Art. 17).

The envisioned court will complement the protective mandate of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. It will have both advisory and contentious jurisdiction over human rights matters. As for its sources of law, the court shall apply the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights "and any other relevant human rights instruments ratified by the States concerned." (Art. 7). This is a very significant provision, because the great majority of African states have ratified many of the major United Nations human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (entry into force in 1981) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (entry into force in 1990). Consequently, the court will be able to apply a much broader array of human rights obligations against states than the African Charter alone affords.

African states, the commission, the OAU and African intergovernmental organizations will be able to submit cases to Court (Art. 5). Individuals and NGOs, however, may not file a petition with the court against any state that has not explicitly made a declaration under Article 36(6) of the protocol recognizing the competence of the Court to consider such petitions. Unfortunately, this protocol provision permits States to shield themselves from complaints by

their own citizens and NGOs who allege human rights violations. Because governments will be reluctant to make such declarations, and because no state has ever filed a human rights complaint against another state before the commission, it is unlikely that the court will see much business.

The protocol authorizes the court to issue appropriate orders to remedy a human rights violation, including the payment of fair compensation or reparation to the injured party (Art. 27). States recognizing the court promise to comply with its judgments (Art. 30), and the OAU Council of Ministers will be charged with monitoring the execution of Court judgments on behalf of the OAU Assembly (Art. 31). Presumably, the Council of Ministers will pressure a non-complying country into honoring a court judgment. Historically, however, the OAU has been extremely reluctant to interfere in the internal matters of member states, even in those that have engaged in gross human rights violations. The expenses of the court are to be borne by the OAU (Art. 32). However, given that organization's inadequate support for its own Human Rights Commission, one must wonder how well it will maintain the court.

CHALLENGES AND PARADIGMS

Can Africa meet the human rights challenge of the new millennium? There has been no shortage of rhetoric and ceremonial commitment. In April of 1999 the OAU held its first ever Ministerial Conference on Human Rights. At that conference, held at Grand Bay, Mauritius, OAU Secretary-General Salim called for the integration of human rights in school curricula and the strengthening of institutions responsible for promotion and respect for human rights²⁷. He emphasized that Africa "needs to inculcate in its people a culture of peace, tolerance and respect of human rights, to energetically fight poverty, illiteracy and intolerance, to strive to overcome the scourge of conflicts and ensure that human rights violations are not only condemned but also effectively opposed and eliminated"²⁸.

The ministers concluded the conference with a Declaration and Plan of Action that reaffirmed their commitments to human rights, the rule of law, and democracy²⁹. They recognized that human rights are founded on respect for the sanctity of life, human dignity, tolerance of differences, prosperity and stability. The declaration "urges all African states to work assiduously towards the elimination of discrimination against women and the abolition of cultural practices which dehumanize or demean women and children." The declaration also calls on African states to eradicate genocide on the continent and to ratify the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the Protocol on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Four Geneva Conventions, the UN Statute of the International Criminal Court, and a number of other major UN human rights conventions. Furthermore, the declaration recognizes that the promotion and protection of human rights are primarily state responsibilities. Therefore, it calls on African states to establish and adequately fund national human rights institutions and to "engage in a process of continuous dialogue with the African Human Rights Commission."

But will the states act? It took nine years to get fifteen African states to ratify the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child so that it could come into force³⁰. After a year and a half, only two of the OAU's fifty-one members have ratified the protocol to create an

African human rights court. Some African observers have high hopes for the court. They believe its existence will make African leaders more conscious of their human rights obligations. Others doubt that the court will do little to improve a grave human rights situation whose causes are primarily economic, demographic and political.

An Africa suffering from severe economic, demographic, health, and political problems cannot easily achieve the human rights status its people want. Speakers at the first African Development Forum emphasized the need for a new paradigm for African development based on a vibrant domestic private sector, a stable state, effective policy analysis, and good governance³¹. Such a paradigm will also need a marked change in Africa's relations with international financial institutions and donor states³².

At the forum, OAU Secretary-General Salim stressed the linkage between governance, economic development and human rights. "Good governance and democracy or the respect for human rights cannot thrive on empty stomachs," he said. "Democracy must deliver on bread-and-butter issues, otherwise democratic transitions will be reversed and the continent will slide back into situations where the politics of poverty gives rise to the poverty of politics"³³. Meeting the human rights challenge in the new millennium will require Africans to adopt new political and developmental paradigms that also meet the continent's economic, demographic, and health challenges. It remains to be seen if this will happen.

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Governance, Wealth Creation and Development in Africa: The Challenges and the Prospects

JOHN MUKUM MBAKU

Abstract: Available evidence shows that human conditions in most African countries have deteriorated significantly in recent years. In fact, since many African countries began to gain independence in the 1960s, the standard of living for most Africans has either not improved or has done so only marginally. The general consensus among many observers—including researchers, aid donors, and even African policymakers—is that unless appropriate (and drastic) measures are undertaken, economic, social and human conditions in the continent will continue to worsen. Today, most African countries are unable to generate the wealth they need to deal fully and effectively with mass poverty and deprivation, and as result, must depend on the industrial North for food and development aid. This paper examines impediments to wealth creation in Africa and argues that continued poverty and deprivation in the continent are made possible by the institutional arrangements that Africans adopted at independence. In order to prepare for sustainable development in the new century, Africans must engage in state reconstruction to provide themselves with governance structures that minimize political opportunism (e.g., bureaucratic corruption and rent seeking), and resource allocation systems that enhance indigenous entrepreneurship and promote wealth creation.

Introduction

Many developing countries have been able to achieve self-sufficiency in foodstuff production as a result of rapid economic growth during the last four decades. In addition, they have significantly improved the quality of life for their citizens. Unfortunately, the kind of strong macroeconomic performance that has allowed many of these countries to successfully deliver major improvements in the national welfare has not been universal. Although a few countries have performed relatively well economically, the post-independence period in the majority of African countries has been characterized primarily by extremely poor economic performance. In addition to the fact that most African countries suffer from food insecurity, the majority live in poverty. It appears that unless appropriate institutional reforms are implemented and the structures that enhance wealth creation are provided, the continent will continue to deteriorate ¹.

In 1997, only thirteen African countries had per capita incomes of more than US \$1,000 ². In sub-Saharan Africa, there appears to have been little or no improvement in the quality of life for the bulk of the people. In fact, today, most people who live in this region are no longer able to meet their basic needs and must depend on foreign aid—including food aid—for survival. According to Cornwell, these economies "must grow at least 4-5 percent annually to achieve food security, provide jobs and register a modest improvement in living standards" ³. Recent

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i2a3.pdf>

data on macroeconomic performance in the region, unfortunately, do not indicate that the region will be able to achieve such growth, given existing incentive structures. According to World Bank, only Botswana (4.4%), Equatorial Guinea (6.0%), Mauritius (4.4%), Seychelles (3.7%), Uganda (3.3%), and Egypt (2.5%) had reasonable rates of economic growth—as measured by changes in the gross national product (GNP) per capita—during the 1987-1997 period. Most countries in Africa had negative rates of economic growth—Angola (-13.1%); Cameroon (-5.6%); Cape Verde (-9.7%); Democratic Republic of Congo (-9.5%); Sierra Leone (-4.4%); and Republic of Congo (-3.5%), just to name a few ⁴.

Of the thirty poorest countries in the world today, as measured by the UNDP's human development index (HDI), twenty-five of them (83%) are found in Africa. According to a study by the Washington, D.C. based Population Crisis Committee, over 90% of the countries with the highest levels of human suffering in the world can be found in Africa ⁵. In addition to the fact that Africa is the poorest region of the world, it is also the only region whose prospects for the new millennium look relatively bleak ⁶.

Several studies have revealed that success in moving beyond structural adjustment into long-term sustainable development will be determined by how well African leaders are able to provide what the World Bank calls an enabling environment for the productive use of resources ⁷. Although there does not appear to be agreement on what constitutes an enabling environment, in this paper we will argue that some of its components include institutional arrangements that guarantee economic freedoms; minimize corruption, rent seeking and other forms of opportunism; and enhance indigenous entrepreneurship and, subsequently, wealth creation.

Many scholars have examined the causes of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa and several variables have been identified as major contributors. Among these are political opportunism, which includes such behaviors as corruption and rent seeking; excessive population growth; political violence, including destructive ethnic conflict; racial intolerance; poorly developed and non-sustainable economic infrastructures; high debt levels; military intervention in politics and governance; a global economy that places African producers at a competitive disadvantage; an international financial system that discriminates against African traders; and the economic policies of the developed market economies ⁸.

Some researchers have argued that the critical determinant of poor macroeconomic performance in Africa and, hence, continued poverty and underdevelopment has been policy mistakes made by incompetent, ill-informed and poorly educated but well-meaning policymakers. This latter argument has informed the movement to recruit and bring to the public services more competent, better educated, honest, and well disciplined individuals. Recent studies by public choice scholars, however, have uncovered evidence that points to political opportunism as the major determinant of underdevelopment on the continent ⁹. Many of the so-called policy mistakes are actually deliberate and purposeful programs promoted by opportunistic, but not necessarily incompetent, civil servants and politicians seeking ways to enrich themselves. The institutional arrangements that African countries adopted at independence endowed the ruling elites with significant regulatory and redistributive powers. These laws and institutions enhanced the ability of the post-independence leaders to engage in inefficient income and wealth redistributions in their favor. Although the perverse economic

policies implemented by these elites imposed significant economic, human and social costs on the rest of society, they generated enormous benefits for civil servants and politicians.

Poorly designed, weak, and inappropriate institutional arrangements are the critical determinant of poverty and underdevelopment in the continent. These laws and institutions promote opportunism (e.g., corruption and rent seeking); restrict economic freedoms, and subsequently, the ability of individuals to engage freely in exchange; impede entrepreneurial activities and consequently, wealth creation; and generally endanger sustainable development. The institutional arrangements that the African countries adopted at independence enhanced the ability of those who had captured the evacuated structures of colonial hegemony to misuse the positions entrusted to them. In the process, they stunted the emergence of an indigenous entrepreneurial class and, subsequently, the creation of the wealth that the post-independence society needed to deal with massive and pervasive poverty.

The real obstacle to development in Africa, then, is the absence of institutional arrangements that effectively constrain the state and prevent its agents (civil servants and politicians) from engaging in opportunism; enhance indigenous entrepreneurship and the creation of wealth; and improve the ability of all individuals within each country to participate fully and effectively in national development. In order to prepare each African country for sustainable development in the new century, citizens must engage in reconstruction of the state through proper constitution making to provide governance and resource allocation systems that minimize political opportunism; enhance indigenous entrepreneurship; maximize wealth creation; promote peaceful coexistence of population groups; and generally increase the national welfare. In the following sections, we take a more detailed look at parts of this transition program ¹⁰.

GOVERNMENT AND THE "ENABLING" ENVIRONMENT FOR WEALTH CREATION IN AFRICA

During the last forty years most governments in Africa have either been unwilling or unable to perform their traditional duties-providing public goods and maintaining a framework of security. In fact, in several regions of the continent, governments have become irrelevant to the lives of the people, hence the proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), many of which have replaced the government in the provision of services such as health care, education, and water ¹¹. The "good" or appropriate government enhances the wealth of the nation; upholds the constitution and maintains law and order; protects and enforces property rights, including the protection of the individual from domestic and foreign aggression; promotes both entrepreneurial activities and the creation of wealth; enforces freely negotiated contracts but does not engage in activities that impede trade or free exchange; effectively and fully enforces rules against theft, fraud, and other activities that involve the illegal redistribution of wealth and income; minimizes opportunistic behaviors such as bureaucratic corruption and rent seeking; and provides public goods and services efficiently and equitably.

Although each society should be allowed to determine its own government through proper constitution making, the "good" government has certain universal attributes. First, the state must be limited constitutionally in order to make certain that civil servants or the state's other

agents do not engage in political opportunism. Proper constitutional constraints will make certain that lawmakers, for example, do not enact fiscally discriminatory legislation and that the state's structures cannot be used by interest groups to plunder the economy for their own benefit. Such limitations should minimize rent seeking and other forms of opportunism, while at the same time advancing entrepreneurship and healthy macroeconomic performance. Second, the political system must not be allowed to degenerate into unlimited majoritarian rule, which could result in the erosion of individual liberty. The latter, which is the cornerstone of any effective democratic system, must not be allowed to become a casualty of majoritarianism. During constitutional deliberations, limitations should be inserted into the constitutional compact to make certain that the majority does not oppress and marginalize the minority. Third, the effective governance system is one that is consensual, secured primarily by voluntary agreement between the relevant stakeholders, and designed to enhance their well-being¹². Members of society must see the "good" government as a social arrangement put together by them to protect their "person" and their "property" as defined and elaborated in the constitution. In most African countries today, most governments pursue and advance primarily the interests and objectives of a few individuals and groups--mostly those of the ruling elites and their supporters.

In recent years, public choice scholars have embarked upon a research agenda whose primary objective is to provide the framework for developing the appropriate model of government for each society. Such a framework can be used to develop governance structures for each African country¹³. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the apartheid regime in South Africa, Africans, energized by these monumental global events, have been engaged in efforts to transform their critical domains and prepare for more effective governance, and economic development in the new century and beyond. Unfortunately, there has not been much success, as the majority of the polities in the continent are still characterized by antiquated, anachronistic, and non-viable governance structures, many of which were inherited from the colonialists. These structures were not designed to enhance the ability of Africans to govern themselves and generate the wealth to meet their needs, nor were they expected to advance peaceful coexistence of groups. In fact, during colonialism, peaceful coexistence was not achieved through cooperative agreements but by force, deceit, co-optation of traditional rulers, bribery, and other forms of coercion. Instead, the colonial institutional arrangements were specifically developed to help the Europeans exploit the Africans and their resources for the benefit of the metropolitan economies.

At independence, the new African leaders were expected by the African peoples, especially those who had been marginalized by colonialism, to engage all sections of society in a national debate on state reconstruction and provide more effective governance structures and resource allocation systems that guaranteed individuals the right to freely engage in exchange and contract--in other words, resource allocation systems that guaranteed economic freedoms. Many of these new leaders, however, undertook primarily opportunistic institutional reforms that significantly increased their political power and enhanced their ability to monopolize the supply of legislation and the allocation of resources (14). Emerging from these reform efforts were highly oppressive, exploitative and intrusive states, not unlike those that had existed in the continent during the colonial period. Throughout most of the post-independence period,

bureaucratic corruption and rent seeking became pervasive as civil servants and politicians promoted perverse economic policies in an effort to plunder the economy for their own benefit. Through this process, many Africans, especially vulnerable groups--women, children, rural inhabitants, and the unemployed and underemployed youth relegated to the urban periphery--were severely impoverished and marginalized.

Economists generally argue that the appropriate model of government has two main functions: "to maintain law and order and to provide public goods" ¹⁵. As has been argued by James M. Buchanan, these functions are equivalent to what he terms the protective and productive state ¹⁶. A protective state engages in activities that enhance entrepreneurial activities and the creation of the wealth that can be used to confront poverty and deprivation, and advance the national welfare. According to Gwartney and Wagner, such a state accomplishes this objective by providing a "framework of security and order," which implies the effective enforcement of laws against illegal activities, including the protection of property rights ¹⁷. During deliberations to design the nation's constitution, members of society may grant the government the power to monopolize the use of legitimate coercion. The government uses the latter to protect citizens from internal and external aggression. In other words, the protective state shields its citizens from harm and provides them with a framework of laws within which they can freely engage in trade with each other. In addition to enforcing contracts, the state also enhances free exchange through its activities, implying that the state cannot pass or enact laws that restrain the individual's ability to trade.

More than a hundred years ago, the American constitutionalist and politician, Thomas Jefferson, elaborated what he believed were three attributes of the "good" government. According to him, "good" government must (1) be able to prevent citizens from injuring each other; (2) engage in as little trade regulation as possible, implying that citizens, acting as private individuals or business owners, should determine their own economic interests and freely engage in them; and (3) minimize takings--that is, the government should not impose heavy taxes on productive activities. Today, we see Jefferson's argument as a description of a governmental system that effectively protects and guarantees economic freedoms, including the maintenance of low marginal tax rates, and, as a consequence, enhances wealth creation ¹⁸. During the last forty years, no such government can be said to have existed anywhere in Africa. While one may argue that governmental structures in Mauritius and Botswana were quite close, truly protective and productive governments are yet to be established in the continent.

The post-independence state in Africa not only failed to perform its protective functions well, but its structures were actually turned into instruments of plunder and exploitation in order to help the incumbent maintain a monopoly on political power and continue to generate extra-legal income for the ruling elite. For example, under the apartheid system in South Africa, whites used the nation's framework of security and order effectively to marginalize the majority black population, create and sustain artificial privileges for themselves, and generally stunt the economic, social, and political transformation of Africans ¹⁹. Instead of performing its duties and protecting all citizens and their property, the apartheid state became the primary source of most of the violence that was directed at the African peoples. Additionally, the South African state at this time failed to maintain an enabling environment for the development and sustaining of indigenous capitalism and the effective and full participation of Africans in national

development. As the evidence now shows, the apartheid state purposefully engaged in activities that stunted the political and economic development of the African peoples and as a consequence, failed to enhance the national wealth.

Of course, the apartheid regime in South Africa was not the only political system whose structures had been converted into instruments of violence against its citizens. In practically all parts of the continent, ruling coalitions--many of them dominated by specific ethnic and/or racial groups--had captured governance structures at independence and used them effectively for the private capital accumulation of the ruling class. In many of these countries, the institutions that make up the national security framework were either destroyed or made subservient to the interests of the ruling elite. In many instances, civil servants engaged in illegal activities to extract income for themselves; judicial officers adjudicated cases based primarily on the wealth and political status of the defendant; judges often used their positions to punish their enemies and those of their relatives and supporters; and senior military elites routinely converted resources destined for their troops into their personal property. In a study of Zaire in 1989, Gould and Mukendi determined that these activities were pervasive throughout the country during the reign of Mobutu Sese Seko. In fact, such activities were common in many other African countries as well ²⁰.

In the majority of African countries that were ruled by the military (e.g., Nigeria and Zaire), the state ceased performing its protective function. State structures were used regularly to suffocate civil society, impose the will of the military on the people, and to help military elites continue to monopolize the allocation of resources ²¹. Military rulers used the regulatory powers of the state to redistribute income and wealth in their favor, and in the process, severely impoverished and marginalized the majority of citizens. Despite its enormous earnings from petroleum, Nigeria is today, one of the poorest countries in the continent. In 1982, Nigeria had a gross national product (GNP) per capita of US \$1,110, but by 1989 it had fallen to US \$270. Thanks to continued military interference in economic and political affairs, the economy continued to deteriorate, as per capita income reached a new low of US \$230 in 1994 before rising to US \$260 in 1997 ²². During the period, 1980-1997, per capita income in Nigeria was falling at an average annual rate of 8.42%. Despite the OPEC oil price increases of the mid-1970s and Nigeria's enormous windfalls from oil, Nigerians are today among the poorest people in Africa. Their development potential has been squandered by perverse economic programs promoted by the military elites who have ruled the country during most of its existence as a sovereignty ²³.

The conversion of the state's framework of law and order into instruments to suffocate civil society and plunder the economy for the benefit of politically dominant groups has been the rule not the exception in many African countries. For example, in Cameroon, the country's first president, Ahmadou Ahidjo, engaged in institutional reforms in the immediate post-independence period that re-enforced the presidency and concentrated most political power in the central government ²⁴. From 1960 to 1982, he ruled the country by decree and employed the country's large security apparatus to exploit, oppress, and marginalize the people for his own benefit and that of his supporters. Instead of protecting the liberties and property of Cameroonians, the nation's security institutions were used effectively by the president and other members of his ruling coalition to torture the people, suffocate civil society, destroy the

independent media, oppress and marginalize popular forces, stunt indigenous entrepreneurship, subvert justice, and, in the process, totally marginalize the Cameroon people, in an effort to help Ahidjo continue to monopolize political power and the allocation of resources ²⁵. In 1982, Ahidjo handed the government to his prime minister, Paul Biya. Unfortunately for Cameroonians, Biya retained the nation's existing laws and institutions, forcing the country to remain a de facto one-party political dictatorship ²⁶.

In order for the state in Africa to perform its protective functions, it must guarantee the security of its citizens. At minimum, the protective state must maintain law and order, provide the wherewithal for popular participation, enhance entrepreneurial activity, and maximize the national welfare. Included among these institutions are (1) a properly constrained police force; (2) an independent press; (3) a professional civil service; (4) a professional and politically neutral military, subordinate to the civilian government; (5) an efficient and representative legislature; (6) an independent judiciary; and (7) an independent central bank.

The second function of the state is to enhance the national welfare by organizing those productive activities that cannot be carried out efficiently by the private sector. In its productive role, the state is expected to produce the goods and services that citizens acting in their individual and separate capacities cannot undertake efficiently. A theory of public goods has been developed by economists to explain why the state may be required or called upon to produce certain goods and services. For example, in the presence of externalities, the state has the opportunity to significantly enhance the national welfare by organizing the affected activities. One must caution, however, that states should not become engaged in the production of goods and services that can be organized efficiently and effectively by the private sector. This warning is directed especially at governments in the African countries, which during the last forty years, have dominated virtually all sectors of their economies, engaging in activities that were supposed to be the exclusive purview of the private sector. In the process, these governments established and artificially sustained a plethora of unprofitable and poorly managed public companies, maintained large, bloated and parasitic bureaucracies, and significantly impoverished their citizens. In order to provide the subsidies that these unprofitable public enterprises needed so as to continue to operate, and to meet the financial needs of the large civil services, these governments accumulated relatively high external debts. In fact, by the mid-1980s, the majority of African governments were no longer able to meet their financial obligations ²⁷.

Although it is true that a state has the potential to improve national wealth through the production and distribution of goods and services that cannot be organized efficiently by the private sector, such a function can only be carried out efficiently if the country's institutional arrangements adequately and effectively constrain the exercise of government agency, and subsequently the ability of civil servants and politicians to engage in political opportunism. As the evidence from post-independence Africa has indicated, governments are able to stray, often quite significantly, from the path prescribed by the conceptual models. What the government is expected to do in order to maximize the national welfare, protect the liberty and property of individuals, enhance wealth creation, and promote peaceful coexistence of groups, is not necessarily what governments actually do. The state may lack the human capital to perform its assigned functions efficiently ²⁸.

In some cases, the government may be unwilling to undertake the activities as required. The ruling elites may desire different public policy outcomes from the ones desired or demanded by greater society. There is ample evidence to indicate that the failure of the post-independence state in Africa to perform its protective and productive functions efficiently has been due primarily to opportunism on the part of public servants. In other words, the absence of skilled individuals in the public services of the African countries has not been the major determinant of poor macroeconomic performance. Political opportunism (e.g., rent seeking and corruption) on the part of civil servants and politicians has been the primary determinant of continued economic deterioration ²⁹.

The theory of public choice states that the incentive structures within a market determine the behavior of traders and, as a consequence, explain market outcomes. Thus, one way to understand post-independence policy outcomes in African countries is to examine incentive structures in these societies. Market incentive structures are determined by the country's institutional arrangements. Existing institutional arrangements in the majority of African countries make political opportunism (especially rent seeking and bureaucratic corruption) the inevitable outcome to public policy. According to Gwartney and Wagner, "[t]he central point of departure taken by these scholars [i.e., public choice scholars] is that the incentives contained within a particular system of government will determine whether or not government's power to tax, spend, and regulate is used as envisioned by the normative justifications" ³⁰. In other words, the incentive system within each society will determine the extent to which the state will perform its productive and protective functions. Therefore, even if the government has the capacity and capability to perform these functions effectively, it may still not do so if the institutional arrangements do not provide the appropriate incentive structures. Thus, the incentive structures must be considered an important and critical part of state capacity and capability.

As mentioned above, the incentive structures are determined by the country's institutional arrangements. A country's constitution determines the power of the different political jurisdictions within the country, provides structures for the peaceful resolution of conflict, and defines the type of resource allocation system that society will have. In other words, the nation's constitution determines the kinds of incentive structures to be faced by participants in both economic and political markets, and provides the foundation for the establishment and sustaining of the country's institutions. To make certain that the state performs its functions effectively, citizens of each African country must engage in proper constitution making to reconstruct the state and provide their societies with what public choice scholars call the constitutionally limited government, and a resource allocation system that guarantees economic freedoms ³¹.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNISM AND POVERTY IN AFRICA: NKRUMAH'S GHANA

Like many of the new African countries, Ghana believed that it could achieve rapid economic growth and development by adopting an import substitution industrialization (ISI) program. The government of Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana's first head of state, expected to anchor the ISI program on its regulation of the international trade sector. To meet the goals set under

the ISI program, the government introduced a number of policy instruments. These included (1) protection of domestic producers through tariffs, exchange controls, and import quotas; (2) subsidies to foreign firms to encourage them to establish and maintain import production facilities within the country; and (3) the creation of development and investment banks that were expected to provide subsidized loans to individuals and groups willing to invest in the government's so-called "priority development sectors."

The government usually determined the priority areas. In addition, the state created a significant number of public enterprises, which were expected to produce a variety of goods and services. Specific sectors of the economy were targeted for control by the government. These included public utilities (which the government considered too critical for national development to be left under the control of the private sector, especially if non-Ghanaians dominated the latter); exploitation of the country's natural resources; and the ownership and operation of airlines, radio, and other forms of communication. Nationalist fervor demanded that the government create firms to exploit the country's environmental resources and ensure that certain important areas of the economy were placed under the firm control of the indigenous people. As a consequence, industries such as mining, air and rail transportation, electricity and telecommunications, as well as the financial sector, were expected to be controlled and dominated by the government.

Unfortunately, two important constraints made public policy failure inevitable in Ghana. First, the institutional arrangements adopted shortly after independence did not adequately constrain the state, allowing civil servants, whose job it was to implement the ISI program, to deliberately mismanage it for their own benefit. Second, Ghana did not have non-governmental agencies that were capable of counterbalancing elite interests and forcing civil servants and politicians to become accountable to the people. The absence of an effective civil society to serve as a check on the exercise of government agency and the inability of existing institutional arrangements to adequately constrain the state resulted in widespread policy failure. The large number of state enterprises that the government had created to implement the ISI program were, instead, turned into instruments of patronage and corruption, and regularly employed by civil servants to extract extra-legal income for themselves, and by politicians to purchase regime security for the regime.

According to results of research on Nkrumah's ISI program ³², the perverse incentive structures made possible by the country's institutional arrangements encouraged political and bureaucratic corruption; destroyed any chances that the ISI may have had for success; and enhanced the ability of civil servants and politicians to use the government's regulatory powers to enrich themselves at the expense of greater Ghanaian society. Referring to Ghana's former trade minister, A. Y. K. Djin, Leith remarks that the system (i.e., regulation of the foreign trade sector) which the government had designed to "meet the apparent national needs and to minimize capricious discrimination among importers was frequently set aside in favor of Mr. Djin and his associates" ³³. Djin and other Ghanaian civil servants used the foreign exchange rationing and import licensing systems--which were designed to enhance the implementation of ISI--to extort bribes from prospective importers, discriminating against any entrepreneurs who were either unwilling or unable to pay the required bribes. Thus, the regulatory system set up by the Nkrumah government at independence in Ghana was easily transformed into an

instrument for the enrichment of the ruling coalition. The ease with which civil servants and politicians in Ghana were able to turn governmental structures into instruments of plunder was due primarily to the existence of institutional arrangements that failed to adequately constrain the state and subsequently the behavior of its agents and the absence of a strong civil society to force accountability in government ³⁴.

The extent of venality and public malfeasance in Ghana during the government of Kwame Nkrumah is well documented. Many Ghanaians believe that even though the overthrow of Nkrumah by the military could be considered opportunistic, the public still welcomed the action because of the exceptionally high level of corruption that pervaded the government. As Werlin has stated,

"Many Ghanaians attribute the downfall of Kwame Nkrumah and his Convention People's Party to their corruption. 'It was lucrative to belong to the Party; nepotism was the rule', notes T. Peter Omari. During the Nkrumah régime, corruption was not merely practiced by the politicians alone. Attu Kwaminia adds, 'but by those who held various degrees of power in the civil service, in commercial concerns, in corporations, in political parties, in traditional authorities, and so on'" ³⁵.

After Nkrumah's regime was overthrown in 1966, several commissions of enquiry were engaged by the new military government to investigate and determine the extent of corruption in the public sector. Although the military may have attempted to use these commissions of enquiry to discredit the Nkrumah government, many scholars have attested to the judiciousness and fairness of the commissions (36). The more than 40 commissions revealed that during Kwame Nkrumah's reign, [a] kickback of from 5 to 10 percent was expected in return for government contracts. The CPP garnered about 90 percent of its income in this way, amounting to over \$5 million between 1958 and 1966, which Nkrumah freely used for his own purposes. For example, the properties of A. G. Leventis were purchased in 1962 at an inflated price with the understanding that \$2.4 million would be turned over to Nkrumah for his own use ³⁷.

While in power, Nkrumah did respond to his critics and made an effort to deal with corruption. For example, in 1965, Nkrumah sacked his trade minister for mismanaging the import-licensing scheme and replaced him with Mr. Kwesi Armah. In addition, the government published for the first time the foreign-exchange budget. Unfortunately, these reforms were only superficial and failed to affect the existing incentive structures, including the country's institutional arrangements. As a consequence, there was no incentive for the new minister to engage in behavior that was significantly different from that of his predecessor. On the contrary, shortly after he took office, Mr. Armah became engaged in the same types of opportunistic behaviors that had characterized Mr. Djin's tenure in office. In fact, instead of limiting his activities to "profiting" from only a fraction of the licenses issued by his office, Mr. Armah developed and implemented a system that enhanced his ability to profit from all licenses issued.

According to one of the commissions,

"He [Mr. Armah] introduced the system whereby all applications for import licenses had to be addressed to him personally under registered cover and he alone was responsible for processing the said applications... [T]here was open corruption and malpractices in the matter of grant of import licenses during this period. Import licenses were issued on the basis of a

commission corruptly demanded and payable by importers on the face value of the import licenses issued. The commission was fixed at 15%, but was in special cases reduced to 7.5 or 5%"³⁸.

While he was the Minister of Foreign Trade, Mr. Armah and his subordinates routinely denied applications for permits to import essential inputs for local industries. On the other hand, licenses were being granted for the purchase of non-essential commodities (primarily luxury American and European goods). Since the latter generated significantly more monopoly profits, prospective importers were willing and quite eager to invest in the bribes that were demanded by the civil servants at the trade ministries. Corruption in the foreign trade ministry eventually thwarted the government's development goals as presented to the Ghanaian people at independence.

Subsequent Ghanaian governments have attempted to deal with pervasive corruption, rent seeking and other forms of opportunism. Military dictator Jerry Rawlings, who has since "civilianized" himself and is now the elected Ghanaian head of state, has on several occasions dealt ruthlessly with those convicted of corruption and other forms of public malfeasance. He executed three former national rulers for their complicity in corruption and financial mismanagement and two bank executives who were "judged and found guilty" of corrupt enrichment and other fraudulent activities in connection with the Ghana Commercial Bank³⁹. Rawlings' ruthless, brutal and non-constitutional approach to corruption cleanup in Ghana was condemned, as well as praised. His harsh measures, however, had only a short-term impact on corruption. Corruption control programs that are most likely to be sustainable and have long-term positive effects on civil service efficiency require fundamental changes in existing institutional arrangements and subsequently, the incentive structures faced by market participants. Unless such changes are undertaken and Ghanaian society provided with more participatory, transparent and accountable governance structures, corruption will remain a serious constraint to development.

ENHANCING INDIGENOUS ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITIES

The most critical need in Africa is wealth that can be used to alleviate poverty. Throughout the continent, few economies are able to generate the resources needed to confront pervasive poverty and deprivation. The inability to generate enough wealth to meet even basic needs has been due primarily to government-imposed restrictions on economic freedoms. Such restrictions have stunted indigenous entrepreneurship and made wealth creation virtually impossible, especially in the formal sector. While such restrictions have generally created many benefits for the ruling elite, they have imposed significant costs on the people, especially the historically deprived and marginalized. During the last several decades, the African economies have been so mismanaged that today many Africans have become almost totally dependent on the industrial North for survival. Due to changes in the global economy during the 1989-1991 period, Africans now have another opportunity to engage in state reconstruction through proper constitution-making.

As a result of the development model adopted by many African countries after independence, most economies on the continent are heavily regulated, suffer from high rates of

corruption and rent seeking, and have bureaucracies that are very hostile to entrepreneurs and the private sector. Most of the regulations that exist function as major impediments to private exchange and trade. Research has determined that while competitive exchange minimizes the incidence of rent seeking and other forms of opportunism, the latter tends to flourish in monopolized markets ⁴⁰. Monopolistic (and monopsonistic) markets in the African economies are usually maintained with the help of government regulations. Such monopolized markets, whether developed and maintained by domestic or foreign firms, will have a significantly negative impact on indigenous entrepreneurship and subsequently, efficient wealth creation in the country. To insure competitive exchange (i.e., to minimize monopolization) and provide the appropriate environment for capitalist development, the constitution of each country must guarantee economic freedoms and create structures that protect private markets.

According to Mueller, the ability of political coalitions or interest groups to engage in opportunism and to restrict the ability of other individuals and groups to participate in economic markets, can be constrained through constitutional design ⁴¹. Appropriate constitutional provisions can minimize rent seeking and other forms of opportunism, which have contributed significantly to the inefficient allocation of resources in many African countries. Thus, to improve macroeconomic performance in the African countries so as to generate the wealth that the people need to solve their problems, it is necessary that each country be provided with the institutional arrangements that guarantee economic freedoms, promote entrepreneurship and enhance the creation of wealth ⁴².

In a study published in 1996, Gwartney, Lawson and Block identified four components of economic freedom, which they argue, can be elaborated in the constitution in order to provide the society with the enabling environment to create wealth. First, the government should provide traders with a currency that is stable and has a relatively predictable value. In carrying out this function, the government should make an effort to maintain relatively low rates of inflation. In addition, citizens should be granted the right to have free access to foreign currency and also maintain bank accounts in foreign financial institutions. Without stable money, individuals cannot undertake the complex exchanges that are an important part of a modern economy, or participate effectively in global markets. Gwartney, Lawson and Block argue that "the general ingredients of economic freedom in the monetary area include (1) slow monetary expansion that maintains and protects the value of money, (2) price level (or inflation rate) stability, and (3) the absence of restrictions limiting the use of alternative currencies" ⁴³.

Second, the private sector and not the government should determine the goods and services to be produced in the economy. During most of the post-independence period, the government has determined most of what should be produced in the economy, and in many cases, how these goods and services should be distributed. In the post-Cold War era, central development planning should be de-emphasized in favor of greater reliance on the market. It is important that trade be based on mutually beneficial voluntary exchange and state influence restricted to broad areas consistent with the concept of economic freedom as guaranteed in the constitution. The state would provide public goods and protect the liberty and property of individuals. Government-imposed production constraints, such as price control regimes and interest rate ceilings, interfere with economic freedoms and should be eliminated from each economy ⁴⁴.

Third, the government should not pass legislation that creates benefits for some individuals and groups at the expense of others. Economists have identified three public policies that can generate benefits for some individuals while imposing significant costs on greater society. These include income transfers and state subsidy programs, high marginal tax rates, and conscription to secure soldiers for the military. Such public programs directly infringe on the economic freedoms of many citizens, stunting entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

Finally, restrictions on international trade are an important infringement on the right of citizens to free exchange. During the post-independence period in Africa, most of the laws imposed on international trade have come at the request of interest groups seeking enrichment. Although such restrictions have created many benefits for special interest groups, they have imposed enormous costs on greater society. In addition to impeding trade, these regulations have produced reductions in both consumer and producer surpluses. Excessive economic regulation is widely considered the most important source of bureaucratic corruption in African economies. For example, civil servants at the central banks regularly extort bribes from entrepreneurs seeking scarce foreign exchange permits. The outcomes of most international trade regulation in Africa have been increased corruption and opportunism, as well as continued deterioration of general economic conditions.

Shortly after independence, many new African leaders told citizens that government regulation was an important policy tool that could be used to protect domestic industries, improve macroeconomic performance, and industrialize the economy. Despite their now obvious negative effects on exchange and wealth creation, many countries have continued to promote such policies. Of course, regulations generate the resources necessary to provide regime security and allow the monopolization of political space and allocation of resources. Controls on agriculture have generated significant resources that have been used to subsidize the politically volatile urban sector. Such regulatory programs have only further marginalized and impoverished many rural communities.

To enhance wealth creation in Africa and improve the continent's ability to engage in sustainable development, each country must create resource allocation systems that guarantee economic freedoms through proper constitution-making and state reconstruction. In addition, each country must constrain the power of the government so as to prevent civil servants and politicians from engaging in opportunism. If these reforms are not enacted, Africans will continue to suffer from high rates of poverty and deprivation. Destructive ethnic conflict will remain pervasive.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

At independence, many Africans--especially the historically marginalized and deprived groups and communities--believed that the control of governance structures and economic systems by indigenous elites would provide them with the wherewithal to improve their living conditions. It was generally believed that shortly after the departure of the Europeans, the institutions which they had left behind would be dismantled and reconstructed to produce structures that were more suitable to the maximization of African values. This was never done and, consequently, Africans have been unable to generate the wealth that they need to confront

pervasive poverty and deprivation. Today, Africa is one of the poorest regions of the world, and its prospects for the new century look relatively bleak. The causes of economic deterioration in Africa have been examined by many researchers ⁴⁵. In this paper, I have argued that the most important determinant of poverty is the absence of institutional arrangements to guarantee economic freedom and adequately constrain the opportunistic activities of civil servants and politicians.

Institutional arrangements are a critical determinant of macroeconomic performance. They determine the incentive structures faced by market participants and, as a consequence, determine market outcomes. To properly prepare Africa for the new century, it is necessary to reconstruct the state through proper constitution making, providing an environment for wealth creation and peaceful coexistence. It is important to caution that the process of designing constitutional rules must involve enfranchising people (especially the historically marginalized groups) and providing them with the facilities to participate fully in constitutional deliberations. If, as was the case during decolonization, the transformation process is controlled and dominated by urban-based indigenous elites and their foreign benefactors, the outcome will be institutional arrangements unable to efficiently direct development on the continent. In this paper, I have examined some of the most important issues facing Africa as it prepares for the new century. These include determining of the appropriate model of government and enhancing indigenous entrepreneurship and wealth creation.

Constitutions can significantly constrain the ability of legislators to enact counterproductive public policies ⁴⁶. During constitutional deliberations, members of society can establish a development-oriented constitutional structure. A constitution that minimizes the erosion of economic freedoms by guaranteeing the right to freely engage in trade and constraining the activities of the state is critical for sustainable development. Certain constitutional provisions, including the following, can enhance economic freedom but constrain the state and its agents:

- Monetary provisions: These should provide for an independent central bank, allow citizens to own bank accounts in non-domestic currencies, and create price-level stability.
- Government borrowing: These provisions should make certain that the government borrows only for specific projects, as a way of enhancing fiscal responsibility.
- Income and consumption taxation: Here, the emphasis is on minimizing the possibility of a double tax on saving. The latter is critical for capital formation.
- Procedural limitations on the power of the government to tax: In order to make certain that the government functions as an engine of economic growth and development, its power to tax must be limited constitutionally.
- Provisions for the approval of the public budget: A process that is transparent and accountable to the governed must be put in place so that public budgets can be approved. Ideally, this should involve approval of the budget by the executive and legislative branches of government. However, it is important to note that the exact process adopted would be determined by the existing structure of government. Whatever the process, it must be one that is transparent and accountable to the relevant

stakeholder groups. Thus, a supramajority requirement should be considered since that implies that there will be more of a consensus on matters relating to the budget.

- International trade and the imposition of tariffs: International trade is a very important way to enhance the wealth of a nation. Thus, interference with the flow of trade is counterproductive and limits the ability of the economy to create wealth. As discussed in this paper, restrictions on trade--domestic or international--usually produce benefits only for special interest groups.
- Labor markets: The right to enter into labor contracts that are mutually beneficial to the employer and employee is critical to wealth creation. Interference with this right can lead to significant inefficiencies in the allocation of a nation's labor resources.
- Price controls: Control of prices usually benefits special interest groups (e.g., urban dwellers) and impedes wealth creation.
- Economic regulation: Government regulation of private exchange can and does enhance the wealth of a nation if it is not undertaken arbitrarily, capriciously and opportunistically, as has been the experience of the African countries during the last forty years.

According to Gwartney and Holcombe ⁴⁷, regulatory "laws should be structured so that they are objective and non-arbitrary, and so that they apply uniformly to all members of a society. In addition, regulations should be instituted only to further the general public interest, not to further narrow special interests." The primary reasons for elaborating these provisions in the constitution is to guarantee economic freedoms and to make certain that they cannot be abrogated through ordinary legislation.

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BOOK REVIEWS

***Great Ideas for Teaching About Africa.* Misty L. Bastian and Jane L. Parpart (eds.). Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1999. 243pp. paper: \$29.95.**

As the title promises, this book is full of great ideas for teaching about Africa. The nearly two dozen contributors (and, presumably, the target audience) constitute a fairly narrow group--those faculty teaching courses about Africa at North American universities--and yet they provide a broad range of approaches to teaching about Africa. As the editors acknowledge at the outset, the book focuses on practical, rather than philosophical, issues confronting teachers of African studies. As the editors also note, the book comes at a time when area studies are increasingly under attack, with more localized or more global programs preferred. What the book reveals, however, is that the current state of African studies teaching is alive and well, and that African studies methodologies--in particular--interdisciplinary and innovative--are at the academic forefront.

The book covers a wide range of disciplines, including anthropology, art, history, political science, religious studies, foreign languages, and geography. It devotes several chapters to using the arts--film, literature, music--as resources for teaching, and several more to broaching controversial subjects and current issues in the classroom--the African slave trade, ethnicity, HIV/AIDS, female circumcision, gender and development, making and keeping peace in Africa. Appropriately, the book devotes an entire section to the use of new technology in the classroom--describing an array of inventive ways of teaching Africa through technology. These include creating a web-based African art exhibit, assigning web quests to learn the map of Africa or disentangle the details of the crisis in the Great Lakes, linking technology and theory by using the internet for the very latest country specific information.

Great Ideas for Teaching About Africa raises a series of compelling issues for North American teachers of Africa. The book reinforces the need to introduce students to primary documents as historical sources and reminds of the importance of embedding into their historical and cultural contexts such controversial issues as female circumcision or even ethnicity. It recommends putting students at the center of their learning: for example, through the use of student-designed development projects that address gender inequity in an African country or role-playing exercises around HIV/AIDS or real life legal battles. The book emphasizes the imperative of exposing American students to African voices--those of musicians, filmmakers, artists, novelists, historians, religious leaders, intellectuals and more.

The speed with which information technology is developing dates some of the specific references in this 1999 book. Indeed, the outstanding websites for general information on Africa now number in the dozens and include the following:

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v4/v4i2reviews.pdf>

- African Human Rights Resource Center:
<http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/africa/index.html>
- African Index: <http://www.africaindex.africainfo.no/>
- Africa News Now: <http://www.africanewsnow.com/>
- Africa Policy Information Center: <http://www.africapolicy.org/index.shtml>
- Africa South of the Sahara: <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/guide.html>
- African Political Resources: <http://www.agora.stm.it/politic/africa.htm>
- Columbia University African Studies:
<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indiv/area/Africa/>
- H(istory) - Africa: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~africa/>
- University of Pennsylvania African Studies:
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/African_Studies/AS.html

This is to say nothing of the country specific or subject specific sites which number in the hundreds. In addition, there are now literally dozens of African daily and weekly newspapers online. Similarly, many international organizations, non-governmental organizations, African governments, political parties and social movements, regional organizations, and research institutions and universities have impressive and informative websites. These provide students (and researchers and scholars, of course) with immediate, invaluable resources once only available at well endowed libraries or in country. They give us all an access to Africa once available to far fewer people.

The many contributors to this volume repeatedly invoke the same challenge when teaching about Africa at their universities: "The teaching of Africa is simultaneously a struggle to overcome centuries of 'filling in the gaps' and a struggle to tear down distortions and misinformation in order to rebuild knowledge" (p. 204). *Great Ideas for Teaching About Africa* provides a wealth of ideas for tackling this and related challenges.

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***Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace And Good Governance.* Adebayo Adedeji (Ed.). New York: Zed Books, 1999. 377pp. Paper: \$20.00.**

Over the last four decades, Africa has experienced some of the most violent civil wars and other sorts of systemic violence. These conflicts have earned Africa the unique and unenviable image of a continent in retreat and perpetually at war with itself. Military insurgencies have caused regional destabilization and dramatically increased the number of failed states in Africa. In addition to jeopardizing development efforts, this raises doubts as to the nature and viability of post-colonial African state ¹. Several normative issues have emerged from the study of these internecine conflicts. First, they have raised anew the importance of state legitimacy ². Second,

they have brought forward disturbing questions about the concepts of territorial sovereignty and statehood, given the fact that the juridical statehood attained with decolonization has proven inadequate³.

In *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts*, teams of African scholars (based in those countries principally affected by these conflicts) examine the multidimensional causes with the eyes of observer-analysts. This volume combines the proactive policy research efforts of the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies with the products of an international conference on African conflicts. It includes the critical assessments of country research teams in five of the conflict areas and a selection of papers, allowing for closer comparison of the many difficult situations on the continent.

Conflicts in Africa are more striking for their causal similarities than differences. While most conflicts in Africa share a number of underlying causes, the researchers identify political leadership at the root of all African conflicts. This does not exculpate some "externally initiated and funded development strategies such as structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) [that] have been a major contributing factor in the emergence of conflicts and/or in their exacerbation" (p. 12). In fact, economic conditions of most of these African countries account for the success of African elites and politicians, since in Africa "it is generally believed that political power means success and prosperity, not only for the man who holds it but for his family, his birthplace and even his whole region of origin" (p. 44).

This book is a proactive, policy-oriented search for the root causes of African conflicts. While highlighting some common obstacles to redressing African conflicts, it posits that "until the root causes of conflicts have been fully comprehended and addressed, they cannot be mastered and that the mastery of conflicts is imperative to achieve lasting peace and good governance in any country" (p. 7). Strategies for the way forward are discussed in Chapter Seventeen. Among other recommendations, the contributors propose a moratorium on the importation of arms, governmental decentralization, and democratization through constitutional arrangements. The various chapters also emphasize the importance of thorough and in-depth knowledge of these conflicts amongst the international community. As the editor points out, the "superficial understanding of both the uniqueness and complexity of African conflicts and of the tendency on the part of the donors to view Africa's problems through the lenses of western countries and societies accounts for their inappropriate policy prescriptions about peace" (p.17).

The book's qualitative research base makes it invaluable to international policy makers and students of policy development, as well as scholars in political science, history, anthropology and other disciplines concerned with solving Africa's seemingly intractable conflicts. I also highly recommend it to African public office holders and politicians who have turned Africa into a continent where forward and backward movements frequently equal zero.

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Notes

1. See Makau wa Mutua, "Putting Humpty Dumpty Back Together Again: The Dilemmas of the Post-Colonial African State" (1995) 21 *Brooklyn Journal of International Law* 505.
2. See generally, E.K. Quashigah & O.C. Okafor (eds.), *Legitimate Governance in Africa* (Netherlands: Kluwer, 1999).
3. See Makau wa Mutua, "Why Redraw the Map of Africa: A Moral and Legal Inquiry" (1995) 16 *Michigan Journal of International Law* 1113 at 1114.

***Imposing Wilderness: Struggles Over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa.* Roderick P. Neumann. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1998. pp.271. cloth: \$35.00.**

With his recent book *Imposing Wilderness*, Roderick Neumann joins a growing number of political ecology scholars in exploring the causes of dislocation of Africans and conflict between nature preservation and traditional land use patterns. His central argument is that we need to locate the origins of these conflicts in fundamentally contradictory notions of the "natural" African landscape and the appropriate role of humans in that landscape. Neumann argues that Europeans--the British and Germans in particular--conceptualized "nature" as being free from people and human-caused change. By removing people from the landscape, it becomes natural (and worthy of viewing by white tourists). Humans belong in the landscape only in so far as they are conceptualized as primitive-hunters and gatherers, not agriculturists or herders. These ideas led European conservationists to promote the dislocation of Africans--in Neumann's case, the Meru of Tanzania--for game preserves and later national parks. In making his post-structuralist argument, he uses historical documents and interviews with local residents. *Imposing Wilderness* is a brief and clearly written account of the rise of protected areas from the early colonial period through the post-independence period.

For the colonial period, at least, his argument is convincing. But if we apply Neumann's logic to post-independence Tanzania, we might expect a return to a more African conception of land use. In fact, only after independence does the Tanzanian state turn the Mt. Meru area into a national park. Clearly, first world influence did not disappear with independence and, arguably, pressures from the World Wildlife Fund and others played an important role. Neumann suggests, moreover, that the creation of national parks in the post-colonial period might have been promoted by linking notions of what it meant to be a modern nation-state and wilderness preservation. As he presents it, this argument feels a bit *ad hoc* and remains undeveloped.

This book follows many of the themes that Neumann developed in an outstanding series of articles that have contributed to the development of the political ecology school. Some of these articles have been the mainstay of graduate courses in political ecology for nearly a decade. In part because of these articles, however, this book covers relatively little new ground. The book's main interest lies in a set of theoretical ideas and empirical points rather than a coherent whole.

One particularly interesting assertion he makes is that, during the colonial era, arguments over game preserves and national parks were primarily disagreements between conservationists in the metropole-in London-and colonial administrators living in Tanzania. Conservationists saw the landscape as wild and primitive and worthy of preservation while colonial officials worried that moving more Africans off the landscape would only create unrest and destabilize British control over the territory. Absent from these discussions were Africans. Ultimately, conservationists won, suggesting that ideas at the metropole were more important than colonial administrative needs.

Neumann makes an interesting empirical observation as well when he notices that Meru property rights slowly eroded rather than being taken explicitly in one fell swoop. The state and local residents constantly negotiated and renegotiated property rights. Some of the local residents' rights disappeared at the hands of capital city decision makers as land protection was beefed up repeatedly several times during the twentieth century. But much of the negotiation went on at the local level, between park administrators and guards, often independently and in contradiction to legislation and high-level administrative rules. For example, the legislation that created Arusha National Park explicitly maintained a right-of-way for local residents through the park, yet in recent years local park officials have closed the path to residents.

Although this continual negotiation is clearly important for the maintenance of any Meru access rights, *de facto* or *de jure*, the logic of particular administrative developments and the erosion of local rights seem to have more to do with economic or administrative incentives of the state than with European notions of nature. Similarly, local claims to the national park lands and resources and protection from marauding animals that destroy crops seem to have clear economic foundations. Neumann frequently reaches for political economic or state building explanations, yet he leaves these explanations undeveloped both empirically and theoretically. Political economy is clearly central to his story, even perhaps undermining premises, but we don't really learn about the linkages between the political economy and conflicting notions of nature and land use. Still, Neumann covers vast territory and this book is a pleasant read, but one is left with a desire for more theoretical development and empirical detail.

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"We Women Worked So Hard": Gender, Urbanization and Social Reproduction in Colonial Harare, Zimbabwe, 1930-1956. Teresa A. Barnes. Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1999. 256pp. paper \$24.95; cloth \$59.95.

Teresa Barnes' work is one of several recent studies on colonial Africa that places women at the center of history as initiators and actors who carved out opportunities, jobs, and dwelling places in urban areas rather than simply reacting to the impositions and limitations colonial officials and African patriarchs imposed on them (Tripp 1989, Geiger 1997, Bozzoli 1991, White

1990). Where she breaks new ground is in locating African women's urban strategies within a larger framework of social reproduction and nationalist activities. In colonial Zimbabwean society, white settlers sought to reduce Africans to farm and mine laborers, social reproduction often became a political act. She argues that African women in colonial Harare were part of a long-term political movement that had "elements and initiatives in common with political nationalism" but was different enough to warrant separate consideration (p. xviii). In the desire for social reproduction, or "to transmit something African into the future," both African men and women played a role. African women figured prominently, though, by trying to create an environment in which they could live with their families and take advantage of some of the independence urban living had to offer (p. xix). While African men often desired to live with their families, they were much more ambivalent about the increase in women's freedom that often accompanied urban residence.

Drawing on colonial documents and what she terms "substantial excerpts" from oral interviews conducted in 1988-89 with Ms. Everjoice Win, Barnes traces the shifting relations of power during two and a half decades (1930-1956) of women's residence and work in colonial Zimbabwe. She argues that these years are particularly important because by the beginning of the period, colonial officials had clearly demonstrated a desire to restrict Africans' options as wage earners in the urban economy. Over the ensuing decades, however, African women found a way to carry their identities and families into the future within this context.

Barnes' work makes several important contributions to the wider body of literature on the African colonial experience. The first is in defining and describing how some women in colonial Harare differentiated themselves from others. Arguing that Western notions of class do not apply to the area under study, she presents the categories that her interviewees described for her. Those at the top of the social hierarchy lived "properly" or were "well-known" and succeeded within colonial urban society. These women had "material assets that others lacked: a husband, a house, perhaps education" and enjoyed, as a result, "elevated social status" and relative safety and security (p. 23). Access to land and housing in order to engage in a business and raise a family were the most critical element here and by far the hardest to secure. Only a few managed to circumvent laws and gain independent access to land. Usually such access devolved from marriage to a man. In this situation, some women sought to proclaim the validity of lobola (dowry or bride price) and patriarchal control of the family to ensure the health and well-being of their family.

Being officially married, Barnes argues, was the essential ingredient for achieving status and respectability in colonial Harare. The majority of women, though, were not married "properly" and had mapoto (temporary marriages) relationships in which they provided domestic and sexual services to a man in return for accommodation, food, and domestic goods. These liaisons were formed without consent of the families and within them women accumulated their own property and some of the men's as well, challenging African notions of social reproduction. Others opted for independence but paid a price in terms of social marginalization. These women often engaged in activities like prostitution and beer-brewing. At the bottom of the social ladder, prostitutes by the 1950s had lost their own names and used those of famous prostitutes from the 1920s and 1930s; they were anything but "well-known." In Barnes' work, the two activities of beer brewing and prostitution, so salient in other works on

urban women (White 1990, Akyeampong 1997, Bujra, 1975, 1977) do not appear front and center, because she is more concerned about the kinds of work that African women viewed as promoting the healthy reproduction of African society

Second, in contrast to Schmidt's work in early colonial Zimbabwean history, the author argues that African and European men were not in alliance against African women during the period under examination. She contends that in the 1930s there was no complicity between the colonial state and African men to control women's movements. There were several reasons for this. Urban African men often benefited from women's residence in town, though rural men complained about the corrupting influence of urban women. Despite rural complaints, colonial officials in the 1930s suspected that very few women were in town without permission of their parents or guardians. Rural parents rarely came to urban centers to claim their daughters because often they shared in their earnings. Older generations of Africans were less concerned about urban residence than they were about controlling wages of the younger generation. In addition, the state was not committed to removing women from urban locations. For example, the colonial government did try to locate and return some urban women in the 1930s, mostly young, recent arrivals. Yet, they ignored many urban women, including prostitutes, who had resided in town for longer periods of time and women who had come from great distances. Settlers feared African resistance to large-scale removal and they feared that, in the absence of African women, African men would turn to white women for their sexual satisfaction.

Finally, placing social reproduction at the center of African political concerns gives the nationalist movement in Zimbabwe greater historical depth and breadth. One of the examples of interest here is the response to the Rhodesian government's enforcement of the 1946 Native (Urban Areas) Accommodation and Registration Act, which disqualified many men and women from urban residence. When the state began removing respectable urban women (wives, widows, and mothers), the Reformed Industrial Commercial Workers' Union took up the cause of men's marital rights and women's township residence rights for the next five years. As a result of the protest, the government ceased night raids and began allowing some men and women to register for residence. In another example of African concern for social reproduction, the 1956 bus boycott turned violent one night as men attacked and raped independent female hostel residents, some of whom had flouted the boycott, saying they had enough money to pay the fare. For many Harare men, independent control of wages was threatening to the African social order.

Barnes' work succeeds in illustrating that long before the armed struggle, African women (and men) were dissatisfied with their lot in Southern Rhodesia and sought ways to change it. The chief omission (due in part, at least, to the original intent of the oral history interviews) is a lack of attention to families (p. xxv). In order for her arguments about social reproduction to be carried to a logical conclusion, stories of colonial Harare's residents' relationships with their rural families, and with the lives of their urban children, need to be told. These additions would enable the reader to see more clearly the rural-urban linkages so vital to women and their families during this period as well as the efficacy of their strategies to recreate viable African families in a new context. This book will be of interest to social historians, women's historians, and urban historians of Africa. The concept of social reproduction is an important avenue for the exploration of African initiatives under colonial rule.

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***Western Education and Political Domination in Africa: A Study in Critical and Dialogical Pedagogy*. Magnus O. Bassey. Westport: Bergin & Garvey, 1999. 123pp. Cloth \$59.95.**

Three premises, though not new to most Africanists and Africans, are the basis for Magnus O. Bassey's most recent work: 1) Current African educational systems have colonial and missionary roots; 2) education in Africa leads to elite status; 3) elites tend to protect the current system. The author presents this book as "a critical analysis of the behavior of African educated elites and argues that educated elites in Africa have used their education and the schools to perpetuate their dominance over their less fortunate countrymen and women" (p. 11). In addition, Bassey proposes the adoption of a critical dialogical pedagogy to address these current imbalances.

With these goals set out in Chapter One, most readers, especially those with an interest in African education, would expect a detailed study of primary historical and current documents. However, a careful reading of this work reveals no such analysis. While there are glimpses of specific events and regions, "Africa" and "Africans" tend to be the underlying analytic categories of this nine-chapter work. With such a wide scope, perhaps it is no surprise to find a lack of depth and very little continuity across chapters. Most chapters appear to stand alone. Chapter Two begins with a focus upon general principles of "Traditional African Education." Bassey utilizes secondary philosophy and general education sources to posit that African systems of

education were egalitarian, complete and "relevant to the needs of the individual and his or her society" (p. 24).

The next three chapters document the general influence of Christian Missions and colonial education policies. But there is little discussion of how missionary systems interacted with the previously discussed forms of African education, except to say that they undermined traditional authority. The author outlines French, British, Portuguese, Belgian, and German colonial educational policies in seven pages. All colonial policies are then referred to as having certain features, including domination, elite status, and inequity. Throughout these chapters, Bassey makes reference to the "African neobourgeoisie [that have] prolonged the life of colonialism inadvertently by talking so much of educational changes and achieving very little in this direction and by sustaining imperialism through neocolonialism" (p. 49). This section makes very clear the central weakness in this work: Lack of scope and contextualization lead to problematic overgeneralizations. There are marked contextual differences between Nigeria, Tanzania, Ghana, and Zimbabwe that must be recognized. When such differences are not taken into account, generalizations across regions become much less tenable.

Chapters Six and Seven explore the concept of power, inequality and their general manifestations in African educational systems. Chapter Six discusses the general atmosphere of African dictatorships that employ coercive violence. Chapter Seven returns to the school setting to discuss the issues of disempowerment, sexism, domination, and hegemony. A majority of this chapter discusses the gender gaps in contemporary African education and the attitudes contributing to their continuation. Throughout the chapter, disempowered teachers and students are portrayed as helplessly reproducing the structures of hegemony. In addition to a review of the Friearian concept of "banking education," and Bernstein's "codes of control," the author includes an overview of Bourdieu to show how cultural capital leads towards maintenance of the status quo. Further development of these frameworks with specific African examples would greatly assist reader in this chapter. An in-depth treatment of Bourdieu's conceptual framework might lead to a discussion of how powerful market forces influence all members of a society, not only elites.

Chapter Eight is a brief (five-page) general summary of the apartheid educational system in South Africa. This chapter appears to be disconnected from the rest of the work. No attempt is made to integrate the South African example into previously discussed chapters. The concluding Chapter Nine is a call for critical dialogical pedagogy to address current inequities in African educational systems. Drawing upon Giroux, Friere, and Dewey, Bassey concludes, "My answer is that we must use our schools for psychic conversion of Africans in favor of economic investment, wealth creation, entrepreneurial spirit, self-help and for creating wealth for the nation" (p. 111). In order to do this, he states, formal education must be reconceptualized to overcome its colonial heritage. How this would be done in a specific context is not mentioned. To recognize these important differences would probably contradict an underlying central premise of this work: that one can actually speak of an "African elite" and "African educational experience." Much more detailed scholarship recognizing the complexity of African experience will be necessary in order to achieve his laudable goal.

This work appears to be largely inductive and aimed at a non-specialist audience. What Bassey generally reiterates in this work is already painfully clear to African specialists and

citizens of African countries. Perhaps most novel in Bassey's work is his stated intention to isolate and assign blame to African elites for the current state of affairs. But this alone is insufficient. A more thorough analysis would examine local needs and levels of participation in one region's educational systems. Connections could then be made to both historical roots and current political trends. Only then could specific solutions be formulated. Indeed, the goal of "harnessing the language of critique with the language of economic empowerment" (p.113) is something to which most educational policy planners worldwide would aspire. If Bassey's ultimate goal is to reorient the elite focus of African educational systems, it remains unachieved.

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***Drama for a New South Africa: Seven Plays.* David Graver (Ed.). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 228 pp. cloth \$39.95; paper: \$16.95.**

In the opening paragraph of this volume of South African plays, David Graver states that his goal is to keep American attention on South African theatre "now that apartheid has passed" because of its "universal lessons and appeal." Theatre enthusiasts should recognize a wealth in South Africa of "hybrid dramatic forms" combining "African and European" (also named as "industrialized and developing") aesthetic values, which are "rich in vivid language, forceful performance styles and incisive social function" (p. 1).

I can only imagine that this glossing over of these complicated and controversial ideas may have been forced upon this otherwise respected scholar by his publisher for marketing purposes. In rescuing what he perceives to be America's flagging interest in South African theatre, however, Graver does make a point worth considering. This is the idea that it was not artists who faced a crisis of imagination after apartheid (a debate which flourished in South African intellectual circles), but audiences, particularly overseas audiences. He does not use this point, however, to catalyze any substantial discussion on transnational processes in South African theatre.

Reading through the introduction, one wonders why Graver professes interest in bringing South African plays to the attention of the West, since he notes that certain plays, while important in a South African context, lack an emotional impact that would make them seem "crude and schematic" by "European standards of dramaturgy" (p. 15). While his introduction discusses theatre of "social function", such as township community theatre and workers' theatre, he pronounces it lacking in "significant autonomous aesthetic appeal" (p.14) for an anthology.

Graver acknowledges a literary bias in this collection, bowing out from including more community-oriented plays, or a community-oriented analysis. Such perspectives, however, remain a vital part of the landscape of South African theatre for the very reason that they address issues of marginalization, gender equality, education, poverty, crime, and cultural identity, all pressing issues in the wake of apartheid. Given this, it is surprising and unfortunate

that Graver would choose such glib phrasing as "wife abuse has become a popular topic lately in South Africa" (p.14).

Although Graver's introduction covers far more ground than just the scripts he has selected for the anthology, it is impossible in a twenty-page introduction to do justice to the history and range of South African theatre. It might have been more important, therefore, to focus on the historical moment called "post-apartheid" and how the problematics of this term are reflected in the plays he has selected. The historical category, "post-apartheid," is a vexed one as the legal changes that have been implemented have not significantly improved the material lives of the majority of South Africans. By including plays that were written during the height of resistance to apartheid, the implication is that Graver views post-apartheid as an imaginative category rather than one that corresponds to reality. However, he does not follow through on this point. Instead he focuses on a "rainbow nation" definition of "post-apartheid" by insuring a representative "sampling" of plays, from "Afrikaner, Anglo, African, and Indian communities" (p.19). Moreover, the limited analysis he gives revolves around the rather reductive themes he names as belonging to this era of "post-apartheid theatre," namely: "the recovery of the past; abiding social injustices; and hybrid theatrical forms" (p. 7). Such broad, general categories could be applied to any number of South African theatre works, from those created in opposition to apartheid to those created during its crumbling and aftermath, no less than to the theatre of several other nations.

The collection itself opens with the seemingly obligatory and marketable "Sophiatown" (1986), one of the most famous South African plays. This play as well as Zakes Mda's "And the Girls in Their Sunday Dresses" (1988) and Paul Slabolevsky's "Mooi Street Moves" (1992) have all previously appeared in print in other places, although granted they were published in South Africa and not the US. We can be thankful, however, for the remaining offerings which have not yet to my knowledge appeared in print: Ismail Mohamed's "Purdah" (1993), Reza de Wet's "Crossing" (1994), Nicholas Ellenbogen's "Horn of Sorrow" (1988), and Brett Bailey's "Ipi Zombi?" (1998). These last two choices were particularly bold but welcome, since their performance styles are so distinctive that it might have seemed counterintuitive to attempt to represent them in print form.

However, it might have been even more suitable to the goals of a volume of plays from the "new" South Africa to include more recent examples of "post-election theatre" that are at least historically congruent with what is really new, namely the adoption of a democratic constitution. It would also have been gratifying to see more plays given first-time publication, works that have not already had much academic discourse surrounding them. Examples of such plays might include, Mike van Graan's "Dinner Talk" (1996), which could be considered as a formal opening of the discussion on "post-apartheid" issues; Craig Coetzee's tour-de-force, "White Men With Weapons" (1996), or the memorable community work, "Gomorra" (1997). Alternatively, with Graver's insistence on emphasizing the combined European-ness and African-ness of South African theatre, and his concern with appealing to the American audience, it might have been interesting, for example, to include a play like "Good Woman of Sharkeville" (1996), Janet Suzman and Geina Mhlophe's restaging of Brecht's similarly titled play.

Despite his literary propensities, Graver does acknowledge the inability of a play's script to give an impression of its performance. To his credit, he supplements the texts with information on the staging and performance techniques, and has preserved the multilingual qualities of the scripts by including translations and a glossary of terms. Each of the plays is accompanied by a short biographical account of the playwright, a performance history and, in most instances, a brief account of political implications or context. Thus, while this anthology may fall short of expectations of scholars of South Africa, it does certainly make a range of compelling scripts from South Africa easily accessible to an American audience.

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***Music, Modernity, and the Global Imagination: South Africa and the West.* Veit Erlmann. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 312 pp. Cloth \$65.00.**

In this dense volume, Veit Erlmann focuses on the musical tour as a site that gives expression to "the interdependence of Western constructions of Africa and of African representations of the West" (p. 214). The core of this book is devoted to the African Choir's tour of the United States and the Zulu Choir's tour of London in the 1890s, and Paul Simon's Graceland tour of South Africa in the 1980s.

Loren Kruger (1999) makes a similar argument about African claims to modern subjectivity within colonial constructs in her analysis of "tribal sketches" and historical pageants in early 20th century South Africa. The weight of Erlmann's argument, however, resides at the level of "the individual" or the "bourgeois subject" (p. 36) as a site for the construction of a range of personal and social identities as a mode of "self-fashioning" in the face of societal, national and global pressures.

Erlmann's analysis also departs from the industrial, economic, and other invisible and disembodied global processes that produce various racially or nationally encoded musics under the neutralizing term of "hybrid." Rather, the author mobilizes a Victorian-inspired notion of the physical traveler as a remedy for a set of ontological and epistemological crises produced by the onset of modernity. These examples of musicians traveling between South Africa and the West at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries are not only motivated by, and generative of, fictions about the Other, but reveal specific longings and biographical fictions of self. Suspending a concern for post-colonial relations of power, Erlmann works with a more closely postmodern idea of a "global imagination." The global imagination evokes a world made from images that are inscribed, projected, worn, mimicked and contradicted in a mutual economy of cultural imagining.

The book opens in the 19th century where the totalizing epistemology of spectacle produced such forms as the panorama, world fairs, Parisian shopping arcades and the panopticon to which the author adds the scopic orientation of 19th century autobiography and

travel writing. In his analysis of autobiographical texts of the African choir members published in the London papers, Erlmann argues that these writings manifest mutually produced and intertwined fictions of the self as articulated through an association with African nationhood as much as through an association with Victorian values of education, Christianity, heroism.

Erlmann claims that late-19th- and late-20th-century worldviews reach across the hundred-year gap that separates them by virtue of their common embeddedness in "societies of the spectacle" (p. 5). In so doing he intends to disrupt disciplinary boundaries that consider culture as situated in time and place and to "offer a picture of cultures in constant state of movement and displacement" (p. 8).

Another unifying theme is his extension of Benedict Anderson's (1983) conceptualization of the nation as an "imagined community" by recognizing nationalistic trajectories inscribed in religious narratives of redemption and education. The first half of the book historically grounds this phenomenon in the history of the missions and black independent churches in South Africa, and the civilizing values in Victorian Christianity perceived by both blacks and whites as embodied in the hymn, and in American Negro spirituals. In the second half of the book this theme of redemption plays out as a means of locating personal development within a global sense of historical change, rather than in a societal search for epistemological truths.

For example, Erlmann analyzes Paul Simon's motives in the Graceland tour as exemplifying Simon's "own search for identity," which is "emblematic of the attempts of significant sectors of the middle class to refashion themselves as cultural intermediaries to reach some state of grace and redemption" (p. 181). Ladysmith Black Mambazo's songs mirror this gesture with their own longing for "home" as a locus of identity, "redemption," and wholeness" (p. 200), provoked by and made possible through an engagement with "the modern world" (p. 200).

Nowhere is the complex relationship between national identity, biography, and religious redemption more apparent than in Chapter 13, which addresses another Ladysmith Black Mambazo collaboration, this time with South African born Tug Yourgrau in "The Song of Jacob Zulu." Here the dramatized biography of Andrew Zondo becomes a site for the autobiographical projections of the collaborators. These projections are infused with tropes of nostalgia, innocence, and ritual religious conversion that simultaneously symbolize personal and national redemption. Despite this potentially interesting layering of biographies, this chapter diverts and disappoints by invoking the over-determining discourse of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as emblematic of South Africa's forging of a post-apartheid national identity. Consequently, Erlmann leaves terms such as "politics of memory" (p. 235), "reconciliation" (p. 244), and "postapartheid identity" (p. 235) undeconstructed and unaffected by the mill of global and mediated distortions as if to signify some axiomatic irreducible essential of present-day South Africa. One finds evidence for this in Erlmann's reading of the sequel, *Nomathemba*, a story of a woman who leaves her rural home and wifely duties to make an independent life for herself in the city. Falling short of his earlier imperative that aesthetic expression be considered as a "medium for the construction of meanings" rather than an "agent" of a fixed relationship between signifier and signified (p. 187), Erlmann reads *Nomathemba* simply as a "metaphor for the people of 'New South Africa's' continued search for hope and renewal in their country" [my emphasis] (p. 244).

Although Erlmann does draw parallels between 20th century film and cyberspace and 19th century panorama (p. 5, 176) as mediums by which societies are governed by images (p. 176), the author never does address music performed in any of these mediums directly. He excuses himself by contrasting his arguments on global culture with Appadurai's, which are based in the rise of electronic media (p. 177). Instead, he is more interested in Zygmunt Bauman and Richard Rorty's notion of an aesthetic community characterized by what Erlmann calls "triumph of the symbolic" (p. 177) and in the "utopian power" of Michel Maffesoli's notions of style and figure (p. 177). These ideas are taken up relatively briefly in Erlmann's last two chapters devoted to two more Ladysmith Black Mambazo collaborations with Spike Lee in *Do It A Capella*, and with Michael Jackson in the music video *Moonwalker*.

This rich, multidisciplinary work is destined to interest a broad range of scholars. Ethnomusicologists will find their home in the occasional but detailed musical analyses. Historians will find a depth of historical information. Cultural theorists will find a reliable survey as well as a significant contribution to the literature on trans-nationalism, modernization and globalization. In addition, the book's perspectives speak to the current academic discussion in South Africa on biography and autobiography as genres mediating national narratives of political transition.

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***A Daughter of Isis: The Autobiography of Nawal El Saadawi*. Translated By Sherif Hetata. New York: St. Martins Press, 1999. 294pp. Cloth \$55.00; Paper \$19.95.**

Autobiography has long been the site of scholarly discussion especially as more personal modes of narrative have taken on historical and political importance. Recent controversies over the autobiographical writings of Rigoberta Menchu and Edward W. Said challenge the veracity of their stories and mark this genre as a site of struggle over social and political authority. Nawal el Saadawi has already been attacked and imprisoned in an attempt to quell her authoritative voice. Her autobiography, *A Daughter of Isis*, may provoke similar responses. She has challenged Egyptian neo colonial policy, self-serving gender norms, and conservative interpretations of Islam. She writes, "The written word for me became an act of rebellion against injustice exercised in the name of religion, or morals, or love" (p.292). Her presence on a

fundamentalist death list forced her to leave Egypt for the United States, where the majority of this book was written.

In a spiraling style reminiscent of much of her fiction, el Saadawi depicts the sights, sounds, and smells of her early life. Mixing her contemporary experiences with those of her Egyptian youth, *A Daughter of Isis* recalls the formative life of one of Egypt's foremost writers. El Saadawi is well known as a physician, novelist, and writer of essays. The candor with which she has approached health, economic, and social problems has landed her in jail and driven her into exile. She writes, "My crime has been to think, to feel. But writing for me is like breathing in the air of life, it cannot stop" (p. 34). Although many of her other works have addressed parts of her personal life, this is her first real foray into the genre of autobiography. She writes "Perhaps in some ways autobiography is more real, more true than fiction, more creative, and more steeped in art. Autobiography seeks to reveal the self, what is hidden inside, just as it tries to see the other" (p. 293).

Much of el Saadawi's writing reveals incidents in her personal life and there has been considerable speculation about the extent to which her novel, *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*, is autobiographical. Like Huda Shaarawi's memoir, *Harem Years*, el Saadawi speaks in ways that lead up to but fall short of many direct personal revelations. What is very beautiful about her fictional style can occasionally be frustrating in this autobiography. She alludes to early sexual experience, but never comes back to it. Perhaps the answer is implicit in the beginning of the book where she remarks that: "Memory is never complete. There are always parts of it that time has amputated. Writing is a way of retrieving them, of bringing the missing parts back to it. Of making it more holistic. Reality is something that changes all the time, something I cannot pin down or express in words on paper" (p. 9). Both the works are wonderfully suggestive, but sometimes do not achieve the candor we find in other works.

Her early life is told beautifully and is peopled with characters interesting for their moral courage and unusual views of life. El Saadawi's academic excellence saved her from suitors, and a life of domestic drudgery. As Sittil Hajja says, "... the miserable life of a peasant does not change. Education is the sweetest of all things. It opens the door to a job in the government and helps a man to become full in his clothes" (p. 72). When her father faltered in his support for her studies, her mother, Zaynab, helped by saying she didn't need her assistance in domestic tasks. Her father and mother come to respect her achievements as a thinker and doctor. In turn the young el Saadawi is very aware that her mother's sacrifices, love, and support allow her to continue at school. Her father's view that "politics is a game without principals" reflects the many difficulties of the colonial situation. His integrity as a man opposed to corruption, one who refuses to be a party man, gives the young el Saadawi a model of thinking independently. But she is well aware of how her gender forms her place in society even as she transcends its most common expectations.

In *A Daughter of Isis*, reflections of el Saadawi's early life in Egypt are framed by her exile in Carolina. As is the case with much of her fiction, this is a particularly engaging style. It keeps bringing the reader full circle in her life and creates an anticipation regarding the things which will drive her from her homeland. The book foreshadows her coming traumas but, except in a brief afterword, it does not deliver the stories of those later times. Although the book contains pictures of her as a rural doctor, at the first meeting of the Egyptian Women Writer's

Association, with her children and current husband, these people and events are only mentioned. The events of the actual account stop with her still in Al-Mashraha School of Medicine. She leaves us at a point where she is not very formed as a person, where her desires to be a good woman, law abiding, and a good Muslim, clash with her desire for closer involvement with the revolutionary forces driving out the vestiges of colonial power. The very interesting ways in which she eventually integrates her personal, intellectual life and her politics are missing from this volume, since she stops her story prior to the synthesis. For those of us who respect her mature positions, it is disappointing not to hear more of their origins. She reflects on the choice to focus on her earliest life in the afterword, "the years I had written about where very important in the direction that my later life took" (p. 290). Still it is a very wonderful life story, and especially in the beginning, beautifully written. The English translation contains explanatory references to historical material, words, and concepts with which the European reader might not be familiar.

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