



# African Studies Quarterly

Volume 15, Issue 2

March 2015

Published by the Center for African Studies, University of Florida

ISSN: 2152-2448

# African Studies Quarterly

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# Oil Corrupts Elections: The Political Economy of Vote-Buying in Nigeria

HAKEEM ONAPAJO, SUZANNE FRANCIS, and UFO OKEKE-  
UZODIKE

**Abstract:** The extant perspectives on vote-buying have produced three central arguments around its causes, which are the factors of poverty, the electoral/voting system, and the nature of politics in the state. Going beyond these perspectives, this study presents the argument that vote-buying can also be explained by considering the nature of the political economy of a state, especially when the state is oil-dependent. The Nigerian case study demonstrates this argument. We employ the “oil-impedes-democracy” framework, which is a strand of the resource curse theory, to argue that the incidence of vote-buying in Nigeria’s contemporary elections is prevalent because of the oil wealth associated with politics and elections in the state. This is because abundant oil wealth intensifies elite competition, which explains the use of all strategies to win elections including vote-buying. This is also facilitated by the fact that the political elite, especially the incumbent, have adequate access to oil wealth and spend it to “buy” elections and hold on power. Voters, on their part, also prefer to sell their votes during elections to have a share of the “national cake” given their perception of the wealth associated with politics in Nigeria and the poor service delivery by politicians after assuming state offices.

## Introduction

“[In Nigeria], political parties budget to bribe security and INEC officials. This is a very serious challenge to our democracy.”

The above remark was made by Attahiru Jega, the current chairman of Nigeria’s electoral body, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), to lament the sorry state of elections in that country.<sup>1</sup> This revealing statement corroborates the many narratives of fraud and malpractice in the successive elections held in Nigeria since its return to democracy in 1999. Clearly, a significant part of the problem with Nigeria’s electoral process, especially in light of Jega’s statement, has been the prevailing incidence of vote-buying (exchange of cash or gifts for votes), which has almost become a norm during elections. Indeed, vote-buying in its different dimensions has been a common and recurring feature in the reports of observers on Nigeria’s elections. The reports are usually characterized by statements such as: “a politician...was alleged by voters to have distributed money to people who queued to vote as well as electoral and security officials at a polling

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v15/v15i2a1.pdf>

station.”<sup>2</sup> A number of empirical studies have also demonstrated the prevalence of vote-buying in the Nigerian elections.<sup>3</sup> For example, a 2007 survey conducted by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and Practical Sampling International shows “that more than seven out of ten Nigerians believe that vote-buying happens either ‘all of the time’ or ‘most of the time’ in the country’s elections.”<sup>4</sup>

A close observation of the phenomenon of vote-buying in Nigeria suggests its potential to enrich the existing literature on vote-buying and electoral fraud. Existing theoretical perspectives have only produced three dominant arguments to explain the foundations of vote-buying in elections. First, it is argued that socio-economic factors, especially poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, play a major role in promoting the market for votes in democracies.<sup>5</sup> Second, it is argued that the voting methods in a particular electoral system may also guarantee the predominance of vote-buying during elections.<sup>6</sup> The third explanation is predicated upon the belief that vote-buying is a product of the nature of partisanship and party organization in a particular state.<sup>7</sup> What is however uncommon in the literature is an understanding of the incidence of vote-buying from the lens of the political economy of a state. It was only in 2011 that a useful study by Pedro Vicente surfaced, which establishes a connection between vote-buying and an oil-dependent economy with the case of Sao-Tome and Principe.<sup>8</sup> This particular study was a follow-up to his earlier research, which discovered a notorious rise in corruption following the discovery of oil in that small West African country.<sup>9</sup>

The present study aims to contribute to the argument on the relationship between oil-dependent state and vote-buying with the illustration of the Nigerian case study. It is no news that Nigeria is an oil-rich and oil-dependent state. It is currently the largest oil exporter in Africa given its production of 2.525 million barrels of crude oil per day, and its contribution of 2.7 percent supply to the world’s oil market.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, oil has been a major source of the country’s revenue, currently accounting for 70 percent of its total revenues. While vote-buying has been observed as a common occurrence in oil-dependent Nigeria, it is difficult to find a systematic study that has demonstrated a possible link between oil wealth and vote-buying in the country. The oil wealth phenomenon in Nigeria has been more popularly employed as an analytical framework to explain resource conflict in the Niger Delta region, revenue allocation politics and conflicts, and corruption and underdevelopment in the country.<sup>11</sup>

Our study works within the framework of the resource curse theory with special emphasis on its “oil-impedes-democracy” strand. The study argues that the predominance of vote-buying in Nigerian elections reflects the nature of politics and elections produced by its oil-dependent economy. Nigerian politics constitute a highly and fiercely contested process among the elite given the fact that the control of state power is clearly equivalent to direct access to the state’s oil riches. It is against this backdrop that elections are overly monetized as politicians heavily spend oil money on elections, especially on vote-buying, in order to have (or continue to have) a strong hold on power. For their part, voters also willingly offer to sell their votes given their belief of receiving a share of the national oil wealth. We attempt a validation of this hypothesis by illustrating contemporary issues around the political economy of Nigeria and the electoral process since democracy returned to the country in 1999. Within these parameters, we further present empirical evidence from a fieldwork conducted on electoral fraud in Ekiti State in south-western Nigeria, which provides more support for our argument on vote-buying in Nigerian elections.



The article is structured as follows. The first section provides a review of the theoretical perspectives on the relationship between oil and democracy, presenting the extent and dimensions of the debate on that topic. The second section provides an explanation of the tragedy of democracy in Nigeria's oil economy, especially in contemporary times. The third section provides an analysis of the debilitating consequences of oil wealth on the Nigerian elections in light of the prevalence of vote-buying in the country. In the fourth section, we present empirical findings of the outcome of fieldwork conducted in the southwest region of Nigeria. Finally, the fifth section provides a summary and conclusion.

### **Oil Wealth and Democracy: Theoretical Perspectives**

The "oil-impedes-democracy" perspective represents a major component of the resource curse theory. Its proponents are chiefly of the position that dependence on natural resources (oil in particular) not only undermines growth and development in a state but also negatively affects its democratic processes. With illustrations from many oil-rich Middle East and African states, the arguments of its proponents are centered on the idea that oil wealth sustains autocracy, and thereby frustrates democratic transition and consolidation. This thesis is mostly anchored on the concept of "rentierism" in oil-dependent states.<sup>12</sup> Rentierism is symptomatic of a state with over-reliance on revenues from external rents on natural (oil) resources and where the government is the principal recipient of the rent, which permits the control of the economy by a few political elites. In addition, the state operates an economy where only a few create the wealth, while the majority only engages in its distribution and utilization.<sup>13</sup> As a result, rentierism is argued to have negative influence on democracy for the following four reasons: taxation, spending, social structure, and external support.<sup>14</sup>

The proponents of the taxation factor suggest that rentier governments may strategically use oil proceeds to either eliminate or reduce the tax burden on their citizens and hence occasioning limited pressures for accountability and democratization.<sup>15</sup> Studies have observed this phenomenon in many oil rich countries including Kuwait, Qatar, Jordan, and a host of other Arab countries.<sup>16</sup> The second argument, the spending factor, indicates that enormous wealth from oil resources increases the capacity of the government in rentier states to spend excessively on patronage and to continue to have a hold on power.<sup>17</sup> In addition, governments have the capacity to spend heavily on internal security with the aim of repressing domestic demands for democratization and the formation of interest groups that could call for democratic transition.<sup>18</sup> The social structure argument suggests that rentierism limits the possibility of the emergence of a social class that could possess the capacity to oppose the status quo. This is against the backdrop that the middle class created in oil-dependent states lacks independence from the government, and eliminates the chances for an effective labor class because rentier states often discourage sustainable industrialization.<sup>19</sup> The external support thesis is derived from the work of Gregory White and Scott Taylor based on Nigerian and Algerian case studies. They argue that "key actors in the international arena—notably, former colonial powers, international financial institutions and transnational corporations—are inclined to undemocratic, military regimes that supply oil, while simultaneously offering rhetorical support for ongoing transitions."<sup>20</sup>

As presented above, the oil-impedes-democracy perspective in its current forms focuses more on the connection between oil dependence and authoritarianism. Furthermore, it offers a theoretical explanation of challenges to democratic transition because of the oil factor. Yet,

it is scarce within this theoretical framework to find a reasonable consideration of the consequences of oil resources on existing democracies, especially for democratic consolidation. However, the work of Jenson and Wantchekon on this subject is exceptional.<sup>21</sup> These two scholars advanced the position that oil wealth has the possibility of negatively affecting democratic consolidation. This especially occurs in a democracy where the state is weak, allowing for incumbent politicians to control and distribute oil rents, and encouraging the promotion of patron-client networks. In this situation, elite competition for state power is extremely intense which may lead to democratic breakdown.<sup>22</sup> We find this postulation particularly instructive for this study. We present the argument that democratic development in Nigeria is impeded because of its oil-dependent nature. A major reason for this is the immense wealth associated with state power in Nigeria because of the influence of incumbents on oil wealth, which intensifies elite competition. This process creates a seriously contested electoral process where the political elite employed all strategies, including violence and fraud. In this instance, vote-buying becomes one of the major winning strategies, which is facilitated by their access and control of the state's oil wealth. In addition, voters characteristically sell their votes given their perception of the oil riches associated with politics in the country.

### **Oil Curse and Democracy in Nigeria**

Although oil resources have been a component of the Nigerian economy since the 1950s, it was certainly in the period of the 1970s oil boom (occasioned by the world oil crisis in 1973) that the state fully developed the traits of rentierism given the massive oil earnings it realized during the period, and of course, the increased state control of the oil industry. Oil revenues rose sharply from ₦4,733 billion to ₦15,234 billion by 1980 (an estimate of about 222 percent increase).<sup>23</sup> These huge earnings increasingly occasioned over dependence on oil resources to the detriment of other revenue sources, especially agricultural exports. Between 1970 and 1980, the percentage of revenues from oil exports against the others rose sharply from 57.6 percent to 96.1 percent, and it was as high as 99.2 percent in 2005.<sup>24</sup> The oil factor has since been a central issue in all facets of the Nigerian state and society including its democratic trajectory. The phenomenon of oil wealth has indeed accounted for democratic breakdown, frustrated the democratic transition process, and been a major challenge to the path of consolidation of the contemporary democracy in Nigeria.

Extraordinary levels of corruption immediately accompanied the influx of petrodollars. The first democratic regime in the era of the oil wealth phenomenon increasingly experienced the rise of super-corrupt politicians who looted state resources with much cruelty and impunity. In this regard, Michael Watts noted that "Nigeria 'lost' US\$16.7 billion in oil income owing to fraudulent activities and smuggling of petroleum between 1979 and 1983."<sup>25</sup> It certainly became fashionable for politicians and civil servants to stuff stolen money in Swiss bank accounts and torch government ministries to prevent account audits. This high level of corruption greatly accounted for the Buhari/Idiagbon military coup that aimed at saving the country from that generation of political elite. Many high-ranking politicians were prosecuted following enough evidence of embezzlement of public funds at the special tribunal established by the military government in 1983.<sup>26</sup>

A democratic transition as well became arduous and almost impossible upon the military's assumption of power, especially during the regimes of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Sani Abacha. This was largely the result of the allure of oil money.

Babangida earned the sobriquet “Maradona,” as he kept changing the timetable for the democratic transition.<sup>27</sup> At the inception of his reign, he promised to complete the transition on 1 October 1990 before it was suddenly postponed to 1 October 1992. From 1992, it was again deferred to 2 January 1993 before Babangida finally arrived at the 27 August 1993 date.<sup>28</sup> Despite all these changes and the incredibly expensive transition exercise, the 12 June 1993 presidential election staged afterwards was suddenly cancelled by the regime despite the general claims of freeness and fairness in that electoral process. In an attempt to truncate the transition program, Babangida spent huge amount of oil money for patronage and to find legitimacy for himself; hence the labeling of the regime as “government by donation.”<sup>29</sup> Many civil associations, such as the Association for Better Nigeria (ABN), Committee of Patriots, Third Eye, and the Committee of Elder Statesmen, sprang up and were sponsored by the regime to frustrate democratic transition.<sup>30</sup> At the end of this regime, an investigative panel, otherwise known as the Pius Okigbo Panel commissioned in 1994, discovered that Babangida’s government spent a total of US\$12.4 billion of the Gulf War oil windfall on “extra-budgetary expenditures” that “neither the president nor the Governor of the CBN [Central Bank of Nigeria] accounted to anyone.”<sup>31</sup>

The same story goes for Sani Abacha’s military regime, which took over power from the short-lived Interim National Government created after the 12 June 1993 political crisis precipitated by the presidential election. Contrary to Babangida’s Maradonic approach, Abacha never pretended to support a democratic transition. His aim was to transform himself from a military head of state to a civilian leader in the fashion of other leaders in West African countries—Burkina Faso (Blaise Compaoré in 1991), Ghana (Jerry Rawlings in 1992), Niger (Ibrahim Baré Maïnassara in 1996), and the Gambia (Yahyah Jammeh in 1996). Abacha was indeed fiercer in his own approach. With oil money at his disposal, he spent heavily on internal security to clamp down on the opposition.<sup>32</sup> Individuals who seemingly opposed his political ambition were assassinated, detained, or forced into exile. On the other hand, Abacha spent excessively on political mobilization and patronage to actualize his succession bid. All the five parties registered for the “transition” exercise nominated Abacha as their presidential candidate, making him unopposed for the anticipated election. Besides, many civil groups were established solely to mobilise support for him. The most prominent was the Youths Earnestly Ask for Abacha (YEAA), which organized a Two Million Man March to “persuade” Abacha to contest the presidency.<sup>33</sup> After Abacha’s death, which naturally collapsed his authoritarian regime, a series of unimaginable figures amounting to billions of US dollars were reported to have been stolen by Abacha and his family members. Officially, Obasanjo’s government pragmatically struck a deal with the Abacha family whereby the government only recovered about US\$1.2 billion while the family was left with US\$100 million and par bonds worth US\$300 million.<sup>34</sup>

The post-1999 democratic dispensation has also experienced serious challenges following a series of conflicts around oil wealth. Democracy ostensibly opened up the space for the expression of grievances and expanded the opportunities for renegotiation of nationhood, which gave rise to increased agitation for resource control by the peoples of the oil-rich Niger Delta. The 2005 National Political Reform Conference (NPRC), therefore, created a good platform to redraw the revenue allocation formula in which the oil-producing regions could be better positioned to benefit from the allocation of oil wealth in the country. The outright rejection by the Northern delegates of the proposed 25 percent sharing formula on the principle of derivation by the Niger Delta delegates at the conference has since been argued as a major reason behind the transformation of peaceful protests into

violence in the Niger Delta. This is because the event was immediately followed by the proliferation of militant groups and increased violence in the Niger Delta region.<sup>35</sup> It was after the introduction of an amnesty offer for the militants by the Umar Musa Yar'Adua's government in 2009, upon the failure of a military approach, that a "fragile peace" has been recorded in the region.<sup>36</sup>

While the amnesty policy was being offered to the ex-militants of Niger Delta, there emerged another notorious terrorist group in the northern region, the Boko Haram group, whose destructive activities are unprecedented in the history of Nigeria.<sup>37</sup> Albeit clamoring for the Islamization of Nigeria, many are of the belief that the group emerged to express its grievance over marginalization of the northern peoples in response to the existing structure of allocation and spending of oil money in the state. This is especially in response to the huge amount of money involved in the rehabilitation of the Niger Delta ex-militants in light of the amnesty policy framework. For example, former Head of State and prominent leader of the opposition Muhammadu Buhari argued: "What is responsible for the security situation in the country [Boko Haram terror activities] is caused by the activities of Niger Delta militants."<sup>38</sup> As such, many in the North believe that amnesty in the fashion of that offered to the Niger Delta militants should be extended to the members of Boko Haram. In fact, some northern political elites employed the means of the Boko Haram crisis to resume talks on the renegotiation of the terms for revenue allocation in the country. On behalf of the nineteen governors in the North, Aliyu Babangida (governor of Niger State) proposed in the early days of the Boko Haram uprising in February 2012 that: "The revenue allocation formula should be looked at. We are hoping that within 2012, there would be discussions and review of the allocation formula."<sup>39</sup> It was against this backdrop that the Federal Government offered to "appease" the north with the payment of 13 percent derivation on solid minerals, which was hitherto exclusively enjoyed by oil producing states.<sup>40</sup>

Another area that has not received enough scholarly and empirical attention in connection with Nigeria's oil wealth and the state of its democracy is the implication of oil wealth for the electoral process and how this contributes to the explanation of vote-buying in contemporary Nigerian democracy. This is especially so against the backdrop of the new phenomenon of oil windfall in Nigeria since the early days of the present democracy, which coincides with consistent increases in world market oil prices until the drop beginning in late 2014.

### **Oil Wealth, Political Money, and Vote-Buying in Nigeria**

In line with the foregoing section, the thesis advanced in this section is that the struggle for power has been more intense in the present Nigerian democracy owing to the attractions of national wealth largely derived from oil and gas resources. It is for this reason that politics, especially elections, has not only been a fierce process but also an incredibly expensive venture in the country. Political elites characteristically use oil money to fund elections and buy votes from the electorate. As for the voters, who are generally poor, an increasing awareness of the huge money politicians amass in politics and the poor service they deliver upon their assumption into office leads them to prefer selling their votes to have a share of the "national cake." The foregoing statement supports the theoretical argument that "an abundance of natural resources increases competition for the control of the state, which is linked to high levels of political violence and the use of resource rents by ruling parties to maintain their hold on power."<sup>41</sup> In this light, politics is rather "dominated by issues

concerning the distribution of oil rents, not ideology.”<sup>42</sup> This process offers a meaningful explanation of the prevalence of vote-buying in the country.

It is noteworthy that Nigeria’s earnings from oil sales quadrupled following soaring oil prices in the world market. For instance, the country’s savings of surplus profits from crude oil sales rose sharply from US\$5 billion to US\$20 billion between 2005 and 2008.<sup>43</sup> It is for this reason that the government of Olusegun Obasanjo established the Excess Crude Account (ECA) in 2004. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), ECA was established “with the primary objective of protecting government budgets against shortfalls arising from volatile crude oil price.”<sup>44</sup> It was basically funded from surplus revenues derived from crude oil sales, Petroleum Profit Tax (PPT) and royalties above the budgeted benchmark of the government for each fiscal year.<sup>45</sup> Established with this clearly stated objective, ECA has constituted one of the major sources of intergovernmental suspicion and conflict in democratic Nigeria as the political elite see the account as a goldmine to be exploited under the guise of using the money to address budgetary deficits.

Shortly after the government of Obasanjo in 2007, the thirty-six governors in the federation constituted a major political force to pressure the federal government to begin distribution of the ECA funds amongst the tiers of government while declaring the account unconstitutional. Following consistent pressure, Yar’Adua’s government began sharing money in the account amongst the tiers of government. The CBN in its 2008 annual report reported that the sums of ₦841.5 billion, ₦795.4 billion, and ₦77.9 billion, were respectively withdrawn at different times from the ECA and shared amongst the three tiers of government.<sup>46</sup> In 2010, the sums of ₦450 billion, ₦873 billion, ₦502 billion and ₦30.5 billion were withdrawn at different times in a similar manner.<sup>47</sup> Under the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan, reports show that the following amount of money has been withdrawn thus far between 2012 and 2013 and shared among the governments: February 2012, ₦187 billion; March 2012, ₦158 billion; July, ₦35 billion; October 2012, ₦35.5 billion; November 2012, ₦35.5 billion; February 2013, ₦3.5 billion; March 2013, ₦173 billion; and April 2013, ₦721.5 billion.<sup>48</sup> Against the backdrop of these consistent withdrawals, there have been consistent concerns by economists about the wastage by the regimes and for the country’s future. For instance, Oby Ezekwesili (former minister of education and former vice-president at the World Bank) argued that: “The present cycle of boom of the current decade is much more vexing than the other four that happened in the 70s, 80s, 90s and 2000s.” She further revealed that the governments of Yar’Adua and Jonathan had squandered \$45 billion in foreign reserves and \$22 billion in ECA after Obasanjo’s government.<sup>49</sup>

The ECA phenomenon provides one of the many examples that could demonstrate the rationale behind the “do-or-die” philosophy of politics in Nigeria. All strategies, especially fraudulent ones, are characteristically employed during electoral contests to acquire power for the distributive politics in the state. In this process, the huge monies amassed by government are, in turn, used to fund and purchase elections. For example, the conflict between former President Obasanjo and his vice-president, Atiku Abubakar, came with the revelation of how they diverted money from the Petroleum Technology Trust Fund (PTTF) to fund their re-election in 2003, as well as an account of how the former used money from the Fund to execute his failed tenure elongation ambition (the third term agenda). In another instance, it was widely reported that the governor of an oil-rich state (James Ibori) in the Niger Delta region significantly funded Yar’Adua’s presidential campaign. Ibori was popularly known as the “Oil Sheikh,” owing to the stupendous wealth he made during his tenure as the governor of oil-rich Delta State. In April 2012, he was convicted by a United



Kingdom court for having admitted to stealing £50 million in state funds and for other related charges on money laundering.<sup>50</sup> Other politicians with little access to state wealth or “money bags” resort to selling their landed properties and investments to fund elections with the expectation that their investment will be ‘recouped’ once they get into power.<sup>51</sup>

Consequently, elections in Nigeria are among the most expensive in the world. In a special report by Nick Thompson of CNN on international campaign finance, Nigeria is listed among the six countries with the most expensive elections even though clear data on election financing in the country are not easily available. With reference to Nigerian elections, Magnus Ohman, the Political Financial Advisor for International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), remarked: “It’s an electoral system where you need to spend.”<sup>52</sup> Clearly, one of the reasons for the huge finances associated with elections is the special budget used for vote-buying by parties and politicians. For example, it was widely reported, and confirmed by a delegate at the People’s Democratic Party (PDP) January 2011 presidential primaries that the sums of US\$3,000 and US\$10,000 were budgeted for each delegate to buy their votes by the competing camps of Atiku Abubakar and Goodluck Jonathan, respectively, at the primary election.<sup>53</sup> Given that 8,500 delegates were reported to have attended the primaries, it can be estimated that the Atiku camp would have spent US\$25.5 million while Jonathan’s camp would have spent US\$85 million on vote-buying alone at the preliminary stage before the general elections. Interestingly, Reuters reported that a substantial part of the money used by the incumbent was withdrawn from the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) account, which affected the forex (foreign exchange) market.<sup>54</sup>

Besides the direct buy-and-sell transaction as illustrated above, it is also popular for parties to bribe electoral officers for them to manipulate votes in their favor. In a personal interview with the researchers, a presiding officer for INEC who carried out his assignment in Osun State in the 2011 general elections narrated his experience in the following statements:

Bribery was introduced in one form or the other; financial gratifications to all officers with the hope that the presiding officers will be manipulated in their favor. I can specifically speak of the PDP, a total of ₦1.1 million were given to us at our first meeting. We were told, “If they catch you, you cannot mention us.”...They wanted us to inflate the number of accredited voters.<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly, the officer clearly admitted to having collected money from politicians. His attitude towards the bribe money is quite consistent with our argument on the general attitude of Nigerians with regards to elections and politics because of the oil factor. Nigerians do not necessarily see it as immoral to accept monetary offers from politicians in exchange for votes, although they might occasionally defect at the point of voting.<sup>56</sup> When asked about his motivation for collecting the money, the electoral officer enthusiastically responded that

I am happy to collect the money. Maybe I should tell you this: I have spent 30 years of my life in that country, I never received anything substantial from that country. If for once in 30 years I see someone as being part and parcel of the ‘national cake’ offering me money, I would be so happy to collect the money because ordinarily the money should have been used to provide basic amenities.... I wish several other youths had the opportunity to collect that kind of money from the politician. The money was in a ‘Ghana Must Go’ bag

with a CBN bond on it (₦1000). It tells you: 'this money is Nigerian money, spend it!'.... If it happens over and over again, I will still collect the money.<sup>57</sup>

In the same spirit, the officer willingly offered to share the experience of his colleague in the eastern region. His colleague who served in Owerri in Imo State told him that no voting took place in his polling unit during the presidential election because:

... at the INEC distribution center, as early as 8am in the morning, they told them everyone had agreed that the PDP would win the presidential election. But for coming, you should all [the presiding officers] have ₦25,000 each. So I am not surprised at the bogus number of votes in the East.<sup>58</sup>

### **Empirical Data on Ekiti State Elections, 2007-2011**

In the classification of states in Nigeria, Ekiti State in the southwestern region represents one of the states with absolute dependence on federal allocations (basically from the oil wealth).<sup>59</sup> This is because the state lacks any meaningful alternative sources of revenue except for the federal allocations. For example, the peer review report of the Nigeria Governors' Forum (NGF) in January 2013 indicates that the state's capacity for internally generated revenue is weak. It constituted only 9.8 percent, 7.9 percent, and 7.6 percent of its total revenues, in 2009, 2010, and 2011 respectively.<sup>60</sup> Thus, the economic life of the state has always been more determined by the "vagaries of the fluctuations in world oil prices."<sup>61</sup> Reports show that federal allocations to the state constituted almost 80 percent of the state's revenues between 2005 and 2007. This statistics excludes some other revenues from excess crude sales at the period.<sup>62</sup> Given this condition, economic activities in the state are more centered around the public sector. Many people are engaged in the civil service and teaching professions (in public schools). Worse still, the highland nature of the geography of the state also does not encourage agriculture, although many of its rural population engage in farming.<sup>63</sup> This sufficiently accounts for the high-rate of poverty in the state. The National Bureau of Statistics show that Ekiti State has the second highest level of poverty in the South West Region, with a 59.1 percent figure.<sup>64</sup>

The state's economy, as presented above, occasions increased attraction to state power because money obviously flows from the corridors of the government. Politics has therefore been a major issue in the state since its creation in 1996. Certainly, this explains the controversies and violence that have followed elections in the state, especially the 2007 gubernatorial elections and their rerun in 2009. Elsewhere we have presented findings on the dimensions of electoral fraud in the states elections.<sup>65</sup> In this study, we present findings on the incidence of vote-buying in the state's elections within the context of the rentier nature of the Nigerian political economy. The findings on the phenomenon in the state are basically derived from a series of in-depth interviews (both personal interviews and focus group discussions) with the categories of people that surround the elections held in the state between 2007 and 2011. These categories include politicians (from the dominant parties in the state), voters (basically youths, some under the voting age), election observers, election officers, and party thugs. We were able to interview thirty people to elicit information from them ostensibly about electoral fraud in the state. It was in this process that we were able to make sense of the phenomenon of vote-buying in the state's elections. Given the sensitivity of the topic under investigation and the manner of their responses, we have deliberately kept the identity of respondents confidential.

*Politics is “Chop and Go”—Politics is about Looting and Money Making*

In a series of discussions with our interviewees, it is clear in their perception that politics in Nigeria represents a viable means for personal enrichment, especially because it guarantees absolute access to state money. In a focus group discussion with youths who have had considerable experience, as voters or as party followers, in the recent elections in the state, the following were some of their responses when asked about their understanding of politics in Nigeria:

“Politics is chop and go. You just have to get there and make your own money at the expense of the masses”; “Politics is a serious business. They [politicians] are just there amassing wealth for themselves and their own family”; “Politics in Nigeria is a dirty business. Politics is about struggle for power and wealth and not in the interest of the masses”; and “Politics is everything in Nigeria. You want to get political power and have access to everything you need in life.”<sup>66</sup>

Given the above manner of response, it makes sense to argue that voters are motivated to easily accept money from politicians given their perception of the abundant monetary benefits in politics. In addition, it could be inferred from the narrative provided by a politician that politics is so important in the state because of the spoils it provides. In his explanation of the 2007/2009 crisis in the gubernatorial elections held in the state, the interviewee narrated that:

In 1999, the whole of southwest voted for AD. Our friends in the ruling party were not preparing that they will once be out of government. They thought they will be in government for over ten years. Councilors will settle down in a beer parlor and kill fresh fish. They were buying many vehicles—Toyota, Mercedes Benz, Nissan, just name it. They never anticipated any economic shortfall. Suddenly, they lost in 2003 but they thought by 2007, they will be able to reclaim power. When they lost again in 2007, then there was increased aggression from them because most of them sold their properties to execute the 2007 elections.<sup>67</sup>

The above narration clearly confirms the popular perception that politics is about self-enrichment in Nigeria. Certainly, this reason provides an explanation for the extent to which politicians would go in order to acquire power. As mentioned in the interview, politicians spent excessively on the elections and sold their properties in desperation for power. In this process, vote-buying becomes one of their major spending on elections. The following illustrates the many forms vote-buying took in the state elections.

*“Logistics”*

The gathered evidence clearly indicated that political parties created separate budgets for vote-buying at electoral periods under the label of “logistics.” This revelation has earlier been made by a former governor of a state, Donald Duke, while giving a personal account of how governors rig elections.<sup>68</sup> In the case of Ekiti State, a party executive narrated that it is the normal practise for politicians to have an all-night meeting a day before elections with the purpose of strategizing to bribe electoral officers and buy votes from voters. According to him:



... most of the electoral officers will come and collect money [at the meeting]. Even if you don't call them, they will come. I was told it is a normal practice. It is called logistics. I was told other parties have done that. At the end of the day, we had to give them something. In fact, the money came from the state.<sup>69</sup>

In addition to the money provided to electoral officers prior to voting, there are also special monetary allocations for each polling booth in the state. Our informant informed us that the amount of money allocated to each polling booth varies depending on the population and location of each booth. "We budgeted ₦100,000 for each polling booth," he stated. "There is money for presiding officers and provision for security officers for each polling booth. [In estimation], that is about ₦300,000 for each polling booth and we have about 177 wards in Ekiti. Each ward would have about five to six polling booths."<sup>70</sup>

#### *"Door-to-Door Campaign"*

According to an election observer with the Justice, Development and Peace Commission (JDPC), there is also the method of vote-buying popular among all the political parties, which is done under the guise of a "door-to-door campaign." As the term symbolizes, politicians and their agents move from one house to the other, ostensibly to campaign and solicit for votes, only to offer people cash or other gift items (such as tins of milk, clothing materials, detergents, bags of salt, etc.) in anticipation of their votes at the polling booth. Although old-fashioned in Nigeria, the method is apparently more favored because of the high rate of poverty in the state. Politicians see it as a better strategy to negotiate with voters at their homes because of the advantage of negotiating with the whole of the family, rather than an individual voter only. Narrating his experience, a politician informed us that:

I was telling my aunt to vote for our party because I helped her daughter to get a job when we were in power. She responded that the other party has done well than our own party because they gave her ₦2000 as against the ₦500 provided by our own party. The children were given ₦1000 each.<sup>71</sup>

#### *"Voter Card"*

Realizing the importance of voter registration to elections, political parties pay potential voters to register to vote at the elections. In this process, many people are mobilized in preparation for the elections. A university student informed us that:

There was a time when I was on campus, the party came with buses to mobilize students to go and register. A friend came to inform me that the president of the town union told him that ₦500 will be provided for people willing to vote. I told him about the warning made by the new INEC chairman on fraudulent registration, but my friend said I should just forget about that.<sup>72</sup>

It is also interesting to note that it is not really in the interest of the parties to ensure that the registered voters are present on election day, but what actually matters in this instance is the voter card. Someone else may use the voter card to cast a ballot. In such instances, there are voter cards for sale to candidates who are in desperate need of votes. In the words of one of our interviewees, "There are politicians who have more than fifty votercards. They sell it on the day of elections."<sup>73</sup>

*"See and Buy"*

This marks a new trend of vote-buying in Nigeria. It was introduced in the 2011 elections by politicians to prevent defection by voters having paid for their votes. Our informants narrated that this came as a new method after politicians realized that voters in most cases do not comply after payment for their votes. Therefore, politicians (in connivance with electoral officers) influence the creation of congested polling centers that would allow for monitoring of how people vote regardless of the fact that Nigeria operates a secret ballot voting method. In this regard, political thugs are hired and placed at strategic locations very close to ballot boxes to see which party a voter has voted for before payment. In the words of an election observer, "On election day, someone will be watching the pattern of vote and give signal to another party agent to pay at the back, if the voter fails to vote for the party, there is also a signal."<sup>74</sup> We were also informed that "after voting, you [voters] will go to the queue and write names" in order to receive their payment after voting for the party.<sup>75</sup>

**Conclusion**

The main objective of this paper has been to explain the predominance of vote-buying in Nigerian elections within the context of the oil dependent nature of the state. To this end, we demonstrated that elite competition has been fiercer in the current democracy in Nigeria given the new age of oil windfall the country has experienced in recent times. Politics has, therefore, been consistently driven by the distribution of rents because of the general attitudes towards elections by both the elite and the masses. In this process, the oil money to which the political elite, especially the incumbents, have abundant access has mostly shaped the market of votes in the country. To further buttress our argument, we present evidence from a fieldwork conducted in a state in the South West Region that absolutely depends on oil revenue allocation. This structure of the economy of the state apparently shaped the character of elite competition and the incidence of vote-buying in the state's elections. While studies in the field of economics and political science have contributed immensely to the resource curse theory, especially its relationship with democracy, this study has attempted to offer a contribution to the extant literature by employing the Nigerian case to argue that oil resources constitute a potential variable for consideration in explaining the apparent challenges facing democracies in oil-dependent states, especially the newly democratized ones. Also importantly, this study has proven to be relevant to the existing literature on the theoretical perspectives on vote-buying. As much as we certainly agree with other scholars that the factors of poverty, electoral systems, and the nature of politics are truly related to vote-buying in electoral systems, based on the Nigerian case we also argue that the political economy of states also matter in the discourse on the incidence of vote-buying.

**Notes**

- 1 Umoru 2012.
- 2 Transition Monitoring Group 2007. p. 83; also see National Democratic Institute 2007; EUEOM 2007, 2011.
- 3 IFES 2007; Danjibo and Oladeji 2007; Bratton 2008; Jensen and Justesen 2012.
- 4 IFES 2007
- 5 Kitschelt 2000; Schaffer 2002; Bratton 2008; Jensen and Justesen 2012, 2013.

- 6 Cox and Kousser 1981; Hicken 2007; Lehoucq 2007; Birch 2007.
- 7 See Molina and Lehoucq 1999; Schaffer 2002.
- 8 Vincent 2011.
- 9 Vicente 2010.
- 10 See CIA profile and Revenue Watch Institute.
- 11 On the resource conflict, see for example, Osaghae 1995; Ukeje 2001; Watts et al. 2004; Omeje 2005; Ikelegbe 2006; Oyefusi 2007; Obi, 2010; Obi and Rustad 2011. On revenue allocation and political conflict, see for example, Naanen 1995; Suberu 2001; Uche and Uche 2004; Anugwom 2006. On studies related to corruption and underdevelopment, see for example Khan 1994; Osoba 1996; Ades and Tella 1999; Shaxson 2007.
- 12 Mahdavy 1970; Beblawi 1990; Yates 1996.
- 13 Beblawi, 1990, pp. 87-88.
- 14 On taxation and spending see Ross 2001, p. 332) on social structure, Sandbakken 2006; and regarding external support, White and Taylor 2001.
- 15 Anderson 1987; Luciani 1990.
- 16 For Kuwait and Qatar, see Crystal 1990; for Jordan, see Brand 1992; and for other Arab countries, Schwarz 2008.
- 17 Lam and Wantchekon 2002.
- 18 Ross 2001.
- 19 Sandbakken, 2006, p.139.
- 20 White and Taylor 2001, p. 323.
- 21 Jenson and Wantchekon 2004.
- 22 Ibid. 2004, p. 821.
- 23 CBN 1983 cited in Olukoshi, 1995, p. 139.
- 24 CBN 2006.
- 25 Watts 2003, p. 215.
- 26 Osaghae 1998, p.154; Watts 2003, p. 215.
- 27 See Momoh 1995, p. 16. The reference is to Argentinian soccer star Diego Maradona.
- 28 Osaghae 1998, p. 223.
- 29 Momoh 1995, p. 45.
- 30 Ibid., p. 47.
- 31 Osaghae 1998, p. 279.
- 32 Reports indicate that Abacha and his Chief Security Adviser, Ismail Gwarzo, characteristically withdrew money from the national treasury to spend on security. In fact, that became a major means to siphon oil money. For example, it was reliably reported that “between November 1993 and June 1998, Abacha directed his National Security Adviser, Alhaji Ismail Gwarzo, to withdraw from the Central Bank of Nigeria a total of \$1.6 billion and £417 million for security purposes. Interestingly, only £250,000 and \$195 million went for that purpose.” Egbo et al. 2012, p. 9, note 30.
- 33 Mustapha, 1999, p. 280.
- 34 *The Guardian* 2002.
- 35 Ukiwo, 2011, p.23.
- 36 Many are of the opinion that the amnesty offer has only temporarily doused the tension in the Niger Delta region. This is against the backdrop of the belief that the government only introduced the amnesty offer to enhance oil production that was negatively affected

- by violence in the region. As such, the underlying issues of environmental degradation and development of the region that drive the crisis have not really been dealt with.
- 37 For details on Boko Haram, see, for example, Abimbola 2010; Onuoha 2010; Onapajo and Uzodike 2012; Onapajo, Uzodike and Whetho 2012; and Agbiboa 2013.
- 38 Isenyo 2013.
- 39 Bello 2012.
- 40 Udoh 2012.
- 41 Jenson and Wantchekon 2004, p. 818.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 CBN 2012, p.14.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 CBN 2009.
- 47 CBN 2011.
- 48 The information on withdrawals from the ECA come from *Economic Confidential* 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2012e, 2013a, 2013b, and 2013c.
- 49 Iriekpen 2013.
- 50 Tran 2012.
- 51 Amuwo 2009, pp. 47, 50; also, Ojeifo 2006.
- 52 Thompson, 2012.
- 53 Personal interview with PDP member in Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.
- 54 Lazarus, 2011.
- 55 Personal interview with electoral officer after the 2011 general elections in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, March 2012.
- 56 See Bratton 2008.
- 57 Personal interview with electoral officer after the 2011 general elections in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, March 2012.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 This is contrast to some states with sufficient economic activities that could create alternative revenues for them besides the federal allocations. In a 2008 report, the following states were identified as having substantial levels of financial independence on the basis of their capacity for internally generated revenue: Lagos (63.5 percent), Sokoto (46.6 percent) and Ogun (27.5 percent) States. Other states that recorded over 10 percent capacity for generating revenue internally included Osun, Oyo, Borno, FCTA, Jigawa, Kano, Kaduna, Kogi, Anambra, Kwara, Gombe. Edo, Abia, and Rivers States. Others including Ekiti State fell into the category of states with absolute dependence of the federal oil allocations (see *Thisday* 23 July 2009).
- 60 NGF 2013, p. 20.
- 61 Ekiti State Planning Commission 2004, p. 30.
- 62 Ibid., p. 31
- 63 Personal interview with Taiwo Owoeye, Lecturer, Department of Economics, Ekiti State University, in Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.
- 64 NGF 2013, p. 10.
- 65 Onapajo 2014; Onapajo and Uzodike 2014.
- 66 Focus group discussion, Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.

- 67 Personal interview, July 2012.
- 68 At an occasion in July 2010, former in Cross River State Governor Donald Duke gave a detailed insider's account of how governors perpetrate fraud in the electoral process. Interestingly, he narrated that that the whole process begins with the "courtesy call" the INEC's Resident Electoral Commissioners (REC) pay to state governors. It is at this point that the governor creates some sort of unholy relationship with the officer. According to him, "When the Resident Electoral Commissioner comes before the elections are conducted- of course when he comes to the state, usually, he has no accommodation; monies have not been released for the running or conduct of the elections and all that because we always start late. He pays a courtesy call on the governor. It's usually a televised event you know, and of course he says all the right things: 'Your Excellency, I am here to ensure that we have free and fair elections and I will require your support.'" See *Sahara Reporters* 2010.
- 69 Personal interview, Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 Focus group discussion, Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.
- 73 Personal interview, Ado-Ekiti, July 2012.
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 Ibid.

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# The Rise and Fall of the Rwanda-Uganda Alliance (1981-1999)

SCOTT McKNIGHT

**Abstract:** This paper argues that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance began in the early 1980s as a pact of survival between Ugandan rebels and Rwandan exiles then living in Uganda, through the Rwandan and Ugandan military occupation of Congo, and concludes with the alliance's violent breakup in late 1999. Using different alliance theories, this paper helps explain that the success of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance against the Mobutu regime had generated a "bandwagon" effect in the region. But the speed and success of this war paved over serious disagreements in strategy and clashes of personality within the Rwanda-Uganda alliance. It was not until the second war in Congo that these disagreements came to the surface; the alliance encountered fierce and unexpected resistance from states in the region, which joined together to "balance" and ultimately stymie the Rwanda-Uganda alliance's second attempt at regime change in Congo. Drawing from interviews with high-ranking Ugandan and Rwandan officials, as well as numerous secondary sources, this paper argues that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was beset by personality clashes between major players in the alliance, strategic disagreements over the ubiquitous "Congo question," and zero-sum economic conflicts of interests, exemplified by the fighting between the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries at Kisangani, which marked the end of the alliance.

## Introduction: Some Key Questions of Alliance Theory

How do states choose between allies and enemies? What forces bring states together or push them apart? Which level—systemic, domestic or individual—should we emphasize when understanding alliance dynamics? This paper examines the factors that brought Rwanda and Uganda together and ultimately which drove them apart, from their first cooperation as guerrillas in the early 1980s, culminating with their ugly breakup at the turn of the twentieth century as occupiers in a foreign land. But first, some theoretical points must be clarified.

First, what is an alliance?<sup>1</sup> Here I use Walt's definition from his seminal work on alliance theory; an alliance is "a formal or informal relationship of security cooperation between two or more sovereign states" which "assumes some level of commitment and an exchange of benefits for both parties; severing the relationship or failing to honor the agreement would presumably cost something."<sup>2</sup> I modify the definition only as it relates to sovereign states; I argue that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance actually existed before either side represented incumbent power in their countries. I argue further that it was their intimate cooperation as

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v15/v15i2a2.pdf>

guerrillas and exiles fighting for their survival that constituted an alliance. Following Dittmer's alliance logic, neither side could achieve its goals without the other.<sup>3</sup>

Second, why do alliances form? Schroeder identifies three causes: to oppose a threat; to accommodate a threat through a "pact of restraint"; or to provide great powers with a "tool of management" over weaker states.<sup>4</sup> The first cause endures throughout the life of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, but the other two do not—either because Uganda had enormous difficulties in restraining its ally Rwanda or because the relative distribution of power between the two allies was not significant enough for one to be able to manage the other.

Third, how do states respond when confronted by a serious external threat? According to realist theory, states can essentially choose from two options: to "balance"—self-strengthening or forming alliances in order to prevent stronger powers from dominating them; or to "bandwagon"—to align with the foreign threat itself.<sup>5</sup> This question is obviously crucial to understanding the formation and duration of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, but it also influences how states in the region responded to the actions of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance itself. And here is where it gets tricky for the policymaker: a mistaken hypothesis—for example, expecting other states to bandwagon but which actually balance—can doom a grand strategy, jeopardize a state's security and, in the most nightmarish of possibilities, result in being dominated or wiped out altogether.

Fourth, does aggression become easier with each new conquest, or does resistance harden at a faster rate? The bandwagoning school of thought no doubt believes that, to use one of its proponent's expression, "nothing succeeds like success."<sup>6</sup> By contrast, the balancing school of thought, to paraphrase neo-realist godfather Waltz, winning leads to losing; in other words, states generally oppose rather than join aggressive powers.<sup>7</sup> The latter group sees balancing as the rule and bandwagoning as the exception.

Fifth, which factors cause a state to bandwagon or balance? Here a short critique of the literature is needed. The collective goods literature is useful in explaining the distribution of burdens within existing alliances, but fall short on questions of why states form alliances in the first place.<sup>8</sup> Game theory faces a similar weakness, focusing on the distribution of power and the structure of possible payoffs, but, as Snyder admits, "game theory does not predict who will align with whom."<sup>9</sup> Both overlook several key variables, such as geographical proximity, ideological affinity and elite perceptions. So, it's not merely a question of relative gains, as realists stress, but also one of the amorphous perceptions. As we will see, elite perceptions—and relations between elites themselves—were crucial in determining the direction and actions of not only the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, but also reactions to the Rwanda-Uganda alliance.

### Some Methodological Issues

A paper analyzing the evolution and dynamics of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance inherently runs into a number of methodological challenges, and so requires a necessary dose of modesty from my part. First, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, like so many in international politics, was never formalized or delineated in an official document, and so is open to debate. I define it by the substance of its cooperation, especially in war-making from the early 1980s to nearly the end of the twentieth century.

Second, does the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, the idiosyncratic product of its unique environment and history, actually provide any insight to the existing literature on alliances? Or does this focus on a singular case study in a particular region where the sovereign state's

capacity is inherently weak, executive power excessively concentrated, and the lines between interstate and intrastate muddled, present an insurmountable barrier? Then again, much of these limitations apply European diplomatic history, which nevertheless provides the bread and butter for most international relations theory.

Third, how to deal with the relative dearth of literature on central Africa when compared to other regions? Likewise, connecting the alliance theory with central African facts also proved challenging, and as such, I generally avoided the confusing practice of lunging to make historical and inter-regional parallels; the paper thus has a heavy narrative base, with theory and analysis injected therein.

Fourth, and perhaps most challenging, how reliable are these primary sources? I've tried to treat the elite testimony provided to me with caution, aware of the Kiswahili proverb that "one does not kill oneself for what people say" (*hawamfii mtu kinywa*). While in Rwanda and Uganda, I conducted interviews principally with what could be called decision-makers—presidential advisers, diplomats, generals, and cabinet ministers—as well as the journalists, academics, and opposition members who tirelessly sought to keep them honest. The constant need to cross-reference interviews through published materials and other interviews required constant vigilance.<sup>10</sup> Their testimony is not cited blindly. I am satisfied to say that a heavy portion of this work draws on interviews with high-ranking military, political, and diplomatic officials whose names I can cite openly, and so avoiding the infuriating practice of repeatedly citing "author's confidential interview" without providing any further details—a practice that only serves to summon the reader's skepticism anyway.

### Origins of the Alliance, 1959-94

*"The central pattern that recurs time and again is one in which ethnic polarization paves the way for political exclusion, exclusion eventually leading to insurrection; insurrection to repression, and repression to massive flows of refugees and internally displaced persons, which in turn become the vectors of further instability"* —René Lemarchand,<sup>11</sup>

With this concise analysis, Lemarchand successfully identifies the self-generating force behind many of the region's gravest security headaches at the time—Rwanda's many refugee crises (1959-94), Rwanda's cataclysmic genocide of 1994, Burundi's semi-genocide and civil war (1993-2003), nagging insurgencies in Uganda and Sudan, and both Congo wars. This pattern of ethnic polarization, persecution, and population flow together provided the necessary conditions for the Rwanda-Uganda alliance to take form.

This paper argues that, in the early 1980s, the foundation of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was laid, not between sovereign states, but rather between a group of Rwandan exiles and the tiny guerrilla force of Yoweri Museveni in the Ugandan hinterland. It was an alliance born out of the common necessity of self-preservation. Although the highpoint of the alliance and sudden collapse happened just years apart at the end of the twentieth century, the alliance's roots actually reach back decades to the early independence period.

Persecution of Rwanda's minority Tutsi population, starting with the so-called "Hutu Revolution" in 1959 on the eve of Rwanda's independence, sparked the mass exodus of Tutsi into neighboring states. Without this ethnic cleansing masquerading as a revolution, the series of cataclysmic events that would later afflict the region, none more ghastly or well known than Rwanda's genocide of 1994, would have been impossible. So long as the



majority Hutu dominated Rwanda's government and economy, the minority Tutsi could never feel safe or welcome in Rwanda. In Uganda, after a relatively secure existence under the otherwise calamitous regime of Idi Amin (1971-79), the Rwandans suffered severe persecution under Milton Obote's second regime (1980-85). Persecution from the "Obote II" regime naturally drove Rwandan Tutsi exiles, many living in Uganda since their expulsion from Rwanda in the late 1950s and early 1960s, to join Museveni's guerrilla force, the National Resistance Movement (NRM). During Uganda's "bush war" (1981-85), this force astonishingly grew from a dozen bush warriors to a formidable organization of many thousands, and ultimately seized power in 1986.<sup>12</sup> It was during this baptism by fire that the sons of Rwandan refugees not only fought for their survival, but also gained valuable guerrilla experience, which they would later use for their armed return to Rwanda.

Among Museveni's very first recruits were two talented Rwandan Tutsi, Fred Rwigyema and Paul Kagame, the latter the son of a Rwandan Tutsi refugee. It was only natural, therefore, that the Rwandans, some of whom had fought with Museveni since the beginning, were rewarded with high positions in Museveni's security establishment after 1986: Rwigyema became Museveni's *de facto* number two, Kagame became Museveni's spy chief, and various other high-ranking positions were filled by more of Museveni's Rwandan brothers-in-arms. But the government's high-profile inclusion of Rwandans—no matter how long they had been in Uganda and no matter their sacrifices in the "bush war"—was bound to provoke a clash among Uganda's xenophobic segments, who had a very negative answer to Museveni's famous rhetorical question—"What's wrong with being Rwandan?"<sup>13</sup> In the late 1980s, it was clear that the Rwandan "refugee warriors"—the vast majority of whom were Tutsi—had outlived their welcome in Uganda.<sup>14</sup> As a result, they organized themselves as the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and in late 1990 invaded Rwanda. Taking with them gear from Ugandan military depots, it seemed that Museveni had decided it was better to turn a blind eye for the sake of allegiance to his former comrades-in-arms as well as to maintain plausible deniability with the Hutu regime in Rwanda.

The goals of the RPF invasion were modest: force the Hutu dictatorship into reform and allow Tutsi exiles back into the country. But this Tutsi-led invasion re-ignited Hutu fears of Tutsi enslavement, which the well-oiled Hutu propaganda machine had disseminated effectively for years. The war dragged on for nearly four years as a protracted, low-level guerrilla struggle, with the RPF relegated to pockets in Rwanda's mountainous northwest. In the meantime, anti-Tutsi violence within Rwanda spiked, stoked by Hutu supremacist propaganda. These assassinations and small-scale massacres eventually culminated in the hundred days of genocide from April to July 1994 in which some 800,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed.<sup>15</sup>

Amid the chaos and carnage, the RPF seized the capital Kigali in July 1994, halting the genocide and driving the Hutu supremacists from power. As a result, the defeated *Forces Armées Rwandaises* (FAR), genocidal militias, and government officials together fled Rwanda during July-August 1994 behind a shield of terrified peasants, about two million Hutu in all.<sup>16</sup> This confusing mass of refugee, rebel and murderer together settled into what soon became mega-camps just beyond the Rwandan border in the Kivu provinces of eastern Congo (known as Zaire until 1997). From these camps, they organized an invasion to recapture power in Rwanda.<sup>17</sup> By late 1994, it was clear that neither Rwanda's civil war nor genocide was over, but instead dangerously paused, waiting for the next bout of violence.

True to Lemarchand's description of the general pattern of armed conflict in the African Great Lakes, this dangerous cycle of ethnic polarization leading to political exclusion, then



to armed insurrection, and finally to armed repression was thus also a major driving force behind the Rwanda-Uganda alliance. At the same time as the defeated forces of the Hutu dictatorship fled Rwanda into eastern Congo-Zaire and into Tanzania during mid-1994, Museveni's government in Uganda was facing its own rebel threat. The motley of rebels fighting along Uganda's 765-kilometer-long border with Congo-Zaire—a conflict with no connection to the Hutu-Tutsi apocalypse in Rwanda—held grievances against the “southerner”-dominated Christian government of Yoweri Museveni.<sup>18</sup> Even years after Museveni's bush warriors succeeded in taking the capital Kampala in January 1986—with substantial help from Rwandan refugees in Uganda no doubt—Museveni's government nevertheless had failed to control large swathes of Uganda's northern and western regions.

Uganda's anti-government rebels, grouped together as the inappropriately named Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), received training and matériel from Sudan and shelter in Congo-Zaire. Both of these sources of support were easy enough to explain: for Sudan, it had long been engaged in a proxy with Uganda, who had supported Sudan's southern rebels in that decades-long war; for Congo-Zaire, the vast expanse of territory was largely beyond the administrative grip of the country's dysfunctional regime of Mobutu Sésé Seko.<sup>19</sup> Whatever the case, the ADF in the mid-1990s brought terror down on Ugandan civilians and stymied the government forces sent to squash them. Through the mid-1990s, Uganda's insurgent problem in the west was getting worse. This threat is crucial to understanding Uganda's interest in a continued alliance with Rwanda, especially Uganda's eventual participation in Rwanda's war in Congo-Zaire.

### **Close Allies, Different Worldviews**

Before moving on to discuss the alliance's fateful move into Congo-Zaire, we need to elaborate on how the RPF and NRM, despite many of their leaders' intimate ties since the early 1980s, saw the world in very different ways. For the RPF, no event was more impacting than the genocide of 1994. To this, we must acknowledge that it was the RPF that stopped the genocide, not UN peacekeepers or any intervening foreign power. Western media broadcast images of forlorn Hutu refugees streaming across Rwanda's borders, never explaining that some of these “refugees” had earlier jettisoned their bloodstained machetes. So Western viewers, generally unencumbered by any grasp of the region's idiosyncrasies, naturally came to believe that these two million “refugees” fleeing Rwanda were themselves the victims of genocide.<sup>20</sup> With the plight of the refugees the new focus of international attention, a monumental aid operation was mounted by UN agencies and hundreds of NGOs.<sup>21</sup> The world's altruism suddenly poured into the refugee camps around Rwanda's borders in the form of food, blankets, syringes, and tents—not into Rwanda itself, where whatever Tutsi survivors remained.

All this served to exacerbate the Rwandan Patriotic Front's profound sense of victimization, which had begun with the tragic “Hutu Revolution” and widespread persecution of Rwandan Tutsi in 1959, and continued through the trauma of living in refugee camps in neighboring countries.<sup>22</sup> The sense of victimization became unique to ethnic Rwandans living in Uganda as a result of unrelenting discrimination, which culminated in anti-Rwandan pogroms under the second Obote regime of the early 1980s. So, fearing for their lives, many of Uganda's ethnic Rwandans joined Museveni's NRM. They later formed the core of the RPF. Despite having contributed to the NRM's bush war victory in 1986, Museveni apparently reneged on an alleged promise of Ugandan citizenship for his

Rwandan comrades-in-arms—still a matter of debate and rumor. As a result, these ethnic Rwandans' sense of distrust could only get stronger. When, in response to the RPF invasion in late 1990, France, Belgium, and Mobutu's Congo-Zaire came to the rescue of the Hutu dictatorship, the RPF leadership only naturally believed that the world was against them.

But all of these betrayals and conspiracies, real or perceived, could not compare to the traumatic climax that was the 1994 genocide. Through the RPF lens, the international community did nothing to stop the murder of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi. It was not an altogether inaccurate judgment, but it was the RPF's victim complex that simplified a profoundly complex issue—humanitarian intervention—into essentially one of “us versus them.” It was not just that, though. After the genocide, foreign donors exorcised their guilty demons by lavishing food, medicine and clothing not on the survivors of genocide, but on the Hutu mass murderer “refugees” in the camps. The RPF worldview understandably grew more suspicious—and their behavior more and more violent. This tendency to see violence and self-help as the best means to achieving goals would inject a dangerous and divisive element into its alliance with Uganda.

By the time the RPF took Kigali in early July 1994, three-fourths of Rwandan Tutsi, well over half a million in all, had already been murdered.<sup>23</sup> That meant that, in a country whose territory was slightly smaller than that of the state of Maryland, the family and friends of these young and impressionable RPF soldiers were inevitably among the victims. Seeing the corpses scattered along the routes of Rwanda's hinterland was no doubt a devastatingly personal ordeal for RPF soldiers who had come down from the hills. As many who lived through it told me during my interviews in the country, the feeling was almost beyond comprehension for the outside observer.<sup>24</sup> The piercing anger and thirst for revenge inevitably broke through walls of discipline; revenge killings after the genocide were very common.<sup>25</sup>

The unparalleled horror of the genocide—Hutu brutality, Tutsi collaboration, and international indifference—together formed the fundamental reference point for the RPF worldview. The RPF came to expect betrayal in every interaction and saw enemies at every turn. Self-help, already in the genetic makeup of the Tutsi-dominated RPF, now became the organization's guiding principle. This mistrustful worldview inevitably infected the RPF's perception of its oldest ally, Uganda, too, and thus influenced the bearing of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance.

For the NRM, there was no cataclysmic event like Rwanda's genocide or any singular moment that defined its worldview. Instead, the unique dynamics of Uganda's bush war (1981-85) forced Museveni's tiny rebel outfit, fighting in the lush countryside not far from the capital Kampala, to utilize a flexible guerrilla war strategy in which the rebels ceaselessly communicated and compromised with local leaders as means to win popular support against what had become at best an incompetent and at worst a ruthless Obote regime.<sup>26</sup> Without any meaningful foreign support and having only opened a foreign front in the final days of the war, Museveni had succeeded in transforming the NRM, true to its name, into a genuinely popular resistance movement. After seizing power in 1986, Museveni then moved to bring Western powers, including the international financial institutions that they dominate, into his broad coalition.<sup>27</sup> So successful was Museveni's transition from guerrilla strategist to statesman that Uganda's prolonged macroeconomic success turned the country into one of Africa's handful of success stories.<sup>28</sup> This political capital with Western powers would serve the Rwanda-Uganda alliance during its later campaigns in Congo-Zaire.

### Highpoint of the Alliance, 1994-98

While the first forms of collaboration of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance were initially between refugees and guerrillas, after the RPF victory in July 1994, the alliance came to represent incumbent power, binding two sovereign states determined to extinguish security threats to their rule.

As Uganda's insurgent problem worsened into the mid-1990s, Rwanda's civil war was stuck at a dangerous pause. And eastern Congo-Zaire was at the center of both problems, providing shelter for the armed enemies of the Rwandan and Ugandan governments. Facing down these acute security threats, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, now representing government power as the NRM in Uganda and the RPF in Rwanda, again found sufficient reason to cooperate. This time, however, they would cooperate beyond their borders. From mid-1994 onward, the alliance was bound to gravitate toward the unresolved "Congo question," while all the complicated personal histories lingered beneath the surface.

The Rwanda-Uganda alliance must be put into the unique context of a region in the midst of profound—and often violent—change at the time. Refugee crises, guerrilla insurgencies, and state failure in the African Great Lakes region all took place within a broader context of instability and violent conflict. In the 1990s, a rash of civil wars stretched from the Horn of Africa in the northeast all the way to Angola and Congo-Brazzaville in the southwest. Congo-Zaire, a territory four times the size of France, acted as the vast and decaying center.<sup>29</sup> Of Congo-Zaire's nine neighbors, no less than seven were beset by armed insurgencies or embroiled in outright civil war.<sup>30</sup>

Among central Africa's broad zone of conflict, nowhere was more volatile or more violent than the region's vortex: the dense "triangle" of Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo-Zaire's Kivu provinces. Altogether a micro-region no bigger in size than Cambodia or the state of Washington, it was nonetheless a turbulent regional crossroads with a violent past and seemingly all the ingredients for more violence. The population of the triangle was not only young—the majority under twenty years-old—it was also desperately poor, with per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 1998 below \$400 US, their individual national economies all heavily indebted, and negative economic growth everywhere. At nearly twenty million people—by far Africa's most densely populated micro-region—the vast majority of the population consisted of small-scale peasant farmers.<sup>31</sup> With land pressure ubiquitous in the triangle, land pressure was the greatest in resource-poor Burundi and Rwanda with virtually every cultivable piece of land under hoe.<sup>32</sup> This neo-Malthusian explanation of the 1994 Rwandan genocide became particularly influential in the German-speaking world.<sup>33</sup> For Collier, champion of the controversial "greed and grievance" school of thought, the micro-region's high poverty levels, low incomes, and low education levels, all within an agrarian setting, made the opportunity cost for violence high.<sup>34</sup>

By the mid-1990s, the region was submerged in violence and human suffering: Rwanda was decimated by genocide and an unfinished civil war; Burundi was embroiled in ethnic war and state failure; and the Kivus were inundated with arms, aid, and refugees—Rwandan ex-military and *génocidaires* among them—and a central government in far-away Kinshasa with neither the will nor the capacity to do anything about it.<sup>35</sup> Being so close to this cauldron, Congo-Zaire's multilayered crisis was doomed to grow more convoluted, more extensive, and considerably more violent. The huge influx of refugees into the Kivus—50,000 from Burundi in 1993 and 1.2 million from Rwanda in mid-1994—brought these tensions to a boiling point. It also meant that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, complicated as

they were by historical baggage and differing worldviews, would feel the tremors of a region in the midst of tectonic change.

Ethnic Tutsi, though this time in eastern Congo-Zaire, would again provide the catalyst for change—or at least the pretext, in this case. The *Rwandophones* (speakers of Kinyarwanda, the language of Rwanda) living in the Kivus, had long been suspected of being loyal only to Rwanda. During this Hutu-Tutsi tumult then, these *Rwandophones* in eastern Congo-Zaire became targets of harassment and killing, mainly done by the ex-FAR and *génocidaire* militias who had inundated eastern Congo-Zaire after the genocide.<sup>36</sup> It seemed like murderous distraction when compared to their greater goal of returning to power in Rwanda, but nevertheless one that they deemed necessary. It was not long before the threat of genocide of Congolese-Zairian Tutsi became real, especially for a previously obscure, tiny minority group called the Banyamulenge (people from Mulenge), a people apparently of Rwandan Tutsi descent.<sup>37</sup>

For the RPF regime in Rwanda, convinced that their only hope lay in self-help and ready to deal the fatal blow to the ex-FAR and Hutu militia just across the border in eastern Congo-Zaire, now was the time to act. If the pretext of genocide against Congolese Tutsi emboldened the Tutsi-dominated RPF regime to act, we cannot overlook what African Great Lakes scholar Reyntjens cynically called the “genocide credit,” which the RPF had earned as a result of the international community’s inaction during the Rwandan genocide just a few years before.<sup>38</sup> Now was the time to cash in. Under the skilled military strategist and de facto Rwandan strongman, Paul Kagame, the RPF seized the pretext of the so-called “Banyamulenge rebellion” in eastern Congo-Zaire to get down to the real business of waging war on ex-FAR and Hutu *génocidaire* militias in the nearby mega-camps.<sup>39</sup> For Uganda, eyeing its own threats across the border in eastern Congo-Zaire, it was clear the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was ready to get imperialistic in the region.

Careful of what it could mean to send its troops across sovereign borders, however artificial and undefended those borders may have been, the propaganda machines in Kigali and Kampala sent out shameless denials throughout late 1996 that the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries were in fact the mind and muscle behind the “Banyamulenge rebellion” in eastern Congo-Zaire. The reality was more nefarious. Over the final months of 1996, Rwandan forces hunted hundreds of thousands of ex-FAR, militia and Hutu refugees fleeing west through the dense and hostile Congolese rainforest, committing atrocities of all sorts along the way.<sup>40</sup> If Rwanda’s genocide of Tutsi was ever avenged, it was avenged in the Congo basin, beyond the cameras of Western media and the sight of aid workers.

Meanwhile, the Ugandans were busy with their own cleanup operation, sweeping through northeastern Congo-Zaire and sending ADF insurgents scrambling toward southwest Sudan. Anticipating this breakout, the Ugandans called on their southern Sudanese allies, the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), who, at the other end of this broad pincer movement, were ready to deal a knockout blow to the Sudanese-supported ADF.<sup>41</sup>

But it was not enough for Kigali and Kampala to say they weren’t involved, even if events on the ground were clearly trending in their favor. To forestall allegations of violating Congo-Zaire’s sovereignty, Rwandan and Ugandan forces, together with their Congolese Tutsi and anti-Mobutu allies, organized their own liberation outfit, the *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL). In fact, the AFDL was formed weeks after fighting began in eastern Congo-Zaire—and formed in a hotel room in the Rwandan capital no less.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the AFDL was the crucial legal fig leaf for the Rwanda-



Uganda alliance's invasion of Congo-Zaire, furthering the necessary fiction that the Congolese alone had organized and revolted against the Mobutu regime.

So, in late 1996, the unsettled conflicts of the Rwanda-Burundi-Kivu triangle micro-region spilled into one big, bloody, and confusing war. And the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was at the great war's very center. The Rwandan and Ugandan militaries occupied eastern Congo-Zaire, having effectively regionalized the war, operating beneath the Congolese façade of the AFDL. In late 1996 and early 1997, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was running on all cylinders—military, political, and diplomatic.

At this point, the alliance faced the tempting possibility of revising its goals. Thus far, the war could justifiably be understood as a war of self-defense, with the Rwanda-Uganda alliance having carved out a *cordon sanitaire* in lawless eastern Congo-Zaire. But the lure of territorial conquest was not to be underestimated. The three decade-old regime of Mobutu Sésé Seko was no doubt a thorn in the sides of Museveni and Kagame, even if for different reasons. During Rwanda's civil war, Mobutu had responded to a call for help from the Hutu dictatorship under Habyarimana, against whom Kagame and the RPF had been fighting. By contrast, the source of Mobutu's guilt with Museveni and the NRM had more to do with Mobutu's passive acceptance of Ugandan rebels, most notably the ADF, in its far east. As then Ugandan defense forces commander told me: "Anybody could do literally anything in eastern Congo."<sup>43</sup> For Museveni, Mobutu's unholy, tough largely ineffective, alliance with Sudan, long-time Ugandan enemy, did not make Museveni see Mobutu in a more positive light either.

The blueprint for overthrowing the decrepit Mobutu regime was apparently drawn up when Museveni first convened secret talks in November 1994, with many of Mobutu's regional enemies in attendance.<sup>44</sup> Now, with Rwandan and Ugandan forces occupying a large swathe of eastern Congo-Zaire, and with the AFDL providing a Congolese veneer, the plan finally appeared workable. Mobutu, that corrupt and ineffectual ulcer on Africa's new, supposedly democratic image, contrasted with what Reno called "reform rebels" as represented by Museveni and Kagame.<sup>45</sup>

Aside from the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, whose grievances against Mobutu have already been mentioned, the other most important anti-Mobutu force chomping at the bit for regime change in Kinshasa was Angola. Its MPLA regime in the capital Luanda, then in its third decade of war against the indefatigable rebel group UNITA, wanted to deal the fatal blow to Mobutu, who had long provided bases and supply lines for UNITA across the border in Congo-Zaire.<sup>46</sup>

For the realist in international relations theory, perennially focused on the balance of power, a trend of "bandwagoning" seemed to be catching on. As alliance theorist Stephen Walt put it: "states are attracted to strength: the more powerful the state and the more clearly this power is demonstrated, the more likely others are to ally with it."<sup>47</sup> Bandwagoning with the Rwanda-Uganda alliance then seemed both defensive and offensive in nature; for the former, it meant preserving one's independence in the face of a potential threat, whether the RPF against the continued Hutu threat, the NRM against the ADF rebels or the MPLA in Angola against UNITA. For all of the above, a successful war against Mobutu held the promise of sharing in the fruits of victory, in particular replacing Mobutu with a more compliant leader in an expansive state with which all of these participants shared a border.

Actually, the war against Mobutu, led by the Rwanda-Uganda alliance but blessed by Angola, turned out to be anything but a regional heavyweight bout. To the advancing anti-

Mobutu forces, Mobutu's bloated *Forces Armées Zairoises* (FAZ), decimated by decades of corruption, indiscipline, and ineffective leadership, simply refused to fight. In fact, Congo-Zaire's state structures were in the process of their final yet total collapse, a process begun arguably over a decade before.<sup>48</sup> So Rwanda and Uganda found themselves at the center of a broad regional alliance determined to overthrow Mobutu. The formidable anti-Mobutu coalition made it clear that, after over three decades in power, Mobutu had made far more enemies than friends. It took only seven months of war to overthrow his thirty-three year-old regime.

Let us make it clear: the First Congo War (October 1996-May 1997) that overthrew the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko was not the product of some Anglo-Saxon conspiracy, engineered in Washington and carried out by its clients in the region. Neither Kagame nor Museveni nor dos Santos nor Kabila were Washington's puppets or proxies. As Julius Nyerere, Tanzanian president and de facto godfather of a reformed Africa, proudly called the war that overthrew Mobutu the work of Africans, not outsiders.<sup>49</sup> Rather than a grand conspiracy, a deeper phenomenon appeared to be at work: "Africans solving African problems" in the form of classical territorial imperialism, which had become fashionable—or at least permissible—by the mid-1990s. Thus, the final years of the twentieth century, just like those a hundred years earlier, was a period of imperialism in Africa. Only this time it was African states invading and conquering other African states.

Although the First Congo War—often called Congo's "War of Liberation"—eventually took on an interstate appearance, the real sources of instability were undeniably intrastate in nature, exploding from the real cauldron of central Africa: the micro-region of the Rwanda-Burundi-Kivu triangle. These domestic conflicts combined to cross borders and spill into the region, thus becoming international, and splitting into what in effect became two broad camps—those fighting for Mobutu and those fighting against Mobutu. And the latter far outweighed the former. This melting of conflicts into a broader bipolar division certainly made it easier for Rwanda and Uganda, already with a history of cooperation in violence, again to band together with common goals: first, to pacify security threats in eastern Congo-Zaire; and second, to topple Mobutu and install a reliable partner in Kinshasa able to secure the country's eastern borders with Uganda and Rwanda. However, these common goals binding the Rwanda-Uganda alliance were far from obvious; disagreements over strategy and conflicts of interest were lurking just beneath the surface.

Several commentators on the international relations of central Africa and the Congo wars have accurately identified this seemingly magnetic bipolar alignment as "the enemy of my enemy is my friend."<sup>50</sup> But each participant never lost sight of its true enemy: the RPF against the Hutu threat, the NRM against the ADF, the MPLA in Angola against UNITA, and so on. That also meant that the core conflict of the First Congo War—that is, the RPF's inconclusive war with ex-FAR and *génocidaire* militias—actually had nothing to do with who ruled Kinshasa. That changed when Hutu murderers sought refuge in eastern Congo-Zaire and received some sort of blessing, first from Mobutu and later from Laurent Kabila. It was this development that convinced the RPF and their Ugandan allies, whose own insurgents continually found refuge in eastern Congo-Zaire and supplies from Sudan, to push for regime change in Kinshasa and squash the problem at its source.

Lemarchand correctly elaborated on that hard-core realist principle, but with an important ethnic tinge: "the friends of the Tutsi are our friends, and the friends of the Hutu are our enemies."<sup>51</sup> This became a guiding principle for all participants—state and non-state alike—involved in the wars of the Great Lakes. During Uganda's 1981-85 bush war,

although certainly not the central cause of that war, this ethnic element was again apparent as Rwandan exiles swelled the ranks of Museveni's Tutsi-friendly guerrilla force to fight the anti-Tutsi Obote regime. By the 1990s, from the tightly compact triangle of Rwanda, Burundi, and the Kivus, political and ethnic violence spilled across borders, inevitably creating a broader game of cross-border alliances with much greater stakes in which the ubiquitous need for survival increasingly outweighed all other concerns and thus created alliances of all sorts.<sup>52</sup>

In the First Congo War, Rwanda and Uganda again made common cause, this time as incumbent regimes seeking to disperse security threats from their turbulent frontiers with Congo-Zaire. Rwanda used the pretext of protecting minority Tutsi—the Banyamulenge people—to intervene militarily in eastern Congo-Zaire. But let us not get carried with official narratives from Kampala and especially Kigali, which justify this as exclusively a war of self-defense. Instead, the tempting possibility of projecting power into Congo-Zaire, their rich and pitiable neighbor, was part of the calculation from the beginning—if the opportunity presented itself. What is more likely is that imperial conquest, however modest, was always secondary to the overarching goal of dealing completely with the *génocidaire* threat and ending Rwanda's civil war once and for all. Mobutu's overthrow in May 1997 was the welcome byproduct of this invasion.

The successful conclusion of the First Congo War marked the highpoint of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance. It turned both Rwanda and Uganda into important regional actors in the mid-1990s, whose alliance could apparently decide the leadership of territorially bigger and economically richer states and an alliance with which other states in the region would bandwagon. But their history of cooperation in violence was not yet finished, and it soon became clear that removing Mobutu had actually created as many problems as it had solved.

### The Alliance in Quagmire, 1998-99

Rwanda and Uganda, despite being landlocked, poor, heavily indebted, and peripheral in the international system, had become the core of the broad regional coalition that overthrew the Mobutu regime. Congolese scholar Nzongola-Ntalaja captured the greatest irony of the Congo wars: "Lilliputian states the size of Congo's smallest provinces, such as Uganda, or even that of a district, such as Rwanda, [could] take it upon themselves to impose rulers in Kinshasa and invade, occupy and loot the territory of their giant neighbor."<sup>53</sup> How was this possible?

The comprehensive decay of Congo-Zaire's state structures and economy—the handiwork of three decades of Mobutu rule—provided the opportunity for Rwanda and Uganda to extend their influence well beyond their borders. More disturbingly, though, state failure in Congo-Zaire allowed the incandescent conflicts of the African Great Lakes, a region of highly heterogeneous populations whose distributions do not fit neatly within border limits, to spill into the Congo basin and ultimately result in a dizzying series of cross-border alliances between state and non-state actors. Central Africa in the 1990s thus proved what has essentially become a truism of intrastate war: a collapse of governance is likely to cause civil conflict just as civil conflict is likely to cause a collapse of governance. Its consequences, especially in eastern Congo-Zaire, were disastrous.

With Rwanda and Uganda as the *eminence grise* behind the anti-Mobutu AFDL coalition, the hard-bitten Marxist bush warrior Laurent-Désiré Kabila became the new Congolese president in May 1997.<sup>54</sup> That the relatively obscure Kabila became leader of post-Mobutu

Congo was no foregone conclusion—and did not happen without a fair amount of byzantine intrigue.<sup>55</sup> After having been invited by Rwandan and Ugandan leaders to participate in the Congolese façade for the anti-Mobutu rebellion, by the time the capital Kinshasa fell to the rebels, Kabila had effectively clawed his way to the top of the rebel alliance. Also among the rebel leadership was ardent Congolese nationalist André Kisase Ngandu—widely recognized as “Kampala’s man” in the AFDL. From the outset, Kisase Ngandu was regarded as the only real threat to Kabila’s dominance of the rebel alliance. But Kisase Ngandu’s fierce nationalist streak, not to mention the open secret of his connection to the Ugandan intelligence apparatus, apparently left his Rwandan minders ill at ease. Gérard Prunier believes that Kisase Ngandu’s assassination was apparently done by Rwandans with Kabila’s approval.<sup>56</sup> And that suspicion was widely held in Kampala, too, as my interviews with Ugandan officials indicated.

So, in a case of perception trumping reality, Kisase Ngandu’s assassination was seen as exemplifying just how far Rwanda would go to control the rebels—even at the expense of their Ugandan allies. Rwanda’s behavior in the war against Mobutu had shown that it would leave no meaningful task to the Congolese—or to the Ugandans for that matter. When Rwanda wanted something done in Congo-Zaire, they would do it themselves. So, it shouldn’t surprise us that the RPF’s self-help nature, born of betrayal and distrust, would steadily contaminate its alliance with Uganda, the latter which seemed repeatedly relegated to a position of junior partner.

To make matters worse for Rwanda, the Faustian pact it had brokered with Kabila was not without its own troubles. Rwanda continued to do the heavy lifting while Kabila cashed in, first as AFDL spokesperson and then as rebel leader and ultimately as Congolese president. It was not long before Rwanda felt that Kabila was not holding up his end of the bargain. Thus, what began as Rwanda’s violent investment to cultivate a pliant post-Mobutu successor, ostensibly to defend Rwanda’s interests in Kinshasa, increasingly appeared more like a case of the client skillfully manipulating his patrons for his own gain.

Regardless of their differences on the Congo question, it soon became abundantly clear that neither Rwanda nor Uganda—nor Kabila, for that matter—had yet fully appreciated the monumental postwar task of resurrecting Congo’s state structures, a task that was absolutely essential to restore regional stability and economic development. The alliance was quickly learning in Congo that, to paraphrase an old Chinese dynastic saying, one cannot administer on horseback. Actually, getting rid of Mobutu was just one of many problems within the bigger, more daunting “Congo question.” So, to the chagrin of the Rwandan and Ugandan leaderships, the myriad of security cancers in eastern Congo continued to fester—the Hutu threat to the RPF regime first among them.

As if that was not enough; the alliance’s client, Congo’s new president Laurent Kabila, now felt the time was right to strike an independent course. Kabila soon became another source of tension in the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, whose leaders were divided over how to deal with their hardheaded client. Only later would it become known that, early on, there were deep strategic differences between the Rwandan and Ugandan leadership over how to deal with Kabila—disagreements that actually stretched back to late 1996.<sup>57</sup>

How did the Rwandan and Ugandan leaders, successful military strategists and state-builders themselves, understand Kabila’s role in resolving the key questions of post-Mobutu Congo? Here again, both Kagame and Museveni drew from their own experiences of guerrilla war and alliance-building. Ugandan president Museveni made no secret that he feared that too much foreign influence on the Congolese rebels would obviate the need for



the rebels to make tough choices, learn from their mistakes, and work for popular legitimacy; in short, too much foreign influence would doom the rebellion, a point repeated to me by several of his military deputies.<sup>58</sup> Museveni was informed by his own experience during the Ugandan bush war in the early 1980s in which he tirelessly brokered compromises and cultivated grassroots support for the sake of internal cohesion. Unsurprisingly then, in Congo Museveni preferred to help Congolese develop their own rebellion, win popular support, and eventually liberate their own country.<sup>59</sup> A part of this interpretation is no doubt historical revisionism from Uganda's official establishment, sugarcoating what was at times a ghastly civil war. But for a rebel outfit that began with less than twenty bush warriors, including a few Rwandan exiles, and ultimately grew to a force of many thousands capable of overthrowing an internationally recognized government, there must be some secret to Museveni's success.

By contrast, Rwanda saw every problem in Congo as a nail that needed to be hammered—and Rwanda would naturally be the one doing the hammering. It was no doubt a product of the RPF's own experience—that not even allies can be trusted and that, when something needs done, better to do it alone. A Congolese rebel leader captured this difference in strategy: "Uganda is [in eastern Congo] as a mid-wife to Congolese liberation. The Rwandans want to have the baby themselves!"<sup>60</sup> Again, a grain of salt is needed; to claim the key difference in the alliance's Congo strategy as Rwanda wanting to invade and occupy, while Uganda wanted to cultivate and liberate Congo is a careless oversimplification—and likely a propaganda triumph for Kampala. Nevertheless, in general terms, Rwanda's penchant to control its Congolese allies against Uganda's preference to guide the Congolese rebels indeed existed—and its existence gradually deepened the rift already present within the Rwanda-Uganda alliance.

Relations between Kabila, his Ugandan, and especially Rwandan backers met their moment of truth in July 1998. Just over a year after taking power, Kabila, fearing a Rwanda-inspired coup, expelled all Rwandan soldiers and personnel from Congo. The Rubicon now crossed, Kabila reflexively began supporting Rwandan and Ugandan insurgents—the same insurgents against whom he was chosen as rebel leader to fight. Rightly sensing the existential threat to his power from the Rwanda-Uganda alliance, Kabila impulsively moved to balance against his patrons: for his internal balancing strategy, he expelled the ubiquitous Rwandans and fervently began building up his own forces, especially his fiercely loyal *kadogo* (child soldiers).<sup>61</sup> For his external balancing strategy, he supported the Ugandan and Rwandan rebels, especially ex-FAR and the Hutu militias, to weaken his former patrons' relative power.

So, central Africa's ethnic bipolar alignments—enemies of the Hutu on one side, enemies of the Tutsi on the other—were flipped almost overnight. Sensing the window of opportunity closing fast, a group of Congolese mutineers and Rwandan commandoes, led by Kagame's de facto number two James Kaberebe, embarked on a daring cross-country blitzkrieg of Kinshasa. But their attempt to decapitate Kabila's government was in vain.<sup>62</sup> The Second Congo War (August 1998-July 2003) had begun.

Why did Uganda make the fateful decision to support Rwanda and again follow Rwanda into the fray? From my interview with former Ugandan army commander Gen. Jeje Odongo, Uganda's leaders feared that their gains from the First Congo War would be lost if they left Rwanda alone to overthrow Kabila and install a new leader in Kinshasa. Rwanda would presumably have absolute control over Kinshasa's new leaders, leaving Uganda voiceless and, more importantly, its western border insurgent problem unsolved.<sup>63</sup>

Following Odongo's line of reasoning then, it seemed that Uganda believed, firstly, that the Rwandan blitzkrieg would succeed and, secondly, it needed to move fast to join the winning coalition. This rationale seems in line with international realist theorist Rothstein, who said: "Small powers [e.g. Uganda] ... were forced to play a perilous game: moving quickly from the lighter [e.g. Kabila's] to the heavier [e.g. Rwanda's] side of the balance as soon as an apparent victor ... could be discerned."<sup>64</sup> To use the nomenclature of alliance theory, Odongo's interpretation implies a logic of bandwagoning, which in this case appears both defensive and offensive. Odongo's explanation also clarifies, as if there was any doubt, which side of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was more willing to seize the initiative and take—often violent—action.

So, Rwanda was again leading war in Congo, and Uganda was again following Rwanda's lead. And again, Rwanda's heavy involvement in planning and fighting was the result of its leaders' insatiable desire to control their Congolese rebel allies, whatever the cost those rebels would then inevitably pay in terms of legitimacy with the local Congolese population. But unlike during First Congo War a few years earlier, this time the Rwanda-Uganda alliance profoundly underestimated the reaction from states in the region. If the war against Mobutu was seen as a war of liberation, this was doomed to be seen as a war of conquest. Instead of a swift and decisive victory over a demoralized army and bankrupt treasury like the war against Mobutu, the outcome of the war against Kabila was very different—longer-lasting, far bloodier, and far more complicated.

This time the Rwanda-Uganda alliance provoked stiff and unexpected resistance from states in the region; the armed forces of Angola, Zimbabwe, and to a lesser extent Angola's "godson" Namibia, answered Kabila's desperate plea for help in a big way, supplying the manpower, the firepower, and the money needed to keep the Rwandan and Ugandan invaders at bay.<sup>65</sup> The eleventh-hour rescue operation stymied the Rwandan blitzkrieg at the gates of Kinshasa and saved Kabila from certain defeat.

Here, we need to pause to reflect on the core question of alliance theory: when facing a significant external threat, is it more common for states to balance—to form an alliance in order to prevent stronger powers from dominating them—or to bandwagon—to align with the source of danger? As Walt argued in his seminal book on alliances, "balancing is far more common than bandwagoning."<sup>66</sup> The Rwanda-Uganda alliance would learn this the hard way.

Why then did Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia decide to intervene and balance against the Rwanda-Uganda alliance? First, let us apply some alliance theory: these three countries came to Kabila's defense, no doubt the weaker side in relative terms, which thereby increased the influence of the three countries—Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia—within the alliance in both absolute and relative terms. In absolute terms, their participation made the alliance stronger. In relative terms, because their capabilities (e.g. military, resources, competence) were unquestionably greater than Kabila's government, they were more influential in the alliance. By contrast, to ally or bandwagon with the Rwanda-Uganda alliance—the stronger side in relative terms—would have given these three countries little influence, since they would contribute comparatively little to the coalition. Kenneth Waltz captured the logic of the Angolan, Zimbabwean, and Namibian leaders facing the threat from the Rwanda-Uganda alliance: "Secondary states [e.g. Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia], if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side [e.g. Kabila's government]; for it is the stronger side that threatens them. On the weaker side, they are both more appreciated

and safer, provided, of course, that the coalition they form achieves enough defensive or deterrent strength to dissuade adversaries from attacking.”<sup>67</sup>

On another level, the joint intervention from Angola, Zimbabwe, and to a far lesser extent Namibia was seen as the ironic opposite of what apparently motivated Uganda’s decision to support Rwanda in the second war. Whereas Uganda sought to preserve its influence in what seemed certain to be a Congo without Laurent Kabila as its ruler, by contrast, Angola and Zimbabwe wanted to preserve their investment in the Kabila government. For one, Kabila had mortgaged his rebellion against Mobutu with Angolan and Zimbabwean funds, including renegotiating lucrative mining contracts to the benefit of his new patrons.<sup>68</sup> Thus, Kabila’s overthrow very likely would mean a loss in both money and influence for Angola and Zimbabwe in resource-rich Congo.<sup>69</sup>

So, what logic guided Rwanda’s seemingly impulsive decision to rush across the Congo basin and topple the Kabila government? One factor was the speed of power projection, crucial to balance of power theory. Simply, the siege on Kinshasa was designed to overthrow Kabila before he could effectively balance, either internally by mobilizing forces inside the country or externally by finding allies in the region. Another factor was a basic assumption of bandwagoning, which as Walt puts it, “states are attracted to strength: the more powerful the state and the more clearly this power is demonstrated, the more likely others are to ally with it.”<sup>70</sup> Or, to use a bandwagoning proponent’s explanation: “. . . nothing succeeds like success. Momentum accrues to the gainer and accelerates his movement. The appearance of irreversibility of his gains enfeebles one side and stimulates the other all the more.”<sup>71</sup> Using this rationale then, Rwanda sought to make such a speedy and effective show of force so as either to cower states of the region into neutrality or inspire them to join what appeared like the winning side. But this time only Uganda followed.

So, instead of awe and what Healy and Stern called the “ingratiation effect” accompanying the Rwanda-Uganda alliance’s muscle-flexing, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance now led to genuine concern—and ultimately resistance—from states in the region.<sup>72</sup> The source of this fear was the perception that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was an offensive imperialistic alliance, hunting bigger game in central Africa under the banner of the so-called African Renaissance.

On this point, to understand the balancing behavior of Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, we need to elaborate on a broader trend in African international relations in the late 1990s. A general reformist trend, first thrust upon the continent in the early 1980s through the now infamous Washington Consensus and structural adjustment policies, had been gaining momentum over a decade.<sup>73</sup> In the 1990s, this phenomenon brought forth a homegrown byproduct, which became known as the African Renaissance, epitomized by the end of apartheid and birth of a “New South Africa.” This phenomenon wishfully anticipated a buzzword potpourri of democratization, market reforms, and good governance sweeping through Africa.<sup>74</sup> It would be too ambitious to elaborate on the well intentioned but ultimately disappointing evolution of this movement in this paper. Suffice to say, however, it never lived up to expectations.

What is important to this study is how the United States, Britain, and post-apartheid South Africa swooned over the possibility of Rwanda and Uganda, both apparently reformist themselves, bringing this supposed renaissance to the Congo basin. After all, the alliance had already succeeded in eliminating one of Africa’s oldest blights, Mobutu Sésé Seko. The tacit support from the great powers also recognized that Laurent Kabila “had lost his way” and was not the right man to lead post-Mobutu Congo to the promised land of

democratization and market reform.<sup>75</sup> This recognition also made the United States and Britain far more hesitant in again encouraging the Rwanda-Uganda alliance as a catalyst for change in Congo.

Conspiracy theories of a wicked Anglo-American plot using the puppet Rwanda-Uganda alliance to carve into Congo and keep it weak are without evidence and so not worth elaborating, although such theories are wildly popular in Congo's thriving rumor mill. What must be said, though, is that the so-called African Renaissance was inherently antagonistic to the old order of state-led development and "big man" rule, which was represented by the de facto one-party states of Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia. Thus, it was not so much Kabila's regime that Angola, Zimbabwe, and Namibia had come to rescue; much more cynically, it was to defend Africa's incumbent big men from foreign-led regime change. Mobutu's overthrow, so it seemed, was only the beginning.

Museveni and Kagame had profoundly underestimated the resistance that their invasion of Congo—the second one in less than two years—would provoke among leaders in the region. The echoes of falling dominoes in and around the Congo basin, kicked over by the boots of Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers, caused Angola and Zimbabwe—and to a far lesser extent Namibia, Chad, Sudan, and Libya—to take action. The coalition that rallied to Kabila's defense saw the status quo under threat from the revisionist Rwanda-Uganda alliance. Not just that, but this status quo alliance saw bandwagoning with the Rwanda-Uganda alliance as simply too dangerous. It would have required an excessive amount of faith that Rwanda and Uganda, which had already proven unafraid to fight, would humbly discard their aggressive ambitions after overthrowing Kabila. By contrast, joining with Kabila, for all his imperfections, was a safer bet because his survival would depend on the generosity of his allies, especially from Angola and Zimbabwe.

The Rwanda-Uganda alliance's willingness to take risks to improve their position in the regional pecking order and alter the prevailing distribution of power—in this case, imposing their will on Kinshasa, capital of the biggest and potentially richest country in the region—provoked stiff resistance from states in the region. Rwanda's blitzkrieg to overthrow Kabila only served as conclusive proof that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was indeed hegemonic. Beneath the surface, though, the alliance was already beginning to split at the seams. For Kabila's protectors, the exorbitant cost in manpower and resources to resist the Rwanda-Uganda alliance was apparently a price worth paying compared to the perceived costs of conceding to the headstrong alliance, which they saw as committed to extending its influence throughout the region.

A few words must be written on Angola's critical role here. Despite the heavy lifting from the Rwanda-Uganda alliance in the First Congo War, it was the MPLA regime in Angola that acted as Kinshasa's real gatekeeper. Not only did Angola share with Congo-Zaire a porous border of over 2,500 kilometers, but UNITA rebels, the MPLA's archenemy, had for decades found shelter on Congolese territory.<sup>76</sup> And the MPLA had no qualms about fighting in foreign lands against any government that supported UNITA. This became obvious when, not long after the MPLA regime blessed the Rwanda-Uganda alliance's campaign to overthrow Mobutu, they were punishing another of UNITA's supporters, this time on the other side of the Congo River in the civil war of Congo-Brazzaville. Angola, which had once served as lead frontline state—and battleground, for that matter—against hegemonic apartheid South Africa through 1980s, was a state whose enormous resource endowment and decades-long civil war gave it the military capability to project power in the region. More so than any state in the region then, Angola was capable of preserving the



region's balance of power in some African version of Britain's long cherished "splendid isolation" foreign policy. To superimpose Churchill's explanation of this foreign policy onto Africa, it was therefore Angola's duty "to oppose the strongest, most aggressive, most dominating power on the Continent."<sup>77</sup> Likewise, Angola's decision to oppose the Rwanda-Uganda alliance seemed to be acting out Vattel's centuries-old explanation of the balance of power dynamic: "The surest means of preserving this balance of power would be to bring it about that no State should be much superior to the others ... to make a stand against a very powerful sovereign and prevent him from dominating."<sup>78</sup> The Rwanda-Uganda alliance then, at least as it was seen through MPLA eyes in Luanda, was a threat to this balance.

But it was not only the grand strategy of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance that was fundamentally flawed. Both sides—those for and against Kabila—drastically underestimated the strength of their adversaries. As interviews with high-ranking Ugandan and Rwandan military officials revealed to me, the Rwanda-Uganda alliance wrongly predicted a relatively quick overthrow of Kabila. Considering the magnitude of disarray in post-Mobutu Congo and Kabila's inability to rectify any of its major challenges, this miscalculation is understandable. What is shocking, though, is that leaders of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance believed their invasion to overthrow Kabila would actually be supported by regional leaders.<sup>79</sup> The Rwanda-Uganda alliance seemed unable to disconnect itself from its own experience that violence could cure all evil and the misperception that states in the region would fall in line.

It must be said, too, that regional forces intervening to defend Kabila, with Zimbabwe in particular, gravely underestimated the challenges and costs of training the hapless Congolese armed forces, resurrecting the Congolese state and economy, and most challenging of all, repelling the Rwandan- and Ugandan-backed rebels in the unfamiliar terrain of eastern Congo.<sup>80</sup> In many ways, the war became a quagmire for both sides and a victory for neither.

### Death of the Alliance, 1999-2000

By early 1999, the Second Congo War had become a multi-layered quagmire with no end in sight for the Rwanda-Uganda alliance: the prospect of outright military victory was all but impossible; the costs of war had become unbearable; the border areas were no more secure; and donor pressure to withdraw from Congo continued to grow. Ultimately, the stress on the alliance was too much to bear. The breaking point came in August 1999, when differences over strategy, control of resources and personality conflicts erupted in heavy fighting in the Congolese city of Kisangani.

Nzongola-Ntalaja has rightly called the Second Congo War a "war of partition and pillage."<sup>81</sup> As structures of the Congolese state thoroughly decayed and all functions of sovereignty in eastern Congo passed into private hands, holding a loaded gun was sufficient means to tax locals and control civilian populations. Rebel groups, bolstered by Rwandan and Ugandan firepower, set up predatory administrations in the occupied territories to bleed resources from hapless peasants through crushing taxes and unending harassment.<sup>82</sup> In a cruel stroke of irony, Congolese resources paid for Congo's occupation by foreign armies with all their accompanying brutality, while lining the pockets of many well-connected Rwandan and Ugandan officers. A series of shocking publications from the United Nations named names high up in the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries for their rampant plunder of Congolese resources—or "trade with our Congolese brothers," as one

Ugandan general shamelessly said to me.<sup>83</sup> With the reports, the euphemism “elite network” entered the vocabulary of central African warfare.<sup>84</sup> As it became clear that political objectives—Kabila’s overthrow, in particular—could not be readily achieved, economic objectives—generally plundering in the interests of self-enrichment and making the war pay for itself—grew in importance.

In the stalemate, vague lines of battle essentially divided Congolese territory from the northwest to the southeast.<sup>85</sup> Meanwhile, persistent instability in eastern Congo presented these Rwandan and Ugandan elite networks with an apparently irresistible opportunity to expand their private war rackets, though at the expense of unparalleled human suffering and millions of innocent lives. Perrot rightly categorized these elites as “entrepreneurs of insecurity” whose rational cost-benefit analysis recognized that war, instability, and the absence of a functioning state were more profitable than peace, stability, and state reconstruction.<sup>86</sup> But it may be the double entendre of another scholar that really captured the macabre reality of the mighty forces driving the Congo wars: these elites were “making a killing” out of war.<sup>87</sup> Plundering Congolese resources proved self-sustaining and lucrative, allowing the Rwandan and Ugandan armies to continue to operate without subjecting their national treasuries to pressure from foreign donors or parliamentary scrutiny.<sup>88</sup>

Was this practice of plunder, however, actually official policy? Did Rwandan and Ugandan leaders encourage and even systematize the exploitation of resources in the Congolese lands they occupied in an attempt to finance their war effort? Unfortunately, this question holds no definitive answer. My interviews with Ugandan military officers all yielded the same, predictable response—that there was no official policy of resource extraction—but this should not leave the analyst at ease. By contrast, several reports have mentioned Rwanda’s mysterious “Congo Desk,” which became the nerve center for Rwanda’s Congo operations.<sup>89</sup> Again, though, this doesn’t provide a definitive answer to the plunder-as-policy question.

As mentioned above, not only was the Rwanda-Uganda alliance deprived of their goal of another regime change in Kinshasa, but the dogged resistance that the alliance provoked actually helped aggravate tensions between Rwanda and Uganda to the point that these apparently steadfast allies eventually became bitter enemies. This violent breakup took place at Kisangani, the major trading hub in Congo’s northeast, a city best known for the diamonds scattered in its riverbeds. Because the Rwanda-Uganda alliance died in one of Africa’s most lucrative diamond centers, the battles only served to confirm that Rwanda and Uganda were just in Congo for the spoils. And considering the nefarious behavior of the Rwandan and Ugandan occupiers, it’s not an altogether inaccurate claim.

From my interviews with high-ranking Ugandan and Rwandan officials, however, it became clear that the fighting between Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers at Kisangani was just as much about greed as it was about personality clashes and disagreements over strategy. The Rwanda-Uganda alliance was simply too complex—and too personal—for mere economic motives to suffice as explanations. Three main causes account for the alliance’s clash at Kisangani: zero-sum economic disputes, personal feuds and disagreements over strategy.

Let us take a closer look at why Kisangani turned into the alliance’s graveyard. For nearly a year after the second invasion of Congo in August 1998, the Rwandan and Ugandan militaries had essentially fought on different fronts, Rwanda in Congo’s east and southeast, including on the fringes of the crucial mineral-rich province of Katanga, where resistance was strong; Uganda in Congo’s vast and largely unpopulated north, where resistance was



weak but the territory's strategic value low. What is important to this analysis is that Kisangani, with all its abundant natural wealth, was the fault-line of these de facto occupation zones. Although supposedly under joint command, Kisangani was in reality divided between Ugandan and Rwandan spheres of influence.

The reality of split occupation did not faze the provocative Ugandan commander in Kisangani, Brig. Gen. James Kazini, who preferred to make decisions on his own.<sup>90</sup> Nor did Kazini bother to hide his sense of superiority toward the Rwandans.<sup>91</sup> This is somewhat understandable since Kazini, who over a decade earlier had led ethnic Rwandans in Uganda's bush war, and thus considered the Rwandans "a bunch of bush fighters."<sup>92</sup> When the Rwandan exiles left Uganda to invade Rwanda in late 1990, Kazini was a colonel while the Rwandans were mostly privates. A former UPDF army commander told me: "Kazini used to call them [the Rwandans] 'boys' and they didn't like it."<sup>93</sup> Kazini's condescending attitude only helped harden Rwandan resolve to prove they were not mere bit players in Uganda's civil war. In Kisangani, for example, the different radio stations of Rwandan-backed and Ugandan-backed rebels soon became tools to sound off and swap insults. Pickup trucks with anti-aircraft guns and heavy machine-guns sped through Kisangani's potholed streets, just one of many shows of bravado and brinkmanship.

But let us not forget about the diamonds. In the early months of the occupation, industry insiders estimated that Rwandan and Ugandan officers had bought up to \$20 million in uncut stones a month for export.<sup>94</sup> The trade was immensely profitable, but extremely divisive. Each side dealt with their own traders, the Rwandans with Ali Hussein and his Lebanese network, and the Ugandans with the infamous Belgian "Papa" Phillipe Surowicke.<sup>95</sup> Although there was plenty of wealth to go around, the zero-sum nature of the diamond trade was bound to drive these chauvinistic tendencies to the brink.

In mid-August 1999, the pressure overflowed. After a three day-long battle between the Rwandan and Ugandan forces, the battle-hardened Rwandans succeeded in controlling much of the city. The Rwandans were simply better-organized, more motivated and more experienced in the unconventional warfare that the city demanded. By contrast, the dismal fighting performance of the Ugandans may be explained by, among other factors, their soldiers' questioning of why they were fighting their Rwandan allies in the first place. The Rwandans and their Congolese allies celebrated their victory by parading in Ugandan uniforms and vehicles captured during the fighting. They even showed the cadavers of Ugandan soldiers on Congolese TV as a warning to potential opponents that this was the consequence of challenging them.<sup>96</sup>

But the war of egos, one of the main causes of the first battle, was enough of a reason to fight again. Kazini, his pride injured, felt personally offended by the Rwandans' upstaging of the Ugandan military; thus, the need to return the Rwandans to their subordinate place as "boys among men" made the second—and third—battles inevitable. By building up Ugandan forces in the city, Kazini had, as later Ugandan forces' spokesman told me, provoked another battle.<sup>97</sup>

The now infamous "Kisangani wars," three in all, obliterated the pretext that the militaries of Rwanda and Uganda were in eastern Congo for security reasons, or at least, that they were in Congo for other reasons as well.<sup>98</sup> Only an eleventh hour intervention from the British foreign secretary staved off a disastrous war between British allies and supposed Renaissance representatives.<sup>99</sup> In Kisangani, the high-minded rhetoric of fighting for self-defense, democracy and development in the region gave way to a more sinister reality of

plunder, personality conflicts, and disagreements over strategy. Kisangani was merely the site where this volatile dynamic burst into the open.

## Conclusion

The speed and success of the war against Mobutu hid the deep strategic and personal disagreements within the Rwanda-Uganda alliance. By the mid-1990s, Congo-Zaire had become so decrepit and dysfunctional that the RPF's war against the Hutu *génocidaires* and, to a lesser extent, Uganda's war against Sudan-backed rebels in northeastern Congo-Zaire, had the beneficial side effect of leading to Congo-Zaire's "war of liberation." But this is not to say that the goal of overthrowing Mobutu had not already been in the minds of Museveni and Kagame, each long harboring regional ambitions that primarily related to their dysfunctional neighbor.

Regardless of these latent ambitions, though, to say that the initial Rwandan and Ugandan invasion of eastern Congo-Zaire was to overthrow Mobutu is to simplify what was a rather complicated strategic picture. After the Rwandan and Ugandan forces secured eastern Congo-Zaire in late 1996, the alliance prudently tested the international waters. America, Britain and South Africa turned an encouraging blind-eye, all with their own reasons for wanting to see Mobutu's overthrow and the guilt of the Rwandan genocide cleansed. Conversely, France and Sudan scrambled in a ham-fisted attempt to defend Mobutu, the former fighting the boogeyman of an Anglo-Saxon conspiracy, and the latter focused on its proxy war with Uganda. But it was the militarily robust MPLA regime in Angola that acted as Kinshasa's real gatekeeper, ultimately giving their crucial blessing to the Rwanda-Uganda alliance's war against Mobutu.

The Second Congo War, in which the Rwanda-Uganda alliance tried to overthrow Kabila—ironically the alliance's choice for Mobutu's successor—took a very different path than the first war. Once Kabila had cut the Gordian knot with his former patrons and supported their rebel enemies, especially the Hutu *génocidaires*, another Rwanda-Uganda alliance invasion of Congo was inevitable. However, in light of the alliance's long—and successful—history of war stretching back to the early 1980s, it was no surprise that war was the preferred means of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance to achieve its goals. But unlike the wars that the Rwanda-Uganda alliance had fought before, the war against Kabila became a nightmarish, seemingly inescapable quagmire. Already by 2000, some sixteen months after entering the war, the periodical *The Economist* accurately commented that Museveni's government was eager to pull out of Congo, but was "too deeply involved to get out easily."<sup>100</sup> The same could be said for Rwanda, whose fig leaf government of national unity was gradually stripped down with high-profile resignations and protests, finally showing its true authoritarian colors. Meanwhile, eastern Congo descended into an abyss of misery, poverty, and warlordism. And for the RPF regime in Kigali, the Hutu threat remained.

When success in the war against Kabila was not forthcoming, the towering egos of old bush warriors Kagame and Museveni came to the fore. Even the three battles between at Kisangani did not seem cathartic enough, and throughout 2001 Rwanda and Uganda nearly went to war on their own soil.<sup>101</sup> But, as this paper argued, all of these strategic differences over the complex "Congo question" were present as early as late 1996; it was merely the speed of their success on the battlefield that provided the veneer of a strong alliance. Learning from his rebel experience during Uganda's bush war, Museveni sought to export his model of a grassroots rebel coalition with a moderate political philosophy, appealing to a

wide range of anti-Kabila elements. But the Congolese rebels, in late 1996 just as in late 1998, were helplessly disorganized and divided among themselves, making Rwanda's top-down, hands-on solution seem unavoidable—though equally ineffective. Simply, there was no one who could effectively unite the disparate voices and administer the chaos of post-Mobutu Congo.

The victim complex of the Tutsi-dominated RPF leadership, the product of its persecution by the Hutu dictatorship, the Obote regime, and finally the inaction of the international community during the 1994 genocide, only made the RPF see a world of enemies around them. Thus, anything that the RPF needed done, it would do alone—even if it meant organizing and executing an entire war in Congo. This ethic of self-help explains the distinct power shift within the Rwanda-Uganda alliance in late 1996, in which Rwanda effectively assumed the mantle of regional leadership and relegated Uganda to a junior partner in the alliance. A psychologist may see an inferiority complex driving the RPF, which seemed determined to upstage their former mentors by using force, their most trusted instrument. That same psychologist may also see in the RPF a deep sense of distrust, in which violence and control were the only effective means of survival. An international relations scholar would likely see the cardinal realist principles of self-help and survival. With the Rwanda-Uganda alliance again having reverted to armed force to bring about regime change in Congo, the alliance unexpectedly learned a tough lesson of international relations—that states generally oppose rather than join aggressive powers.<sup>102</sup>

Greed cannot be overlooked as a cause of the alliance's eventual breakup. But, contrary to popular perception, it was definitely not a long-term cause. However admirable the spartan values of Museveni and Kagame, cultivated during their years fighting in the bush, the NRM and RPF were the masters of resource-poor and desperately underdeveloped countries. Once these armies occupied resource-rich eastern Congo, the lure of booty—for war and for personal gain—was eventually too great to resist. Thus, the question of whether either Rwanda or Uganda made plunder an official policy during the war, which my interviewees unsurprisingly denied vehemently, actually seems irrelevant; the irrefutable fact was that plunder had become widespread on all sides—among Kabila's enemies as well as among his allies—and, most tragically of all, caused the occupation of Congo to be self-financing.

These three factors—personality conflicts, strategic differences and economic clashes of interest—held different degrees of importance in bringing about the fall of the Rwanda-Uganda alliance. However, when combined with pressure from international donors and Congolese resistance and, most importantly, a failing war effort in late 1999, the alliance seemed bound to break up. And the breakup of that alliance, true to its very nature and history, was bound to break up violently.

## Notes

- 1 For a good discussion of the various definitions of alliances, see Dingman 1979, pp. 245-50.
- 2 Walt 1987, p. 1.
- 3 Dittmer 1983, p. 38.
- 4 Schroeder 1976.

- 5 These definitions are from Waltz 1979, p. 26, though he credits them to Stephen Van Evera. Also see similar terminology in Wolfers 1962, pp. 122-24.
- 6 Thompson 1977.
- 7 Waltz 1981, p. 81.
- 8 See Olson and Zeckhauser 1966.
- 9 Snyder 1984, p. 463.
- 10 Because of the sensitive nature of the topic—whether regarding refugee experiences, war experiences, or accusations of plunder or atrocities—each interview was in itself a delicate act of balancing courteousness with insatiable curiosity. As endnotes will show the reader, some of my interviewees preferred to remain anonymous.
- 11 Lemarchand 2009, p. 31.
- 12 Interview with former UPDF army commander Maj. Gen. Mugisha Muntu, Kampala, Uganda, September 2011. On Uganda's civil war, see Kutesa 2006 and Amaza 1998.
- 13 Museveni quoted in Rusagara 2009, p. 173.
- 14 On Uganda's "politics of indigeneity" and how it related to the Rwandan exile question, see Mamdani 2001, pp. 159-84.
- 15 On state-led violence leading up to the Rwandan genocide, see Association Rwandaise pour la Défense des Droits de la Personne et des Libertés Publiques 1992; Rapport sur les Droits de l'Homme au Rwanda 1992; F.-X. Bangamwabo et al. 1991; A. Destexhe 1994.
- 16 Prunier 1995, pp. 312-14.
- 17 See for example: Human Rights Watch/Africa 1994 and Human Rights Watch/Africa, May 1995.
- 18 Prunier 1999.
- 19 Woodward 1988, pp. 224-38. The SPLA was careful to maintain good relations with the Museveni government, mindful that Uganda had become a vital transit point for humanitarian aid shipped overland from the Kenyan coast into SPLA-occupied Equatoria. Prunier 2009, p. 81.
- 20 On the criticism of the humanitarian aid for Rwanda, see African Rights 1994, pp. 28-39.
- 21 Prunier 1995, pp. 100-07.
- 22 On the so-called "Hutu Revolution" or "Social Revolution", see Mamdani 2001, pp. 103-31.
- 23 Ibid, pp. 295-311.
- 24 Interviews with various Rwandans in Kigali, Gisenyi, Ruhengeri, and Cyangugu, October-November 2011. Many preferred to remain anonymous.
- 25 For example, see Mujawamariya 1994; Human Rights Watch Africa 1999, pp. 713-14, 719.
- 26 Amaza 1998. Museveni 1985.
- 27 Twaddle 1988, pp. 313-35; Ofcansky 1996, pp. 95-99.
- 28 Hansen and Twaddle 1991.
- 29 Veteran Africanist Young writes of "two interlocked zones of civil conflict," the other extending along the west African coast from Liberia to Senegal. Young 2002, p. 13.
- 30 These included Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Congo-Zaire, the Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville), Rwanda, and Uganda.
- 31 By contrast, the population of Washington state was around six million and

- “overpopulated” Cambodia was just over eleven million during the same period.
- 32 Rwanda’s swelling population—from two million inhabitants in 1940 had risen to seven million by 1990—inevitably exacerbated pressures on the land. According to Meredith’s estimates, a typical peasant hill community in Rwanda in the 1950s held about 110 people per square kilometre; by the 1970s, that number had risen to about 280 and by the early 1990s, it stood at a staggering average of 420 people per square kilometre. Meredith 2011, p. 490.
  - 33 For an English-language example, see Diessenbacher 1994. For the German-language literature, see Bächler 1995, pp. 135-59; Molt 1995, pp. 845-52.
  - 34 Collier 2002, pp. 563-595.
  - 35 For more details on the politics of Kinshasa toward the rebellion, see de Villers and Omasombo 1997, pp. 259-80.
  - 36 La Nouvelle Relève 1996; Musoni 2003.
  - 37 On the Banyarwanda and Banyamulenge, see Willame 1997.
  - 38 Reyntjens 2009.
  - 39 Reyntjens 2000, p. 10. Kagame later told Belgian journalist Braeckman: “In a way we were lucky. They even gave us a pretext for this war.” Braeckman 1999, p. 27.
  - 40 Parqué and Reyntjens 1998, pp. 273-306; Human Rights Watch Africa/Fédération Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l’Homme, 1997; Umutesi 2000; Médecins Sans Frontières 1997. For a map of the refugee movements, see Ogata 2005, p. 205.
  - 41 Prunier 2009, p. 132-33.
  - 42 This fact of the AFDL as the alliance’s creation is widely confirmed in the literature. For example, Prunier 2009, p. 396. However, exact details remain imprecise.
  - 43 Interview with former UPDF army commander Maj. Gen. Muntu, September 2011.
  - 44 Prunier 2009, p. 67.
  - 45 On Reno’s discussion of Museveni and Kagame as “reform rebels,” see Reno 2011, pp. 119-62.
  - 46 Turner 2002, p. 75. The acronym MPLA stands for the People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (Portuguese: Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola). UNITA stands for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (Portuguese: União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola). For more on Angolan politics and society, see Hodges 2001.
  - 47 Walt 1987, p. 20.
  - 48 There is thankfully a very rich literature on Mobutu and his regime. Some of the best evaluations include Callaghy 1984; Young and Turner 1985; Willame 1985; and Wrong 2000, though this last work is less scholarly though nonetheless compelling.
  - 49 Leymarie 1997; Bassir 1997.
  - 50 Reyntjens 2009, p. 44; Prunier 2009, p. 414.
  - 51 Lemarchand 2001, p. 93.
  - 52 Reyntjens 2009, pp. 42-44.
  - 53 Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, p. 214.
  - 54 Upon becoming president in May 1997, Kabila returned “Zaire” to its former name of “Democratic Republic of the Congo” (DRC).
  - 55 Schatzberg 1997, pp. 70-84. For the most thorough biography of Kabila to date, see Kennes 2003, pp. 57-59; for the evolution of Kabila’s rebel career, see Willame 1999, pp.



- 16-29.
- 56 Prunier 2009, p. 403.
- 57 Interview with (ret.) Ugandan People's Defense Forces Gen. Muntu, September 2011.
- 58 Interview with former Ugandan army commander Gen. Jeje Odongo, Mbuya, Uganda, October 2011; interview with (ret.) Gen. Muntu.
- 59 Prunier 1999, p. 43-4.
- 60 Unnamed Ugandan journalist quoting Congolese rebel leader Wamba dia Wamba in Stearns 2011, p. 240.
- 61 On the child soldier or "kadogo" element in Kabila's army, see Cheuzeville 2003, pp. 173-296; Amnesty International 2003.
- 62 Prunier 2009, pp. 181-86.
- 63 Interview with former Ugandan army commander Gen. Jeje Odongo, Mbuya, Uganda, October 2011.
- 64 Rothstein 1968, p. 11.
- 65 This borrows from Prunier's claim that, due to its rich history of cooperation against apartheid South Africa, the MPLA had become "godfather" to Namibia's independence. Prunier 2009, p. 93.
- 66 Walt 1987, p. 5.
- 67 Waltz 1979, pp. 126-27.
- 68 See Rupiya 2002 and Turner 2002.
- 69 Turner 2002, p. 85; Stearns 2011, p. 290.
- 70 Walt 1987, p. 20.
- 71 Thompson 1977, p. 843.
- 72 See Healy and Stein 1973.
- 73 For a concise and balanced introduction to structural adjustment policies, see Thomson 2004, pp. 183-92.
- 74 On the African Renaissance, see Makgoba 1999; Kornegay et al. 2001.
- 75 ICG 1999.
- 76 For a short discussion on the dynamics between the Mobutu regime, UNITA and the MPLA in Angola, see Leslie 1993, p. 158-60.
- 77 Winston Churchill's explanation of Britain's traditional alliance policy also applies to Angola in the context of the Second Congo War: "[I]t would have been easy ... and tempting to join with the stronger and share the fruits of his conquest. However, we always took the harder course, joined with the less strong powers." Churchill 1948, pp. 207-08.
- 78 Vattel quoted in Gulick 1995, p. 60.
- 79 Interview with (ret.) Gen. Muntu and Gen. Odongo, September-October 2011.
- 80 Rupiya 2002, p. 93; *Zimbabwe Independent* 1998a and 1998b.
- 81 "The war of partition and pillage" was the name of a section in Nzongola-Ntalaja 2002, pp. 227-40.
- 82 Afoaku 2002, pp. 109-28.
- 83 Interview with (ret.) Gen. Elly Tumwine, Kampala, Uganda, October 2011.
- 84 See for example Reno 2000.
- 85 For more details on how the early years of the Second Congo War developed on the ground, see ICG 2000.



- 86 Perrot 1999, pp. 60-71; Cooper 2002, p. 936.
- 87 Jackson 2002.
- 88 Longman 2002, pp. 129-46 and 156-7; Renton et al. 2007, p. 194.
- 89 United Nations Security Council 2001, para. 126.
- 90 In one of his many shows of brinkmanship, Kazini ordered Ugandan tanks to parade through the Rwandan parts of town for three hours after midnight, thundering an artillery barrage into the surrounding forests. Stearns 2011, p. 240.
- 91 Interview with UPDF spokesperson Col. Felix Kulayigye, Mbuya, Uganda, October 2011.
- 92 A Ugandan journalist quoted in Stearns 2011, p. 240.
- 93 Interview with former UPDF army commander Gen. Jeje Odongo, Mbuya, Uganda, October 2011.
- 94 Santoro 1998.
- 95 Prunier 2009, p. 215.
- 96 Stearns 2011, p. 240-41.
- 97 Interview with Col. Felix Kulayigye, Mbuya, Uganda, October 2011.
- 98 For a sharp French-language analysis of the Kisangani conflict, see Leloup 2004.
- 99 ICG 2001, pp. 3-4.
- 100 Economist Intelligence Unit 2000, p. 8.
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- 102 Waltz 1981, p. 81.

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# **The Cattle are “Ghanaian” but the Herders are Strangers: Farmer-Herder Conflicts, Expulsion Policy, and Pastoralist Question in Agogo, Ghana**

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**Abstract:** The phenomenon of farmer-herders conflict across West Africa has prompted management strategies by several governments across the subcontinent. One of the conflict resolution mechanisms has been the policy of expulsion, which the Ghanaian state adopted as a response to incessant conflict between the settled agriculturalists and migrating Fulani herders. This paper focuses on migration and conflict as well as the intrigues and politics of expulsion of Fulani pastoralist from Agogo town in Ghana since 2009. There are multiple factors responsible for the migration of Fulani herders to Agogo area that are linked to climate change. We also examine the social and political factors triggering the expulsion as well as agitation to expel the Fulani. Counter to this we examine the Fulani reactions towards this development. Through this we also critique the policy of expulsion as a means of dealing with the pastoralist question. By means of a critical assessment of the conflict we offer strategies for policy and reconciliation.

## **Introduction**

Conflict in Northern Ghana has increased in recent times between farmers and pastoralists over resources and access to resources. This is often referred to as the “pastoralist question” and it raises controversies around how to deal with such issues across Africa’s entire Sahel belt. The task of addressing the pastoralist question has been a recurring issue across West Africa, where there has been a high incidence of violent farmer-herder conflict in recent times. The changing climatic conditions in the traditional abode of the pastoralists in the Sahel region have caused a southward migration to where the grass is much lusher. The nature of this migration has often meant traveling long distances from one point to the other and thus intruding into spaces long ago claimed by settled farmers. This is a major implication of the southward migration due to the frequency of acrimonious and often violent encounters between migrating herders and the local sedentary population. Over time, the persistent clashes between these groups have been a

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v15/v15i2a3.pdf>

large concern of governments across the region and this has necessitated the adoption of a number of policies aimed at addressing the phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> The policies that attempt to deal with this appear to feed into discourses of “strangeness” and create oppositional forms of dealing with the problems. We offer here some ideas for policy and for reconciliation that may be more constructive and deal with the lived realities found in the complicated set of factors that lead to conflict.

One of the measures put in place is the policy of expulsion, which has been practiced in a number of countries in the West African region such as Nigeria, Mauritania, Libya, Côte d’Ivoire, Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup> This was done either as a response to economic hardships in the host country or as a result of conflict between the migrants and the host communities in the past.<sup>3</sup> In northern Ghana, the policy of expulsion does not only mean evacuating Fulani herders from the country, it also means declaring them *persona non grata* and preventing them from entering and operating in the country at any time into the future. The aim of the policy is to put an end to incessant conflict between the indigenous population and the migrant herders, who are often classified as strangers. Here “stranger” connotes the usual meaning of someone who is unknown, but also carries a stronger sense of unease and fearfulness of those who do not belong and are deemed to be different.

One of the places where the policy of expulsion has been adopted in Ghana is Agogo town in the Ashanti-Akim North district of the country.<sup>4</sup> This area has seen many recent violent clashes between Fulani pastoralists and farmers since 2001. The levels of violence appear to cycle up and down over time with conflicts starting in 2001, but decreasing in 2002. It rose again in 2004 and went down in 2005. Violence resurfaced again in 2009, and hostilities remained until 2011. The government has begun a process of expulsion with new policies.

The politics of eviction of Fulani herders from the Agogo area falls within the long tradition of alien eviction in Ghana, which dates back to 1969 via the enactment of the Bussia government’s Alien Compliance Order.<sup>5</sup> The order mandated that all foreigners resident in Ghana regularize their stay in the country and those without residence permits were ordered to leave within fourteen days. This set the basis for a mass expulsion of thousands of West Africans who had come to Ghana in search of better opportunities in the then flourishing Ghanaian economy.<sup>6</sup> Migration had been made conducive by the previous liberal immigration policy, which was an integral part of the Africa-centric foreign policy pursued by the Kwame Nkrumah administration immediately after independence.<sup>7</sup> However those liberal immigration policies ended in 1969 with the Alien Act that impelled all foreigners to leave the country. It is important to note that until a few months before that Act was passed most of the “foreigners” that it targeted were actually full citizens. The Nationality Act (passed a few months before) revoked the citizenship of Ghanaians who had, in many cases, been living in the country for generations and who had been granted full citizenship by Nkrumah in 1957. In what was believed by many Fulani to be a reenactment of the 1969 Alien Act, on January 20, 2012 the Kumasi High Court ordered the Ashanti Regional Security Council (REGSEC) to flush out all Fulani and their cattle from the Agogo Afram plains with immediate effect.<sup>8</sup> This differed from the 1969 Alien Act as it did not expel anyone from Ghana, but just from the immediate area. It did raise fears (and hopes) that it would lead to full expulsion from Ghana. Following the judgment, there were a series of protests by many of the settled agriculturalists calling for an

instant enforcement of the order. Security forces were even drafted to enforce the judgment. However, in spite of the Kumasi court ruling and the series of protests supporting it, there is still a presence of Fulani herders in the town. Many people are still angry over the unwillingness or inability of the state to enforce the court order of expulsion.<sup>9</sup> This raises some pertinent questions: what are the motivating factors for herders' migration to Agogo, considering the antagonism they encounter? What are the triggers for the conflict? What is the political and operational relevance of the policy of expulsion in dealing with the Fulani issue in Agogo? What are some possible strategies or policies that may be adopted to deal with the violence?

The study begins with a theoretical framework on the tension between farmers and herders. It then traces the factors motivating the migration of herders to the Agogo Afram plains. This is followed by an analysis of the recourse to violence between the two groups. The demands by the residents of Agogo for eviction and reactions by the Fulani are placed into a discussion of the politics of eviction and the pastoralist question. The study finds that the issues are much more complicated than foreign pastoralists invading a farming community. The pastoralists are enmeshed in local social and economic relations, and they probably share common cause with the farmers over issues of poverty, marginalization, and abuse by local elites. We make some practical suggestions that may be used to address policy or to think of strategies to deal with the now endemic violence.

### **Farmer-Herder Conflicts: A Theoretical Framework**

In trying to situate the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflict across Africa, a number of theories are immediately relevant. The first here is climate change as it addresses why such conflict arises (structural factors that strain resources and push people together). Relative deprivation theory can then be used to bridge the structural and the social/political. It suggests that conflict will not be resolved as both groups will remain deprived of resources from the others actions or even presence on the land. Both groups draw from a limited pool of resources and the assumed differences (cultural, linguistic, practices, and traditions) currently disallow them to form any common ground. Processual theories of conflict may be of more utility as they address how violence unfolds within local contexts. As Mark Moritz notes, "If patterns of herder-farmer conflict could be entirely explained by structural factors alone, we would expect all conflicts in the same stressful context to display not only similar causes, but also similar levels of engagement and violence and similar outcomes."<sup>10</sup> Moreover, a focus on the local conditions in which violence erupt shows how large-scale environmental or structural causes are exacerbated (and can be mitigated) by local forces and local relationships.

In addressing new and expected structural issues, a number of studies have tried to situate the phenomenon of farmer-herder conflict within the climate change discourse. One important reality of the climate change discourse is its changing political economy of meaning, perception, and interpretation. Climate change initially emerged as an environmental issue.<sup>11</sup> However, it became an energy problem before becoming recast as a security threat; and it was then lifted to the level of the United Nations Security Council for discussion. One of the most defining moments for the streamlining of climate change as a security threat and concomitant discourses into the UN body was attained when it was tabled for discussion at the UN Security Council

meeting. British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett argued that fights over water, changing patterns of rainfall, and fights over food production and land use are the major causes of war and therefore the Security Council must be interested in what causes them, one of which is climate change.<sup>12</sup> Also, the British Ambassador to the UN used the occasion to argue that “border disputes, migration, energy supplies, resource shortages, societal stress and humanitarian crises” as examples of the threat to international peace and security that climate change poses.<sup>13</sup> Since then, the security dimension to the phenomenon of climate change has become a recurring theme in international security discourse.

A number of studies have emerged linking climate change with conflict.<sup>14</sup> Proponents of this perspective have argued that substantial variation in climatic condition is a major trigger of violent conflict. Using a multidisciplinary approach to study climate change across space and time, Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel argue that a strong nexus did exist between changes in climatic condition and propensity for violent conflict.<sup>15</sup> Hendrix and Glaser, in their study on rainfall predictability in Africa concluded on the side of erratic rainfall triggering violent conflict.<sup>16</sup> Using the migration of Fulani cattle herders to Ghana as a case study, Steve Tonah locates the violent conflicts between local farmers and Fulani cattle herders as a result of dwindling grasses in the Sahelian region.<sup>17</sup> The old patterns of transhumance practiced by the Fulani have had to change; Fulani who may have passed through a region or stayed for a limited and defined period of time now stay permanently. In other cases they move into new areas they have not used before.

The mere presence of pastoralists does not have to be a negative one as other communities of farmers and herders have built interdependent relationships through processes of exchange (labor, products, livestock, etc.). Local elites clearly have relationships with the Fulani who keep cattle for them. Such interdependence may be described as symbiotic, in which the two communities form host-client or host-stranger relationships with one another.<sup>18</sup> The dwindling resources and resources base caused by population growth or drying of grasslands perhaps mitigate the possibility of further exchanges. Climate change affects the socio-structural conditions of a people in terms of the quality of resources available to them; and in the event of this, it could result in violent conflict as well as authoritarian attitudes.<sup>19</sup> Even though the perspective of climate change inducing conflict has been criticized as speculative, unsubstantiated, exaggerated, and problematic, there seems to be a consensus on climate change inducing migration.<sup>20</sup>

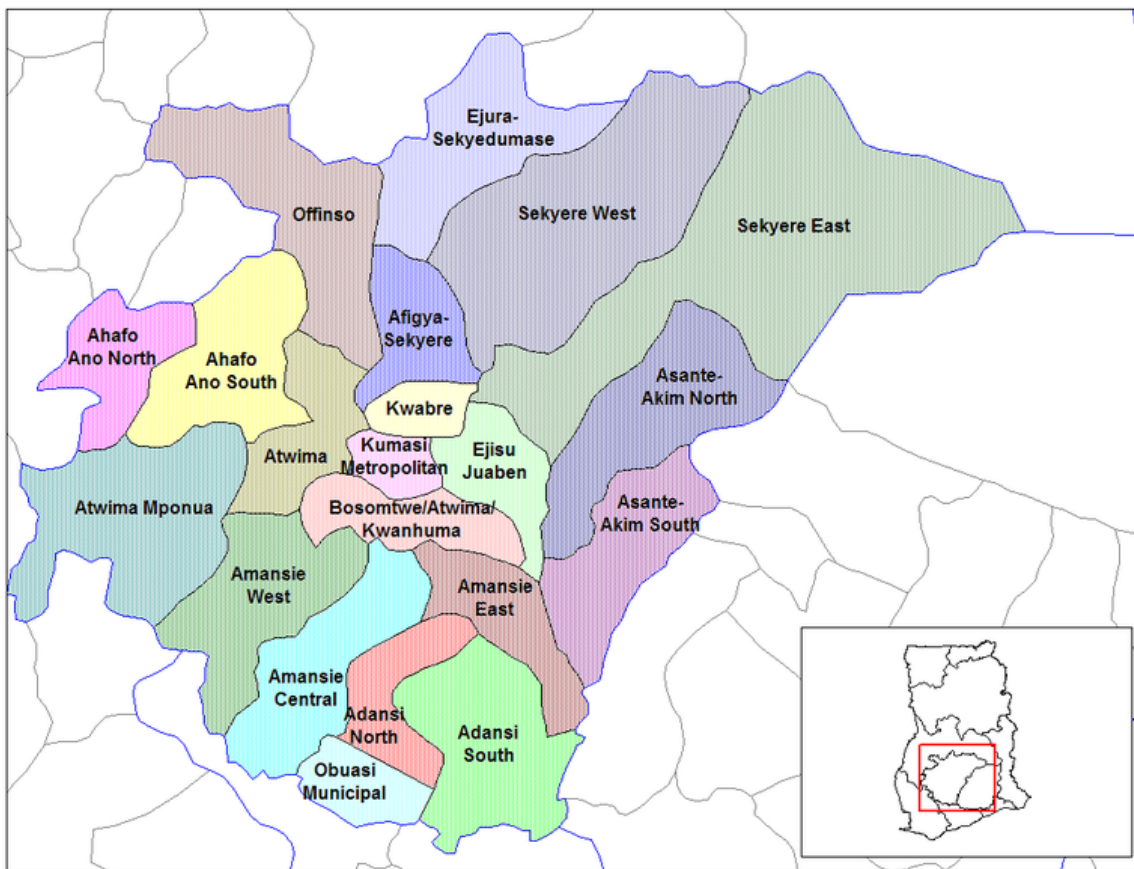
Climate change clearly puts pressure on the herders to move into other regions leading to localized conflicts and tensions. The aggressive behavior of contemporary herders and farmers in the wetland areas are due to high level of frustration.<sup>21</sup> Here, the frustration is two-way: the herders are fleeing their traditional arid zones towards wetter places and are frustrated by dwindling pastures that sustain their means of livelihood. Upon reaching the wetter regions, their cattle consume the crops of farmers, who in frustration, respond by attempting to kill off the destructive animals or drive out the newcomers.<sup>22</sup> Revenge missions of grazers result in circles of violence. In other words, the basic source of frustration experienced by both parties is traceable to climate change, which is caused both by human and natural factors. Other factors aiding the frustration are issues related to ethnicity, ignorance, weak state policies, weak state security systems, intolerance, and growth in human populations. Here again processual

theories of conflict may be brought to bear on the analysis, especially of the escalation of such violence. The structural causes can be broadly speculative and predictive; climate change will increase conflict along the edges of the Sahel. Conflict theory then can be brought to bear on the specific situations that erupt by examining the sequence of interactions to explain why certain conflicts escalate.<sup>23</sup> As Moritz states “the point of the processual analysis is that it starts with the event (the conflict) and then examines how it articulates with the sociocultural, political, historical, ecological, demographic, economic, and institutional context.”<sup>24</sup> Thus we can frame it within the climate change discourse, but also the responses to it by local farmers as well as policy and law. It is within that complicated mix of policies, laws, environmental change, social norms, and past experiences that conflict erupted, but more importantly it is within that mix solutions must arise.

### Study Area and Methodology

Research work for this study was carried out between June and July 2013 in Agogo town, which is in Ashanti-Akim North District of Ghana with headquarters at Konogo.

**FIGURE 1: ASHANTI DISTRICTS**



Source: Licensed under Public domain via Wikimedia Commons and found at [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashanti\\_districts.png#mediaviewer/File:Ashanti\\_districts.png](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ashanti_districts.png#mediaviewer/File:Ashanti_districts.png)



The town is approximately eighty kilometers east of Kumasi, capital of the Ashanti Region. The study also covered four adjoining Fulani camps at Brahabome, Abrawapun, Nyamebekyere and Kuwereso. The main methods of data collection were unstructured interviews, participant observation, key informant interviews, and focus group discussions. Focus group discussions were used specifically in the course of interviews with the Fulani, who preferred to cluster in groups. The unstructured interviews were conducted with ninety-five respondents in Agogo town and adjoining Fulani villages of Brahabome, Abrawapun, Nyamebekyere, and Kuwereso. The interviews focused on the history of migration, causes of conflict and the lived experiences of the people. Additional information was also gathered from several key informants and stakeholders in the area as well as in the national capital of Accra. This included the local government officials, experts at the Kofi Annan Institute for Peace Training Institute, journalists, traditional chiefs and opinion leaders in the area.

### **Fulani Migration to Agogo Afram Plains**

The history of Fulani migration to the Agogo Afram plains is a relatively recent occurrence. Such migration benefitted from two waves of Fulani movement in Ghana. The first migration was from various West African states into northern Ghana. The second wave was a dispersal of the Fulani from northern Ghana into the Agogo Afram plains of central Ghana; some were originally from other West African states as well as some longer term Fulani inhabitants of northern Ghana. The two waves were not unconnected to climate change. There is an earlier Fulani presence and small-scale migration into northern Ghana from countries like Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger from the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> However, the migration of Fulani is attributed to more recent factors, namely the “veterinary revolution” of the late 1950s and the “precipitation plunge” of the 1960s.<sup>26</sup> The veterinary revolution led to the development of vaccines to overcome tsetse fly threats to cattle survival in the West African rain forest belts. This enabled cattle to be kept much further south than before, which also has the impact of making cattle keeping a prestige activity for sedentary farmers, especially for the elite. The precipitation plunge refers to rainfall shortage which resulted in the Sahelian drought that brought the whole of the Sahel region under intense and long term environmental distress. Thus, the veterinary revolution potentially opened up the south for cattle keepers.

By the late 1980s, a combination of population increase and dwindling grass had pushed the Fulani herdsmen, initially settled in the northern region of the district, to the center and south where there is an abundance of grass. One such area is the Agogo Afram plains. As narrated by Joseph Nti, the Assistant Regional Registrar of Ashanti Traditional Council in Agogo, during the migration in the late 1980s, three Fulani herders approached the Agogo traditional council requesting land for grazing purposes.<sup>27</sup> They had come with the support of one of the chiefs of the villages. The traditional council (called Nana-in-Council locally) met and decided to grant their request, thereby allowing the Fulani to erect their homesteads. The granting of the request had been based on the presence of a huge swathe of grassland in the Afram area as well as the absence of farming activities on that land. By the mid-1990s, however, the herder population had witnessed tremendous growth due to the migration of other herders coming to join the initial settlers, and over time they made a huge presence in such settlements as Nyamebekyere, Bebuso, Brahabome, Mankalia, Abrawapun, Onyemeso, and Pataban.<sup>28</sup>

However, this was not considered much of a problem by the traditional councils and the Agogo residents until the late 1990s when tensions started brewing. Research findings show four factors behind the initial peaceful atmosphere in the area. In the first place, the coming of the herders had the blessings of the local traditional leader (locally the Nana Sarpong) and his chiefs-in-council who have a role in allocating land. Some of the chiefs had symbiotic relationships with the Fulani who tended their cattle for them. The second is that the area was large enough to accommodate the then small Fulani population with ease. The third is that there was minimal contact between the herders and the farmers as they live far apart. One of the Agogo farmers in a response said: "We hardly meet. The Fulani lived very far away in the bush with his animals and only come to town during market days to sell cattle or milk. We have our own farms at the other end and they are far away from them."<sup>29</sup>

Lastly, due to minimal interactions, the conduct of the herders in the area was not considered a problem by the local population. However, by the late 1990s, tension had started brewing. One major reason for this was an increase in the farming population and the need for more land for cultivation.<sup>30</sup> The population explosion now forced a gradual movement of farmers towards the Fulani dominated areas. This was to result in two things. The first is that the crops cultivated close to Fulani homesteads were eaten by their cattle, thereby leading to low yield and low income for the farmers and thus causing anger and frustration. At times, the farmers killed animals found on their farms. The Fulani then retaliated by either driving away the farmers or attacking them in return. The second is that it brought the farmers' wives and female farmers close to the Fulani, which led to cases of harassment. This even contributed to accusations of rape against Fulani herders as well as further claims of armed robbery.

By the year 2000, protests started emerging among the Agogo residents over incessant accusations of farm destruction, robberies, and raping by the herders. The people demanded eviction of all Fulani from the area.<sup>31</sup> The central theme of the protests has been a demand that the traditional ruler, Nana Akuoko Sarpong, must expel all Fulani from the area. Agogo respondents were of the opinion that the traditional ruler was responsible for the atrocities because he was the one who harbored the Fulani and therefore should be the one to drive them away. However, the traditional authorities in the town did not immediately respond to the calls for expulsion. Following growing feelings of frustration over alleged atrocities of the herders, the people attacked the Fulani.<sup>32</sup> Retaliation by the Fulani resulted in a counter attack by the people, leaving one Fulani dead and his body dragged into the bush.<sup>33</sup> At this point, the traditional ruler, Nana Akuoko Sarpong, who was a member of the Council of State, requested the deployment of military personnel to the area to quell the riot and maintain law and order.<sup>34</sup> The army was able to restore peace, but it was not to last long. In 2004, the Agogo people regrouped and launched another attack on the herdsmen and reiterated their initial demand for their expulsion from the area. Again, the army was called upon to restore order. This again brought about a short-lived peace. In 2006 violence resurfaced, and by 2009 the violence had become endemic.<sup>35</sup>

### Protests, Expulsion Threats, and Reactions

The struggle for the expulsion of Fulani herders assumes multiple forms: press conferences, demonstrations/street protests, and use of the court of law. The initial approach of the Agogo residents to the Fulani consisted of confrontations and attacks. Following the inability to prevail over the Fulani who were effectively defending themselves, however, the people adopted the method of press conferences and demonstrations. The first major expulsion-demanding protests were staged on 29 April 2010 when hundreds of people under the auspices of *Agogomanmmakuo* (Agogo township association) and the Agogo Youth Association staged a violent protest in Agogo town.<sup>36</sup> In January 2011 the protest was repeated, this time around, against the traditional ruler, Nana Akuako Sarpong. They again ordered him to vacate the throne on the ground that he was responsible for the atrocities by allowing the Fulani herdsmen to occupy their land for so many years.<sup>37</sup> In August of the same year, the traditional chief was prevented from observing the traditional rites of his late uncle, arguing that such thing would only be allowed if he ordered all Fulani out of the area.<sup>38</sup> Similar spates of protests calling for expulsion were witnessed in September 16, 2011 and on November 8, 2011.<sup>39</sup>

When it was becoming the reality that street protest could not work properly the recourse was to go to court. On January 20, 2012, the Kumasi High Court ordered the Ashanti Regional Security Council (REGSEC) to flush out all Fulani and their cattle from the Agogo Afram plains with immediate effect.<sup>40</sup> The court ruling was a sequel to an application filed by Agogo residents against the Fulani. On 7 February, the Council inaugurated an eleven-member committee to come up with evacuation plans. After several meetings, the committee recommended that the council employ the use of force to throw out the herders from the area within two weeks.<sup>41</sup> To carry out the order, the National Security Coordinator, Lt. Col. Gbevlo-Lartey (ret.) deployed a team of soldiers to carry out the court order.<sup>42</sup> Despite the eviction there are still some Fulani herdsmen in the area, raising expectations of continued violence.

Research findings identify some pertinent issues from the foregoing discussion. One is that the accusation of farm destruction is a major motivating factor for the demands for expulsion on the part of the Agogo residents. All Agogo respondents are unanimous in their responses in this regard. In the words of one of them:

Fulani herders use their cattle to vandalize our farms. You could be on your farms and the cattle will come and invade. When you try to send them away, the herders will not allow and will even attempt to attack you instead. At times, they use the cattle to feed over our crops overnight, so by the time you arrive your farms in the morning, they are vandalized. It is very bad and frustrating.<sup>43</sup>

Secondly, accusations of rape and robbery are as common as that of intentional farm destruction. A woman respondent said that:

I can tell you that cases of raping are real. I have learnt not to go to my farm alone because of fear of Fulani. I have seen several people who have been raped by the herders when they meet them alone in the farms. So each time I must go to my farm, I make sure I have male companions to protect me. Even at that, I am always afraid until I return home. Now, I have stopped going to the farm after they overpowered some males to rape their wives in the farm. I am afraid.<sup>44</sup>

From the foregoing, some issues came to the fore. The first is that the antagonism between the Agogo residents and Fulani herders seem to have some basis in economic interests. There are two angles to the economic issue. The first angle from the Agogo people states that the continued antagonism to the presence of Fulani herders in the area has to do with the economic loss occasioned by Fulani cattle. The destruction of farms by cattle represents a major economic disaster in the area. Large farms are often victims of cattle invasion and destruction. This has resulted in lower crop yields in the area and, by extension, less income for the farmers. The second angle to the economic discourse is contained in the response of the Fulani herders as stated by the spokesman of the Fulani in Agogo:

The farmers used to hunt grasscutters; but now there are no grass cutters anymore.<sup>45</sup> Now, if you hunt grass cutters that only sell for twenty Ghana Cedi and there are cattle in the bush that you can kill and sell for two thousand Ghana Cedi, which one do you think they will prefer? This is what is happening. What they do is that when they want to kill the cattle and you resist, they will attack you and turn around to say it is the Fulani that attack.<sup>46</sup>

Two issues are contained in the account of the Fulani. The first is that their persecution at the hands of the Agogo people has to do with their relative economic advantage, which the sale of cattle has given them. The second is that they also suffer economic loss as a result of cattle rustling, blamed on the Agogo residents. In the same vein, the attacks on the Fulani are similar to the feelings of frustration of Agogo residents over cases of robbery and rape blamed on the Fulani herders. Respondents voice their anger on their helplessness in the face of these atrocities allegedly perpetrated by the herders. However, research findings show some level of exaggeration in these claims. Crime in the area is not restricted to the Fulani herders alone. There are instances where indigenes are also involved in robbery and rape. Attacks on the Fulani have resulted in several deaths as discovered by the lead researcher. However, the Fulani are also involved in violent attacks on the farmers and the populace. This they attributed to defense. In the response of one of the herders: "When they attack us, we have no choice than to defend ourselves. If we do not do that, they will kill us off. So, it is natural that we have to defend ourselves with whatever we have. And when we do that, they brand us attackers. We are only defending ourselves."<sup>47</sup>

But underneath these accusations and counteraccusations is a fundamental factor of nationality and identity. The politics of ethnicity and nationality hinges on supremacy of indigenous population over those considered migrants. In this way of thinking, Fulani are regarded as strangers who came after the consolidation of the Ghana state. Several statements attest to this. In one of the responses: "We do not have Fulani as an ethnic group in Ghana. They all migrated from Nigeria, Mali, Burkina Faso and everywhere. They cannot come and destroy our land here. They must go back. They are not part of us."<sup>48</sup>

All respondents in Agogo voiced the opinion that Fulani are strangers in the area and should move to where they came from. A Fulani respondent equally shared the same feeling: "It is a matter of hatred against us. My father was born in this country. I was born here in Ghana. I have the Ghana national identity card. I am a Ghanaian but they will never accept that. They just hate us. Now they say I must leave. But to where?"<sup>49</sup>

All Fulani respondents subscribe to the hatred thesis. However, research findings show clearly that the migration of Fulani to the area is a fairly recent event. In that way they cannot be regarded as indigenous to the place. In a society that is strongly attached to primordial claims, agitations for expulsion based on feelings of frustration over Fulani activities will continue to feature prominently in the town.

### **The Politics of Expulsion and the Pastoralist Question in Ghana**

Post-colonial governments have continually employed expulsion as a policy across West African states. As argued above, the Ghanaian government expelled foreigners in 1969 in the face of a dwindling national economy. In 1983, the Nigerian government under President Shagari expelled Ghanaians who had come to seek economic refuge in Nigeria following the collapse of the Ghanaian economy in the 70s.<sup>50</sup> In 1989, the Senegalese government sent pastoralists packing following clashes between them and the farmers.<sup>51</sup> In 2012, there was an expulsion of Fulani inhabitants from some crisis-prone villages in the Plateau State by the Special Task Force (STF), which was charged with maintaining peace in that crisis-torn state, even without a policy of expulsion in place.<sup>52</sup> A similar policy of expulsion was used in Atebulu District in the Bong Ahafo Region of Ghana in 1999 and 2000 to drive away Fulani herders, but according to Steve Tonah, it was fraught with inadequacies.<sup>53</sup> In the case of Agogo, the policy has not been a total success. This is due to cattle ownership and the involvement of traditional institutions. In an interview, Kewsi Aning argues that, there is no single Fulani herder in southern part of Ghana that can erect a homestead without the express permission of the local chiefs.<sup>54</sup> It is the local traditional chiefs that often invite the Fulani herders to come and occupy their lands in return for monetary returns. Secondly, every Fulani spoken to holds cattle for indigenous Ghanaians. According to Aning, if a Fulani herder has fifty head of cattle, you can be rest assured that twenty of them belonged to indigenous Ghanaians, particularly “big men” and those that are in government. Therefore, agitation for the expulsion of Fulani herders threatens the economic interests of the traditional and political elites.

But a fundamental issue poses a dilemma for the Ghanaian state in addressing the Fulani pastoralist question. This is the definition of Ghanaian citizenship. The Ghanaian constitution recognizes people born in Ghana and also allows people to acquire citizenship after residing for many years in Ghana. Several of the Fulani herders were born in Ghana and several of them possess the Ghanaian national identity and voters cards. In the face of the law, they are Ghanaians, but according to many people they are strangers. The difference between the people’s perception and the constitutional recognition constitutes a major dilemma for the Ghana state.

### **Conclusion**

Pastoralists and nomads have a long pedigree of conflict and attempts at control by the state. They do not easily fit into categories and challenge the assumed salience and prominence of national borders as well as defying state attempts to regulate and control them.<sup>55</sup> As climate change is expected to increase, the issues and problems faced here will only be exacerbated as more pastoralists challenge international and internal borders for access to grazing land. Finding a solution to the conflict in light of an expected increase in pressures due to climate



change means it will be all the more urgent, for the issues and problems faced here will only be exacerbated.

In the Agogo area of Ghana, the state is seeking a solution that excludes the nomads in contrast to efforts to sedentarize them. Excluding these people is probably an easier act of policy than trying to regulate and settle them. By defining them as intruders they support local farmers—i.e., those that are already under the aegis of the state. However, the elites themselves are part of the problem by keeping their own cattle, which constitute symbols of their wealth and status. They therefore exacerbate the problem by creating more pressure on land and fuelling the very type of conflict that they need to play a role in curtailing. Expulsion of pastoralists is obviously not a solution and highly charged, and not only because it violates constitutional rights of citizenship and birth. The case here shows a problem of legitimacy of the state as seen by the people not just the state. In this case the people are seeing the role of the state as one of protecting them from the illegitimate, i.e., the nomads. Yet the state is deeply involved through the political elite's own cattle-keeping practices.

Any agreement may not be satisfying to either of the hostile groups as it is ultimately about limited resources. The violence will remain endemic as both groups have land use practices that are in competition with one another. Relative deprivation theory suggests that this conflict will not be resolved as both groups will remain deprived of resources from the others actions or even existence. The extent to which this could become political violence directed at the state is low since the discontent is not shared, at least not between the groups even as it is from within them. Perhaps herein lies the crux of the problem and the start of a solution. If these people could see each other as victims of the world system and global warming then the state perhaps would be seen as the one contributing to their deprivation and discontent. Joint political action may be more meaningful and compelling. A useful concept here may be one of reconciliation. According to Ervin Staub, "Reconciliation means that victims and perpetrators, or members of hostile groups, do not see the past as defining the future, as simply a continuation of the past. It means that they come to see the humanity of one another, accept each other, and see the possibility of a constructive relationship."<sup>56</sup>

There is no easy answer to the conflict and the violence. This article seeks to place these events in context and explain the policy within that context. The state in this instance cannot simply expel people, as the conditions causing the migration will continue to get worse as climate change continues. The pressures to move south will increase and national borders are never solid. Policy and laws must accept that these two communities are here to stay. Dealing with that may be a challenge, but is not one that denies people their citizenship rights, birthrights, or dignity. It is also a more honest appreciation of the interconnectedness of these peoples and their economies.

While climate change here is leading to or contributing to conflict, the relationship is not meant to be seen as a direct association. Climate change linked conflict is building on already existing relationships. So whether or not climate change will cause violence is premised off of this context—so the when and why will need further exploration. This also offers hope in that climate change need not lead to violence, but that violence can be mitigated through policy, social action, and better mutual understanding.

## Notes

- 1 Basset 1988.
- 2 Hagberg 2000, Oppong 2002.
- 3 Tonah 2002.
- 4 This is geographically located in southern Ghana but echoes the policies and practices found in the north.
- 5 Gould 1974.
- 6 Tonah 2002, Bosiakoh 2008.
- 7 Dzorgbo 1998.
- 8 Ghana News Agency 2012.
- 9 Based on fieldwork conducted in Agogo town on 12 June 2013.
- 10 Moritz 2010, p. 139.
- 11 Brown, Hanmmill, and McLeman 2007, p. 1141.
- 12 Spencer 2007.
- 13 Holmberg 2008, p. 14.
- 14 Barnet and Adger 2012.
- 15 Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel 2013.
- 16 Hendrix and Glaser 2007.
- 17 Tonah 2002.
- 18 Tonah 2006.
- 19 Fritsche et al. 2012.
- 20 See Gleditsch 2012, Glieditsch, Nordas, and Salehyan 2007, Gartzke 2012, and Busby 2013 for such critiques.
- 21 Here we echo other psychological theories of violence such as frustration-aggression theory of conflict. See McDougall 1951, Dollard 1939, Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff 1951, and Bandura 1973.
- 22 See again Dollard 1939 or McDougall 1951 for a psychological theory of frustration-aggression to explain the shift to violence.
- 23 Kriesberg 2007.
- 24 Moritz 2010, p. 142.
- 25 Tonah 2006.
- 26 See Blench 2004 and Balling 2005.
- 27 Interview with Joseph Nti; conducted on 12 June 2013 at the Nana Akuoku Palace in Agogo.
- 28 Morgan 2011.
- 29 Agogo respondent in Agogo over the course of fieldwork in June and July 2013.
- 30 Joseph Nti confirmed this in an interview conducted on 12 June 2013.
- 31 Agogo respondent, in Agogo on 12 June 2013.
- 32 Bob Sarpong, the younger brother to the traditional chief who also speaks on his behalf, argues that it was beyond the power of the traditional rulers to expel herders from the area. According to him, that power belongs to the state and that people are mistaken in thinking

- it was Nana Sarpong, the traditional ruler, who harbors them. Interview with Chiefs at the Palace, June 2013.
- 33 Morgan 2011.
- 34 Ibid. Interview with chiefs at the palace also confirmed this.
- 35 This was confirmed by numerous interviews of both herders and farmers.
- 36 Morgan 2011.
- 37 Morgan 2011.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Ibid.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Joy Online 2011.
- 42 Ghana News Agency 2012.
- 43 Interview with Agogo farmer.
- 44 Agogo respondent.
- 45 Grass cutters are cane rats, *Thryonomys swinderianus* that are consumed locally. Agogo respondent comment.
- 46 Agogo farmer respondent.
- 47 Fulani respondents.
- 48 Agogo respondent.
- 49 Fulani respondent.
- 50 Akrasil 2012.
- 51 Tonah 2002, Schmitz 1999.
- 52 Ibrahim 2012.
- 53 Tonah 2002.
- 54 Kwesi Aning is the Director, Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre. Interviewed June, 2013.
- 55 Scott 2009.
- 56 Staub 2006, p. 868.

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# A Community-Based Program in a Non-Existent Community

KWADWO ADUSEI-ASANTE

**Abstract:** Community is one of the idealized terms used frequently in contemporary development discourse. This paper argues that community is a complex and portrays the outcomes of development programs that apply it loosely. It draws on qualitative research methods and a case study of the World Bank's Community-Based Rural Development Project implemented in Abaase in the Eastern Region of Ghana between 2005 and 2011. The analysis suggests that while the concept of community seems appealing, it may not practically exist or may be weak in localities labeled as communities. Thus, the paper argues for the need to design and implement community-based or driven programs in a way that identifies, develops, and targets specific community groups or members, particularly in migrant and transient populations.

## Introduction

The concept of community is often applied in contemporary development discourses and programs. Although the literature variously portrays it as being complex, political, "controversial," and a myth, the concept of community continues to gain popularity among many development brokers. This is particularly true of the World Bank, which has since 2000 been championing Community-Driven Development (CDD) programs and investing nearly USD two billion annually in the approach.<sup>1</sup> This article draws on lessons from a Community-Based Rural Development Project (2005-2011), which was implemented in Abaase in the Yaago Plains of Ghana.<sup>2</sup> It seeks to provide empirical grounds for appreciating (1) the complexity of the concept of community; and (2) the need to design and implement community-based or driven programs in a way that identifies, develops and targets specific community groups or members. Theoretically, the text aims to provide a conceptual framework for examining the concept of community.

The first part of the paper describes the methodology. This is followed by a brief exploration of the literature to show the complexity and conceptual controversies around the concept of community. An analytical framework for examining what "community" is and what it is not is established in the section. The last part of the paper discusses Ghana's Community-Based Rural Development Project (CBRDP), which was used as the case study, and presents an empirical case study of Abaase, a town in the Kwabre North District (Yaago Plains) of the Eastern Region of Ghana. The dynamics of Abaase, a beneficiary of the CBRDP and the data,

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v15/v15i2a4.pdf>

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ISSN: 2152-2448

suggest that while “community” did not practically exist in the locality, the implementers of the CBRDP seemed to have ignored the need to nurture one there, through targeting traders, for example, leading to the abandonment of the project.

## Methodology

The data was drawn from the review and analysis of relevant academic literature and qualitative data during a seven-month (September 2010-March 2011) doctoral fieldwork conducted in nine localities from the Eastern, Greater Accra, and Volta Regions of Ghana. The thesis sought to unravel the manner in which the application of contested complex concepts impacted Ghana’s CBRDP. This article is based on the case of Abaase in the Eastern Region (Yaago Plains) and formed part of the five case studies in the doctoral thesis proper. The qualitative data was generated from participant-observation, focus group discussions, and individual interviews with local government officials (LGOs), Traditional Chiefs, CBRDP managers, key informants, and residents of the CBRDP beneficiary localities.<sup>3</sup> A total of fifty formal and in-depth individual interviews and ten focus group discussions were conducted in the nine research localities. Two hundred and twenty-five questionnaires were also distributed to residents of the research localities who were not included in the individual interviews and focus group discussions.<sup>4</sup> Respondents were purposively sampled and had to reside in Abaase and possess intimate knowledge of the implementation processes of the project in the locality (Abaase). Relative to Abaase, the semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and open-ended questionnaires elicited information on the (1) processes leading to the selection and implementation and the state of the CBRDPs; (2) the participants’ understanding of “community,” their sense of belonging and obligations to Abaase and what they considered as the most important needs of the locality vis-à-vis the project implemented; and (3) issues affecting local tendencies in Abaase. The data was analyzed manually and the themes that emerged are presented this paper.

## Community: Conceptual Controversies

Community tends to generate a great deal of discussion and debate. Some scholars argue that it is a political term, and that its recent romanticization is a return to local organizing after it was jettisoned for neoliberalism in the 1980s. In the wake of the obvious failures of the neoliberal market economy to deliver what it promised (trickle down growth), community organizing (communitization), they argue further, has been revived and repackaged as the Third Way to reduce public spending by complementing government efforts in meeting citizens’ needs.<sup>5</sup> The other issue that makes community contested relates to its definition.

Etymologically, “community” comes from the Latin *cum*, which means “together or among each other” and *munus*, which means “the gift.”<sup>6</sup> From its roots therefore, the term connotes the sharing of “something” usually among small [human] groups, what Ferdinand Tönnies referred to as *gemeinschaft*.<sup>7</sup> Even so, the internet, new technologies and urbanization have given the term a “new seductive appeal” by stretching its connotation beyond group sizes, territoriality, and even as a form of manageable human organization.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, many people now live in small localities they do not consider as their community, but claim “communitiship” with such larger entities encompassed as a university

or country or their workplace, some of which have no geographical boundaries. It is common to read about a community of animals or even plant species; or that we live in an “international community.”<sup>9</sup> In Australia, for example, not-for-profit positions are classified as the community sector, while suburbs whose residents only share spaces (e.g., a suburban community); or a people who share characteristics as Africans, are often referred to in the media and policy documents as, for instance, an or the “African community.” In addition, penologists, criminologists and corrective services worldwide use the term community to mean an entity into which ex-offenders must be reintegrated, as if they had always been a part of it.<sup>10</sup>

The broadening of the implication of community has given rise to three situations. The first is that of the labeling of localities and groups as communities, where in reality “community” does not exist, or exists but not in the traditional and romantic sense. In some cases, the ground settlement and mobility patterns of people in localities labeled communities may not support interaction to the levels required for a coherent community to exist. Because interaction and membership is a choice, “community” cannot be forced on people, even if they share spaces or interests.<sup>11</sup> Tellingly, some scholars have observed that the labeling of community is sometimes a deliberate policy action to direct attention away from the internal politics and from questions of the nature of actual social relations in a locality.<sup>12</sup>

Second, there is also the tendency, as Mansuri and Rao observed, to conceptualize the term “to denote a culturally and politically homogeneous social system, or one that, at least implicitly, is internally cohesive and more or less harmonious.”<sup>13</sup> Referred to as “spatialization” by Amin, the homogenization inclination presents two challenges. On the one hand, it assumes that everyone within a geographic entity (village, town) shares similar values and interests with those therein, thereby burying internal differences.<sup>14</sup> On the other, it fails to acknowledge the reality that communities can and do exist within a community.<sup>15</sup> Thus, Mosimane and Aribeb caution community ideologues and practitioners to be aware of the difference between community of “place,” which denotes people living together in a spatially bounded locality; and community of “use,” which refers to a scenario where people share a certain resource or identity.<sup>16</sup>

Third, it is possible for identifiable groups or communities to be misrepresented on matters that may concern them. The literature enumerates a number of instances where a few influential people, due to their wealth, political contacts, or educational backgrounds (termed the elite), have dominated and forcefully represented the rest. The opposite is also possible, where the voice or representation of a minority group can be relegated.<sup>17</sup> In lieu of the complexity of the term, many scholars concede that an attempt to universalize a particular definition of “community” is impossible. For example, Bell and Newby found ninety-eight different definitions that hardly shared any commonalities.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars regard community as both evaluative and normative. By evaluative, it is considered as value-driven and its meaning is contested and open to diverse meanings, depending on the ideological leanings of the person using it.<sup>19</sup> Normative community implies that there exist norms and rules, which could be developed and used positively to organize people to achieve a “good cause”; or negatively to persecute and exclude “the outsider.”<sup>20</sup> This assertion is supported by Fisher and Shragge, who argue, “community” has become the dominant form of resistance and social change throughout the world.<sup>21</sup>

Notwithstanding the difficulty of defining what “community” is and what it is not, theoreticians seem to agree on three issues. First, that the term should be appreciated for its complexity and that it may be futile attempting to find a universal definition. As a result many scholars circumvent defining the concept by describing its core features instead. For example, as Table 1 below shows, Goode outlined eight characteristics; McMillan and Chavis also presented four elements; Bartle discusses four features; while Tesoriero outlines five. Second, that the meaning of “community” should go beyond “spatialization” to include “functionalization.” Community as a function relates to people having a sense of belonging, solidarity, and identity.<sup>22</sup> It is also about common interest or understanding between people; a form of social organization where members share spaces, including the virtual, interactions and a resource.<sup>23</sup> Third, that whoever (scholars and policymakers) applies the term must clarify the meaning they ascribe to it.<sup>24</sup>

**TABLE 1: CHARACTERISTICS OF A “COMMUNITY”**

Goode’s eight characteristics of a community	McMillan and Chavis’ four characteristics of a community
<p>A social organization:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Whose members are bound by a sense of identity</li> <li>2. Where few leave, so that it is a terminal or continuing status for the most part</li> <li>3. Whose members share values in common</li> <li>4. Whose role definitions vis-à-vis both members and non-members are agreed upon and are the same for all members</li> <li>5. Who have a common language, which is understood only partially by outsiders</li> <li>6. That has power over its members</li> <li>7. Whose limits are reasonably clear, though they are not physical and geo-graphical, but social</li> <li>8. Whose members encourage others to join them (social reproduction) for generational continuity</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Membership (the feeling of belonging)</li> <li>b. Influence (a sense of mattering)</li> <li>c. Integration and fulfillment of needs members</li> <li>d. Shared emotional connections</li> </ol>
	<b>Bartle’s four characteristics of a community</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Boundaries of communities are fuzzy</li> <li>ii. Communities can be within communities</li> <li>iii. Communities may move (not static)</li> <li>iv. Urban communities are special</li> </ol>
	<b>Tesoriero’s five characteristics of a community</b>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Human Scale</li> <li>II. Identity and Belonging</li> <li>III. Obligation</li> <li>IV. <i>Gemeinschaft</i></li> <li>V. Culture</li> </ol>

Sources: Goode 1957, McMillan and Chavis 1986, Bartle 2007, and Tesoriero 2010.

As “community” was a key component of the CBRDP, many of the project’s documents were systematically reviewed to establish how the term was conceptualized. When no official definition was found, the researcher informally interviewed one of the senior managers for clarification as follows:

Researcher: It's been difficult to pin point how the project defines "community." Could you please provide me with any relevant documentation that defines the concept as used in this project?

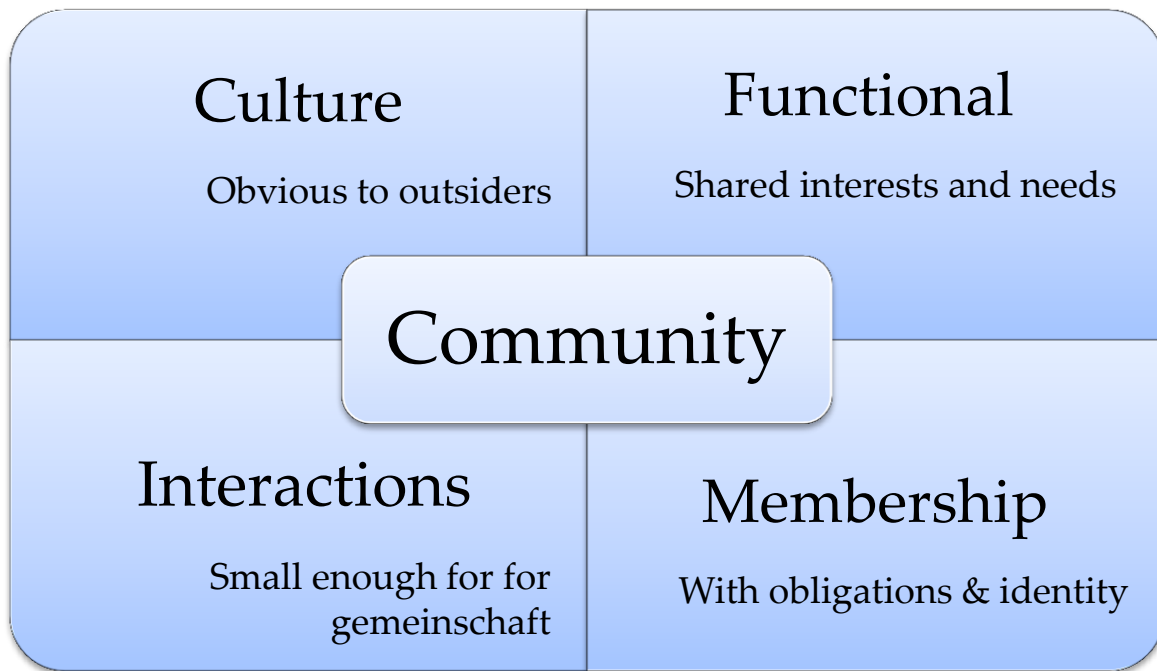
Manager: CBRDP has no special definition for a "community." Our use of the word "community" agrees with any dictionary definitions. A working definition of a community could refer to a group of people living in the same vicinity and bound by same culture, beliefs and practices. You may adopt any of the known definitions as offered by dictionaries or development practitioners

The fact that the CBRDP did not have a definition for "community" illustrates the disregard that some development brokers have for concepts and their contextual relevance in project designs. While some scholars have noted this tendency as causing project failures, it seems to be persisting.<sup>25</sup> As the Manager's response did not provide meaningful clarification of the concept as used in the project, it is crucial to establish an analytical framework for what community is and what it is not. Meaningful clarification is necessary for the purposes of use in this paper so as to capture, to a greater extent, the complexities of the localities researched and the relevant groups therein.

### **Community Conceptualized**

A critical review of the characteristics of community in Table 1 above reveals that while the concept is contextually variable, that is, every "community" is different, it seems to relate primarily to relationships (sharing, belonging, solidarity, and collective identities) which transcend territoriality, as conceptualized as follows. First, while it could be organized around spaces and territories, as used in this paper, "community" is conceptualized mainly in functional terms. Thus, residents of a given locality are not regarded as a "community" for the mere reason that they share that space, considering that not all of them may identify with it. As Lavarack and Wallerstein argued, however, "heterogeneous groups and individual [who share a given space] can actually become a community ... [if] programs reflect their shared interests and needs."<sup>26</sup> Consequently, members of a given locality may be referred to as a community if there is a function they are committed to or identify with. By implication, communities can be developed, if built around functions that relevant people are committed to either temporarily or permanently. For example, if a project relates to agriculture, a "community of farmers" could be developed through proper targeting and in other ways that give the farmers a sense of ownership of the project.

Second, because "community" as a function relates to an idea of belonging, solidarity, and shared identities, membership is crucial. A community may require a leader(s) who perform the rites of initiation and define the roles of members and their ethical boundaries. While members could belong to other groups, they are expected to be conscious of and have a sense of belonging to each of the communities they are a part of. Members are also expected to be loyal and committed to the community through their willing to contribute time, talents and abilities as well as material objects to maintaining the group.<sup>27</sup>

**FIGURE 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF A “COMMUNITY”**

Sources: Goode 1957, McMillan and Chavis 1986, Bartle 2007, and Tesoriero 2010.

Third, a community should offer members structures and avenues for interaction and contact, as a “people” and where non-members come in as visitors or invited guests. Whether formal or informal, the interaction has to allow for most members to know each other, what Ferdinand Tönnies calls *gemeinschaft*, which is interaction in a small group, as opposed to *gesellschaft*, or relationship of mass society.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, a “community” may have to produce a culture, which differentiates it from others. The culture may be a language or a jargon; or the group’s philosophy and ideological leanings. In addition, it is expected that the culture is known, accepted, and practiced by all members; non-members may have to identify it as a unique trait of the community. As members of a family or a religious group would identify with each other, so should members of a community be willing to claim that “this is my community.”

Thus far, an attempt has been made to conceptualize community as a functional entity, small enough for interaction, where members submit to the group’s tenets voluntarily and having a distinct culture, which is obvious to “outsiders.” Within this framework, the section below draws on the empirical data to examine the “communitiness” or otherwise of Abaase, and how this impacted on the CBRDP that was implemented there.

### **Community-Based Rural Development Projects (CBRDPs) in Practice: A Case Study of Abaase, Eastern Region, Ghana**

Ghana’s Community-Based Rural Development Projects (CBRDP) was designed as a type of the World Bank’s Community-Driven Development program. The CBRDP aimed to empower rural population, and strengthen the country’s decentralization system.<sup>29</sup> The project, which served as one of the principal vehicles for the implementation of Ghana’s Poverty Reduction Strategy



(GPRS) to bridge the gap of uneven distribution across socio-economic groups and geographical locations, was funded with loan facilities from the World Bank's International Development Association and the Agence Francaise Development. The Government of Ghana implemented the project under the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) and the Regional Coordinating Units (RICUs) in conjunction with an independent CBRDP secretariat.<sup>30</sup>

Like most CDD programs, the principle underlying Ghana's CBRDP was to allow an entity called "community" to choose, implement, and maintain local development projects.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, area councils, believed to be closest local government body to people at the grassroots level in Ghana, were taken through the rudiments of the CBRDP to facilitate the process.<sup>32</sup> They were trained in financial, project tendering, and procurement management processes, after which they were required to prepare their respective Community Action Plans.<sup>33</sup> This document contained the community's project road map. Once endorsed by the CBRDP headquarters, the beneficiary locality received seed money in three equal installments to implement the project.<sup>34</sup> Because it was community-based, the expectations the CBRDP beneficiary locality would contribute labor or offer hired services at a reduced market rate to complete and maintain the project.<sup>35</sup> As described below however, because "community" did not exist in Abaase in the real sense of the term, as of the fieldwork period the project looked abandoned. Abaase benefitted from a forty-stall market structure under the CBRDP, which was completed in 2009. During the fieldwork, the market was not in use and traders were seen selling in the sun or under trees. Due to the lack of maintenance, the aid-funded stalls were deteriorating and had become a home for squatters who also used it as a toilet facility. As described below, the failed state of the Abaase project is attributable to the fact that many residents of the locality tended to treat it with "a sense of temporality." This attitude, as the paragraphs below highlight, raises doubts about why a community-based project was implemented in this place.

Located in the Kwabre North District of the Eastern Region, Abaase is a part of a vast 5,040 sq. km island, called the Yaago Plains, one of the most remote, deprived, and poverty-stricken parts of Ghana.<sup>36</sup> According to the District's Medium Term Development Plan, the population of Abaase was estimated to be 4,865. Residents of Abaase are predominantly farmers and petty traders. In terms of religion, Christians are in the majority, but some 20 percent of the residents are Muslims.<sup>37</sup> Although the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) occupies both electoral constituency seats of the district, many Abaase residents claimed that the New Patriotic Party, in whose term of office the project was implemented, have always won in their electorate, though at times in opposition.

Three ethnic groups dominate Abaase. The Kwabre traditionally own most of the Yaago Plains. They are an Akan ethnic group from the Kwabre South District. Many of them are traders and farmers, some of whom commute to and from Abaase at least three times in a week, while others have settled, but still maintain ties with their extended families in Kwabre South, where they also invest most of their capital. Depending on the direction one uses, the distance between the Kwabre South towns and the Yaago Plains is less than four hours travel time, including the time spent on the ferry. Apart from the Kwabres, significant numbers of Ewes and ethnic groups from the northern part of Ghana have a presence in Abaase and most parts of the Yaago Plains.<sup>38</sup> The Ewe are largely from the Volta Region and enter the Yaago Plains through

the eastern corridor by crossing the country's largest and longest river, the Volta. A sizable number of people from different ethnic groups in the northern parts of the country, many of who are Muslims also live in Abaase. Like the Kwabre and the Ewe, most are petty traders and animal farmers.

Because of its rural isolation, interviewed residents of Abaase (and the Yaago Plains) appeared not to associate with the locality as their hometown or a place worthy of any meaningful investment. Interestingly, some of these residents were either born or had lived there for over thirty years. The common maxim in the locality is "*Obiaa enfi Abaase*," translated "no one hails from Abaase." The director of the oldest and most influential NGO in the district, the Yaago Plains Development Corporation (YPDC), explained that "Yaago Plains will never develop until the residents change their attitude towards the place and treat it with some sense of permanence." Because of this attitude of temporality, Anyidoho describes the locality as:

A fascinating reference point for thinking about development in Ghana. They are a recurrent site of experimentation in development programming, and yet remain persistently 'undeveloped' by all accounts . . . The paradox of the Yaago Plains is that while the district, with its agricultural and marine potential, has been targeted for development by various governments, it has not met its own potential or the expectation of policymakers. The . . . [Yaago Plains District] has a dual identity: it attracts migrants from the north and south with its promise of abundant yield from land and sea, but it also has an unwelcoming reputation as a remote and inaccessible region.<sup>39</sup>

The perception of temporality was further corroborated by the fact that the Assembly Member of the town, at the time of implementing the project, was not serving in Abaase. When asked why, he said, "I'm not a native of Abaase . . . I would rather serve the people in my traditional hometown . . ." The area council chairman at that time also alluded to that assertion when he said: "My family lives in Accra and I work here. I visit them often. Yaago Plains is more of a resettlement area, people move in and out . . . It is therefore difficult to build a school [for a locality] as it can be a white elephant in the future. I can even cite three places where schools were built: Ebunum, Asikum and Nkubeha, but are now of no use."

The seeming disassociation with the town tended to impact negatively on local organizing initiatives. While the size of Abaase was small enough to allow for face-to-face interaction on local development issues, the residents tended to place more emphasis on religious interactions than meeting as a community. When asked by questionnaire if they attended local meetings, over 85 percent answered "No!" Three reasons emerged. The first was related to the usual "no one hails from Abaase" mantra. A second was related to a concern that if people expressed dissent with local leaders at meetings, they were persecuted afterwards. In a mixed-gender focus group discussion with some Abaase traders, many of who were disappointed with the state of the market project, a young man explained that: "The chief and his elders chair the meetings so you must be careful the way you talk ... during meetings you might offend someone and this would bring problems. I would rather stay at home and work instead of going for meetings."

A 53-year-old woman also remarked:

The town is small . . . so we are careful of what to say . . . if not you are targeted . . . I remember sometime ago, a senior medical doctor held a meeting with us and asked us to tell him about the problems we face at the clinic; one man told him that the medical staff did not respect the sick people . . . because they always shouted on them. One evening this man fell sick and went to the clinic but he was sacked because of the point he raised during the meeting. He is now on pension and has left Abaase for his hometown.

The third reason regarding a lack of interest in local meetings was also complicated by failure of previous projects that involved the collection of residents' money. Residents the author interviewed made references to a failed water project in 2002. One of the area's members of parliament of the area initiated a local self-help project to raise money to construct a borehole for the town. It was alleged that the MP provided the seed money and the local leaders also levied residents to raise the remaining sum. While many people claimed that they paid, the project did not eventuate, partly because of the lack of "sense of community" in the locality. The residents' money was not refunded, as confirmed by a male farmer who had lived in Abaase for ten years: "When you ask question about the water project in meetings . . . you will see that the faces of the leaders have changed . . . why worry about projects again? I'm a native of Abaase?"

A female trader confirmed that:

We paid the money because we wanted access to good drinking water. They made it serious to the extent that you would be arrested if you did not pay. Some people were arrested for refusing to pay. Most of us paid, but we have not seen any good use of the money . . . Since then, I decided not to go for local meetings any more.

These precedents, many of which were allegations, did impact significantly on the implementation and the maintenance of the Abaase CBRDP. While many of the local officials claimed that they met and discussed the project with the local people, most of the residents maintained they were not consulted about it; all they saw was that a market was being built. While some of the local people, particularly women, admitted taking part in the communal labor later on, because the chief called for it, the local officials explained that it was initially difficult because of mistrust, the fact that many people tend not regard Abaase as their hometown, and a mentality of the people that government should solve all local problems. Consequently, although the market project was meant for the entire community, they had to raise the project's additional money from among the traders who, against the policy of the CBRDP, were each promised a space. Incidentally, while this promise led to the eventual completion of the project, the same promises bedeviled it.

Before Abaase received the market sheds, traders sold their wares or produce under trees or straw structures. These trees and structures were broken down to make way for the CBRDP project. The officials assured the traders of spaces in the new sheds only if they contributed money, which they did. However, the officials realized that they could not allocate the shed as promised because the forty sheds were not enough to accommodate the almost two hundred traders who had paid money in advance. The situation was convoluted by a directive from one

of the CBRDP senior managers of the that the sheds belonged to the entire Area Council, made up of twenty localities, and that they could not be allocated to only the Abaase traders who had contributed labor and money.<sup>40</sup> One aggrieved trader said:

Before they started the project, we were asked to pay some money if you wanted a space in the new market. We paid but when the market was completed and we asked for our space, they told us to wait . . . we have been waiting for three years . . . so we sell outside the market in the sun, while the sheds are empty.

During fieldwork, the project's officials were embarrassed by the situation and admitted that they had made a mistake by over collecting the money. Even so, they argued that because of the attitudes of most of the residents towards the locality, and the mistrust that the failed water project had generated in the local leaders, there was no other way they could have raised the project's needed additional funding. The local officials blamed the state of the market on the CBRDP manager's insistence that the sheds could not be allocated to only the Abaase traders. The puzzle then was who gets the shed and who gets the refund after their previous market structures had been broken down? As of March 2012, twelve months after the fieldwork, key informants in Abaase confirmed that the market was still not being used and the money of the traders had also not been refunded.

## Conclusion and Discussion

This paper set out to show what becomes of projects that use community only in the normative sense without theoretically and practically conceptualizing it. Two conclusions emerged. The first was that "community" appeared not to exist in Abaase. Consequently, not only did the CBRDP project lack local support during their implementation, but also that the market sheds have been left unmaintained. The problem was that, like many towns in the Yaago Plains, residents of Abaase did not associate with the town. Analyzed within the above framework, Abaase barely qualified as a community, as its residents did not regard themselves as members of the town, so would not associate with it, had no obligation to it, or exhibited any culture worthy of commonality. The sense of temporality towards the locality, coupled with mistrust of local leaders seemed to have made it difficult for the local project's leaders to organize support for the project. In their bid to raise additional funds to complete the market sheds, the local officials over-collected monetary contributions from traders, who apparently outnumbered the available sheds once built. This compounded the problems the project was designed to alleviate.

Second, the CBRDP designers and implementers appeared not to have made any effort to build the "communities" upon which to base the project. While many functions around which the CBRDP could have been built existed (such as a community of traders or farmers), these seemed to have been ignored. Thus, the project appeared to have been implemented in a locality or a "space" rather than within a functioning community. As it turned out, because there was no "community" to own and maintain it, the Abaase CBRDP was abandoned and found in a state of disarray at the time of the fieldwork.

The article has shown that it is not enough to base development projects around idealized, yet complex and contested terms such as "community." As the conceptual framework indicated, community is a multi-faceted concept, and each of its features must be in place or

developed before its benefits can be realized. The analysis of the Abaase case study, however, shows that the locality lacked the four key attributes of the concept of community: Function, Membership, Interaction, and Culture. Therefore, it is important that development stakeholders clearly define and conceptualize key terms they apply in development programs to serve as road maps during implementation while at the same time investing in social research and impact assessment to understand how local contexts and dynamics would influence development outcomes. If projects are meant to “improve” lives these simple processes will mean that they can effectively be maintained. Finally, the study has revealed that community-based programs located in settings that have temporal or migrant populations need to identify and target specific community groups and members or draw them from wider population bases, as this case study has shown.

## Notes

- 1 Appadurai 1995, Guilt and Shah 1998, Wong and Guggenheim 2005, Binswanger–Mkhize et al. 2010, Pandey 2010, and Tesoriero 2010.
- 2 Abaase and Yaago are pseudonyms for the localities where the research was conducted.
- 3 The Abaase focus group discussion was conducted with both male and female traders who belonged to diverse ethnic groups and faiths.
- 4 The direct quotations in this article were extracted from interviews and focus group discussions conducted in Abaase in September and October 2010.
- 5 Marion 2007, Defillippis and Saegert 2008, Defillippis et al. 2010, and Pandey 2010.
- 6 See <http://www.seek2know.net/word.html>, retrieved 23 March, 2012.
- 7 Tesoriero 2010 and Kenny 2011.
- 8 Delanty 2003, p. 2.
- 9 See Hall and Cooper 1970 for communities of plants and animals.
- 10 Borzycki and Baldry 2003 and Hattery and Smith 2010.
- 11 Khwaja 2001, Platteau 2004, Alesina and Ferrara 2005, and Cornish 2006.
- 12 Ferguson 1990 Botchway 2001, Cleaver 2001, Moncrieff and Eyben 2007, and Tesoriero 2010.
- 13 Mansuri and Rao 2004, p. 8.
- 14 Etzioni 1996, Shah 1998, and Botchway 2001.
- 15 Bartle 2007 and Minar and Greer 2007.
- 16 Mosimane and Aribeb 2005.
- 17 Cornish 2006, Labonne and Chase 2007, and Platteau 2009.
- 18 Bell and Newby 1971.
- 19 Amin 2005 and Defillippis et al. 2010.
- 20 Mosimane and Aribeb 2005.
- 21 Fisher and Shragge 2010.
- 22 McMillan and Chavis 1986, Appadurai 1995, Delanty 2003, and Tesoriero 2010.
- 23 Agrawal 1996, Puddiffot 1996, Mosimane and Aribeb 2005, and Tesoriero 2010.
- 24 Botchway 2001, Bartle 2007, and Tesoriero 2010.



- 25 Mehmet 1978, Botchway 2001, Mosse 2005, Easterly 2007, Collier 2007, Riddell 2007, and Hancock et al. 2011.
- 26 Lavarack and Wallerstein 2001, p. 180.
- 27 McMillan and Chavis 1986, Bartle 2007, and Tesoriero 2010.
- 28 Bartle 2007 and Tesoriero 2010.
- 29 CBRDP 2006.
- 30 CBRDP 2006, Yaron et al. 2008, and Binswanger-Mkhize et al. 2010.
- 31 Mansuri and Rao 2004, Yaron et al. 2008, and Binswanger-Mkhize et al. 2010.
- 32 Area councils form the lowest system on Ghana's local government structure. For their supposed grassroots nature, see Ahwoi 2010.
- 33 This was supposed to be participatory and consultative between the local people, the Assembly and Unit Committee Members, and Traditional Chiefs.
- 34 GHC 15,000 (Approximately USD 10,000 in 2005).
- 35 CBRDP 2006 and Yaron et al. 2008.
- 36 Ghana Statistical Survey 2008 and Kwabre North MTDP 2010.
- 37 Kwabre North MTDP 2010.
- 38 No statistical data exist on the ethnic distribution of Abaase.
- 39 Anyidoho 2012, pp. 1-2.
- 40 By implication the monetary contribution should have included all the twenty localities.

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# The Repugnancy and Incompatibility Tests and Customary Law in Anglophone Cameroon

MIKANO E. KIYE

**Abstract:** Contemporary customary law in Anglophone Cameroon has undergone a severe transformation since the coming in force of the Southern Cameroons High Court Law (SCHL), 1955. Prior to its enactment, customary law was administered by village authorities and was not subjected to any requirements. The SCHL is an influential piece of colonial legislation applicable in the former Southern or West Cameroon (currently the two Anglophone South West and North West Regions). Apart from establishing the competence of the then High Court, the legislation provides for the reception of English law into the territory and for the enforcement of customary law subject to passing duality tests—the repugnancy and incompatibility tests. Section 27(1) governs enforcement of customary law. Seemingly, the provision had the objectives of guaranteeing the survival of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon and eliminating offensive customary practices, thereby provoking in the people a sense of reform of customary rules. However, contemporary developments revealed that inasmuch as Section 27(1) has secured the survival of customary law (as interpreted by lawyers) over the years, it has also generated a number of conceptual and practical difficulties in the enforcement of customary law by the statutory courts. There are no clear standards in determining repugnancy and this has led to uncertainty in the application of customary law. Further, the duality tests have led to a divergence between the customary law recognized by the court and that recognized in society, the consequence being that a new version of customary law has arisen which does not reflect socially recognized norms. Alternatively, through the application of the duality tests, a new version of customary law is created by the statutory courts and then institutionalized in the legal system.

## Introduction

Customary law refers to custom, local usage, and belief of a particular community considered as binding on the people. Most, if not all, of these customs and usages are said to have been developed from time immemorial and handed over to the people from generation to generation. Although this perception of customary law as emanating from time immemorial has been challenged, nonetheless, it is generally accepted that customary rules existed prior to colonialism.<sup>1</sup> Customs and usages reflect the habit and social attitudes of the time. Generally, the concept of customary law is based on custom. The term “custom” does not imply that a

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<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/v15/v15i2a5.pdf>

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ISSN: 2152-2448

single uniform set of rules govern all Cameroonians. Rather, Cameroonian customary law has been looked upon as consisting of countless legal systems, each developed by and applicable to a particular ethnic group. In other words, a system of ethnic identification underlies customary law: customary law has a jurisdiction limited to particular cultural boundaries and it is the possession and right of a restricted ethnic group. Thus, each of the over 250 ethnic groups recognized in Cameroon has its own customary rules. Despite the fragmentation of customary rules there are also significant similarities in the rules applicable by the various ethnic groups.

Prior to colonization, customary laws were applicable in indigenous courts throughout the territory under the supervision of traditional leaders. At the advent of colonialism, extraneous legal systems were imported into the territory, notably French civil law and English common law.<sup>2</sup> In Anglophone Cameroon, one of the most influential pieces of legislation enacted by the British was the Southern Cameroons High Court Law, (hereinafter referred to as SCHL), 1955. It governed the administration of justice by the colonial High Court of Southern Cameroon. Despite being colonial legislation its impact within the administration of justice is still felt in contemporary Cameroon. Indeed, it is one of the most authoritative pieces of legislation in the administration of justice in Anglophone Cameroon. The legislation establishes the competence of the High Court and legitimizes the reception and continuous application of received English laws in the territory—the provisions of Sections 10, 11, 12, and 15 are illustrative. These provisions legitimized the application of substantive English law, practices, and procedures in Anglophone Cameroon. While Section 11 provides for the application of pre 1900 English statutes and doctrines of equity, Section 15 calls for the application of post 1900 English law in respect to issues dealing with probate, divorce, and matrimonial causes.

The impact of the SCHL extends to the recognition and enforcement of customary law. Section 27(1) is the most authoritative legislative provision that expressly provides for the recognition of customary law. None of the legislation enacted since independence expressly provide for the recognition of custom. Much of this legislation, including Article 2 Paragraph 2 of the 1996 Constitution, Section 3 of the Judicial Organization Ordinance 2006, and Article 21 of Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977, only makes implicit references to the recognition of customary law. Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955, is the only applicable law in Anglophone Cameroon that expressly provides for the recognition and enforcement of customary law.

Whenever customary law is to be enforced by the court, the impact of Section 27(1) almost always becomes apparent. The provision does not provide for the total and unconditional recognition of customary law. Rather, over the years, a pattern has emerged from the interpretation of this provision by the court: for a customary norm to be recognized and enforced by the court it must neither be repugnant to natural justice nor incompatible with a written law. Thus, prior to recognition, a customary norm is subjected to duality tests: the repugnancy and incompatibility tests. This colonial innovation, which has been endorsed by the local legislature, is not without consequences. The duality tests have restricted the scope of applicable customary law and, arguably, have provoked a sense of reform of customary law. An unavoidable divergence has also arisen between customary law recognized by the court and what is socially recognized under that name in society. Further, the repugnancy test has led to uncertainty in the application of customary law. This article advocates for the strengthening of the role of customary law in contemporary Cameroon.



The article provides a critical appraisal of almost six decades of the duality tests provided for under Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955. It provides an in-depth analysis of the provision and argues for the scrapping of the repugnancy test. It suggests that the test has generated uncertainty in the application of customary law, weakened the appeal of human rights rhetoric in the court, and has fragmented the legal process by creating two different versions of customary law. The article is divided into three parts: part one provides an analysis of the provision of Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955; part two unravels its impact on customary law; and part three discusses the path forward and suggests an alternative measure to the repugnancy test.

### **Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955: An Overview of the Provision**

The recognition and enforcement of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon is provided for under Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955. That provision states: “The High Court shall observe, and enforce the observance of every native law and custom which is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience, nor incompatible with any law for the time being in force, and nothing in this law shall deprive any person of the benefit of any such native law or custom.” The letter of this provision is not unique. In fact, it is derived from or replicated in other pieces of legislation applicable in the former Southern Cameroon.<sup>3</sup> The provision has two major effects: firstly, it recognizes customary law as a form of law; and, secondly, it provides for the regulation of customary law subject to its enforcement.

#### *The Recognition of Customary Law in Anglophone Cameroon*

Section 27(1) authorizes the High Court to “observe and enforce the observance of every native law and custom.” Thus, the High Court is not only mandated to take notice of the existence of customary law within the jurisdiction of the court but must also enforce its observance in the administration of justice. Reference to the “High Court” in the provision is not restricted to the High Court of Justice. Indeed, when the provision came into force, it referred to the colonial High Court, which then exercised both original and appellate jurisdiction. Nowadays, reference to the “High Court” is construed to refer to the ordinary statutory courts such as the Court of First Instance, the High Court of Justice, the Court of Appeal, and the Supreme Court. Although customary courts are not precluded from exercising jurisdiction in conformity with the letter and spirit of the provision, technically speaking, as custom-applying courts, (as opposed to statute-applying courts), they are exempted from relying on the provision. Section 27(1) legitimizes the application of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon.

Since independence in 1960, Cameroon has yet to enact legislation that expressly recognizes custom as a form of law. A number of post independent legislative actions only make implicit recognition of custom. Amongst them is Article 2 Paragraph 2 of the 1996 Constitution.<sup>4</sup> The provision provides that the State: “...shall recognize and protect traditional values that conform to democratic principles, human rights and the law.” “Traditional values, it is contended, refer to the ancestral customary values of the people. This constitutional provision is subject to ambiguity. It alludes to the state offering protection to “traditional values” without stating in precise terms what those values entail and the measures that have been adopted or are to be adopted to protect them. Could it be said that the protections the state is going to provide to

“traditional values” are already those in existence, and contemplated under Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955, to safeguard the future of customary law? Such a question is difficult to answer considering the vagueness of the constitutional provision. Ideally, one would have thought that the state would enact a specific post-independence legislation to protect these values in conformity with the letter and spirit of the constitutional provision.

Article 3 of the Judicial Organization Ordinance, 2006, is another post-independence legislative action that makes implicit recognition of customary law.<sup>5</sup> It recognizes “Customary Law Courts” in the judicial system. These courts, customary courts as they are usually referred to, are competent to settle disputes using indigenous laws and customs. The recognition of customary courts, an institution mandated to apply customary law, must therefore be seen as an implicit recognition of customary law.

Further, the relevant provision of Decree No. 77/245 of 15 July 1977 is worth discussing.<sup>6</sup> This decree made chiefs auxiliaries of the administration and empowered them to settle disputes according to native laws and customs.<sup>7</sup> This is the province of Article 21 which states: “The Chiefs may, in accordance with native law and custom, and where laws and regulations do not provide otherwise, settle disputes or arbitrate in matters arising between their subjects.” Technically speaking, chiefs are not part of the judicial process. Therefore, by authorising chiefs to settle disputes using native laws and customs, this provision expressly recognizes customary law albeit within the non-state justice system where the relevance of chiefs in the settlement of disputes cannot be over-emphasized.

Regarding the foregoing, the importance of Section 27(1) becomes even more apparent: It remains the only authoritative legislative instrument applicable in Anglophone Cameroon that expressly recognizes customary law. Unlike in jurisdictions elsewhere, where customary law is either recognized on the strength of a constitutional provision or a post independent legislation this is not the case in Cameroon.<sup>8</sup> The failure of the Cameroonian draftsman to expressly provide for the recognition of customary law either through a post-independent legislation or a constitutional provision raises a conceptual question: could this omission be regarded as a deliberate attempt to minimize the relevance of customary law in Cameroon? Alternatively, could this measure be perceived as being contemptuous of customary law? A critical analysis of the provision of Section 27(1), specifically the criteria established for the regulation and subsequent enforcement of customary law by the statutory courts, suggests an affirmative answer to these questions.

#### *Regulation of Customary Law: Recognition Subjected to Duality Tests*

Further to its recognition, Section 27(1) provides for the judicial regulation of customary law subject to its enforcement. According to the provision not all customs shall be recognized as customary law. In fact, the provision subjects the recognition and enforcement of customary law to a duality tests: the repugnancy and incompatibility tests. The express inference is that for customary law to be recognized by the court, it must neither be “repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience nor incompatible with any law for the time being in force.” Through these tests, the court has established control over customary processes. Each of these will be treated in turn, beginning with the repugnancy test.

According to Section 27(1) for customary law to be enforced it must, amongst others, not be repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. The word 'repugnant' means highly distasteful or offensive, opposed or contrary to, as in nature.<sup>9</sup> The precise ancestry of the test is somewhat in doubt. However, it has been said that it arose from Roman law sources and may have been influenced by canon law.<sup>10</sup> It was introduced into Africa during the colonial era and since then has remained an important feature in the development of customary law in post-colonial African societies.

By virtue of the test, an indigenous law, tradition, or custom is not to be enforced if it is distasteful, offensive to equity and good conscience, and is opposed to natural justice. The test further precludes the customary court from imposing a (customary) penalty that is repugnant to natural justice or offends against human dignity or is simply barbaric. In French-speaking Cameroon, the phraseology used by the French colonial administration was to the effect that local laws and customs were to be applied only insofar as they were not "contrary to the principles of French civilization."<sup>11</sup> Any rule of customary law which permitted slavery, or murder, or which offended basic notions of justice was considered to be contrary to the principles of French civilization.<sup>12</sup> In applying the repugnancy test, it is not within the province of the court to modify an "uncivilized custom" and apply the modified version of the custom.<sup>13</sup> The role of the court is limited to either accepting a custom or rejecting its enforceability. A customary law must not be repugnant to natural justice if it is to be enforced. The implication is that the onus of determining what norm becomes customary law shifts from the people to the court. The repugnancy test is applied alongside the incompatibility test.

Section 27(1) also subjects customary law to the incompatibility test, which ensures that no rule of customary law can prevail over the provisions of an enactment of the national legislature. Furthermore, except as otherwise stated, where a statute adequately provides for a subject, customary law will not be enforced in respect of that subject. There is direct incompatibility where the statute states expressly its objective to abolish or modify the customary rule. The incompatibility test was aimed at subjecting customary law to the provisions of municipal legislation. Nowadays, its application has been extended to cover international treaties ratified by, and justiciable in, Cameroon including human rights treaties. Being at the hierarchy of legal orderings in Cameroon, as provided for under Article 45 of the Constitution, there are bound to be legal and constitutional implications on all other normative standards that conflict with human rights values, be they statutory, common law, or customary law.<sup>14</sup> Thus, through the incompatibility test, a customary norm would be rendered unenforceable should it conflict with either a municipal law or provisions of an international treaty ratified by Cameroon.

The court has not established a sequence of priority in the application of the duality tests. They are often used inter-changeably and in no specific pattern. The tests are a legacy of British colonial policy in the administration of customary law in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. At the end of colonialism, the tests were maintained by most, if not all, independent sub-Saharan African states with far reaching consequences. In Anglophone Cameroon, the tests have had severe repercussions on the development of customary law.

### **The Impact of the Duality Tests on Customary Law**

The duality tests were designed to restrict the scope of customary law and to initiate reform of some its values. The tests have also produced some undesired effects, most of which are unforeseen consequences of the application of the tests. While the repugnancy test has led to uncertainty in the application of customary law, it has also had profound influence in the enactment of local legislation. Generally, the duality tests have led to an unavoidable divergence in customary law. I shall treat the effects in turn.

#### *Restriction of the Scope of Customary Law*

The incompatibility test has drastically restricted the scope of applicable customary law. Prior to colonialism, customary law was the main form of normative ordering and was applicable to all actions, be they civil or criminal, although such appellations were unknown to customary law. Native courts, as they were then referred to, had unlimited jurisdiction. The incompatibility test established a new order: it restricted the jurisdiction of customary law and subjected it to the provisions of written (statutory) law. In fact, where legislation has made provision a rule of customary law becomes inapplicable under the incompatibility test. A direct consequence is that customary courts have been ousted from exercising criminal jurisdiction and their civil jurisdiction is restricted within the realm of family law.

In civil matters, the jurisdiction of customary court is limited to awards not exceeding the sum of 69.200 francs CFA (approximately 105 euros). Since most civil disputes attract awards in excess of the said sum, customary courts are restricted to handling only petty civil causes. In this connection, although they have jurisdiction over polygamous marriages, it remains questionable whether they have the competence to handle incidental questions arising from such marriages including custody, property adjustments upon divorce, and financial allocations.<sup>15</sup> This is because disputes dealing with financial allocation on divorce usually involve monetary sums in excess of the court's financial jurisdiction. Therefore, even when a cause of action falls traditionally within its jurisdiction, a customary court may still be unable to exercise jurisdiction insofar as the claim exceeds the financial jurisdiction of the court.<sup>16</sup> The recent jurisdiction of the statutory court also suggests that the High Court shares concurrent jurisdiction over polygamous marriages with customary courts and that once a litigant objects to the jurisdiction of the customary court over a polygamous marriage, that court must surrender its jurisdiction over the dispute in favor of the competent High Court.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Reform of the Rules of Customary Law*

An anticipated effect of the repugnancy test was to initiate changes and provoke reform in customary law. It was hoped that by invalidating harmful customary values, the court would provoke to the people a sense of reform of customary laws. The importance of the repugnancy test in reviewing custom with the need to ushering in changes was aptly stated by a Nigerian judge, Justice Nwokedi, in the Nigerian case of *Agbai v. Okogbue*.<sup>18</sup> The judge apparently considered that the courts could contribute to the process of adopting customary usages to changing situations through the application of the test. As he stated in his judgment:

Customary laws are formulated from time immemorial. As our society advances, they are more removed from its pristine social ecology. They meet situations which were inconceivable at the time they took root. The doctrine of repugnancy in my view affords the courts the opportunity for fine-tuning customary laws to meet changed social conditions where necessary, more especially as there is no forum for repealing or amending customary laws. I do not intend to be understood as holding that the Courts are there to enact customary laws. When however customary law is confronted by a novel situation, the Courts have to consider its application under existing social environment.

This view is subject to criticism. As a form of law that emanates from the community, ideally one would expect changes in the law to come from within the community. Attempt to use the court to reform customary law amounts to an imposition on the people. Nonso Okereafiozeke criticized the test for hijacking the people's responsibility in ushering changes in customary law and instead handing it over to the court. He writes: "Ideally, therefore a people's law should emanate from a broad spectrum of the people, rather than from a few. This is the distinction between "customary law" imposed from the top and that developed from popular practices. Laws that are imposed by a few cannot become an acceptable means of social control..."<sup>19</sup>

#### *Uncertainty Due to the Absence of Clear Standards*

Questions have often arisen as to the standard the court employs to determine the rules of repugnancy. How does the court reach the conclusion that a customary rule is repugnant? What are the principles used by a judge in reaching that conclusion? These are questions worth considering, for in order for a rule to be declared repugnant it has to be adjudged on certain values: it may be those of the court that is seised of the issue; it may be those of the legal system where the court is situated; it may be those of the society in general or those of a foreign jurisdiction. There are three contrasting views.

Firstly, it is believed that the repugnancy test is not measured against the standard of a foreign country, and specifically British conduct, but against standards internal to the various jurisdictions or those based on universal morality. Therefore, during the colonial era, the formula was not meant to refer to English law but was regarded as an all-encompassing basis for the administration of justice in the colonies. Olawale supports this view, stating that British colonial policy in the sphere of law was not to judge the validity of local law and custom by the standards of Western thoughts or Christian ethics, but by the canons of decency and humanity considered appropriate to the situation at hand. In this connection, the objective of the test is to administer justice and not to exclude or impose a particular brand of law.<sup>20</sup> This position was adopted in the Nigerian case of *Dawodu v. Danmole*.<sup>21</sup> The Privy Council upheld a Yoruba custom of inheritance based on the *Idi-Igi* system. According to this system, the estate is divided in equal shares among the number of wives, with each child then taking an equal share of the portion allotted to his/her mother's branch of the family. While this was said to be contrary to the British principle of equal division to all children, the Privy Council held otherwise with



respect to its applicability in Nigeria. It stated: "The principles of natural justice, equity and good conscience applicable in a country where polygamy is generally accepted should not be readily equated with those applicable to a community governed by the rule of monogamy."<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, and popular amongst scholars, is the view that the doctrine is associated and interpreted with the principles of English law (or received Western law).<sup>23</sup> As a British-inspired legislation, it was likely to have been adjudged based on principles of British morality. In fact, during the colonial era, given that those traditionally exercising the power to hold laws to be repugnant were British or British-trained judges, the repugnancy clause may have in part been a means to enforce western-based morality. Criticizing this measure, Marasinghe writes: "There is a danger built into this approach, where English standards of justice and law are utilised for the determination of whether a rule of native law and custom passes the required 'repugnancy test'. The danger is that native laws would over the years disappear as a living system of laws."<sup>24</sup>

In contemporary Anglophone Cameroon although the court relies on basic notions of justice, as dictated by the legal system, those notions of justice are still, however, based on values of English received laws, which are still predominantly upheld in that section of the country. The tendency of the court to measure the acceptability of customary law based on English-inspired laws has led to a perverted value system in Anglophone Cameroon. Western inspired laws, which are foreign in orientation, are perceived as genuinely Cameroonian whereas customary laws, which are ancestral Cameroonian laws, are viewed as foreign in nature. By relying on exotic standards, the test gives the erroneous impression that standards of justice espoused by received foreign law were superior to those of customary law. This measure is flawed given that customary law and received Western laws share different social, historical, and philosophical contexts and to adjudge one based on values enunciated by the other would only produce the wrong outcome. This has negatively impacted on the perception of customary law. Commenting on the test, Okereafoezeke wrote: "Measuring the quality of a native law or custom on the basis of a foreign or alien consideration such as those brought about by British colonial laws or even local official laws does not augur well for the growth of the native justice systems."<sup>25</sup>

Thirdly, there is the view that the court has not developed clear standards for the application of the test. One commentator echoed this view as follows:

The courts have not developed any general theory on the basis of which rules of customary law are to be tested. Rather, they have adopted a liberal and flexible approach and have, on an ad hoc manner, invalidated or sanctioned a rule sought to be applied on the basis of their notion of what is fair and just.<sup>26</sup>

The absence of a clear standard is not without consequences: it has led to flexibility in the application of customary law, which has in turn generated uncertainty. Since no basic standard exists, the decision is based on the discretion of the court. And since it is but normal that judges hold different values of what might constitute proper conduct there is bound to be judicial uncertainty in the interpretation of the test, thus making it difficult to establish a universally valid precedent acceptable to all. As the decision of judges appears to create an uncertainty about the way in which the clause is applied, that uncertainty is passed down to customary law,



which in turn made it equally uncertain. This uncertainty is best illustrated through case law analysis. The contrasting decisions reached in the cases of *The Estate of Agboruja*, a Nigerian case, and *David Tchakokam v. Keou Magdaleine*, a Cameroonian case, is worth discussing.<sup>27</sup> In both instances, the courts were called upon to determine whether the system of levirate marriage under customary law (by which the wife of a deceased member of the family could be given to or married by another member of the family) offended natural justice, equity, or good conscience. In *The Estate of Agboruja*, the court approved the system of levirate marriage. In upholding the system it held:

... the custom by which a man's heir is his next male relative, whether brother, son, uncle or even cousin, is widespread throughout Nigeria. When there are minor children it means that the father's heir becomes their new father. This is a real relationship and the new fathers regard the children as their own children. Whenever this custom prevails, native courts follow it, and no doubt somewhere or in this large country this is being done every day.

Approving the custom of levirate, the court wrote:

... there can be nothing intrinsically unfair or inequitable even in the inheritance of widows, where those who follow the custom are pagans and not Mohammedans or Christians. The custom is based on what might be called the economics of one kind of African social system, in which the family is regarded as a composite unit.

On the contrary, the court arrived at a different conclusion in *David Tchakokam v. Keou Magdaleine* and rejected the practice as not only being repugnant but also contrary to written law. At the death of the widow's husband she was married through levirate to the nephew of her deceased husband. The new "husband" asserted claims over the property left behind by the widow's deceased husband. He averred that, being an object of inheritance under customary law, the widow was not entitled to inherit property. The court, relying on Section 27 of the SCHL, 1955, ruled in favor of the widow, granted her title over the contested properties and pronounced their levirate marriage invalid. The presiding judge wrote:

All in all, I am unable to find that there was ever a customary levirate marriage between plaintiff and defendant and even if there were the law will not give its blessing to a marriage that is not only obnoxious and repugnant to natural justice but obviously against the written law ... Section 27 of the SCHL clearly does not permit this court to enforce a marriage which is liable to be voided under our law.<sup>28</sup>

Although the cases are derived from two different jurisdictions, it is important to note that the applicable rules are similar as Anglophone Cameroon and Nigeria share similar legal traditions. Nonetheless, the judges arrived at different conclusions. Whereas the Nigerian judge saw the practice as not being repugnant because of the benefits it confers to the family, his Cameroonian counterpart disapproved of it as repugnant.

The flexibility and inherent uncertainty in the application of the test is also evident in the contradictory precedents it has generated in the interpretation and enforcement of discriminatory customs. It is trite and settled law in Anglophone Cameroon that the repugnancy test is invoked to eradicate discriminatory customs. The flexibility in the application of the test has challenged this notion. On a number of occasions, judges have invoked the clause to justify decisions that validate the reliance on discriminatory customary values. This was evidently the case in *Nanje Bokwe v. Margaret Akwo*.<sup>29</sup> In justifying the rationale of its decision, the court ruled that the respondent, Margaret Akwo, a married woman, could not inherit from the intestacy of her deceased father in the presence of suitable male heirs. The respondent's father was deceased. Prior to his demise, he had made a gift of land to the appellant, Nanje Bokwe, which was approved by the respondent's brother. On the death of her brother, the respondent took control over the estate of her deceased father and questioned the validity of the gift made to the appellant. The Kumba Customary Court ruled in her favor, but the Court of Appeal, Buea, quashed and overtuned the judgment. The Court justified its decision in these words: "The respondent is a married woman. She cannot unless so given by a will inherit from her father let alone be his next of kin. Alfred Mbongo [respondent's brother] was his father's next of kin. Alfred Mbongo is dead and has left a male heir. In fact, the respondent has no *locus standi*."

The argument lacks merit, for the customary practice that prevents married women from inheriting on the intestacy of their deceased parents contradicts written law and is inconsistent with the established jurisprudence of the statutory courts in Anglophone Cameroon.<sup>30</sup> Although rulings of this nature are rare, it reflects the unprecedented level of judicial flexibility and uncertainty in the application of the test.<sup>31</sup>

### *The Repugnancy Test has Inspired the Cameroonian Legislature*

An unforeseen consequence of the repugnancy test is the influence it has had on the development of the law in Cameroon. In fact, the precedents established by the court in the application of the test have had immense influence on the legislature. When a custom has been notoriously adjudged as repugnant by the court, the legislature in turn finds it necessary to enact specific legislation outlawing the custom. Thus, the legislature has drawn its inspirations from the court and has repealed by necessary implications any rule of customary law adjudged by the court as obnoxious. Some provisions of the Civil Status Ordinance, 1981, including Sections 72 and 77(2), are illustrative. These provisions outlawed some of the consequences associated with the payment of dowry under customary law, frequently adjudged as repugnant by the courts.

Under customary law, dowry has great significance.<sup>32</sup> Generally, dowry is seen as the symbolic act that validates a customary marriage and also signifies its dissolution. Only upon the full payment of dowry by the bridegroom-to-be could there be said to be a valid marriage. Conversely, and in principle, it is only upon the full refund of dowry by the wife (or her family) to the husband that a marriage can be considered terminated. A dowry compensated the family of the bride for the emotional and physical loss of a reproductive daughter. It was part of the compensation system, a form of social control.<sup>33</sup> The bride price involves a bartering negotiation. The higher the bride price, the greater the pressure exerted by parents on their

married daughter so that she stays with her husband. By agreeing to receive a high bride price on the occasion of their daughter's marriage, the parents would therefore manifest the importance they attach to the union and their willingness to preserve it in all circumstances. And the willingness of the groom's parents to pay a high bride price in the first place would express the same intent. In short, a high bride price serves as a commitment device aimed at minimizing the risk of marriage break-up.<sup>34</sup> Women in general have an interest in keeping bride price payments low since the payment must be returned to the husband if the woman initiates a divorce—a high bride price thwart women's efforts to sever a union, for their kin may be unwilling or unable to return it.<sup>35</sup> The payment of bride price established the marriage contract with all its rights and obligations.<sup>36</sup>

It has been argued that amongst the Igbo of Nigeria, bride price is not perceived as a way of buying the bride but as an act of respect toward her parents and kin.<sup>37</sup> With the introduction of paper money and the capitalist economy, women are commodified and sold to the highest bidder. Money introduced, which replaces cattle and other goods, takes on the form of price as the money acts as an expression of value.<sup>38</sup> Excessive bride price demands have made it very difficult for girls to find husbands.<sup>39</sup>

The court in Anglophone Cameroon has provided a slightly different interpretation of the concept of bride price or dowry. Dowry is perceived as the root cause of the problems facing women in traditional Cameroonian societies and may have influenced their status vis-à-vis property in these societies. The dictum of Justice Inglis in the North West Court of Appeal case of *Achu v. Achu* is revealing:

... customary law does not countenance the sharing of property, especially landed property, between husband and wife on divorce. The wife is still regarded as part of her husband's property. That conception is understood by the payment of dowry on marriage and on the refund of same on divorce.<sup>40</sup>

Amongst the most criticized consequences associated with dowry is the presumption that a child begotten by a wife during the continuation of her customary marriage with her husband remains the issue of the husband irrespective of whether or not he is the biological father, provided that the dowry paid on her behalf had not been refunded to him. Therefore, even if begotten with a third party during the continuation of the marriage, the issue becomes that of the husband. This principle was, for example, applied in the notorious case of *Ngeh v. Ngome*.<sup>41</sup> The wife gave birth to twin children with another man after abandoning the matrimonial home. Since the wife had not refunded the bride price, the Kumba Native Court and the Special Appeals Officer held that the children belong to the husband. This was rejected, on further appeal, by the then West Cameroon High Court as being repugnant to natural justice, equity, and good conscience. Following the precedent established in this decision, the statutory court has regularly relied upon it in declaring the custom repugnant and unenforceable in similar causes of action. This has influenced the legislature to enact the provision of Section 72 of the Civil Status Ordinance, 1981, which outlaws this customary practice. That provision states: "The total or partial payment of a dowry shall under no circumstances give rise to natural paternity which can only result from the existence of blood relations between the child and his father." Therefore, any customary rule that violates this provision becomes unenforceable in the light of

the incompatibility test as it offends a statute. Once such a statute is enacted, the court is subsequently prone to rely on its provisions rather than on the customary precedent that had in the first place influenced the enactment of the statute.

Another customary practice phased out by legislation inspired by the court is widow inheritance or levirate marriage. This practice is widespread in the West and North West Regions of Cameroon and is also based on the premise of a dowry. According to the custom, the dowry payment on behalf of a woman also makes her part of her husband's property and answerable to his family. Provided she has not refunded the dowry, the death of her husband does not terminate the marriage: she may be inherited along with other property by either a brother-in-law or any other heir designated by the husband's family. The statutory court has repeatedly held the custom as obnoxious.<sup>42</sup> Section 77(2) of the Civil Status Ordinance was introduced to give legislative backing of the views of the court. That section of the ordinance states:

In the event of death of the husband, his heir shall have no right over the widow, nor over her freedom or the share of the property belonging to her. She may, provided she observes the period of widowhood of 180 days from the date of the death of her husband, freely remarry without any one laying claim whatsoever to her or any compensation or material benefit for dowry or otherwise received, either at the time of engagement, during marriage or after marriage.

This provision outlaws the practice of levirate marriage and ensures that the widow, rather than being perceived as property that cannot own property, is given the authority to exercise her right of proprietary ownership.

#### *Unavoidable Divergence in Customary Law*

One of the most problematic effects of the repugnancy test is the divergence that has emerged in the rules of customary law. This divergence is a consequence of both the processes of administering customary law through the duality tests on the one hand and the subsequent establishment of customary law on the other. Both processes are interrelated.<sup>43</sup>

The duality tests have led to the birth of two versions of customary law over the years: lawyer's customary law and sociologist's customary law. When the court refuses to enforce a customary norm by declaring it either repugnant or incompatible with a written law, it only prevents the rule from being recognized in the state legal system. In most instances, the rule continues to be applicable by the people within the particular district in total disregard of the jurisprudence of the court. Although the court does not qualify the rule as customary law it is, however, regarded as such in society, thus leading to a fragmentation of the legal process and a divergence in customary rules.

Gordon Woodman has documented on this divergence. He states that rules recognized by the court as customary law (lawyer's customary law) do not necessarily correspond to socially accepted norms in society (sociologist's customary law). This divergence, he asserts, occurs during the process of the establishment of customary law before the court. Judicial establishment entails the institutionalization of the rule in the official legal system thereby making it available for use by the courts. Woodman explains some of the reasons for the

divergence. It may arise from mistaken findings on the content of sociologists' customary law. Further, even if such mistakes do occur, courts sometimes have to reach conclusions on the content of customary law when sociologists' customary law is in the mode of change. He further asserts that the second part of the rule in *Angu v. Attah* is liable to produce another divergence between the court's customary law and the society's customary law. There have been instances, he notes, where controversial points of law were settled by referring to one or few decided cases that were in turn based on weak evidence. Moreover, because previous decisions may be treated as binding authority, there is a further possibility that the courts might disregard local variations in customary practice. Further, once a rule has been judicially recognized, it is liable to be applied to ethnic groups other than those whose customs were in issue in the decisive cases.<sup>44</sup>

This divergence in customary rules and the subsequent fragmentation of the legal process is evident in Cameroonian society especially if recourse is had on the substance of the applicable customary rules within the state and non-state justice systems dominated by traditional courts. There is a variation between the customs applicable in traditional courts, perceived as genuinely ancestral, and those enforced by state courts, viewed as bastardized versions of customs. Within traditional societies, the argument is that the customary values enforced by traditional courts are reflexive of the views and ethos of the local communities whereas those enforced by state courts have undergone severe substantive transformation and, in most occasions, cannot be justified by corresponding social practices within those communities.

It should be mentioned that the divergence in customary laws is unavoidable for two reasons. Firstly, in applying the provision of Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955, the court is only mandated to either apply a custom or reject its enforceability. It is not within the mandate of the court to modify an outdated custom and apply the modified version. Moreover, due to the near absence of law reporting in Anglophone Cameroon, court judgments have very limited reach. Their effect is mostly felt only by the parties to the disputes. Thus, rejection of a custom by the court would only have an impact on the litigants. It does not prevent its observance in society. The effect is a potential variation between the court and society on the substance of customary law. Secondly, Woodman argues that the divergence is unavoidable because of the very nature of state courts—they have a peculiar character, which demands in every case an answer to a question which sociologists' customary law has never had to answer, and cannot answer. Therefore, sociologists' customary law never answers the question before the court, and hence, lawyers' customary law which does, must have a different meaning. Woodman writes:

The state courts' remedies and procedures are such that they cannot reproduce the circumstances in which social norms operate and by which they are enforced and consequently they cannot simply "apply" those norms. The legal systems of necessity exercise a creative function: when they appear to apply customary law, they in reality create a new type of "customary law". An alternative formulation is to say that customary law is institutionalized by the state legal system. However, "institutionalization" should not be taken to imply that the product is not substantially new.<sup>45</sup>



He concludes that the divergence between lawyers' customary law and sociologists' customary law must be seen not as a consequence of unfortunate, remediable defects in the process of establishing lawyers' customary law, but as a necessary, irremovable phenomenon in the enforcement of customary law by state courts. It follows that it is erroneous to regret or criticize the divergence.<sup>46</sup> Thus, the divergence stems from the different methods employed by the court and the sociologist in investigating customary law. In the foregoing, Diamond objects that sociologists' customary law is not law.<sup>47</sup> And Allot states that lawyers' customary law is not customary.<sup>48</sup>

### **Strengthening the Role of Customary Law: Scrapping the Repugnancy Test**

The impact of the duality tests, and specifically the repugnancy test, on customary law in Anglophone Cameroon has been far reaching indeed. The tests have played a crucial role in the development of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon. They have assisted in fostering an equitably gendered society through the rejection of discriminatory customary values against women. The repugnancy test has positively impacted municipal legislation. Despite these commendable achievements, the application of the tests has threatened the future of customary law as a living form of law. Even though the incompatibility test has restricted the application of customary law in the legal system, it is the repugnancy test that deserves greater attention. Unlike the repugnancy test, the incompatibility test is based on precise and unambiguous standards established by the national legislature to regulate the application of customary law. In this connection, the incompatibility test has generated little or no controversy, as the standards employed in determining incompatibility are mostly derived from within the local context.

The benefits achieved through the application of the repugnancy test have come at a high and unacceptable cost: its flexibility has created uncertainty in customary law making it difficult to establish a universally valid precedent; by relying on standards which are exotic in nature, it has created the illogical impression that standards of justice espoused by western-style law were superior to those of customary law; by transferring to the court the people's responsibility in ushering changes in customary law it has challenged the ancestral foundation of customary law; and the test has assisted in the balkanization and fragmentation of the legal process and contributed in the subsequent divergence in customary laws. Such developments are extremely damaging to the growth of customary law and have threatened its future in the legal system. Indeed, the repugnancy test has served its time and if there is a genuine desire to enhance the role of customary law, a need arises to repeal it.

There is a need continuously to review customary rules to ensure that they reflect changed circumstances. This objective could be efficiently accomplished without recourse made to the repugnancy test. In fact, there are mechanisms available to the court, which, due in part to the repugnancy test, are underutilized. Emphasis should be placed on promoting the incompatibility test and vigorously extending its scope of application to incorporate human rights. Human rights values have become the new emancipatory rhetoric relied upon in several jurisdictions in sub-Saharan Africa to regulate the values of customary law. The human rights corpus is founded on values most of which are diametrically opposed to those espoused by customary law: human rights propagate gender equality and non-discrimination whereas customary law legitimizes gender discrimination; consent to marriage is manifest in modern



human rights discourse as opposed to widow inheritance under customary law; the punishment of banishment under customary law conflicts with the notion of free movement of persons under human rights; individual responsibility under human rights is contrary to collective responsibility under customary law, etc. Although human rights treaties ratified by Cameroon are incorporated into municipal law by virtue of Article 45 of the constitution, unfortunately human rights values do not have broad appeal in Cameroonian society. This could be partly attributed to the near neglect of human rights values by the court in preference to the repugnancy test. In fact, the courts have become over-reliant on the repugnancy test and have, regrettably, used it as a supplement for the language of human rights. Practically, in most customary causes where the saliency of human rights issues abound, rather than employing the language of human rights in the determination of the suit, courts in Anglophone Cameroon prefer to invoke the repugnancy test. Thus, emphasis should be placed on human rights which are capable of regulating and transforming customary values to reflect changed circumstances. Repealing the repugnancy test would increase the appeal of human rights rhetoric in the courts. It would also ensure judicial certainty in the application of customary law and would improve its status vis-à-vis statutory law in the legal system.

The repugnancy test, when introduced in the colonial era, was well-intentioned and was suitable in tackling challenges in an era when most African states were still under colonial rule and the ideology of human rights, due then to the global politics of suppression and colonialism, was not widely acknowledged by major western powers. It was then an approved novelty available exclusively to the colonial state to eliminate local practices deemed offensive to human dignity. In an era of human rights, the repugnancy test has become a grossly inadequate and insufficient a mechanism to measure harm and mediate wrongs in the contemporary world.

Although recourse to human rights would be a credible replacement for the repugnancy test, it would, however, not solve one of the most daunting issues related to contemporary customary law in Anglophone Cameroon. In the absence of the repugnancy test how could change in customary law be initiated through the people? The repugnancy test has failed to provoke any substantial change in social attitudes as customary law has demonstrated resilience. Repugnant customary values are still being observed in society resulting in a divergence in customary laws. The reason for this development is simple. The nature of the operations of the court requires it to determine the validity of substantive customary rules without adopting measures to alter the operations of such rules in society. Repealing the repugnancy test would transfer the responsibility of ushering changes in customary law from the courts back to the people. One of the most devastating effects of the repugnancy test is that it has created the illogical impression that customary law is created at the level of the court and is then imposed on society.

Even though customary laws are evolutionary in nature, this evolution is yet to be effectively reflected in Cameroonian society, especially in the rural areas, due, in part, to the conservative interpretation of custom. It is therefore relevant to adopt measures which are capable of initiating reforms of the law through the people. The jurisprudence of the court has been geared towards rejecting the enforcement of barbaric customary practices without necessarily tackling the underlying causes of such practices in society. Given this, it becomes

difficult to alter social attitudes. Thus, to usher in change in social attitudes, emphasis should be placed on the socialization process that underpins customary law. Thus, a program that targets the socialization process rather than its side effects is required. Initiatives should be encouraged from within the social group considered as appropriately relevant in safeguarding basic human rights, while also attempting to initiate changes in customary practices. This will require both sensitization and dialogue. Programs should be initiated from within the community to encourage dialogue with community leaders and the community in general to explore ways of encouraging changes in customary values reflexive of human rights. Unlike the jurisprudence of the statutory court, such changes emanating from within the community will not be perceived as imposition from the top but rather as reflexive of the wishes and aspirations of a greater majority of the people. This is the only way social changes will command the respect and authority needed to foster a redirection in the community's perceptions. This will also generate a feeling of ownership of the law and, with it, the legal process. Therefore, if adequate measures are taken towards this direction through seeking changes in the socialization process there is a possibility that the re-emerging socialization process would invariably incorporate human rights values. Conversely, human rights values will in turn respond to the aspirations of the socialization process in Cameroon without those values necessarily departing from their core principles.

## Conclusion

Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955, has had, and continues to have, a tremendous impact on the administration of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon. Few would have thought that a piece of colonial legislation, aimed at recognizing customary law subject to duality tests, would produce such far reaching effects. Prior to colonial rule customary laws were applicable throughout the territory and were not subjected to any qualifications. The advent of colonialism led to the importation of extraneous legal orderings into the territory, notably French civil law and English common law. The SCHL, a legacy of British colonial administration in the former Southern Cameroon, virtually ended the dominance of customary law in favor of western received and inspired laws. Section 27(1) provides for the recognition of customary law subject to it passing duality tests, the repugnancy and incompatibility tests. Thus, the onus of deciding whether a custom passes the duality tests falls within the province of the superior statutory courts.

Even though Section 27(1) has led to some positive effects, notably the rejection of harmful customary practices, over the years the application of the provision has generated a disturbing trend of circumstances that have severely and negatively impacted on the construction of customary law. The courts have not developed a particular standard for the application of the repugnancy test leading to judicial uncertainty in the application of customary law. In view of its vagueness and ambiguity, the court sometimes employs exotic standards in determining whether or not a rule passes the repugnancy test. These exotic standards, having no basis in Cameroonian society, are used to invalidate customary rules. By subjecting customary law to western standards of justice, customary values, despite their social relevance within the local context, are gradually being eroded and in turn are replaced by values extraneous to local circumstances. This has severely impacted the nature and character of ancestral customary law.

One of the most undesired effects of the duality tests is the divergence that has ensued in the rules of customary law. Although this divergence is unavoidable and is, amongst others, attributed to the different methods employed by the courts and society in investigating customary law, it has, however, led to a balkanization of the legal process and the fragmentation of customary law. Through the over-reliance on the repugnancy test, it has weakened the appeal of human rights discourse in the court.

The repugnancy test has served a good purpose but its consequences are far too costly for the future of customary law. In an era of human rights discourse, to strengthen the role of customary law in Anglophone Cameroon, it is essential for the courts to be more engaging with human rights values which, if effectively utilized, are capable of efficiently regulating customary law. The repugnancy test must therefore be repealed and grassroots initiatives initiated through the people and targeting the conservative socialization process in Cameroon in order to provoke changes in customary laws. If these measures are efficiently adopted, the future of customary law in the Cameroonian legal system would be secured.

## Notes

- 1 It has been argued that customary law is of recent development and a product of the colonial state. See Snyder 1981; Chanock 1995; Nyamu 2000, pp. 405-06. The dominant view in African legal theory suggests that customary law existed prior to the establishment of the colonial state in sub-Saharan Africa. See Anyangwe 1987, pp. 139-40; Ngwafor 1993, pp. 7-9.
- 2 Cameroon was initially colonized by Germany. With the defeat of Germany during World War I, the country came under the colonial rule of France and Britain. The French occupied the former Northern or East Cameroon (now referred to as Francophone Cameroon) while the British administered Southern or West Cameroon (now referred to as Anglophone Cameroon). For a detailed history of Cameroon see Ngoh 1996.
- 3 Amongst these is Section 18(1) of the Customary Court Ordinance, 1948, a colonial piece of legislation applicable in the Federation of Nigeria and the former Southern Cameroon. It defines customary law as: "The native law and custom prevailing in the area of the court insofar as it is not repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience nor incompatible either directly or by natural implication with any written law for the time being in force."
- 4 Law No. 96-06 of 18 January 1996 (amending the 1972 Constitution).
- 5 The ordinance came into force through Law No. 2006/015 of 29 December 2006. It amended certain provisions of the Judicial Organization Ordinance, 1972.
- 6 This degree regulates the activities of chiefs and chieftdoms in Cameroon. Before the degree came into effect there had been two previous administrative instruments recognizing chiefs in Cameroon. These were Order No. 244 of 4 February 1933 to lay down regulations governing traditional rulers and all subsequent amendments thereto and Southern Cameroons Law No. 7 of 10 December 1960 to provide for the recognition of chiefs within Southern Cameroon and matters relating thereto.

- 7 A chief is a traditional head of an ethnic group or village community and is imbued with traditional authority. Before the colonization of Cameroon, chiefs were said to command enormous respect and authority. Nowadays, they act as the link between the administration and the people. The position has become extremely politicized as chiefs are mandated to deliver the electorates to the ruling party.
- 8 Most countries of the South Pacific region have made provisions for the recognition of customary law in their constitutions. For example, see Section 76, Schedule 3, Paragraph 3 of the constitution of the Solomon Islands, 1978, and Articles 47(1) and 95(3) of the Constitution of Vanuata, 1980. In Africa, several countries have made express recognition of customary law or customary dispute mechanisms in their constitutions. See, for instance, Sierra Leone's constitution defines common law as including customary law, Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, S. 170(2); Kenyan Constitution Art 2: (4) states that "Any law, including customary law that is inconsistent with this Constitution is void to the extent of the inconsistency, and any act or omission in contravention of this Constitution is invalid." See Cuskelly 2011.
- 9 Okereafoezeke 2001.
- 10 Uweru 1980, pp. 289-90; Marasinghe 1998, p. 25.
- 11 Salacuse 1969, p. 60.
- 12 Ibid., p. 60.
- 13 Kuruk 2002, p. 17.
- 14 Article 45 of the constitution states: "Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement."
- 15 Some judges have held that they do not have such competence. See, for example, the judgment in the cases of *Mosima Elizabeth v. Mosima Simon Ngeke* (Suit No. CASWP/CC/95: reported in Ngassa and Time 1999, vol 1, p. 43) and *Aboh Lucy v. Kang Sume David* (Suit No. HCF/38/96: reported in Ngassa and Time 1999, vol. 1, p. 75). However, in the case of *Fomara Regina Akwa v. Fomara Henry Che* (Suit No. BCA/11CC/97: reported in CCLR 2002, Part 9, p. 32) the North West Court of Appeal, Bamenda, disagreed and held that Section 16 of Law No. 89/017 of 29 July 1989 as amended by Law No. 90/12/90 organizing the judiciary makes provisions for customary courts to have competence in some of the matters relating to the status of persons. This view was further re-affirmed in the case of *Abi Zacharia Ajong v. Nji Micheal Ajong* (Suit No. BCA/4CC/2000: reported in CCLR 2002, Part 9, p. 67) where the court held that although matters of succession fall within the jurisdiction of the High Court, however, by virtue of Section 27(1) of the SCHL, 1955 the jurisdiction of customary court is not ousted.
- 16 However, it was held in the case of *Ngu Emmanuel Ngum v. Jacob Assaah Tamufor* (Suit No. BCA/3CC/87: reported in Ngassa and Time 1999, vol. 1, pp. 127-35), that the customary court may provide awards in excess of its financial jurisdiction insofar as such awards are made in the exercise of its customary jurisdiction, particularly in the dissolution of a customary marriage.
- 17 See the case of *Christiana Etombi v. Ndiva Woka John* (Suit No. CASWP/CC/09/2001: reported in Kiye 2007, pp. 94-95).

- 18 7 N.W.L.R. Part 204, 391 at 417. Derived from Iheme 2002.
- 19 Okereafoezeke 2001.
- 20 See, amongst others, Olawale 1962, p. 104; Uweru 1980.
- 21 1 W.L.R 1053 (1962).
- 22 Derived from Palmer and Poulter 1972, p. 160.
- 23 Scholars in support of this view include, among others, Anyangwe, 1987, p. 243; Marasinghe 1998, p. 7-14; Okereazofeke 2001.
- 24 Marasinghe 1998, p. 35.
- 25 Okereafoezeke 2001.
- 26 Ezejiofor 1980, p. 43.
- 27 For the Nigerian case, see Yakubu 2002; for the Cameroonian case, see Suit No. HCK/AE/K.38/97/32/92: reported in Ngassa and Time 1999.
- 28 Page 119, Paragraph 1 of GLR 1999 vol 1, pp. 111-26.
- 29 Suit No. CASWP/CC/22/82: unreported.
- 30 See, amongst others, Rule 21(1) and (2) of the Non Contentious Probate Rules, 1954. The decision contradicts the position of the court in the cases of *Elive Njie Francis v. Hannah Efeti Manga* (Suit No. CASWP/CC/12/98: unreported); *Nyanja Keyi Theresia & 4 Ors. v. Nkwingah Francis Njanga and Keyim - administrators of the estate of Keyi Peter* (Suit No. HCF/AE57/97-98: unreported); and *Chibikom Peter Fru & 4 Ors. v. Zamcho Florence Lum* (Supreme Court judgment No. 14L of 14 February, 1993). In these cases, the court used the repugnancy test to reject the enforcement of discriminatory succession and inheritance customary rules against women.
- 31 Another case where the court justified its decision on a repugnant custom is *Abi Zacharia Ajong v Nji Micheal Ajong* (Suit No. BCA/4CC/2000: reported in CCLR 2002, Part 9, pp. 67-72). In this case, the court justified the exclusion of the daughters of the deceased in the administration of the deceased's estate and instead divided the estate equally amongst two conflicting males. According to the court's rationale, custom does not permit women to engage in the business associated with the running of the estate (farming of palm trees and making raffia mats), which is exclusively reserved for men. The court concluded that the exclusion of the daughters in administering the estate of their deceased father was not repugnant to natural justice. By inference, this decision legitimizes a discriminatory and chauvinistic interpretation of a custom that assigns subjective and inferior social roles to women.
- 32 Dowry is also known as bride price. In traditional African societies, and in accordance with customary law, it constitutes money, goods, and/or property that the bridegroom-to-be is expected to provide to the family of the bride-to-be before the solemnization of the marriage. In some circles, it is mistaken to be the money the husband uses to "purchase" his wife and is said to be the root cause of most problems associated with the status of married women under customary law.
- 33 Pratt 2003, p. 89; Gaspert and Platteau 2010, p. 5; Gueye 2010, p. 74.
- 34 Gaspert and Plateau 2010, p. 7.



- 35 Ibid., p. 8.
- 36 Meyer 1969, p. 45.
- 37 Nwapa 1966, p. 23.
- 38 Ekong 1992, pp. 93-4.
- 39 Gueye 2010, p. 76.
- 40 Suit No. BCA/62/86: reported in Ngwafor 1993, p. 196.
- 41 W.C.L.R. 32 (1962-1964): reported in Ngwafor 1993, p. 273.
- 42 See, for example, the case of *David Tchakokam v. Keou Magdaleine* (Suit No. HCK/AE/K38/97/32/92: reported in Ngassa and Time 1999).
- 43 The process of judicial establishment of customary law is based on the celebrated case of *Angu v. Attah* (1916). According to the principle, for customary law to be enforced by the court it must, firstly, be proved to exist as a matter of fact, and, secondly, judicial notice has to be taken of a rule after it has been frequently proved. The process of judicial establishment is closely interrelated with judicial regulation—recognition subjected to duality tests. Judicial regulation is the prelude towards the establishment of customary law. Once customary law has been regulated (i.e., found not to be either repugnant to natural justice or incompatible with a written law) it is established before the court. Conversely, if a customary rule has not been established such a rule must be regulated prior to its establishment. See Kiye 2007, p. 141.
- 44 Woodman 1988.
- 45 Ibid., p. 181.
- 46 Ibid., p. 156.
- 47 Diamond 1971, p. 45.
- 48 Allott 1960.

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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Julius O. Adekunle and Hettie Williams, eds. 2013. *Converging Identities: Blackness in the Modern African Diaspora*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press. 325 pp.**

The aim of this book, according to its editors, is “to examine how the African diaspora either maintains or loses cultural and ethnic identity when they interact with other people” (p. xxi). This aim is achieved as chapters examine ethnic, cultural, national, and racial issues existing in the African diaspora and its influences on the identity formation of Africans and people of African descent in Europe and the Americas. One of the key features of this book is its accessibility: the language is clear and chapters are neatly organized by broad themes according to geographical regions. Additionally, topics covered in sections are vast (from mental health to race films in France), and thus readers from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds and interests will find something to enjoy.

A notable criticism of the book, however, is its apparent pre-occupation with dichotomous framing of contested terms and references. It appears that every argument is developed and concluded via a thesis and antithesis model. An example of this is a discussion on race and ethnicity in the very first chapter. Entitled “Are you ‘Black’ or ‘Ethnic’?: The Dichotomous Framing of Immigrant Identity,” the author, Peter Kretsedema, spends a significant amount of time distinguishing between the two terms. The focus on defining terminologies inevitably limits the discussion to a simple overview rather than an analysis of the complex ways in which the two terms converge and diverge in different locales and situations.

Similar critique applies to chapter two where once again, the title opposes binary between two loaded terms, “minority” and “community.” As in the previous chapter, much of the discussion is centered on definitions. This leaves little room for thoughts on different ways in which blackness is performed in France (the focus of the chapter) and elsewhere in the African diaspora. The concern with binary ultimately leads to another flaw in this chapter, which are bold assertions without any real qualifications. The author, Gado Alzouma, asserts that it was not until 2008, when Barack Obama became President of the United States, that French people of African descent gained consciousness of their membership within a global (black) community. Prior to that it was riots in French suburbs in 2005, but mainly it was the election of President Obama that was instrumental in creating shared black consciousness and community in France. This comment is alarming on many levels: firstly, it assumes that blacks in France were, prior to November 2008, apathetic of their racial identity and with that, lacked consciousness of their shared experience with other black people in different regions. This cannot be true seeing as blacks in France, as it is true for most blacks in Europe, are reminded every day of their commonalities with other black or brown people through inequalities and structural problems experienced precisely because they are members of an ethnic minority group. Secondly, it implies that black French politics is primarily dictated, rather than influenced, by the politics of race in America.

The chapters that follow are less bold in their assertions. In particular, chapter six, on deconstructing African/black diaspora studies, offers a stimulating discussion on developments

<http://www.africa.ufl.edu/asq/pdfs/v15i2a6.pdf>

made within African/black diaspora studies since the discipline became established in the academe. The author, Okpeh Ochayi Okpeh, challenges emerging scholars to move forward with research that addresses concerns in the twenty-first century. Okpeh also discusses the need for multidisciplinary perspectives and methodologies, particularly focusing on slavery as a watershed in the historical development of people of African descent.

The second part of the book is hopeful and continues with further discussions on major events in the twenty-first century and its impact on the African diaspora. Hettie V. Williams commences this section with a discussion on the racial identity of President Obama. She argues that he displays what she terms “other blackness,” which entails “a complex sense of self-awareness” situated on “the hybridity of the everyday” (p. 117). The argument sounds convincing except the theory underpinning this is often drawn from the black British context, and the implication is that one model fits all, which is erroneous considering the specificities of American race politics.

We get a more varied discussion in the final section of the book which focuses on the black diaspora in the Latin world. In this section, contributors from different disciplinary standpoints discuss the black presence in the Latin world and the challenges of navigating black identity in places such as Peru and Mexico. The Latin world is often silenced in scholarship on the black Atlantic, so many of the arguments in this section will provide fresh perspectives for both undergraduate and graduate students who are interested in this region.

Portia Owusu, SOAS, University of London

**Leonardo Arriola. 2013. *Multiethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 304 pp.**

Sirens wailed as droves of my neighbors headed into the Kibiko forest to the site of a helicopter crash which claimed the life of former Kenyan Minister of Interior and major beneficiary of the Goldenberg scandal, George Saitoti. Those who arrived at the crash site before the police cordoned off the area made out well: duffel bags of money were scattered all around. Saitoti had been on his way to a political rally and, as is the norm in election season, needed to demonstrate both his appreciation of voters and his strength as a candidate, and packed the helicopter accordingly. Winning elections anywhere in the world requires financial exchanges, but in Kenya’s case, these exchanges, between candidates and voters, candidates and coalition partners, or even incumbents and candidates of rival parties, take on added significance and many interesting dynamics.

Leonardo Arriola’s *Multiethnic Coalitions in Africa: Business Financing of Opposition Election Campaigns* grasps how elections in Kenya really work, which is a refreshing exception to the simple models projected by donor-driven optimism. Arriola interprets complex and opaque electoral strategies in Kenya and Cameroon in a clear and concise manner. He attempts to show “how opposition candidates are able to forge multiethnic electoral coalitions in some African countries but not others” (p. 8). His main thesis is that when incumbents lose control over the private sector, notably the private finance sector, opposition candidates are able to amass

sufficient wealth to make pre-electoral financial commitments to coalitions that are broad enough to mount a successful challenge.

Arriola develops his argument along familiar lines: politically insecure leaders of new African democracies responded to challenges from rival centers of capital with “financial reprisal regimes” (p. 20), which constrained emerging threats by restricting private banks and using central banks to regulate access to finance. These methods were effective until the early 1990s. Exogenous shocks and subsequent demands from the international financial institutions, which in Kenya’s case were reinforced by donors enforcing reform conditionality, made incumbents concede to financial and political liberalization. These concessions gave opposition movements opportunities to attract funding and organize in ways that had previously been too dangerous. Arriola inserts new elements into this old narrative. He explains how candidates prove to potential coalition partners that they are both committed and have staying power. He also explains differences between the relationships that Kenyatta and Moi had with the Kenyan business sector and how this shaped their financial strategies.

Most of Arriola’s argument is well supported. He thoroughly traces the evolving nexus between African politics and finance over four decades. He connects his analysis to a wide spectrum of the great theorists of African political economy in a generally balanced approach. To rule out other explanations, he tests against thirty-eight variables ranging from settler mortality rates to geographic features.

There are parts of his arguments, however, that raise questions. For one, Arriola bases his entire thesis on one election in Kenya, the 2002 National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) victory which brought Kibaki into his first term. This was indeed an impressive event, and how the opposition coalition was able to resist fracture, when they had consistently fractured in the lead up to previous elections, definitely warrants investigation. This one successful coalition in Kenya is contrasted to unsuccessful coalitions in Cameroon, and is used as the central crux of his argument. One election is not a trend, however, and provides a weak basis for the rest of the book, especially when the two subsequent Kenyan elections in 2008 and 2013 contradict what occurred in 2002.

Arriola also gets a few details wrong about his case studies. In trying to show that the 2002 election was unique, he claims the opposition did not fracture along ethnic divides. He is right that the top two candidates were both from the Kikuyu community, but the blocs, which constituted the coalitions supporting these candidates were divided along neat ethnic lines. Also, even if ethnic divides had been partially overridden in the 2002 election, it would not have been the only Kenyan election when this happened.

Arriola is fair in claiming that his data proves that the freedom of the private banking the opposition’s likelihood of forming and maintaining a successful coalition. If he reined in his claim of answering why some opposition coalitions replace incumbents while some do not, Arriola’s book would be a very successful endeavor. In any event, it is a worthwhile read for anyone following African elections.

**Note:** The views expressed in this review do not reflect the views of the U.S. government.

Devon Knudsen Ochieng, *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*



**Anna Aulette-Root, Floretta Boonzaier, and Judy Aulette. 2014. *South African Women Living with HIV: Global Lessons from Local Voices*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 166 pp.**

The Global North, i.e., the highly industrialized nations in the Northern Hemisphere, has dominated the scientific and scholarly discourse on how to approach the eradication of HIV. Much of this discourse has focused on the ABCs (abstain, be faithful, condomize) of HIV prevention. Aulette-Root et al. note that scholars are beginning to question the ABCs, suggesting that three more letters need to be added to the formula for eliminating the virus: GEM (Gender relations, Economic contexts, Migration). This book explores the influence that gender inequality, socio-economic inequality, and migration patterns have on the politics of HIV treatment and prevention.

*South African Women Living with HIV* is a qualitative, ethnographic study that documents the stories of fifteen South African women. This book presents well-crafted empirical evidence using participant observation and tape-recorded in-depth interviews to illustrate the women's concerns around HIV. Five themes emerge out of the open-ended questions of the interviews: (1) the pros and cons of status disclosure; (2) the importance of employment and intimate relationships with men to create a feeling of normalcy for women living with HIV; (3) care work for children; (4) care work for abusive men; and (5) the use of antiretroviral medications (ARVs) and body image. The women interviewed were members of a HIV support group in Cape Town.

The initial chapters of the book offer a framework for understanding the marginalized status of women living with HIV in this region and an excellent historical context of the creation of the coloured community in South Africa. One chapter explains the methodological approach. The authors devote entire chapters to HIV status disclosure, normalcy via employment and intimate relationships, care work for children, care work for abusive men, and body image and ARVs. These chapters are the heart of the work. The concluding chapter offers ideas for moving forward using this contemporary analysis of the predicament of women living with HIV in South Africa.

This book offers a participatory analysis of the HIV pandemic. This effective bottom-up research design to involve active participants as bodies of knowledge strengthens the likelihood of success as it gives ownership to the impacted community. It is different than the current dominant rhetoric where outsiders offer biomedical research and the instruction to make better sexual choices as the sure-fire ways to decrease the spread of HIV infection. "There appears to be a gap in the HIV literature when it comes to hearing the voices of women who are living with the virus and their ways of defining themselves and interpreting their own lives" (p. 9). This book begins to fill the void in current HIV research on prevention and treatment that is centered on biomedical quantitative data.

If there is a weakness of the book, it is the lack of a methodological appendix. A methodological appendix would have allowed for the authors to be more detailed in the explanation of self-reflexivity and its impact on the research. For example, it would have behooved the authors to be self-reflexive by way of race. The discussion about race in the methodological approach reiterates that race is a social construct rather than a biological concern. The de-emphasis of the race of the authors is a shortcoming as the role of the race of

the researcher influences the outcome of the research in the method of participant observation. Additionally, a methodological appendix could have provided a space to share more details about the specific interview questions asked as it relates to the emergence of the themes.

This is an important work for those who are interested in contemporary approaches to the elimination of HIV in southern Africa. This text brings the voices of South Africa's marginalized population of women to the center of the discourse. Exposure has been given to the psycho-social impact of status disclosure, body image and ARVs, the care of abusive men, care work for children, and the perception that having employment and a male romantic partner in your life will allow you to be seen as "normal." The developing theme of this text offers Africanists a solid platform to think critically about global politics, social class, racism, and gender injustice and their impact on the spread of HIV infection in marginalized populations south of the Sahara. This book will appeal to scholars and students of psychology, public health, public policy, and African studies.

Dana Grisby, *University of California, Los Angeles*

**Huw Bennett. 2013. *Fighting the Mau Mau: The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 307 pp.**

Huw Bennett challenges the traditional conclusion that the British army successfully fought the Mau Mau by winning the "hearts and minds of the people." He is qualified to write on the military history of counter-insurgency in Kenya because he acted as one of the expert witnesses in the Mau Mau case at the UK High Court in London whereby Kenyans sought reparations claiming disgusting abuse at the hands of the security forces. This case afforded Bennett access to a wide range of files concerning Kenya, including new material that was released under the Freedom of Information Act. Using colonial archives at Hanslope Park, which was housed in Her Majesty's Government Communication Centre, he argues that the army utilized force and passed severe Emergency regulations to terrify the civilian population into submission.

Before Bennett's 2013 book, the orthodox school of thought advanced the triumphalism attitude in the military and academic circles about the British military's professionalism. In this regard, orthodox scholars alleged that the army carried out operations within the confines of law by using minimum force in counter-insurgency warfare and hence targeted insurgents without harming civilians. This book challenges the orthodoxy and provides an in-depth account on the role of the British army together with regiments such as the white settler Kenya Regiment and the white-led King's African Rifles. Bennett argues that the army was not a modest force that engaged a "hearts and minds" strategy in counter-insurgency but rather resorted to extensive violence including torture, extra-judicial killings, and rape to defeat Mau Mau. The author advances his arguments in nine chapters.

In chapter one, the reader is informed that instability in Kenya developed for several years before the government imposed an official Emergency in October 1952. The conflict was ignited by the introduction of agricultural techniques, poverty, loss of land, and lack of political representation, which pitted the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru ethnic groups against the European settlers. The estranged rural groups formed alliances with urban activists in the unrest which

affected the Central and Rift Valley Provinces and Nairobi. Initially, the army failed to defeat the Mau Mau due to poor tactics, indiscipline, poor coordination with other security forces, and poor intelligence. Victory was attained by the army when brutal strategies gained from experience in India, Ireland, and the Middle East were used.

The second chapter deals with the relationship that existed between the civilians and the army in relation to the structures which facilitated their interaction. It reveals that the British military authorities formed alliances at the local level because they lacked the capacity and knowledge to thwart the insurgents unassisted. The third chapter dismisses the central orthodox premise that the British army counter-insurgency strategy operated within the realm of the legal framework. It explains how the British dealt with international law after the Second World War and concludes that intense violence was used against the Mau Mau as a result of the permissive British legal milieu. The fourth chapter evaluates the concept of minimum force and explains how it functioned side by side with exemplary force in Kenya. It argues that the latter was designed to be used against the entire population in a drive to punish the insurgents and warn collaborators. It is evident from the fifth chapter that violence was used below the genocidal levels in Kenya because the army Commanders ensured restraint among its soldiers. To win the army relied on orders, public announcements, meetings, and inquiries. Chapter six informs readers that restraint in the army was achieved through military discipline, which was augmented by operational policy that distinguished between civilian and insurgency targets. Accordingly, war zones were streamlined, rules of engagement and prisoner policies set, and the operations of Special Forces were guided. Chapter seven affirms that regardless of the attempts made to reduce the use of maximum force, soldiers employed widespread violence against the population. Consequently, the people were: compelled to migrate, beaten, raped, tortured, and shot in an effort to end the rebellion. Chapter eight reveals that General Erskine initially wanted to conduct a restrained campaign, but he was forced to compromise due to resistance from other decision making stakeholders who included the governor, settlers, and some soldiers. Discipline also contributed, and it was a result of compromise between commanders and soldiers, which led to controlled ruthless responses against the Kikuyu population. Chapter nine's argument is that the army influenced policy implementation even in areas completely controlled by civilians. In fact, civilians and the army agreed that the Mau Mau Rebellion must be outlawed before it could overwhelm British rule and influence other ethnic groups to participate.

Join me in applauding Bennett for his stimulating revisionist contribution. It is an animated, comprehensible, and rich academic book on Mau Mau that equally adds to and complements the increasing knowledge about British counter-insurgency. The contestations are identified and problems thrashed out on the role of the military, which reverberate with other counter-insurgencies. In Kenya the army cannot be excluded from the benefits and consequences of the rebellion. Bennett's arguments are not easy to comprehend, however, but this does not water down an exceptional book that contradicts the orthodox school of thought on the issues discussed.

Mediel Hove, *Durban University of Technology/University of Zimbabwe*

**Tanja A. Börzel and Christian R. Thauer, eds. 2013. *Business and Governance in South Africa: Racing to the Top?* Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan. 274 pp.**

*Business and Governance in South Africa: Racing to the Top?* is an eclectic, informed, and academic text that draws from the rich experiences and scholarly inputs of a wide range of experts in the fields of business, governance, environmental studies, international relations, and political science with special interest in Africa. The "Preface and Acknowledgements" section adds credence to this statement: "[T]his book is the result of truly collaborative endeavour" (p. ix) that takes cognisance of multiplicity of approaches to understanding "limited statehood" and its knock-on effects on governance, accountability, and business ethics. The book has five contributors, which include the editors Tanja A. Borzel and Chritian R. Thauer. It is arranged in four parts with thirteen chapters. Part one is the "Introduction"; part two is about "Fighting HIV/AIDS in South Africa"; part three focuses on "Fighting Environmental Pollution in South Africa"; and part four centers on "Conclusions."

The book's theme is essentially premised on the concept of "limited statehood" as it impacts businesses, governance, accountability, environmental pollution, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and HIV/AIDS in South Africa. Thus, the book "... summarises the most important findings of more than seven years of research within and outside ... business and governance in areas of limited statehood" (p. ix). *Business and Governance in South Africa* sings from the same page as Susan Strange's *The Retreat of the State: The Diffusion of Power in the World Economy* (1996), John Ruggie's *Constructing the World Polity* (1998) and Ohmae Kenichi's *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of the Regional Economies* (1995), to mention a few books cast in this mould. Taking a cue from these books, *Business and Governance in South Africa* opens a new vista on the dialectics of "retreat of the state," that is when governments are underperforming to engender an enabling atmosphere that can impact governance and accountability favorably to the benefit of the citizenry. Retreat of the states has the potential to stifle processes and mechanisms that can make business operations ethical and moral. This situation is more problematic in developing nations such as South Africa, which that is still reeling from the destructiveness of apartheid as diverse stakeholders are alleging that companies (multinationals) are not living up to their billings in terms of accountability ethics and governance.

The authors make a sharp distinction between "limited statehood" and fragile statehood/state fragility. The former is a situation "where governments lack the capacity to set and enforce regulations and generally refrain from measures affecting the costs of production" (p. 3), which in turn adversely affects the society at large in terms of providing social goods, and policing how the citizenry as well as their environments are treated by corporations (Risse, 2013). The latter is about absence of governance in its entirety including leadership failure (Uzoechina, 2008). Another remarkable contribution of this book to the repertoire of literature on business and governance in developing countries is lodged in its subheading: "racing to the top?," which is about a healthy business environment and national prosperity. This brings perspective to how strict regulation by the South African government and compliance by companies in South Africa with limited statehood can be an elixir to better governance of the country's business environment. This will eventually positively affect the country's socio-economic condition as well as its environmental wholesomeness. In the wake of globalization

and trade liberalization, ensuring race to the top detonates better business governance in South Africa, a nation with limited statehood, as the authors maintain.

Although a welcome development to discourses on nations with poor corporate governance, unethical business practices, and accountability problems, the book is full of theoretical discussions of limited statehood but appears to be less pragmatic in terms of case studies that add credence to this. Thus, *Business and Governance in South* could have leveraged case studies more fully as well as interviews from practitioners in the industry in order to give the book a flavor of the practitioner viewpoint for more credibility and relevance. Nevertheless, it is a bold eclectic academic endeavor on business governance in South Africa.

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Chigozie Agatha Ugwoji, *University of Huddersfield*

**Brenda Cooper. 2013. *A New Generation of African Writers: Migration, Material Culture and Language*. Rochester, NY: James Currey. 182 pp.**

Brenda Cooper's book focuses on five migrant African writers to argue that the writers craft a language with which they attempt to resist the imperial tropes and negative metaphors of the English language. These writers are: Biyi Bandele, Leila Aboulela, Jamal Mahjoub, Moses Isegawa, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. Their migrant status is due to the fact that they have lived outside Africa for a while, either temporarily as students or permanently.

Cooper's argument stems from the understanding that the English language, as used in Western writing, utilizes metaphors that "subtly and invisibly" caricature, conquer, and colonize through belittling the cultures it encounters. The depiction of Africa in Western writing is distorted with images of darkness and savagery, the book concludes. Cooper shows how the writers attempt to negate the belittlement and distortion, and contest the history and strategy of conquest of the Western writing by representing material culture in metonymy and metaphor. The strategies that the writers use include populating their narratives with material objects, "foreign" words, "jingles and rhymes, rhythms and references to oral traditions, transformed words, made-up words, nonsense, and stuttering" (p. 11).

Cooper further shows that, in playing with language, the writers are disseminating their own culture to counter the acculturation wrought by the English language, establish their identities, and ultimately resist the homogenization of the world. For instance, she explains that by using indigenous words, or Arabic, the writers indicate the existence of other cultures or civilizations other than the dominant Western one.



The introductory chapter builds the theoretical framework upon which Cooper develops her argument where she adroitly extrapolates on the metonymic gap developed by the authors. In the first chapter, Cooper discusses Bandele's *The Street*, and shows that the author tries to suggest connections between England and Nigeria through the concrete realities of life on a busy London street. Bandele's creation of an exotic world, the invented words, rhymes, flying words and strange unexplained Yoruba words create a new level of communication, which constitutes a resistance to the hegemony of one world and the superiority of the English language.

The third and fourth chapters discuss Aboulela's *The Translator* and Mahjoub's *The Carrier* respectively. The protagonists of *The Translator*, a Muslim Sudanese woman and a Scottish man, help show the clash of race, migration, and religion. As a translator, the woman bridges the gaps between the two sets of cultures and languages involved. Ultimately, she eventually translates not just the language but the culture, and in the process lends a language through which the novel itself is told. Cooper argues that *The Carrier* shows that science is involved in power politics relating to wealth, trade, and colonialism. The material objects that are of interest are the brass case and the telescope, as well as the list of names of Arab scientists, which suggests that scientific breakthroughs have never been a preserve of the West, contrary to the argument of Western history.

Chapter five focuses on Isegawa's *Abyssinian Chronicles*. Here Cooper shows that the material objects in the novel are made to "lose their solidity" and instead become metaphors of "struggles for ascendancy, revenge, expropriation, expulsion, theft and vandalism" (p. 90). For instance, a boat and a bobbin that act as metonymies of dictators(hip) are vandalized and stolen, respectively.

The sixth and seventh chapters focus on Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus* and *Half of a Yellow Sun* respectively. Cooper shows critical differences in the language of both novels. *Purple Hibiscus* has, among other material objects, the dancing figurines that help to define the clash of Catholicism and traditional Igbo traditional culture. *Half of a Yellow Sun*, the novel set during the Biafran conflict, creates tropes that counter the acts of violence and that become "essentialised and monolithic symbols of African culture (p. 133).

In the concluding chapter, Cooper refers to Tayib Salih's *Season of Migration*, and concludes that the novel suggests the interdependence of identity and material culture in the process of migration, a phenomenon echoed by the younger writers.

The book is fascinating in that it helps to highlight that the mundane objects "littered" in these narratives are more than meets the reader's eye. It is enlightening in the way it convincingly interrogates the subtext, exposes the myriad of objects, and explains them as metonyms and metaphors and as being profoundly significant in the telling of the stories. Cultural and literary scholars would find it invaluable.

Joshua Ondieki, *Kenyatta University*



**Frederick Cooper. 2014. *Africa in the World: Capitalism, Empire, Nation-State*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 130 pp.**

Based on a lecture series given at Harvard University's W.E.B Du Bois Institute in 2012, *Africa in the World* is a set of "reflective essays" intended to augment rather than satisfy readers' curiosity about Africa (p. ix). Not meant as a "comprehensive analysis of Africa's place in the world" (p. ix), it asks instead that we refrain from stepping "out of history" in our assumption that "some characteristic of Africa... explains why so many of its people are poor or so many of its governments corrupt" (p. 90). These phenomena, Cooper contends, must instead be understood as the result of long historical processes involving sustained exchanges between Africa and the (Western) world. "Africa's economic present," he argues, "is a co-creation, emerging out of long-term interactions among nonequivalent political and economic units" (p. 91). Africa, then, is not an exception to global norms defined by Western standards; it has been and continues to be an asymmetrical partner in the establishment and maintenance of those very norms by which it is so often judged a failure.

The subtitle delineates the book's structure, comprised as it is of three essays: "Africa and Capitalism," "Africa and Empire," and "Africa and the Nation-State," along with an introduction and conclusion. The "and" in the essay titles is meant to cut both ways; Cooper's aim is not only to demonstrate how capitalism, empire, and the nation-state have affected Africa, but to show that Africa has been integral to the development of these three hallmarks of modernity. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was not simply the result of capitalist powers scouring the earth for labor power to feed an existing economic machine, but was instrumental in allowing capitalism to emerge. African colonies were not merely swept up in European empires, but came to shape and even dismantle them. The predominance of the nation-state in today's world also owes much to political choices made in Africa during the era of independence. Indeed, in the 1950s it was anything but certain that the handful of empires spanning the globe would give way to the roughly two hundred nation-states with which we are now familiar.

Evoking this sense of uncertainty and multiple avenues for Africa's future development that existed in the post-war era is where *Africa and the World* shines. Although the material in its three essays deals somewhat with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Cooper's primary goal is to remind readers of the variety of political possibilities Africa saw before it at "the post-World War II conjuncture" (p. 2). He wishes us to reflect on "[w]hy of the different pathways out of empire that African leaders envisioned in the 1940s and 1950s did the one ultimately followed lead to the nation-state, a political form whose dangers were recognized by influential African political leaders at the time" (p. 3)? In noting, for example, that prominent African politicians of the era like Léopold Sédar Senghor viewed empires as entirely normal phenomena—and indeed how they abhorred the idea that each nation should have its own state—Cooper is able to remind us that the current global political dispensation is peculiar, historical, and surely temporary. He successfully uses this line of thinking to reframe a number of key concepts in the field of African studies and politics. Africans moving from Bamako to Paris in 1950, for example, were not considered immigrants, but French citizens exercising their right to circulate in the empire. The discourse about Western powers facilitating development in Africa, which we now know as foreign aid, was in the post-war era a question of "entitlements

of citizens" (p. 92). Thus, Cooper reminds us, there is "not a long-term and inherent difference between "us" and "them"" (p. 92), but rather a short-term apparent difference precipitated by the rise of the nation-state system over the past half-century.

And this system, Cooper argues, was not the one African leaders of the post-war era wanted. It was brought about by imperial efforts to deflect the expensive demands of their overseas citizens by granting them autonomy and eventual independence. This, he contends, turned out to be a "Faustian bargain" that led African politicians to have a "stronger vested interest in the territorial units: patronage to distribute, resources to allocate" (p. 79). This is where *Africa in the World* disappoints. Although it makes ample note of African leaders' turn toward authoritarianism, patronage politics, and clientelism after obtaining political power, it normalizes rather than explains these phenomena. It is not self-evident that a political leader's first thought after gaining power would be the distribution of patronage, yet Cooper appears satisfied to suggest that sovereignty was too great a temptation for African leaders with few other resources at their disposal. Although there may be truth in such claims, they do not sit easily with the fact that Cooper takes at face value the assertions of African post-war politicians regarding their desire to form supranational polities.

Cooper leaves such issues vague, and indeed much of the book is marred by other nebulous exhortations to "take a more supple view" of African and European relations (p. 92) or to understand that the European and African continents are not "neatly bounded" (p. 90). His concluding remark is that Africa's current political configuration is "born of contingent and contested political processes" (p. 101). As such, he manages to epitomize the fashionable reverence for historical particularism that leads to the most banal of conclusions: things could have happened differently, and the world is not comprised of monolithic units. While true, such statements do not go nearly far enough to constitute a significant contribution to the field of African history.

Yet while such remarks may not present much new information to an Africanist readership, they are worthy of note for a general audience. Indeed, *Africa and the World* is a suitable text for undergraduate students and interested laymen. At scarcely one hundred pages and with few notes, it provides a concise and accessible account of Africa's complex relationship with the Western world and of the multiple possibilities that lay before the continent in the post-war years. By evoking popular topics such as foreign aid, international migration, and the problem of "third world development," Cooper has composed a text that will engage and challenge any reader with a passing knowledge of contemporary global issues. And despite his reticence to form strong conclusions, Africanists will find Cooper's sweeping overview of Africa's role in the emergence of capitalism, the development of empires, and the rise of the nation-state to stimulate their thinking and illuminate connections both temporal and geographic.

Robert Nathan, *Dalhousie University*

**Ulf Engel and Manuel João Ramos. 2013. *African Dynamics in a Multipolar World*. Leiden: Brill. 219 pp.**

Africa has gained worldwide attention in the last two decades not just for the high growth rates and abundant opportunities of many of its countries, but also as it has become an important terrain of the changing global political game. While we are witnessing the development of more centers of gravity across the globe, “Africa enjoys a previously unheard of protagonism [...] becoming a self-defined identity, instead of an externally imposed categorical condition” (p. 4). *African Dynamics in a Multipolar World* is a collection of essays originally prepared for the fifth European Conference of African Studies (ECAS 5), which was held on June 27–29, 2013 in Lisbon, Portugal. The volume is the eleventh title of the series managed by the Africa-Europe Group of Interdisciplinary Studies and contains twelve chapters by fifteen authors including the introductory piece of the editors, Ulf Engel and Manuel João Ramos. Different case studies are presented from varying corners of the African continent, some of which are highly intriguing and well written based upon empirical knowledge from fine field research.

First, Engel and Ramos flesh up many of the ongoing changes and challenges in Africa, arguing that with globalization “intra- and intercontinental economic, cultural and political flows are becoming resolutely all-directional” (p. 5), which then also has obvious consequences for African Studies. The need and necessity for inter- and trans-disciplinary approaches and scholarly dialogue is also emphasized by Ebrima Sall, who in the book’s last chapter addresses the study of Africa in a multipolar context. With this contribution, the volume is provided with a framework capable of accommodating several cases and aspects from within the African realm. Sall underlines that “the multiplicity of partners and interlocutors does have an impact on social and political processes within the continent” (p. 210), all of which have a focal point on development, but as Africans desire it, involving societies at large at all levels. CODESRIA has been promoting numerous research projects to look deep into the alternative (African) pathways of development and social transformation.

The two strongest and most intriguing chapters are based on serious anthropological fieldwork and offer the readers insight into changing daily African realities in light of the changing global context and its influence on both individual and community life strategies. Ana Bénard da Costa and Adriano Biza visit the notion and interpretation of “home space” via examples of urban districts of Maputo. One of their conclusions is connected to the fact that “in most cases no single activity generates income sufficient to meet the needs of the families,” which induce “constant exchanges and sharing, structured around family relations which extend beyond the nucleus of residents of any individual home space” (p. 25). Alcinda Honwana’s chapter addresses “Changing Patterns of Intimacy among Young People of Africa” by introducing the notion “waithood,” referring to the situation and time scale in which young people still wait to “attain social adulthood” (p. 29). Drawing from in-depth interviews between 2008 and 2011, Honwana argues that, “waithood is transforming young people’s intimate ties and sexual relationships” (p. 30). In a number of the stories that she presents we learn that “sugar daddies” and “sugar mamas” are key to reach “objects of desire” (such as clothes, hair style, music, smart phones, or university education), promoted through all global channels of communication in the “Western way.” The wide spectrum of relationships shows how “new

geographies of sex among young people are challenging notions of masculinity and femininity” (p. 42).

In the fourth chapter historian Alessandro Triulzi deals with yet another crucial topic for Africa’s future: migration. He emphasizes the importance of recording immigrants’ voices and memories, “so that the inner world of feelings and representations of present-day people moving in and out of Africa can be better appraised and contextualized within our societies” (p. 52). The case of Tiburtina in Rome (to the Italian public known as “Hotel Africa”) reveals how a formerly abandoned railway warehouse could become a “transnational space” for migrants. John Davies further extends the horizon of African Studies in the fifth chapter by examining the multinational dynamics with regard to state-building and gives the example of a “notional and desired state of Denmark” citing Francis Fukuyama (2004) (p. 70). The issue of borders (actual and imagined) and how they are seen to mean a “securitized zone” (p. 72), or exclusionary reality for young Africans is finely analyzed throughout the chapter.

Virginie Tallio in chapter six tackles corporate social responsibility (CSR) and how it is growingly becoming “more prominent on the development scene” (p. 89). Tallio underscores that CSR has its roots in African communalism and therefore can earn a place in African Studies research—also from an interdisciplinary angle, as it intertwines business matters, social, and political issues at the same time. In the seventh chapter Ana Pires de Carvalho investigates the “demographic dividend” in Africa, emphasizing that: “Investing in youth, particularly labor intensive programs, is a crucial strategy for transforming the demographic challenge into economic opportunities, social inclusion and poverty reduction” (p. 101). In chapter eight Paulos Chanie and Paschal B. Mihyo elaborate on doctoral studies in sub-Saharan Africa, with an overview of Research School for Social Science in Eastern and Southern Africa (RESSEA) and its “objective of supporting African universities to fast track their PhD programs” (p. 123). The ninth essay, by Preben Kaarsholm, tells us about the different faces of globalization via the case of the Marikana miners’ strike and massacre of 2012 in South Africa. Although the title (“Africa Globalized? Multipolarity and the Paradoxes of Time-Space Compression”) may read a bit misleadingly the event surely is worth looking at closely as it provided “sudden, sharp insights into new life worlds and labor relations emerging in rural settings” (p. 148). When talking about modernity and development, the question of both physical and human infrastructure needs to be put high on any agenda across the continent. Mark Lamont’s contribution focuses on Kenya’s “new infrastructural dispensation” and the country’s “most recent development planning, ‘Vision 2030’” (p. 154). The chapter offers sufficient food for thought about China’s involvement in Africa’s “infrastructural renaissance” via the case of LAPSET, the Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor. In the last but one chapter Elísio Macamo analyzes the World Bank initiative “Global Partnership for Social Accountability” and looks into the question of “good governance” and the accountability of governments.

*African Dynamics in a Multipolar World* is a useful collection of issues and “clues to research lines in African Studies” (p. 3) for academics, students, and policy-makers. It is appreciated that the editors did not want to seem more ambitious than the scope of the papers they accepted for the volume.

István Tarrósy, *University of Pécs, Hungary*

**Toyin Falola and Emmanuel M. Mbah, eds. 2014. *Contemporary Africa: Challenges and Opportunities*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 261 pp.**

The editors of this book have assembled contributions from various scholars with competences in history, political science, international studies, and anthropology. In general terms, the contributors adopt a pessimistic approach to political and socioeconomic developments in Africa since the era of decolonization between 1945 and the mid-1960s. The focus has been on developments in sub-Saharan Africa, with the main themes ranging from the lack of peace and security, limited protection of human rights, the debt crisis, increased levels of unemployment and poverty, and gender inequality to the deteriorating health care standards a situation compounded by the HIV and AIDS pandemic.

The book is organized into two main parts. The first, consisting of chapters two to five, focuses on the legacies of colonial rule on postcolonial Africa. The second part, chapters six to ten, deals with some of the notable socioeconomic changes in sampled African countries. Mickie Mwanzia Koster, who wrote chapters two and nine, has focused on the history of Kenya, discussing the Mau Mau uprising of 1952-1960 and the Mungiki Movement that appeared in the 1990s. She argues that despite the fifty years of independence for Kenya, some of the contestations over land distribution and political space still linger on from the era of colonial rule, exemplified by the claims for compensation by former Mau Mau fighters in 2009 (p. 23), and the threat posed by the Mungiki Movement (p. 210).

There are also chapters that deplore the inefficiency of the postcolonial state in Africa. In chapter three, Julius O. Adekunle argues that despite the modernization of African civil service systems, most of them still remain as huge drains on state resources, through inefficiency, corruption, and also their politicization and entanglement in ethnicity (p. 58). In chapter four, Tokunbo A. Ayoola, laments the neglect of the Nigerian Railroad system by both the colonial state and the postcolonial state, leading to its collapse in the 1990s due to lack of proper maintenance (p. 74). The fifth chapter, by S.U. Fwatshak, continues on the same subject of neglect, but pushes the blame to the Cold War rivalry between the USA and the USSR. The author posits that while Asian countries benefitted from Western technological, security, and economic support (for them to disregard USSR propaganda), African countries did not get a similar treatment. Africa witnessed a rise in insecurity due to civil wars fuelled by the Cold War (such as the wars in the Congo and Angola); lack of economic opportunities; and the rise and sustainability of dictatorial regimes supported by the West (pp. 104-05). In that atmosphere, African states also incurred huge debts, as outlined by Augustine E. Ayuk in chapter six, leading to a debt crisis by the 1980s and 1990s, which was only alleviated by the HIPC program launched in 1996 (p. 136). One other interesting narrative is Austin C. Okigbo's contribution (chapter eight), in which he continues with the same pessimistic approach by tackling the question of racial tensions in post-apartheid South Africa. He argues that despite that the country is no longer under white minority rule, there is still more that needs to be done to bring about racial harmony, and he uses the issue of providing HIV/AIDS remedies as a case study (p. 177).

The book has some shortfalls, the most notable being the omission of developments in North Africa, the home of the Arab Spring (in terms of conditions prior to, during, and after the uprisings), which began in Tunisia in 2011 but surprisingly did not spread to sub-Saharan



African countries with similar challenges. The contributions have also fallen into the trap of looking at African affairs from a pessimistic perspective, with less emphasis on the positive economic and political developments the continent has undergone. The question of insecurity also deserved an extensive discussion, as it has just been mentioned in passing in the book's introduction (p. 11). Certainly more should have been discussed on this theme, with regards to the threat posed by terrorist groups such as Boko Haram (in West Africa) and Al Shabaab (in East Africa).

Despite these shortfalls, I would recommend this book to scholars and other readers interested in the history of modern Africa, especially those interested in colonial and postcolonial continuities, the changing roles of the state, and also foreign intervention in African affairs.

Paul Chiudza Banda, *West Virginia University*

**Edmond J. Keller. 2014. *Identity, Citizenship, and Political Conflict in Africa*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 208 pp.**

Edmond J. Keller is a distinguished political scientist whose long research career has focused on political transitions, cultural pluralism, and nationalism, and conflict and conflict management in Africa. His *Identity, Citizenship, and Political Conflict in Africa* reflects his scholarly interests. It is broadly divided into two parts comprising eight chapters and a summary section. The first part traces the evolution of the concept of citizenship in present-day Africa from a theoretical and legal standpoint. Chapter two is the most important section of this part. It considers the theoretical and legal dimensions of the concept of citizenship. Furthermore, it demonstrates how current conceptualizations of this phenomenon in Africa are similar to, or different from, classical theories of citizenship. The chapter goes on briefly to consider the various ways in which African states established the legal basis for national citizenship, the different ways in which average citizens understand what it means to be citizens of a particular polity, and how their understanding relates to other individuals and groups in society. In chapter three, he spells out a new framework for analysis of the relationship between the state and citizenship-based conflicts. Although mixed, the methodology used for this study mainly comprised ethnography and a variant of "social process tracing" to help pin down the root causes of "crises."

An important aspect of the first section is the tracing of the origin of identity crisis among different peoples (cultures) of the various nation states in Africa. The merging of diverse ethnic nationalities by European colonial administrations, which was done for administrative ease, and proper harnessing of the mineral resources, formed the root of the crisis. Conceptions of nationhood are overshadowed by ethnic alignment as the case studies succinctly show. Within a country, citizenship is first aligned to ethnic groupings before the bigger national identity. Therefore, ideas of citizenship have continuously suffered brutal reprisals among different groups within a country. Suffice to say that upon this careless foundation of ethnic merger, many African nations have remained tied to the macabre outcome of identity politics.



In the second section made up of five chapters, Keller focuses on five case studies: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Rwanda. He clearly show how these countries represents the different ways in which citizenship and identity conflicts outside formal political institutions manifest themselves in Africa today. He applied the "modest analytical framework" in considering the selected case studies. He clearly shows that among the most common causes of intergroup conflict in Africa today are disputes over identity and citizenship. In some cases the identification of groups or individuals with an entire national community is called into question, but in most instances the autochthony within subnational communities is most salient. This, he submits, has forced scholars to rethink the process of socio-political transformations that has been taking place in Africa. Issues raised in these case studies are very significant and critical to the ongoing political crisis in many African nations today.

In the final section of the book, Keller offers a summary and discussion of the implications for the arguments and findings of the research for African nations in general. This section places special emphasis on the importance of good governance, democracy, and the rule of law for creating an enabling environment for the consolidation of citizenship rights in Africa. As rules governing identity, citizenship, and group relations become more institutionalized and firmly established, it is reasonable to expect that citizenship rights will be applied and upheld in a more equitable manner. For now, however, these issues are in their earliest stages of being worked out. Any high expectation that nation building in the former colonial states of Africa would be a relatively smooth process have been proven to be far from the case. In fact, throughout Africa, nation building continues to be very much a work in progress. And it might remain that way until nations find how to accept one another.

The significance of the book rests on the depth of analysis offered throughout the various sections. Keller, show a strong understanding of the political dynamics at play in the discourse around identity and citizenship in Africa. He does not declare a one-size-fit-all attitude in his analysis of the various countries used as case studies. By consciously declaring that there is no one way to read civil conflict in modern Africa, he makes the book an obvious work in progress. This is welcomed given the complex nature of various African nation states. I find the book to be incisive in analysis and critical to the issues of identity and citizenship in Africa. It potentially forms a significant text for scholars and students of African conflict studies. For ordinary readers, the work is as engaging and detailed with current information about the situation in many African countries.

Ndubuisi C. Ezeluomba, *University of Florida*

**Ali A. Mazrui and Lindah L. Mhando. 2013. *Julius K. Nyerere, Africa's Titan on the Global Stage: Perspectives from Arusha to Obama*. Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press. 390 pp.**

The book is an account on and about "Mwalimu Nyerere's intellectual philosophy, personality, political ideology and leadership style" (p. 7) from the persons who knew him and who were influenced by him and his vision. He is portrayed as a global "political giant" (p. 7); "Mwalimu, the Mentor" (p. 209); "the nationalist" (p. 267); "a philosopher" (p. 20); and "a continental Pan-

Africanist" (p. 250). With wise and strong leadership and brilliant policies of cultural integration, he took one of the poorest countries in the world and made it a proud leader in African affairs and an active member of the global community (pp. 45-46). This outcome centers on a number of policies that he initiated and administered, which some constitute as Nyerere's successful "unsung heroism of national building policies" and the ever-singled-out "heroic failure of *ujamaa* policies" (p. 45). They call him a titan. He was the promoter of an African socialism that is opposed to Marxist socialism. As such "Nyerere's vision of the world had often been bipolar in economic terms, a division between the 'haves' and 'have nots', the affluent north and less affluent South, the elite within each society and the underprivileged within the society" (p. 273).

The book is divided into nineteen chapters, preceded by a preface and chronology of major events in Tanzania from pre-history to November 2010, and ending with a conclusion and an appendix. The chapters are grouped into four parts reflecting life versus social and material reality of Tanzania and Africa. While it is hard to capture Nyerere global influence in a single book, in 390 pages Mazrui and Mhando have attempted this undertaking by presenting a modest comparative and critical analysis that "seeks to fill in the gaps of some of the enormous corpus that have developed over the course of five decades regarding the history of Tanzania and Nyerere, its Titan" (p. 6). They have argued that he "was an intellectual in full command of his country" (p. 59). It is a succinct barometer of Nyerere's performance on both the local and global stages and his far reaching impact on African politics and political history, philosophy, and cultural transformation in the post-colonial era in Africa and that he was not only original thinker but also "a figure of dignity in world politics" (p. 279). However, "Mwalimu's legacy is to be found not only in political emancipation, social justice, language, and cultural history, but also in education, and national building beyond tribal lines toward true national unity" (p. 19).

Three key issues are central to this titan: "a *political* system based on the principle of the one-party state; an *economic* system based on an African approach to socialism (what he called *ujamaa*, or familyhood); and a *cultural* system based on the Swahili language" (p. 49). On top of these are his Pan Africanism agenda manifested in the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in 1964 which remains, "the most durable case of horizontal integration in post colonial Africa as a whole" (p. 351) and his "undivided commitment to African liberation struggles and movements" (p. 166) where he made Tanzania "a training ground for armed liberation fighters..." (p. 48). In that respect, "Mwalimu Nyerere played a critical role in the liberation struggle against colonialism and the end of apartheid in Southern Africa" (p. 15). As such, Nyerere "as a philosopher, dreamer and pragmatic leader of his country and people, looking from today's position he may have been ahead of his time!" (p. 20).

Most of the chapters are based on earlier published papers and articles with exception of a few such as chapters 1, 2, 6, 8, and 12. The choice of using previously published articles limits the ambition of the authors. As a result, the book suffers from the serious omission of the titan's impact, especially in his post president era and his comparison with Obama. Also it runs short of a sense of co-authorship. This manifests itself in the frequent use of "I" instead of "we" found in many pages throughout the book and editing challenges that have presented some data as if Africa is still like that of 1990 (p. 246).

In spite of such shortfalls it is a genuinely useful book for all those seeking inspiration in “their struggles to transcend dependency” (p. 224). It is of importance to all students and those interested in understanding Tanzania and Africa as “It depicts the times and issues that Tanzania as a nation, and Africa in general, went through with Nyerere at the helm” (p. 19). Several lessons can be learned from the titan as “He was ... ideologically innovative, philosophically independent, capable of saying ‘No’ to both the left and the right ideological spectrum, and capable of borrowing from both indigenous culture and foreign influences” (pp. 279-80). The book should be a must book in the library shelves of all universities in Africa and where studying and understanding of Africa and Africans is central to academic engagement.

Conrad John Masabo, *Pan African University Institute for Governance, Dar es Salaam University College of Education*

**Kidane Mengisteab. 2014. *The Horn of Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 272 pp.**

*The Horn of Africa* systematically analyzes internal and external challenges and opportunities that define the state of peace, political stability, and security in the horn of Africa. To this end, apart from closely investigating various types of conflicts and violence that constantly reduce the region, the author provides readers with some hope for at least analytically mitigating some of the setbacks on the road to democracy and prosperity. By locating Ethiopia at the center of his analysis, the author diagnoses historical legacies and contemporary developments on the one hand, and sociocultural, economic, and political conditions that underpin and thus define the horn of Africa on the other. In addition to Ethiopia, *The Horn of Africa* closely explores Somalia, Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Sudan, and South Sudan.

*The Horn of Africa* consists of eight thematic chapters. Apart from introducing the book’s subject, chapter one clearly spells out the conceptual foundation that serves to guide the author’s venture into the complex realm of the horn. In this chapter, the author proposes that the majority of political instabilities and conflicts in the region emerge out of two principal conditions. The first consists of failures of internal political and institutional systems to deal with various problems associated with interest groups, especially identity groups and to “facilitate peaceful management of conflicts that arise between the state and identity groups and among identities and communities” (p. 2). The relevance of *The Horn of Africa*’s thesis can be seen to capture, at least the current conditions of the majority of countries in the region. A number of ethnic and identity groups are currently posing a wide range of questions, such as cultural, religious, economic, and political. The Ethiopian multicultural condition and its challenges and similar state of affairs in Sudan, South Sudan, Kenya, and Somalia are, for instance, quick reminders in this regard. As the book empirically argues, these states were not only unable to solve these problems, but also shaped its trajectory negatively through a deliberate polarization and bias. The second condition involves the inability of institutions of regional governance to promote political stability and security and the inability to create a conducive socioeconomic environment that facilitates communal wellbeing and minimize intra- and-inter ethnic frictions along the borders of the region. These two core conditions are, in a

way, the *raison d'être* of *The Horn of Africa*. In other words, the author primarily engages Africans themselves in his effort to make sense out of the rampant political instabilities that shape and reconfigure the region. This is, accordingly, the peculiar contribution of the book to our knowledge of the horn of Africa and thus to African studies.

Chapter two closely examines various types of conflicts and wars that have long been disturbing the region and the human and material costs thereby. Chapter three extends these costs to resource management and natural environment. Chapter two puts Ethiopia in the overall “geopolitical genealogy” of the horn and that whenever some kind of political instabilities and conflicts hit or involve Ethiopia in the region in some ways, it will be definitely felt by neighboring countries in the region. This is particularly the case when we realize that the majority, if not all, of the countries of the horn are related historically, culturally, socioeconomically, and politically. The long-standing friction of Ethio-Eritria, Ethio-Somalia, and Ethio-Sudan are very good examples. Put it simply, no one can claim to understand the socioeconomic and political condition of the horn of Africa, or any of the countries in the region for that matter, without the necessary and specific treatment of Ethiopia therein. This is the other important strength of the book and also a critical perspective the author attempts to offer.

The subsequent chapters of the book trace the etymology of contemporary problems to democratization and political stability in the region; the states as a source of national and regional problems; regional instability and external involvements in the region; and, finally, the author concludes with “prospects for democracy, integration and stability” (p. 182). The only problem I have with the book is its reductionist tendency on some issues. One, among others, is his treatment of the action taken by the then Coalition for Unity and Democracy (CUD) party after the 2005 election in Ethiopia. While accounting for this, he considers them as a devil advocates and bystanders who do not want political stability in Ethiopia and thus reduce them into those “trading places with ruling party” (p. 208). Partly, it is true that they had weaknesses in terms of party organization, a solid national agenda, and a strategic existence. However, what the author missed is the grand problem commonly attributed to the government.

In conclusion, the book is an excellent work for many reasons. Its depth, simplicity, empirically sound-well loaded, pattern of ideas brought together, and holistic approach adopted make it unique. *The Horn of Africa* can be a valuable asset for students of African studies, Ethiopian studies, political science, and sociology.

Mukerem Miftah, *Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Istanbul*

**Michelle R. Moyd. 2014. *Violent Intermediaries: African Soldiers, Conquest, and Everyday Colonialism in German East Africa*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press. 328 pp.**

It's a pity that the story told so skillfully in this book is unlikely to find its way into history curricula in Tanzania, for it should be known by today's youth. The men and women at the center of this story were young more than a century ago, yet they seem uncannily familiar. These were marginalized young people living amidst volatile insecurity. In such conditions they responded with resilience and pragmatism, combining astonishing mobility with refusal to be constrained by political loyalties or communal identities. In a violent and unstable world,

youthful strength and ruthlessness were their best weapons. Though they lived in the early colonial period, they were in no sense predestined to resist colonialism, to become nationalists, or to be craven “collaborators.” Their failure to fit into any of the stereotypical colonial roles is what will keep them out of conventional history curricula.

*Violent Intermediaries* tells the story of the *askari*, the African soldiers who served in the colonial military in German East Africa between 1889 and 1918. The German military initially recruited in Sudan and Mozambique and later relied on recruits from German East Africa itself, particularly Unyamwezi. Nevertheless, the Germans considered the former military slaves and veterans of the Anglo-Egyptian military from the Sudan to be their most able soldiers, and placed them at the “apex” of their “martial race ranking.” The Sudanese consequently exerted strong influence on the formation of *askari* military culture and its distinctive “way of war.” It was characterized by the independent operations of small units capable of taking initiative, particularly when suppressing resistance through destruction of villages, expropriation of livestock, and enslavement of women and children. The author traces the experience of *askari* through their recruitment, training, combat, and off-duty lives.

Their off-duty experience lies at the heart of this study, for it is here that we most clearly see the *askari* as “intermediaries.” It is also here that their women are most visible. When not on duty, the *askari* pursued masculine “respectability,” or “*askari* manhood,” that could be achieved, argues Michelle Moyd, only in the “presence of women.” By marrying they created families and wove networks of patronage. Together with their wives, they raised children, maintained homes in the “*askari* villages” that adjoined German forts, and in retirement resettled their families in areas set aside for veterans. Not content to stay home while their men were on fighting “expeditions,” wives insisted on accompanying military columns even into hostile territory. By staying close to their men they asserted special status as wives of *askari*, benefitted from the protection of the German officers who acted as their husbands’ patrons, and in return contributed the food preparation and other domestic services that allowed *askari* to maneuver unencumbered by long logistical tails. These young women could be assertive and defiant when demanding the entitlements due wives of *askari*. Like the *askari* themselves, they were intermediaries between Germans and conquered populations. While it was the men who with their uniforms, soldierly deportment, and marches more obviously “performed” the enhanced status obtained through service to the colonial state, women as well as *askari* interacted with surrounding communities as consumers and business operators (they were among the very first Africans who enjoyed regular cash incomes in German East Africa). In these ways they hastened the incorporation of their African neighbors into the new colonial economy as markets and towns grew up around military stations.

Reading this book is a pleasure. This is rare of example of historical writing which truly “unpacks” ideas and problems by examining them carefully from a variety of angles. It does so, moreover, in versatile, lucid prose. This is as true when the author unexpectedly invokes Roland Barthes to explicate her understanding of “myth,” as when she considers as well-worn a topic as the “monetization” of early colonial economies. In the end, I’m left wondering whether the seeming modernity of the *askari* and their wives is not an illusion created by historians whose imagination has been too narrowly confined by ideas of resistance and collaboration. Perhaps marginalized and pragmatic youth are not modern at all, but have long been part of



East African society. Perhaps the threat of violence which they pose is a longstanding danger. Perhaps this book brings to light problems much broader and deeper than that of the soldiers of German East Africa.

James L. Giblin, *University of Iowa*

**Zoe Norridge. 2013. *Perceiving Pain in African Literature*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 239 pp.**

Epistemological and ontological concerns on studies relating to pain, torture, suffering, and trauma have continued to inspire serious research and ignite diverse critical debates. Zoe Norridge's *Perceiving Pain in African Literature* is an immense contribution in this direction. With a well-defined scope of different unique/subjective experiences and representations of pain the book addresses a wide range of texts with insight. The individuality of pain dismantles collective perspectives in which such distinctiveness is eclipsed or neutralized. Significantly also is the dimension which wrestles with how to overcome, stop, and cope with pain as an existential reality.

The literary text, whether the novel, memoir, or testimonial account, offers a rich site of representation which triggers multiple discourses on psycho-somatic phenomenon as pain from cultural, social, philosophical, and political considerations. The texts examined, Norridge underscores, "are engaged in a form of lament—all are interested in bearing witnesses to the suffering of the past and present, in representing and thinking through the losses involved in the experience of pain, and the changing meaning of that pain" (p. 211). Pain is therefore a current though relatively understudied theme in African literary criticism that needs to be extensively explored.

Norridge strikes a balance between theory and practical criticism, providing a veritable blend of theoretical discourse and aesthetic representations showing the growing interdisciplinary synergy that characterizes African postcolonial literatures and criticisms, and Western generated conceptualisations of pain. Norridge extensively draws from existing Western theory to appropriate in the field of African literary studies. With regard to her theoretical and ideological position, Norridge examines Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain*, David Morris's *The Culture of Pain*, Susan Sontag's *Regarding the Pain of Others*, and Madeleine Hron's *Translating Pain*. Norridge, contrary to a critic like Elaine Scarry who concentrates on common experiences and universality of pain, argues in line with David Morris's conviction of pain as always personal and cultural, that pain is particular and literature has the potential to explore its singularity (pp. 20-21).

In Chapter One, "Painful Encounters in Yvonne Vera's *Stone Virgins*," Norridge examines the psycho-somatic experiences of excruciating pain, brutal killings, indescribable torture, and rape orchestrated by the liberation struggle and its attendant effects on Zimbabwe's emerging nationalism and particularly the woman. Triggered by history, suffering, pain, and memory are explicitly discussed with reference to discourses pertaining to perceptions of pain; narrating pain with regard to time, space, and identity; disorienting narratives and links between pains;



living with pain. The woman is site of the display of despicable pain. The dead cannot even articulate the gruesomeness of pain and the survivor can never be the same again.

“Between Minds and Bodies—the Location of Pain and Racial Trauma in Works by Bessie Head and J. M. Coetzee” is Norridge’s second chapter. The pain and suffering caused by racial discrimination in apartheid South Africa are analysed in Head’s *A Question of Power* and Coetzee’s *Life & Times of Michael K*. Body pain is inextricably linked to mental processes, which involve emotional and social spheres of experience.

Chapter Three, “Women’s Pains and the Creation of Meaning in Francophone Narratives from West Africa,” regards the individual in a social and cultural context. It takes recourse to explorations of pain in medical anthropology—more precisely gendered pain with regard to cultural, personal, symbolic, and appropriated pain in Senegal, Cameroon, and Côte d’Ivoire. Female genital excision as a matter of cultural epistemology and not medical discourse is the focus in different texts used. The fourth chapter centers on “Writing around Pain—Personal Testimonies from Rwanda by African Writers.” It examines the mass suffering and carnage orchestrated by the genocide and pays particular attention to insights into individual peculiarities of suffering. The last chapter grapples with measures at stopping, overcoming, and coping with pain. Entitled “Responding to Pain, from Healing to Human Rights—Aminatta Forna, Antjie Krog, and Mame Orbinski,” it views issues of cessation of pain in hospital, courtroom, or any other forums. The Epilogue reiterates the place of the individual in pain discourse and the intersection between literature and human rights with reference Kay Schaffer’s and Sidonie Smith’s *Human Rights and Narrative Lives* and Joseph Slaughter’s *Human Rights*.

The undoubted strength of this intellectually engaging and thought-provoking book is thus the individual dimension from which one should construe pain. The book wrestles with semantic instability in cultural/political representations, but advocates meaningful multiple and straddling identities. Using authors from Zimbabwe, Southern Africa, Cameroon, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, and Rwanda, Norridge demonstrates erudition on her subject. The book is convincing and strongly recommended to any researcher in African literary and social studies.

Charles Ngiewih Teke, *University of Munich*

**Derek R. Peterson. 2012. *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent, c. 1935–1972*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 344 pp.**

Derek Peterson, Professor of History and African Studies at the University of Michigan, presents a fascinating study that addresses the controversy between Christian revivalists and ethnic patriots, using the East African Revival as a lens to examine the social and cultural history of late colonial Africa. This revival, which swept the region between the 1930s and 1960s, was multilingual and multicultural in character. Consequently it was perceived as a threat by patriots in many East African cultures who at that time were promoting the value of their specific homeland’s traditions, ethnicity, and patriarchal social structures in order to maintain its distinctiveness in an era of colonial domination. In an intricate manner, revivalists and patriots contended over etiquette, culture, social order, and civil duty to create moral

legitimacy for their political communities on the eve of African nationalism. Unlike previous scholars who have focused too much on the conflict between African nationalists and European colonialists, Peterson's analysis takes account of this moral and cultural discourse within and between African cultures in the development of ethnic patriotism in East Africa.

The book investigates the moral debates between cosmopolitan revivalists and locally based patriots in eastern Africa. Peterson employs a perceptive interpretive framework to contrast revivalists (who crossed boundaries to preach the Christian gospel) with patriots (who erected boundaries to defend their fatherland and ethnic solidarity). He describes the revivalists as pilgrims on the road toward another home, as depicted in John Bunyan's well-known Christian allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*—always on the move, crossing geographic and societal boundaries to spread their message, and unwilling to settle in or identify with any particular civil society. He characterizes the patriots, on the other hand, as conservative moral reformers whose goal was to defend their ethnic identity, family customs, traditional virtues, and respectability. As Peterson tells it, they did so by rewriting history, inventing tradition, and preserving cultural order.

The first of the book's twelve chapters introduces the major themes of the study, such as African conversion and the cultural discourse of patriots. Peterson scrutinizes the socio-political effects of conversion in a time of turmoil instead of seeing it merely as an inward reorientation in religious conviction. Chapters 2 through 5 trace the history and development of the Revival, which created solidarity outside the traditional framework of ethnicity. Despite its nonconformist and other-worldly characteristics, the Revival inspired converts to use transportation and communication technology to establish a new cosmopolitan community. Chapters 6 through 8 trace the genealogy of patriotic thought and practice in the late colonial world. Peterson provides a nuanced understanding of patriots' moral arguments in his careful discussions of socio-historical factors such as labor migration, women's independence, and campaigns against prostitution. He devotes the three chapters that follow to an extended examination of the controversy between revivalism and patriotism in central Kenya and western Uganda. Particularly interesting is how the framework of converts' testimonies was transformed into a literary genre by former Mau Mau guerrillas in the detention camps who used that same framework as they composed their autobiographies to describe their life journeys. In his concluding chapter, Peterson links the history of the moral debate of patriots to contemporary issues in African society. For example, he notes that Uganda's recent Anti-Homosexuality Bill illustrates that modern East African nations maintain the foundation of moral order and tradition forged by the patriots of the mid-twentieth century.

A recurring topic of the book is the revivalists' public confession of sin. Patriots considered this a threat to social order, because it violated traditional standards of decorum. In the conservative moralist culture they were struggling to consolidate, keeping domestic affairs out of public view was critical to maintaining an orderly and respectable community. Public confession seemed to destroy boundaries between the private and the public. It is telling, for example, that Haya patriots in northern Tanzania correlated confession with prostitution, because both involve exposing oneself in public (albeit in very different ways); committing either act damaged an individual's social reputation, and for men might also jeopardize their leadership role or moral authority within their extended family. Consequently, Haya anti-

prostitution campaigns went hand in hand with reforming marriage and suppressing revivalists in order to reinforce strict social discipline. Though this analysis of confession contains valuable insights, Peterson inadvertently tends to downplay the religious motivation of those practicing confession. In fact, public confession was one of the distinctive features of revivalism in many parts of the world. For instance, many converts practiced confession in public during the Great Awakening in North America in the 1730s and the Pyongyang Revival in Korea in 1907.

The book is best suited for graduate students and scholars in African social history and African Christianity. The author assumes a certain degree of prior knowledge of African nationalism. For example, he does not explain in detail the historical background and major issues of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya, highlighting instead how British officers borrowed techniques of confession from the revivalists in their effort to rehabilitate Mau Mau suspects in the detention camps. As a meticulous researcher and astute scholar, Peterson provides excellent footnotes and an extensive bibliography on the topic, including detailed descriptions of forty-six archives on three continents and 170 informants from Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. This insightful and comprehensive monograph serves the scholarly purpose of stimulating further research on the Revival and its socio-political implications in late colonial Africa.

Daewon Moon, *Boston University*

**Peter Polack. 2013. *The Last Hot Battle of the Cold War: South Africa vs. Cuba in the Angolan Civil War*. Philadelphia: Casemate. 232 pp.**

From the fall of 1987 until the spring of 1988 Angolan government forces (MPLA) and their Cuban allies (with Soviet military support) fought against rebel insurgents (UNITA) and their South African allies (with United States support) in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. More than twenty-five years later the historiography of this battle remains so paltry that even the winner of the engagement remains contested.<sup>1</sup> Fascinated with the battle that he refers to as the “Black Stalingrad,” Jamaican born lawyer Peter Polack turned researching this military engagement into his hobby that culminated in the publication of *The Last Hot Battle of the Cold War: South Africa vs. Cuba in the Angolan Civil War*.

On its opening page Polack writes that his book is “purposely written from a wide selection of sources” (p. 7), but the book’s bibliography is only two pages long and evidently includes no archival-based research. Instead, it is based almost exclusively upon memoirs from, and interviews with, soldiers (not leaders) who participated in the battle (although the interviews are not cited or documented in any useful way). Inexcusably, none of the more than fourteen hundred pages worth of award winning scholarship that Piero Gleijeses has produced on this topic is neither referenced nor appears in Polack’s bibliography.<sup>2</sup>

Had Polack read Gleijeses’ scholarship (or a host of many other books published in the past decade) then perhaps he would not have made the mistake of labelling Cuba and South Africa as “proxies” of the superpowers (p. 18). Despite declassified documents from both the Soviet Union and Cuba proving otherwise, the author claims that it is an “indisputable fact” (p. 35) that Havana acted at the behest of Moscow in sending its troops to Angola, and that the Castro

regime's claims to the contrary were always "improbable at best" (p. 31) and have now been thoroughly "debunked" (p. 35). It bears mentioning that Polack cites no sources whatsoever in reaching this conclusion.

The book also suffers from a lack of context as there is virtually no discussion of the Portuguese colonial era, Angola's civil war in 1975, or the reasons behind the political decisions being made in Havana, Pretoria, Washington, Moscow, or Luanda, which affected how the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale played out. Without this information an unfamiliar reader who picks up *The Last Hot Battle of the Cold War* would not know why South Africa and Cuba were fighting inside Angola or what the stakes of the conflict were.

Polack claims that previous estimates of South African and Cuban casualties in the battle are "wildly inaccurate with margins of error over 100 and even 200 percent" when measured "against careful review of the pertinent records" (p. 19). Yet, the author never discloses what these "pertinent records" are. Nor does he explain why such inaccuracies may have occurred. One reason that casualties were publicly underreported is that the South African government and press only publicized the deaths of its white soldiers while ignoring the deaths of its black soldiers—a fact that Polack fails to mention and is seemingly unaware of.

The writing and organization of *The Last Hot Battle of the Cold War* is also painfully disjointed. It was hard to understand why the narrative did not flow in a more chronological manner or why so much irrelevant information and extraneous details were included (the book could have benefitted from a better editorial eye striking out unneeded and redundant information). Furthermore, the text is littered with colorful but awkward phrases such as referring to the 1980s Soviet Union as "the nation of Stalin" (p. 129).

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was an important moment in the history of southern Africa. Nelson Mandela, for example, referred to it as "the turning point for the liberation of our continent—and of my people—from the scourge of apartheid." Readers turning to this book hoping to find analysis of why the battle was fought; why Mandela and others view its ramifications as so important; or even who won the battle and why, will be sorely disappointed. However, military aficionados interested in first-hand accounts of military conditions on the ground; a detailed examination of the weapon systems and capabilities utilized by both sides; or a paragraph description of the death of practically every South African soldier who died in the battle will find value in this book. A professional historian, however, will have trouble seeing the forest through the trees in this book.

## Notes

- 1 For example see: Gary Baines 2012, "Replaying Cuito Cuanavale" *History Today* 62.9.
- 2 Most notably see: Piero Gleijeses 2002, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959-1976* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press); and Piero Gleijeses 2013 *Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press).

Phil Muehlenbeck, *George Washington University*

**Robert Ross. 2014. *The Borders of Race in Colonial South Africa: The Kat River Settlement, 1829-1956*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge University Press African Studies Series no. 128). 340 pp.**

Rising in the Winterberg of the Eastern Cape, the Kat River flows south until it joins the Great Fish. Settled in the 1820s by Maqoma, son of Ngqika, a powerful Xhosa leader, by 1829 the Valley had been declared an exclusively Khoekhoe settlement by the imperial government, on the advice of Sir Andries Stockenström, Commissioner-General for the Eastern Districts. The imperial grant acknowledged the loyalty and civility of the Khoekhoe, sought to establish the settlement as a buffer zone against the Xhosa to the east, and perhaps also acknowledged pre-colonial Khoekhoe settlement there. New settlers were raised from the Gonaqua Khoekhoe, under their leader Andries Botha, from “bastards,” from Christian mission stations such as Bethelsdorp and Theopolis, and among freed slaves. Later groups of amaMfengu and Xhosa joined them.

Soon villages were established, churches built, smallholdings prospered, sustained by an efficient irrigation system. Professor Ross’s exploration of the archaeology of the Valley (Chapter 2, “Water and Land: The Making of the Settlement and of the Landscape”) is a highlight of an excellent book. In the Frontier Wars of 1834 and 1846, people of the Kat River Settlement fought as levies on the British side. Despite these disruptions James Backhouse in 1836 observed that “the neat cottages of those who have become more prosperous...would not discredit the more respectable of the labouring class in England” (p. 116). The settlers’ prosperity was the product of hard work and “industry.”

The Kat River people were constantly harassed by the British settlers, whose ideological banner was raised by Robert Godlonton of the *Graham’s Town Journal*, and carried into battle by the magistrates Biddulph and Bowker. The Khoekhoe had also to suffer the incompetence of Governors Henry Pottinger and Harry Smith. In June 1850 under Bowker Xhosa police destroyed property ostensibly to evict “squatters.” The cumulative effect was that when the Eighth Frontier War broke out that December, many of the Kat River people chose not to fight on the British side. Soon well-organised Khoekhoe were at war with imperial soldiers and colonial militia. Hermanus Matroos was eventually killed in an attack on Fort Beaufort. Willem Uithaalter’s forces occupied Fort Armstrong and held it for some time. A number of Kat River men were charged with and found guilty of high treason: all were pardoned. Andries Botha, controversial but loyal, was subjected to what Robert Ross calls “in many ways, the first of South Africa’s show trials” (p. 277). His death sentence was eventually commuted

So, despite its achievements, explored with humane perspicuity in this lively and timely book, the Settlement lasted less than thirty years. By 1856, the Kat River people were dispersed. Many had died in battle defending the British, some at the hands of the British. Many who survived had to forfeit their land. They were the victims of their own success and of “the lack of charity, the inability on the part of the British colonial rulers of South Africa, and of the mass of the settler population, especially those who identified themselves as English, to accept the possibility that the Khoekhoe were as successful, as powerful and as articulate as the men and women of the Kat River Settlement had turned out to be” (p. 2). Khoekhoe prosperity and amaXhosa resistance “exacerbated white racism, until it became a self-fulfilling prophecy” (p. 2). The Europeans could not “admit the success of the Khoekhoe in making a landscape of



culture where one had not existed before" (p. 279), and the rebellion was "broken, finally, by the numbers an imperial war machine could muster, by the hunger its scorched earth policy induced and by what can only be described as systematic British savagery" (p. 258). Robert Ross argues that "not for the last time in South African history, the white rulers came to believe that their own self-concept of nationhood, or ethnicity, was an undeniable principle by which any society had to be organized" (p. 174). Perhaps it is towards a democratic non-violent sense of "situational identities and...shifting loyalties" (p. 174) that South Africa could move now.

The author writes that "these events mattered to the individuals concerned, and after years reading the letters of missionaries, government officials, newspaper editors, perfidious or otherwise, and above all of the Khoekhoe of the Eastern Cape, they also matter to me" (p. 291). His book has made them matter for this reader too.

Tony Voss, *Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University*

**Ian Taylor. 2014. *Africa Rising?: BRICS—Diversifying Dependency*. Suffolk: James Curry. 194 pp.**

*Africa Rising? BRICS-Diversifying Dependency* is an overview of the economic activity between Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC countries) and Africa. It is a response to the Africa rising narrative and presumably Vijay Mahajan's book, *Africa Rising: How 900 Million African Consumers Offer More Than You Think* (2008). The author presents four chapter case studies focusing on each of the BRIC countries along with two broader chapters on economic growth, or lack thereof, to present his argument. Ian Taylor is not persuaded by the Africa rising narrative, and while there is some evidence presented that supports positive economic growth in Africa, much of the book presents evidence against rapid sustainable development in a potentially vibrant Africa.

This book is successful in examining mature economic relationships between four non-western countries and Africa. Exploring these relationships remains uncommon, and thus the book presents a valuable addition to the conversation on south-south relationships. Despite this important angle, the perspective the author uses to present this information compromises a compelling argument against an Africa rising narrative and may leave the skeptical reader wondering if a different methodology would render different conclusions.

For the most part, *Africa Rising?* treats Africa as a monolith. This argument is difficult to maintain throughout the book, and the author is forced in some places in the book to abandon a monolithic analysis of Africa and acknowledge sub-groupings of countries to more accurately and specifically explain the BRIC countries relationship with Africa. For example, Taylor writes about the increase in trade between Brazil and Africa. But he must then recognize that the increase was due to relationships with five specific countries, Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, and Sao Tome e Principe, and not with the continent as a whole. Portuguese is one of the driving forces of these relationships, but it is also clear that by taking a closer look at economic or regional groupings that economic growth and the speed of that growth looks different.

Another way that *Africa Rising?* falls short of its potential is by examining BRIC countries and their interests in Africa, rather than the reverse, which is perhaps the more challenging



study to conduct. There are very few examples of the impact that African countries have reaching out to or investing in BRIC countries. The case study of India shows that some of India's top African investors are from South Africa, Morocco, Kenya, Seychelles, Nigeria, Tunisia, and Ghana. It seems that more examples of African investment elsewhere in the global South would be important to the Africa rising narrative, but this type of information is rarely presented throughout book. These vignettes are worthy of study and are perhaps what keeps the Africa rising dialogue afloat. These examples are also a critical part of understanding how or if economic growth is indeed accelerating in Africa.

Taylor's book is more of an updated presentation from a somewhat Afro-pessimistic point of view. He suggests in the early part of the book that stellar economic indicators supporting the Africa rising narrative have been exaggerated to lure investors and that published statistics on African countries are questionable and inaccurate. He presents the inherent dubiousness of optimistic indicators, statistics, and research. It then follows that the Afro-barometer facts cited in the book show that African citizens do not believe that their countries' economies are improving. These arguments challenge whether Africa could ever rise. In short, this book aims to challenge the assertion that Africa is growing out of dependency.

Taylor's *Africa Rising?* is not quite the answer to Mahajan's book, if that is what it was meant to do. Mahajan's research into formalizing informal markets, the African middle class, youth potential, Nollywood, cell phones, etc. still makes a fairly compelling Africa-centered, industry-centered case for countries on the continent that are changing and that have the potential for positive economic growth. *Africa Rising?* is a continuation of a top down dialogue about the potential of emerging economies and questions the solid growth potential, or the likely continued dependent status of African economies.

This book is of most value to those who are interested in an overview of the economic relationships that Brazil, Russia, India, and China have with Africa over the last ten to fifteen years. The attention rests on the BRIC countries, and less in-depth information is given to African cases. For scholars who enjoy the international lens and large-scale statistics to understand the economic health of a region, this book is a respectable addition to that conversation. It is also a refreshing examination and nod to the relevance of the relationships between countries in the global South. In this sense, the book is of most benefit to advanced students and others conducting preliminary research.

Kelli N. Moore, *James Madison University*

**Olufemi Taiwo. 2014. *Africa Must be Modern: A Manifesto*. Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. 224 pp.**

It does at least raise some scruples that while the Global West has moved for more than half a century into the postmodern era, Africa in all ramifications has yet to reach the shores of modernity. There is a lingering blame game over who is responsible for Africa's backwardness or what has now been described as Africa's predicament, as in the title of Obi Oguenior's 2001 book, *Philosophy and the African Predicament*. Some pass the buck to the colonialists who for all intents and purposes demobilized Africa through the slave trade, racialism, and colonialism

and today still influence and remand Africa to poverty through its powerful institutions. Members of this group have been called the externalists. The other group, referred to as the internalist group, hold to the contrary that Africa has been the cause of much of its problems since the postcolonial era. This is where one can place the author of this powerful little book. Olufemi Taiwo in this conscience-bullying masterpiece raises the discussion to a new level. He not only places the bulk of the blame in the lap of Africans but also explains why this is so and proffers a solution to the African predicament. One thing for sure compels humanity to continue the quest for a better society; to sustain the attitude of a forward look or the so-called march of civilization and that is the provision of the quality living for humanity. This also appears to inform Taiwo's advocacy for Africa to become modern. In the first chapter where he defends the thesis on why Africa must become modern he states "I propose to do a spirited defence of the necessity of modernity as the way out of Africa's current prostrate position respecting the quality of life in it and the dismal prospects of its teeming majority" (p. 9).

To get on board the modern express therefore, Olufemi Taiwo outlines and gives detailed explanations of certain attitudes and policies African peoples and nations must imbibe and implement. These include individualistic ontology: the author argues that communalism, which is a mode of social living in which living and sharing together are to be preferred, has nonetheless stagnated the growth of society by constantly bending the will and stifling the freedom of the individual. What the author alludes to is the proven fact, that it is the individual human being across history who has been responsible for the development of human civilizations. The entrenched position in the postcolonial Africa if not the preference of Africa's age-old communalist ethos by misguided nationalist zealots has made the thriving of imagination and industry of the individual difficult. He draws examples from China, South Korea, and India, which were able to make a delicate social transition from a restrictive and moribund community-centred orientation to a system in which the individual thrives by freeing up the energies and imagination of their teeming populations to accelerate their movement towards modernity (p. 72).

Also posited is the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Taiwo highlights the problem with the postcolonial Africa's education system by suggesting the development of what he calls "knowledge city" in which African nations adjust their education policies to lay more emphasis on learning rather than on certification. This will enkindle the imagination of the African intelligence, offer freedom of inquiry, and liberate the mind of the inquirer. He defines a knowledge society as "one in which knowledge is pursued, supported, funded, and embraced for its own sake. That is, it is the type of society in which just knowing is what is valued..." (p. 81). This reveals a major problem in postcolonial African nations in which research and funding of academic activities are almost at a zero level. This cannot be absolved from the blame of why much of Africa remains consumerist societies.

Third is the issue of efficiency in management and documentation of statistics. The author insists that Africa in the postcolonial era has yet to realize the importance of statistics in planning and national development. It is a strong aspect of modernity for "numbers" to be taken seriously, as they should form the bases of forecasting, planning, and execution of developmental projects. The neglect of this factor in much of Africa has produced situations in which the transition to modernity has become difficult. Fourth is the matter of respect for rule

of law. For the author, and rightly so, corruption and ignorance both play central roles in the rampant attitude that disgusts “process” and always seeks to emphasize “outcome.” Modern societies thrive because they are organized and recognize the importance of process provided for by rule of law. Without the rule of law, it is difficult to run a society that will develop and make any significant progress. That for the author is one of the Achilles heels of the postcolonial Africa.

Olufemi Taiwo agrees that the imposition of colonialism truncated the program of modernity, which some African societies have imbibed following the well-meaning missionary efforts. Since the end of colonialism, however, it lay in the hands of Africa to reinvent itself. However, it has been less imaginative by stifling the freedom of the individual, sustaining the non-modern institutional legacies of colonialism, denigrating knowledge, ignoring the importance of numbers, and neglecting the rule of law. To overcome these challenges is to become modern, and that entails above all else the reformatting of what the author calls the “African mindscape.” At present, this mindscape is dominated by the philosophy of limits (p. 197) such as can be found in the idea of African communalism (p. 210). Perhaps one of the consolatory aspects of this dirge is that it seeks to restore a culture of hope through which following the requirements for modernity promises great rewards. Whoever thinks he knows the problem of Africa had better read this book. Whoever feels there is no known solution that can apply should read this book first; but whoever wishes to remain unperturbed about the African predicament had better not read this book. This book almost certainly will challenge any mind. The author has evidently written down thoughts that cost him his sleep for many years now.

Jonathan O. Chimakonam, *University of Calabar*

**Kjetil Tronvoll and Daniel R Mekonnen. 2014. *The African Garrison State: Human Rights and Political Development in Eritrea*. Rochester, NY: James Currey. 212 pp.**

Eritrea is one of the world’s most repressive and closed regimes today, trailing in all indices of political openness and human welfare. *The African Garrison State* is an excellent analysis of the emergence of this regime, critically assessing the politics and historical backdrop that derailed democratic development in post-independence Eritrea. After a modest flurry of efforts for transition to democracy capped with a new constitution in 1997 (chapter 2), there culminated a state of “rule of law(lessness)” (chapter 3) devoid of any legal restraint on arbitrary power or respect for basic rights. This has been evident in a deplorable human rights condition the authors show through detailed investigation of inhumane prison conditions (chapter 6), arbitrary detention and disappearances (chapter 7), and the discrimination and persecution of minorities (chapters 8 and 9). Refreshingly insightful is an analysis of the roadblocks to democracy and the path to a repressive dictatorship following a leadership rift in the ruling EPLF/PFDJ in 2001 (chapters 4 and 5).

The book will be well received by a wider readership, particularly among students of African regimes. The roots of the regime, as Tronvoll and Mekonnen argue, lay in the authoritarian political culture of the EPLF that was infused into the botched nation-building

process. Its liberation era values and principles codified in the National Charter and other proclamations were contrary to the ideals of liberal democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The National Charter defines democracy in terms of “patriotism, national unity, secularism and social justice” (p. 62), and cautions against seeing it relative to “number of political parties” (p. 59), regular elections, and basic freedoms. The transition period was beset by these contradictions. Beneath a superficial rhetoric of democracy, authoritarian impulses were taking root, and structures of control were systematically embedded (p. 72). This insidious historical baggage, though overlooked by the authors, obtained agency in President Isaias Afworki, whose authoritarian leadership style and aversion to institutional restraints to his power pre-empted prospects for democracy from the outset.

Over the past twenty-three years, against genuine hopes for a democratic and prosperous future, Eritrea has thus plunged deeper into an abyss of political repression and social anguish. The familiarity of this path and the quintessential neo-patrimonial regime is a *déjà vu* of authoritarian politics in postcolonial Africa. Even though very fitting to describe the militarized state and society, the authors’ analytical concept, a “garrison state,” is nonetheless insufficient to capture the neo-patrimonial character of the regime: a “big man” ruling by decree, a state treated as his private property, absence of rule of law, patronage, and bureaucratic inefficiency. While clearly attesting the absence of rule of law, they fall short of displaying the rule of a person that supplanted it. For a better understanding, this analytical approach also casts Eritrea into a larger theoretical and historical context of postcolonial Africa. The personalization of power is so consummate that Eritrea today lacks even the most “rudimentary principles of rule of law and legitimate political institutions” accountable to the public (p. 15). Isaias controls all matters of national life, from war and peace to private funerals of ex-fighters; his word is the law of the land.

In chapter ten, the authors analyze well a feature central to the crisis—social militarization and a national service that turned to a “service for life” and an effective instrument of state repression. The analysis shows that its implications are so extensive and far-reaching that any attempt to understand post-liberation Eritrea is untenable without due emphasis on it. Yet most innovatively seminal are chapters 8 and 9 on the jeopardy of minority groups and the danger of national fragmentation inherent in the Eritrean body politic. The representation of ethnic minorities amounted to no more than a “dance-democracy” in national holidays and cultural festivals (p. 130), while their most crucial rights have been “brutally crushed.” The official stance against attitudes evoking sub-national identity rendered ethnic and religious minorities vulnerable to discrimination and domination by the majority Christian Tigrigna ethnicity. In particular, land policies and resettlement of Tigrigna highlanders in the Western lowlands ignited a “land-grabber” discourse on a state practice akin to Amhara settler colonization in imperial Abyssinia. The ramifications are widespread and far-reaching, sowing the seeds of future discord along ethnic and regional lines—a fragmentation pervasive among the exiled opposition and in the diaspora cyber-sphere.

Apart from few limitations, *The African Garrison State* is successful in its “comprehensive assessment” of “widespread and systematic violations” of fundamental rights and freedoms amounting to “crimes against humanity” (p. 187). It will certainly stimulate and inform an ongoing debate on the national identity and constitutional future of Eritrea. Yet any reforms in

Isaias's watch seem remote, and a post-Isaias transition will be a "hugely challenging and complex" proposition. Focusing on the short-to-medium term, the authors recommend stricter international measures against the government for "a meaningful change of behavior" towards basic rights and liberties (p. 193). Equally worrisome, however, is the long-term stability and transition to democracy. Due to the factors that hampered transition in the 1990s, a peaceful transition to civilian rule or to multiparty politics seems a remote possibility. Yet, in the event of change, the neo-patrimonial nature of the regime and its assault on state institutions holds a grim prospect to a steady transition. The instability and power vacuum accompanying transitions could also result in uncertainty succumbing to military dictatorship, a civil war, or a complete state failure. Barring all this, however, a sound transition will not only require rebuilding democratic institutions, but also a system of proportional representation guaranteeing minority rights and autonomy for equitable power and resource sharing.

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