African Studies Series 50

Edited by Patrick Chabal

Political Domination in Africa

Reflections on the Limits of Power

POLITICAL DOMINATION IN AFRICA

AFRICAN STUDIES SERIES 50

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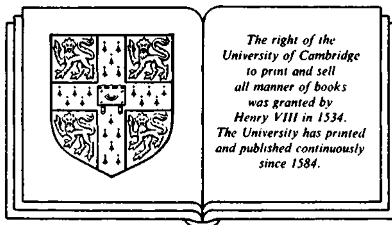
PATRICK CHABAL

King's College London



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To the memory of Jean and Hélène Mondain

Né creda mai alcuno stato potere sempre pigliare partiti securi, anzi pensi di avere a prenderli tutti dubii: perché si truova questo nell'ordine delle cose, che mai no si cerca fuggire uno inconveniente che non si incorra in uno altro; ma la prudenzia consiste in sapere conoscere la qualità delli inconvenienti, e pigliare el meno tristo per buono . . . Concludo adunque che variando la fortuna e stando li uomini ne' loro modi ostinati, sono felici mentre concordano insieme, e come discordano infelici. Io iudico bene questo, che sia meglio essere impetuoso che respettivo . . .

Niccolò Machiavelli, *Il Principe e Discorsi sopra la Prima Deca di Tito Livio* (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Italiano, 1970), pp. 106, 114

Let no state think that it can always adopt a safe course; rather should it be understood that all choices involve risks, for the order of things is such that one never escapes one danger without incurring another; prudence lies in weighing the disadvantages of each choice and taking the least bad as good . . . My conclusion is, then, that, as fortune is variable and men fixed in their ways, men will prosper so long as they are in tune with the times and will fail when they are not. However, I will say that in my opinion it is better to be bold than cautious . . .

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated and edited by T. G. Bergin (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1947), pp. 67, 75

Il politico in atto è un creatore, un suscitatore, ma né crea dal nulla, né si muove nel vuoto torbido dei suoi desideri e sogni. Si funda sulla realtà effetuale . . . un rapporto di forze in continuo movimento e mutamento di equilibrio. Applicare la volontà all creazione di un nuovo equilibrio delle forze realmente esistenti ed operanti, fondandosi su quella determinata forza che si ritiene progressiva, e potenziandola per farla trionfare è sempre muoversi nel terreno della realtà effetuale ma per dominarla e superarla. Il 'dover essere' è quindi concretezza, anzi è la sola interpretazione realistica e storicistica della realtà, è sola storia in atto e filosofia in atto, sola politica.

Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del Carcere*, vol. III (Turin: Giulio Einaudi editore, 1975), p. 1578

The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality . . . a relation of forces in continuous motion and shift of equilibrium. If one applies one's will to the creation of a new equilibrium among the forces which really exist and are operative – basing oneself on the particular force which one believes to be progressive and strengthening it to help it to victory – one still moves on the terrain of effective reality, but does so in order to dominate and transcend it. What 'ought to be' is therefore concrete; indeed it is the only realistic and historicist interpretation of reality, it alone is history in the making and philosophy in the making, it alone is politics.

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 172

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Introduction: Thinking about politics in Africa

PATRICK CHABAL

This book opens with Richard Sklar's Presidential Address to the Twenty-Sixth Meeting of the American African Studies Association.[1] 'Democracy in Africa' was, quite appropriately, a challenge to Africanists. The argument, and it is a powerful one after so many years of political decay and economic failure in Africa, is a defence of democracy. Sklar concludes that there is no convincing defence of what he calls 'developmental dictatorship' and no convincing demonstration of the incompatibility of democracy and development. Though 'the imperatives of development are far more demanding than the claims of democracy',[2] Sklar tells us, the record so far does not suggest that the absence of democracy has served Africa particularly well economically, nor does it provide moral or practical grounds for thinking that Africans would not prefer to live in democracies if they were given the choice.

This argument is only partly a plea for the formulation and construction of what Sklar defines as 'developmental democracy'.[3] It is also, and perhaps primarily, a moral injunction to re-examine the foundations of our thinking about African politics and to reflect creatively about the relationship between good government and economic prosperity in Africa. Sklar's plea for 'developmental democracy', though programmatic in appearance, is in fact an invitation to return to the fundament of political theory. What is politics? What is democracy? What is political accountabilty? What is good government?

This volume is one response to the intellectual, moral and practical challenge set out in Sklar's paper. It is an attempt to think afresh about politics in Africa (rather than African politics) and to reflect on the way we, Africanists, have hitherto gone about our trade. This book, in the diversity of the papers presented, questions and at times breaks with existing assumptions and analytical traditions. It suggests a new approach to the analysis of political theory and practice in Africa. It is, firstly, an approach grounded in universal political theory rather than in the theory of political development (or dependence) devised for Third World countries today.[4] It is an approach which takes seriously both the achievements and limitations of political theory as it has been derived from and applied to Europe.[5] It

asks whether, and in what ways, the historical experience of European countries is genuinely of relevance to Africa today. It is, secondly, an approach grounded in the growing knowledge of African history which we now have at our command.[6] It is an approach which seeks to connect what we know of colonial and pre-colonial Africa with what we want to know about post-colonial Africa.[7] It is, in short, an approach which strives to integrate the history of Africa with the understanding of its politics. Universal in its application of political theory and particular in its attention to the detail of African history, the method sketched out in the contributions to this volume is at once modest and ambitious. It is modest because it reminds us that the demands of political analysis are the same everywhere in the world. It is ambitious because it presupposes far greater knowledge of African history and society than we have so far been accustomed to require.

The time for such reassessment is appropriate both because of the present condition of Africa and because of the unsatisfactory state of our understanding of the social and political processes which determine the fate of the continent. The increasingly savage famines which ravage so many countries are a horrifying reminder of some of the potential consequences of the failure of governments to govern.[8] There is certainly despair about Africa today and some of that despair is justified. Many countries are no longer economically viable and have no means, other than world charity (if it is charity), of feeding their population. Even those countries with a modicum of economic prosperity have suffered from the relentless increase in the cost of energy and the fluctuations of the world market economy. There is even evidence that the 'success stories' of Africa (for example, the Ivory Coast and Kenya) are likely to face grave economic difficulties in the near future. The economic condition of Black Africa is almost universally grim if not tragic. There are few illusions left about economic development as this was optimistically conceived in the sixties.[9]

The political condition of Africa is, unsurprisingly, not much better. Though a few countries have remained 'stable' (whatever that may mean) and their governments in control of an administration capable of administering, the majority have been shaken, sometimes incessantly, by political convulsions and violence. A few have come close to being destroyed by their governors (for example, Uganda, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Republic and Chad).[10] It is not only that hopes for democracy seem to have faded completely; the very basis of effective government seems scarcely to obtain in Africa today.[11] Political despair has also descended upon us and the prophets of gloom, whether unreconstructed ethnocentric conservatives or disillusioned liberals, abound.[12] It is almost as if Africa had been written off politically – except, that is, in the calculus of super-power politics.

Even the optimism generated by the liberation of the Portuguese colonies and Zimbabwe, an optimism prompted by the success of the armed struggles, appears somewhat to have dissipated.[13] Some bemoan the fact

that Zimbabwe is on the way to becoming a one party state. Others decry the failings of the socialist regimes set up in the former Portuguese colonies. The Ethiopian revolution has few foreign defenders (though it has patrons) and there is growing evidence that the famine there in the 1980s is on an even larger scale than that of 1974 which hastened the end of the Emperor's reign. There is also severe famine in Mozambique and serious food shortage in Angola.[14] Under these circumstances there is more than a little doubt about the meaning of the so called transition to socialism. The prospect for Namibia, too, is far from cheering, even assuming the best terms for independence. Many already conclude that wars of national liberation appear to have failed substantially to enhance the capacity of African states to devise and carry out more successful policies.[15]

The present condition of Africa has engendered despondency because we seem to have lost the capacity to understand it. The extremes of economic and political deliquescence have exposed the rudimentary nature of the conceptual apparatus used in our analysis of African politics. Disenchantment with African studies is not only the result of despair in the face of human suffering but also of our inability to account, historically and conceptually, for what is happening.[16] Twenty-five years after the flood of books on African politics which marked the independence of the continent, political scientists of Africa seem to have been overtaken by events, even if they can still find a market for their putative understanding amongst governments or multinational corporations.

But while political scientists have retreated from the harshness of African reality, historians of Africa have made remarkable progress. Much valuable work has been published and it is now possible to have some real sense of the modern, and even early, history of the continent.[17] As historians have pushed the frontier of our knowledge back in time, it has become evident that our understanding of the post-colonial period inevitably depends largely upon our understanding of Africa before independence. The history of colonial and pre-colonial Africa, a history as complex and intricate as that of any other part of the world, has revealed the vacuousness of ahistorical political analysis. The added depth of historical perspective now makes it possible to see present-day African politics within its proper context. Unsurprisingly, the history of Africa reveals the lines of continuity from pre-colonial to post-colonial times as stronger, more numerous and more consequential than had been assumed by many political scientists.

Proper historical perspective, although it does not 'explain' what is occurring today, allows us to think about Africa in terms of its dynamic: crisis, consolidation and change. It makes it less tempting to seek *dei ex machina* (slave trade, colonial conquest, colonial rule, imperialism, dependence) and more rewarding to unravel the many ways, complex and obscure, in which African societies have adapted over time and will no doubt continue to adapt.[18] What this greater (and rapidly increasing) historical knowledge of Africa reveals is that any despair, other than that

derived from the sight of human suffering, is intellectually unwarranted. The history and politics of Africa prove to have much in common with the history and politics of the rest of the world, a revelation perhaps less cheering than it might once have been to the Western liberal conscience but scarcely, on balance, one which justifies the extremes of gloom which afflict many Africanists.

What it does mean, however, is that there is little prospect of explaining African politics solely by means of concepts specific to Africa or the Third World. The collapse of Ghana, the Biafran war in Nigeria, the famine in Ethiopia, the perennial civil war in Chad, for example, cannot simply be understood in terms of the consequences of colonial rule, ethnicity, dependence or underdevelopment. The reality of their history is far more complex and we cannot account for all these events within one particular theoretical framework or by means of a single conceptual apparatus. This is not cause for alarm. It is a reminder that the history and politics of these countries are as intricate as that of Europe and that we should expect no less difficulty in understanding them.

What it means, therefore, is that our understanding of Africa will benefit from an intellectual opening, a willingness by Africanists to consider the relevance of the study of other parts of the world and other periods in history.[19] The development of a history of Africa should be paralleled by the willingness on the part of political scientists to apply the same degree of analytical rigour to the study of Africa as they would apply to the study of their own societies, rather than to persist in creating specifically African (or Third World) modes of analysis. Bayart's recent work on Cameroon, and his chapter in this book (ch. 6), show the usefulness of analytical work of this kind.[20] Callaghy's chapter (ch. 2) is also a move in the same direction though both its premises and its conclusions differ from those of Bayart's. The very divergences in interpretation between these two (and other) chapters reflect at once the fruitfulness of the new approach and the need for historians and political scientists of Africa to collaborate more closely in their attempts to unravel the history of the continent and to analyse the processes which characterise its present development. What we need is good history and good political science, not just African history or African political science. The time has come, as Staniland argues, to overcome the nationalist and colonialist traumas which attended the end of colonial rule and the birth of independent African nations. As Dunn rightly says, 'neither fatalism nor voluntarism: political understanding'.[21] It is in that perspective that Sklar's defence of democracy is both timely and provocative.

To think of democracy in Africa is to address fundamental questions about the nature of politics in Africa and about the content of the political theory with which we have analysed Africa. Sklar defines democracy as that political system in which the rulers are accountable to the members of the polis.[22] It is, indeed, the case that in demonstrably democratic states, rulers are accountable to the electorate, though not always in ways which ensure

that accountability is a working reality. But this is not to say that rulers in other political system are never accountable to those over whom they rule, even if the forms of accountability and the degree to which it is seen to obtain by its prospective beneficiaries, differ sharply from what they are in Western democracies.[23] There self-evidently are different forms of systems of political accountability. Democracy, as we understand it in its European context, is a form of political practice which evolved historically in specific settings under specific circumstances and at specific junctures in a limited number of countries.[24] The question of the existence or absence of democracy in Africa is thus primarily historical, not theoretical. So how did democracy reach Africa's shore? Or was it indigenous?

Simply to ask such questions is to measure the magnitude of the difficulties involved in devising even a working definition of democracy. Starting from Sklar's notion, the most general usable concept is a political system in which mechanisms and institutions exist to promote and enforce the accountability of rulers to those over whom they rule. It is immediately apparent that, by that definition, there were a number of pre-colonial forms of governance which were 'democratic'. It is equally clear that no colonial government could ever be construed as having been democratic, however benignly colonial rule may have been exercised. It is true that the British, French and Belgian (but not the Portuguese or Spanish) colonies inherited the ideology and instruments of democracy as they were developed in the mother countries. But they also, crucially, inherited the long history of undemocratic forms of colonial government which followed their subjugation and shaping as colonial states. The key question today therefore is whether post-colonial states could reconcile this dual, contradictory, heritage and evolve working democratic practices.

Independent African governments faced three principal political tasks. They had to consolidate nation-states out of arbitrarily defined colonies; they had to blend together nationalist parties (ideology, organisation and personnel) and a colonial state apparatus in a hastily re-christened democracy; and, finally, they had to spur economic development, that is utilise the country's resources to create wealth-producing assets.[25] Despite the enthusiasm of the African nationalists and of those Africanists who came to study them at that time, there was no good reason to believe that African governments would find it easy to achieve these three goals, still less to do so while upholding any form of democratic government. Precedents in Europe (for example, Germany or Italy) were not encouraging. To have expected democracy to flourish would have been historical blindness. The simultaneous attempt to realise these three ambitions militated sharply against the preservation of democratic rule.

The formation of nation-states, and more importantly their consolidation into political entities free from the threat of disintegration, demanded the creation of a national culture capable of over-riding ethnic and regional forms of self-identity. Equally, it required the construction of political

structures strong enough to withstand local pulls but flexible enough to allow representation. Most independent countries, but by no means all, started life with representative political systems in which accountability was secured, as in the West, by elections. Though there were large differences between colonies, the governments of most independent countries swiftly realised that democracy served them badly.[26]

By and large the machinery of these states was a replica of that in existence under colonial rule. Colonial states, which operated with scant regard for accountability to those over whom they ruled, aimed at stability rather than at welfare and economic development. Theirs was a minimal goal, that of managing the colony in the most efficient way and at the lowest possible cost.[27] Although great changes occurred in the last ten years of colonial rule, and although progress was made towards a form of colonial governance which would be both more accountable to Africans and more attuned to the political and economic development of the territory, it cannot be seriously argued that the demands placed on colonial states were ever as numerous and urgent as they were on the newly independent governments. Nationalists were committed and expected to achieve far more than their colonial predecessors using the same administrative instruments, but now under the exigencies of democracy from which the colonial state had been absolved.

In many instances, the consolidation of the nation-state itself proved difficult even when the integrity and competence of the government were not at fault.[28] In Senegal, the government came to rely on an unholy alliance with the immensely powerful *marabouts*.[29] In Ghana, there was justifiable fear that the Ashanti would resist state encroachment.[30] In Nigeria, the welding together of the north and south could not be satisfactorily achieved even under clever federalist schemes.[31] In Cameroon, independence came through civil war, as it did in the Belgian Congo.[32] In Uganda, there could be no effective form of democratic government satisfactory to the Baganda.[33] In Kenya, the consequences of Mau-Mau and the preponderance of the Kikuyu distorted the political system.[34] Even Tanganyika, spared the peril of a dominant ethnic group, found little comfort in democratic practice when it was joined by Zanzibar.[35] Countless other examples could be given. The point is that in virtually no African country was the establishment of a viable nation-state enhanced by the exercise of democracy as it was bequeathed by hurried colonial officials on their way out.[36]

Often democratic practice, particularly local and national elections, exacerbated regional, ethnic and religious cleavages simply *because* it was representative, and access to power on a democratic basis is competitive. Representative government assumes the existence of a nation-state, the legitimacy of which is no longer in doubt. It can only work if and when the representative is taken to be and in fact is committed to national, rather than local, politics.[37] This has rarely been the case in Africa for reasons which have less to do with the poor application of democratic theory than

with the context within which modern politics developed. The outcome, more often than not, has been one-party states, in which usually the nationalist party has been the dominant force.

Most African countries were led to independence by one nationalist party.[38] In the elections which preceded independence, when there were elections, opposition to the nationalist party most frequently came from regional or ethnic groups.[39] Although the departing colonial constitution-makers sought to establish a working democracy, they settled for one truly national party when they could get one. They feared divisions more than they desired multi-party competition. Decolonisation thus inevitably favoured incipient one-party states, just as colonial rule had promoted the emergence of political institutions focused on local, hence by implication particularist issues. In this respect, paradoxically, the highly centralised and statist form of French colonial rule, with African extensions of metropolitan parties, often allowed more (though still limited) party competition than the decentralised and more localised British practice, simply because it forced politics to the national level.[40]

Colonial practice and the institutional process of decolonisation were conducive to one-party states whatever the ideological and constitutional legacy. So was nationalist politics. At independence the nationalist party took over the state *in extenso* (in many instances the civil service was still staffed by colonial officials for some years). Politically, colonial rule had refined the art of the balancing act, balancing between various regions, various ethnic, religious and racial groups, and various economic constituencies.[41] The practice upon which it was intended the system would work was that of the enlightened despot, yielding wisely to the most threatening, not necessarily the most deserving, claimants and continually splitting demands so that no single demand and no single claimant could ever bring intolerable pressure on the resources (financial or symbolic) of the state.

By and large, post-colonial states continued to rely on the same principle, a principle best served by the one-party state such as the colonial state had been. But as nationalist and indigenous party-states, they laboured under considerable disadvantages. They could not, like colonial states, call upon the repressive resources of the Empire, though some governments did request military assistance from the former colonial powers.[42] But more importantly, post-colonial states were not, like their predecessors, *au dessus de la mêlée*, one step removed from the political and social divisions of the country. Except in colonies where white settlers were powerful politically (for example, Rhodesia and Algeria), the colonial state was free to respond to demands and pressure with minimal concern for local or social constituencies. The post-colonial states were in no such enviable position.

Nationalist politics was built upon (though in some sense and for a limited period transcended) social, political and economic coalitions. Often, nationalist parties had grown from local, ethnic or professional associations and, in any event, their growth required successful coalitions between

diverse social and economic constituencies.[43] That unity was achieved, although not with an equal degree of success in each country, is evidence of the overwhelming desire for self-rule rather than of political unanimity. Beyond independence lay the realm of everyday politics for which nationalist parties were often ill-prepared. Few were true mobilising parties. Most were paper coalitions, rapidly exposed to the conflicting demands of their diverse social, ethnic and economic constituencies. They had little experience of government, they had few means of resisting these conflicting claims in a democratic framework and in most cases, had only limited resources available to meet these demands. With some exceptions, most post-colonial states were singularly ill-equipped to govern effectively. In some cases, they were also blissfully unaware of the social and political divisions within the nationalist party, and within the country as a whole.

The most apparent danger to the newly independent governments was ethnic strife, although economic discontent would prove even more serious in the long term.[44] Only in cases where the nationalist party was genuinely a nationalist coalition and where there was no dominant ethnic group (for example, Tanzania) was the debilitating effect of ethnic pressure avoided. In most other instances, there rapidly emerged a distinct ethnic challenge to the government: in Guinea, the Foula; in Ghana, the Ashanti; in Togo, the Ewe; in Nigeria, either the northern states or the Ibo; in Cameroon, the Bamiléké; and so on. At the very least, successful governance required skilful appointments to government and state agencies and, in proportion to the perceived threat, either deference to or repression of the dominant ethnic group. Perhaps Ghana provides the classic example here, and a significant one, since in the fifties it had one of the few mobilising political parties in Africa.[45] Nkrumah's government, rightly or wrongly, feared Ashanti opposition. The Ashanti were the single most important ethnic group both in size and wealth, and the dominant members of Ashanti society had little sympathy for Nkrumah's Convention People's Party government. The chiefs who had been by-passed by the CPP and who feared for their economic preponderance sought to rally Ashantis against the government. The government's response to their challenge, clumsy and repressive, consolidated Ashanti hostility until they organised ethnically as a party. The state was now threatened. Ghana became a repressive one-party state.

Ethnic politics thrive on democracy, but ethnic politics weaken democratic governments. The answer lies in a one-party state.[46] Ethnic politics was not necessarily unavoidable but in practice it has almost never been averted through democratic forms of government in Africa, even under a federal system as in Nigeria. The political weakness of one-party states is that the party comes to reflect and to embody the country's social and economic contradictions, contradictions and divisions within civil society. In the post-colonial state, where the nationalist party filled all governmental and administrative positions, those contradictions cracked the unitary

façade. The state apparatus itself became the locus of these contradictions. The enemy was within. To allow the challengers separate political voices was to risk the disintegration of the state. The ensuing political dynamic enforced unity and increased statism. The safeguard of the state must prevail. The dilemma was real, whether the leadership of the independent country was committed to democratic forms of government or not. Democracy in this context was seen as a luxury which weak and poorly institutionalised states could not afford. But, perhaps, independent African governments would have been better able to resist the drift away from democracy had it not been for the overwhelmingly difficult economic conditions under which they had to navigate a ship still so fragile.

The economic fate of the newly independent African states rested on three pillars: the natural endowment (population, minerals and agriculture) of each country; the colonial legacy (infrastructure, commerce, industry, and so on); and the country's potential integration into or divorce from the world market economy (trade and investment).[47] From the outset, a number of African countries were not economically viable (Mali, Niger, Equatorial Guinea, for example), and their well-being depended almost solely on foreign aid. Most other countries did not have sufficient internal resources to sustain growth, let alone development. Only a handful were generously endowed (for example, Zaire, Guinea, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Kenya), though in many cases dependent on foreign technical and financial assistance for the exploitation of their natural resources. Virtually no African country was in a position to sustain autarchic economic development. For most African states, domestic economic pressures and the constraints of the world market worked against democratic rule.

Incipient capitalist forms of production determined the development of agriculture and industry in the colonies.[48] International trade was largely in the hands of capitalist firms, petty trade often controlled by indigenous or foreign merchants (Indians, Lebanese). Only those countries sufficiently well endowed, hence sufficiently attractive to capital, and willing to develop state capitalism in line with the world market economy found it relatively easy to make prosper their colonial inheritance. The others were left to battle, sometimes against overwhelming odds. The choice, realistically, was between state capitalism (whatever that might mean in some of the poorer countries) or state socialism. The state would direct the economy and would appropriate its surplus, where there was a surplus, redistributing it in unequal parts to the various estates and to itself. Though the state bureaucracy (or the army) would usually appropriate increasingly large portions of that surplus, what really mattered was whether there was a surplus and how much of it was left to distribute to the other estates.

Essentially, there are two stories here: one for those countries endowed with mineral resources and another for those with nothing but the produce of their land. For the latter, the key (though by no means the only) variable was, and remains, the relation between state and countryside. With few

exceptions (for example, Tanzania or those countries where producers in the countryside have totally withdrawn from the market economy), there have been highly unequal terms of exchange between the state and rural society, to the detriment of the latter.[49] In the 'successful' cases (for example, the Ivory Coast), the economic well-being of some sections of the countryside has improved despite unequal exchange.[50] Elsewhere, rural society has simply grown poorer and, sometimes, it has reverted to subsistence agriculture. The main determinant of agricultural economic success has been factor endowment rather than the correct laissez-faire politics of state capitalism, though it is true that state socialism has proved particularly inept. However, even where agriculture has thrived there has not been greater internal democracy simply because there is no good reason, other than moral, why one-party states, historically the scions of colonial undemocratic states, should allow political competition to disrupt the process of surplus appropriation. It is cheaper and more effective to subsidise class quiescence than to allow class representation. In cases where the economics of agriculture have failed, the size of the pie has been reduced, a condition unfriendly to democracy. In those instances it has been more economical and more expedient for the dominant groups to take over the state wholesale, the better to repel demands for representation.

Among the countries with mineral resources, Nigeria and Zambia can be taken as representative of the oil and extracting industries.[51] Where mining occurs on a large scale, workers are more organised and trade unions stronger. Politically, their voice is more consequential than that of any other group of workers in Africa and they can influence government policies substantially. But their political power has not so far, even in Zambia, induced African governments to open up the political process. Though trade-union leaders do occasionally become political challengers, it has almost always been possible for African governments to circumscribe the workers' demands to corporate matters. Hitherto, workers have not attempted to organise into 'labour' parties and it is not clear under what circumstances they would ever be permitted to do so.

The story of the impact of the oil industry on Africa is more straightforward as it has led to the creation of very few local jobs. Essentially an expatriate industry, its main effect has been to swell, sometimes enormously, the exchequer of the state. The substantial financial windfall, acquired at minimal cost, strengthens the role of the state as the prime economic agent in the country. It increases its ability to allocate funds as is politically desirable and it makes membership of the state even more attractive. In Nigeria, increased revenues have made it possible to finance the enormously expensive creation of nineteen states, a federal system which can exercise some check on non-democratic (and/or extra-constitutional) forms of government but which is also a license to abuse and corruption. Whether democracy in Nigeria can ever take root is not clear but it is certain that the country's riches have worked to preserve and,

perhaps, strengthen federalism.[52] A large exchequer lubricates the political system and renders it more flexible but the case of Nigeria suggests that it is wrong simply to assume that wealth buttresses democratic rule in Africa (as it has done in Venezuela, for example, since the 1950s). The converse, however, is unfortunately true: poverty makes it significantly more difficult to sustain democracy. There are, of course, exceptions but I am here compelled to paint a large canvas. On the whole, it is exceedingly difficult to avoid the conclusion that the economic predicament of most African countries is inimical to democracy.

Lest my remarks so far be themselves construed as systematically inimical to democracy, let me repeat that I have not concerned myself with the desirability – moral, intrinsic or pragmatic – of democracy, but merely with an examination of the historical context within which democracy has hitherto failed to prosper in Africa. But while it is simple enough to outline the causes of the failure of Western type democracies in Africa, it is more difficult but also more necessary to offer well-considered conceptual approaches to the analysis of politics in Africa. Our starting point must be the re-examination, in their historical context, of basic notions of political theory as they apply to Africa.

Inherent in a discussion of democracy in Africa is a concern about the purpose and mode of its government. The promise of democracy, as Sklar and Callaghy understand it, is a system of political accountability in which the governors are institutionally held to account to those who have elected them and over whom they rule. The further implicit promise of democracy, as Sklar argues, is that it is the political system most likely to provide good government and economic prosperity to those who may chance to benefit from it. But though it is true that it is the aim of liberal democracy, as it is also of socialism, to evolve systems of political accountability which ensure good government and economic well-being, it is of course not necessarily the case that the reverse is true. Good government, as Dunn defines it, may exist outside democracy. He writes: 'Good government is, of course, to be interpreted not in terms of the intentions of the rulers, which tend (at least professedly) to be excellent in most societies at most times, but rather in terms of the consequences of their rule for those over whom they rule.'[53] Our concern, therefore, must extend beyond the search for democracy. Good government and political accountability in Africa must be understood not in the narrow context of democratic theory but in the wider, and historically more relevant, one of political theory.

Politics, as Lonsdale reminds us, is defined in the relation between power and production, a relation which evolves over time and the terms of which (reciprocal rather than univocal) determine the arena of political action and accountability.[54] In this wider and more universal context, political accountability is a relation of reciprocity and inequality between the rulers and the ruled: kings and subjects, chiefs and villagers, colonial administrators and *indigènes*, party leaders and followers, revolutionaries and

peasants. It is a relation of collaboration, coercion and violence. Above all it is a relation which constantly changes as the external and internal context itself changes. As Lonsdale argues with considerable force, political accountability is

> part of the moral calculus of power; it concerns the mutual responsibilites of inequality. Because it raises questions about the control of power and its purposes, accountability must also be concerned with political organisation. For if power is not to some extent shared there can be no effective base from which it may be controlled, nor any protected right to discuss its purposes. So political accountability, or public morality, is the chief end of political freedom. Whether it also guarantees social justice and economic development is an altogether thornier question.[55]

Political accountability, then, is at the centre of politics as soon as men and women are organised for social and economic purposes. In a community limited in size and with little social stratification, accountability is relatively simple and easily defined. In more developed societies, whether pre-colonial kingdoms or modern countries, accountability becomes both more complex and more diffuse. It is more difficult to apprehend conceptually and in reality. In independent countries, it lies not just in the constitutional and institutional devices which formally hold rulers to account for their deeds. It is also part of the social fabric of society, in relations between patrons and clients, ethnic leaders and their kin, party bosses and party members, bureaucrats and citizens, employers and employees, *mullahs* and believers, military and civilians. Above all else, it is embodied, symbolised, in the relation between state and civil society.

By means of this notion of political accountability, rather than that of democracy, it becomes possible to analyse African societies in their historical context. The rulers' imperative, their civilising missions (Lonsdale), defines the rules of the games at a particular moment in history, the parameters of politics. But power is always tied to legitimacy. Whatever the aim of government, and whatever the government (king or military junta), the ideology of the regime is both a reflection of its ambitions and its legitimating discourse. The aim of all rulers, other than the insane or the tyrant, is good government, economic well-being and stability.

In post-colonial states, the aim of government, whether socialist or capitalist, has been economic development, a vague term which is generally taken to include the growth of the economy and an improvement in the living conditions of the citizens.[56] The failure to achieve economic development in most of Africa is at the heart of the crisis of political accountability. The legitimacy of African governments, whatever their political complexion, is undermined by their economic failings. Famine is, as it has always been, the most lethal corroder of the political fabric. Whatever the causes of economic ill-health, the inability of any ruler to sustain the commonweal is the ultimate sanction against his or her right to rule. The ferocious drought conditions in much of Africa today have in effect disenfranchised a number

of governments, if not government itself. But even in countries where there is no famine, good government has been in short supply, as it has been at most times in most parts of the world. There are good historical reasons, as Dunn shows (ch. 10), why good governments have been few in post-colonial Africa. One of the reasons is that good colonial governments were equally rare; another is that the economic standing of most African countries, already low at independence, has sunk even further. But is there a correlation between economic failure and the failure of political representation?

African countries inherited or constructed political systems of representation in which political accountability was institutionalised in parliaments, assemblies or other elected bodies. Though I have argued above that the conditions of independence mitigated against the development of liberal democracies in Africa, did they also undermine other forms of representation? It is, as Staniland reminds us (ch. 3), a fairly worn argument that, though Western democracy is ill-suited to Africa, political accountability obtains through other forms of representation to which formal multi-party elections are peripheral.[57] Kenya, Tanzania, Guinea-Bissau, the Ivory Coast, Cameroon or Senegal (among many), although not liberal democracies, arguably possess governments which are both representative and legitimate, where political accountability is, however inadequately, extant.

Whether there is legitimate political representation or not depends on at least two factors: the effectiveness of government, that is the skill and will with which it governs; and the nature of the relationship between state and civil society. For, indeed, under the conditions of Africa's independences, the reality and consequence of political representation (that is, working political accountability) depend almost entirely on the ability of civil society to curb the hegemony of the state. An effective government can be bad. Government can only be good (that is of benefit to its citizens) where civil society matters. Absolute hegemony corrupts governments absolutely.

The post-colonial state in Africa was, with few exceptions, both overdeveloped and soft.[58] It was overdeveloped because it was erected, artificially, on the foundations of the colonial state. It did not grow organically from within civil society. It was soft because, although in theory all-powerful, it scarcely had the administrative and political means of its dominance. Neither did it have an economic basis on which to rest political power. It was born with political hegemony, of whatever complexion, but with no legitimate claim on or class control of production. The process by which it sought to achieve economic hegemony, and the measure in which it succeeded, determined its character: state capitalism, state socialism or state penury. In countries with sufficient economic resources and where economic waste was kept under control, economic hegemony could go hand in hand with growing, if limited and unequal, prosperity for the masses. Elsewhere, the masses, though rarely the holders of state power, grew poorer and more wretched.

How, and even whether, African states achieved economic hegemony depended partly on factors outside their control. A country's economic potential and its relation to the world market are still the ultimate determinants of its fate. But within these real, and sometimes overwhelming, constraints, the effectiveness of the state's economic policies is the single most important element of good government. There may be little that states can do to alter their position in the world economy but there is an infinite variety of ways in which they can do harm to society. Effective government, therefore, is a prerequisite, if not necessarily always to economic hegemony, at least to political legitimacy and accountability. As Dunn writes

> Effective state powers in African territories are unlikely to charm well-informed liberal observers by the manner in which they govern. But, other things being equal, they may at least succeed in furnishing reasonably good government, and in doing so they will be able to spare their subjects the miseries of anarchy and civil war from which the peoples of Africa have suffered so desperately in recent years.[59]

Though it is not inherently so (there is, after all, enlightened despotism), it is likely that good government depends equally on meaningful political representation, whatever form it may take. Formal constitutional and institutional mechanisms, such as proper and fair elections and operative elected assemblies, are of considerable import. But they are only one aspect of the process of political accountability. There are others. As Cruise O'Brien shows, for example, there are forms of accountability attached to each type of Muslim religious and political organisation in West Africa.[60] This is equally true of other areas of social, economic, cultural or moral life. To heed the view of war veterans' associations, the army, students, ethnic leaders, market women, trade unions, *marabouts*, peasants or capitalists is one of the requirements of effective government. The political price to pay for ignoring the whispers is often greater than that of yielding to the wail. There is, however, no causal link between the mechanisms of formal representation and the effectiveness of government. In Africa, even fair elections and a functioning parliament are no guarantees that proper representation is extant. This is because of the nature of civil society in Africa and the modalities of its relation with the state.

Without a doubt, ideal liberal democracy, if it were possible, would be a vast improvement on what there is today in most African countries by way of government. But it is not possible, precisely because liberal democracy was the historical outcome of the particular circumstances in which capitalism shaped the relationship between state and civil society in Western Europe.[61] Ideal government in Africa today would be something else, and what it would be can only be conceived of in terms of a relevant historical analysis of the relation between state and civil society. Though there can be disagreement on the meaning of civil society in Africa, it is in the first instance, as Bayart argues, determined in the relation of society to the

post-colonial state.[62] Because the post-colonial state – or rather the holders of state power and their retinue – sought to combine political and economic hegemony, civil society was bound to be defined in its reaction against the state.

The state in Africa has pretensions at being all-encompassing – the unitary state of the colonialists became the unitary nationalist state – and touches therefore all aspects of society, 'traditional' as well as modern. The post-colonial state is not the arbiter state of liberal democracy but the interventionist, conquering and growing state (an excrescence, as Bayart says). It is, as Callaghy points out (ch. 2), a Leviathan, but a Leviathan with feet of clay. Civil society which may originally have been mobilised by the nationalist state or which, for other reasons, accepted the legitimacy of the Leviathan, becomes political in the process of its detachment from and reaction to the state. What is not of the state becomes civil society. So that civil society, in so far as it can be defined, consists not just of what is obviously not part of the state but also of all who may have become powerless or disenfranchised: not just villagers, fishermen, nomads, members of different age groups, village councillors, or slum dwellers, but also professionals, politicians, priests and *mullahs*, intellectuals, military officers and all others who are, or feel they are, without access to the state. Civil society is a vast ensemble of constantly changing groups and individuals whose only common ground is their being outside the state and who have, as Bayart points out, acquired some consciousness of their externality and opposition to the state.

The study of African politics since independence has largely been concerned with the state.[63] Discussions on democracy or on good government are primarily discussion about the state. But it is clear that an understanding of politics in Africa, and hence of the systems of governance and accountability which exist or may develop there, requires attention to civil society. Though the state is highly visible, if only because historically it was the symbol as well as the structure of the newly created nation, it is neither all-encompassing nor all-signifying. Or rather its character and its significance derive in large measure from the nature of civil society and its mode of coexistence with the state. For states have not operated in a vacuum and it is ultimately their action in relation to civil society which determines their complexion and the fate of their policies. Civil society matters because the state seeks to act upon it and in doing so it provokes self-conscious or even spontaneous reaction. Successful states devise *modi operandi* which adapt to and respond to civil society: political accountability. Unsuccessful states either dissolve, absorbed piecemeal by civil society, or they turn to absolutism, tyranny, in opposition to civil society. There are examples of all three in Africa today.

Recognising the existence and political relevance of civil society is not, however, necessarily to apprehend it. As yet we know far too little, though African history is giving us better information on colonial and pre-colonial

societies than we often have for post-colonial societies. This is partly because we have failed to study post-colonial civil society as we should have and partly because studying civil society in independent Africa is often dangerous. Research in Africa almost always requires state permission. There is nevertheless much more that could be done within a conceptual perspective which recognises the importance of civil society and focuses attention on it. The politics of civil society exists, although often in forms which are not self-evidently recognised as such.[64]

'Peasant' behaviour, the politics of production, is of immense importance for Africa. Far from being the hapless creatures on which state might is visited, 'peasants' are often the determinant of the state's economic capacity.[65] In much of Africa, there is far greater potential for agricultural production, and the absence of agrarian development is a reflection of the politics of rural society. Hence the current argument for less state interference with production.[66] The case of Guinea-Bissau which I discuss in a separate chapter (ch. 5) is obviously one where agricultural failure has been a response by producers to state policies (or the absence of policies). The same applies to other countries. The action, or inaction, of rural producers is probably the most important aspect of the politics of civil society, but it is by no means the only one. Other groups and individuals matter. Trade unionists, students, intellectuals, army and police officers, *marabouts* and archbishops are all obviously important; but so are, in their own way, nomads, paupers, vagrants, delinquents, the starving and the dispossessed. They all affect the balance of political force between state and civil society. How they do so is a matter for future research.

1

Democracy in Africa

RICHARD SKLAR

I am often asked to explain what possessed me, a white American political scientist, to undertake African studies. Usually, I reflect upon my state of mind in the mid 1950s and mention the allure of a new horizon for democracy, limned by the doctrine of self-determination for subject peoples. Even then, however, realists warned that democracy in Africa, as in Asia, would bleed and die on the altars of national consolidation and social reconstruction.[1] But democracy dies hard. Its vital force is the accountability of rulers to their subjects. Democracy stirs and wakens from the deepest slumber whenever the principle of accountability is asserted by members of a community or conceded by those who rule. Democracy cannot be destroyed by a coup d'état; it will survive every legal assault upon political liberty. The true executioner of democracy has neither sword nor sceptre, but a baneful idea. Ironically, the deadly agent is an idea about freedom.

In Africa today, freedom from want is a universal goal. Millions of lives are blighted by the effects of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition, untended illness, and inadequate education. In all countries, political leaders dedicate themselves to the cause of economic and social development. Most leaders also claim to respect the principle of accountability to the people. However, the imperatives of development are far more demanding than the claims of democracy. Appalled by the human condition and waste of resources in Africa and other non-industrial regions, many intellectuals proclaim the validity of an anti-democratic idea, to which the term 'developmental dictatorship' is aptly applied.

According to A. James Gregor, the principles of developmental dictatorship were first formulated by Italian Marxists during the course of intense theoretical debates before the outbreak of World War I.[2] Eventually, they came to understand that orthodox Marxism was not relevant to the social realities of their underdeveloped country. Left to itself, they reasoned, the feeble Italian bourgeoisie, fettered by its dependence upon foreign capitalists, would not create an industrial society. Fatefully, they forsook the ideal

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of proletarian internationalism and embraced statist nationalism in order to mobilise all talents and resources for a programme of forced and rapid industrialisation. With heretical abandon, they entrusted responsibility for the direction of events to an 'audacious minority' or 'vanguard elite'.[3] Faced with a similar predicament in the 1920s, the post-capitalist regime in Moscow adopted a similar nationalist and statist strategy. Ever since, national struggles to overcome economic backwardness in many parts of the world have been intensified if not actually led by proponents of developmental dictatorship.

The hardships of developmental dictatorship are well known: liberty is suppressed; labour is regimented and exploited; freedom of movement is curtailed; personal choice is severely restricted. From his pre-revolutionary vantage point, Karl Marx advised his readers to anticipate painful transitions or 'birth-pangs' during the creation of new social orders. 'The country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.'[4] Must we, now, believe that Africa, rid of external rule but bowed down in social and economic agony, with burgeoning populations and a dearth of jobs, should or will resort *en masse* and *in extremis* to developmental dictatorship? Shall we avert our eyes from an unforeseen alternative and disregard an abundance of evidence for the thesis that Africa today is a veritable workshop of democracy?

Democracy in Africa is as varied as the ever-changing forms of government in more than fifty sovereign states. Democracy in Africa is an experimental process in a new generation of countries.[5] We should study this process not only to learn about Africa, but also to refresh our knowledge about the meaning of democracy itself. As the African philosopher, Edward Wilmot Blyden, might have said, in our time, these experiments in democracy constitute 'Africa's service to the world'.[6]

For this assessment of democracy in Africa, I have distinguished four existing types at the level of national government and one other which has been proposed. The first type is liberal democracy, wherein the powers of government are limited by law and citizens enjoy freedom of association to compete for office in free elections at regular intervals. Numerous liberal democracies were bequeathed to Africa by the former colonial rulers; all but a few of them, however, were rudely swept away by military coups, political usurpations, and constitutional changes shortly after (or within a decade of) independence.[7] A few hardier breeds of liberal democracy have been planted and nurtured by African statesmen themselves.

At the present time, one person in five on the continent of Africa lives in a truly liberal democracy with genuine freedom of expression and freedom of political association. (Among Black Africans the percentage is higher: one in four.) The citizens of liberal democracies include an estimated one hundred million Nigerians plus the citizens of five other states, namely, Botswana, the Gambia, Mauritius, Senegal, and Zimbabwe.

However, the serious qualifications to which this observation is liable underscore the experimental and highly contingent nature of liberal democracy in Africa.

During 1980–2, ventures in liberal democracy have been aborted by paternalistic military guardians in Upper Volta, (arguably) the Central African Republic, and Ghana. At present, liberal democracy lingers in Zimbabwe, but the political leaders of that country have expressed their strong preference for a democracy without party competition. Until the electoral victory of Mauritian socialists in June 1982, no national government in an independent African state had ever been transferred to an opposition by electoral means. Confirming the historic importance of this event, the Mauritian socialists have pledged to strengthen a constitutional guarantee of free elections at regular intervals. In the Gambia, liberal democracy nearly succumbed to an insurrection in July 1981. It has since been fortified by the establishment of a confederation with a protective sister-republic, Senegal. Since the retirement of President Léopold Sédar Senghor in January 1981, Senegal has emerged as a full-fledged liberal democracy. President Abdou Diouf leads a moderate socialist party which enjoys a commanding majority in the national assembly. The party is also a haven for conservative and parasitical interest groups. To rejuvenate this party for the urgent tasks of economic reconstruction, and to defuse a potentially revolutionary opposition, President Diouf has opened the door of legality to all political parties. Inevitably, the opposition parties sparkle, like the fragments of a Roman candle, in splendid sectarian isolation. Diouf's open-air treatment of illiberal dissent is a milestone for democratic socialists in Africa.

Given the large number of sovereign entities in today's Africa, and the preponderance of illiberal governments, the crucial accounting for African liberal democracy must be rendered in populous Nigeria.* Scholars have pondered and variously explained the remarkable resilience of constitutional liberty in Nigerian government. Without prejudice to the importance of other explanations, notably the influence of indigenous constitutional traditions, I am particularly impressed by the impact of federalism upon Nigerian political thought. While the number of states in Nigeria's federation has varied and remains contentious, federalism *per se* is an article of national faith, the virtually unquestioned premise of national unity. It is instructive to recall that federalism was a shared value for rival nationalists during the colonial era;[8] it was the indispensable basis for Nigerian unity under military rule, when the threat of national disintegration loomed large. At present, nineteen states accommodate a richly textured and wondrously complex tapestry of democratic political life.

Truly federal governments are necessarily liberal governments,

* The argument given here still holds, despite the two military coups taking place (in December 1983 and August 1985) since this paper was originally written.

predicated on the division and restraint of power. In Nigeria, the rights of citizens and constituent states alike are protected by a staunchly independent judiciary. In fact, Nigeria is an exceptionally legalistic society; many political issues of great moment are finally resolved in the courts; for example, the outcome of the 1979 presidential election. Nor did the courts lose their vitality under military rule. Shorn, temporarily, of their formal constitutional independence, the judges still retained their authority in the states, where, in the words of a legal scholar, they performed 'prodigious feats of courage' defending the rights of citizens.[9] Should constitutional government in Nigeria be suppressed once again,* the potential for its early revival would be preserved by federalism, the legal profession, and the determined practice of judicial independence.

Despite its apparent vigour, liberal democracy in Nigeria is debilitated by the effects of economic anarchy and social distemper. A small minority of the population is conspicuously wealthy and privileged while the vast majority seethes with discontent. Keepers of the national conscience frequently deplore the plunder and waste of Nigeria's wealth by corrupt officials in collusion with unscrupulous businessmen.[10] Scholars discern the portents of revolutionary mass action, particularly in the northern states, where class conflict is pronounced.[11] Disillusioned intellectuals renounce democracy and urge the merits of developmental dictatorship in one form or another. Both the Leninist and the corporatist, or Brazilian, versions have their advocates. In Nigeria, as in Senegal, liberal democracy is democracy with tears and many reservations.

A second type of democracy in Africa accepts the principle that rulers should be accountable to their subjects but dispenses with the political method of multi-party electoral competition. I shall adopt the term 'guided democracy' for this type of government by guardians of the public weal who insist upon political uniformity. Guided democracy is, to be sure, a form of developmental dictatorship; it is classified separately because the other forms of developmental dictatorship make little or no pretence of accountability to the people on the part of exalted persons or national saviours.

The late President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya was one of a number of African presidents who have ruled beyond the reach of accountability. When he died, in 1978, the barons of Kenyan politics and society could not imagine, nor would they have tolerated another episode of such highly personal rule. Kenya had become a *de facto* one-party state in 1969, when the sole opposition party was banned. Yet the one-party political process in that country has been highly competitive; the triumphal party itself has been described as a 'confederation of arenas' where the bosses of rural factions 'collide' and 'collude' in their 'perennial struggle' for power.[12] Survey research on the electoral process tells of a well-informed electorate which imposes the norm of accountability upon its representatives; for example, in

* Formal constitutional democracy was abolished in the coup of December 1983.

1979, 45 per cent of the incumbent members of parliament were defeated at the polls.[13] When, in 1982, Kenya became a one-party state *de jure*, her commitment to guided rather than liberal democracy was decisively confirmed.

During the course of a purely formal parliamentary debate on the establishment of a one-party state, the vice-president, Mwai Kibaki, explained that constitutional change was needed to preclude the election of persons who would favour economic experiments based upon Marxist theories. Such theories, he argued, have been disproved by the poor economic performances of communist systems.[14] This kind of reasoning, from a different ideological perspective, is used by the leaders of those authoritarian regimes which have socialist orientations to preclude the practical advocacy of capitalist ideas. In such cases, political monopolies are justified by persons who assert the moral necessity or scientific truth of an official doctrine, for example, 'humanism' in Zambia, the 'Third Universal Theory' in Libya, and Marxism–Leninism in several countries.

The touchstone of guided democracy is the existence and operation of a political mechanism which can be expected to ensure the accountability of rulers to the people. Various developmental dictatorships in Africa, both capitalist and socialist, do not pass muster as guided democracies because their leaders rule without regard to the principle of accountability. Those which do qualify as guided democracies include a variety of political forms and ideological orientations. Some, such as Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, and (arguably) Zambia, have mass-mobilising parties with open memberships. Others, including Congo People's Republic, Angola, and Mozambique, have created Leninist parties with doctrinal restrictions on membership and statutes on the required accountability of leaders. In these and other instances of one-party or, as in Libya, no-party rule, the degree of democracy varies with the intensity of passion for political accountability and its effective enforcement.

In socialist thought, the concept of democracy extends beyond the precept of accountability to the idea of social justice. From that perspective, democracy implies the effective pursuit of an egalitarian social order in addition to a government which is accountable to the people. For the principal instance of social democracy (my third type for this survey) in Africa I turn, necessarily, to Tanzania.

Ever since the famous Arusha Declaration of 1967, the Tanzanian government has endeavoured to minimise social inequality and to counteract various tendencies toward class division. In the commentaries of President Julius K. Nyerere, two aspects of the quest for social equality are strongly emphasized: first, the problem of privilege, or differentials in both personal consuming power and access to public services; second, the importance of popular participation in the decision-making processes of both political and economic organisations.[15] On the first count, impressive achievements have been recorded in reducing income differentials and

providing economic, educational, health, and other essential services to the public at large. Furthermore, the conversion of public trust into personal wealth has been checked by progressive taxation, lean salary scales for the administrators of public agencies, and the enforcement of a socialist code of conduct for leaders and officials.

On the second count, that of progress towards popular and democratic participation in governmental and economic decision making, Tanzania's record is more difficult to assess. In 1967, the sole legal party accepted an historic challenge: to build socialism in an agrarian country without resort to coercive methods of collectivisation. At the same time, every effort would be made to raise the standard of living and enhance the quality of life in peasant and working-class communities. However, the vast majority of rural dwellers did not respond favourably to the party's call for collectivisation on a voluntary basis. Finally, at the end of its patience, the government used compulsion to move and resettle millions of peasants from their dispersed homes and farms into clustered villages between 1974 and 1976. That process, known as 'villagisation', has made it possible for the government to reach the entire rural population with basic services. However, the related aim of socialist farming – the collectivisation of production – was, at first, de-emphasised and then virtually abandoned in the face of peasant resistance, a food crisis, and the critical views of potential donors, notably the World Bank, at a time of dire need for foreign aid.[16]

Suddenly, the socialist venture in Tanzania was awash in a sea of academic and intellectual doubt.[17] Could rural socialism be reconciled with an acceptable level of agricultural efficiency? Had the socialist venture been sabotaged by non- or pseudo-socialist officials and their class allies in concert with anti-socialist foreign powers? Those who seek honest answers to these hard questions and still believe in the viability of socialist policies in Tanzania have set great store by the party's avowed commitment to popular and democratic participation in economic and political life. They also view with concern the lack of evidence to show that workers and peasants participate effectively in the formulation and adoption of public policies. At the centre of power, the ruling party itself sets a decisive example for all other institutions. In his empathetic assessment of party life, Cranford Pratt finds an 'oligarchic' and 'profound bias against any opposition to the leadership'.[18]

If, as Nyerere maintains, democratic participation is a cornerstone of social equality,[19] sincere socialists cannot disregard the inevitably repressive effects of legal barriers to freedom of association. Socialists of participative conviction cannot sidestep a pluralist question: is democratic participation viable in a one-party state, where political competition is severely restricted by the virtual elimination of group rights to pursue self-determined political aims? This question, which reflects the liberal critique of guided democracy, has engaged the attention of intellectuals in several

other African countries where the search for social democracy is less resolute than it has been in Tanzania. An illuminating example is the constitutional declaration of a 'One-Party Participatory Democracy' in Zambia. It signifies experimentation with a fourth, familiar but elusive type of democracy, namely, participatory democracy.

The theory of participatory democracy is a product of the current era. It affirms the existence of a reciprocal relationship between democratic political institutions and participative social institutions, with particular emphasis upon the educative effects of democratic participation in the workplace.[20] In Zambia, the concept of participatory democracy was introduced as a national goal by President Kenneth D. Kaunda in 1968.[21] Subsequently, Kaunda construed the concept to connote democratic participation in all spheres of life, so that 'no single individual or group of individuals shall have a monopoly of political, economic, social or military power'.[22] To his mind, the public interest suffers when politicians monopolise political power, or soldiers monopolise military power, or intellectuals and technocrats monopolise knowledge, or publishers and writers monopolise the power of the pen, or workers monopolise power through strikes, or chiefs monopolise the power of tradition.[23] In the near future, he forecast, participatory democracy would be practised in all Zambian institutions, including the civil service and the army.[24]

Objectively considered, however, the record of participatory democracy in Zambia has fallen far short of Kaunda's expectations. Careful studies attest to the very low levels of popular attachment to, or involvement in, participatory institutions in rural Zambia.[25] The sole legal party has not become a truly popular institution. Membership in the party has dwindled to fewer than 5 per cent of the population despite its availability to Zambians without restriction.[26] A 'commandist' and 'paternalistic' style of administration at the local level[27] is magnified at the national level by the domineering office of the president. As William Tordoff observes, 'Ironically, no one emphasizes the virtues of participatory democracy more than the president himself, yet his own style of increasingly personalized decision-making renders its realization difficult.'[28] As in Tanzania, the party-state in Zambia abhors the very idea of political pluralism. Yet the Zambian government, unlike the Tanzanian, must contend with a formidable and resourceful labour movement; indeed the Mineworkers' Union of Zambia, 60,000 strong, has never accepted the hegemony of the party in the sphere of industrial relations. Its long-term struggle for autonomy from an imperious government lies at the very heart of conflict in Zambian politics.

Truly democratic participation is self-motivated and self-determined; it is not coerced. In Africa, participatory democracy implies a commitment to the self-motivated assertion of peasant and working-class interests in political affairs. But the Zambian leadership has tried to induce popular participation into channels which would be controlled by a monopolistic

political party. From a democratic standpoint, however, induced participation comes close to being a contradiction in terms; indeed it is a form of coercion. And it has been rejected by the Zambian workers and peasants.

In 1981, following a spate of wildcat strikes, four leaders of the labour movement, including the chairman and secretary-general of the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, and an eventually successful aspirant for the presidency of the Mineworkers' Union, were detained for nearly three months on charges of plotting against the government. Announcing this action, Kaunda accused the labour leadership of capitalist deviations.[29] In 1982, Kaunda turned a corner in his personal ideology. Much to the amazement of Kaunda-watchers, most of whom were confident of his apparently unshakeable commitment to non-doctrinaire 'humanist' socialism, he decided that Zambia's official ideology should be Marxist (or 'scientific') socialism. But this is not, after all, an arbitrary choice. Scientific socialism marks a strictly logical progression in ideology for a ruling group of socialist inclination which intends to control the working class. It also signifies the maturation of basic tendencies towards an undiluted developmental dictatorship in Zambia.[30]

As a result of Kaunda's ideological demarche, the beleaguered labour movement has acquired a powerful ally in its bid for autonomy, namely the interdenominational Christian Council of Zambia. Following his release from detention, Frederick Chiluba, chairman of the Congress of Trade Unions, is reported to have 'made a point of going to church almost every day'.[31] As in Poland, the struggle for participatory democracy in Zambia has forged an alliance between two social institutions which are second to none other in popularity, namely the labour movement and the churches. Like his Polish counterpart, Lech Wałesa, Chiluba stands for participatory democracy from without, rather than from within, the party.

In Zambia, as in Tanzania, the acid test for participatory democracy is the attitude of the national leadership towards self-assertion by the working class and the peasantry. Neither regime has passed that test; each has chosen to promote induced, rather than spontaneous, participation. It may be instructive to contrast these instances with the noteworthy practice of worker self-management in Algeria, inaugurated spontaneously by urban and rural workers at the end of the war for independence. For twenty years, this genuine expression of working-class democracy has survived the rigours of interaction with an authoritarian government. The vitality and lasting effect of this participatory institution in Algeria is attributable to its spontaneous, as opposed to induced, genesis.[32] By contrast, a memorable episode of induced participatory democracy under revolutionary conditions in Guinea-Bissau, called by Amílcar Cabral 'revolutionary democracy', appears to have faded in the post-revolutionary, one-party state.[33]

A fifth type of democracy has no legal guardian in Africa, but its adoption is often contemplated. Its name is consociational democracy, so christened by a Dutch political scientist, Arend Lijphart, and widely celebrated by

like-minded scholars. This type of democracy is prescribed by its advocates as a long- or short-term solution to the problem of cultural, that is, ethnic, racial, or religious, group conflict in deeply divided societies. In fact, it is a version of liberal democracy with the addition of special arrangements to protect the vital interests of cultural groups. In culturally plural societies, such as Switzerland, federalism and cantonal autonomy are exemplary consociational devices; the principle of proportionality for both political representation and the distribution of benefits is also important. In Nigeria, the constitutional requirement that political parties must reflect the 'federal character' of the country in order to qualify for registration is one of several consociational devices which have been designed to prevent sectional domination. Consociational mechanisms and techniques are routinely used by the governments of plural societies. According to Lijphart, however, the hallmark of specifically consociational democracy, as a distinct type, is effective and voluntary political cooperation among the elites and truly representative leaders of the main cultural groups.[34]

In South Africa, the banner of consociationalism has been unfurled by legal opponents of the ruling National Party, principally the white Progressive Federal party[35] and Inkatha, a Zulu-based mass organisation, acting through a multi-racial commission appointed by Gatsha Buthelezi, chief minister of Kwazulu, in 1980. Drawing upon the ideas of Professor Lijphart, who served as a member, the commission has proposed a consociational constitution for the Province of Natal as an example for the country as a whole. The key features of this proposal include universal adult sufferage, a legislative assembly elected by means of proportional representation in electoral districts, and an executive body chosen in accordance with consociational principles.[36] These recommendations have been rejected by the government. Meanwhile proposals for consociational democracy in South Africa have also been criticised by rigorously democratic thinkers. Heribert Adam, for one, notes that group identities and their ethnic labels in South Africa have been imposed upon subject groups by the dominant group. 'For example,' he observes, 'there are no enthusiastic Coloureds in the self-perceptions of those classified as Coloureds.'[37] Furthermore, a growing number of black liberation leaders are social revolutionaries with little or no interest in consociational compromising. Increasingly, the liberation struggle involves collective demands for 'redistributive' or social and, in the workplace, participatory democracy.[38]

In divided societies, like South Africa, where revolutionary action involves a large and increasing measure of class struggle, consociational democracy cannot fulfil its promise of stabilising social satisfaction. Yet it would be mistaken to believe that the consociational idea of self-determination for self-regarding communities is counter-revolutionary *per se*. In so far as subnational group rights command general respect, democratic movements which disregard consociational precepts do so at their own peril. In Africa, the value of consociational democracy would be more

clearly apparent in countries, such as the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, where the nature of cultural cleavage is less ambiguous than it is in the *apartheid* republic.[39] This type of democracy should not be underappreciated because of its current association with moderate reform in South Africa.

Democracy in Africa is widely approved but everywhere in doubt. Democratic dreams are the incandescent particles of current history which gleam brightly in the sunlight of liberation only to fade beneath the lengthening shadow of grim economic realities. This survey of types may help to sort some of the problems of democracy in Africa. Liberal democracy founders in a rising tide of tears and social despair. Reflecting on two recent setbacks for liberal democracy in West Africa, an acute observer offered this judgement: 'It was only the appalling economic situations in Ghana and Upper Volta, and the impotence of the respective governments faced with this situation that led to the collapse of their parliamentary systems.'[40]

Social democracy introduces a standard for the just distribution of wealth and material benefits; but its success and survival cannot be ensured by redistributive policies alone. In an age of social optimism, people will not settle for the redistribution of misery and poverty. Everything depends upon the timely creation of national wealth and wealth-producing assets by means of public and collective, rather than private, enterprise. In many African countries, however, statist economic policies, espoused in the name of socialism, have discouraged or prevented the release of creative, wealth-generating energies. In Guinea, for example, the regime outlawed all private markets in 1975; private trading was made a criminal offence. State agencies were supposed to fill the void, but they were riddled with corruption and proved to be hopelesly inefficient. Economic collapse and starvation were avoided only because the law was erratically enforced and eventually allowed to lapse.[41] In this and many other cases, statism has been mistaken for socialism.

For reasons that are, in the main, historical and contingent rather than theoretical or necessary, socialism has often been identified with statism by friends and foes alike. Increasingly that identification discredits socialism as a mode of development in the eyes of the world on the grounds that statist strategies are plainly impractical and unrealistic apart from their troubling political aspects. In the past, a few countries, notably the Soviet Union and China, have constructed socialist economies with capital extracted from the countryside and appropriated by the state for purposes of investment and essential purchases abroad. That classic strategy is plainly unsuited to conditions in the agrarian countries of Africa for several reasons, among them rural resistance to collectivisation, exponential population growth, the high cost of critical imports, and endemic problems of statist economic management. Furthermore, socialism is supposed to signify the democratisation of economic life. Coercion is contrary to the spirit of socialism.

Statism, the most general form of coercion, is the graveyard of socialism as well as democracy.

Participatory democracy is a logical response to the challenge of statism. Its appearance and reappearance in Africa should be a source of inspiration to democrats and, in particular, democratic socialists. However, the practice of participatory democracy cannot be regimented by the state without detriment to its integrity. Where participatory institutions have been created in factories and farms by self-motivated, and self-directed workers, as in the case of Algeria, they countervail the power of the one-party state. By contrast, where participative decision-making is narrowly restricted and subject to close supervision by a party-state, as in Tanzania and Zambia, participatory democracy succumbs to the assault of guided democracy and developmental dictatorship.

Shall we conclude, with Gregor, that developmental dictatorship is the wave of the future for Africa?[42] The empirical support for that viewpoint is weak. Its sole rationale – the presumed power to produce rapid economic development – is scarcely tenable. Democracy is a far more popular alternative, but democracy must take up the challenge of development where dictatorship has failed. Africa needs a developmental democracy, a democracy without tears. Developmental democracy could represent a synthesis of all that has been learned from the many experiments with simpler types. It would probably be liberal and social, participatory and consociational all at once. From guided democracy it could inherit an appreciation for the function of leadership. The core of guided democracy could even be refined and transformed into preceptoral democracy, or leadership without political power.[43] In a complex, developmental democracy, intellectual guidance would operate by means of persuasion alone; its efficacy in Africa would be ensured by that immense respect for learning and scholarship which is a characteristic quality of modern African societies.

Developmental democracy does not imply a specific formulation of democratic principles based upon distinctive core values, such as political liberty for liberal democracy, social equality for social democracy, popular participation for participatory democracy, or group rights for consociational democracy. The content of developmental democracy would vary with the views of democratic theorists. One such theorist, the Canadian, C. B. Macpherson, has introduced the term to designate a stage in the evolution of liberal democracy, marked by the emergence, in theory and practice, of equal opportunity for 'individual self-development'.[44] This advance was promoted by the political doctrines of John Stuart Mill and his early-twentieth-century successors. In our time, it is surely appropriate to broaden the meaning of developmental democracy so that it will accommodate the goals of social reconstruction in the non-industrial countries. Developmental democracy today should, I believe, be enlarged to encompass the core values of social, participatory, and consociational democracy

as well as the specifically liberal elements of limited government and individual self-development.

Broadly conceived, developmental democracy would evoke fresh and original responses to the problems of economic underdevelopment, social stagnation and political drift. Original thought is the heart of the matter. Gregor has shown, convincingly, that the essential ideas of developmental dictatorship were formulated during the first decade of this century by revolutionary syndicalists in Italy. By the ninth decade these ideas have surely run their course. There is no good economic reason for Africans today to propitiate the European gods of developmental dictatorship.

From the early stirrings of modern African nationalism to the onset and consolidation of political independence, Africa has resisted foreign intellectual domination. In all but a few countries, African governments conduct their foreign relations on the basis of a deep and abiding commitment to the principle of non-alignment in world politics.[45] African statecraft reflects a determination to formulate the challenges of international relations from a self-defined standpoint. In the social thought of twentieth-century Africa, intellectual self-reliance is a paramount theme; it spans the ideological spectrum as indicated by its prominence in the francophonic philosophy of *Négritude*, the Africanist tradition of Anton Lembede and his followers in South Africa,[46] the 'African' and democratic socialism of Nyerere, and the revolutionary socialism of Amílcar Cabral.[47] Students of social thought should recognise the quest for an intellectual synthesis and transcendence of capitalism and socialism in their classical and contemporary, or neoclassical, forms. In an essay entitled 'The emancipation of democracy', W. E. B. Du Bois assessed the contribution of black people in America to democracy thus:

> It was the black man that raised a vision of democracy in America such as neither Americans nor Europeans conceived in the eighteenth century and such as they have not even accepted in the twentieth century; and yet a conception which every clear sighted man knows is true and inevitable.[48]

Might this not be written of Africa's contribution to democracy in our time?[49]

Where shall we look for the signs of intellectual and political synthesis which would signify the emergence of a new democracy? Where have the forms of developmental democracy begun to take shape? Every national workshop bears inspection, for each, in its own way, contributes to the aggregate of democratic knowledge and practice. Consider Zimbabwe, where revolutionary socialists in power prepare to terminate a transitional period of liberal government in favour of a more restrictive, one-party political formula. Their long-term objective has been described in an official document as 'a truly socialist, egalitarian and democratic society'.[50] Zimbabwean leaders and theorists will be challenged by the fact that there are no models for this kind of social construction on the face of the earth.

In pace-setting Zambia, where wage labour constitutes a comparatively large component of the total work force (more than one-third), the struggle for trade-union autonomy is fundamental to the cause of developmental democracy. But for the democratic vitality of the labour movement, developmental dictatorship in the guise of 'scientific socialism' could not be counteracted by other popular groups in Zambia. While clergymen, businessmen, intellectuals and professional people are, in the main, opposed to the adoption of 'scientific socialism' as an official doctrine, they could not resist it effectively without the firm support of democratic labour. In this matter of ideological choice, the principal restraining force on Zambia's political leadership is neither foreign capital nor the Zambian bourgeoisie; it is the Zambian labour movement.[51]

In the Sahelian nation of Niger, a military government has proclaimed the institution of a new political order, known as 'the development society'. Founded upon the twin pillars of traditional youth organisations and village-based agricultural cooperatives, the new system of government functions through a series of elected councils, culminating in a National Development Council, which has been directed to frame an 'original' and 'authentically Nigerien' constitution.[52] Here, too, the spirit of developmental democracy is abroad.

In neighbouring Nigeria, the prospects for developmental democracy are enhanced by a federal system of government which provides a multiplicity of arenas for social and political experimentation. Federalism is also the essential foundation of Nigerian national unity. The relevance of that example to pan-African thought merits attention. Dictatorship may be the most formidable barrier to pan-African unity. Pan-African federalism would foster democracy at the expense of dictatorship in many countries. As a pan-African principle, federalism would also facilitate the exchange of democratic discoveries among African polities and thereby promote the growth of developmental democracy. Increasingly, African freedom would radiate African power.

Metaphorically speaking, most Africans today live under the dictatorship of material poverty. The poverty of dictatorship in Africa is equally apparent. It offends the renowned African tradition of community-wide participation in decision making.[53] By contrast with dictatorship, democracy is a developing idea and an increasingly sophisticated form of political organisation. The development of democracy in Africa has become a major determinant of its progress in the world.

2

Politics and vision in Africa: the interplay of domination, equality and liberty

THOMAS CALLAGHY

> [Alexis de Tocqueville] brought to modern democracy neither the enthusiasm of those who expected from it a transfiguration of the human lot nor the hostility of those who saw in it no less than the very decomposition of human society. Democracy, for him, was justified by the fact that it strove for the well-being of the greatest number; but this well-being would be without brilliance or grandeur, and it would always be attended by risks.
>
> Raymond Aron

Alexis de Tocqueville was concerned with the meaning of democracy,[1] as are many Africans and Africanists today. In this chapter I will discuss the difficulties of relating the realities of everyday politics to visions of a better society. First, I sketch out the notion of an early modern patrimonial administrative state. Such states are, with few exceptions, authoritarian in nature. Next I analyse a similar form of rule in nineteenth-century Latin America, as well as its most interesting democratic exception – Chile. I then apply the argument to Nigeria under both authoritarian and democratic rule, stressing the nature of politics, the role of the military, the tensions between liberty and equality, and the impact of what is characterised as the 'ideology of development'. In conclusion, I discuss the interplay of politics and vision and the three-way tension between domination, equality, and liberty in contemporary Africa.

I NOTE ON DEFINITION AND CAUSAL ANALYSIS

I employ a rather strict and orthodox definition of democracy to include most of the characteristics associated with 'liberal democracy' as it developed out of complex socioeconomic and political struggles in Western Europe. The characteristics are: (1) the accountability of rulers through regularised multi-party, free, and competitive elections; (2) political institutions and policies which reflect societal values as established *and* changed via formal electoral and legislative mechanisms; (3) the freedom to associate and organise politically; and (4) the rule of law. Other forms of political participation are, of course, possible. One example might be genuine intra-party elections in single-party states.

The causal explanation implicit in the argument is that structural elements (historical and cultural, as well as socioeconomic) and political elements interact, allowing for the importance of actors, their beliefs and choices, as well as other factors. The structural argument is probabilistic, not deterministic. The careful analysis of political variables helps to account for both adherence to the regional authoritarian norm and departures from it.

II THE PATRIMONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STATE IN AFRICA: THE UNDERLYING FORM OF DOMINATION

The search for internal and external sovereignty, authority, and unity remains very incomplete in most African countries.[2] For African ruling groups of all ideological and policy persuasions, the need for greater authority over their societies and territories is a primary concern. Efforts at state formation and the processes of class formation are the most salient characteristics of the contemporary African condition. Authoritarian forms of rule result not from high levels of power and legitimacy, but from the tenuousness of authority. The quest for sovereignty takes place within the context of poorly organised states with limited power resources which attempt to rule societies that are distinctly early modern internally and dependent externally. This general condition has continuously frustrated efforts to formulate grand, all-encompassing typologies of rule that productively differentiate between African states.

The modal African state is conceived here as an organisation of domination controlled with varying degrees of efficacy by a ruling group or class that competes for power, for sovereignty, with other political, economic, and social groups both internally and externally. It is only partly autonomous, as it seeks to cope with constraints and uncertainty and to manage its dependence. Rulers thus struggle for unity and power simultaneously on two fronts. To increase state power is to reinforce their own power and to further their interests. Internally, the state must concern itself with ethnic, regional, religious, linguistic, and other particularisms, as well as strongly rooted universalistic religions (Islam and Christianity), and emerging class structures. Externally, the state combats the legacies of the colonial state; strong linkages to the world capitalist system, which is increasingly dominated by transnational corporations; the pervasive influence of a wide variety of international organisations, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, as well as the competing states, blocs, and ideologies of the international state system. Yet the international system is also heterogeneous and divided: states, corporations, organisations and classes pursue their own interests. This allows African states some relative autonomy.

From this perspective, a central aspect of contemporary African reality is attempted state formation by patrimonial administrative states – the slow and uneven consolidation of central political and economic authority out of

dispersed power conditions internally and dependent conditions externally. The degree of autonomy, both internal and external, must be empirically investigated in each case and over time, not dogmatically denied or proclaimed.

A basic argument of this chapter is that most African ruling groups, civilian and military, have responded to the nature of their societies and economies by relying on a centralist and corporatist colonial tradition and a wide variety of authoritarian techniques. In so doing, they have 'recreated' centralising administrative states with organic-statist orientations very similar to the colonial ones and patrimonialised them.[3] The three major aspects of this process have been, first, the control of limited pluralism and emerging class politics in small, relatively 'modern', primarily urban sectors by depoliticisation or departicipation by means of the inclusionary corporatist structures of a single-party apparatus or the exclusionary corporatist measures of military regimes without party structures; secondly, the attempted extension and strengthening of highly authoritarian and centralising territorial administrative structures to control the uneven effects of modest levels of socioeconomic modernisation and the consequences of ethnic, regional, religious, and linguistic particularisms as they merge in complex ways with incipient class factors; and thirdly, highly personalistic forms of rulership, politics, and administration resulting in patrimonial administrative states using often very eclectic blends of legitimating doctrines.

This relatively generalised pattern of early modern authoritarian rule in Africa is similar in important ways to the early post-colonial period in much of Latin America, and is not likely to disappear quickly. Neither totalitarian nor stable democratic regimes are likely in Africa under current conditions. Variations of a common early modern authoritarian theme are more likely, 'changes within the genus authoritarian' are possible.[4] As Kasfir has stressed, there is 'nothing inevitable about departicipation'.[5] Liberal democratic ideas do have roots in the African soil, as seen most clearly in opposition rhetoric and in a limited recent trend back to more open political structures. Democratic and quasi-democratic experiments are taking place in Senegal and elsewhere, and a few countries, such as Botswana, have managed to maintain open political structures for a long time. But, as the cases of Ghana, Nigeria, and Uganda demonstrate, a harsh political and economic reality can easily defeat democratic rhetoric and sincere intentions.

The notion of early modern state is used here as an intermediate typological category to refer to regimes that are neither persisting traditional ones nor truly modern authoritarian ones. They are distinguished by traditional or semi-traditional forms of politics. Various types of particularism, as opposed to pluralist and class structures, remain of primary concern to central authorities. The central authorities themselves are patrimonial in character, structure, legitimation, and style. Most such states also have low

levels of socioeconomic modernisation, as they are primarily preindustrial or in the earliest stages of delayed and dependent development.

Early modern is a typological concept with specific characteristics, not necessarily a historical or chronological notion, much less an implicitly evolutionary one. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century absolutist states in Europe were early modern, as were most nineteenth-century Latin American states. Although many African states have superficial similarities with current authoritarian regimes in Latin America, most of the latter states can no longer be considered predominantly early modern in character. Pseudo-modern authoritarian forms of rule in Africa only partially mask the solid core of a patrimonialised colonial state structure that must contend with traditional and quasi-traditional politics, powerful forms of particularism, and emerging class consciousness.

In early modern states, a single political system simply does not exist. Central authorities do not have binding, intensive, continuous and direct jurisdiction over all persons and action taking place within a unified territory; they do not monopolise the means of administration, adjudication and extraction within their territory. In short, power is dispersed; there are coexisting and partially competing traditional or quasi-traditional political and legal systems in local areas beyond the complete control of central officials.[6] This situation is further complicated by a fluid class situation. A single national and modern political structure does not hold sway over all people in all localities in a direct and unmediated way via a fully bureaucratised administration, a unified legal system, and an effective coercive apparatus.

In the immediate post-colonial period, various groups made increasingly substantial demands on the new governments for the distribution of scarce resources. In this early period of relatively uncontrolled though limited pluralism, the existing liberal democratic structures were strained by particularistic pressure, continued high birth rates, rapid urbanisation, increased education and the expectations of rapid change generated by the ideological and policy pronouncements of the new nationalist leadership. The relatively low levels of development of most African states (compared to the rest of the Third World) revealed, as the initial resources dissipated, the negative effects of even limited pluralism and exposed the extreme weakness of the new regimes. Central authorities then tried to maintain control by authoritarian and corporatist modes of domination.

After independence, most African regimes thus moved from the exercise of restricted but nonetheless real authority – that is, legitimate power – towards distinct authoritarianism. Crises occurred in both their urban and rural sectors which were further aggravated by such uncontrollable external factors as fluctuating commodity prices and limited or unproductive foreign investment. In the process, the late colonial legacy of liberal democracy was rejected substantively, if not in rhetoric, as legal or *de facto* single-party regimes were created, often with heavy Leninist or 'mobilisation'

overtones. In fact, over time most of these regimes became relatively limited political machines or military regimes, as the army and police discovered their power. Beneath these often multiple changes in regime 'type' can be seen the three key processes identified previously that led to the creation of centralising, early modern, patrimonial administrative states.

In creating this authoritarian patrimonial administrative state, African rulers have drawn on the inherited highly statist, authoritarian, centralist, and corporatist colonial administrative tradition. As Zolberg noted: 'On the whole the government continues to function much as it had done during the colonial period, as a centralized and hierarchical system of administration.'[7] The other element of the colonial legacy – liberal democratic constitutional rule – had shallow roots not least because of colonial policy itself, and quickly passed from the scene.

In the African context, organic-statist tendencies are most clear in single-party or party-state regimes. The ideological doctrines of most African single-party regimes have been very eclectic blends of nationalism, populism, socialism, Leninism, anti-imperialism and pan-Africanism, with strong traditional, quasi-traditional and personalistic overtones. The party, or fused party-government, is seen as the expression of the unity and general will of the nation, of the people. It represents the organic moral community whose interests it interprets. Order and unity are paramount. All cleavages – particularistic, pluralistic and class – and all conflicts are seen as illegitimate. This heavily statist view has an inclusive definition of community and posits the necessity of a strong state (party-government) with relative autonomy from all groups to interpret the general will and achieve unity by controlling conflict.

In most versions of the single-party ideology, there exists a basic ambivalence towards 'traditional' social structure and values. Because representation is to be primarily functional and corporatist, societal groups are not to be abolished or completely transformed as in the Leninist organic orientation, but rather incorporated and controlled. As such, this organic-statist view assumes a middle ground between the individualistic orientation of democracy and the Leninist focus on class conflict, totalitarian control and economic transformation. Structurally, the African single-party apparatus did not, despite some use of Leninist models, prove to be a strong instrument of mobilisation and social transformation. Rather, the party-state has been authoritarian within its domain, but its domain has been relatively limited.

African militaries are certainly not the relatively professionalised, bureaucratic, and development-oriented militaries of the 'new' authoritarianism in current Latin American states. More often they resemble early Latin American *caudillismo*. African military regimes frequently attempt to organise and control their societies by using state-corporatist structures. Clearly, this does not apply to the highly despotic regimes like those of

Amin or Bokassa. On the whole, however, African military regimes are more exclusionary in character than civilian single-party regimes.[8]

Military regimes came to power in a rash of coups d'état beginning in the mid 1960s partly as a result of the weakness of civilian regimes facing societal crises and partly because of threats to their group interests. But they have 'not proved to be significantly different from civilian rule', making only a 'limited modification of existing arrangements'.[9] Like their civilian predecessors, they maintain authoritarian, patrimonial administrative states aimed at controlling ethnic and other particularisms, pluralist challenges, and emerging classes. Military regimes have not been more conducive to socioeconomic development, less corrupt, more stable or more distributively just than civilian regimes.

The economic policies of African regimes usually take an intermediary position, rejecting both the free-market operation of classical laissez-faire capitalism and the centralised, total state planning and control of command socialism. Their political economy is what Max Weber described as 'political capitalism', or what historically has been referred to as mercantilism, in which the state has an important but not all-encompassing role. They are thus neo-mercantilist. Like their European predecessors, African neo-mercantilist states do not engage, despite the rhetoric, in effective large-scale economic planning. Again, like early modern European mercantilist states, African neomercantilist states often seem to be in serious financial difficulty – even on the brink of bankruptcy. Regular sources of revenue are not adequate or are poorly organised; extensive borrowing and debt are common; corruption is rampant, scarce resources are squandered by ruling groups.

A key characteristic of the limited patrimonial-bureaucratic states of early modern European mercantilism, as of African neo-mercantilism in the 1980s, is the enunciation of elaborate and ambitious policies that are scarcely implemented. Eli Heckscher's assessment of early modern European mercantilism might well apply to contemporary Africa: 'The ability of mercantilist statesmen to achieve what was required by their programs was very limited ... Generally it may be said that mercantilism is of greater interest for what it attempted than for what it achieved. It certainly paved the way for its successors.'[10] Similarly, most African states, whether weaker or stronger versions of the neo-mercantilist states, can anticipate at best moderate rates of growth and development.

Crawford Young has stressed the 'decay', 'decline' or 'progressive "dequalification" of the state' in Africa as a result of which 'the impersonal institutions of the once-potent colonial state now lie in ruins'. According to him, this 'crisis of the state' is characterised by 'the erosion of its probity, competence, and credibility'. Corruption (a key patrimonial characteristic) 'has become a defining feature of the state'. The decline in competence of the state is measured by the decline in 'its ability to transform allocated public resources into intended policy aims' (also a key characteristic of

patrimonial administration in early modern states). He notes that this is particularly true in the rural areas and correctly points to agriculture and infrastructure.[11] In fact, there are two conceptually distinct but interrelated processes at work: the progressive patrimonialisation and functional contraction of the inherited colonial state structure, and the normal cycles of political control and extraction characteristic of early modern state formation. These processes have now been accelerated by the economic and fiscal crises of African states since the mid 1970s (in themselves key manifestations of their patrimonial character).

The authority of the African state often appears like a sort of authoritarian bragging which drowns in an often mocking passivity. As Young has noted, there 'is a prime contradiction of the contemporary state; it is at once hard and distant, soft and permeable. In its habits and operating modes, the state reflects the inertial perpetuation of its colonial past; in its command style, the domination that gave it birth persists.'[12] As in early modern Europe and nineteenth-century Latin America, the African centralising patrimonial state is a Leviathan, but a lame one.

The major patrimonial elements of this state are as follows. First, broad and increasingly centralised executive authority is personalised, most commonly around a presidential monarch or military leader who controls the state. Second, the leader's position is legitimated by complex and shifting blends of charismatic, patrimonial, and legal-rational doctrines and beliefs, in an attempt to 'routinise' power. Third, the personal ruler is supported, in varying and often uncertain ways, by personal officials and new state administrative cadres whose positions rest in large part on political loyalty to the ruler in partially integrated and partially fragmented sets of patron–client networks. Fourth, these officials control the inherited colonial administrative apparatus and party-state structure where it exists, while appropriating its offices. The state is the major avenue of upward mobility, status, power and wealth.

III THE PATRIMONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STATE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LATIN AMERICA

In many ways Africa is most comparable to the early post-colonial period in Latin America. Common factors include a centralist and organic-statist colonial legacy, patrimonial forms of government in an early modern context of political breakdown, territorial fragmentation, strong particularisms, and primary-product export economies with low levels of socioeconomic development. The Latin American experience is particularly relevant to an analysis of Africa because its post-colonial history stretches over a century and a half.

The immediate Latin American post-colonial period was strongly affected by the clash of two traditions: the authoritatian, centralist and corporatist tradition of the Spanish patrimonial colonial state and the

Catholic church; and the individualistic, liberal democratic and constitutional notions of the Enlightenment, which had become the dominant idea set in the international arena of the time. There are 'two sets of institutional pillars on which the Iberic-Latin state systems rest. Sometimes fused, sometimes parallel but largely untouching, these two institutional foundations continue to exist side by side'.[13] A similar situation exists in much of Africa today.

The dominant tradition, however, was that of the Spanish patrimonial colonial state. Clearly organic-statist in orientation, this Spanish colonial state was in many respects the European absolutist state exported directly to the New World. The focus and apex of the colonial state was the Spanish monarch, who was very concerned with preventing the rise of autonomous political power in the colonies and used early modern forms of prefectoral administration to forestall it. Authority rested on a mixture of tradition and the full personal power of the monarch, who made law and translated most political and adjudication issues into administrative ones.[14]

By the time the colonial state was transferred to Africa, it had lost its patrimonial monarchical apex and was more fully bureaucratised; nonetheless it was still organic-statist, patrimonial and authoritarian in crucial aspects. African rulers adopted and patrimonialised a similar centralist and authoritarian tradition. They also operated within an international tradition which stressed populist, revolutionary and socialist ideas in addition to liberal democratic ones. The impact of this second tradition is reflected primarily in the pseudo-democratic, populist and revolutionary elements of single-party or military regimes and in their eclectic legitimating doctrines.

Although the collapse of the colonial regime in Spanish America dissolved the remaining legitimacy from the patrimonial royal apparatus of domination, it was difficult to establish a new form of authority capable of generating widespread support. Latin America had produced more anticolonialism than true nationalism. Every nineteenth-century Latin American country except Chile and Brazil moved relatively quickly from constitutional republicanism toward some form of *caudillismo*. The region underwent no major socioeconomic or political transformation during the early post-colonial phase. The same holds for Africa.[15]

The collapse of imperial authority activated latent particularistic tendencies – regional, cultural, racial, caste, and class – that had been held in check by the structure of colonial domination. The new and arbitrarily defined republics quickly fractured along a myriad of internal lines of division and conflict. Struggles for power, prestige, and control of the patrimonial colonial state structure broke out. Upon independence, the new creole political elites grafted 'their stock of half absorbed ideas from the arsenals of Anglo-French "enlightened" thought'[16] on to the inherited colonial patrimonial state. In the process, they duly established constitutional party systems legitimised by the dominant ideology of liberal constitutional democracy, which they had partially but shrewdly adapted to

local conditions. Without nationally well-developed socioeconomic interest groups to sustain such political structures, these states ricocheted between periods of near total breakdown and personalistic despotism.

From this chaotic vacuum emerged the *caudillo*, who seized power and then helped to recreate the structure of the Spanish patrimonial state 'with only those minimum concessions to Anglo-French constitutionalism that were necessary for a nineteenth-century republic which had just rejected monarchical rule'.[17] Strong leadership using an eclectic blend of traditional, nationalistic and constitutional legitimating ideas was employed to re-establish order and stability. This process 'represents less a breakdown of democracy into authoritarianism than a breakout from a grafted liberal democratic structure of an underlying mode of political organization'.[18]

In its historical Latin American context, the *caudillo* was a self-proclaimed leader of personal magnetism, most frequently a military officer, who commanded a non-professional, often irregular army seeking to create basic order and unity in a country in which central authority had collapsed. In his effort to contain centrifugal tendencies, the *caudillo* commonly sought support from an 'oligarchy' of landed and commercial elites whose power was based on the development of primary-product export growth within the context of a largely agrarian society penetrated only to a limited degree by capitalist relations and not possessing a unified national market.[19]

This highly personalised and quasi-military form of government was underpinned by extensive and complex patron–client relationships, which constituted the main form of societal articulation and the primary linkage between state and society. By promoting highly particularistic orientations, these patron–client relationships vitiated horizontal mobilisation along lines of caste or class. The large bulk of the population remained inert politically except for occasional outbursts of protest. Although the authoritarian state tried to project an image of strength, its capacity for systematic control was distinctly limited. At the apex of the partially interlocking sets of patron–client ties was the *caudillo*, the 'patron of patrons', and society was conceived of as a set of parts that related 'through a patrimonial and symbolic center rather than directly to one another'[20] – that is, an early modern organic-statist view.

Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, changes in social structure took place slowly and unevenly, driven by internal and external factors. Such changes in the structure of post-colonial African societies are much harder to see because of the relatively short period of time since independence. As Latin American countries developed and their societies became more complex, new 'power contenders' were more or less continuously added on – creole elites, emerging liberals, traders, merchants, professionals, and eventually workers and peasants. The prime condition for the 'absorption of these new forces into the prevailing sociopolitical system' was that 'they must demonstrate a strength sufficient

that they have to be taken seriously as a power contender'.[21] Usually this meant the ability to organise and to apply influence and pressure effectively over time.

All of these changes took place within the context of a corporatist framework, occasionally punctuated by democratic and quasi-democratic interludes. There was considerable regime instability and often violence. Ruling was a particularly precarious and difficult business. As Howard Wiarda has argued, there were numerous palace coups, *pronunciamentos*, barracks revolts, strikes and protest marches, but there were few true revolutions.[22]

During this period, in addition to the regular 'non-realigning' coups and changes which sought to 'substitute one civil-military faction for another, thus leaving the essentials of the political order intact and public policy little affected', there were occasional 'critical realignments' which brought about more important shifts.[23] These were often coups, but they could also include assassinations, elections, quasi-elections, forced resignations, armed revolts, strikes, demonstrations, kidnappings, and so on. These 'critical realignments' were often the result of peaks of mass mobilisation, periods of deep popular grievance and polarisation, major world economic crises, declining export prices, and the incorporation of new power contenders (reflecting new class and/or vertical stratification). Old power groups and political structures were rarely eliminated, just added on to.

As the social base became more complex over time, traditional political patterns began to change, usually slowly and incrementally. Until the late 1840s patriarchial, patrimonialist society and *caudillismo* predominated, but new issues did arise and elections, where they existed, were indirect. After a world economic crisis and the European revolutions of 1848, there was a period that reached into the 1880s of increased national consolidation, economic growth, and infrastructure development. As the import–export economy began to expand, competition increased between 'liberals' and 'conservatives'; the upper bourgeoisie and small middle-class groups pressed for inclusion.[24] Foreign capital was a catalyst for investment and production. Yet regime instability remained the rule. The early modern *caudillo* regimes were inherently unstable, and it became increasingly difficult to institutionalise them.

From the 1880s until the 1930s 'frock-coated bourgeois' or 'order-and-progress' *caudillos*[25] tended to replace the earlier, more traditionally oriented soldier *caudillos* in much of Latin America. It was the heyday of oligarchical rule. Economic growth and development increased; trade, agriculture, infrastructure and mining expanded. The presence of foreign capital increased greatly, and the development of an urban middle class, strongly professional and bureaucratic, was largely dependent upon the expanding state.

Statist, elitist, reformist, and corporatist populism emerged in the 1930s and 1940s in response to a slackening of primary-product export-led

development due to the global crisis of international capitalism. In this situation, certain middle-class groups sought to create multi-class coalitions to overthrow the old order. They mobilised the growing popular sector in corporatist structures while simultaneously expanding social welfare programmes and launching real industrialisation of the import-substitution variety. There were both authoritarian and democratic populist regimes.[26]

The colonial state imposed the administrative structure of an authoritarian state on Africa. African rulers subsequently patrimonialised it. The Europeans brought a more fully developed and modern administrative structure to Africa, a structure which was the end result of European developments. As a result, it was more fully organised, systematised and formalised than the structures which were exported by the Spanish monarchy to Latin America. The colonial state of Latin America was exported from Europe mid-stream, so to speak, and as a result it was much more a patrimonial state than the colonial apparatus imposed in Africa. The patrimonialisation of this apparatus by the Africans, however, has reduced the effectiveness of the state, making it more early modern in character. For example, the existence of more state 'services' in Africa than in colonial Latin America is one legacy of the later colonial state. But there has been a very real functional, if not formal, contraction, not to say atrophy of these services. Many of them barely operate at all. In addition, the functioning of these additional services is more oriented towards control and extraction than towards mass welfare.

One result of the socioeconomic and political changes was that in Latin America by the end of the nineteenth century state structures became a sort of 'living museum' or 'hodge-podge mix of both the historic organicist concepts and the newer liberal-democratic ones',[27] as reflected in the sequence of republican constitutions. By the late 1950s, the twenty Latin American republics had written a total of 186 constitutions. One scholar points to a resulting anomaly: 'on the one hand apparent devotion to constitutionalism as a cure for national problems, and on the other, lack of respect for constitutional mandates. Nowhere are constitutions more elaborate and less observed.'[28] Thus, 'by 1890 or roughly seven decades after independence, the ex-Iberian colonies had everywhere created republican structures of government which were by no means democratising, much less democratic'.[29] Pseudo- and quasi-democratic structures abounded.

Similar 'democratic' characteristics are common to many African single-party and military regimes. By my definition, neither these nineteenth-century Latin American regimes nor most contemporary African ones are democratic, but rather are variations on a common early modern authoritarian theme. The experience of Latin America suggests that there is likely to be in Africa considerable regime instability, most of it of an authoritarian nature. Such cycles of political change occur within the context of the African early modern patrimonial administrative state. Over time, socioeconomic change will take place slowly, incrementally and unevenly,

altering the contextual variables which influence politics. Given the Latin American experience and the inhibiting factors in Africa discussed in the first section of this chapter, it would be unwise to predict a widespread flowering of democratic regimes in contemporary Africa. The authoritarian patrimonial administrative state is the norm in Africa, and it is likely to remain so. Pseudo- and quasi-democratic forms of politics will, however, continue to coexist with the basically authoritarian nature of politics, as they have since independence. The democratic colonial legacy will also linger on, occasionally leading to renewed attempts at genuine democracy, but, as in nineteenth-century Latin America, it is not likely to be the dominant current. Several genuine and relatively long-term democracies did, however, exist in nineteenth-century Latin America, and it is analytically profitable to examine them. I present the case of Chile.

Democracy as I have defined it existed in nineteenth-century Chile, Costa Rica, and Colombia under the same early modern conditions and within the same historical tradition prevalent in the rest of the region. Early in the century Chile managed to evolve representative institutions quite similar to those developing in Europe at the same time. As Arturo Valenzuela points out, 'For 140 years, from 1830 until 1970, all Chilean presidents were elected to office and were succeeded by their constitutionally designated successors, with exceptions in 1891, 1924, and 1931, when constitutional continuity was disrupted by short-lived political crises.'[30] Clearly the president was the major figure in Chilean politics for a good part of the century; he was genuinely elected and for a fixed term. Parliamentary accountability also developed gradually. During this entire period, an elected legislative chamber was politically important and powerful. These were fragile institutions, of course, which could have disintegrated and were, in fact, threatened at crucial junctures. Chile was still very much an early modern patrimonial administrative state, but a democratic one.

A number of factors facilitated the consolidation of these fragile democratic institutions and the development of a viable democratic political culture. Of central importance was the president, General Manuel Bulnes, a war hero, who rejected the role of *caudillo*. He helped to establish democratic procedures and institutions, including the acceptance of a role for the legislature and the use of cabinet government. Above all, he set the pattern of stepping down to an elected successor, in his case, a civil servant. The war which Chile fought with Peru and Bolivia brought a temporary sense of unity among the elite and pride in a fledgling national identity. Probably most important, however, was the establishment of sharp governmental control over the military, converted into a national guard. Lastly, in the early years the government did not go directly against the interests of the dominant economic groups, though it encouraged the growth of the export sector by developing the infrastructure and maintaining good external economic and political relations.

As Valenzuela points out, these factors helped the democratic institu-

tions to overcome some important challenges. Above all, they helped bring about a viable democratic political culture early on. The major political actors pursued their interests within the rules of the game. The conservative forces felt able to uphold traditional society within the democratic system and they, along with radical liberals, pushed through some crucial democratic reforms. This facilitated the development of the legislature, the growth of political parties, and the expansion of the electoral system. In many ways the process was similar to the development of democracy in Europe. Valenzuela stresses that 'the Conservatives did not become democrats because of an ideological conversion. They correctly perceived that representative institutions were in their best interests and were the only alternative they had once the military solution was precluded.'[31]

This 'deviant' case undermines determinist explanations of authoritarian rule, be they historical, cultural or economic. As Valenzuela notes:

> these approaches neglect the fact that the development of democratic institutions is highly problematic and contingent ... the study of democracy must take into account certain fortuitous events as well as the role of political leadership and of conscious choice on the part of elites.[32]

The Chilean case points to the importance of political explanations, of political logic. It stresses the relative, rather than determining, importance of contextual factors.[33]

Democracy is a fragile creature, dependent on the slow consolidation of legitimacy and the development of a political culture which supports the rules of the game. It can easily be killed, not just by historical tradition or economic factors, but by the conscious action of political agents. Some analysts quite rightly stress that the organic-statist, patrimonial, and corporatist authoritarian nature of politics in Latin America is not simply an historical legacy, but rather a ready-to-hand and rational response by elites to political crises.[34] I would argue that the same holds for contemporary Africa. Clearly, only a few patrimonial administrative states are likely to be democratic.

IV DEMOCRACY IN AN AFRICAN PATRIMONIAL ADMINISTRATIVE STATE: THE CASE OF NIGERIA

Africa has also had cases of democracy which 'deviated' from the regional authoritarian norm. I argue here that the failure to establish a viable and legitimate democratic regime in Nigeria is the result of reinforcing contextual and political factors. By African standards, Nigeria has a relatively deeply rooted democratic legacy; but it also has an authoritarian one.[35] Unlike nineteenth-century Chile, however, positive political factors favouring the development of a democratic order in Nigeria have been insufficient to overcome the contextual constraints.

Nigeria is clearly a patrimonial administrative state. Richard Joseph

characterises it as an overdeveloped, ambivalent or 'soft' state which was 'inherited from the colonial era' and then expanded. He points to an underlying deep crisis in Nigerian life 'which can be temporarily alleviated, but not resolved' by policy initiatives, or, I would argue, probably even by changes in regime type. Central to this crisis is a distinct pattern of competition for access to public resources which he calls 'prebendal politics'. As a result of this pattern, Nigeria is entangled in a 'debilitating cycle of political renewal and decay'.[36]

Joseph stresses the continuity from the colonial period, particularly statist economic policies. The state, under both democratic and military regimes, has been fragile and vulnerable to the ability of actors 'to block, alter, or circumvent state policies to suit their own needs'. In short, state economic effectiveness and administrative performance have been and still are limited. Nigeria is on the capitalist periphery; it has a weak and not very productive class of 'drone capitalists'.[37] Prebendal politics is central to the country's political and societal matrix. Joseph stresses that the

> 'softness', 'corruption', and 'indiscipline' which characterise the daily conduct of public affairs is fostered by the emergence of the state as the central focus or vortex of the struggle for advancement at all levels and from all sections of Nigerian society. Procedural rules governing the conduct of state business become fig leaves behind which a range of informal mechanisms and strategies are employed to achieve access to the public till or to procure valuable licences to import, build, borrow, or exchange.[38]

Nigeria has a dominant class, but class-based politics is not a major factor because 'political society is an intricate and expanding network of patron–client ties, which serve to link communities in a pyramidal manner'.[39] State offices are used for the personal benefit of both patrons and clients.

Clearly, Nigerian reality comes close to my notion of the early modern patrimonial administrative state. In my frame of reference, a key result of the conversion of state offices into prebends is the patrimonialisation of the inherited and expanded colonial state structure, as has occurred in Nigeria. This pattern applies to both the period of military rule and, in a more debilitating manner, to civilian democratic regimes. It is aggravated by the economic context: 'increasing statism in the context of peripheral capitalism, complicated by mono-mineral export, only fosters prebendalisation of state-power'.[40]

This patrimonial administrative state has consisted alternatively of genuine democracy and of military regimes – not a common phenomenon in post-colonial Africa. In 1979, after thirteen years of military rule much hope was placed on the return to democracy. Nigeria's Second Republic was the product 'of a complicated and carefully staged process of transition from military to civilian rule, perhaps the most elaborate in modern political history'.[41] Despite a number of important problems, the military adhered to its announced timetable. Structural changes were made in an effort to mitigate the effects of ethno-regional politics. These changes included a

shift to a US-style presidential system, and regulations which eventually limited the number of parties to five and forced them to broaden their bases. Despite charges of electoral fraud and rigging, as well as late calls for the military to step in, the Second Republic commenced as planned on 1 October 1979. The elections had given each of the parties some hold on power in the complex federal system, and it had produced a viable competitive party system. One experienced commentator expressed the hope that 'it may be a sign that people know no panaceas exist, and that the public may temper its usual impatience'.[42] It was not to be.

Although the continuities with the First Republic were clear, the parties were much more regionally diversified under the new democratic regime. They still, however, clearly reflected the intense patrimonialisation of politics in this early modern state. Witness Joseph's description of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), the dominant party:

> What united the party was a willingness to collaborate under the leadership of established northern politicians, along with the guarantee that power would not only be shared as widely as possible but also that the leading positions in the party would be circulated among individuals from the main regions of the country.[43]

Larry Diamond, on the other hand, argues that the parties reflected class and ideological divisions and maintains that, as the 1983 elections approached, two broad, competing alliances were emerging – the 'conservatives' and the 'progressives'. This, then, could have been seen as the beginning of a division similar in structure and consequence to that between the liberals and conservatives in nineteenth-century Latin America.[44] The dominance of the NPN in the 1983 elections and the subsequent coup d'état precluded development of this division *within* a democratic system. As in Latin America, intense, fanatical passions and violence have accompanied the electoral struggles: 'politics becomes warfare, a matter of life and death'.[45]

The new democratic regime was characterised by ineffectiveness and increased corruption. State control of the economy revealed the neo-mercantilist characteristics discussed in the first section of this chapter. As oil revenues declined, the Shagari government had great difficulty formulating and even more implementing urgently needed austerity policies. These economic and administrative problems were made distinctly worse by massive corruption which had devastating consequences for the fledgling democratic regime. Democratic politics aggravated and made obvious this aspect of the patrimonial administrative state. The elite–mass gap widened as severe austerity measures were announced. Administrative inefficiency and mismanagement reached staggering levels:

> With the return to competitive party politics after 1978, these constraints to the full flowering of prebendal politics were removed. The winning of elections calls for heavy investment by aspirant candidates and their parties in

> Nigeria, and the recouping of such investments cannot be done without the simultaneous distribution of public resources to sectional constituencies.[46]

Constitutional arrangements to cope with these problems were contradictory. On the one hand, there were strict regulations making public officials accountable. On the other, there was a provision that all state appointments and financial allocations had to reflect the federal character of the country. The result was a serious legitimacy crisis.

Diamond maintains that this process has increased the class character of Nigerian politics. I believe Joseph is much closer to the mark when he notes that 'those who achieve public positions will find themselves violently assailed for their abuse of office *while being simultaneously prevailed upon* to procure some benefits for their artificially expanded networks of sectional supporters'.[47] This key aspect of the patrimonial administrative state makes democracy ever more difficult to maintain. President Shagari himself has stressed that 'when society condones corruption there is little a government can do. In Nigeria we do not yet detest it enough.'[48]

Such characteristics foster a political culture that is destructive of democratic norms, or at least not supportive of them. Democratic politics in Nigeria is seen as a zero-sum game. Because the stakes are so high, an extraordinary premium is placed on acquiring and keeping political power, and, as a result, irregular measures come to be seen as rational acts:

> To a striking degree, Nigerian politicians are agreed that the chief danger to democracy is intolerance of opposition, whatever its basis – the unwillingness to give opposing interests a fair hearing and opposing parties a fair chance, the refusal to play by the rules of the game, the reluctance to risk defeat.[49]

There is a crucial difference between the use of democratic rhetoric as opposition to an authoritarian regime and an operative political culture supportive of the functioning of a democracy. Out of self-interest many actors may support demands for democracy precisely because access to the state and to its resources will then become easier. Once democracy has been achieved, however, their behaviour is not conducive to its consolidation. The characteristics of the patrimonial administrative state reassert themselves. In sum, a fragile democratic structure is erected on a patrimonial administrative state, the central features of which are revealed. This in turn raises concerns about equity and development, and encourages the military to destroy democracy in order to save it.

Nigeria's military officers have long considered themselves as guardians of the nation. On 31 December 1983, some of them again exercised their self-proclaimed role and ended Nigeria's second attempt to consolidate democracy. In the radio broadcast that announced the coup, Brigadier Sani Abacha declared that the military was rescuing Nigeria from 'the grave economic predicament and uncertainty that an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the past four years . . . Our leaders revel in squander-mania. Corruption and indiscipline continue to prolifer-

ate in complete disregard of our sad economic realities.'[50] Major General Muhammed Buhari, the new ruler of Nigeria, also charged that the 1983 elections had been rigged and that Nigeria 'had been enslaved by a handful of people who had been sharing the wealth among themselves and who were determined to stay in office at all costs'.[51]

Clearly, the economy was not in good condition, and corruption was rampant. A fair amount of evidence exists that there was 'grave and massive electoral fraud':[52] intimidation of voters, intentional falsification of results, inflated voting lists, extra voting cards and polling stations, general administrative ineffectiveness, voting by ineligible people, multiple voting, and so on. It seems to me, however, that the issue is not one of malfeasance, which is as old as elections and democracy, but rather the response to it. By overthrowing the regime, the military prevented slow change within the system that does not destroy the fragile roots of a democratic political culture, thereby continuing a tradition of non-democratic regime alternation. It is not as if the 1983 elections eliminated the principal opposition parties; they retained an important place in national politics.

The legitimacy of the Shagari government had clearly been eroded among many sections of the population as the 1983 elections approached; student demonstrators had even called for the military to overthrow the government.[53] The coup was, by all accounts, quite popular among a wide cross-section of the population – students, the intelligentsia, dissident politicians (that is, those who had lost), business people, and large numbers of ordinary Nigerians. There was clearly a revulsion against the massive corruption and greed, and there was a desire for better economic performance and planning.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, Alexis de Tocqueville discussed the tension between the pursuits of liberty and equality, and what he said clearly applies to Nigeria today. Speaking about the French revolution, he observed 'how the desire for reforms took precedence over the desire for freedom':[54]

> Readers ... will have noticed the steady growth amongst the people of two ruling passions, not always simultaneously or having the same objectives. One of these, the more deeply rooted and long-standing, was an intense, indomitable hatred of inequality. This inequality forced itself on their attention, they saw signs of it at every turn ... The other ruling passion, more recent and less deeply rooted, was a desire to live not only on an equal footing but also as free men ...
>
> On several occasions during the period extending from the outbreak of the Revolution up to our time we find the desire for freedom reviving, succumbing, then returning, only to die out once more and presently blaze up again. This presumably will be the lot for many years to come of a passion so undisciplined and untutored by experience; so easily discouraged, cowed and vanquished, so superficial and short-lived. Yet during this same period the passion for equality, first to entrench itself in the hearts of Frenchmen, has never given ground; for it links up with feelings basic to our very nature. For

> while the urge to freedom is forever assuming new forms, losing or gaining strength according to the march of events, our love of equality is constant and pursues the object of its desire with a zeal that is obstinate and often blind, ready to take every concession to those who give satisfaction. Hence the fact that the French nation is prepared to tolerate in a government that favors and flatters its desire for equality practices and principles that are, in fact, the tools of despotism.[55]

For Tocqueville the establishment of what we now call a democratic political culture was very difficult, but very necessary. Such a fragile creature was needed to defend liberty against the strong passions willing to use any means in the search for equality.

In much of the Third World today there exists what I call an ideology of development – a cluster of ideas and beliefs that asserts that the development of the country is the highest goal of government. Development is defined in many ways, but it usually means increasing the welfare of the majority of the population, raising the standard of living of the people, and establishing some equity. Inherent in this ideology is a belief that these goals should be achieved as fast as possible. While authoritarian rule has been a major characteristic of the African patrimonial administrative state, the emphasis on development by ruling groups has varied greatly in practice from regime to regime and country to country. This ideology has profoundly affected the changes of democratic rule in Nigeria. Because, as Linz reminds us, 'political democracy does not necessarily assure even a reasonable approximation of what we would call a democratic society, a society with considerable equality of opportunity in all spheres, including *social* equality',[56] the search for development and socioeconomic equality often poses a serious threat to political democracy.

Both sides of Tocqueville's equation are clearly present in the Nigerian context. As Diamond notes, 'Nigerians are dreamers . . . two broad goals are widely shared in Nigeria: development and democracy':

> Since independence in 1960 . . . Nigerians have dreamed about a *huge and rapid* leap forward in economic development, resulting in improved living standards. *And* they have sought to construct a system of government that would not only ensure a reasonable balance in power and resources between ethnic groups, but also provide for meaningful popular participation and responsive and accountable government.[57]

The Chileans managed to consolidate their democracy in the nineteenth century, but they did not tackle issues of socioeconomic structure or stratification at first. Can the Nigerians do both simultaneously, or must one give way to the other? Diamond writes:

> The apparent motives, popular reception, and initial posture of the military strongly suggests that this takeover was undertaken for democratic, rather than authoritarian, reasons . . . Nigeria remains in search of democracy . . . Nigeria will be searching for a political formula and a set of structural reforms that will permit the development of *a more genuinely democratic government*, one which will be responsive to the country's needs, one which will endure.[58]

In short, as I have said, democracy was destroyed in order to save it. This is a classic illustration of Tocqueville's argument about the tension between liberty and equality.

Since a crucial feature of democracy is its policy neutrality, its stress on form rather than substance, the search for development and equality tends to gain the upper hand:

> It is the basic moral ambiguity of a political system that legitimizes decisions on the basis of formal, procedural, legal correctness without distinction of content . . . , with no reference to substantive justice and no link to a system of ultimate values. In societies suffering from serious injustices and deep cultural cleavages, it is difficult to accord intellectual justification to a system in which the will of the electorate, the technicalities of the law-making process . . . can serve to maintain a social order that arouses moral indignation . . .[59]

The search for democracy in Nigeria, that is, the search for some 'real', 'balanced', 'genuine' democracy ensuring equality and development, will continue. But since this mythical democracy is not likely to be found, there will be no democracy at all. The banalities and rawness of day-to-day democratic politics in early modern patrimonial administrative states collide head-on with the impatience of the ideology of development, and democracy disappears. Each time this happens, it becomes less and less likely that democracy will ever be consolidated. Both Hirschman and Linz have noted 'how a structural view of progress tends toward a pessimism that discounts any relative process and rejects anything but an integrated, comprehensive, and simultaneous solution of all basic problems'.[60]

Diamond states flatly that 'the overthrow of the Second Republic was caused by its politicians', not by ambitious soldiers, and that, after the failure of the 1983 elections, the only alternative was the military.[61] But civilians do not stage military coups. To blame the civilians is to evade responsibility; the military staged the coup, ending a viable attempt at democracy. Certainly the civilians are far from blameless. The military, supported by large sections of Nigerian society, focused its attention on the search for equality and development, thereby raising the issue of accountability. Like the regime it overthrew, however, the military must cope with the realities and logic of the Nigerian patrimonial administrative state as delineated above. It is not at all clear that the military regime can be less corrupt and more effective than its civilian predecessor. The characteristics of the patrimonial administrative state make it very difficult to pursue equality, development and democracy at the same time. As the case of Chile shows, however, political action that prevents the use of the military option might allow some of the substantive issues to be fought out slowly within a democratic system. Chile remained a patrimonial administrative state, as would a democratic Nigeria – changes are very slow. Such a path does not have the pristine elegance of the ideology of development, but it can lead to relatively stable democracies.

Diamond notes that the search for genuine democracy will continue in

Nigeria, and he draws three conclusions that are especially important for the future of democracy'.[62] The first is that corruption must be effectively dealt with by the government. Given the nature of the patrimonial administrative state, this will be very difficult for *any* regime, democratic or authoritarian. If Nigerians wait to deal with corruption first, they may never get democracy. Secondly, 'since Nigeria is not yet at a point in its development when politicians can be expected or trusted to regulate themselves', Diamond proposes a form of dyarchy in which the military would be the ultimate guarantor of national welfare; 'Nigeria requires institutionalization of a role for the military as a fourth branch of government'.[63] If the experience of Latin American and other cases are examined carefully, this suggestion loses a good deal of its attractiveness. Institutionalising such a role for the military would simply reinforce the cycle of coups and seriously weaken the consolidation of democracy. Once that cycle is firmly established, it is very hard to break. The fortuitous fact for Chile was that the counter-principle was established early. General Buhari has emphasised that 'we are an offshoot of the last military government'.[64] The cycle may already have been established in Nigeria.

The third issue for Diamond is 'the lengthening shadow of the state over every other realm of society'.[65] With Nigeria's low level of development, the role of the state is, unsurprisingly, central to society. Diamond's call to dismantle much of the state apparatus is naive given the socio-political logic of the patrimonial administrative state, the weakness of the local bourgeoisie, and the ideology of development. Here, too, the experience of Latin America has implications for Nigeria.

While I believe these remarks by Diamond to be off the mark, his assessment before the coup is valid:

> Democracy requires compromise and patience. This is its great strength and also its great weakness. It may be that the social cleavage – the competing visions of distribution and development – now dividing 'progressives' and 'conservatives' in the Second Republic is too deep and too diffuse to be contained within the democratic framework ... Should the democratic alternative once again fail in Nigeria, a unique historical opportunity for peaceful and constitutional reform may well be lost.[66]

The search for equality in its twentieth-century garb, the ideology of development, has cut short a chance to work on Nigeria's problems within the framework of a democracy. As Joseph has neatly put it, 'What we shall never know is whether the constitutional system would have gradually developed the necessary self-regulating mechanisms or whether, as the new military regime contends, the country was headed for certain political and economic collapse.'[67]

The outrage and frustration of Nigeria's military leaders and of much of Nigeria is quite understandable. Nevertheless, the consequences for future democracy are very serious and long lasting. I am not saying that the ideology of development is wrong or pernicious; I am merely pointing out

one of its consequences for democracy, one that Tocqueville saw over a century ago. Whether it is the most appropriate form of rule for Africa's needs is not the issue before us here. The experience of Nigeria's Second Republic and the coup that ended it indicate that it was wrong to hope 'that people know no panaceas exist, and that the public may temper its usual impatience'.[68] Expectations for equality and development are probably too high to give democracy much of a chance. In analysing the prospects for democratic rule in Africa, it is incumbent to combine historical and socioeconomic causal explanations with political ones. One can try to delineate the possible logic of political action, but it is ultimately unpredictable as John Lonsdale writes:

> How dominant classes behave does actually matter. The autonomist model of states without nations accorded them too much freedom, the underdevelopment model of neo-colonies not enough; it was too functional to allow any room for the exercise of political responsibility. To situate Africa's present rulers in their specific histories is to explain the limits on what it is possible and rational for them as one class to do in relation to others, but it does not ultimately explain what they do nor, more importantly, how they set about doing it; if it did, then it would be impossible to account for the moral uncertainties of power through which its forms are continually in flux.[69]

As the case of Chile suggests, it is unlikely though not impossible to have a long-lasting democracy in an early modern patrimonial administrative state. The combination of political skill and fortuitous circumstances required is rare.[70]

CONCLUSION

The tensions between liberty and equality, democracy and development in Nigeria have left the underlying structure of domination – the early modern patrimonial administrative state – untouched, as it has been in most of the rest of Africa. Over twenty years of independence have shown that there are no panaceas, authoritarian or democratic, conservative or revolutionary, but, at the same time, that it does matter what rulers do and how they do it. The experience of nineteenth-century Latin America indicates that the nature of the patrimonial administrative state changes only very slowly and incrementally. Structural and contextual constraints to action are real and set serious limits to political action, but they do not unilaterally determine it. Expectations of swift and dramatic change are likely to be dashed. When they are, a deeply rooted cynicism becomes a very real danger. As the history of Latin America indicates, however, things do change as the structural and contextual factors are slowly altered by accumulated human action.

The nature and rigours of day-to-day politics in Africa make it unlikely that either democratic or developmental visions will bear much fruit for now, but the search for one or both of them accounts for much of the

political struggle on the continent. It is possible that a few African states may occasionally develop participatory forms of rule, variations on a single-party or corporatist military theme – conservative, developmental or revolutionary. These forms will not, however, consitute democracy as I have defined it, primarily because they do not allow for a review of societal goals and policies (whatever they are). Nor do they allow the regularised selection of rulers by open and competitive elections. As the experience of nineteenth-century Latin America suggests, it is likely that there will be considerable regime instability and cycles of political change in Africa, most of it of an authoritarian nature.

The range of probable forms of rule in Africa today extends from cases of clear-cut exploitation and extraction, such as Zaire, to undemocratic, but partially participatory, quests for development and equality, such as Tanzania. When the political conditions are appropriate, there may also be occasional attempts at democracy, since the democratic legacy does remain strong in a few states. There is little likelihood, however, of what Sklar calls 'developmental democracy'.[71] The harsh realities of African politics over twenty years make Sklar's vision of 'a democracy without tears' appear strikingly utopian. It is important to separate the often passionate normative desires of the observer or political actor from a clear analytic search for the probable and possible forms of political rule in Africa today. What 'Africa needs' may well not be what it is likely to get. Modest expectations about democracy are required. Like Tocqueville, it is important to bring to democracy neither the enthusiasm of those who expect from it a transfiguration of the human lot nor the hostility of those who see in it no less than the very decomposition of human society. Democracy is risky after all and often lacks brilliance and grandeur.

Thus far in Africa the patrimonial administrative state remains basically untouched by the pursuit of various political visions, especially those of democracy and of development. Thus, this is not just a two-way tension between liberty and equality, but a three-way one between liberty, equality, and domination. As in nineteenth-century Latin America, domination appears to be winning in Africa most of the time. The day-to-day politics of the African patrimonial administrative state makes the effective translation of political vision into reality very difficult, but ultimately not impossible. Certainly both politics and vision will remain in Africa.

3

Democracy and Ethnocentrism

MARTIN STANILAND

Sklar's paper in this volume will inevitably provoke the criticism that his conception of democracy is ethnocentric. For more than a decade, indeed, Third World scholars have been lambasting their counterparts in Western Europe and North America for 'ethnocentrism' and 'cultural imperialism', and usually the charge has been accepted quite meekly. I shall argue, however, that not only is the criticism rather stale, but it has in fact always been question-begging and shallow. Further, if we look closely at the premises implicit in the criticism, they often reveal a double standard: a denunciation of the intellectual nationalism of others and an exaltation of intellectual nationalism (indeed, protectionism) nearer to home, in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Lastly, the criticism itself, set against the variety of Western writings on (in this case) Africa, is indiscriminate, in specifics unfair and inaccurate, and in methodology confused.

This argument does not mean that any critique of ethnocentrism is groundless or that the term itself is without meaning. Nor does it imply that the indignation of Third World scholars is always unjustified or exaggerated. Indeed, it is only necessary to read quickly through Sklar's chapter to experience again the irritants which have so inflamed African nationalists. The very clarity and self-confidence of the paper illuminate the features of American liberal evangelism that both attract and repel. On the one hand, they highlight its robustly egalitarian approach to the world and its expansive, energetic involvement in international affairs. On the other hand, these features make for a no doubt unintended sense of indifference to the cultural and intellectual claims of nationalism, as well as a sense of telling others what is good for them.

The virtues breed the vices. American liberalism – because of America's own history – is quick to applaud self-determination as an act of liberation by nations (or individuals). Yet it is often perplexed, even annoyed by self-determination pursued as a search for identity. It understands readily the wish to be free, but only with great difficulty the urge to be different. Independence is a right, the right to be free; liberal democracy is the

This essay is dedicated to the memory of Bernard Schaffer, teacher, colleague and friend.

corollary of independence, and the only dependable insurance for freedom. Who could wish to separate them? Why would anyone want to try?

The innocence and simplicity of this view make it an easy target, and the amiable insensitivity of those taking it has continually stirred up nationalists to attack it. Perhaps, however, the target is too easy and too large, for not only have the critics become rather loose in their attacks, but they have also missed inconsistencies and defects in their own positions. The shooting has become wild and inaccurate.

Before discussing the historical and conceptual problems of the critique of ethnocentrism, I want to set out my own view of the context in which the critique has occurred. The context is an increasingly complicated one in which interdependence between states is offset by the continuing fact of political sovereignty and cultural diversity. Those who try to write about, and prescribe for, politics in their own countries and in foreign countries have to strike a balance between global processes and local pressures and peculiarities.

It is undeniable that, for example, political life in Senegal has features in common with politics in all other societies and indeed is affected by external forces. Hence the temptation to see it as an instance of 'universal' processes, and to apply 'universal' standards to it. But Senegal also has cultural distinctness in the minds of Senegalese, including Senegalese writers and social scientists. Further, Senegal exists as a legal and political entity, the authority of which can be deployed to obstruct external influences and to maintain, for better or for worse, the distinctive character of Senegalese society and the distribution of power within it.

Western and, increasingly, African scholars struggle to find a language to describe the complexities and ambiguities of situations of this kind as clearly and as systematically as possible. The Westerners – especially perhaps Americans – have tended to emphasise the global nature of processes and institutions, while the Africans have stressed the peculiarities of African processes and institutions. The fact is that the relationships involved – the material which theorists and commentators are trying to reduce to an intelligible conceptual form – are intrinsically complicated and ambiguous. All theory relating to them is necessarily oversimplified, and necessarily students fall back on ideas and experiences which are familiar. As an African proverb puts it, 'The stranger sees what he knows.' There cannot be a single right way of viewing politics in Africa, or anywhere else: what there can be, and has been, is a continual recycling of ideas and evidence, a constant readjustment of theory and experience.

My plea, then, is for a more charitable and sophisticated approach to criticising the work of others. If the assumptions I have outlined above make sense, neither a purely universal theory (such as modernisation theory) nor a purely nationalist framework (such as some African critics seem to want) is likely to suffice. Just as there are both internal and external dimensions to the processes under observation (for instance, the formula-

tion of development policy), so both internal and external perspectives are useful. Those who continue to belabour the 'ethnocentrism' of Western scholars reveal a rather patchy acquaintance with earlier work and the values inspiring it, and they also give insufficient credit to the efforts of non-African scholars to devise frameworks which incorporate both local idiosyncrasies and more general phenomena.

In the remainder of this chapter, I want to examine the earlier writing in order to assess the fairness of the standard critique aimed especially at American commentators and theorists. I also want to examine the logical problems of the critique and the adequacy of the solutions it proposes.

THE 'ETHNOCENTRIST' AND 'IMPERALIST' CRITIQUES

The conventional African critique claims, in the words of one formulation, that 'the post-colonial concern of Western scholars was with the creation of a liberal democracy [in Africa]'.[1] In general, it is argued, Western scholars have tried to foist their assumptions and values upon Africa, to the point that they have been guilty of cultural and intellectual imperialism. It is not only the leader-writers and lay preachers presuming to judge Africa who are guilty: so too are the social scientists with their allegedly 'value-free' theories. Thus Claude Ake declares that 'the bulk of Western social science on Third World countries amounts to imperialism and is worse than useless'.[2] The implication is, as Jinadu puts it, that African political scientists must achieve intellectual decolonisation, 'in order to counteract the ethnocentric and teleological bias in much of the studies of African politics conducted by non-Africans'.[3]

Note first that this critique contains both cognitive and political elements. The cognitive element is expressed in the charge of 'ethnocentrism'. Few critics actually define this term, but the sense seems to be that used in the extensive anthropological writing on the subject. In the classic definition of Graham Sumner, ethnocentrism is described as a 'view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all others are scaled and rated with reference to it'.[4] Or, to take a more recent formulation, it is 'an attitude or outlook in which values derived from one's own cultural background are applied to other cultural contexts where different values are operative'.[5] Using such definitions, we would judge that (in this case) outsiders had been guilty of ethnocentrism to the extent that they had assumed the relevance and superiority of American institutions for foreign countries.

The political element is expressed in the charge of 'imperialism'. Ake, the most strident exponent of this criticism, defines imperialism as 'the subordination of one country to another or an attempt to subordinate one country to another in order to maintain a relationship of unequal exchange'.[6] He adds that such subordination may be 'cultural' as well as economic and political. I return later to the multiple problems involved in applying this

definition to the work of social scientists. The point here is to note the essential thesis, namely, that Western social science, an ally of capitalism, has imposed itself on Africa, falsifying African reality and suppressing African attempts to portray that reality.

The ethnocentrist critique

Two kinds of objection can be made to the ethnocentrist critique – one empirical, the other logical. The empirical objection is that the record simply does not support sweeping assertions that Americans, academic or non-academic, were intent on creating liberal democracy in Africa. Some undoubtedly were, but there was an unending parade of people leaning almost dangerously far over backwards to show understanding of why liberal democracy was irrelevant or premature. This parade consisted of people with quite different values, but it included the core of American Africanists.

The anxiety of Africanists not to seem 'ethnocentric' in their judgements arose partly from a political sympathy with African nationalism, partly from a less specific, more professional source: the methodological debates of American anthropologists.[7] Anthropologists (especially those associated with Melville Herskovits) were interested in ethnocentrism both as a feature of societies they studied and as a problem in their own efforts to understand them. Since ethnocentrism was taken to be a universal aspect of human societies, it must necessarily be an obstacle to the anthropologist from one society trying to understand other societies. How could, say, an American anthropologist shake off his natural sense of the 'given-ness' and superiority of American institutions and acquire the open-mindedness essential for understanding institutions and values which seemed equally natural and superior to members of other societies?

The answer, in Herskovits' view, was a methodology of cultural relativism,

> a philosophy which, in recognizing the values set up by every society to guide its own life, lays stress on the dignity inherent in every body of custom, and on the need for tolerance of conventions though they differ from one's own.[8]

The implication, Herskovits said, was that as an anthropologist, one should (apart from seeking objectivity) never 'judge the modes of behavior one is describing, or seek to change them'.[9]

Such injunctions had implications well beyond Herskovits' seminars, for he was a dominant influence in the establishment of African studies in the United States (as was anthropology as a discipline).

Herskovits used his influence to persuade the American public and policy makers to appreciate both the achievements and the special problems of African societies. He extolled 'the political sophistication of aboriginal African governmental institutions ... the complexity of African social

structures ... and the psychological subtleties of African personal relations'.[10] More specifically, he applied his relativism in advising American politicians about the likely course of post-colonial politics in Africa. With impeccable authority as director of the major African studies programme and first president of the African Studies Association, Herskovits argued to the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations that Americans should not expect (and had no right to expect) Africans tamely to imitate Western democracy:

> The indications are that we will see states with one-party systems, based on wide popular support, having executives and weak legislative bodies, and political maneuvering within the party rather than between constituted majority and minority groupings.[11]

He appealed to Americans to distinguish between the concept of accountability, which was universal, and the more culturally specific forms of it, such as liberal democracy. It was essential, he wrote, in approaching Africa 'to strike beneath the outer forms; to recognize that power always has entailed responsibility; and to understand that the emergent political forms which may perplex those outside Africa are manifestations of older sanctions'.[12] Fellow anthropologists, such as William Bascom, took a similar view, claiming that pre-colonial African government commonly provided 'avenues for the expression of public opinion ... a choice between candidates for the throne and a means of deposing rulers who proved undesirable to the people'.[13] Further, just as they were sceptical about the wholesale importing of American institutions and ideas into African societies, so anthropologists tended to oppose efforts to involve Africa – and African studies – in the diplomatic and intellectual battles of the Cold War.[14]

Of all the outsiders involved in Africa, anthropologists have been among the most abused by African scholars. Yet on this (and other) evidence, they emerge as exceptionally intent on avoiding ethnocentrism and exceptionally determined to empathise with African cultures and with the aspirations of African nationalists.

The Afrocentrism promoted by anthropologists blends into a broader 'pro-African' mood dominant in several circles in the United States in the early 1960s. Afrocentrism (or 'Afrophilia') had a variety of ideological, pragmatic, and ethnic sources. Whether out of racial solidarity, guilt about the treatment of blacks in the United States, or concern about the role of African states in the Cold War, 'understanding the African point of view' became in the sixties a quest for many who had little else in common, least of all a point of view.

A very usual expression of Afrocentrism was the adoption of a self-denying attitude toward crusading for democracy in Africa. Here again the motives at work were startlingly different. But, whatever their reasons, many academics and non-academics across a wide political spectrum agreed that the prospects for liberal democracy in Africa were poor (at least in the

immediate future). To lament the fact was to risk being thought naive – or worse, a crude Cold Warrior. In fact, African critics later complained that Westerners, especially social scientists, had leant too far backwards to justify one-partyism and the authoritarianism that went with it.[15] In any case, the irrelevance of Western democracy quickly became the smart orthodoxy. Academic experts and liberals held that, in Hubert Humphrey's words, it was naive and arrogant to expect Africans to adopt 'our version of democracy, which happens to be the most complex and difficult system of government in history'.[16]

Since similar conclusions about the irrelevance of liberal democracy were voiced by conservatives, socialists, black spokesmen, and others outside the New York liberal establishment, it is worthwhile reviewing briefly the very different assumptions and preoccupations which lay behind this anti-evangelistic front. Among the academics we should distinguish between the more abstract democratic theorists and the 'nation-builders'. The former were the more detached of the two, arguing deductively from historically based theory concerning 'the preconditions for democracy'. Among such preconditions were high rates of urbanisation and industrialisation, widespread literacy, adequate and equitably distributed personal incomes, and a widely shared sense of national identity. Without such preconditions, democracy was unlikely to work, and Africa was, for the most part, without them. No evaluation, positive or negative, of African regimes was usually present in such analysis. But this did not make it immune to criticism, since Third World students often attacked the very choice of criteria as 'ethnocentric', projections of Western experience presented as universal laws. They pointed to cases such as that of India in which democracy seemed to be flourishing in a poor, mainly rural society with substantial inequalities and sharp communal differences.[17]

The 'nation-builders' took a more positive and *engagé* view of post-colonial Africa. Highly sympathetic towards what they believed to be the priorities of African governments and highly receptive to such governments' analysis of their own problems, nation-builders saw the mechanisms of liberal democracy as likely to impede rather than assist the achievement of national unity and economic development. The priority was 'modernisation' and it required strong, even authoritarian government. Many taking such a position clearly saw themselves as, nonetheless, liberal democrats. For them, one-partyism constituted a deferral of democracy, not its defeat. Such deferral was a necessary cost of establishing new states, and, on the evidence of American history, there was no long-term incompatibility between achievement of democracy and the goals of nationalism. Moreover, it was important to be publicly and assertively understanding of political developments in African states as a sign of respect for African independence.

A typical, and impeccably authoritative, statement of this view appears in a pamphlet issued in 1960 by the Africa League under the names of David

Apter, Elliot Berg, Rupert Emerson, Ruth Schachter, and Immanuel Wallerstein (the very membership of this collective says much about the breadth of consensus at the time, and about its subsequent disintegration). The authors managed to combine support for self-determination with fidelity to liberal democratic values (drawing somewhat on democratic theory in the process):

> We stand for these values. This does not mean that it is either right or useful to tell other people what kind of government they should have. Democracy, if it is to exist in the sense in which we know and value it, must be rooted in modern social conditions which do not yet exist in Africa . . . it is both useless and offensive to Africans for us to blame them for not having a multi-party system . . . when such a system can only exist where development has led to the differentiation of a nation's society into national rather than sectional interest groups, and an understanding and acceptance of institutions in which these differences can be resolved.[18]

Close to – indeed, almost indistinguishable from – this group were those who saw one-partyism and other ostensibly non-democratic forms as representing either an indigenous, innovative kind of democracy (embodying the universal principle of accountability to which Herskovits referred) or some kind of synthesis between imported and indigenous institutions. In either case, the resulting evaluation was highly approving. Thus the political scientist Gwendolen Carter deplored the negative implications of much lay commentary on African one-party states, claiming that such regimes were performing a 'significant role in nation-building':

> I find it misleading [she declared] to call them undemocratic . . . I would maintain that a high proportion of the new African governments have a broad base of mass popular support, that there is a fairly continuous interaction between their political party leaders and the people in the local areas, and that a wide variety of ideas and policies are expressed.[19]

American socialists differed from the liberals in their views both of nationalism and of what constituted economic development. But their approach to democracy was equally instrumental and economistic. Political forms, contingent on social and economic circumstance, were progressive or not to the extent that they helped social and economic development (in this case, socialist development). Because of its association with capitalism, liberal constitutionalism was *prima facie* suspect of not being helpful, and not likely to be so. At best, it was merely a means towards the ends of socialism and 'economic democracy' – a dispensable formality; at worst, it was a vehicle for reactionary or bourgeois interests.

Thus in 1959 the *Monthly Review* remarked that bourgeois democracy was 'in eclipse' outside the bastions of capitalism: 'in its place will be a planned, coordinated, world community, producing goods and services according to capacity and distributing them according to need'.[20] The journal forecast that 'the Chinese commune, under the general leadership

of the communist party, will prove to be one of the norms of the new socialist world'. Meanwhile, argued Leo Huberman, though political liberties were 'valuable' and 'essential' to the materially affluent, they were 'not of particular urgency to hungry, uneducated, diseased, exploited people'. So, he concluded, 'when those of us with full bellies tell the people with empty bellies that what they need most in the world is free elections, they will not listen'.[21] Such criticism was aimed not just at liberals but also at democratic socialists, as, for instance, when in 1974 John Saul attacked Mário Soares and the Portuguese socialists for being 'unduly preoccupied with electoral procedures and the like [in Portuguese Africa], rather than with a more straightforward transfer of power to the liberation movement'.[22]

Preoccupied with questions of economic development and 'nation-building', then, the self-defined liberals and socialists in the United States (and elsewhere) were quite prepared to entertain the idea that liberal democracy was irrelevant to Africa. They did so, however, not necessarily because of any positive belief in an indigenous form of democracy, but because they had other priorities (about which they were more dogmatic) and because they saw democracy in economic terms. In short, the reason why democracy was irrelevant was not because it was culturally specific, but because it required social and economic conditions that Africa for the time being lacked.

Although black American opinion covered the same ideological spectrum apparent in the writings of whites, it tended to be especially sensitive to the problems and policies of African governments, particularly when they were under attack from white liberals and conservatives. The one-party states in Ghana and Guinea had vocal black American defenders, such as Alphaeus Hunton and Shirley Graham Du Bois. Hunton quoted approvingly the official Guinean view that liberal democratic forms were irrelevant since 'we have no divergent class interests, no one who wants to stand up for anything less than full political independence'.[23] The Guinean party was, in Hunton's view, 'an integral part of the daily existence of the people' and democracy 'not a remote ideal but an immediate necessity'.[24]

Nkrumah's CPP elicited various interpretations, from the enthusiasm of Shirley Graham through the more guarded commentary of St Clair Drake to the downright scepticism of Martin Kilson. Drake tended to see the party as a synthesis of traditional Ghanaian forms and imported institutions and, at least in 1956, saw some hope for parliamentary democracy.[25] However, even when the norm of American or British democracy was accepted, black writers usually took a similar view of its relevance to that fashionable among white liberals, often drawing (like liberals) on American history to justify authoritarianism:

> To understand Ghana better, it might be profitable to re-read or recall a little early American history, recognizing that we were confronted with the problem of federalism versus regionalism . . . that we had no strong opposition

> party in the early months of the Washington administration, that our government was plagued with rebellious citizens who resented and resisted the imposition of taxes and revolted in a Whiskey Rebellion, and that we passed Naturalization, Alien and Sedition Acts aimed at domestic disaffection.[26]

More radical black writers preferred to emphasise the experience of oppression which blacks had suffered in both America and Africa, and to stress the similarities between African nationalism and the civil rights struggle in the United States. In general, black writers were less concerned with institutions as such than with questions of racial identity and equality.

Looking at conservative writings on Africa, a crucial flaw in the ethnocentrist critique becomes apparent. Liberals, blacks, and socialists, as we have seen, were reluctant to prescribe politically for African states. Certainly, they might draw on American history and their own notions of development. But this hardly constitutes 'ethnocentrism' in the strict sense, and if reference to their own history was their sin, it was certainly one committed by many others. To ask of scholars that they cast off all intellectual and cultural influences acquired from their own societies is a requirement beyond anything entailed in transcending ethnocentrism in the usual sense. As it happened, however, American liberals and many American academics interested in Africa did accept the obligation to make at least an effort in that direction. For that reason, the African critique of them is peculiarly unfair.

Conservatives, on the other hand, had no such reticence about rating the rest of the world according to American values or about putting American interests first. They were ethnocentric in the strictest sense, and proud of it. But their ethnocentrism led them to oppose, not to support, efforts to spread democracy abroad. Such was their conviction of the uniqueness and superiority of American (or at most Anglo-Saxon) institutions that they were militantly sceptical about political evangelism, except where it could be shown to serve American interests directly and exclusively. Being generally more attached to liberty than to democracy, conservatives were especially scornful of crusades for majority rule. Many were incensed at the folly of liberals who saw late colonial Africa as a stage for the re-enactment of the American Revolution. American liberals had already helped to undermine the morale of European colonialism, bringing about a failure of nerve as calamitous in its likely consequences as the collapse of the Roman Empire.[27] With the European withdrawal, a void had been left, as James Burnham implied in describing a flight north from Nairobi at midnight: 'Though the night was clear there was only darkness below – unbroken for hundreds of miles.'[28]

To encourage democracy under such circumstances was, conservatives and a few liberals said, worse than useless. As Elspeth Huxley repeatedly told American readers, Africans understood only loyalty to 'the tribe'; they lacked the sense of common citizenship and civic obligation needed to make

democracy effective and nation-states stable.[29] Yet, another writer argued, American liberals persisted in exporting the 'Spirit of '76' into Africa, a spirit as harmful as the firewater handed out by traders to Indians:

> We have been rampaging through the world sowing revolution among people little able to grasp the Spirit of '76. Behind us lie the wrecks of empires, whose fragments are patiently gathered up by the Soviet Union, the only long-run beneficiary of an American policy based upon misunderstanding and misapplication of the principles which inspired our Revolutionary statesmen.[30]

The only context in which democracy might have even a chance was within the 'natural' framework of African politics, the tribe. Conservatives disagreed about whether pre-colonial government had been in any serious way democratic, but they agreed that post-colonial states were artificial and doomed to disintegration unless 'the reality of tribalism' was somehow recognised institutionally (by a form of federalism or by a complete recasting of African states on an ethnic basis).[31] They therefore sympathised readily with secessionist movements in Katanga and Biafra which in conservative eyes represented authentically African movements for self-determination (and which were claiming sovereignty over resources crucial to American national interest).

Whether talking about democracy, economic development, or foreign policy, conservatives emphasised culture as an argument for limiting American involvement in Africa. When they did approve of intervention, their reasoning was almost always based on national interest, a concept which gave no ground to liberal notions of international understanding. Their views of African culture were generally disparaging, and in the starkest sense ethnocentric, summed up in some reflections on the Congo crisis by the British writer Anthony Lejeune:

> We should fall down on our knees and thank God for Wimbledon and Yonkers, for Wigan and Flatbush, for our world of clean water and honest policemen and money which is almost sound and politicians who are almost honorable. Never forget how close the jungle is and the beasts that prowl there.[32]

American attitudes toward democracy in Africa thus make up a complex tapestry of assumptions, prejudices, and hopes. Herskovits himself noted this fact when he remarked in 1962:

> As we turn to the ideas about Africa that exist at the present time, we must first of all divest ourselves of the idea that it is possible to describe any single image held by Americans, taken as a whole. Just as there are many Africas, so there are many images.[33]

It is clear that if we are using the concept of 'ethnocentrism' at all strictly, then the most thoroughly and unashamedly ethnocentric group were the American conservatives. But it is also clear that their ethnocentrism caused them to distance themselves from African affairs. As Michael Lofchie has

remarked (and as any participant in academic and political activities related to Africa can testify), among American Africanists there has been 'a pervasive disinclination to produce a conceptual terminology which, by even the most remote stretch of the imagination, could be construed as "conservative"'.[34] The liberals and radicals who are so preponderant have leaned over backwards not to be prescriptive about democracy, though they have been less relativistic when it comes to discussing economic development. Even here, however, they have often shown a surprising tenderness for forms of state socialism and an anxiety to explain why private enterprise is unlikely to be the engine of growth it was in Europe and the United States.

To sum up: it is undeniable that there were Americans who talked and wrote as if the central question in Africa was the success or failure of liberal constitutionalism. But the historical record simply does not support the generalisation that American scholars went about foisting liberal democracy on helpless Africans. The ethnocentrist critique is thus weak on empirical grounds (although I may have overlooked the real villain, hiding him behind a battalion of straw men). On logical grounds, it is confused. It is unclear both what is being attacked and what remedies are proposed.

If the critics were attacking 'ethnocentrism' in the sense of an arrogant assumption that Western ideas and institutions are self-evidently valid for African societies, they would have a case. But the trouble is that culprits are in short supply, at least among those taking an active interest in Africa. If they simply mean that since all theories are 'value-laden' (a premise many explicitly state), all foreign interpretations of Africa are affected by the values of the cultures in which they originated, then they are diluting the concept of ethnocentrism into an unexceptionable, if shallow type of cultural determinism, as found, for instance, in books about national cuisine.

In fact, such a position thoroughly undermines the basis of the standard polemic: how, given this view, can one logically object to American views of Africa being affected by American experiences and values? What is there to object to? And why are American views likely to be more 'ethnocentric' (or more objectionably so) than, say, Swiss or Icelandic views of Africa (or Nigerian views of Togo, or Ibo views of Yoruba land)? Why, indeed, is ethnocentrism a *problem*, any more than, for example, French ideas about the right way to cook yams are a problem for cooks in Ghana or Nigeria?

The answer, of course, is not perception, but power: the power of 'imperialism' to impose its norms and assumptions.

The imperialist critique

As noted earlier, the 'imperialist' critique of Western writing on Africa is a supplementary political thesis to the 'ethnocentrist' cognitive critique (with whatever substance or coherence that may have). One claims to expose

misrepresentations by foreigners, the other to explain how they have been able to put them over on Africans and the rest of the world.

A well-known, though exasperatingly tortuous exposition of the 'imperialist' thesis is, as previously remarked, that provided by the Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake in his book, *Social Science as Imperialism*. Ake claims that Western social science 'propagates mystifications, and modes of thought and action which serve the interests of capitalism and imperialism . . . [it plays] a major role in keeping us [Africans] subordinate and underdeveloped . . . it continues to inhibit our understanding of the problems of our world, to feed us noxious values'.[35] To support his assertions, Ake examines a range of Western theories, concentrating especially on political development theory, the villain among the straw men referred to above.

It is impossible to review here all the problems of logic and interpretation that Ake's work presents. At its core is an essentially self-confirming and circular argument. All theories and values are reducible to material interests. The theories and values of Western social science were formed within the bosom of capitalism and imperialism. Therefore, Western social science serves capitalism and imperialism – QED. By definition, then, only a social science 'with socialist values' can end underdevelopment and imperialism. What these values are, or where this social science is to be found, Ake does not say.[36]

To the extent that Ake actually argues a case, several problems arise relating to his thesis of imperialism. Imperialism is (in his definition) a relationship of subordination, and capitalism, being essentially antithetical to African interests, requires such subordination to survive. The obvious question is how social science has helped the process of subordination, and how it has been able to impose its 'mystifications' and 'propaganda'. One problem is that while much of the theory examined clearly does incorporate Western experience of economic and political change, and assumes that such experience may be repeated elsewhere, it is completely unclear how the mere articulation of a theory 'amounts to' imperialism, that is, creates or sustains subordination. What are the agencies by which such oppression is effected?

The problem is compounded by the apparent liberalism of much development theory, not to mention the statist sympathies of some development economists. The values of political development theory – democracy, freedom, and equality – seem directly opposite to those which would legitimise an inherently oppressive ideology. Surely their propagation would bring about the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism, not its reinforcement?[37]

Ake gets around this apparent contradiction by some ingenious textual interpretation intended to show that political development theorists, despite appearances, were actually and fundamentally authoritarians: thus 'the concern of [political] development theorists for democracy is more

apparent than real'. There is, Ake suggests, a 'sharp contradiction between the *raison d'être* of the theory and what it pretends to be'.[38] The *raison d'être*, naturally, is to serve imperialism, though who sets this task, and how, remains obscure. Even the writers concerned may be unaware of the 'objective' significance of their work, or they pretend to be so. Their 'apparent' commitments are not their 'real' ones; their 'subjective states' are irrelevant.[39] Similarly, when development economists abstain from preaching capitalism, 'this is probably a matter of necessity', brought on by the shining successes of socialism. Instead, they practise 'technicism', in order to reinforce 'the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie' and prevent citizens in the Third World 'asking dangerous questions'.[40]

But still we have no explanation of how these doctrines impose themselves. Social science has played 'a major role in keeping us subordinate and underdeveloped'. How, exactly? It is not enough to say that American university presses have been pouring forth 'unscientific' accounts of Third World reality. What has to be shown are the political mechanisms by which such accounts have been used abroad to further the interests of capitalism, what the institutions of intellectual domination are and how they work. All Ake does is to assert a congruence of ideas and values (a congruence which, on his own admission, sometimes seems lacking) and to assert that such congruence 'amounts to imperialism'. We are left with a bizarre vision of publishers' representatives rushing customs barriers, defenceless students forced at gunpoint to recite Parsons' pattern variables, and peasants starving because of biases in Almond's weighting of input and output functions.

Without identification of the process of subordination, Ake's argument collapses into the book's embarrassingly simple tautology. Western social science contains Western liberal values and derives from Western experience. Capitalism and imperialism come from the West. Therefore, Western social science serves capitalism and imperialism. We are back with the ethnocentrist critique, albeit in a debased, positivist form.

But supposing that Ake's charge is merely one of ethnocentrism, how fair is it, particularly to the political development theorists? Certainly, it is true that such theorists tended to equate 'development' with the acquisition of values and institutions associated with modernisation in the West. But this logical weakness has become the basis for a wholesale and repetitive denigration of the writing of Western scholars on the Third World. How many times must this particular pianist be shot? Does he, in fact, deserve to be shot at all?

Pace Ake's disdain for people's 'subjective' claims about the significance and purpose of their work, it is worth recalling the intellectual ambition which inspired studies of 'political development'. The idea was to devise a framework for comparing political systems throughout the world – an imperial enough ambition, but one on behalf of the political science discipline, not of Wall Street or the Pentagon. Such an effort was likely to

entail a high degree of abstraction in the categories used (another point of criticism against political development theory). Any framework which can comprehend the great variety of political systems existing around the globe is bound to end up using categories which tend to be vague and voluminous. Again, it is easy to say that these categories need to be changed or the relationship between them altered to fit Third World conditions.[41] But political development theorists, at least the more sophisticated among them, would welcome such changes as demonstrating the potential of a comparative approach rather than oppose them as invalidating it.

As to the source of the categories, it is clear that Gabriel Almond, for example, made strenuous efforts to acquaint himself and his colleagues with non-Western political systems and that he was acutely conscious of the dangers of ethnocentrism: 'No transgression [he writes] has greater capacity to strike fear in the hearts of contemporary social scientists.'[42] He has admitted that they may have allowed the errors of ethnocentrism, teleology, and unilinearity to creep into their work.[43] But unless one is opposed to all cross-cultural comparison, it is surely right to honour Almond's account of his problems, rather than to impute to him and his colleagues complicity in 'imperialism' and collusion with capitalism. This account is impeccably honest and logical:

> We were . . . aware of the fact that we were comparing non-Western political systems according to Western categories and from Western perspectives. After all, we were Westerners, beginning with the knowledge and concerns of the West, trying to understand how the newly emerging or rapidly changing political systems of Asia, Africa, and Latin America were similar to or different from our more familiar institutional systems and processes.[44]

Westerners specifically concerned with Africa faced a similar problem. Whatever the errors of neglect committed by Western scholars in relation to Asian and Latin American scholars, the fact is that in the 1960s the body of African scholars from whom outsiders could have drawn enlightenment about African problems was very small. Moreover, their theoretical formation closely resembled that of the outsiders themselves (exactly the point that more recent critiques of African political science by Africans have made).[45] In these circumstances, it is unfair to censure American scholars for relying, in so far as they did, on their own ideas and experiences. The fundamental injustice committed by Ake and others lies in the implication that an articulated theoretical alternative, a well-publicised and well-developed body of Third World theory providing a superior indigenous perspective, was available and was suppressed. They never, however, give names and references, except sometimes to political leaders such as Nkrumah.

Western scholars trying to understand African politics were, then, largely on their own. Normatively, they accepted the general Afrocentric principle – an extension of anthropological relativism – that their mandate was to

articulate what was distinctive about African politics, as far as possible 'from an African point of view'. For lack of an African intelligentsia able or willing to act as interlocutor and spokesman, they tended to seize on the ideas and values of the political leadership, spinning from them a theoretical paradigm of 'nation-building' and 'national integration'. For their pains, they later found themselves attacked, as these leaders fell from favour, for naivety and toadyism – often by other scholars who themselves subsequently found no problem in 'identifying with' the leaderships of, for example, Tanzania, Mozambique, and Angola.

SOLUTIONS

Critiques imply preferable approaches and interpretations. What would the critics of ethnocentrism prefer? What can they reasonably ask? How would their alternatives be better?

It we look at the comments of African political scientists on Western studies of Africa, certain common assumptions are apparent. Most African critics want to 'decolonise' the concepts and frameworks used in depicting their societies. This concern reflects the growing number and self-confidence of African scholars, and it is a natural extension of the winning of political independence. If the United States, after *its* independence, had been flooded with African scholars, journalists, and politicians, forever asking questions and, worse, telling the natives what they should do and how far they had to go to become developed, there would certainly have been a rising tide of irritation among the native intellectuals, and strong complaints that what they did and how they developed was their own business.

In the African case, this reaction ranges in violence from an almost racial rejection of the validity of any Western commentary, through forms of intellectual protectionism (suggesting that African scholars are likely to understand their own societies best and even that they should have veto power over work by foreigners), to more eclectic views, holding that both insiders and outsiders may, given certain conditions and restraints, be able to make distinctive and useful contributions.

The problems of intellectual nationalism correspond closely to those of ethnocentrism. Indeed, they are mirror images of each other: one man's nationalism is another man's ethnocentrism. To assert that only Africans can say anything worthwhile about African politics is really a form of counter-ethnocentrism – a human enough reaction, but nevertheless a reaction in kind. It poses several other problems. One is that, applied rigorously, it would disquality Africans from commenting on anything outside their own continent, or their own countries. No visiting Nigerian professor could ever again denounce at length the sins of America, except in so far as they clearly affected Nigeria. Further, as Jinadu points out, such nationalism tends to be self-consuming:

> Is an Ewe-speaking political scientist not open to a possible charge of ethnocentrism by his Ashanti colleagues in his interpretation of political processes in Ashanti or even in other parts of Ghana for that matter? Would a Yoruba political scientist's interpretation of the events leading to the breakdown of civilian politics in 1964–65 Nigeria not be colored by the fact of his being Yoruba?[46]

Just such a controversy had already occurred, Jinadu remarks, in an argument about Bolaji Akinyemi's book on Nigerian foreign policy, when a northern critic attributed biases in the work to the author's southern origin.

As several African scholars have said, 'intellectual xenophobia' could have high costs for the intellectual and political life of the societies concerned. Outsiders may sometimes be able to research and write about topics that local researchers fear to probe (a fear one critic calls the 'cowardly circumspection' of his colleagues). Intellectual protectionism may simply, like other kinds of protectionism, protect the lazy, timid, and uncreative.[47]

Finally, to abuse 'Western' social science does not by itself identify, even point to, what would be distinctive in an 'African' social science. The truth is that African critics attack Western ideas with Western ideas, or at best with Eastern ideas. Indeed, some of the sharpest comments of African radicals are reserved for the 'mental dependency' of their compatriots, as in Machyo's remark that the African intellectual is like

> a balloon in the sky which, having attained maximum ascent, can neither fly up or come down. It merely floats in the air in any direction that the wind blows it.[48]

Thinking about the quandary of intellectual nationalism really brings us back to the broader ambiguities of the relationship between individual states and cultures and the global system. There can be Senegalese music and a Senegalese literature, but can there be a Senegalese social science? Music or language may be culturally specific, though universal as a phenomenon. But 'social science' is largely a Western intellectual creation, for better or for worse, and there are many other intellectual imports besides.

Just as there is a tension between phenomena which are global in scope and phenomena which are peculiarly local and somewhat autonomous, so there is an intellectual tension between the universalising instincts of science and the cherished idiosyncrasies of individual cultures. As Coleman and Halisi point out, there is in African political science, as in American political science, 'a crucial and enduring paradox . . . the tension between universality and relativity'.[49] Similar considerations lead Jinadu to a more tempered view of intellectual autarkism:

> We need not condemn the work of this or that political scientist primarily because he is non-African or an African studying an African society other than his own. There is a universalist dimension to political science and the

> merit of a study is to be judged in terms of the contribution it has made to scholarship. We cannot escape our cultural biases and prejudices, but we can at least attempt some studied detachment from them.[50]

In short, we are back with Herskovits, but in a much changed political situation from that in which the underdeveloped world was an open-air laboratory for anthropologists. Indeed, if we detach ourselves from the intellectual and emotional strife surrounding the question of ethnocentrism, we can see the arguments involved as expressions of an extended post-colonial dialectic: the working out of the cultural and intellectual implications of political independence in the Third World through a series of ideological adjustments and reformulations by the intelligentsias of both developed and developing countries.

Out of the heat and dust of conflict, some rather clearer conceptions of the rights and duties of each side are beginning to emerge. Western scholars have largely ingested criticism of their more buccaneering activities in the 1960s and 1970s, but some are tiring of the ritualised denunciations still regularly delivered at conferences by Third World scholars.[51] The latter, for their part, seem to be moving beyond some of the cruder, more deterministic positions provided by dependency theory, towards positions which embrace fully the intellectual entitlements of independence while completely accepting its less comfortable obligations.

A good recent example of such mature African nationalism is an article by Maimire Mennasemay which argues that a central demand of African political theorists, one they should impose on their own thinking as well as make of non-Africans, ought to be the recognition of Africans as 'historical subjects', that is,

> as men who have produced and produce their conditions of existence, and therefore are responsible for them and capable of changing them. Such recognition permits us to see that Africans are primarily responsible for their own emancipation.[52]

As Mennasemay acknowledges, his statement has implications for various orthodoxies – for those using a conservatively cultural approach, for those taking a crudely economistic approach (for example, by blaming all problems on shortage of natural resources), and for radicals drawn to dependency interpretations. To the latter, he declares: 'Africans are not the mute objects of the manipulation of neo-colonialism. They are through their states, its *active* partners. Not to recognize this is to deny the historical agency of Africans.'[53]

Interestingly, some of the most thoughtful debate about the dilemmas of Third World social scientists has occurred among anthropologists. It suggests a duality of roles: on the one hand, an active involvement in the now global process of scientific and political argument; on the other, a commitment to interpreting and, where necessary, defending their own cultures – as one writer puts it, in slightly Olympian fashion, standing up for

'the humanity of the local populations'.[54] Such a commitment by Third World intellectuals is essential, as the Indian anthropologist Madan argues, to striking a balance between universality and specificity. It will 'enable us to preserve the historical specificity of cultures, and not dissolve them in generalizations masquerading as cultural universals'.[55]

The long-term effects of such activism by Third World scholars and writers might be more dramatic than this rather abstract formulation suggests. Within the academic sphere, it could lead to a redefinition of social science as a 'mutal interpretation of cultures'.[56] But, even more importantly, it would be a barrier to the tendency of people in developed countries to see developing societies as undifferentiated objects – objects for research, perhaps even for good works, but nonetheless supine and homogeneous entities. It would put an end to the working view of social science as a matter of white Westerners extracting thesis material from non-white informants.

More radical still would be the effect of Third World scholars actually exploring societies of the developed world in the way in which Western anthropologists and other scholars penetrated their societies. James Baldwin recently hinted at the revolutionary implications of such a reversal of roles when he said that he sensed a terror in the white world: 'I can't prove this, but I know it. It's the terror of being described by those they've been describing for so long.'[57]

A materialist would argue that nothing would be significantly changed in the 'real world' by encouraging African scholars to study Western societies.[58] Others might respond that to challenge a cultural hegemony, to reverse the relationship of student and studied, as Baldwin suggests, could begin a landslide deep down in the structures of international inequality. It would, moreover, touch directly and irreversibly that aspect of international inequality which is so hurtful to Africans and others in the Third World: the sense of being regarded as less fully human and less completely individual than people in industrialised countries, of being regarded as 'underdeveloped people'.

Two things are essential to make such a landslide conceivable and to keep it going. One is that African scholars give outsiders the kind of detailed, descriptive vision of their own societies that (for example) the novelists and empirical sociologists of nineteenth-century England provided. African novelists and playwrights are still a better source in this respect than African academics who, whether radical or liberal, often seem absorbed in imitating the theoretical gyrations of their Western colleagues. The other requirement is that African and Third World scholarship generally should expand its horizons aggressively, to explore in its own terms the societies which until now have done most of the exploring in the world. Western Africanists should be unpatronisingly sympathetic to such a development. For the intellectual and imaginative development of their own work depends directly on opportunities for such development being available to their

colleagues in Africa (even though in present conditions resources for travel and research are scarce in Africa).[59]

The great sin of Western Africanists has perhaps been paternalism, rather than ethnocentrism in its strictest sense. One of the more subtle but poisonous kinds of paternalism has been a reluctance on the left and among liberals to challenge the arguments and assumptions of Africans as strenuously as those of Americans and Europeans for fear of the dreaded epithets of 'racist' and 'imperialist' (to name only the most intimidating). The aim of this chapter has been to blow away some of the disingenuous and specious arguments which have flourished under and sustained this regime of intellectual sado-masochism.

It may be timely to do so. We seem now to be experiencing a revival of nationalism in the West, somewhat in response to the harsher vibrations of Third World nationalism. Heretical as the suggestion will be to liberal Africanists, such a revival may not be completely disastrous for relations between Africa and the West. Nationalism can speak unto nationalism; liberalism often seems just to be talking to itself. A 'mutual interpretation of cultures' requires a relatively clear and self-confident identity on both sides. With such a sense of identity, it may be possible for social scientists and intellectuals, African and Western, to learn what Madan has argued anthropologists must learn, namely, the ability 'to look beyond the confines of their own cultures without losing the capacity to be themselves'.[60]

4

Wails and whispers: the people's voice in West African Muslim politics

DONAL B. CRUISE O'BRIEN

The principle of the sovereignty of the people is at the base of all forms of government and it hides under the least free of institutions.

A. de Tocqueville,
Recollections[1]

If democracy is to be discovered beneath any form of government, as Tocqueville suggests, then a problem remains when reviewing African politics in ascertaining the solidity of government itself. Aristide Zolberg in an influential article of 1968 described the politics of the new states of Africa as taking place in 'an almost institutionless arena ... with conflict and disorder as its most prominent features'.[2] The absence of political institutions, of 'stable valued and recurring patterns of behaviour',[3] might then be seen as the fundamental problem: no institutions, no democracy? It is around the problem of institutions that the Muslim contribution to a democratic politics in Africa is reviewed here. Islam in Africa has certainly developed its own institutional forms, and it will be argued that each of these has its democratic dimension. Islam has also, perhaps paradoxically, helped to give substance to institutions of Western importation, in the institutions of the colonial and of the post-colonial state.

The will of the people may not of course be clearly or publicly expressed in the political setting of West African states. A defective democracy at best may prevail at the state level, with more or less gross electoral manipulation, and it will not be argued here that Muslim politics in West Africa, as it were, exceeds the regional democratic norm.[4] We can talk of democracy in a West African Muslim setting only as a restricted, partial presence, an element in the structure of authority. The people's will may thus be expressed as a wail of charismatic devotion, or a whisper of clientelistic supplication. Authoritarian procedures prevail within local Islam as in the realm of unbelief: the language of Muslim authority is close to the language of absolutism. There is none the less a democratic element in African Islam, if only in the rudimentary sense that the people (clients, devotees, believers) do play their part in the choice of their leaders, and that the leaders take account of popular preferences and seek to anticipate popular

reactions. A leader's failure to respond to these preferences, or to anticipate these reactions, can provoke the desertion of his following and the emergence of an alternative and still divinely sanctioned leader.

Islamic authority in contemporary West Africa presents itself within what are at least nominally secular state structures. The secular state has been an enduring colonial legacy, perhaps necessarily for the preservation of peace in pluri-religious situations. As Muslim numbers grow, however, one must anticipate increasing pressure to bring legal and political requirements into conformity with Muslim precept. 'Democracy' might even be invoked to justify the adoption of the *sharia* as state law, where the population is predominantly Muslim, although the imposition of Muslim law on Christian or pagan peoples can only be an invitation to communalist strife (a portent here being the inconclusive but animated and potentially explosive *sharia* debate in Nigeria in 1978).[5] Mauretania has remained an isolated example of the Islamic republic, but Mauretania is exceptional in having a Muslim population of some 99 per cent, and in belonging perhaps more to the north-west African Maghreb than to 'black' or sub-Saharan Africa.[6]

Islam can in favourable circumstances, when it is the religion of a substantial popular majority, help to provide a sense of political community within the African state. It can help to overcome the problem of the isolation of elite political culture from the beliefs and attitudes of ordinary people. A consideration of political belief at a mass level in tropical Africa will necessarily accord an important place to the political culture of Islam. Current demographic estimations would put the total number of Muslims in black Africa at over one hundred million, and still steadily rising both in absolute numbers and as a proportion of the continental total.[7] Here, then, is a religion of the masses, which can count its quota of believers among the political elite, a world religion which offers at least a theoretical possibility (as of course does Christianity) of allowing important political communication between elite and mass within a shared belief system. The political messages which are thus communicated need not always amount to anything conspicuously democratic, but it is surely obvious that there can be no possibility whatever for democracy in the absence of such communication between rulers and the ruled of the elements at least of a shared political language. This in itself would justify an exploration of the relation between Islam and democracy.

It should furthermore be recognised that Islam has derived some significant tactical advantages from its involvement in representative democratic politics, even where it is not the religion of an uncontested majority. Thus in the Federation of Nigeria, where census data has been so hotly contested a political subject, the alien institutions of Western federal democracy have allowed the cause of Islam to advance very significantly in terms of political power. The size of the northern population enabled northern Muslim politicians to conquer power at the Federal centre. That consummate Muslim politician, the Sardauna of Sokoto, was master of the alien political

instrument placed in his hands in the terminal colonial period. Elections were used to preserve and increase political control in the Northern Region – 'one north, one people' – and alliances were manipulated to ensure northern dominance at the federal centre. Since the Nigerian federation was constructed across the fault line of a great nineteenth-century *jihad*, with all the potential for communalist upheavals which such a construction has entailed, one should perhaps welcome any political institutions which permit the house of Islam to coexist peacefully with the house of war. The politics of electoral representation have also provided a mechanism for the arbitration of disputes within the house of Islam: between 'Wahhabi' reformists and sufis of the Tijaniyya in northern Nigeria (where the politics of Kano city have been most thoroughly described).[8]

The Muslim contribution to the operation of African political institutions has in the past been substantial, and it continues to be significant today. The institutional successes of African Islam may in the first instance be consigned to the domain of the creation of political order, which is regularised and sociologically legitimate (although one may doubt whether Professor Zolberg had Islam precisely in mind when he wrote the word 'almost' before his 'institutionless arena').[9] And while the institutional forms of Islam in Africa may not have been conspicuously democratic, there is a significant element of (concealed) popular choice at work within what are in principle strictly authoritarian Muslim institutions.

The political operation of Muslim institutions is to be considered here, and related to the democratic process broadly understood, in the form of a simplified reduction into three types. First is the type of traditional Islam, here meaning the Islam of the sufi 'mystical' tradition – an Islam of saints and pious brotherhoods, of magic and sacred clientelism. Second is Muslim reformism, a modern and puritanical movement, strongest in the urban centres; the types of literate and politically conscious Islam designated as 'scripturalist' by Professor Clifford Geertz.[10] The third type is that of revolutionary Islam, which includes both traditional apocalyptic Mahdism and African reactions to the recently prominent Iranian model. This typology is used to concentrate on the political character of Islamic institutions, and within the political to concentrate on the possible democratic dimensions of Muslim organisation: most broadly, in the expression and implementation of the believers' will, then in the choice of leadership by the faithful, and most narrowly in the Muslim electoral contribution to institutions of representative government in Africa.

TRADITIONAL ISLAM: THE POLITICS OF MYSTICISM

The sufi tradition in West African Islam[11] may in political terms be seen as focused on the idea of a human intercessor between God and the believer: a saintly *wali* with the power to speak for his devotees on the Last Day. The living sufi saint can also show the path to paradise to his disciples, can

virtually guarantee them salvation in the hereafter, and in consequence can command what seems a total obedience here below. The disciple's nominal subjection to his master is such that he is, in the sufi phrase, like a 'corpse in the hands of the embalmer', doctrinally bound to observe a total obedience to his spiritual master and guide. None the less, close observation of sufi practice can show how misleading is all the outward show of an abject subservience. Not only may the apparently absolute spiritual master be on occasion chosen by his disciples, but it is generally the case that the master must satisfy at least some of the disciples' desires if he is to maintain control over his sacred clientele. The saintly master may even reach a tacit doctrinal understanding with his disciples, sacrificing the demands of Islamic purity to the requirements of acceptable tutelage. The appearance of total mastery and absolute subjection can thus conceal what is in effect a conditional authority, something close to a sufi social contract.

The sufi tradition has been dominant in black African Islam for some two hundred years, that is since it emerged to take on the work of mass proselytisation and organisation. Prior to the advent of 'mass sufism' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there was indeed an esoteric sufi mystical tradition among the relatively learned and pious, ideally a search for individual union with God, involving more or less arduous ascetic practices on an individual retreat or *khalwa*. In terms of social organisation, however, this esoteric sufism was a narrowly elite concern, the sufism of the gentleman's club. The search for a mass clientele in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant that the sufi elite had adapted their devotional structures to the purposes of proselytisation, the devotional instruction of the unlearned and the illiterate, converting the pagan or the semi-pagan to a more rigorous Islam. There was from the outset a democratic dimension to this apparently elitist endeavour, the instruction of the many by the learned and pious few, notably in the mass adoption of religious reform as a medium of political insurrection against rulers deemed tyrannical as well as irreligious. The *jihad* or holy war can be said to have provided for a drastic form of the circulation of elites, where the charismatic leader of *jihad* rose on a tide of fervent popular support. Here, as elsewhere, democracy is inherent in charisma.

The most impressive institution in the world of sufism is perhaps the 'lodge' or *zawiya*. The lodge is sited at the tomb of a revered saint, and apart from pious pilgrimage, it exists for the task of sacred instruction. But the social purposes of the *zawiya* are wonderfully varied, a true functionalist utopia; an inn to accommodate the pious traveller, a school to instruct the faithful, a court to arbitrate differences sacred or profane, a market place and farm to provide for the material sustenance of the believers, a miniature welfare state for the distribution of alms, as well as a church and a final resting place for the bones of the devout. The conventional label of lodge seems inadequate to cover such a social range which, if anything, brings to mind the glories of the medieval Christian monastery. In political terms the

zawiya can accommodate to hard times, to a surrounding anarchy or civil war, by a self-encapsulating autarchy: all the tasks of government are after all already included within its purposes. Under a secure state authority the *zawiya* can develop an intermediary political role and convert the faithful into a negotiable clientele. The sacredly sanctioned hierarchy of the sufi *zawiya* then becomes a parallel hierarchy of government, valuable to state authority as resting on a true popular devotion. In multi-party situations one can even see the *zawiya* converted to the political purposes of a party cell.

The sufi brotherhood or *tariqa*, including many lodges, has rarely amounted to a single institution. Here again one has a unifying saintly ancestor, with a particularly revered tomb, and also a shared devotional style in the use of distinctive prayer formulae. But the geographical extensiveness of brotherhood links, potentially associating the Muslims of West Africa with co-devotees in North Africa or in the Middle East, has raised problems for the *tariqa's* adjustment to a political world of states and nations. European colonial power was indeed more than willing to 'support' the local branches of sufi brotherhoods for the purposes of administration, assisting the saintly establishment in such a way as to convert spiritual hierarchies into chains of worldly command. But the colonial powers remained distrustful of the interterritorial links of sufism, with a particular bureaucratic vigilance reserved for any 'pan-islamic' associations.

The importance of sufism in African Muslim politics is certainly variable across time and space, and one should perhaps bear in mind an elementary periodisation. The nineteenth century is marked by the militant sufism of the great *jihad* movements, whether sponsored by the Qadiriyya brotherhood as in Hausaland or by the Tijaniyya as in Senegal and Sudan. The *tariqa* in this time served to lay a basis for the formation of states, or more commonly to convert existing states into incipient empires (the ideal of Islamic universalism, and of a total Muslim community, could legitimate the extension of political frontiers across ethnic or linguistic boundaries). Of course, European conquest involved the destruction of many *jihad* states, from that of Al Hajj Umar Tal to that of Samory, although the post-*jihad* emirates of Hausaland were incorporated into the government of Northern Nigeria. Where colonial policy was to work through the sufi brotherhood (in the interests of low-cost administration), the *tariqa* adjusted easily enough to its changed circumstances – as with the Qadiriyya in Nigeria, which achieved a new pan-Nigerian unity (*c*. 1937) bringing the different branches of the *tariqa* for the first time into a united brotherhood. The Nigerian Qadiriyya also actively sought to broaden its popular base, notably by group recitation of the brotherhood's prayers, and in politics became the chief pillar of the Northern People's Congress. The sufi brotherhoods of Senegal again were involved in a variant of colonial indirect rule, and in the process were unified and even bureaucratised as

never before: the brotherhoods in electoral politics have in general given their support to Leopold Senghor and now to president Abdou Diouf.[12]

Although sufi politics under colonial or post-colonial government has commonly been identified with established authority, with government, and with 'quietism', there have also been many cases of sufis in political opposition. Some brotherhoods were subject to colonial administrative persecution, as for example the Hamaliyya in French Soudan or the Sanusiyya throughout France's African empire, or the Senegalese Mourides until 1912.[13] These brotherhoods may have been the victims of conspiracy on the part of their sufi rivals, or of administrative misapprehension, but each in its time did provide a vehicle for the expression of popular political discontent. A particularly notable case of sufi political opposition is that of the Niasse branch of the Tijaniyya in Nigeria.[14] Ibrahima Niasse was an important figure in the popularisation of sufism, bringing sufi experiences to millions of his followers in the 'community of grace', and in Nigerian politics his support went to the opposition Northern Elements Progressive Union (centred in Kano). The community of grace has been estimated to have been the largest single Muslim organisation at the close of the colonial period, and politically it was opposed to the Qadiri establishment. Sufi brotherhoods in the terminal colonial period of the transfer of power (the Ivory Coast's *le temps de la politique*) were heavily involved in electoral politics in many African states. The *tariqa* in this time was a particularly significant agency of political representation. As elections have since declined in political significance, so the brotherhood may be threatened with political marginality.

The conclusion that sufism is doomed as a prevalent Islamic style is one that has a growing audience among African Muslims and among observers of African Islam. Professor J. S. Trimingham, for example, has written of 'the weakening of the sufi spirit' in Africa, threatened both by modern fundamentalist Islam and by modern secularism, which is perhaps rashly designated 'irresistible ... the global trend of modern life'.[15] The previous decline of sufism in the Arab world, as so well chronicled for example in the case of Algeria by Professor Ali Merad,[16] would suggest that sufism is soon to become hopelessly out of date – unable to cope either with the demands of a world economy or with the tightening political constraints of the nation-state. Perhaps the process of doctrinal diffusion from the Arab heartlands will indeed bring the downfall of the whole sufi edifice, although there is surely room for doubt here. Sufi Islam survives very well in the Soviet Union,[17] where secularism is a good deal more irresistible than in contemporary black Africa, and there are even some thriving sufi communities in California, a state where they know a thing or two about the global trend of modern life. And sufis do take readily enough to modern electoral politics, where they are given the opportunity (in the Sudan, in Senegal or in Nigeria). It is above all the observed political versatility of sufi institutions, from dependence and clientelism to autarchy, which leads one to doubt the

prophecies of sufi doom. Should the nation-state falter or fail, there could be life yet along the path of self-sufficiency. If we are to think of Africa now as of Europe in the time of the collapse of the Roman Empire, then the sufi *zawiya* with its capacity for withdrawal and self-management could, like the Christian monastery, be an institution to preserve order and civilisation in the midst of chaos. And order thus preserved would even be democratic in its way, built as it would be upon the freely given devotion of the faithful.

REFORMIST ISLAM: SACRALITY AND WESTERNISATION

The modern proponents of Islamic reform, who have been in the ascendant since West African political independence, are part of a movement towards the emulation of current Muslim belief and practice in the Arab world. The ideal of a return to the original principles of Islam, those of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, has notably been expressed in the Wahhabiyya movement[18] (of eighteenth-century Arabian origin) and in the Salafiyya (which came to sub-Saharan Africa from early-twentieth-century Algeria). The radical or properly reactionary ideal of such reformers had had its political counterpart in a doctrinal and organisational assault on traditional sufi Islam. As in Arabia, so in Algeria, these reformists have argued that sufi mysticism and the attendant cult of saints were sanctioned neither by the Koran nor the *sunna*. West African reform movements (broadly since 1945) have followed this precedent in their bitter critique of local sufi Islam. The sufi leaders, or *marabouts*, are stigmatised as incompetent to sustain Islam and to guide the Muslim community. The list of charges is impressive: that the *marabouts* indulge in forbidden magical practices; that they are charlatans; that they collect fees from their gullible followers in return for fraudulent 'services' of intercession with the divinity; that they neglect their proper task of religious instruction, for which their poor command of Arabic makes them in any case incompetent; that they have brought division to the community of the faithful, to the *umma*, with their quite superfluous brotherhoods and lodges; that they have encouraged an impious anthropolatory, with their hierarchies of 'saints'. These doctrinal charges can be encompassed within a single one, that the sufis have committed the sin of associatism, negating the unity of God. Order is to be restored to the *umma*, in the reformist view, by a renewed emphasis on the transcendent importance of the two pure doctrinal sources, the Koran and the *sunna*.[19]

This doctrinal assault on sufism, root and branch, could not but lead to a struggle for power in West Africa, as of course it had done in Arabia and Algeria. The reformists of the Wahhabiyya or the Salafiyya have castigated black Africa's sufi leadership for its failure to protect Islam from the onslaught of colonising Europe, and they have put forward a clear alternative programme: ignorance is to be dissipated by religious instruction, necessarily based on a proper understanding of the Arabic language, with

teachers where necessary from North Africa or the Middle East. The reformists repudiate what Professor Jack Goody[20] has termed 'restricted literacy', the situation which leaves the sufi disciples in a linguistic darkness and thereby allows the perpetuation of beliefs and attitudes which Islam should not tolerate. For reformists, the techniques of instruction are to be borrowed where necessary from the modern world; pen and paper, desks and benches, radio and television, all are legitimate. The traditional *marabout* would have seen blasphemy and capitulation in the very use of such alien instruments, although that particular line of defence has proved impossible to hold.

Muslim reformists have borrowed more from the West than the instruments of modern instruction; they have adopted the model of a complete organisational structure derived from the procedures of the modern state. The movement of Islamic reform, or association of reformist *ulama*, has been organised to cover the territory delimited by imperial Europe, latterly the nation-state, and it operates with management committees and with bureaucracy, a Muslim institution modelled on the West. National Muslim associations along such lines have become general among the states of sub-Saharan Africa:[21] they can give the state a monopoly presence in the dispensation of religious patronage; they can serve a useful purpose in the collection of political information (the democracy of the KGB?) and they can confer a precious legitimacy to the state in governing its Muslim subjects. Most usefully of all, such associations focus Muslim political allegiance on the nation-state, reducing the transcendent ideal community of Islam to manageable territorial proportions. Reformists of course accuse the sufis of dividing the *umma*, with their brotherhoods and lodges, but a sufi might well retort that the reformists themselves have done much more to promote Islamic disunity, with their states and nations.[22] Discord between sufi brotherhoods is after all rarely as bitter as is strife between Muslim nations, in Africa or elsewhere.

Whatever the merits of such a hypothetical case, there can be little doubt that it is the reformists who have been gaining the ascendancy in the Muslim communities of black Africa. Reformists may have needed the sufis in order to reach a mass Muslim audience, especially a rural one, but the sufis now seem to feel an even more urgent need of reformist help in modernising their own educational programme. In so far as there is peace between sufis and reformists, it is a peace on reformist terms: the very considerable recent amplification of the pilgrimage to Mecca has helped to undermine the sufi position, as awareness of sufi marginality in the Muslim heartland is brought back with each returning *hajji*. Black Africa's Muslim reformists are installed in Mecca itself, with a place of honour in the Saudi state, in evident command. A reformist perspective again is dominant in Islamic international relations, and is respected by the powers of the Arab world. And privileged relations with the Arab Muslim world are obviously of critical importance to the penurious states south of the Sahara.

The rise of Wahhabiyya-style reform in sub-Saharan Africa is well illustrated by a review of Muslim politics in the Republic of Mali (ex-French Soudan). Wahhabi ideas began to circulate in Soudan in the 1920s and 1930s, locally introduced by Muslim traders returning from the pilgrimage to Mecca. Reformers with this inspiration were immediately drawn into conflict with the local sufi establishment, the *marabouts* whom the reformers portrayed as fraudulent salesmen of magical services (subject to a steep price rise), and as purveyors of a worthless education (which did not give anything like an adequate instruction in Arabic or in the higher Islamic learning). Wahhabi reformers were also soon in political difficulties with the French colonial administration, which had made its political alliances with sufi *marabouts*. The reformers then gave their political support to the nationalist party, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (as indeed did the administratively harassed sufis of the Hamaliyya, which together with the Wahhabiyya formed the Subbanu movement, or Islamic wing of the RDA). The reformers thus actively cultivated a political following, as they sought a religious audience by setting up separate 'Wahhabi' mosques and schools, and by organising occasions for public disputation between their spokesmen and those of the sufi brotherhoods. The evident superiority of the reformist in Islamic culture then apparently did much to swing Muslim public opinion behind the reformers. Support for the Wahhabiyya has widened quite steadily since 1945, reinforced of course by the increasing popularity of the *hajj*. And in political terms the Muslim reformers today constitute an indispensable element in the support base of the military rulers of Mali. Mali is a relatively well-known case of a development which can be traced very widely in Muslim West Africa: 'Wahhabi' ideas are now in general circulation, with a particular audience among the younger generation.[23]

The ascendancy of the Muslim reformists has grown fairly steadily over the past three decades in the states of sub-Saharan Africa. The reformist *ulama* are conspicuous in the entourages of rulers, who benefit in principle from the guidance of a consensus of the learned, and who benefit in practice from a theologically sanctioned political authority. The state-salaried *imam*, giving the Friday sermon with a text from the Ministry of the Interior, is an important agent in the creation of political order. The reformist *ulama* have done much for political order, just as the state has done a lot for the *ulama*. Political institutions in the Western style do not in practice seem to operate against the interests of the Muslim learned.

Islam can thus serve the state, even the nation-state of alien derivation, but the possible Muslim services to the cause of democracy are less clear. Though representative democracy is one Western political practice for which the reformist *ulama* have not shown a lasting inclination, if there is to be a democracy in a Western style in black Africa, then the reformist *ulama* are the most probable Muslim proponents of such democracy. It is all too easy to stigmatise the political role of (some of) the *ulama* as mere clerks of

personal rule, preaching puritanism and political compliance, but there is a process of political communication here which can work in both directions.[24] The Muslim learned of course help to convey the ruler's messages to the Muslim subjects, but they can also bear messages from the subjects to the palace. *Ulama* can even take on the leadership of movements of popular protest, when religious matters are at issue. And in extreme cases the pious *alim* can take the leadership of revolt against an unjust ruler, he can become an agent of revolution.

REVOLUTIONARY ISLAM: THE CYCLE OF MUSLIM RENEWAL

Instances of Muslim revolutionary political upheaval, of the overthrow of rulers and regimes, are to be placed within a cyclical process of religious renewal, in black Africa as elsewhere in the world of Islam. The perfection of Islam's original moment, and of the divinely dictated Koran, in principle rule out Western notions of subsequent progress in human affairs. But as the intentions of revolutionaries are no necessary guide to the outcome of revolution, various institutional changes can result from Islam's revolutionary outbreaks. And the democratic element is always present in black Africa's Islamically motivated revolutions, in the impulse which leads masses of men to rebel against authority. The unresolved problem, from a democratic standpoint, is again an institutional one; how to provide for recurrent popular participation. And here it seems that Islam at least in recent times has borrowed its modalities from the West.

There is, as already indicated, a discernible revolutionary tradition in African Islam, going back at least to the great *jihad* movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In some cases it was indeed the expansion of European power which prevented the *jihad* movements from leaving any institutional legacy, although in the case of northern Nigeria it was the application of Lugardian indirect rule policy which enabled the successor states of the great Fulani *jihad* to survive and prosper. There was a charismatic democracy in the origins of the movements of *jihad*, in the fervent devotion of the charismatic following to the leader of holy war. It was the believer's choice to come to the leader's support, his choice to follow the hero's instructions, and such charismatic devotion must be sought first in the follower's eye. In an important sense, the first believers do elect their chief, and democracy is inherent in the most authentic of charismatic moments.[25]

Succession to such revolutionary leadership has always been problematic, when the problems of institutional regulation return to the surface. The limitations of Muslim revolution are clear enough, if one compares West Africa's Islamic experience with that of the modern secular revolutionary as discussed, for example, by Professor Samuel P. Huntington.[26] If one is to accept that the achievements of the revolutionary in the post-colonial ('praetorian') world lie in the building of valid new institutions rather than

in the destruction of decrepit old ones, then the achievements of black Africa's Islamic revolutionaries seem modest indeed. Muslim revolutionaries may in Western terms be seen as either apocalyptic or reactionary in precept, and one must seriously doubt their capacity to make good the institutional dislocations of the post-colonial world.

The apocalyptic Muslim tradition of Mahdism must of course be mentioned here. Expectations of the coming of the Mahdi were, for example, concentrated by the European conquests towards the close of the nineteenth century, and Mahdism could as in the Sudan take on a character of anti-colonial resistance. But Mahdist expectations could also serve conservative ends, as in the nineteenth-century Sokoto caliphate where Mahdism was part of the ideology of the ruling *ulama* ('He is coming, but not quite yet'). The common people could, however, recognise their own signs of the imminent Last Days. They could recognise their own particular leader as the expected Renewer (*mujaddid*) who would prepare the coming of the mahdi, and even claim to have found the Mahdi in person. Revolts of such a kind were indeed a feature of early colonial rule in various West African states, and they were put down by a coalition of the Muslim establishment and the Christian conquerors. Only the truly desperate, those with very little to lose, were apparently prepared to welcome the End of Time.[27]

Reminders of Islam's continuing revolutionary potential have come of late from the cities of northern Nigeria, with the bloodstained revolts conducted first in the name, and then in the memory, of Muhammed Marwa the Maitatsine ('he who curses others'). The Izala rebellion in Kano (December 1980) resulted in some five thousand deaths, including that of the Maitatsine. Marwa's followers, an authentic charismatic clientele, were recruited from the poor and the displaced. They vehemently rejected Western education and technology as well as the leadership of sufi brotherhoods or political parties. And they responded with enthusiastic self-sacrifice to the call for a 'purified' Islam which could only have been achieved by violent revolution (echoes at least of Mahdism appear to have been involved). Renewed rioting occurred two years later (October 1982) in several northern cities, with hundreds of deaths. These outbursts have been contained by a massive use of force (army, air force, police) against a Muslim crowd of boundless bravery and scant weaponry. But there are doubtless still many followers of the Maitatsine's cause, as there will no doubt be other occasions for outbursts of revolutionary Muslim fundamentalism in northern Nigeria.[28]

The Iranian example has of course had its effect in black Africa as elsewhere in the world of Islam. The Iranian revolution of 1979 initially appealed to oppositional politicians of a previously secular persuasion, and no doubt also to certain politically ambitious Muslim clerics who may have been prepared to disregard questions of doctrinal difference between Iranian *shia* and African *sunni* Islam. Africa's outstanding example to date

has been that of Ahmed 'Khalifa' Niasse in Senegal, who proclaimed an Islamic revolution for that country (and from Paris) in November 1979. Khalifa Niasse comes from a highly respected family of the local Tijaniyya sufi order, and he had a background in governing party politics as well as in sufism. His conversion to revolutionary Muslim politics has been seen as being based on calculation rather than on faith, and his party of God (*hizboullahi*) has failed to take root. The Muslim Students' Society of Nigeria, with its campaign against the secular constitution (and against alcohol on campus), appears to be another instance of the Iranian inspiration. The potential machinery undoubtedly exists in West Africa for an Islamic revolution which would take on a clearly nationalist as well as a generally anti-Western colouration. Muslim revolution in independent Africa to date has often been confined to the domain of geopolitical conspiracy (and much can be ascribed to Libyan intrigue) but there is an audience, a democratic base notably among the educated young, for a militant and revolutionary Islamic nationalism. There is a political harvest yet to be reaped by the West African leader who can combine the appeals of revolutionary Islam and of aggrieved nationalism.

CONCLUSION

The Muslim contribution to African democracy can be understood in two possible regards, that of the internally democratic element in Muslim social institutions and that of the Muslim contribution to the institutional life of the modern state. A disregard for democratic values may be affected within the Islamic institutions; where Muslim democracy exists, it cannot readily be avowed. What weight could a believer possibly give to the people's will, set against the dictates of the Koran and the *sunna*? Yet an examination of the internal operation of Muslim institutions does reveal their concealed democratic element, from the charismatic to the clientelistic. Islam, notably in a reformist idiom, can also be shown to have made important contributions to the operation of the modern state, while in the process also borrowing substantially from the West. One can even occasionally observe a wistful admiration for democratic institutions of the Western representative type among today's Islamic elites. Modern Muslims having already borrowed the nation-state from the West, it would perhaps only be consequential on their part also to take to the Western style of democratic government (although this is probably a development for the distant future).

There has been shown to be a significant element of democracy at work in each of the type-situations reviewed above. Traditional sufi Islam, characterised by the nominal subservience of the discipline to his spiritual master, reveals upon examination some important reservations, qualifications and ambiguities behind the façade of abject submission. The spiritual disciple is after all also a political client, who can over time choose

to change his master: the geographical and social mobility of the clientele, which is of cource enhanced by economic change, increases the likelihood of such changes of spiritual master. It must be clearly borne in mind that these changes of mastery are in the end dependent upon choices made by the individual disciple concerned. That much of democracy is characteristic of real sufi situations.

The freely given allegiance of the disciple is also necessarily involved in the periodic emergence of a new charismatic leadership, whether one is to place such charismatic upheavals within the type of traditional or of revolutionary Islam. One does indeed find manipulation from above in Muslim charismatic movements, a place for a schemer and the organiser beside the miracle-worker and the mystic, but there can be no charisma without its democratic element in the unbidden devotion of a mass following to a venerated chief. Even reformist Islam, finally, has its democratic component in the service of political communication provided by the Muslim learned. Beside their important role in endowing state authority with a precious legitimacy, the *ulama* also keep the ruler informed about the state of political opinion among the Muslim subjects: such information it would be most rash for the ruler to disregard, and wise for him to use as grounds for discreet political action. The *ulama* can be adept in the politics of palace clientelism, and such clientelism always has a democratic potential in so far as these clients also can elect to change their masters, and can conspire to that effect. The ruler who listens to the whispers may not have to hear the people's wail.

5

Revolutionary democracy in Africa: the case of Guinea-Bissau

PATRICK CHABAL

> Always remember that the people are not fighting for ideas, nor for what is in man's mind. The people fight and accept the sacrifices demanded by the struggle in order to gain material advantages, to live better and in peace, to benefit from progress, and for the better future of their children. National liberation, the struggle against colonialism, the construction of peace, progress and independence are hollow words devoid of any significance unless they can be translated into a real improvement of living conditions.
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> Amílcar Cabral, *Palavras de Ordem Gerais* (Conakry: PAIGC, 1969), p. 23

For those interested in the fate of socialism in Africa, the history of Guinea-Bissau is of some consequence. It was in 1974 that the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde) achieved independence following its remarkable success during the war of national liberation. At a time when socialist hopes in Africa had begun to dissolve into despair, Guinea-Bissau stood as a symbol of African prowess, a political regime potentially more capable of sustaining socialist practices than any of its predecessors. Though in Mozambique and Angola (and later in Zimbabwe) the nationalists also emerged victorious from a war of independence, it was Guinea-Bissau which captured the imagination the most, both because of its achievements (political, military and moral) and because of the stature of Amílcar Cabral (founder and leader of the PAIGC), without doubt one of the most able and creative political leaders of modern Africa.

Today, there is debate as to whether the PAIGC in Guinea-Bissau has failed; whether indeed socialism in this small West African country remains as unattainable a goal as ever it was on the rest of the continent. Admittedly, the signs of failure are many: massive economic dependence, agricultural collapse, repression, a coup d'état (and several abortive coups), and the rejection of moves towards the unity of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde (one of the central objectives of the PAIGC). There is an apparent similarity betwen the fate of Guinea-Bissau and that of many other African countries; its economic and political deliquescence a result of its condition as an African mini-state with few resources and limited administrative skill.

Were the expectations wrong? Was Guinea-Bissau's future ever bright? Was hope founded on a myth, the myth that nationalist prowess begets socialist success? Were the aims of the PAIGC, agrarian socialism* and revolutionary democracy nothing but evanescent glitter following military euphoria?

My purpose here is to probe the symbol, to engage the myth, to come to some conclusion about the relevance of the nationalist war for revolutionary democracy and agrarian socialism and, more generally, about the relevance of revolutionary democracy and agrarian socialism for Africa. I do so by means of a discussion of the extent, nature, meaning and implications of the failure of the so-called 'Guinea-Bissau experiment'. Was it a failure of vision or a failure of will? What is the balance of responsibility between fate and agency? Are revolutionary democracy and agrarian socialism utopian in themselves or merely incapable of being brought into existence in Africa today? Finally, what can the history of Guinea-Bissau reveal that is not parochial? How does it contribute to our understanding of governance and accountability in Africa?

I

The importance, symbolic or otherwise, of the politics of Guinea-Bissau derives from the process of its decolonisation.[1] In Guinea-Bissau, Angola and Mozambique (as in Algeria and Vietnam before them), independence came as the result of nationalist wars of liberation, not through constitutional decolonisation.[2] The PAIGC went underground in 1959 and launched armed warfare in 1963. By 1973, when it proclaimed independence unilaterally, the party had consolidated its rule over two-thirds of Guinean territory and it controlled about half the population. Although Amílcar Cabral was killed in January 1973, the party went on successfully to increase its military pressure on the Portuguese, now confined to the cities and a number of fortified camps, until in 1974 the PAIGC considered itself (and in all likelihood was) in a position to defeat the colonial troops. In April of that year, however, the Portuguese military overthrew the Lisbon dictatorship and brought back democratic rule to Portugal, thereby ushering in decolonisation in its African colonies. Guinea-Bissau was granted formal independence in September 1974, the other Portuguese colonies in 1975.[3]

The history of the armed struggle in Guinea-Bissau and of the decisive influence of Cabral cannot be given here in any detail.[4] What is important to note is how the PAIGC successfully evolved into a political organisation capable of developing the military structure to sustain a difficult guerrilla war. It overcame, though not without great difficulty, the principal hurdles

* I use the expression 'agrarian socialism' to convey Cabral's commitment to socialism by means of the development of agriculture rather than at the expense of it. Agrarian socialism here does not mean socialist agriculture as it is found in Eastern Europe: quite the reverse.

to a successful people's war. It achieved *de facto* nationalist unity, it integrated the party in the interior of the country with the external leadership, it maintained strict political control of the military, and it managed to construct a working political and economic structure in the liberated areas. The party which took power at independence had little in common, therefore, with those which inherited the post-colonial state in most other African colonies. Its experience lay in political mobilisation and military struggle, its political constituency was in the countryside and its instrument was a tough indigenous ideology fashioned on the ground. That ideology, as articulated by Amílcar Cabral, contained a commitment to democracy and socialism in equal measure: revolutionary democracy and agrarian socialism.[5]

Given the colonial history of Guinea-Bissau (and of the other African Lusophone countries) and the history of the war of national liberation, it was hardly surprising that revolutionary democracy as conceived by Cabral differed from the political systems inscribed in the constitutions of the newly independent French and British colonies. The constitution of Guinea-Bissau understandably reflected the political aim of the party. Article 4 states: 'In Guinea-Bissau, power is exercised by the labouring masses in close association with the PAIGC which is the political driving force of society.'[6] Article 6 is even more explicit: 'The PAIGC is the driving force of society. It is the supreme expression of the sovereign will of the people. It defines the political orientation of the state and ensures its realisation by appropriate means.'[7]

What this meant, simply, was that in Guinea-Bissau, as in other socialist countries, there would be a one-party state and that the party would be the dominant political and ideological force. This is not, on the face of it, a principle of democratic rule and indeed, historically, party control has been the single most effective organisational enemy of democracy. Cabral, nevertheless, strongly believed that he could provide a democratic balance to party rule and he took vigorous action to ensure that this would be the case after independence.[8]

To him what Guinea-Bissau needed and, more importantly, what it could have, was revolutionary democracy.[9] By this he meant a political system in which democratic control of the revolutionary party was given a firm institutional framework. Although he viewed the party as the driving force of the revolution, he believed that a socialist transformation of society was not possible, nor was it desirable, without popular support as expressed through democratic institutions. In this respect the question of the political role of the party and its relationship to the state was paramount. Although during the war Cabral had sought to develop the party itself according to a 'spirit' of revolutionary democracy, there is some doubt as to how much he had achieved which could survive his death.[10] Whatever the case, he knew that, after independence, his hope for revolutionary democracy was doomed without institutions in which democratically controlled state power

counterbalanced the inherent tendency in one-party states for the party slowly to monopolise power. It was for this reason that he had insisted on holding elections before independence and, indeed, the 1972 elections were unique.[11] There is no other example of a revolutionary nationalist movement holding recognisably fair elections before liberation, nor is there any other example of a self-proclaimed revolutionary party, dedicated to one-party rule, creating the political structure to ensure that the party is politically accountable to the people over whom and in whose name it proposes to rule.

The 1972 elections made it possible for the population of the liberated areas to elect regional and national representatives. Unsurprisingly, the voting derived from a concept of democracy different from that in practice in Western Europe or North America. There was no multi-party competition, nor was there, as there is in some other African countries, multi-candidate competition. The voting rubber-stamped the election of the nominated candidates so that democracy was only extant in the selection of the candidates. On the whole, the choice of the candidates was left to the local constituencies and there was minimal party interference with their selection.[12] This was due to the attitude of the party and to its legitimacy in the liberated areas rather than to any political safeguard built into the electoral process. It was the long established and mutually recognised trust which gave meaning to the campaign of political mobilisation leading to the elections. In this respect, and it could not historically have been otherwise, the elections were democratic. The party, or at least Amílcar Cabral, was committed to the establishment of representative political institutions. This, in Cabral's view, was revolutionary democracy.

What he hoped to achieve was a novel form of democracy consonant with the experience of the political process of decolonisation and with the revolutionary aims of the PAIGC. These aims were revolutionary not just because Cabral was a socialist but because, in Sklar's words, they sought to 'evoke fresh and original responses to the problems of economic underdevelopment, social stagnation and political drift'.[13] They were democratic because they sought to do so by means of a political system which would institutionalise and give life to the rulers' accountability to the ruled. This Cabral intended to achieve without coercion, following the wartime practice of political mobilisation though persuasion and propaganda.

Cabral's death, early in 1973, before independence, removed the strongest force behind this ambitious attempt at revolutionary democracy.[14] Nevertheless, the PAIGC pledged to carry on in the spirit of its founder and, at independence, it remained committed to the twin political aims he had outlined. To this day the party's programme is unchanged. That the experiment had not succeeded was openly revealed (though it had been evident for some time) by the coup of November 1980 in which the prime minister, J. B. Vieira (Nino), overthrew the president, Luiz Cabral, abolished elected institutions and set up a Revolutionary Council accountable

only to itself and to the new party leadership.[15] The implications of the obvious political failings of the PAIGC were enormous. A proper understanding of the genesis of the 'Guinea-Bissau experiment' and of the reasons for its fate will show that the failure, though not inevitable, was made more likely by the circumstances under which the PAIGC took power at independence.

Like most African states, as I argue in the Introduction to this book, Guinea-Bissau was destined to be a one-party state. The PAIGC, like the nationalist parties of Angola and Mozambique, half military and half revolutionary, was disinclined to consider forms of democratic one-party rule which would give equal political weight to those who had collaborated with the Portuguese or who had thrived on ethnic nationalism. In those three countries, the nationalist victors faced the task of constructing a new state out of a clandestine party organisation and the remnants of the colonial bureaucracy with which they could not dispense. The state they so constructed was fragile, contradictory and ill-prepared to take over the running of a government rent by the depth of the crises which immediately confronted it. Out of the bush and into ministerial chairs, the party leaders, though hardened by years of war, had had no time to submit their ideals to the trials of everyday government.

The task facing the government of Guinea-Bissau (without Amílcar Cabral) was to combine political mobilisation for development with revolutionary democracy. Guinea-Bissau gained freedom as a poor, underdeveloped and war-scarred country, with an artificially swollen capital city holding over one-seventh of the total population.[16] Its skeletal infrastructure had been reduced to rubble and its agriculture, virtually the country's only proven resource, had been much diminished by the conflict. Merely to feed itself, Guinea-Bissau required large investments in infrastructure and agriculture, and the reconstruction of the marketing and credit networks. At the same time, sustaining the population of the capital absorbed an increasingly large proportion of the country's budget. Though foreign aid and gifts were abundant, it was clear that to meet the country's economic needs, let alone to begin modernising agriculture, expert management on the part of the government was required, particularly if the country was not simply to sink into ever greater external debt and dependence.[17]

The PAIGC, with its mere handful of cadres capable of taking over the functions of government, was compelled to rely heavily on the expertise of the colonial bureaucrats, many of whom were reluctant or unwilling partners in this experiment in socialist democracy. To induce that section of the civil service to work, even more to carry out the government's policies, committed the state to large financial disbursements. At a very fundamental level, the new government simply did not have the manpower to do its job. It was overwhelmed. Many of the ablest guerrilla commanders simply drowned in administrative work. But democracy needs good administration

simply because bad administration wastes resources and leads to discontent, and discontent breeds opposition. Opposition in one-party states leads to divisions within the party. Such divisions usually result in less rather than more democracy.

Politically, the party's dilemma was equally stark. Its historical constituency was in the liberated areas, where the war had not led to structural changes in the mode of production. The villagers' chief demands were low taxes, fair prices, efficient marketing and trade, extended credit facilities and improved communications. In a democratic state, their demands should have prevailed. And in fact Cabral's programme for development placed full priority on the improvement of agriculture. But those demands were in no sense revolutionary, in that they did not imply, according to Cabral, the modernisation of the countryside which was essential for the success of agrarian socialism. Though Cabral never disclosed the nature of the agrarian revolution he had in mind, it would require structural changes if only because there were severe limits to increased production within the existing pattern of family-based agriculture.[18] Whether Cabral's assumptions about the need for structural changes were ill-founded has not yet been demonstrated. However, as a working agronomist in Guinea-Bissau he was better placed than most to assess the needs and potential of agriculture, so it behoves those who argue against his views to show why they were inappropriate. The obvious failure of agrarian socialism in Africa (and elsewhere) so far may not in itself necessarily support the current view that only capitalist agriculture can thrive on the continent.[19] In any event, it is apparent in Cabral's writings that much of what he advocated for agriculture was not, *stricto sensu*, socialist. He always emphasised, for example, policies (such as high producer prices) which would induce peasants to produce more. Agrarian socialism, state support for mechanised and cooperative farming, were only envisaged for the distant future.[20]

Concretely, then, the PAIGC's difficulties lay in inducing mobilisation for change in the country democratically, that is without coercion and within limits acceptable to the villagers. Cabral's system of political representation which provided for a rural majority in the national assembly ought to have ensured that the government remained accountable to, or at least heeded, the countryside. The successful election of that assembly before independence did indeed give a voice to the representatives of the rural areas, a voice which was heard, even if grudgingly, during the first few years of independence.[21]

At independence, however, the PAIGC's writ did not run in the cities, controlled until the end of the war by the Portuguese. Opposition to the nationalist party was concentrated there, particularly in Bissau. Those who had done well under colonial rule, including the civil servants, greeted a PAIGC state with hostility. The war had induced a massive inflow of population into Bissau, and that flow continued virtually unabated after independence. The city, which had hitherto survived on colonial largesse,

could not cope. It became a national and political problem. Support for the PAIGC could only be enhanced through policies beneficial to those living and working in the city. Political and economic logic would have required the repatriation of large numbers to the countryside but there were certainly no democratic, and probably no non-coercive, means of inducing such a return, which in terms of development was virtually a requirement for the success of Cabral's policies. However, whether Cabral's project to decentralise the government and dispense with Bissau as the capital was viable is open to question.[22]

The government's policy to gain, rather than to coerce, support in the city, its determination to overcome rapidly growing urban problems, and the manifold pressure for an urban-based form of development, increasingly shifted the focus of its action away from the countryside.[23] This is a common problem in African countries but it is one which is made far worse in cases where wars have artificially sustained excessive urbanisation. The PAIGC's efforts were compromises, but compromises which unambiguously favoured the city over the countryside. More and more political and economic resources were expended on the urban sector. Though the elections of 1976 showed that, on the whole, the PAIGC had managed successfully to heal the wounds of war, the drought of 1977 revealed the fragility of the country's economy and exposed the government's neglect of the countryside.[24] In the same year, the Third Party Congress took stock of the deepening crisis but did not bring about decisive action, or indeed any action at all. The November 1980 coup laid open the political and economic contradictions which had torn the PAIGC apart.

II

Although the post-colonial state in Guinea-Bissau started life with serious economic liabilities, the clearest evidence of the failure of government policies since independence *is* in the economic field. Whatever the long-term socialist ambitions of the PAIGC, its minimal programme was clear: reconstruction, self-sufficiency in food at the earliest possible date, and modernisation of agriculture as the basis for development.[25] The implications of this programme were equally clear and involved the development of the means to sustain the recovery and improvement of agriculture: infrastructure, credit, trade, provision of seed, fair pricing, transport, storage facilities and, above all, reconstruction aid. Though Guinea-Bissau's potential for agriculture is good (considering the erratic weather conditions caused by its Sahelian location), the destructive war, the displacement of substantial segments of the population and the disruption of pre-war trade were bound to create serious problems once the government tried to integrate the liberated areas with the rest of the country.[26]

The first three years of independence (1974–7) saw the return of the displaced population, their re-integration into the countryside and limited

reconstruction, principally initiated and sustained by the villagers themselves. Government support was minimal and erratic. The 1977–8 drought, undoubtedly severe, struck a massive blow against the whole fragile agricultural edifice.[27] It exposed the limitations of government support and, more importantly, revealed the absence of coherent policies to sustain agriculture. Production collapsed, and rice and grain shortages became severe. Between 1978 and 1980, food deficits were frequent, particularly in the cities, and contributed to widespread discontent, hence the popular appeal of the 1980 coup. Since 1980, the situation has not deteriorated further although there is little evidence that it has improved much. Agricultural output fluctuates widely with rainfall. Only in 1983–4 did the government adopt a radical policy of price support in order to try to encourage an increase in marketable agricultural production. Producer prices rose 72 per cent for groundnuts and 76 per cent for rice.[28] These recent measures highlight the magnitude of the problem after the first decade of independence.

The failings of government policy, at least until 1980, were evident in all areas of agrarian policy. With regard to the infrastructure, the key to the development of production and trade, very little has been done. Of about 2,500 km of road, only 400 km are paved. It was not until 1979 that a programme funded by the IDA financed the repair of another vital 500 km. A new project got underway in 1984–5 to repair another 500 km. But, ultimately, proper transport (especially in bulk) depends on the successful utilisation of existing waterways (80 per cent of the population lives within 20 km of navigable waterways). Only in 1984 was the first major programme of port improvement begun.[29]

Between 1976, when prices paid to producers were increased substantially, and 1983, the terms of trade had become less and less favourable to the rural sector. Furthermore, the availability of basic consumer necessities in the state-run People's Stores worsened considerably during the same period (dramatically until 1980, only improving slightly thereafter), eventually reaching a point of permanent penury. Most basic necessities had to be obtained from private traders who, because they were operating illegally, marked up their prices.[30] It is too early to say whether the new measures taken by the Vieira government (including the privatisation in 1983–4 of some of the state trading network) will satisfy the demands of the countryside for consumer goods and, thereby, provide incentives for increased production. Unless the availability of consumer goods to the countryside increases, the extra revenues derived from better pricing will not have the desired effect on production.

Although efforts have been made under the Vieira government to improve the situation in the countryside, very little has yet been done in the crucial areas of transport, storage, credit and technical support (including seed supplies). The action of the government since 1980 has recovered some of the ground lost between 1977 and 1980 in productive terms (particularly

for rice) and has given evidence that the regime is attempting to concentrate a greater proportion of the nation's very limited resources on agriculture. This has been achieved by reducing the scope of an over-ambitious industrial programme and thus reducing the overall trade deficit. Nevertheless, trade deficits and the external debt remain so large as to make the prospect of economic autonomy utterly remote. Ten years after independence, the agriculture of Guinea-Bissau has not been modernised. The worst mistakes of the Luiz Cabral regime are in the process of being corrected but it will be some years before the country is in a position to build upon a stable agricultural sector.

Similarly, in the minuscule manufacturing sector, the mistakes of the first regime have, to some extent, been corrected. It had become obvious by 1980 that the overall ambitions of the Luiz Cabral regime were far in excess of the needs, requirements and possibilities of the country.[31] Since the coup, industrial investment has declined drastically. Expenditure on industrial projects was reduced from $12.3 million in 1980 to $1.5 million in 1981.[32] Moreover, several projects (for example, the Citroën vehicle assembly plant) have been abandoned.[33] Generally, fuel economy measures have reduced the possibility of industrial development. It is now clear to the government of Guinea-Bissau and to many of those who finance it from outside that investment must be concentrated on the infrastructure, transport, fishing and, above all, agriculture, if the country is to emerge at all from the depths of dependence to which it has sunk. Given the structure of state expenditures only a stable agricultural revenue and agricultural exports can help this process.

Despite these important attempts to correct some of the economic excesses of the previous regime, the Vieira government has not been able to reduce the enormous drain on public finance due to the state and civil service wage bill. In the 1982 budget, salaries and wages were allocated 59 per cent of overall expenditure. Government expenditure was expected to rise to $59.9 million in that year, producing a deficit of $33.4 million.[34]

The precariousness of the country's economic situation (despite massive amounts of foreign aid) and the measure of its dependence can be judged by its trade and debt position. The export/import ratio tells some of the story.[35] From an abysmal 8 per cent at independence it rose to 35 per cent in 1977. Since the country's exports are entirely limited to agricultural produce (groundnuts, palm kernels, timber) and fish (shellfish), and since import needs tend to grow inexorably (if only because of the cost of fuel and machinery), the ratio cannot be expected to become more favourable unless agricultural production picks up. The recent evolution of the ratio is as follows.

1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983
35	25	22	20	28	24	16

The situation would be considerably worse if it were not for the fact that

most food purchases, at times the bulk of the county's rice needs, are covered by aid agreements. And although the import situation has stabilised since 1980, the trade deficit is not likely to be reduced much given the evolution of the terms of exchange between agricultural and manufactured goods. Guinea-Bissau is indeed locked in a classical dependent condition, one which is well illustrated by the magnitude of its external debt. The current account deficit has been substantially reduced since 1980 (due to drastic import controls and larger transfers), but the increase in borrowing has pushed the overall debt burden to extremes.[36]

This brief panorama of the economy since independence shows a record of mistakes, confusion, ill-luck and dependence. Quite clearly the picture is not substantially different from that of other African Sahelian mini-states, and in some ways, since common sense has prevailed, it is not as bad as it might have been. Agricultural production recovers in good years and shows some promise. Guinea-Bissau could become self-sufficient in food. Manufacturing excesses have been curbed. Imports have been reduced and expenditure controlled (though not reduced). But clearly the situation is precarious, with agricultural production liable to collapse at any time, infrastructure, transport and storage wholly inadequate, the public wage bill extravagant and external dependence almost total. The PAIGC's minimal objectives are far from being attained. There is little prospect of its socialist objectives being implemented.

The failure of the first decade is, in this respect, consequential. Modernisation of the countryside through structural change, assuming that the present regime still harbours Amílcar Cabral's ideals, is still remote. Though Cabral's ambitions were pragmatic, he believed that progress in the countryside would require a steady move towards more cooperative and mechanised forms of farming in addition to, rather than instead of, the existing pattern of village and family production.[37] Even that limited goal seems beyond the imaginative and practical capacities of the state. The struggle for survival has moved the regime a long way from Cabral's ambitions.

The political record is, if anything (and partly because of it), worse than the economic one. The PAIGC possessed at independence enormous political resources, the legacy of the armed struggle, its most important asset in the process of mobilisation with which it intended to move the country forward.[38] The process of political decay, culminating in the 1980 coup, derived from the political evolution of the party and of the state, and from the increasing centralisation of power in the hands of the leadership of the emerging party-state. The result was the slow dessication of the PAIGC which had sustained the war effort in the liberated areas, and the establishment of a bureaucratic party in the cities and provinces, a party increasingly used as a transmission belt rather than an organ of democracy. Similarly, the state was centralised, swallowing the party and its ancillary organisations, and increasingly robbing the elected institutions of their

function. By 1977, when the economic crisis exposed the government, the elected representatives (the national assembly) began to be silenced or ignored.[39]

State and party organisations were transformed from representative institutions to instruments of repression.[40] As opposition and discontent grew, repression increased. The failure of the Luiz Cabral government to persuade party and people of the desirability of greater integration with Cape Verde, and the 1980 constitutional debate which further aggravated the situation, increased tensions within the leadership and precipitated moves to topple Luiz Cabral.[41] By then, six years after independence, the PAIGC state had not only managed to dissipate the bulk of its political assets but it had virtually foreclosed the possibility of moving towards revolutionary democracy, as conceived by Cabral. The costs of failure were enormous and possibly irreversible.

What is most significant about the political events under the Luiz Cabral regime is that there was a reversal of the ideals and practice of the PAIGC as it was developed during the war.[42] It was impossible for the war itself to be conducted democratically, but during that period the party grew largely from the grassroots. Its policies of political mobilisation and defence of the countryside succeeded because there was a working harmony and trust between political leadership and villagers. Although it is sometimes argued that there was excessive centralisation of the party and excessive distance between the largely Cape Verdean leadership and the Guinean rank and file, the record suggests that the PAIGC achieved a high degree of integration and that it had genuine support in the liberated areas. But soon after independence (certainly by 1977), the government, both in what it was doing and in what it was not doing, began to move away from the party-state as it had been conceived by Cabral.

There were historical, structural and institutional reasons, as well as reasons of personal greed, for this move, which I have analysed elsewhere.[43] The combined effects of the economic crisis and political decay split the leadership, divided the country, and largely disenfranchised the villagers from the party. As a result, the 1980 coup was greeted with genuine enthusiasm. Vieira, a popular guerrilla commander with considerable following in the country, was given widespread support and the party gained a new lease of life. The villagers now awaited to see whether improvements would ensue. Would the party once again be their party, a party responsive to their needs and willing seriously to listen to them? Could Vieira return to Cabral's policies as he claimed he would do?

The evidence of the years 1980–4 is confused and contradictory. Certainly Vieira's government removed the most odious irritants: food was given priority, distribution was improved, attention was again focused on the countryside, producer prices were boosted.[44] Politically, Vieira sought to re-establish links with the countryside travelling widely throughout the country and hearing grievances. Repression and arbitrary party rule were

curbed, political prisoners released and security measures relaxed. The armed forces, which had accumulated substantial political and corporate grievances under the Luiz Cabral regime, were placated by Vieira whom they respected and who, in turn, depended on their support. Finally, it is not difficult to understand why, after the excesses of the Luiz Cabral regime, there was support in the country for a break with Cape Verde and an independent PAIGC. Although Vieira is not opposed in principle to closer cooperation (rather than integration) with Cape Verde, Cabral's dream of unity is dead. At a very fundamental level, therefore, Vieira's government has attempted to regain and cultivate the support of the countryside, without needlessly alienating the urban population. Symbolically, he has been considerably more successful than Luiz Cabral and he remains a popular figure.

More substantially, and institutionally, the regime has moved slowly and falteringly towards the restoration of some form of democracy. After the coup, Vieira set up a Revolutionary Council, abolished the national assembly and abrogated the constitution. It took him nearly four years, no doubt for good political reasons, to hold the promised elections. Only in March/April 1984 were the new regional councils and the national assembly (150 members) re-elected. In May 1984, the assembly adopted a new constitution and elected a Council of State (government).[45] Vieira headed the Council of State. Paradoxically, under the new constitution he is also prime minister and chief of the armed forces – it was, among other things, Luiz Cabral's attempt to combine the two positions of president and prime minister in the 1980 constitutional draft which triggered the coup by Vieira, who was prime minister at that time. It is too early to say how significant the return to constitutional rule is, and particularly how much weight the elected representatives will have in policy making and implementation.

What is much clearer is that, since the coup, political infighting has continued unabated, perhaps an inevitable consequence of the illegal seizure of power. There have been at least two coup attempts (1982 and 1984) and three purges of the top leadership, including that of Vitor Saúde Maria, former foreign minister, vice-president of the Council of the Revolution and prime minister. In an inauspicious, but sadly familiar, turn of events, Vitor Maria was charged with plotting a coup following the constitutional proposal that his position as prime minister be combined with that of Head of the Council of State. In addition, there has been infighting within the armed forces (many top ranking officers have been given executive positions in the government) and between the armed forces and the party. As a recognised party leader as well as a genuine military commander, Vieira can hope to control both, but he has not been very successful in reducing the tension that has come about as a result of the political gap which opened under the previous regime. This cannot be a very good omen for the democratic future of the country.

III

An analysis of the reasons for the political failure of the Luiz Cabral regime and for the difficulties of its successor, which are partly due to the coup itself, suggests that in the absence of Amílcar Cabral, failure of vision and failure of will undermined, perhaps fatally, the potential for revolutionary democracy.[46] Clearly the economic crisis, on balance a consequence of ill-advised human agency rather than simply internal and external constraints, contributed heavily to the political decay of the PAIGC. But there was nothing inevitable in the process of political deliquescence.[47] There are a number of political factors which account for this decline. They include problems of leadership, an inability successfully to integrate the party nationally after independence, a reluctance to stimulate the growth of the party from below, a consequent bureaucratisation and ossification of the party, a failure to counter the political and economic dominance of Bissau, excessive centralisation and, finally, an overwhelming lack of commitment to the bicephalous party-state which Cabral had advisedly sought to establish.[48]

These all point to, and reflect, the central failure of the regime, that is the political breakdown between state and countryside. The hallmark of Guinea-Bissau and its significance for African politics was the attempt to establish an agrarian-based form of socialism through democratic means, harnessing the mobilisation of rural society initiated by the war. Such a process required above all else a working relation between state and countryside, a relation based on trust and commitment. That such relations have few successful precedents in history made the experiment all the more crucial. Whether it is an impossible or even undesirable objective is an issue to which I return below.[49] Here I want to show how PAIGC policies failed even to pursue it with any degree of commitment and coherence. Three processes were at work: a shift in party ideology towards new forms of socialist policies; a change in the nature of the party towards greater (rather than less) organisational and political centralisation; and a slide towards party monopoly of power, or rather the monopoly of power by the party leadership.

The shift in ideology both reflected and legitimised the other processes at work. It proceeded by stealth, but it had the most profound effect on the life of the party. By 1977, when the official party ideology was vigorously reaffirmed at the Third Party Congress, the leadership was well aware of the dichotomy within the PAIGC.[50] By 1980, the new ideology was almost in the open. Whether, in the absence of changes in party personnel and policies, the trend has now been reversed (as Vieira claims) is open to doubt. For reasons having to do with the changing balance of power within the party, the PAIGC under Luiz Cabral moved slowly but inexorably away from the previous policy of working with rather than upon the countryside. That this should have happened is not altogether surprising since in Cabral's

absence, there were few with the same degree of commitment to the priority of agriculture.[51] Although it could be argued that even in Cabral's case this commitment was merely the cant of political mobilisation in the countryside, the evidence from his action as party leader is convincing enough.

This shift in ideology was thus partly a matter of leadership. The Luiz Cabral regime had little understanding of agrarian questions nor did it have the political will to resist the manifold pressure against the countryside (pressure which obtains everywhere in Africa). But there was far more to it than this. It was also a reflection of the thinking of those in the party who had consistently advocated policies of more and faster technical advance (primarily in the manufacturing sector) as the only means towards socialism. It harked back to an older debate. On several occasions during the war, but especially in 1972, Amílcar Cabral's policy of political rather than strictly military warfare had come under considerable criticism from some of his colleagues.[52] Why not throw everything into the battle and finish with the Portuguese, they argued. Cabral maintained that the human and political costs of such action would outweigh the military gains. Unsurprisingly, after Cabral's death in 1973, the PAIGC's military activities were immediately and considerably increased.

Underlying this debate was a more profound one with implications for party organisation, policies and attitudes. More military pressure meant greater use of more sophisticated armament, hence less of a people's war and more of a conventional war – with, incidentally, greater military prominence given to technically able commanders, chiefly Cape Verdeans. Military logic clashed with political acumen. Both had merit, but Cabral's position evidently reflected his policies towards the countryside.[53] The pace of military action must never outstrip the political capability of the party and of the people behind it. This debate, which came to a head at the time of Cabral's death, was an indication of the dilemma facing the PAIGC at independence, and the shift in ideology which occurred is a reflection of similar attitudes to problems which are only apparently different. Though it is possible to win a war by conventional military means, it is not possible to develop agriculture by technical means only, and certainly not against the wishes of the producers.

Peasant production requires cooperation, and cooperation comes at a political price. It is that price which the Luiz Cabral government was not willing to pay. It was ultimately the 'technicist' faction in the party – that is, the political alliance between the urban-based bureaucratic bourgeoisie and those in the PAIGC committed to socialism from above through industrial advance – who came to predominate. Whether Luiz Cabral was their leader or whether he simply buckled under their pressure is, politically, a moot point. The shift in ideology, therefore, was not just a choice of different policies, it was a change towards a different vision of development (whether socialist or not is unclear) much more akin to visions of development found in the rest of Africa.[54]

The locus of the ideological battle was, and was always going to be, the party's position on Bissau. Cabral's attitude and his notion of a decentralised state, in which Bissau would not acquire a monopoly over the economic and political life of the country, was clear even if difficult to implement. The point here was not so much that Bissau would suffer the fate of Phnom Penh but rather that an agrarian priority in development policies demanded the establishment of political and economic structures able to mobilise the countryside. Cabral's concern was that urbanisation would outstrip the productive capacity of agriculture. How he would have achieved his aim remains vague, but what is eminently clear is that PAIGC policy after independence did little to move in that direction – or even to cease hurtling in the other direction. Whether those who adhered to Cabral's views simply assumed that the problem would take care of itself or whether they were comprehensively defeated by the 'urban-technicist' faction is not clear.[55] But the result was disastrous, not only for the future of agrarian socialism in Guinea-Bissau but also for the sheer survival of the country.

The economic consequences of the considerable financial burden of feeding, employing and servicing the inhabitants of Bissau were severe. Much more significant, however, were the political, social and developmental implications of policies which were seen to support and encourage an urban vision of the future with all its attendant sequels. At an individual level, to move forward was to move to Bissau. For the country as a whole, the future was the promise held by Bissau. This had a profound impact on the body politic and on some of its major social groups (armed forces, students, peasants, and so on). This is not to say that the alternative was an easy option, but simply to point out that the PAIGC's natural constituency, the countryside, could not have found much to cheer about in the shift in PAIGC ideology. Nor would they have failed to notice the impact of this change on the party they had known and on the state apparatus they had been expected to join.

Consonant with, and partly as a result of, the ideological shift, the party underwent a profound (if mildly subterranean) transformation. The political unification of the whole country at independence did not follow the expected course. Although on paper the PAIGC was extended to those areas which had remained under Portuguese control (chiefly the cities) on the principles and organisation which had obtained in the liberated areas, the reality was different. Because the aim of the party leaders was now to minimise opposition and because the ideology of the party was shifting, the new PAIGC became an instrument of legitimation rather than mobilisation. Significantly, the formal reorganisation of the party was begun in Bissau, not in the liberated areas where the villagers might have expected earlier recognition of their contribution to the nationalist war. Even more significantly, it seems to me, militants from the liberated areas were not used as they might have been for the purposes of legitimising the PAIGC in other

areas. Clearly, the organisation of the 'new' party was in the hands of the centre, the party leadership and its delegates. Gradually, power was removed from the 'old' party of the liberated areas.[56]

This process went hand in hand with and indeed required the centralisation of power and the transformation of the party from one to which the villagers felt they belonged to one constructed on straightforward hierarchical lines.[57] In effect, the party became a transmission belt for the state. To some extent, similar difficulties would have afflicted the PAIGC no matter how serious its commitment to its rural constituency, given that most cadres were drafted into the state apparatus. But in the absence of genuine commitment to the countryside and to the mobilisational role of the PAIGC, the metamorphosis into a party machine was swift. Where the party had been strong in the liberated areas, it remained strong, but it became detached from the higher echelons of the PAIGC. The two-way political flow Cabral had intended to initiate did not endure beyond the first years of independence. In the rest of the country, the party simply became the instrument of the leadership. Soon the 'new' PAIGC submerged the 'old', whose members, angry, resigned or indifferent, shut themselves off from the political process. That this occurred, and occurred so rapidly after independence, is not to say that the party leadership wilfully set out to subvert the 'old' party. Chance, accident, overwork, incompetence, neglect, unconcern and lack of communication all played their part. However, when the evidence of widespread discontent and alienation in the countryside emerged, the response was to silence criticism through tighter party control and repression. By 1980, the state security was feared even in the area of greatest PAIGC support, the south. Among those executed without trial between 1978 and 1980 there were some who opposed party policy, and not just real or imagined plotters of coups.[58]

As Bissau came to dominate the country, so the party leadership came to monopolise power. Party rhetoric still deferred to its rural constituency but the villagers knew better. Vieira claimed after the coup that it was this betrayal of the PAIGC ideals and the monopoly control of power exercised by the Luiz Cabral faction which had compelled him to seize power illegally.[59] He pledged himself to reverse this trend, and to return to Cabral's political line. Certainly, there has been a change in attitude. Vieira and his collaborators have made some effort to convince the party's rural constituency of its commitment to agrarian development and to genuine party dialogue. Vieira's popularity and the obvious change in the political climate have rekindled some support in the historic PAIGC grassroot constituencies. But the fundamental question remains: what is the nature of the PAIGC as a party today? There is insufficient evidence to do more than to speculate, but it seems unlikely that any deep structural changes have taken place. The organisation of the party has not changed, even if some members have been removed. If anything, the PAIGC has been further centralised as Vieira fears opposition from within its ruling circle.

Since the distinction between party and state has become virtually meaningless in Guinea-Bissau (except at the local level) and since it is unlikely that Vieira's regime should want to revive an independent party, the whole notion of revolutionary democracy has been recast in terms of straightforward political accountability.[60] Can a revitalised local party with new confidence and hope ensure that the elected representatives have an effective voice within the state? In one-party states, it cannot be expected that representative institutions acquire independent power, that is, power to oppose government policies. The national assembly in Guinea-Bissau never could, and certainly cannot today, vote motions of censure. It can only influence government policy in so far as the government is willing to be influenced. No doubt, the discouraging experience of the Luiz Cabral regime will suggest to Vieira that he should not ignore popular sentiments.[61] But, ultimately, there is no institutional, political or even legal recourse against his doing so. And whether or not he does so may not, in the end, have much to do with Guinea-Bissau's historical experience as a nation born of nationalist war. A decade after independence, is the 'Guinea-Bissau experiment' to be registered as a failure, discounted as most other socialist experiments in Africa have been?[62]

IV

The analysis of the case of Guinea-Bissau, the implications of which are not overly cheering, can be read at different levels and interpreted in different ways. The most immediate interpretation, and certainly the most attractive to those who always discounted the relevance of the armed struggle for the post-colonial period,[63] is that failure was inevitable. The vagaries of the Luiz Cabral and Vieira regimes are relevant only in that they illustrate the mechanisms of political decay and economic crisis which are the fate of African countries like Guinea-Bissau (small, undeveloped mini-states with few resources). This structural, though not necessarily Marxist, interpretation essentially dismisses the role of human agency. The skills and imagination of leadership may serve to mitigate, but not effectively to avoid, the consequences of the country's objective condition. The future is gloomy because nations like Guinea-Bissau are unlikely to be viable, whatever the policies of their governments.

Certainly, there is merit in being reminded of the objective condition of countries like Guinea-Bissau, a condition which is severely constraining and which is not likely to change under even the most favourable assumptions about world market trends and climate changes.[64] Guinea-Bissau does not have a rosy economic future whatever the circumstances, unless it strikes oil offshore and uncovers viable bauxite deposits in the east of the country (and the outlook so far is not very good). There is also merit in forcing a realistic assessment of the limits of skilful leadership in Guinea-Bissau or elsewhere. However brilliant Amílcar Cabral was as a politician and however inept his

successors may have been (and we cannot yet be sure of Vieira's skills), it is not particularly helpful to speculate on whether Cabral's leadership would have been sufficient to ensure the success of his project. At best, we can speculate as to which pitfalls he might have been able to avoid, but that is not much. Counterfactual analysis does not take us very far because we have nothing to go by: Cabral died before independence. In any event, he himself was not over-confident about his own chances of success and the reasons for this had less to do with self-doubt than with an awareness of the economic, social and political condition of Guinea-Bissau.[65] At the same time, however, it is precisely because Cabral had such concrete knowledge of those conditions and so few illusions about the potential for revolutionary democracy or for agrarian socialism that his project is interesting and utterly relevant to the rest of Africa.

From a second angle, therefore, his project can be seen as an attempt to put into practice necessary, rather than ideal, political and economic policies. In other words, Cabral's project of agrarian socialism and revolutionary democracy was the most realistic, and only in this sense the most ambitious, programme that could be envisaged for a country like Guinea-Bissau. This interpretation would explain why much of Cabral's writing was concerned to persuade his party that there was no alternative, certainly no industrial socialist alternative. Guinea-Bissau could be no other than an agricultural country. In order to be a viable agricultural country it needed to modernise and expand its agricultural base.[66] This could only be achieved in cooperation with the countryside through mobilisation. Successful mobilisation required, as the war had shown, an effective system of representation and accountability. To put it crudely, there was no short cut to a successful agricultural policy and there could be no successful development without success in agriculture. This is not a conclusion with which most serious analysts of Africa's present economic conditions would be inclined to disagree.

The second interpretation of the failure of Guinea-Bissau is, therefore, that the greatest mistake of the post-colonial government is its failure to grasp the absolute necessity of Cabral's project, and as a result to have dissipated the considerable political assets which the PAIGC possessed at independence.[67] Such assets, which were the historical product of the particular process of the war, though rare in Africa, are arguably essential to the success of any sustained agrarian development (whether socialist or not). Few other countries, not even Mozambique and Angola, had at their disposal a political instrument so fully mobilised, politically conscious and as firm in its local roots as the PAIGC was at independence. In this perspective, the failure of independent Guinea-Bissau, overwhelmingly a failure of political judgement, is probably fatal to Cabral's project, for once dissipated these historically specific, and thus eminently evanescent, political assets cannot be artificially re-created. The state has failed to meet civil society on common ground. The fate of Guinea-Bissau today is that of any

other similar African country. The history of the armed struggle is less and less relevant.

At a third level, however, it could be argued that vision mattered less than means. Though there was widespread agreement within the PAIGC on Cabral's political project, there was not at independence the machinery to implement it successfully. In this perspective, the will withered in the face of the sheer enormity of the task.[68] Realism thus forced a shift in ideology towards more realistic aims. This interpretation derives partly from the view that, under the circumstances, the PAIGC was not the proper instrument to carry out Cabral's policies. The argument here is that, during the war, the party had been considerably tightened and centralised. It was essentially run from the top by the Conselho de Guerra (if not by Cabral alone). Though in time of war this absence of real democracy was compensated by the necessity for the party to be sensitive to its rural constituency, at independence the political logic was reversed.[69] The countryside was secure and it was the cities which became the new battleground. The PAIGC operated with the centralised and tightly controlled party machine it had inherited from the war, from the top down. Because of political opposition, particularly in Bissau, and because of the urgent necessity of unifying the country politically before moving towards economic development, the PAIGC leadership took no chance and acted swiftly, if somewhat ruthlessly.

From this perspective, it was not so much that the PAIGC became less democratic or that it wilfully neglected the countryside but rather that, because it now had two different political constituencies, it was caught between the two. The argument here is considerably reinforced if one accepts, as many do, that there was no realistic possibility of decentralisation in Guinea-Bissau simply because there was no non-coercive way of reducing the population of Bissau.[70] A party primarily accountable to the countryside would have been a hostage to forces which could scarcely be expected to advocate policies of development relevant to the country as a whole.[71] That agriculture suffered badly in the years following independence is not denied, but it is simply attributed to the extreme economic and climatic difficulties the country faced at the time. Once the drought had affected agriculture, as it did everywhere in the Sahel, to a point where the villagers lost hope and faith in the party, the PAIGC was reduced to palliatives. The crisis, largely due to unforeseen circumstances, turned the countryside against the government which was forced to govern without its support.

The last possible, if paradoxical, view is that the failure is one of interpretation. The 'Guinea-Bissau experiment' has been perceived as a failure only because of the nature of the assumptions made about its post-colonial history and because of the limitations of the conceptual framework at hand. To judge Guinea-Bissau's achievements by the standard of Cabral's hopes, however perspicacious he may appear to have been,

is to judge by the standard of extreme ambition and not of reality. No country in Africa has managed agrarian socialism, even less revolutionary democracy, although many came to independence with the hope of doing so. Cabral's words must be read as rousing rhetoric rather than as programmatic injunction. The analysis of his action during the war can point to the gap, at times considerable, between his ambitions and the day to day reality of the organisation of the liberated areas. Here, the argument implies that, had he lived, his achievements after independence would have been rather less far removed from those of his successors than is often assumed.[72]

Furthermore, the actual political and economic record is not as bleak as it is made out to be. The failings are obvious but the achievements are not negligible. The balance sheet is not substantially more negative than that of most other similar African countries. By those standards, Guinea-Bissau has not done so badly. It has achieved effective unity of the country – which neither Angola nor Mozambique have managed – by political rather than military means. It has set up a working political regime with national legitimacy which survived the coup. It has maintained political stability (that notion sacred to Western analysts) and has developed an administration capable of running the country. And, finally, despite serious difficulties, the regime still commands widespread support in the country, certainly more than many other regimes command in Africa.[73]

Similarly, in the economic sphere, although the ambitions of the party have been frustrated, the situation is not wholly bleak. Guinea-Bissau remains dependent but, in good years, it is not far from self-sufficiency in food. Considering the severe impact of recurring drought conditions, progress (even if minimal) has been made in the last two or three years when in other countries total collapse is the norm. Except in the crisis year of 1979–80, there has never been massive famine and death by starvation in Guinea-Bissau and if, since 1980, the situation has often been one of penury, it has rarely become one of utter destitution. Finally, although the cost has been high, Bissau has been kept alive. Its inhabitants have not been forcibly removed nor have they suffered the appalling depths of degradation found elsewhere in Africa. On a continent where so many countries have virtually lost the capacity to survive, Guinea-Bissau's record is not to be dismissed lightly. In this view, there may not be much ground for rejoicing but there is place for cautious optimism now that the country has recovered from the economic and political convulsions of the early post-colonial period. Vieira's pragmatism is, by this reckoning, a good omen, however halting his steps towards greater democracy and a more effective form of agricultural development.

V

Whether the interpretation of the first decade of Guinea-Bissau's independence is one of unremitting gloom or one of cautious optimism, my analysis

so far clearly suggests that some of the difficulties involved in recording and interpreting the facts of the case are due to the bluntness of the conceptual apparatus at hand. The relevance of Guinea-Bissau for the rest of Africa lies not just in the interest generated by the nationalist war but equally, in some ways more significantly, in the challenge which the interpretation of its recent history poses to our modes of understanding African politics. Though the lack of interpretative agreement is often evidence of different ideological standpoints, it is also a reflection of a growing inability to come to some agreement about the fundament of political life in Africa. Perhaps because the PAIGC was an unusual political movement on the continent, perhaps because Cabral was such an influential political figure or perhaps simply because there is always a need for a focus of hope, Guinea-Bissau has become a test case of our ability to move forward analytically and conceptually. We may agree on the raw facts, but what do they mean?

At a very basic, and simple, level we do not know how to interpret a number of fundamental political notions which are used constantly by Africans and Africanists. Chief among those are the concepts of revolution, democracy, socialism, development, party, state and society.[74] Though we have a fairly good idea of their meaning in the historical context of European social and political thought, and though we are aware that in some sense African politicians also use them in their universal currency, there are very definite limits to the fit between these notions and African reality.[75] Some difficulties can be overcome by clarifying more accurately what we mean conceptually. But many others cannot. This is partly because language itself, historically the language of the colonising powers, is ambiguous. And yet it is the language of high politics in Africa, the language in which leaders express themselves and develop their analytical tools.[76] Because we share this language we tend to overlook the question of translating reality through language. African languages are, with some exceptions, not used for the conceptualisation of modern politics in Africa, even when their formulation might be more relevant to some aspects of African politics.[77] The language used by African politicians is the language of instrumentality, that is, the language of what they wish to bring about. All African governments want either democracy or socialism and development because, whatever their precise meaning, these are recognisably universal code words. So what did Cabral mean by revolutionary democracy and agrarian socialism? What do these concepts mean for Guinea-Bissau? What can they mean for Africa?

At the core of Cabral's thought is an attempt to give instrumental and institutional life to the notions of political accountability and socialism.[78] What mattered to Cabral was to relate these abstract considerations to the economic and political conditions which circumscribed the realm of political agency in Guinea-Bissau. His refusal to be pressed on the meaning of socialism in Guinea-Bissau derived from a real fear that any statement, because it would have to be made in terms of outside references, would

either commit him to or foreclose particular courses of action. Quite clearly, he felt with some force that no socialist 'model' had much relevance to Guinea-Bissau.

The two pillars of his thinking were the political experience of the PAIGC during the armed struggle, that is the mobilisation of the countryside, and his knowledge of the country's economic potential, that is agriculture. His focus was decidedly on rural society. The fate of the war had turned on the relation between party and countryside; the future of the country would also turn on that relation, that is the relation between state and civil society. But the nature of that relation would have to change.

During the war both the notion of political accountability and the political project of the PAIGC were limited. Accountability meant the successful integration of villagers into a party capable of protecting and administering the liberated areas at minimal cost to the villagers, while prosecuting the war until independence.[79] The historical referent, the necessity to defeat colonial rule, established a certain relation of reciprocity between party and rural society. The war was the process of political mobilisation of rural society, the 'revenge' of civil society on the (colonial) state.[80] Because the mobilisation of rural society did not occur spontaneously, the success of the armed struggle depended on a balance of political reciprocity. Where that balance was no longer maintained, for example in 1963–4, the party lost support and legitimacy.[81] Whatever the institutional embodiment of that relation – whatever the particulars of party organisation and democracy – the political accountability of party to rural society was a reality during the war.

But success during the armed struggle did not imply success after independence. The historical referent changed from that of ending colonial rule to that of socialist development (a much less self-evident and widely shared goal). The party became state. Civil society was transformed, and splintered, by the addition of the non-liberated areas and the cities. The meaning of political accountability changed accordingly and a new balance of political reciprocity was required.[82] The guiding principle of Cabral's thinking was simple, if fiendishly difficult to implement: the living conditions of rural society must improve. Such improvement demands an improved agriculture. Socialism, whatever it may mean in other settings, meant for Cabral the development of the economy by means of the countryside rather than at the expense of it. It was a principle which is singularly relevant to political accountability in Africa today, and its implications were profound. Urbanisation and industrialisation must be consonant with agricultural development; again, a point highly relevant to most African countries. Equally, modernisation of the countryside would be slow, proportional only to perceived reciprocity between state and rural society. Political accountability here meant devising an economic and political balance which ensured that the costs (financial, social, symbolic) of modernisation were underwritten by the state rather than simply borne by

rural society. Peasant willingness to produce and to innovate (that is to take risks unacceptable under normal circumstances) would depend on the reality of such political accountability.[83]

To uphold such a form of political accountability is, other than in fantasy, to devise institutional means of ensuring proper political representation. It means to give life to forms of political practices and political structures with which civil society can confront the state and resist its pressure and sometimes its violence. During the war this was more easily feasible because of the party's dependence on civil society. After independence, the balance of forces was in the other direction. Because of the nature of the post-colonial state in Africa, its class composition and its hegemonic function, there is little prospect of this balance developing naturally. Colonial rule and decolonisation (even in the case of armed struggle) have given civil society few formal means of holding its own politically against the state.[84] Historically, the post-colonial state in Africa has been in the hands of the nationalist petite bourgeoisie and state power has been the pre-requisite rather the reflection of economic hegemony. This hegemony can be achieved either through state capitalism or state socialism, but inevitably at the expense of rural society. The political response of rural society to the onslaught of the state is, in effect, to engage in 'political guerrilla warfare', reducing or diverting production, black-marketeering, migrating, turning to religion, avoiding taxes, hoarding, consuming, engaging in profitable patron–client activities, ethnic mobilisation, and so on. Thus, to seek to achieve some form of balance between state and rural society is to go against the powerful historical tendency in Africa for the state to attempt to exercise political and economic monopoly. Cabral understood that the process of political mobilisation which had sustained the war provided a historic opportunity to build political strength for rural society. The armed struggle had brought about in the liberated areas a degree of political consciousness and an ability to organise hitherto unknown in Africa.

There were two sides to Cabral's political project: one, the creation of formal representative institutions to give a voice to civil society; the other, the integration of rural society into a decentralised (geographically and politically) and autonomous party within which a genuine dialogue between state and civil society could develop.[85] The two sets of political structures were conceived to be complementary, each one a counter-balance to the other. Through their participation in elected bodies, the representatives of the masses, if permitted to carry out their function, would be in a position to influence government policy. The party, at one end a political organisation appropriated by civil society and at the other the vanguard of the socialist leadership, was to be the blood of the country's political life. Whatever the explanation given for the failure of that project (and I must here register my conviction that Cabral's absence was a major contributory factor),[86] what matters now is to assess its relevance to Africa.

The relation between state and civil society (particularly rural society) is

at the heart of politics in Africa today. The fate of most African countries is tied to the fate of their agriculture. Cabral's concern and his ambition to develop agriculture as a priority are now, as they were in 1974, essentially legitimate. The defeat lies not in Cabral's concern, analysis or vision but in his understanding of civil society in Africa. However well informed he was about the objective conditions of rural society, and he was better informed than most, he simply did not possess (nor do Africanists) sufficient historical knowledge of the *modus operandi* of Africa's rural society, how and why it changes over time. Nor did he appreciate, despite his respect for 'traditional' society, the importance of this knowledge for political instrumentality. His outlook was that of the modernist, the technical mind. Change was possible and modernisation would take place if the proper factors of production and technological support were available.

Despite the failure, during the armed struggle, to initiate a structural transformation of the countryside, Cabral remained convinced that the villagers would work with the state once they saw that progress could be made which would benefit them. Because of this, he believed that state and civil society, cadre and villagers, could cooperate given the right political structure. Though he did not minimise the political consequences of a state apparatus dominated by the bureaucratic petite bourgeoisie, whose interests lay in (class) economic appropriation of rural production, he trusted that the self-conscious and politically motivated representatives of civil society could provide a check to the naked pursuit of state self-interests. It is true that Cabral saw the party leadership as the upholders of policies of agrarian socialism and revolutionary democracy, and it is easy to point to the folly of his belief in 'class suicide'.[87] But, ultimately, it is the failure to see that the politics of civil society are not easily compatible with the politics of the state which is the most consequential.

By their very nature, the politics of civil society (low politics) operate at the margin, in the interstices of high politics, never in consonance with them.[88] Because of the history of colonial rule and of decolonisation, the post-colonial state could not be other than the apparatus of political and economic appropriation that it has become in Africa. Wars of national liberation mattered primarily because they accelerated the political evolution of civil society, cutting away at the slow process of change which usually characterises it. They did not create a civil society more able or more willing to cooperate with the state because the state is not there to be cooperated with. The post-colonial state of countries which gained independence by means of a war of national liberation behaves much as states do everywhere else in Africa. The success of decolonisation through a people's war cannot, therefore, be a guarantee of the success of state policies after independence. Rural society, even if it is mobilised politically, as it was in Guinea-Bissau, maintains the capacity to resist the state.

The lesson of the recent history of Guinea-Bissau could well be paradoxical. The success of the nationalist war benefited state and civil society in

equal, though different, measure but it did not make it more likely that they could collaborate more profitably. Whether they do depends on political accountability, as defined above in the Introduction. The ability of states to achieve their aims, whatever they may be, depends largely on the nature of the development of low politics and on the strength of civil society. If this is so, the merit of the relative failure of Cabral's project will have been to point the way to a different approach to African politics. It could lead to the evolving of concepts and analyses derived from a recognition of the importance of low politics, the politics of civil society, in the development of African forms of political governance and accountability.

6

Civil Society in Africa

JEAN-FRANÇOIS BAYART

One of the crucial issues in the unstable political life of Africa is the recurrence of authoritarian, totalitarian or despotic situations in more or less rapid institutional cycles, rather like the heavy and unequal *sistema* which is said to exist in Brazil. This is not as ethnocentric a question as some might like to think. In Gabon, Zaire and Kenya, Africans run high risks defending the ideal of representative and competitive democracy in the face of unyielding power. In Senegal, the Gambia, Mauritius and Madagascar, there is some form of multi-party political system. And in Nigeria, Upper Volta and Ghana, democracy remains at the heart of the continuing constitutional debate. Even in countries such as Kenya or Sierra Leone, where representative politics is being eroded, some institutions like the press or the judiciary find in liberal ideas their inspiration to resist. Equally, the internal organisation of authoritarian regimes, like those in Cameroon and the Ivory Coast, is often spoken of in terms of 'democratisation'.

In point of fact, the immense majority of African political actors claim to be democrats. Is this merely the tribute vice pays to virtue? That was certainly the case in the patrimonial tyrannies of Guinea, the Central African Republic and Equatorial Guinea. But it is much less certain in almost all other cases where the claims of those in power to a democratic legitimacy are not merely cynical manipulation. Not that the old culturalist justification for political unanimity is any longer credible. Nobody now believes, for example, that in African societies there could not be 'two bull crocodiles in the same river' or that single-party states and rural mobilisation projects are the modern embodiments of specific pre-colonial forms of 'democracy' and 'socialism'.

The concepts of democracy and of human rights are the products of Western history. They derive from the value placed on the idea of the individual (as opposed to the person) which pre-colonial societies did not share, and which was introduced into Africa in the wake of colonial rule. This makes these concepts neither contemptible nor suspect.[1] Nor does it

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follow that non-Europeans, particularly Africans, were 'traditionally' more tolerant of arbitrary power (which they resisted by means of different conceptualisations), or that they cannot now conceive of democracy and human rights other than in Western terms. This foreign import has become an integral part of sub-Saharan political cultures. It cannot be eradicated by vague reference to 'authenticity'. It prompts anguished political reflections which cannot be other than African, since they are made by Africans.[2]

The analysis of political systems shows that the quest for democracy does not have to follow Western liberal paths. On the one hand, in politically representative regimes, the holders of political, administrative, judicial and police power maintain their authority by means of repressive measures, inherited from the colonial order, which are not compatible with elementary Western notions of democratic liberties and human rights: for example, the methods of tax collection and the repression of delinquency and of social movements in Senegal, Nigeria or the Gambia. On the other hand, as became evident during the 1970s, politically authoritarian regimes are not as secure as they appear to be. The single party, the primary (negative) function of which is to prevent any form of autonomous organisation within civil society, is not, however, merely an instrument of political oppression. Those states where coercion has been most ferocious are precisely the states – Bokassa's Central African Empire and Nguema's Equatorial Guinea – where the single party most lacks substance. The same applies to those states, Mobutu's Zaire and Sékou Touré's Guinea, where the single party is at the mercy of one man's diktat or where it is nothing but the institutional appendix of a clique. Where it is institutionalised in greater depth, the single party often provides protection for ordinary people against the arbitrary rule of the administration or the police. It can mediate in social conflicts as well as in individual political power struggles (at the parliamentary or presidential level). Even military regimes, the establishment of which frequently, although only temporarily, eases political tension (Mali in 1968, Upper Volta in 1966, Liberia in 1980), are apt to articulate, in populist or messianic language, the popular desire for redemption. Some among them have attempted to advance along the difficult path towards a system of direct political participation, the viability of which is yet to be demonstrated if the cases of Libya and Madagascar are anything to go by. More recently, Ghana's Defence Committees have displayed neither democracy nor efficiency.

The question of democratic governance cannot, therefore, be fully analysed in only institutional terms. Nor is authoritarian rule to be explained solely by Africa's dependence. Fanon believed that 'false decolonisation' explained the coercions inflicted upon the 'wretched of the earth'. Yet the record of those countries which gained independence through armed struggle is no better. It is clear that South African pressure is not the only cause of political tension and repression in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Angola. Mathias and Salama argue that 'in advanced capitalist coun-

tries, democracy is the rule and dictatorship the exception', whereas 'in underdeveloped countries, the normal rule is a political regime of little legitimacy, and democracy is the exception'.[3] This is self-evidently the case but it explains little. These authors, who argue that the 'capitalist class character' of the state in the Third World is derived from the nature of the 'world economy' (rather than from the presence of an exceedingly tenuous capitalist class within the social formation), posit a potential antagonism between that capitalist state and the political regimes which govern it. 'It is not because the state is capitalist that its governments wish to be.' Democratic interludes are possible.

However, in underdeveloped countries, the state is the creator, and not just the arbiter, of capitalist relations of production. 'Violence is required to establish such relations in a context where they would not otherwise occur. Thus, violence and repression come before any attempt at legitimation.' Authoritarianism, according to Henri Lefebvre, comes from this 'putting to work'. This is an implacable process which, however surprisingly, results in a representative regime like Senegal taking coercive actions similar to those in Cameroon. Furthermore, these writers resort to a standard 'political' argument in order to account for the 'opening' of barely legitimate regimes in Latin America. They do not explain it, nor do they give any substance to their preliminary statement: 'grassroots movements make their own way through the gaps in state violence, thereby establishing an *autonomous space of mass expression*, outside state control. It is this which forces the political regimes of today to seek new forms of legitimacy. And this is why political change in that part of the world is such an unpredictable process.' But there is no explanation for the establishment of this 'autonomous space of mass expression' and its impact on the state structure. In a similar context of structural dependence, Senegal and Kenya have moved in opposite directions: the former towards greater democratisation, the latter towards closure. Why? How? These are the questions which this chapter raises without pretending to be able to answer them satisfactorily.

STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

Given that authoritarian rule in Africa is, as we now realise, incomplete and unsystematic, it seems most profitable to explain the continued quest for democracy as a commentary upon the relationship between state and civil society. Though it is arguable that the concept of civil society is not applicable outside European history, I shall define it provisionally as 'society in its relation with the state . . . in so far as it is in confrontation with the state'[4] or, more precisely, as the process by which society seeks to 'breach' and counteract the simultaneous 'totalisation' unleashed by the state.[5]

The notion of civil society is thus an ambivalent (and not just conflictive), complex and dynamic relation between state and society. It is not neces-

sarily a discrete entity completely external to an equally discrete source of power. That much is obvious in the case of institutions or organisations which represent civil society within political society, such as parliaments, parties or trade unions. But it is equally true of the power structures themselves; these are by no means immune to the particularistic pulls of civil society, as evidenced by the way in which the armies of Dahomey, Upper Volta and Sierra Leone lost their military coherence in acute political competition. Moreover, civil society is not necessarily embodied in a single, identifiable structure. It is by its very nature plural and, as I shall argue later, it covers all sorts of different practices; any unity there may be requires human creativity. Finally, civil society is not merely the expression of dominated social groups. It encompasses not only popular modes of political action (which I discuss in greater detail later) but also the claims of those socially dominant groups (merchants, businessmen, the clergy) which are no less excluded from direct participation in political power.

Within this perspective I follow Robert Fossaert, who defines his research interest as 'civil society', which, he suggested, was not so much a structured set of institutions, but the 'social space', large or constrained, as it is shaped by historical forces.[6] Quite what these 'historical forces' (*vecteur principal*) are, other than state power, is difficult to say. It is the object of our enquiry.

In some ways, the relation between state and society is the same whatever the nature of the state. The state always emerges, in whatever form, as an excrescence developing 'in and upon society, multiplying its specialist apparatuses, subjecting populations to its control, criss-crossing the territory it occupies and finally subjecting the activities of society to its control'.[7] Nevertheless, the differences between the consequences of state control are such as to introduce substantive differences between states. Within the liberal tradition there are two distinct types. One – of which Great Britain is the archetype, but which also includes the United States, Switzerland and the Netherlands – is found where the 'organisation of civil society itself makes redundant the emergence of a powerful state or a dominant bureaucracy'. The other – of which France is the ideal type, but which would include Prussia, Italy and Spain – is found where 'the state seeks to control the social system by means of a strong bureaucracy'.[8] Nevertheless, in both cases, state and civil society relate to each other in what Gramsci called a 'balanced opposition', by contrast with the many situations of state domination (*statolâtrie*) over a 'primitive and gelatinous' civil society. There, a heterogeneous state, either imposed by colonial rule or created by revolutionary will (often modelled on other states), has been deliberately set up *against* civil society rather than evolved in continual conflict with it.

The African post-colonial state is undoubtedly of that nature. Underlying the ideologies of national unity there is a hegemonic imperative which drives the state and the self-proclaimed dominant social groups to seek to control and to shape civil society.[9] The first task is to define the basis on which others can gain access to the political system. Most regimes severely

restrict such access by preventing the autonomous and pluralistic organisation of subordinated social groups. Instead, rulers either attempt to integrate the various social forces into single movements or set up intermediary and indirect means of control. Their objective is to enlist the dominated social groups within the existing space of domination and to teach them to be subject to the state. The aim is to administer society, even against itself, and to order it according to the explicit, ideal canons of modernity. Thus, the African post-colonial state is a 'well-policed' state (*policeystaat*), relatively close in conception to the enlightened despotisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The transition (or the attempted transition) from a 'soft state' to an 'integral state' which Coulon analyses in Senegal is a general phenomenon, except where there are deepening crises of hegemony.[10]

It is precisely because of this relative externality, this distance between state and civil society, that we can dismiss Lavau's observation when writing of Europe that 'states and civil societies have mixed with, penetrated and contaminated each other, have shared common ideologies for so long that everywhere there is much statishness in society and much that is civil in all states'.[11] In most of the cases we are studying the waters are not so 'murky' as to make it impossible to distinguish between the two (except in those extreme situations where the state has been absorbed by civil society in a generalised hegemonic crisis as in Congo or Uganda, or under patrimonial despotism as in Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Empire or Guinea). It is possible to identify the collision between state and civil society in the unsettled confusion and sharp confrontation of the 1970s.

It is in light of this dichotomy that it is necessary to study democracy, authoritarianism and even totalitarianism in Africa. Dunn writes: 'There is good reason to see the degree of internal dominance of the state power as a product of the relative insubstantiality of civil societies in these countries, the limited degree of viable and enduring institutionalisation of local social forces outside the sphere of the state.'[12] At the same time, however, the subordinated social groups have not been as passive as they are thought to be, and state domination has often been challenged by an ill-contained civil society. Hitherto, and for reasons which I shall discuss later, most such challenges have failed. There is in Africa little revolutionary potential. The precarious equilibrium is maintained. Nevertheless, the state has been damaged by the constant pressure of those social groups and their ever-changing tactics: revolts, refusal to grow certain crops, declining productivity, strikes, abstention from elections, migrations, religious revivals and even the creation of theocratic communities outside state control, smuggling, the flourishing of informal exchange, distribution of information outside the official media, satirical, religious messianic or revolutionary attacks on the legitimacy of the state, and sabotage of the instruments of political control. There is a long list of popular actions which undermine and reduce the scope of state power. Civil society takes its revenge on the state

and contributes in no small measure to its economic failure. The argument that civil society has atrophied and that it is increasingly dependent on the state must, therefore, be qualified. Here and there it stands in a more equal relation with the state and where it does, it is of some consequence for democracy. There are a number of factors to take into account here, which further research should help to identify and analyse.

The shape of African societies, which is scarcely considered by political analysts, has much to do with the way power is exercised. The physical geography, the extent of technological development and, even more, the demography of African countries have a bearing on the scope of state control. The ability of the supreme political authority, most often one man, to exercise tight political control over the social fabric of society is proportionately greater, the longer its rulership and the smaller the population. In countries of fewer than ten, five or even one million inhabitants, and where the majority are politically minors – under thirty years old – a ruler who has been in power for one or two decades would in all probability know personally every instance of personal aggrandisement, whether of wealth or influence. Recent research in the political sociology of Cameroon, for example, has shown that its ruling class only numbers around 950 individuals out of a population of seven million.[13] A similar number would probably obtain in countries with roughly the same population (Ivory Coast, Guinea, Upper Volta, Mali, Senegal, Zambia, Zimbabwe) or smaller (Angola, Benin, Burundi, Niger, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Chad). In mini-states like Botswana, the Comoros, Djibouti, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, São Tome, Cape Verde, Gabon, Gambia, Central Africa, Congo, Liberia, Mauretania, and Togo, political control is potentially absolute. In these countries there is, to varying degrees, what one can call intimate repression, sometimes good natured and paternalist but sometimes wholly unbearable. Examples abound: the Central African cabinet becoming a tribunal under Bokassa's personal chairmanship; in Guinea, prisoners leaving the torture chamber to take a telephone call from Sékou Touré; in Equatorial Guinea, prisoners beaten up right inside Nguema's presidential grounds. On the other hand, the relation between state and society becomes far more complex in countries with more than ten million inhabitants (Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Sudan, Tanzania), more than twenty (Zaire, Ethiopia) and even more so for Nigeria with over eighty millions. For this reason, countries which are similar in socioeconomic terms are not really comparable politically once the demographic variable is introduced.

Although Africa's cultural diversity has often been used to justify autocracies, it is probably a constraint on central power. Gastellu's argument about the Serer monarchies could well be extended to the post-colonial state: '[The local political regime] depends on the relationship between the king and his subjects. When the king is also the chief priest of the local religion the relation is one of strong dependence. But when the

king is of a different religion from the majority of the Serer (a Wolof animist or a Muslim), there emerges strong local autonomy bordering on independence.'[14] It would be simplistic to argue that the moderate character of Senghor's rule derived from a similar gap between a Catholic president and a Muslim majority. But it is clear that in the countries bordering the Bight of Benin the presence of two large monotheistic religious groups has compelled the most enlightened politicians to maintain a subtle political balance which, in effect, has limited their room for manoeuvre. In a strongly centralised state like Cameroon, the northern Muslim Union Camerounaise has had to compromise because of the socio-political weight of Christianity. President Ahidjo, a Muslim, always had the political acumen to maintain a proper balance between the two religions, but there is no doubt that because of this the Christian elements were able to resist the ascendency of the party's hard-liners and the domination of the bureaucracy.

More concretely, the organisation of civil society is an obstacle to the paramountcy of the state. It is revealing that this same Cameroonian regime should feel obliged to crush or at least to control all autonomous social movements under the pretext of fighting tribalism. And it is precisely because it largely succeeded in this task, after the trauma of civil war, that it was for so long characterised by self-censorship, fear and stagnation. In Senegal, on the other hand, the 'success story' discussed by Cruise O'Brien is largely the result of the organisational strength and autonomy of the Muslim brotherhoods with which the state has been compelled to maintain delicate relations. This compromise between state rule inherited from colonialism (particularly that of the 'municipalities') and the Muslim *Zawiyas* produced a 'complex and inherently viable set of political arrangements, by now quite firmly embedded in a genuinely national political culture', which explains the return towards a multi-party system.[15] In this respect, Kenya is in an intermediary position. Though it is officially a single-party state, ethnic mutual aid societies and 'provincial parliamentary groups' have survived despite the attempt to abolish them in 1981. Together with other relatively autonomous institutions such as the press, the church, women's groups and the university, they make for a form of pluralism which had an effect on the presidential succession and challenges the regime's increasing authoritarianism.

The degree of autonomy from the state of the channels of accumulation within civil society is equally significant. In Africa the state *is* the prime (though usually not the only) channel of accumulation, except in some extreme situations where the structures of accumulation have absorbed the state (Liberia under Presidents Tubman and Tolbert, Sierra Leone under Siaka Stevens, Ghana under Dr Busia and General Acheampong, Nigeria at the end of the Gowon regime, Zaire under General Mobutu), or where patrimonial appropriation is total (Guinea, Equatorial Guinea, the Central African Empire). Political ideologies are largely irrelevant. The state is the dominant economic agent in Africa whether the regime is single-party,

pluralist or socialist. Everywhere the state's integration into the world economy has proceeded apace. Everywhere there has been primitive accumulation, that is, the over-exploitation of the peasantry. State accumulation is intimately connected with individual accumulation at all levels (including the highest) and in all countries (including the most 'socialist'). Power in whatever form is inevitably an instrument for the acquisition of wealth. Even the success of businessmen in the private sector is highly dependent on the state because they need constantly to circumvent regulations and to obtain official permits. It is, therefore, otiose to seek to establish a conceptual difference between the private and the public sector. Both are the instruments of a dominant class striving to establish its hegemony.

Within this general framework, however, differences are to be found which have a bearing on the nature of democracy in Africa. Where there is a greater distance between accumulation and power, there develop autonomous indigenous business classes distinct from the bureaucracy (as in Nigeria, Kenya, Senegal, and Cameroon) and capable of strengthening civil society. Witness here the parliamentary and regional groups in Kenya, the Bamiléké chiefdoms in Cameroon and the Mouride traders and businessmen in Senegal. Elsewhere, on the other hand, the state is in total control of the channels of accumulation and either uses them for patronage and political manna (as in Ivory Coast, Gabon, Zaire or Sierra Leone) or simply appropriates them (as in patrimonial dictatorships). Thus, for example, the Ivoirian state is not 'promoting an autonomous private sector' but rather 'regulating it, by means of its control over the rate of Ivoirisation, thereby maintaining its leverage on those with business ambitions while preventing their formation into a social class independent from the state'.[16] This process largely explains the limits of democracy in the Ivory Coast and the deleterious effect of the power struggle for the presidential succession, which are in marked contrast with Senegal's experiment with multi-party democracy. Similarly, the coup attempt of 6 April 1984 in Cameroon was probably supported by the business class, who had been pampered by Ahidjo's patrimonial largesse from the end of the 1970s and who were thus opposed to Biya's ambition to modernise the state and open up the political system.

THE TRADITIONS OF MODERNITY

I now wish to assess the relevance of Africa's dependent status which I argued earlier was not able to account for the character of the state, whether authoritarian or democratic. Quite clearly the development of 'primitive and gelatinous' civil societies was not *sui generis* but the direct result of the dislocations engendered by the impact of the slave trade, colonialism and the integration of Africa into the world economic system. Colonial rule, for instance, bequeathed traditions of administrative and coercive authority to

the post-colonial state. The legacy of the whip, which reinforced social authoritarianism, was incompatible with democracy, as Kwasi Wiredu pointed out.

There are thus in Africa two complex and contradictory trends. There is, first, the increasing dependence of African societies and the parallel, though not identical, process of state formation, which is undertaken by those social groups which prosper on this dependence but need political domination. The other is the insidious and sometimes violent process by which civil society re-appropriates the post-colonial state but without escaping dependence. This development calls for a re-examination of Badie and Birnbaum's argument that 'in Africa and Asia the state is an import, a mere duplicate of different European social and political systems, a ponderous, inefficient foreign body which engenders violence'.[17] For although the imposition of an overdeveloped state derived from Europe has denied African societies a truly autonomous development, it has not prevented them from evolving increasingly balanced relations with the state – an indication of the historical maturity of these political systems.

Some have defined 'political development' as a similar 'interpenetration of the state and society through new institutions and new values', the construction, as it were, of 'traditions of modernity'.[18] Given the 'democentrism' of the much maligned school of political development, this could perhaps be taken as a definition of the democracy which Cruise O'Brien tells us is to be found in Senegal. Whether this is so depends on the nature of the relations between state and civil society. Many, in Europe or in Africa, invest civil society with the capacity to resist state authoritarianism or totalitarianism. Fossaert writes: 'the analysis of the role of civil society is not merely academic; it helps to identify that which prevents the state from exercising absolute control'.[19] Although this approach is eminently valid, it is not specific enough.

In the first instance, it may not be possible to speak of 'civil society' where there is no 'organisation principle'. Civil society exists only in so far as there is a self-consciousness of its existence and of its opposition to the state: Michel Foucault refers to the 'collective will of a people' in Iran, and Alain Touraine to 'the movement for the liberation of society' in Poland. But most African social formations are characterised by deep cultural, religious, linguistic rifts which prevent the emergence of what Augé refers to as the 'idéo-logique'. Nor does Sahlins' analysis apply to Africa when he writes of 'a cultural scheme . . . impinged upon in various ways by a dominant locus of symbolic production, which is the source of other relations and actions; it is the privileged institutional locus of the symbolic process which produces a classificatory framework and imposes it upon the whole of society'.[20] There is no common cultural frame of reference between dominant and dominated groups, and sometimes not even among the dominated. In Africa there are no one-dimensional or homogeneous societies, but rather a collection of time-spaces (*espace-temps*) like so many poles, created by

various social actors. The value of these time-spaces lies in their formulation but, because their evolution is only relative, incomplete and temporary, they merely coalesce into an open-ended historical framework. The first uncertainty, therefore, is whether there is any political possibility, let alone demographic, economic or technological, of unifying these time-spaces or overcoming their discontinuities, a possibility which requires the emergence of an 'organisational principle' capable of challenging absolute state control. Outside a teleological interpretation of history, the formation of such a social movement is rare, and so is the capacity to capture power, even within a social context where there is cultural and political unity. The very notion of social movement 'is a thesis in itself', as Cobb once trenchantly pointed out about the *sans culottes* in the French Revolution. 'The real question – and it is one that puzzled, astonished, and shocked the Thermidorians – to be asked would be: "how did a popular movement ever come into being in the first place?" and not so much why it failed, but by what miracle it ever succeeded at all, however partially and however briefly. There is no doubt about the causes of its decline . . .'[21]

Even when the unity of this 'organisational principle' has been achieved, the heterogeneity of civil society is concealed rather than overcome. Also, the challenge to the state's monopoly of power may contain within itself the elaboration of a new monopoly. One actor may be able to capture the political support of his allies and translate it into the management of his own interests. Alternatively, if there is no monopoly over the counter-hegemonic project or if that project is eroded, the potential advance of civil society is checked or torn apart, or it leads to the implosion of the political system, the heightening of the hegemonic crisis. Because of its counter-hegemonic project, any liberating social movement is ambivalent. On the one hand it seeks to aggregate and to deploy existing, as yet unconnected, movements of popular action. On the other hand, it conceals processes of political or economic accumulation and the means of access to the state. Although observers are often reluctant to admit it, the 'organisational principle' of the successful civil society contains within itself the seeds of domination and of the disillusions to come. There is no teleological virtue in the notion of civil society. The advance of a civil society which does not necessarily contain the democratic ideal does not in itself ensure the democratisation of the political system. In Africa, norms of hierarchy and authority, and increasingly practices of socially patterned or purely arbitrary violence, are dominant. Furthermore, 'it would be wrong to assume that the social and political content of the various notions of democratisation within civil society, even when they exist, are similar in origin, motives or meaning'.[22] It is clear, for example, that subordinated social groups, because of the discontinuous and heterogeneous context within which they exist, operate according to their own ideals, interests and symbolisms which simply cannot be reduced to the rationality of the state level of politics, whether 'progressive' or 'revolutionary'. In other words, their political practice refers to

time-spaces which, to use Hyden's stimulating thesis, have not yet been 'captured'.[23] Thus, the success of the advance of civil society depends on its capacity to bridge these epistemic gulfs and to confront the state with appropriate conceptual weapons, thereby avoiding the two traps of parochial 'imaginary liberation' and bureaucratic appropriation.[24]

In sum, the concept of civil society seems best able to explain – by its absence – the continuing existence of African autocracy. In situations of tight political control, which prevent any organised opposition or explicitly political resistance and which force the leaders of the oppressed to 'move at a chameleon's (agonisingly slow) pace towards an objective', as a young Malian nicely puts it,[25] generalising 'strategic movements' are less effective than secretive 'tactics' in attacking state control.[26] As the cases of China and Brazil suggest, and as the African situation now confirms, the notions of charismatic political 'transition', which Africanists have put forward for twenty years, are not really viable.[27] Societies chip at the state 'from below' rather than through an organised challenge, though there are occasional violent explosions as have recently occurred in the Gambia, the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Kenya. Such uprisings have never brought about a redistribution of power, not even in Guinea-Bissau, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Madagascar or Congo, where the subordinated social groups have apparently reaped little benefit from their investment in revolts, nationalist or agrarian struggles. In other words, no such social group has hitherto managed to lead and channel society's revenge into an effective organisational principle; atomisation and disunity have prevented it.

The one social category most likely to resist state domination, and which has nothing to lose either in 'traditional' or 'modern' terms, is youth, which has been made marginal by the productive process and which struggles to survive under the heavy-handed authority of their elders. Although they now make up over half of Africa's total population, they are also the least likely to guide the changes which they help to provoke.[28] Historically, they have been easily manipulated into the regimes' strong arm militias, as in Congo (1965), Mali (1967–8), Zambia (1971), Kenya (1981), or Equatorial Guinea under Macias Nguema. Furthermore, there are few common interests and thus little unity of action between them and other social groups which are the natural opponents of the post-colonial state. Women, for example, seek to utilise the political and economic resources of the state in order to achieve individual or familial, but rarely collective, progress. They disapprove of the violent tactics used by the young people. Moreover, because the youth have broken from gerontocratic values, still strong in rural society, any political action by them is usually seen as traumatic. Finally, youth is by definition a transient category, not in a position to accumulate political resources over the long term.

Marxist theory, which in any event dismisses the political role of the 'lumpenproletariat', thus concentrates on the revolutionary potential of the

peasantry and the working class. However, there is no reason to believe that either one of these groups could provide the core of a new society in its relation with the state. The peasantry is weakened by its many internal divisions and by the often dramatic deterioration in its living conditions. Its strategy is to adapt to economic and political changes so as to derive from them maximum benefits or, at least, minimum disadvantage. Though the working class is more aggressive, it is small in size and does not necessarily countenance any counter-hegemonic project.

Civil society can only transform its relation to the state through the organisation of new and autonomous structures, the creation of a new cultural fabric and the elaboration of a conceptual challenge to power monopolies. This can only be achieved by means of ideological and institutional 'mediations', and 'mediations' of new categories are nothing less than schemes for the reconstruction of identity[29] and the plural invention of modernity. It is already clear that new forces, particularly religious, are contributing to this long-term project. It is from this standpoint that it is most profitable to explain the decline in authoritarianism which has occurred in Cameroon or the Ivory Coast. Do these processes, however, lead to the creation of an intermediary filter through which society slowly re-appropriates the state? Do they lead to a more 'equal' relation between state and society?

Nothing is less certain. First, because they more readily lend their services to the state than to its challengers, African intellectuals (with few exceptions) have failed to provide civil society with the original conceptual instruments required for its advance. Even when they have had the courage to offer themselves to the leadership of the resistance, they have in no way been able to transcend the epistemic gulf between state and society. They continue to think in terms of the state's conceptual logic.[30] Second, and paradoxically, the bureaucracy, endowed with traditional values and the authority of the colonial legacy, itself acts as a social movement. It has secured control of the state and of its relation with society. Because it has appropriated the untold resources of modernity and dependence, it is the privileged channel of social, political and economic mobility for the younger generation. It is a decisive influence on civil society. In this way the bureaucracy (or rather bureaucratic power) is above all the 'organising principle' of the ambition of the dominant classes. It is the backbone of virtually all African regimes, civilian or military, liberal democratic or single-party states, socialist or capitalist. But at the same time, the bureaucracy is the apparatus through which some of its dependents overcome their plight within a historically unequal and repressive system. This rise to the top, which amounts to a social revolution, has benefited a substantial minority of younger people in their struggle against older generations. The bureaucracy has appropriated the universal values of 'modernity' and in so doing has acquired considerable integrative power by which even reformist Islam has been affected.

If my argument is valid, then Africa's democratic potential is still further reduced. By a unique historical aberration, any advance by civil society is inevitably taken over by the very force least inclined towards the democratic exercise of power. Far from representing a glorious counter-hegemonic project, society's counter-attack on the state could already have been attempted, but in the worst conditions, and already more or less failed. We are brought face to face, once again, with the violence of dependence: the 'revolution from above' carried out by colonial rule in favour of a minority of the dispossessed has become the recurring feature of the state domination noted by Dunn, the political and economic failure of which is now obvious. The argument is compelling so long as it is clear that the distortions of the state are not just the result of the external dependence of African political systems. They also arise from the evolution of their internal stratification. More precisely, they are found at the intersection of the two, at the juncture of their historical development. Hence, the relative susceptibility of this distorted state to the forces which move society and with which it must, on occasion, compromise. In sum, then, and no matter whether it is united or in disarray, independent or manipulated, massive or tiny, any movement to reduce state power will itself be conditioned by the circumstances of its own politicisation.

THE TRANSITION TO POLITICS

One must remember that the politicisation of such a movement is by no means inevitable and it could lead as much to the fragmentation as to the unification of society. The social actors who are in a position to reduce state control may, for different reasons, remain outside politics. Some fail to enter politics because they cannot conceive of such a thing; the political level is beyond their understanding. Such is the case with peasantries which the state has not yet 'captured'. Others are politically aware but not politically active because 'the propensity to use political "power" ... parallels the relevance of power or, alternatively, indifference to power is a measure of its impotence'.[31] These cases are very different from those of political 'self-limitation', which is said to characterise Solidarity in Poland and which applies equally well to the cautious freemasonry of the Sierra Leone creole bourgeoisie[32] or to the Islamic and Christian mystical tradition of 'non-involvement in politics'.

Political power itself, however, determines what is political. It can, in order to repress and control, endow the action of some social actors with political meaning where there is none and, equally, deny it to the actor who claims it. In Cameroon, for example, Ahidjo's regime denied political meaning to the 1958–65 rebellion by defining it as delinquency.[33] In the early seventies, however, a political intent (linked to the earlier rebellion) was attributed to what was no more than straightforward social delinquency. Finally, the process of politicisation, in its creation of symbols,

acquires a dynamic of its own as soon as it is set off. It becomes self-generating, a whirlpool, when power collapses or shrinks away as it did in Madagascar in 1972.[34]

In Africa, these processes are rendered more complex by the way in which the conceptualisation of the state, and therefore of politics, is derived from the fashion in which the continent was made not only economically dependent but also subject to an imperious external history. In consequence, the formal, structured, political sphere is narrow, even atrophied. Until its final years, colonial rule excluded politics, or rather defined it in administrative terms. The inheritors of this convenient legacy, encouraged by the dominant developmental ideology, have thrived on the colonial tradition to such an extent that some people now speak of the 'political emasculation' of African countries.[35] Yet what is politically thinkable, what Bourdieu calls the 'legitimate problematic', cannot be dictated entirely by the ideology of the state and explained in terms of Africa's dependence. In any case, this is open to different interpretations: in Gabon, for example, a political party like MORENA interprets Western ideology very differently from Omar Bongo.

Above all, the political sphere has been re-appropriated by the various social actors. It is created at the intersection of the different political discourses which characterise African societies on both sides, as it were, of the 'epistemic gulfs'. Various social actors have differing opinions as to what is political: in 1975 in Nigeria, for example, the Constitution Drafting Committee could scarcely make any use of the 350 memoranda it received from the public because they covered such a wide range of issues which were not really 'constitutional'.[36] In other words, the language of politics grows out of specific histories and cultures which are always varied in meaning, so that it differs from one society to the next, and within a society from one group to another. In order to avoid simplistic cultural relativism, it is necessary to situate the various modes of political discourse within the specific context of the various social actors, bearing in mind that some modes (like those of the state) are more structured than others. To do so it is useful to assess the relative importance of the following parameters:

1 The mode of thought which allows one sort of discourse rather than another;
2 the cultural notions which favour some forms of politicisation and which affect political behaviour;
3 the main lines of conflict which polarise social stratification and determine political language;
4 the cluster of historical events, particularly 'traumatic events', which have created political archetypes;
5 the means of entry into politics;
6 the agent of politicisation.

Such analysis requires research in depth as found in monographs. Since the very premises of my argument reject the idea of *an* African culture

which would imply *a* specific conception of politics, the most I can do is to point to the recurrence of certain phenomena which ought to be examined in further research: themes of unanimity and redemption; the definition of political relations in terms of kinship, generation and witchcraft; the temporary and rapidly transcended use of ethnicity; the interpenetration of political and religious discourses. Moreover, it is far from certain that in Africa the principal object of politics is power, as it is conceived to be in the Western tradition (particularly in democracies), rather than wealth. It is revealing that the 1976 Nigerian constitutional draft held that politics opened up the possibility of 'acquiring wealth and prestige, of being in a position to distribute jobs, contracts, grants or gifts to one's kin and political allies'.[37] It is because this would seem to be the case in most African countries that Médard speaks of 'neo-patrimonialism'.[38] There are indeed many African politicians who consider wealth a political virtue, just as the Greeks thought of beauty. In Kenya, political candidates boast of their business skills while in the Ivory Coast, President Houphouët-Boigny displays his Cadillac and his millions to the teachers on strike.[39] Thus, the attacks on the 'predatory politicians'[40] and on corruption which are the foundations of popular political discourse, and which are re-appropriated by those in power themselves, indicate clearly that what is at stake in politics is accumulation and, thereby, the furtherance of the autonomy of state power. In this context, the recourse to witchcraft in politics is not without logic since it attacks above all individual success at the expense of the social group. The ideology of redemption – part religion, part morality – which characterises much African politics is not necessarily, therefore, 'false consciousness'. It is the reflection of a fundamental existential demand which democracy will have to satisfy if it is to survive.

Moreover, the discourse of contemporary state politics cannot be dissociated from that of earlier forms of political power which anthropologists study but which the colonial or post-colonial state has for the most part sought, without success, to obliterate. The democratic quest is equally dependent on these specific interactions, within ethnic or regional contexts, or rather within each social stratum within these contexts. The monographic research which I have called for will need to address the following types of questions. How do people look on the idea of citizenship in contemporary states, since citizenship is a notion which is central to democracy but which historically in Africa was acquired in most cases over a number of years and, was unequally recognised, depending on the sex and original status of the individual? What does freedom of speech imply where political expression was previously entrusted to designated orators who could control such a cosmic, dangerous power? How is it possible to reconcile the democratic ideal which stresses individual right (as symbolised by the privacy of the polling booth) with the collective nature of social and political strategies and, in particular, with family structure? What remains of the sacredness of power? How does it affect the holders of state

power? How do traditional forms of association become channels of contemporary politics?

CONCLUSION

The democratic problematic acquires in this way a texture which has usually been neglected. Hitherto naivety has been the norm. 'Democracy' would arise from modernisation or from socialism, regardless of the historical context. It is in recognition of the shortcomings of these ahistorical approaches that more and more scholars are using the 'consociational' notion of the state which the Dutch political scientist Lijphart derived from his own country's experience. They include a number of Africanists and even African political parties like MORENA in Gabon.[41] This model, however, is not a panacea since the notion of the coexistence of self-enclosed social and cultural groups engaged in pragmatic negotiations through their representatives within the state rests on two assumptions which are not necessarily valid. It is presumed that all forms of interests and identities organise spontaneously *and* that there is a balance between them. Yet there may well be social groups with no political representation; numerous biases distort the articulation of interests;[42] and the probability of disagreement is as high as that of consensus. In addition, the consociational model is usually applied to the cultural diversity which is supposed to characterise Africa. It suggests a permanence of ethnicity, made up of a stable combination of constant factors; not only is this permanence an illusion, but ethnicity is by no means the sum total of the social structure.

In any case the analysis of actual political discourse puts these ethereal debates firmly in their place. Democracy in Africa will either emerge or fail to emerge, from conflicts between social forces and ideologies (not always the same thing). There are many reasons for being pessimistic over the outcome of these conflicts. Nevertheless, we shall not underestimate a society's capacity to 'invent democracy'.[43] Unlike the Indians of South America, the Africans were not robbed of their continent. They have recovered or they will recover their independence. Though disappointing, independence has not deprived them of a future, as is made evident in Hélé Béji's fine essay or in the work of Fabien Eboussi Boulaga. However incomplete, this independence is not condemned to authoritarianism or totalitarianism. Confronted with the violence of foreign domination, the Fangs, for example, or the aboriginal *montagnards* have, it seems, evolved means of decentralising and diffusing power. State domination and external dependence are incontrovertible facts in contemporary Africa and there is no question of obfuscating their brutality or showing unwarranted optimism. However, their progress is not inexorable as the courage, the determination, the humour and very often the political wisdom of anonymous populaces demonstrate.

Nevertheless, it cannot be stressed enough, the creation of democratic

institutions in Africa need not follow Western precedents. The experiments with pluralist and representative regimes are important not so much because of their electoral façade but because of the development of social creativity which they allow. In the main, however, the problems remain enormous. The 1981 riots in Banjul in which young déclassés overwhelmed the oldest democracy on the continent are a sharp reminder of the inadequacy of liberal structures. Africa's potential for democracy is more convincingly revealed by the creation of small collectives established and controlled by rural or urban groups (such as local associations) than by parliaments and parties, instruments of the state, of accumulation and of alienation. These new political mediations will be evolved by Africans themselves, on their own. The task of the foreign analyst of these societies is simply to contribute to their understanding.

7

Political accountability in African history

JOHN LONSDALE

> People talk about capitalism as one mode of development and communism or socialism as another mode, but at least they're both on the move, using different paths. They have something in common, namely a certain level of social integrity, a certain national character, a demand for accountability. All of which is missing in most of the third world. But without it, your capitalism or your socialism, or whatever it is, isn't going to work.
> Flight-Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, April 1982[1]

ARGUMENT

What is, and what should be, the relationship between politics and production, between the forms of rule and the rewards of work? These are fundamental questions. The gulf between them, between what is and what should be, is the issue which underlies political debate everywhere. It is a moral issue rather than a theoretical one, to do with people rather than systems. In theory one can analyse how a particular political system must productively function; but that must never be confused with predicting the thoughts and actions of the men and women who live and work within it. It is the argument of this chapter that there is not and never has been any constant equation between politics and production. Their relationship has gone through a number of cycles in African history. Force has proved to be as fruitful as agreement, principled violence as destructive as fainthearted compromise. It would be nice but over-trusting to argue that responsible rulers will always, in the nature of things, share the profits they deserve with their industrious citizens, while tyrants must inevitably impoverish themselves no less than their slaves. It is possible for democracies to starve while despotisms flourish.

Throughout history men have used force to exact obedience and to destroy previously agreed ways of working. Their violence has extended states and built empires which have protected bigger investments in production, transport and trade. Masters have driven their workers to toil in new ways which enlarge not only the production but also the distribution of goods. But force also destroys; it can kill people and their hopes, their

reasons for working, for investing in the future. And there is good reason to suppose that force cannot provide a lasting base for economic growth, that it cannot make inequalities 'work' effectively for very long. For humans, as selfishly moral beings, are awkward customers. They tend to expect their relationships, even when they are unequal, to be mutually rewarding. To meet that criterion, force has to be hidden; it has to be converted into power. Force is external, even when wielded by a society's own members; it is a hammer. Power is internal to a society, even when exercised by invaders; it is a lever. Force admits of no argument: power does, even when the argument is not between equals. But the agreed exercise of power can also build up vested interests with no capacity to change; collusion can lead to stagnation. Violence and agreement both have their limits; all politics is a shifting combination of the two.

Force has been used as repeatedly in the history of Africa as anywhere else in the world, but not so effectively. The big men of pre-colonial African kingdoms could do little to re-shape productive relations, and white colonial rulers were scarcely as revolutionary in this respect as they first intended. Only in South Africa have public and private violence finally managed to seize from the mass of the people their individual control over property. With that they have also lost much of their power to argue about the use of their labour. In tropical Africa, most families still hold property, property which is not merely house and domestic goods but land and implements, the means of making their own living. Their rulers would have to use great force to take their considerable economic discretion from them. In the absence of such purposeful tyranny, Africa's rulers must face unusually serious problems of productive persuasion, of political accountability.

The idea of accountability seems noticeable for its comparative absence from the field of African studies. This is partly because it is a difficult concept to use, but also because some scholars have thought it to be irrelevant or even inappropriate to the African case. This chapter argues against all these positions. Political accountability has its difficulties in practice but is, at root, a simple enough idea. And it can scarcely be irrelevant anywhere, let alone inappropriate. It is an essential concept for understanding both political history and contemporary politics, especially when one attempts to relate politics to economics.

The reason that political accountability is a difficult concept to use is because of its ambiguity. But that is precisely its point. It is a dual notion. It combines the ideas of responsibility and accountability. Rulers claim to be responsible to their people; people try to hold them to account. Accountability is thus the measure of responsibility. Accountability has many meanings because it is a universal aspiration; it has to assume endless local disguises. It cannot be entrusted to any particular system, whether capitalist democracy or revolutionary socialism. Every political system has its own problems of accountability. And when considered in historical perspective,

it is clear that accountability has been an issue about which men and women everywhere have often argued and over which they sometimes have fought. They have tried variously to give it a new meaning, to exclude or include new categories of people entitled to be taken into account, or to make a publicly declared doctrine of responsibility really count for something in practice. So the ambiguity of accountability is its chief problem for the academic analyst only because it is already its most obvious, and most useful, characteristic for past and present political actors. Its meanings and practices have always been changing because rulers and ruled, masters and servants, have striven to define and redefine what accountability would most usefully mean to them in their own situation.

Where, as is usually the case, the weak have been in no position to argue about the accountability of their rulers they have generally bent all their ingenuity to the evasion of power. Throughout history, and perhaps particularly at the present day, this has proved to be the most devastating answer that Africa's poor could give to the irresponsibility of their rulers. As the Amhara peasantry of Ethiopia say, 'the wise man', when faced with the abuse of power from on high, 'bows low to the great lord and silently farts'.[2]

Accountability is then, quite simply, the problem of power. All power is, and must be, a scarce resource which is unequally shared. But it is not a private luxury; its holders control resources which are needed by others. Without its public exercise power cannot exist. The holders of power create inequality by subsidising their friends and those who can make the most trouble, at the expense of their opponents and of the weak. But effective power is also the relationship which makes inequality work. It can do so in a wide variety of ways, from the use of force to the persuasive creation of a climate of agreement. Force looks more obviously like power but agreement is cheaper, more predictable in its effects and usually more productive. For, however it works, power is always an exercise in applied morals. Questions about authority and obedience are questions about relative advantage and deprivation and, insistently therefore, about right conduct between people. In that perspective, force looks more like applied immorality. At the other end of the scale, if power were equally shared, if nobody could exact obedience and service from anybody, it would cease to exist and its accountability would not be a problem.

Political accountability is therefore part of the moral calculus of power; it concerns the mutual responsibilities of inequality. Because it raises questions about the control of power and its purposes, accountability must also be concerned with political organisation. For if power is not to some extent shared there can be no effective base from which it may be controlled, nor any protected right to discuss its purposes. So political accountability, or public morality, is the chief end of political freedom. Whether it also guarantees social justice and economic development is an altogether thornier question.

However much accountability may be a universal value, in actual political practice it is continually striven for and obstructed rather than achieved. As a value, some version of accountability supports the legitimacy of rule; as a practice, it tests it. Legitimate governments, we are likely to think, are those which are chosen by and thus directly responsible to their people. Their power is unequivocally internal. But this is a very modern view,[3] and even in the most freely democratic of countries one has to separate the legitimising value of accountability from its contentious practice. For all political societies are, and always have been, internally divided. Democratic values were given political form in Western Europe as people struggled to convert into peaceable power the unprecedented social divisions of industrial society. In Africa, too, colonial regimes had to concede democratic rights at the moment when Africans became most conscious of what divided them not only from their white rulers but also from each other. So there are always large minorities who feel that even electoral power is irresponsible, indeed punitive, towards them. There will always be, short of Utopia, this intimate contradiction between the unifying claims of legitimacy and the divisive implications of accountability.

Legitimacy is the universal aspiration of rulers, their occupational delusion, their search for power. They all portray their domination as a civilising mission. Orderly government, they claim, is no burden but an essential investment in the blessings of peace and progress, or civility and civilisation. By claiming responsibility rulers have hoped, literally, to convert their force into power, to carry society with them rather than always fighting against it. In other words, effective power can scarcely avoid submitting itself to some test of accountability. The trick is then to cheat the test or, better still, dictate its terms. This has become increasingly difficult over time.

Kings used to justify monarchy on the grounds that power was too dangerous to be shared out among their divided people. They claimed to be responsible to society only because they were first accountable to God, or to their godlike ancestors. Today such claims are rarely accepted as legitimate. They authorise the fanatical pursuit of the political simplicities with which rulers like President Botha of South Africa, Colonel Gaddafi of Libya, or former President Amin of Uganda have so horribly divided their people. Democratic rulers, no such heroes, try instead to reconcile peace and progress with societal division by first shaping public opinion and then seeming to obey its loudest echo. Colonial governors and political revolutionaries, on the other hand, draw their creative certainties not from within an imperfect society as it is currently constituted but from outside it, from a new vision of the future, a moral idea which will unite their people by doing them good.

All these projects have been civilising missions, formulated at different times and in different places, to cope with different political situations. They are equally valid claims to legitimacy, all infusing the inequality of

power with morality. But they are only assertions of political responsibility, either to the expressed views of real people or to the people's real interests if only they were godly, civilised or brave enough to see them. The testing of their accountability is another matter entirely. One of the moving forces in history, as in contemporary politics, is the constant dialectic between the claims of rulers to be responsible and the critical attempts of the governed, or of some of them, to hold rulers to account. When discussing accountability we cannot confine ourselves to the ideas of legitimacy. That would be to write the history of African political thought. Nor can we limit the discussion to the practices of accountability, the relative ability of divided peoples to organise in order to choose a ruler or government, to remind king or president of their promises, and to get rid of them if they fail or refuse to abide by their mandate. We have to consider the purposes and the practices of politics together. In Richard Sklar's words, democracy in Africa is 'an experimental process', but only because it has first been for many, as it was for W. E. B. Dubois, a vision of liberation.[4]

This chapter tries, firstly, to unravel some of the difficulties of accountability, and to show why the concept matters. Though Africa may suffer particularly acute problems in the formulation and practice of accountability, that is not to say that the idea itself is irrelevant or inappropriate. That would be to condemn Africans, and their friends, to despair. The second section of the chapter tackles the question of the growth of political communities, that is, communities within which the idea of accountability has an insistent meaning. The final section looks at power in action, with particular reference to its sovereignty and evolution through time. The remainder of this first section introduces the three themes: community, sovereignty and process.

To understand how political communities arise we have to examine the historical formation of power. This requires, first, that we distinguish between the practices and purposes of governance, the exercise of power and its vision. Only then can we see how they react on each other in history. It is quite possible to have accountability in what I call the *high politics* of state, honest rulers and free elections, and yet profound injustice or irresponsibility in the *deep politics* of society, that is, the relations between rich and poor, powerful and weak. If one could but find honest rulers it would be, as I have suggested earlier, the normal condition. It certainly characterises liberal democracy, a democracy of 'tears and social despair', as Sklar calls it;[5] and not by any means only in Africa. But throughout history the poor and downtrodden have been able to do something, if often not very much, to improve their condition by making their rulers pay more attention to them. It is a romantic instinct, but probably wrong, to imagine that they have done this most often by their own rebellion. It is the fate of most unaided peasant or worker revolts to be defeated by armies also recruited from the oppressed, and frightened rulers are as likely to entrust their future security to the executioner as to the

reformer. But aspirants to power have to be more generous than holders of power, and the weak have probably gained more by agreeing to be their followers than by threatening rebellion on their own. In this way they have been able to exploit the conflicts of high politics for their own deep purposes, supporting those competitors for power who promise to be responsive to their needs. The practical exercise of power can thus transform its vision, the public doctrine by which rulers may then be held to account.

This conversion of political calculation into norms of accountability, this moral alchemy, seems the more probable where there is some kinship, however imaginary, between rulers and ruled. That may look like a truism and a tautology, but history does not suggest that there is any one, ineluctable, process at work here. There have been at least three. The exercise of royal or state power can engineer the growth of politically participant communities from above. There are examples in Africa's pre-colonial history and it is the civilising mission of her present rulers.[6] Conversely, political communities can develop from below, as subject groups have organised to overthrow an external state power. Territorial nationalism grew like this in colonial Africa; but so too did political tribalism, its hated twin. And, finally, the very absence of community between alien rulers and native subjects may impose restraints on power. This was often the case in African kingdoms. Colonial rulers were as likely to be inhibited by their own strangeness as driven to ferocious action by the strangeness of Africans. Indeed, state power which is entirely external to society is likely, if not restrained, to be forcefully ineffective. So civilising missions, in their search for power, can scarcely be other than nation-building missions. The problem for modern Africa is that competing nations have so often been built both from above and from below. The communal moralities and immoralities of rule were not sufficiently considered by Sklar. But Africans have had to face them in more painful terms than most of the rest of us, whether under European colonial rule or, now, under the rule of fellow Africans who speak a different language.

Accountability is a difficult issue in divided communities. Without sovereignty it is irrelevant. In sovereign polities rulers and ruled can enter into some implied contract of authority and obedience, bound only by those conditions which each can impose upon the other. But if the apparent rulers are really the servants of some other power, unseen or geographically external, then they can scarcely be held answerable to the people whom they claim, it turns out incorrectly, to rule. Scholars have raised two doubts about the sovereignty of African countries, one theoretical, the other more straightforwardly concrete.

The theoretical limitation on political sovereignty is found in the argument which used to be advanced by most Marxists, that the economic or material level of existence determines all others; it is the unseen sovereign. All that political power can do is obey the iron logic of its productive system and

cope as best it may with the contradictions and crises to which all economies are subject. Political will cannot change economic fate. Economic 'development', if one wants to call it that, comes, if at all, out of the conflicts between the powerful few and the labouring many. These class struggles may well range identifiable individuals against each other. But they are essentially impersonal processes which no one group, and certainly no one ruler, can effectively influence. Non-Marxists have never accepted such a proposition, and not many Marxists would nowadays advance it in so stark a form. In denying the power of individual decision it excludes the possibility of political accountability. Nonetheless, we all know that 'the economy' is a field in which rulers make the most extravagant claims and meet their most damaging failures. It is not of course a problem peculiar to Africa, but it may be particularly severe for her rulers because of the second, more straightforward, limitation on their sovereignty.

All African countries, Liberia only excepted, were recently the colonies or other legal dependencies of European powers. Most remain puny in a world of superpowers afflicted with global paranoia. It is difficult not to accept one or other of them as an overmighty ally. Outside powers have very precise strategic interests in Africa. They are therefore anxious to maintain incumbent regimes in office, lest any usurper should have other, and rival, support from outside. It is not a situation to encourage free domestic political competition, nor, therefore, the active pursuit of accountability.

This argument is reinforced when one remembers that African countries have only feeble bargaining power in the world's commodity and capital markets. They seem condemned to choose between the poverty of clientage, supplying industrial countries with raw materials, and the destitution of an independence maintained by not selling anything to the outside world at all. For the reciprocities of the global patronage and clientage between industrial North and agricultural South are highly unequal. Upturns in the world business cycle do, it is true, benefit primary producers more than manufacturers, but primary producers are also more savagely hit in slumps, as in the 1980s. And the loans which the North offers through the International Monetary Fund are, increasingly, conditional upon the willingness of Third World governments to dismantle internal subsidies and external tariffs. The Fund believes, often rightly, that such protective measures have defended local, that is, African, privilege against the local poor, thus giving an unearned bonus to economic inefficiency.

There might be acceptable arguments for this attack on independent Africa's sovereignty were it not so closely connected with the present international debt crisis. Poor countries are being pressed to fund their debts to the rich, at ever rising rates of interest, by squeezing the already pitiful living standards of the majority of their people. Their accountability to Western bankers appears to oblige African rulers to repudiate their responsibility for the African poor. But all states are gatekeepers, standing

between the aspirations of their subjects and outsiders' demands. Rulers have often had to yield to their people's desire for more accountability within, so as to present a united defence against threats from without. Some African countries are, for that reason, better able than their neighbours to bargain with outside powers and agencies. To characterise African countries as 'dependent', therefore, does not in itself foreclose the question whether their rulers can ever be properly accountable, that is, accountable in the same politically contested way as rulers everywhere.

Even if accountability is agreed to be theoretically relevant it may still be rejected as politically inappropriate. For it can become a test of virtue which 'new states' are almost bound, and which revolutionary regimes even ought, to fail. Such failure was once guaranteed by American political science, with its assumption that political power in America was, and in other countries ought to be, simply the product of a free market in social competition, with the latent force of the state virtually forgotten.[7] So in Africa, where states rather too obviously suppressed social freedoms, allowances had to be made. The very existence of new states was said to be too fragile to permit their citizens any political activity which was not strictly controlled. Illegitimacy was somehow to be cured by unaccountability. Similar allowances are made for revolutionary regimes, which are not so very different from other new political dispensations as their authors and admirers would have us believe. Dawns of history are always rising and in many different political colours. New or revolutionary state rulers must first, it is said, secure power; this is bound to be a nasty business. They have to use violence in order to break old injustices which will be violently defended. And the new men will have loftier ideals than their people can yet know. To demand that they submit themselves to the test of popular accountability without first rewriting its rules, if necessary in blood, is to demand that they surrender both their revolutionary cohesion to the divisions of society and their vision of liberation to the defeatism of people who have never dared to dream.

This may seem an attractive argument for making allowances or, to demand more commitment from the scholar, for adopting higher, revolutionary, standards of judgement. But that would be to accept the civilising mission, the myth of legitimacy, as the sole standard of accountability, and as such would be not only poor analysis but disastrous revolutionary practice. For while power is directed by thought, it exists only in action. Only for its zealots is it justified by its intentions. As Amílcar Cabral saw well – and it would have been difficult to teach him much about the practice of revolution – most people judge power by what it does for them in their own generation, and react accordingly.[8] It follows, as Julius Nyerere has also insisted but his subordinates have often forgotten, that the daily means of power have a habit of becoming its ends.[9] If revolutionary truth is too precious to be muddied by ordinary people's discussion it is unlikely to secure their assent. True only to itself, the revolution becomes an external force, generating not productive support but sycophantic opportunism,

sullenly unproductive acquiescence, or ingenious cheating. Real men and women will persist in making their own comment on the power to which they are subject, even if academic observers fall silent.

All polities have their own histories of accountability, recurring patterns in which power is constructed, justified by its mission and then tested on its own terms – and this is the theme of the final section of this chapter, a sketch of the successive attempts to engineer civilising missions in Africa. Before there was developmental democracy there was constructive colonialism and, before that, productive kingship. Rulers have repeatedly discovered virtue in the necessity of their domination. But they have often been matched and sometimes defeated by the attempts of their people to make political virtue a necessity of rule. All these states, whether kingdoms, colonies or independent countries, have undergone domestic cycles of violent political accumulation, concessions to accountability and then crisis. The outcome of these crises of accountability has varied. Some have given rise to new oppressions, others to new freedoms, and all to some combination of the two, which has posed the perennial question of accountability in new forms. Economic change has in part caused, and in part been caused by, political change. It has sometimes opened up wider opportunities for the weak to demand more accountability from the powerful; sometimes it has closed down such opportunity. The idea of accountability owes some of its most contradictory ambiguities to the interaction between polity and economy.

POWER, ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY

Lieutenant Rawlings was right to associate demands for accountability with what he called 'a certain level of social integrity, a certain national character'. In suggesting a solution to the problem of making his country work – not just to labour but to labour profitably – he also identified the problem. For the growth of effective political communities is a long and apparently mysterious business. They are created in some way by the very nature of power, something we all recognise but find difficult to define. So, to repeat, power may, and state power always does, rest on force. But it cannot, for long, be force alone. Force is external, the sole effort of one interest against another. It is expensive. It generates resistance, resignation or evasion. Power is internal; it conjures up a joint but unequal effort in a common enterprise, with joint but unequal rewards. Power is a renewable effect; force uses itself up. It is this reciprocal quality of power, backed by its latent menace, which entangles power and its accountability in political disputes. Disputes generate ideas. Ideas generate communities.

Power has two faces: its managerial competitions, its high politics; and its unequal conflicts, its deep politics. This split personality has been responsible for two radically opposed theories of the growth of state power, broadly, non-Marxist and Marxist. One can argue, first, that political

control over social access to economic resources was, in origin, a collective good, a communal lever.[10] It converted the struggle for survival into a precondition of development. People preferred to obey rules for sharing resources rather than fight for them, and an obedience which was individually rational was collectively productive. Leadership was also essential for external defence. To begin with, rulers enjoyed only those privileges which were gratefully agreed by all; they were, in the fullest sense, accountable. The routine costs of rule were more tolerable than the uncertain price of having no government, where, as the village republicans of Chibuk in north-eastern Nigeria remember, 'there were no rules to make you safe'. Such consensual origins of power are recorded in virtually all African historical myths. To take but one example, both rulers and subjects in what became north-western Uganda agree that the Alur domination there was founded on the people's voluntary subjection to princelings 'as arbitrators, and then as suppressors, of the feuds which they were themselves unable to terminate'.[11] There is an implied contract between prince and people here but also, it is important to note, a suggestion that it was broken when princes ceased to arbitrate in ways which were socially sanctioned and started to suppress disputes with their own forces. African myths of dynastic origin are also myths of constitutional accountability and betrayal.

If, for a moment, one accepts this myth of a civilising mission, one must also accept the importance of accountability in high politics. Accountability secures the cohesion of those who count, despite their mutual competitions. It sets limits to the destructiveness of personal, factional, or party division. It preserves managerial power, a collective good, from political disintegration, a public calamity. It is as important for kings as for capitalists, for democratic socialists as for revolutionaries. It is found where rulers readily delegate authority, where subordinates confidently exercise their discretion, where the abuse of power is given its proper name and is properly punished under a rule of law which stands above political faction. It is very rare; in any absolute sense it is found nowhere. The most that one can expect, and it is a great deal, is that a doctrine of high-political accountability, that is, the self-restraint of the powerful in the cause of collective responsibility, is itself a weapon of political competition. There are too many conflicting currents in all high politics for accountability to be more than that. It has to compete with personal ambition and party loyalty, both of them essential ingredients of power but both, too, contradictions of any claim to responsible and disinterested public service. And yet, to complete the contradictions, the party competition which makes party loyalty necessary is in most democracies believed to be the chief guarantee that rulers will publicly be held to account for their stupidities, their crimes, and even for their sins.

From a deep political perspective, however, accountability in high politics may simply organise the cohesion of oppression. For distinctively

political institutions which collectively bear state authority seem to be found only in class-divided societies, in which power and wealth are distributed between social categories in a structured inequality. This is no coincidence; the question is how to explain it. Non-Marxist scholars, even those who argue that political power was consensually agreed in its origins, accept that power cannot help but create inequality.[12] It literally cannot exist without its internal, high-political, accountability. Accountability organises powerful individuals by obliging them to be collectively responsible for the social acceptability of their power. But it also disorganises the weak. As individuals they can most readily hope to defend themselves against power, or even to use it, by enlisting as clients of the powerful. Clientage is a personal relationship of dependence. It has to be deliberately broken before the weak can unite against the strong. This cannot be done without pain and deliberation. In short, to lay down the rules for sharing resources is to have won the struggle to control them.

But there is the contrary, broadly Marxist, argument that there could be no demand for unequal power until there was unequal wealth, which needed armed protection and could afford to pay for it.[13] The control of productive development was never a collective good; it has always been a sectional prize. It is not shared power, but a class lever. It deprives the weak of independent decision. It allows them to survive, but on terms laid down by the strong. The world has always prospered on suppressed majorities.[14] Ruling classes can never derive their power from responsibility to society at large. For classes can usefully mean something as social categories only if, in their conflict with other classes, they are collectively answerable to their members' interests. The only classes to which rulers have ever been accountable are those which hired them in the first place, or whose more ambitious members invested in public office themselves, the better to exploit the poor. In all class societies, rulers' claims to public responsibility can only be scandalous deceptions, masks of legitimacy to disguise their private, sectional interest: rule is dressed up as service, wealth as honour, and toil as duty.

But power is not quite so simple. If it were, if power were either a collective good in origin, and that alone, or merely a sectional prize, nothing more than a strong arm for the rich, then all talk of accountability must be a sham. On the first view the responsible origins of power have for ever after been betrayed; on the second, the very idea of political accountability is a delusion. But human history has not been so barren of intellectually challenging and politically determined struggles for accountability as either view by itself, and in these rather caricatured forms, would imply. For otherwise, one would have had histories not of changing reciprocities of power but of drearily similar violence. In the relations between ruling and working, it is only where power has been used as often to restrain force as to wield it that there has been any sustained economic development, however unequally its benefits may have been enjoyed between continents and

classes. Force has frequently served to exploit productive relations more harshly, or to revolutionise them. But sharing out power seems as necessary to a continuing productivity in the social division of labour as it is to the possibility of accountability in politics.

All societies, even those without coercive political institutions, are founded on complementary oppositions or moral rifts. There is culturally no more egalitarian and materially no simpler society than the hunting and gathering !Kung San people of the Kalahari; yet even they are daily preoccupied with the tensions between their personal selfishness and the necessity of unstinted sharing for group survival.[15] In more complex societies similar contradictions are found between groups as much as within individuals. If the contradictions are to be productive rather than destructive there needs to be some degree of separation between unequal interests and specialised occupations. Without room for negotiation and adjustment of relative advantage, any relative disadvantage must become permanent, and therefore resigned, subjection.

It is often said that governments divide their subjects in order to rule them. That is true. Favours create supporters and divide the opposition. But it is barely even a half truth, and by itself is simply untrue. Three further aspects of reality must always be added; a reminder about the inherent nature of power, a caution about the spirited awkwardness of humanity, and a corollary on the dispersion of accountability. We need, first, to remember that all effective power must by its nature unite rulers and tends to divide subjects. But, secondly, divisions between subjects are not merely the points at which rulers have inserted the discriminatory levers of government power. They mark, rather, the autonomies which must fruitfully exist within any relatively complex society. If rulers do not respect the rights of their subjects to protect their own sectional interests, government becomes stultifying oppression. The argument applies as well to class interests, such as master and slave, employer and worker, as it does to occupations, such as farming or herding, manufacture or trade. The premise behind such a statement is that the prickly moral sensibilities of men and women constitute a running subversion of what might otherwise seem to be the smoothly functional structures of political and economic systems. People have often struggled (even if more frequently they have not) to establish their right to be taken into economic as much as political account. Political economies are shaped as much by human conflict as by their impersonal logic. If politics is not always to be in uproar, nor production fail, it follows that rulers cannot govern exclusively in their chief class supporters' interest. There are, it is true, important differences in this respect between pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. These are better reserved for a later stage of the argument. For the moment it is enough to establish that to share out power is in a very real sense to create it. The contested accountability of power appears to be essential to its productivity, even in class-divided societies.

We can now bring the argument back to the problem with which it started, the creation of political communities. The process has always required the development of a political culture which restrains the powerful both in their high politics (their relations with each other) and in their deep politics, to allow some, negotiable, degree of freedom to their subjects. Despite appearances, there is no particular mystery in such a process, even if it is by no means inevitable. It results from the linkages between high and deep politics as well as from their conflicts. The relationships which are tested by accountability are not simply, even in countries recently subject to alien conquest, those between two solid collectivities, rulers and ruled. For oppression is never perfectly cohesive, just as no human society is ever entirely equal. Rulers are not unified; they are competitive. Their competitive strength is usually determined by the size, skills and loyalty of their followings, whether these be spearmen, peasant farmers or electoral constituencies. Their individual and, therefore, their group power depends as much on recruiting and rewarding followers as it does on excluding them from strategic resources. Weak clients need strong patrons; but ambitious patrons need resourceful clients.

Throughout history, in Africa as in every other corner of the world, the powerful have fought each other for a larger share of power. Princes have killed their brothers for their father's throne; kings have striven to assert themselves over their ministers; chiefs have concealed the realities of local power from colonial district commissioners; big farmers have ignored or, if pressed, bought off socialist party bosses; the political leaders of national liberation movements have had to rein in their military commanders.[16] These struggles have generated conflicting justifications of power. For powerful personalities are the more convincing when cloaked in political principle. Unprincipled conflict has been common enough, but by itself can never be more than factional intrigue, unstable and unproductive. Principles cast a wider net of allegiance than persons; they more easily identify leaders' schemes with their followers' dreams. So high-political competition can well encourage claims to deep responsibility. It may also give supporters some, if rarely much, scope to keep their leaders to their word by threats of defection. The stratagems of power can thus become the conventions of freedom. A culture of political accountability can emerge. Its calculated moralities can create a community, with a competitive interest in its shared history.

That is an ideal model. It seems best fitted to north-western Europe's nation-states and to Africa's ethnic groups rather than to Africa's contemporary states, within which many different ethnic communities frequently jostle. Save for a handful of exceptional cases, the states of sub-Saharan Africa have neither continuous history nor a common language in which to argue about it. No European nation, it is true, and no African people, represents in any way a simple lineage of common descent. They incorporate histories of political, religious and cultural conflict and

assimilation; but they are generally long histories. Virtually every African state has, by contrast, been arbitrarily marked out by very recent colonial invasion. Common languages are in use within these brash new boundaries of sovereignty. But they are the official tongues of European conquest. Their literate forms have organised statehoods before they have illuminated nationality; they made bureaucracy possible sooner than any critical public. There are, again, happy exceptions, but not many. Lesotho, Tanzania, Somalia and Swaziland are all endowed with languages which are both administrative and popular, sacred and vernacular, tongues of satire as well as command. This good fortune has not solved all their problems of political community, but other African states are still more external in nature, with few connections between state power and a social culture of accountability.

It has not so far been necessary to the argument to make much distinction between types of power, and between state power and social power, between state and society, one must draw connections as well as distinctions. It all depends on the state in question, how it has been formed in past history and how its rulers now behave. Nevertheless, some rather obvious contrasts need to be drawn before the sometimes rather complicated interconnections can be made. State power rests ultimately upon force, social power on persuasion. States have the right to confiscate, in taxation; individuals in society have to strike bargains. State institutions, like the army, the police or the courts, can conscript or command; social institutions, like clubs or churches, rely on volunteers. The agencies of states are said to recruit impersonally and to make impersonal decisions, while social institutions are nothing if not the self-interested associations of people who get on well together.

All this is of course a caricature. States can fail to enforce decisions on all, their governors can dispense privileges to their friends, bureaucracies are riddled with intrigue. Conversely, groups in society, whether landlords or workers, may employ violence; labour is a necessity before its employment can be a choice; and the central institution of most societies, the family, is scarcely a voluntary association. Statutory law can regulate the most private of personal decisions. Finally, if political activity is not to be merely riotous or evasive discontent, guerrilla subversion or high-political intrigue, it must attempt to link social persuasion, the power of free agreement, with the legitimate force of the state. Nevertheless, the distinction between state and society is essential for further discussion of accountability in Africa, since their institutions have not only been generally separated from each other but often opposed.

Until the twentieth century most Africans did not live under states. They tended to live either in chiefdoms, polities with no concentrations of force to use against their citizens, or in communities with still less differentiation of power. Their problems of accountability had little to do with political inequality; they were overwhelmingly concerned with the still more fundamental question of how to apportion blame for personal misfortune. And

compared with European states of the time, even African kingdoms commanded, most of them, very little violence. For Europe has been the continent of war, not Africa. And it has been war that has built states, states that have sustained war. At the end of the nineteenth century European powers enforced states on almost all of Africa and, with them, their contemporary problems of accountability. It is because of this particular history, not because states are superior to stateless peoples in any way save in their capacity to wield violence, that the exploration of Africa's problems of accountability and production in the remainder of this chapter will have to focus largely on the oppositions between states and ethnic groupings in society.

Africa's civilising missions, therefore, its successive ordeals of state building, are its historical arenas of accountability. State power – as distinct from mere force – is a paradox. It is at once domination and liberation. It cannot survive unless it is external to society, above it; it cannot work unless it is internal to society, within it. It is built, but it also forms. Domination over society is built by political will. By the same means it can also be destroyed. But states have staying power; they have by some means or other protected themselves from fragmentation. That is what decisively distinguishes them from other forms of polity.[17] In order to survive, therefore, state power also has to form within society, through adaptation as much as by conscious decision. It must become the indispensable instrument not only of fear but also of hope. It has to attract, to liberate ambition from its social constraints. Durable state power is statish, that is, it must to some extent abstract power into impersonal institutions above society.[18] But it can do so only because it recruits individuals keen to serve. States can consolidate old, but also create new, forms of social class inequality.

Big men in society, chiefs, traders, planters, priests, must always have an eye on state power. More vulnerable than small men to its hostility, they also have more to gain by lending the state their resources, to be repaid with more power. Patrons in society, they can invest in state office. In return, the state gains social authority. But big men also divide state power. They are not sufficiently dependent on it. Their private class interest in society may clash with their public class interest in the state. And they have the deep social resources with which to defy the collective responsibility of high politics. So continued statishness, insulated from the divisions of society, has depended on the recruitment of different sorts of men altogether, by exploiting society's other divisions. States need to attract men without social power, without social ties, men who by escaping service within society are available to serve over it. In many African kingdoms, high civil and military office was held by slaves. Early colonial armies also recruited slaves; many of the first Christian converts, colonial Africa's first office clerks, had been social outcasts, destitute or orphan. Since independence, the huge expansion of state employment in both armies and at desks has provided for a fortunate few of the downtrodden an ever-widening road of

escape to the centre from the grasp of provincial patrons. Here is one of Africa's chief paradoxes of power and accountability. The formation of new governing classes represents an oppressive burden on society; but it has also allowed a massive enlargement of personal liberation, a generation removed from peasantry.[19]

In modern Africa this paradox has acquired pathos. Small political communities with long histories have been engulfed, by conquest, in larger states without memories. But states have some moral force in the modern world and some international standing; they are licensed to use violence against their citizens and to incur debts. Ethnic groups are allowed none of these strengths. Ethnic politics is stigmatised as tribalism, a baleful invasion of statishness by society. Tribalism is feared; it threatens the cohesion of high politics. It is also distrusted as the self-interested creation of big men, who bend the state and disguise their class by carving out uncritically loyal constituencies among the mass of the poor. Tribalism disenfranchises, it is said, because it deprives voters 'of the power to hold the politician truly accountable through common action with other voters across the land'.[20] Only nations, the argument runs, as mutually responsible political communities, can risk the intense political debate needed before a majority public opinion can form which is strong enough to control state power. We can accept this argument as the polemical basis of Africa's contemporary civilising missions. But we must also ask whether the destruction of ethnic associations, among Africa's most vital social institutions, will not also destroy some of the main guarantors of the popular right to argue about political accountability.

We must first recognise that all political communities are invented, whether tribes or nations. But some are more outrageous inventions than others. In Africa today invented tribes intertwine with still more imaginary nations. Each a moral construct on its own, their conjunctions provide the tragic opportunity for political irresponsibility.

Political relations, as secular academics have needed reminding, sum up the mystery of all human relations, which are at their most awesome in the common necessities of birth, procreation and death.[21] Political communities incarnate the immortal longings of their members, who are imagined as kinsmen, by inventing their ancestors for the instruction of their children. There is nothing intrinsically moral in groupings of tens of thousands, still less in tens of millions of people, few of whom know each other, who have not met each other's ancestors and may not see their own grandchildren. But that is the imaginary premise of all politics, accountability to the past and responsiblity for the future. So all secular power is shot through with spiritual values and regularly fortified with ritual ceremony. Ritual creates the common symbols of communication; it invents tradition and, with it, the community.

A political community is daily constructed by precept and practice. Kings are no less imaginatively creative than revolutionaries. Kings ritually ensure

the future and revolutionaries angrily construct the past because they both draw, or intend to draw, their power from the community. There is just this one difference. The symbolic language of responsibility employed by any existing regime inevitably comes to shape a mutually intelligible argument of accountability with society. That is the ruler's purpose and society's challenge. Revolutionaries have to change the terms of the argument, and it takes time for people to catch up with and challenge their meaning. Africans have had to catch up twice in this century, once after colonial conquest, and again, after the conquest states were won by their own nationalists. Nor was it just the symbolic language which changed. The actual language of power and its entire technology was revolutionised. Literacy in a European tongue now shapes a doctrine of responsibility to which there can be no critical echo from (perhaps still) the majority of the people, non-literates even in their own vernacular.

We can now begin to understand, with Cabral, why alien conquest has been so traumatic in its political consequences. The theft of present power cuts its responsible connection with past tradition and therefore with future change.[22] Kenyatta's preface to his anthropology of the Kikuyu, *Facing Mount Kenya*, poetically expresses that recognition. Naming his parents (but also his children), he dedicated the book 'To Moigoi and Wamboi and all the dispossessed youth of Africa: for perpetuation of communion with ancestral spirits through the fight for African Freedom, and in the firm faith that the dead, the living, and the unborn will unite to rebuild the destroyed shrines.'[23] He saw, like Edmund Burke reflecting with horror on the French Revolution, that men cannot look forward with responsibility to their posterity unless they can also, not in mere imagination but in an imagination which takes the measure of power, look back to their ancestors.

Kenyatta imagined that he was preserving his Kikuyu people in print; in fact he was creating them. His book was the first means the Kikuyu-speaking peoples had possessed with which to imagine themselves as one community. Divided into myriad settlements by ridge and stream, they had scarcely done so before. But it was altogether a more plausible project than that in which, a few years later, he helped to invent Kenyans, native heirs to alien conquest. The same could be said of almost all Africa's colonial nationalists. For political communities are those which agree to differ on the implications of common values. These moral values were first shaped by the necessities of survival and, therefore, by the organisation of production. The first political communities were productive ones. Their leaders dramatised their sacred skills of farming and herding so as to attract allegiance. Pre-colonial Africa's communities were less ethnic groups than occupational associations with distinctive beliefs and skills, sometimes recruiting new members and sometimes losing them. Continuously re-invented communities then, they have become vastly more imaginary now. For then production needed faith in men's control of nature; now it needs access to the power of the state. Ecological zones were small and intimate. The arena

of power is large and thronged with strangers. Nature imposed, and imposes, disciplines; power seems to invite astounding tricks. But building tribes was less tricky than building nations.

Colonial conquest changed the context of ethnicity by fastening above it the arbitrary power of an external state. Tribalisms and then territorial nationalisms grew to domesticate its force. Apparently similar to each other, they were really very different. Both adopted new languages. Larger ethnic groups were pulled together by the harmonisation of local vernaculars in local sacred texts, regional Bibles. At the territorial level the new literacies separated between the few, potential citizens adept in English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, and the many, illiterate subjects. Ethnic and territorial movements both matched colonial institutions with their own political arenas. But while struggles to control district councils drew on past traditions of local conflict, nationalist leaders had to learn to trust people whose background they did not instinctively understand. Many ethnic groups exploited the stereotypes within which their white rulers tried to predict their behaviour. They could scarcely avoid becoming cocoa tribes, banana eaters, or cattle keepers. But they promoted themselves, too, by the labels they were given: martial races, railway tribes, or a race of jumped-up clerks. Tribal stereotypes never fitted, of course, but nationalism was inescapably discordant in its economic interests. All these differences were superficial. It was in the moral sphere, the attempt to reconstruct political community, that tribalism was so much more deeply engaged than territorial nationalism.

The chief moral stimulus to political tribalism was the immorality of class formation.[24] New forms of social inequality were insupportable within local society unless burdened with new political responsibility, the duties of patronage. Class formation occurred within ethnic communities as larger farmers or mission teachers appropriated resources and knowledge which had previously been distributed under other rules. It was only within historically associated peoples, with a shared moral economy, a shared sense of what was socially tolerable, that class formation *could* occur. Colonial 'nations', with no prior existence of any sort, had no such moral economy to be outraged. But ethnic localities were jealously watchful on this point. As some families acquired the rights of their neighbours, so their heads tried, by taking on the risks of political leadership, to justify themselves in the new circumstances and become responsible again. They founded local farmers' associations, welfare and educational unions, became patrons of the local church or mosque, and so on, using whatever symbolic language best combined their own literacy and the understanding of the local population. So they helped to build tribes, creating communities in which they had a moral standing and beyond which they acted as brokers of political alliance within the new arena of the state. To see tribalism as mere manipulation of the ignorant by the powerful is inhumane and ahistorical. That it was profitable to find a moral base for class

superiority is undeniable, but it was first a claim to responsibility, a civilising mission.

It is the tragedy of political accountability in modern Africa that this ethnic search for middle-class responsibility became inextricably part of a second moral project, at the territorial level, to transform into internal, accountable, power the external force wielded by colonial states. The new tribal leaderships had had to create the reciprocities of social inequality without the support of the colonial state and often in the face of its defence of more 'traditional' chiefs. But nationalist movements took hold of the instruments of state. Alien in origin, these possessed neither symbolic depth, nor a common language of deep accountability, nor any indigenous conventions of high-political restraint. The open competition for this strange new external resource tainted almost all it touched. State loans and licences relieved businessmen of social cares, freeing their class interest from its surrounding moral communities. Regional patrons brought to government ready-made circles of social reliability, but their mutual competitions tore at the statishness of states. Armies of officials and officers of armies may have been fired with the ideals of public service, but they found that the rhetoric of exhortation was no substitute for socially embedded levers of power.

To see the origins of modern African ethnicity in a responsible project to reconstruct political community against the threat of class formation, rather than in the cynical manipulation of ignorant sentiment, does not make African government any easier. It is simply an attempt to understand African politics in the same way as all other politics, as a creative tension between private interest and public acceptance.

Africans argue as much about accountability as anyone, in deep politics as well as in high. In the view from below, the mass of rural cultivators seems in some countries to have despaired of securing the accountability of rule. They evade power instead, and thereby threaten to destroy it, by pulling down the main fiscal prop of the state. For, rather than accept official crop prices which are loaded against them both by the interests of urban consumers and by covert taxation, they sell their crops on local free markets and smuggle across borders. By contrast, some workers, perhaps especially railwaymen, have been able to check the attempts of their governments to engross all social power by mobilising an historical sense of their own sectional autonomy.[25] And in the world of high politics claims to civilising missions can still be heard. Leaders of military coups do actually believe in the virtues of public service; the colonels of Upper Volta have renamed it Bourkina Faso, the land of honest men. But military accountability can only be tested after armies have retired to their barracks.

Elections are indeed still held, and perhaps with increasing conviction.[26] Rulers hold elections for many reasons. They are bids for international

respectability. They ration the rewards of high politics. Against this, they encourage inflated promises to ethnic followers, but elections are also ritual proofs of rulers' deep responsibility. They are a search, in some forlorn but universal memory of innocence, for the social authority which comes from consent. Electorates, it is true, can be bought, intimidated and cheated. But they are not easily fooled. They keep the other side of the memory, however often it is disappointed and however much it may be invented, of a time when their support for patrons actually counted.

Africans are not different from other people in their expectations of politics. The difference lies in African countries. Their historical particularity suggests that the emergence of a national political community within them is not inevitable. Their state power has been built in extraordinary ways and in unusually difficult times. For the majority of African countries – those that gained independence through negotiation in the 1960s – winning power was a reassuringly innocent affair. The construction of political power did not so much discipline and exclude as reward and absorb. Parties could be bandwagons; they did not have to be shocktroops, because the instruments of political control and economic allocation had already been violently constructed by outsiders, the colonial powers. And at the time the international environment seemed friendly enough. New states did not have to maintain large armies; nor did the lack of economic sovereignty threaten existing local interests which had, after all, grown by virtue of the external market. But the very innocence of power removed what are normally its prudential barriers to irresponsibility. Ideological, self-limiting, doctrines of power were quite inappropriate for all-welcoming bandwagons; and internal consensual props for external sovereignty were not obviously needed. Nationalism could safely be left in official hands, expressed in international languages at overseas meetings.

Yet the effective practice of the nationalists' civilising mission has faced exceptional difficulty. Agrarian society depends on markets for survival, on literacy for power, and on the state for access to both. Local patrons have every reason to sway the state. But states have little purchase on society except, literally, what they can purchase. Disaster has come when, faced with declining export earnings and soaring bills for imported oil, states have decreasingly been able to buy. Moreover, while peasants have good reason to bend the ear of the state, rulers have more clamorous interests to attend to in towns and find that they have only limited control over what peasant families choose to produce in return. And when rulers have tried to industrialise, their lack of sovereignty over sources of capital and their people's labour has been critically apparent. Late industrialising states, and Africa's are last, need tight control of both.[27] Whether on capitalist or socialist paths, contemporary nation-building is vastly more difficult, with its keen demands for accountability and feeble instruments of responsibility, than Africa's earlier civilising missions.

CIVILISING MISSIONS

African history is unusually full of cautionary tales for impatient rulers. Visionary in their claims, they have been taken at their word. African kings drummed up support by proclaiming the fertility of their rule. Some of them were killed when they became senile or when the rains next failed. Colonial rulers claimed to be essential to civilising Africa, instilling the rights of property and the property of writing. They were ousted by those Africans who first appropriated both. Kwame Nkrumah, inspiration for all later nationalists, urged Africans to seek first the political kingdom. Some have been tearing it apart almost ever since. Leaders of national liberation movements entrusted their future to their peasantries. Peasants now do not much like paying for the future socialism.

In pre-colonial Africa men and women created those social relations which enabled them to cope with their natural environment. With simple tools, poor soils and fiercely unpredictable weather but without the yearly winters which keep pests at bay, the enemy was nature rather than man. Most Africans managed to cope without the aid of governments; indeed, governments may have hindered as much as assisted their struggle.[28] But kingdoms were built. Kings claimed to help where it mattered, protecting not only the political but also the spiritual conditions of production. All over Africa, myths of political genesis exalt the power of kings to mediate between the dark encircling powers of the untamed bush and the cultivated field, the frail foundation of civilisation. The big political festivals were harvest or, in pastoral kingdoms, dairy festivals. Royal courts were centres of weather forecasting and gossip about crops or cows. People took their kings seriously. As Audrey Richards saw, 'to believe in the chief is to cultivate in hope'.[29]

The converse was also true. If crops withered in drought, so too might political faith. Kings faced crises of accountability whenever famine loomed, virtually every decade in some parts of Africa. They found then that their personal history was ensnared by their dynastic myth, 'which imposes its own sovereignty on the kings'.[30] But to kill the king whose failings had killed the harvest would probably mean bleeding his power by political emigration rather than shedding his blood. For few African kingdoms were very statish. They were political networks rather than sovereign territories. It was easier to repudiate a king's responsibility by turning one's back than to face him and hold him to account. And the economics of emigration were not too daunting. Africa was sparsely populated, its resources relatively freely available. The specialisations of pre-capitalist production were not often closely integrated; most Africans could themselves produce most of what they needed. They were engaged more with nature than with markets. Provided they could hunt and, perhaps, herd, agricultural communities could without too much hardship survive the seasonal dislocation which migration entailed. Africa is still the continent of refugees.[31]

African kingdoms were none the less cockpits of constitutional debate. Their myths stressed the inhuman brutishness of power as well as its marvellous virtue. In part this dichotomy reflected the daily tensions of high politics. If, as the Lozi say, 'every man thinks that the king has only one subject', kings were bound to offend their followers simply by keeping the peace between them.[32] Powerful commoners used every means to limit the power of kings. They were best placed to do so when they had been the new king's allies in a succession war, the toughest electoral process in pre-colonial Africa. Rituals of royal installation and their annual reminders dramatised the running conflict in all authority, between investing kings with power over production and their followers with control over kings. But such constitutional ritual also dramatised deep political conflict between ruling minorities and the rest of the people for the control of power. They were really contests over class formation, for kings used their power to reward and punish in very material ways. The Xhosa of southern Africa likened government to 'dishing up food' for the king's supporters. The king of Buganda was said to give a foreign war to his chiefs rather as a host gives a party, and chiefs pocketed much of the tribute which was internally derived.[33] But for the most part they were indecisive conflicts; few ruling classes secured such close control over resources that their clients ceased to be their rivals. Many kings had to respect a division of powers, between ruling, law-giving, and intercession with the gods, especially in central Africa. Here, kings were often seen as strangers; the sovereign mysteries of productive activity were guarded from them by native religious cults or commoner chief ministers. All over Africa ethnic distinctions similarly protected occupational specialisations. This self-regulation was carried furthest in the heavily commercialised economies of the West African Sudan. Until the nineteenth century its Islamic trade networks preserved a careful distance from local kings, so that administrative capitals sometimes faced mercantile twins.[34]

Since occupational conflict was in this way more often diffused by social distance than waged within social hierarchies, it is not easy to see class struggle as the origin of African royal power.[35] Determined alliances of men certainly built up power so as to control either the exchanges between ecological zones or the conflicts among strangers for such scarce resources as salt, copper, or good grazing.[36] It is difficult to think of any kingdom which did not straddle such complementary oppositions. But they seem for the most part to have been built by political means alone. There was very little state formation in Africa, pulling together neighbouring productive localities in a new social ladder of exploitation. So royal responsibility for production was nearly always symbolic rather than managerial, and the accountability of kings more often satisfied by the decentralisation than by the reform of power. The limited development of the technology of killing was perhaps crucial in this underdevelopment of monarchy. No African kingdom fought with the sustained ferocity of its counterparts in Europe.

They did not experience that peculiarly European spiral of state power and class differentiation which linked private loans to the state for military expenditure with the development of mining and metallurgy, the factory organisation of dockyards and arsenals with the public scrutiny of royal finance, and all with the testing of national identity in battle.[37] Power continued to oscillate in Africa between kings and chiefs long after it had begun to consolidate their joint alliance in Europe. African kings were not decisively bolstered by the formation of clerical, propertied, middling classes and the crippling costs of cannon.

But African kingdoms were not all the same, and some of them changed greatly in the last two centuries before colonial rule. They became more statish, more external to society; class divisions opened up more harshly; and as the outside threat from Europeans loomed closer, disasters struck production from within. The spread of slavery, the import of guns and ecological catastrophe all tested the accountability of kings, sometimes nearly to the destruction which colonial conquest sealed.

African slavery is a controversial subject on which much research remains to be done.[38] It was a very varied condition, related to power before it was related to production. It existed before the era of the Atlantic export trade, but this huge market in misery both transformed and greatly expanded domestic slavery. Three of its dimensions are particularly relevant in discussing accountability. Slavery could be a cyclical, temporary, phenomenon; it could be a form of political accumulation; only lastly, in terms of both chronology and importance, was it productive toil.

African slavery probably originated in crises of accountability. Droughts and famines were frequent but generally patchy in effect. The famished followers of chiefs whose powers had failed with the rains could survive by pawning themselves or their children to more fortunate neighbours in return for food and land. They would normally hope to revert to their former freedoms or allegiances when better times returned. But ambitious political accumulation could cut into these natural tidal flows between dependence and subjection.[39]

For slavery, however variously it may have started in different parts of Africa, spread more widely as a solution to the problem of 'power and its non-proliferation'.[40] Its political attractions were embodied in the eunuch and the concubine. Both were answers to the dispersion of power, its obsessive accountability, within the colonising lineages of agrarian Africa. However much lineages were formed by 'big men' and their clients rather than by patriarchs and their kin, they respected a rough equivalence between membership, call it citizenship, and rights to productive resources. The secrets of fertility were guarded by elders but in the natural course of things had to be relinquished to their cadets, their sons; power slipped away with one's relations. Outside Muslim Africa the castration of male slaves was symbolic rather than physical. Captive or starving, servile men entered a society as strangers without known kin and therefore as non-citizens. They

were not denied the right to marry, but their children were denied entry into free, lineage, society except as continuing clients of its men of power. They were producers for, rather than within, society, denied full rights to its resources. Their deprivation was the condition for others' accumulation. Concubines, similarly, added to a man's reproductive and productive power without involving him in the reciprocal obligations of marriage. He could enlarge his following without transferring equivalent assets to any grasping in-laws or affinal kin.

Slavery had a similar effect, writ large, on the political history of African kingdoms. Slavery's horrors were most vividly reported for eastern Africa, one of the less statish regions of the continent. Its political effects were more marked in the west, already the most statish region and chief supplier to the Islamic and Christian slave export trades. To generalise in this way is absurd, but early African kingdoms had local militias to match their loose-knit politics; the fruits of war were shared between kings and chiefs rather than cornered by the state; tributary payments did little more than feed those who had brought them to the festivals of harvest, justice and allegiance; and kings lived much as their subjects, in households which were much larger but not otherwise very different from those of lineage elders. So for kings, as for elders, slavery provided an external buttress for power without any increase in internal accountability; but the same went for a kingdom's chiefs, the heads of its productive communities and the commanders of its militias.[41]

In the absence of much state formation from below, slaves were the readiest instruments of political will. Slave officials and slave soldiers were royal agents without social ties; slave labourers could support larger, busier palaces. But chiefs invested their share of the human profits of war in similar ways. The conflicts of high politics were thus more often sharpened than transformed, and the relations between rulers and ruled seem to have become less responsible than before. For the separation between servile and free was a formidable weapon of power. Since classes had not formed it had proved necessary, one might say, to invent them. Kings could use slave troops to police free communities; chiefs and elders could use slave labour to compete with the efforts of their followers and their sons. The support of clients and juniors was in this way devalued; they became more amenable to control, less able to hold their seniors to account. Royal power became more secular, less bound by the ritualised restraints of the past moral economy of production.[42]

But there were other processes at work in externalising the power of some nineteenth-century kings. Asante provides the best example. It is not only the most fully researched, but of all the most statish of Africa's kingdoms its monarchy was the most internally rooted, its power not only built but formed. This seems to have been due to the deeply contradictory character and ideology of its clans. Like all who colonised Africa's tropical forests, much more so than its savannas, these faced herculean tasks in clearing

land, having to destroy about 7,000 tons of vegetation per acre. So Asante civilisation depended not just on collectivities of free citizens but on huge imports of captive labour and, vitally, on the individual ambition which linked the two together in war. As the kingdom was built on the alliances of big men, so too the state was formed by the ambition of many. A class of officials was born, neither slave nor accountable to their clans, but free to serve the king. But even in Asante, kings and officials fell out as the century advanced and in their quarrels bore down more heavily on their people, both slave and free. The causes were complex but can be summarised as the increasing traffic with outside powers, African and European; the greater use of slaves in internal production with the closure of the Atlantic export market; and, perhaps above all, the import of guns and, by the end of the century, of rifles.[43]

The intensification of foreign trade in both the western Sudan and in the Guinea forests of the Atlantic seaboard had two implications for royal accountability. The management of foreign affairs distanced kings from deep responsibility for agriculture, and kings and chiefs became more jealous of each other's profits. Kings feared lest trader chiefs become an independent, 'middle' class; chiefs suspected kings of despotic mercantilist ambition. They thrived, in rivalry, on the slave production of export crops, which enjoyed a rising market until the 1870s. Coerced labour was by no means 'necessary to development'; but it was considered an essential prerogative by contemporary African authorities. High political conflict became more feckless over its social consequences, thanks to the rising imports of ever deadlier firearms. The European arms race of the day stemmed from a domestic process of industrialisation which forced governments to take account of their workers. But the African race for power imported its lethal technology. This broke the restraints which the limited forms of local production had placed on the available means of violence, subverting whatever conventions of accountability people had been able to extract from their kings. Here was the start of the sinister process, accelerated by white conquest, in which African state violence has become almost entirely externalised. Colonial governments lifted the state literally off the ground with aerial policing and now, below, a troop of tanks at the radio station is enough to seize state power.[44]

History is mostly about people being oppressed without revolting. But in the nineteenth century many Africans resisted what they saw as the irresponsibility of their rulers, what we, from a safer distance, can call an intensification of state building. The most widespread reaction was the acceptance of Islam. Unlike classical African religions, but like Christianity, Islam is concerned with relations between people more than between men and nature. It bore a moral critique of power more insistent than the cyclical disillusion caused by ecological failure. If some of Africa's worst tyrants were Muslim, so too were their most courageous critics[45] – though Shaka Zulu, the most notorious despot of all, was no Muslim and neither were his assassins.

Civil wars were also common, perhaps now better recorded rather than more frequent. Most remained succession wars, but there were signs that the principles which attached to their warring personalities were becoming more radical than before, questioning the very concept of kingship. Asante's crisis in the 1880s was due mainly to the resistance of its chiefs to the kingdom's growing statishness, but it also released what looks like republican violence in the urban mob. In the same decade, Buganda's civil war also set king against chiefs over the distribution of managerial power but showed, more fundamentally, that political community remained latent in its clans, deep restraints on the brutalities of high politics. And this seems to have been more generally true. Kingdoms collapsed as much from their own weight as from the blows of white conquest. The productive communities into which they disbanded sometimes sustained for years a resistance to colonial rule which royal armies could rarely keep up for a week.

European conquest also coincided with a great crisis of accountability: the imported rinderpest plague carried off cattle, the tsetse fly roamed wider in its wake and, in eastern Africa, drought withered the crops for which starving pastoralists might otherwise have begged. The authority of masters collapsed with the rule of kings. Slaves made their own moves. Some negotiated new, cliental, terms of allegiance with their former owners, of which the reciprocities were mutual measures of account. Others reclaimed, after weeks of walking, the citizenship of their former clans. It was a paradox of early colonial rule that many more Africans became, in effect, stateless people, concerned to defend themselves against, or to exploit, what seemed to be very local concentrations of power.[46]

European rule was scarcely an answer to this latest African crisis of accountability. And colonial governors immediately announced the terms by which they should be judged, as African kings had done before them, by inventing a civilising mission of their own. Its responsible, vulnerable, promise was to bring the Bible and the plough. Africans were quick to take them up, none more sharply than Charles Domingo of Malawi. A former mission teacher and 'an exceptionally good and competent native' in official eyes, he used his Bible as authority to demand that government, missions and companies call themselves not Christendom but Europeandom. They were 'altogether too cheaty, too thefty, too mockery' to justify their civilising claims.[47] But in 1911 Domingo's was hardly a representative voice. Struggles for accountability were going on at a much earthier level.

These were struggles for the control of production, within a harsh process of state building. Colonial conquests had destroyed African force. Colonial rulers had to reconstruct African power. They needed, as one of their most famous men put it, 'a class who in a crisis can be relied on to stand by us, and whose interests are wholly identified with ours'.[48] States could not be built otherwise. And chiefs and elders, the powers on whom white force relied, soon used the new state themselves, especially its courts, to make their own dependants, wives and juniors, more reliable too. Without kinless outsiders

to lean on, with the end of slavery, local African authorities now demanded more obedient toil from the free communities they claimed to define and defend.[49] And the mere existence of states which, over time, developed the power to tax all and therefore to subsidise a few, ensured, inexorably, that an auxiliary ruling class would form. Backed by the external state, sitting not on customary stools but on official gazettes,[50] chiefs were also less accountable to their people. But there was subversive state formation going on too, subversive of these freshly constructed local social hierarchies, while strengthening, as yet, the state.

The local subversives were a mixed lot. The first Christians or migrant workers, the first farmers who moved beyond sight of the chief's stockade, runaway wives and daughters – all found that while colonial rule imposed new oppressions it also offered new patrons and the peace which made it safe to seek them out. Employers (especially the state), traders and missionaries provided a wide new market in goods, knowledge and power. But it was a market in paradox. Its breadth opened up escape routes from local subservience, to enjoy the fruits of a man's or his wife's labour. Outside the colonies of white settler supremacy, and even in some of them, increased labour really did promote freedom, at least for men. But the connectedness of the market also meant that in any crisis the consequent stringency was visited on all.

Market failures were not local, unlike shortfalls of rain. And colonies were quite different from kingdoms; they were, at least in intention, capitalist states. When, therefore, governments and employers recouped their losses from taxpayers and workers, there was no escape. People could not now cease to educate their children or give up wearing imported clothes, nor could they emigrate from the tax register. It was no longer easy, nor did many actually desire, to evade power; that would also mean deserting the market. The restored accountability of power now required not its contraction but its reform. And states found it increasingly difficult to escape the test. The tight connections of capitalism, the markets which discipline each separate producer, are the secret of its dynamic productive power. But, equally, they may threaten its political structures. For the linkages of capitalist society make it difficult for rulers to ignore cyclical distress. To shuffle off dependants is no answer to market failure – it is not a drought, and there are no fewer mouths to feed. Peasants without markets and workers without jobs not only represent a loss of income; they may, in their struggles not to desert the state but to force it to take account of their plight, cause costs to rise as well.[51]

The great crisis of colonial accountability came with the depression of the 1930s and the Second World War. These brought mass hardship. They also made white rulers shockingly dependent on their subjects, whether in the field of production or on the fields of battle. In this combination lay political opportunity. Africans could set more searching tests of colonial responsibility. An earlier generation had seen the growth of the state as an

instrument of hope as well as fear. Colonial states had formed new classes by their own formation, internal inequalities which replaced the need for imported slaves. But now, thwarted by depression and fired by war, the self-interest of clerks and teachers, farmers and traders, called for the subversion not just of the local props of the state, but of the state itself. They had already redefined their political communities, in order to compete with chiefs and elders for locally responsible authority. Their ideological competition had invented tribes. Now there was a need for nations.

Nationalism has been called 'a theory of political legitimacy'.[52] It domesticates the state. African nationalists passionately believed this. So did their colonial rulers, who doubted only that Africans could legitimately build nations. That task needed, first, the unhurried social engineering of colonialism. But the more colonial regimes tried to engineer post-war reconstruction, mainly in agriculture, the more they encountered African resistance. The poor who were hurt by change downed tools; those who prospered on it demanded the power with which to prosper more. The nationalists won, in part at least, because they appropriated the new civilising mission of 'development'. They accepted, still more fervently than whites, that it needed a moral release from the shackles of tradition as much as economic planning. Almost everybody at the time, even colonial officials, dared to believe that with the new accountability of politics – this final conversion of colonial force into internal power – economic and social progress would together thrive.[53] As if to admit the irresponsibility of colonialism, the British referred to the penultimate stage in the transfer of power as 'responsible government'. The crisis of accountability was apparently being resolved by conceding the new freedom of self-government to new political communities. There is room to doubt, now, how far the appearance was also reality. But for more than a decade, from the early 1950s, it seemed that productive energies were released which were not simply responses to the growth of markets and foreign investment. For people were buoyed up by a widespread faith that work would now be more justly rewarded by the responsibility of rule. Cynicism may not in fact be the appropriate reaction, for these had been unusual times.

From 1942 until well into the 1950s Africa's overseas markets were more favourable than for the past thirty years. And European rulers needed loyal, well-fed subjects, first as soldiers and then as proof of a moral purpose in empire which would retain the American wartime alliance and thereafter rebut Russia's cold-war propaganda. By the 1950s some colonial powers hoped that Africans might become their friendly allies. To secure this meant, naturally, the suppression of radical opposition, as in Madagascar, Cameroon and Kenya. But it also needed, more than usually, the promotion of men prepared to be reasonable. Workers and farmers were courted as well as politicians, since African production was valued as never before. It was helping to earn the dollars of Europe's industrial resurrection and to feed its hungry millions. Governments decided that they had to

recognise autonomous trade unions and farmer cooperatives. Frightened by urban and rural disorders, they thought it only prudent to enlist the self-interest of employees and producers within institutions which were allowed to control their own members. Capital, it was increasingly obvious, needed both creative and obedient classes, and neither of them could be brought to life by force.[54] Unions and cooperatives are as much part of the social power of capitalist states as political tribes were of colonies and as ethnic skills and trades had been of kingdoms.

Colonies retained a surprising degree of cohesion in this time of rapid change. Their rulers were answerable to two increasingly critical publics whose views by no means always coincided: African subjects in local assemblies and political masters in parliaments back home. Yet only Algeria, the Belgian Congo and, much later, the Portuguese colonies, all very special cases, actually fell apart in their colonial high politics. This was in large part because the various colonial governments were composed, historically speaking, of exceptionally united, like-minded, ruling elites. This high-political cohesion was important. The post-war imperial relationship was more exploitative than ever before: it could not afford to crack. The British and French made much of their investments in colonial development. But these were dwarfed by the huge savings which they forced upon Africans. Peasants had little option but to accept the low producer prices offered by the local state marketing boards and metropolitan bulk purchase schemes. Never was colonialism so grindingly systematic.[55] Its impositions were scandalous – the hidden hand in the market – but they did mean that when independence approached and Africans could no longer be prevented from getting their hands on their own earnings, large funds were made available for local investment, for good or ill. So the last decade of colonial rule presented a marvellous spectacle of the productive complementarity of opposites. Agricultural earnings soared despite forced savings. High-political cohesion was maintained despite a rapid devolution of power. African radicals were being isolated by the responsibility thrust upon moderates. All this seemed to suggest that in its transfer power was being transformed. It had been an external engine of extraction; it was becoming the internal motor of development. Much was excitedly expected of the successor African countries.

Their civilising mission did not seem so very different from what had gone before. 'To govern a people is to guide and educate them', thought Patrice Lumumba;[56] and Africans clamoured for education in the European languages of personal ambition and political accountability. The ideology of work was pervasive too; presidents wielded the hoe where kings once ceremonially milked their cattle. Circumstances, however, had changed utterly. Latter-day colonial rulers had devolved power; the new African rulers, like state-builders anywhere, had to accumulate it. But they were scarcely like other state-builders in history. Before the success of the national liberation movements in Portuguese Africa, they inherited power

rather than conquered it. Winning power did not force them, to the same degree as it forced kings, colonial adventurers or even the bosses of political tribes, to create, first, a disciplined, visionary, political loyalty. They had to learn mutual trust in office, and that could be too late. For at the moment of independence their power was abnormally internal. Africa's new rulers had nursed ethnic constituencies rather than mobilised warriors out of them. They had invaded the state with society at their heels rather than imposed it on the people. They were accountable to an electoral democracy which had no equivalent in Africa's earlier pioneer states nor any precedent elsewhere in the world, save for the comfortless case of eastern Europe after the Habsburg empire's fall.

This openness did not survive for long. Politics closed down as industrial investment outran agricultural capacity, or as the exhaustion of accumulated savings forced rulers to choose whom to favour and whom to ignore. Nationalism had been inclusive; government was learning to be exclusive. The search for power, the 'hegemonic project' as it has been called,[57] inevitably contradictory in any state, became still more so in Africa. Earlier, external state-builders, the monopolists of disciplined force, released the productive energies of those groups with whom they felt obliged to collaborate in their search for internal power. Modern African regimes, overcrowded at first with power, have used force to narrow the ranks of their collaborators. Many have stifled productive effort in the process. They have strangled the ambition of independent capitalists who might become their rivals; they have neglected the peasants on whose labours they depend. Nobody today is being liberated by the process of state formation, save for the growing armies of bureaucrats. That, at least, is the common criticism of Africa's managerial classes.[58] Nothing better illustrates the contrasts, but also the comparisons, with earlier civilising missions than the symbols of state power. Like kings, many presidents call themselves the fathers of their nation. But kings expected to be succeeded by their sons; even governors claimed only to be acting as trustees for their native child races. Each had extended the prospect of a graduation upwards by their juniors in power. African presidents have found it almost impossible to provide for their own succession.

It is important, in conclusion, to emphasise the two latent assumptions behind this line of argument. They are conflicting, as must be any comments on human society. The first is that the political conditions of sovereignty, how it is built, how it is formed, and how far its responsibility can be held to account, are themselves an economic force. They can be productive or counter-productive. The second is that the communities of men and women to whom the idea of accountability appeals are very variously invented. They are created most powerfully perhaps by the symbols of their work but, since none but the simplest of societies works in common, communities are also created by their critical use of a specifically political language. This enables different groups, whether crafts or classes, to contain their present

conflicts within a moral field which encompasses past and future. Whether many African countries possess this symbolic means of communication is open to doubt.

The first of these assumptions reverses the logic of 'dependency theory', the conclusions of which my argument none the less seems to support. For dependency theory stresses the lack of African economic sovereignty and the powerlessness as a result of African rulers to accumulate their private riches or their public resources save in ways which hurt their poor. The second assumption questions the validity of the 'radical right' opinion which now dominates the international banking world. This blames Africa's present plight almost entirely upon its rulers' strategies of power, as they appease the urban interests which they cannot ignore, squeeze the rural interests which they can, and invest in projects which promote political control rather than economic development.[59] It is not that these two arguments are wrong but that they are only half right. They deal in cardboard human beings, not complex moral ones. Neither dependency theory nor the radical right gives enough weight to the struggles for accountability, whether violent or dumbly insolent, which makes societies move, especially at times of market failure or ecological crisis. Africa is presently suffering both.

The historical perspective which has been employed here suggests, accordingly, three final reflections on the connections between ruling and working in contemporary Africa, all with the initial proviso that the continent is still, as it always has been, so diverse in its political and social structures that all such general comment must mislead as much as it illumines.

First, the fragility of high politics has been more baleful in effect than its irresponsibility or oppression. The insecurities of rulers have been their people's undoing. Rulers have turned to brigandage for lack of a national past by which to judge and, in judging, bind themselves, notoriously so in Ghana, Uganda or Zaire. But that is not inevitable where historical circumstances have given rulers a proprietorial grip on land as, say, in northern Nigeria or Kenya. Class formation, it seems, can create its own prudential behaviour; its insistent internal contradictions need, unless backed by the racial power of apartheid, the invention of a language of responsibility, the sincerity of which can of course only be tested by conflict. If that is so, then it is the patchiness of Africa's internal class formation, the extraordinary weakness of its inherited social hierarchies and indigenous technology, which make the organisation of political community so difficult.[60]

Secondly, one must not exaggerate the nature of Africa's crisis. It has been relatively recent, since 1974. Before then the growth and development of African economies was not discreditable and in some cases startlingly rapid.[61] Moreover, what seems on the surface to be a crisis of production may be something quite different, a crisis of distribution.[62] The 'rise of the

African peasantry' in colonial times owed as much to the transport revolution, the rapid fall in the costs of carrying Africa's exportable commodities, as to any other factor. But there has been another transport revolution in the past ten years. It has been wholly disastrous. Oil products have become too expensive for weak economies to bear. The decline in agrarian export production seems due as much to the collapse of marketing as to the failure of farming. Peasants may well evade state power, but states have also, for lack of spare parts and fuel, retreated from peasants. And drought has returned, perhaps more viciously than at any time since the 1890s. Certainly the effects of drought have been more catastrophic, as ever larger populations have been forced to cultivate or graze ever more marginal land. There is a grave danger, over much of Africa, that people will no longer cultivate in hope.

But, finally, that is too despairing a note on which to close. Analysis must not be too much burdened by the present, however much the present burdens Africans. Droughts do end, world markets can revive, crises of accountability may change political relationships. Outcomes cannot be predicted. Popular anger with venal politicans has repeatedly shown itself. Regimes have been driven to reform almost as much as to repress. But it is also unwise to repose uncritical faith in the anger of the people. Those regimes which have most built upon it, conquering power rather than merely inheriting it, whether in the former Portuguese colonies or in the ancient kingdom of Ethiopia, are among those which have been least able to protect their people from disaster. But revolutions are civil wars, and in wars many people die who have never held a gun. That too is a dismal observation, but it is an historical one, and while history continues it also moves.

8

The politics of representation and good government in post-colonial Africa

JOHN DUNN

Lorsque les hommes qui disposent des destinées de la terre se trompent sur ce qui est possible, c'est un grand mal.

Benjamin Constant, *De l'Esprit de Conquête et de l'Usurpation*, in *Oeuvres*, ed. A. Roulin (Paris; Gallimard, 1957), p. 955

There are at least two perspectives in which it is both natural and appropriate to consider the political character of African states. The first is the retrospective perspective of causal explanation. The second is the partially retrospective, but always also at least partly forward-looking, perspective of political appraisal. The former is firmly a perspective of theoretical reason; the latter, equally firmly, a perspective of practical reason.[1] Much of the history of Western philosophy has been devoted to the more or less forlorn effort to establish quite how in the last instance the two relate to one another.[2] Unsurprisingly, understanding of the politics of modern Africa, like understanding of the politics of virtually everywhere else at virtually all times, has been bedevilled by a failure to distinguish these two perspectives and to retain a clear grasp of the distinction.

It is scarcely open to serious dispute any longer that the bulk of the political history of post-war Africa has been profoundly discouraging. It has been discouraging to those who favour democracy, or any system of robustly institutionalised political accountability. But it has been little, if any, more encouraging to those who would be more than content, in the absence of such a system, with simply a steady and dependable improvement in the living conditions of the great majority of Africa's populations. With the notable exception of Zaire (which has clung with some tenacity to its historical role within the European imagination of epitomising the heart of darkness), the moment of political independence was one of real optimism in almost all African countries. The subsequent descent into gloom and fear was anticipated with any confidence only by the more unblinkingly reactionary defenders of colonial rule. Much academic energy has accordingly been devoted in recent years to efforts to explain just why these earlier hopes have in the event been disappointed. Still more energy, of a more practical character, has naturally also been devoted in most of the

countries in question to emphasising the need to do better and to exploring a miscellany of suggestions on how it might be possible to succeed in this. Thus far, however, the explanations of failure and decay have proved overwhelmingly more cogent than the quest to synthesise new and more effective strategies for political, social and economic betterment.

What the accumulated weight of these explanations has made clear is how deeply ill-placed was the initial optimism of independence. It has indicated, for example, and beyond the possibility of rational doubt, how hard it is in principle for the populations of African states to hold their governments responsible to them over lengthy periods of time. It has also underlined how hard it necessarily is for any African government to manage its domestic economy effectively and to affect its relations with the world market in a way which dependably benefits the majority of its own citizens. And it has shown unmistakably also just why it has proved more attractive to African political leaders, and to the far larger ranges of subordinates who have protected and sustained their leadership, to act as they have acted and to refrain from acting in other and potentially less destructive ways. A natural response to this growing comprehension, for political leaders and academic interpreters but also for the populace at large, is a mood of growing despair or its psychologically linked antithesis, the espousal of an extreme and very poorly characterised alternative political project. Whether on metaphysical grounds or purely on grounds of intellectual strategy the theoretical project of retrospective causal explanation is explicitly determinist. But the perspective of practical reason cannot coherently be explicitly determinist. Determinism may or may not, in some version or other, be true. But from the perspective of practical reason it has no determinate sense, and hence no determinate practical relevance. To confuse retrospective causal explanation with prospective political appraisal is the political vice of fatalism. Too much explanation is not only bad for the will; it is also bad for the political intelligence. But, of course, too much will is at least equally bad for the political intelligence.

Neither fatalism, nor voluntarism: political understanding.

At the centre of political understanding lies the very simple thought that in explaining the past it is necessary to take all past acts as given, but that in choosing and making the future, however constrained the circumstances in which men and women must act and however imperious the grounds they may sometimes possess for acting in one way rather than another, there simply are as yet no human actions at all to take as given. One reason, at least, why African governments have for the most part done so badly since 1957 is the excess of optimism in which they began. In 1951, exceedingly few African political leaders, north of the Union and outside Ethiopia and Liberia, possessed any direct personal understanding of how easy it is to do unintended harm through the exercise of governmental power. Today in Africa only the wilfully blind or deaf or the genuinely imbecile can be unaware of this any longer. It would be foolish to assume that the habitual

motives or political dexterity of African political leaders in the future will be notably superior to those of recent decades, and even more foolish to assume that the conditions in which they will have to act are likely to offer them greater ease and calm or more freedom of manoeuvre. But it is certainly not foolish to suppose that the decades since independence have provided, for those who choose to take it, an excellent opportunity to learn many political lessons and to develop an altogether more sober and more profound conception of the nature of prudent government in modern Africa.

It is perhaps important to emphasise that there is no quarter of the world where ample evidence of imprudent government cannot be identified, and nowhere where those who have governed imprudently have lacked their own, more or less vivid and importunate reasons for acting as they did. What particularly marks Africa out amongst the areas of the modern world is not the turpitude or clumsiness of its rulers. It is the combination of its historical economic weakness (and its consequently painful susceptibility to misgovernment within the modern international political economy)[3] with the comparatively weak institutionalisation of its civil society at the level of the territorial state.[4] (The economies of African countries are substantially easier to bring to real ruin by misgovernment than, for example, those of the United States of America or Italy or the Soviet Union or Saudi Arabia, though Great Britain and Poland would offer closer competition.) While those who rule, in Africa as elsewhere,[5] are better placed than most to find their own consolations, it should not therefore be assumed that the exercise of rule there is often a particularly simple and comfortable task.

When Richard Sklar tells us that what Africa needs is 'a democracy without tears'[6] – don't we all? – it is scarcely the perspective of causal explanation which he is choosing to adopt. It is easy enough to see why he should elect to escape from this perspective, at least for a brief interlude, and even easier to see why he should wish to deny most of the claims which he assails. Like the rest of the world, Africa indisputably does not *need* the combination of autocracy and tears. But in political understanding there is always real danger in straying too far from causal explanation: the danger in particular of ceasing to talk about politics at all. The theory of what is intrinsically desirable is an important component of political theory, but it is only one of the important components of political theory.[7] To proffer it as a sufficient basis for political understanding is to be, in the most pejorative of senses, utopian. The political error directly complementary to utopianism, a genuinely consistent fatalism, is rather seldom encountered, although the intellectual grounds for rejecting it are difficult to state with much precision.[8] A more common analytical and political vice is the combination of a despondently and uniformly causal representation of past political failure with a more or less discreet or incoherent presentation of the putatively superior properties of a present political regime or candidate regime; fatalism mitigated by evasion or sheer confusion. On the whole the concept

of democracy is not much help in clarifying these issues, having in modern political usage everywhere a very substantial measure of evasion or confusion (or both) firmly built into it.[9] A more promising, if less stirring, pair of conceptions are those of representation and good government.

Virtually all serious modern political theory which is in any sense directed at issues of practical reason (which aspires to guide political conduct and not solely to explain past circumstance) is concerned with the relations between representation and good government. The two principal modern secular ideologies of political understanding, the liberal and the socialist, both tend to present these relations in suspiciously anodyne terms. But there is in fact no coherent and realistic theory within any modern tradition of political understanding of why this linkage should in general be expected to operate satisfactorily in any institution. The unhappy relations between theory and practice in the politics of modern Africa are simply a special case of the unstable and contradictory character of the modern understanding of politics in general. And the latter in turn is not an index of some modern falling away from more ancient levels of wisdom and adeptness but rather the outcome of several centuries of a more pertinacious and less mystified struggle to comprehend the relevant practical considerations.[10]

It is not difficult to explain why political representation in Africa has for the most part been both intermittent and a trifle perfunctory; nor is it difficult to explain why good government, even on the part of the best intentioned of African governors, has been relatively infrequent in post-war Africa.[11] Good government is, of course, to be interpreted not in terms of the intentions of the rulers, which tend (at least professedly) to be excellent in most societies at most times, but rather in terms of the consequences of their rule for those over whom they rule.[12] But easy though it is to explain each of these two political deficiencies in modern African states, it is important to recognise how weak in some ways are the connections between the two. Both in liberal and in socialist understanding the provision of a genuinely valid structure for the representation of legitimate social interests comes close to guaranteeing that government will be on balance good. But, in fact, since the initial establishment of predominantly capitalist economies, the representation of legitimate interests is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the beneficent exercise of governmental power. Neither in a representative democracy presiding over a predominantly capitalist economy, nor in any form of socialist state yet experienced or even described with any clarity,[13] can the most exquisite level of political accountability furnish any guarantee at all of governmental skill. The massively extroverted character of all but the most derelict of African economies north of the Union renders them intensely vulnerable to the pursuit of maladroit economic policies by their governors. Some aspects of the policies pursued can certainly be explained in part by the perceived interests of comparatively small ruling groups, or by the broader class interests of those recruited directly into the proliferating governmental apparatus or of

those employed on a rapidly expanded public sector payroll. But many aspects of these policies (as of the economic policies of most governments in the modern world) are better explained by purely cognitive errors, misjudgements of the internal causal dynamics of a domestic economy[14] and of the prospectively even less readily transparent causal dynamics of the world economy, the rhythms of which massively affect the interests of the great majority of the populations of all African countries. It is reasonable (though not necessarily always correct) to see the interests of governments and their pensionaries as systematically set against the interests of the remainder of a national population. And the distorting policy effects of such self-interested choices might indeed be offset by improving the degree to which governments are rendered accountable to those whom they govern. (Insofar as the relations between rulers and ruled are correctly seen as a zero-sum competitive game of material appropriation, any increase in accountability will necessarily amount to a diminution in the comparative extractive power of the rulers and a corresponding gain in the retained assets of the remainder of the population.) By contrast it would be quite unreasonable to anticipate that the cognitive grasp of the dynamics of the world or domestic economy enjoyed by the populace at large will prove systematically superior to that of their past or present African rulers, and correspondingly unreasonable to expect formulations of economic policy in African states to improve merely because of a strengthening of the system of political representation.

The degree to which the representation of social interests is effectively institutionalised both in the fundamental form of a state and in its more intimate political processes is certainly affected by political will and artifice. Departing colonial administrators, incoming military rulers or nationalist victors, all dismantle some structures of interest representation and establish others. In no instances, however, do they necessarily succeed either in dismantling or in establishing protection for quite the range of interests which they initially had in mind. The representation of interests is a murky and heuristic competitive enterprise in which those who can, get themselves represented, and those who cannot, seldom discover that even the most generous provisions of enlightened despots or revolutionary parties quite succeed in furnishing representation on their behalf. On balance, and in notable contrast to the optimism of late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century liberal thinkers like Sieyès and James Mill[15] (to say nothing of early-twentieth-century socialist thinkers) the constructive attempt of political ingenuity and energy at the centre of modern states to guarantee political representation has been dismayingly ineffective. What does furnish and sustain political representation, it appears, is something which lies deeper and less self-consciously in the texture of social organisation: the capacity for protracted and confident self-organisation of the bearers of different social interests. It is quite unclear that this capacity, a capacity for incessant, costly and inevitably contested agency, can be

discerned at all at the level of a state's structure. The Marxist insistence that capitalist democracy (or autocracy) is structurally committed, in the last instance, to the defence of the interests of capital, within the ebulliently representative politics of the Western world (with their endless flurry of interest group exertion), does underline something which is relatively easy to miss and which is definitely of the greatest importance.[16] But in relation to African countries such insistence is just an airy tautology that does little to clarify the character and contours of class membership or the dimensions of political agency within African states. Nor does it explain the outcome of political agency in the individual state at any particular time.

Because the capacity to secure political representation depends upon the capacity for self-organisation and upon the coherent and accurate understanding of interests (individual, group, class, national), it can be assessed only by a highly specific and ethnographically delicate investigation of particular examples (an activity which in any society, and certainly in most African countries today, is difficult to distinguish sharply from social espionage). Such investigation of modern social organisation in Africa has seldom been carried through with much success. Indeed, with the possible exception of Kenya and perhaps incipiently of the Union of South Africa (where the invidiousness of social espionage would be particularly blatant), it has not really been attempted with much energy at the level of a modern territorial state. But it is a safe presumption that it has been carried through most successfully for relatively small-scale rural localities where the structure of social interests is cognitively less elusive. (Note the tendency, to which no modern social theorist can be immune, to keep the literally unimaginable social, political and economic complexity of any modern society firmly in its place by adopting and manipulating a more and more determinedly abstract vocabulary. Modern social theory is literally a sustained pretence to comprehend the necessarily largely unintelligible: an intellectual equivalent of whistling to keep our courage up.)[17] But if it is probably true today that no one understands the process of interest representation in any African country particularly well, some features of this process are now definitely better understood than they were a quarter of a century ago.

On the evidence of the last twenty-five years it seems a dependable conclusion that those best placed to represent themselves in African countries are the denizens of the higher reaches, civil and still more military, of its state apparatuses. They are better placed even in the weakest of African states because, although they can and of course do not infrequently choose to impede each other, it is exceptionally difficult for their fellow citizens to impede them from collectively representing themselves. In relatively prosperous and fiscally sound states (Nigeria in the aftermath of 1973, the Ivory Coast until 1980, Ghana up to about 1960) they can dispose directly of large and locally derived revenues, garnered through the rents on foreign extractive activities or from the control of the marketing of

remunerative export crops.[18] Even in the poorest of African states, where a large part of the state budget is funded by foreign aid transfers, it is to them that the transfers are made.[19] Despite the efforts and hopes of Nyerere and Cabral,[20] it is unsurprising that they should have elected to employ this allocative discretion in some measure on their own behalf, rather than committing class suicide. Nor are the state structures within which they exercise this discretion at all responsive in general to initiatives emanating from elsewhere in their own domestic societies. Partly, this is simply a consequence of the manner in which these states were initially constructed and kept in working order (often with increasing difficulty) until the termination of colonial rule. Built first to subjugate from the outside and adapted primarily to represent external interests,[21] their initiation into local representative politics was brief, superficial,[22] and essentially involuntary. Even when their institutional structures were devised with some care to guarantee at least the representation of localities in the post-colonial order, the protective linkages between local society and political order were in any case still too recent and too flimsy to impel local society to make much effort to defend the political order against disruptive internal reconstruction; and the self-organising political capacities of local society were in any case still too inexperienced and improvisatory to enable it to defend its own conception of state legitimacy with much effect.[23]

Liberal democratic theory prescribes in the first instance the representation of individuals. But except at the most heroically abstract levels it is hard to see how individuals can in fact be represented effectively at the centre of a modern state.[24] More determinate conceptions of representation prescribe the representation of broad social categories (including social classes) or of localities of varying scales. The one social category in Africa which is by common consent rather successful in representing itself is the membership of the higher echelons of the state apparatus; career politicians, senior civil servants (particularly when involved in the regulation of international trade or the award of major public contracts), senior army officers, and managers of state sector economic enterprises. In early-nineteenth-century utilitarian theories of representation, the problem which was seen as central to designing political institutions was how to guarantee that the representatives of the people (individuals as axiomatically self-interested as those whom they volunteered to represent) should have at least as much to fear on returning to private life as they had to gain from abusing their power whilst in office.[25] Even within utilitarian theory this perspective was not sustained very consistently;[26] and it never won much applause from utilitarianism's Whig critics.[27] Nor were the remedies proposed especially compelling: elections for periods so brief that no representative could hope to exact as much from the theft of public funds as they could expect to lose on their return to private life from the institutionalised practice of such theft by their successors. But crude and equivocal though this aspect of utilitarian theory certainly was, the political vicissitudes of modern Africa have at least

established its relevance to the political design of benign capitalist (or *soi-disant* socialist) orders.

As yet the practice of public sector self-representation has not been depicted very fully and sensitively for any African country (an omission which is scarcely surprising in view of the blatantly illegal form which much of it takes and the severe penalties sometimes meted out in vengeance by enraged successor regimes).[28] Even the most intimate and ethnographically vivid portrait of an African state elite at work and play which we possess, Abner Cohen's study of the Creole community of Freetown,[29] skirts such problems with undue discretion and, in any case, makes too little attempt to characterise the structure of the state that furnishes their habitat. Even in Nigeria, where public sector self-representation has much of the abrasive élan of Ben Jonson's London (or Venice), and where the scale of economic interest and political significance effortlessly dwarfs the rest of West Africa, we still lack a systematic and powerful analysis of the key processes involved.[30] But what we definitely do know by now, on the basis of West African experience, is that the somewhat shop-worn categories of national and comprador bourgeoisies neither depict current social and economic configurations at all clearly nor explain much of either their formation or their mode of operation. In any of the more prosperous African countries of the last fifteen years there certainly are national bourgeoisies, sometimes with considerable genealogical and cultural depth behind them.[31] But it is clear that neither their economic prospects nor their power to mould national political processes to their advantage have been a function predominantly of their initial position within a domestic socioeconomic order. Rather, over time both have been determined predominantly by the fiscal lien of the national government on receipts from international trade, in the Nigerian case especially from the spectacular rent transferred after 1973 from multinational oil extraction.

Seen from West Africa the switchback of the world trading system often reduces national political independence to something of a phantasm (as it is apt to do on occasion even in wealthier parts of the world or in the eyes of socialist incumbents of 10 Downing Street or the Elysée palace). For substantial periods of time, however, many African governments have in fact retained a substantial measure of allocative discretion; and it is only the hopelessly indigent or the relentlessly feckless that retain no allocative discretion at all. In so far as governmental allocative discretion has been exercised, inside and outside the law, to establish and sustain a local bourgeoisie by the allocation of discriminatory rents or privileges or by the individual and illegal sale of public assets at well below cost, it is reasonable to see the resulting bourgeoisie as a state client, just as it is correct to discern relations of patronage, not necessarily running in the same direction, between its individual members and particular state officials. The economic basis for the foundation of such bourgeoisies remains the exploitation of comparative advantage within international trade. The scale of their

formation, accordingly, has been less a function of their own will to independence from or servility towards foreign capital than it has of the fluctuating levels of comparative advantage in different fields of production and of the vulnerability of the more profitable of these to governmental exactions. The most important impact of African governments upon the formation of local client bourgeoisies has therefore come not in their overt or covert enthusiasm for private capital accumulation, but in the degree to which the economic policies which they have pursued have fostered, diminished or, in the extreme cases, eliminated local comparative advantage.[32]

Normative theories of representation, of course, seldom explicitly applaud either public sector self-representation or the establishment and protection of state powers which serve merely as executive committees of local (or foreign) bourgeoisies. On the whole the 'middling ranks' in Africa have yet to find effective ideological defenders, though in the more prosperous of African countries, and particularly outside the national political process, they too have often had some success in defending themselves. But the two largest and normatively best-accredited social categories in modern Africa, the industrial proletariat and the peasantry, have had singularly little success in securing effective political representation. The view that peasants are ill-positioned to secure, and neither diligent nor proficient in seeking to secure, their collective interests as a social category within national politics has distinguished authority behind it.[33] Marx's initial assessment of the revolutionary potential of the French small-holding peasantry in the mid nineteenth century has proved an inadequate basis for understanding the subsequent political experience of the majority of the world's population.[34] But however prominent the role played by peasants in twentieth-century revolutions, and however remarkable the political (and, still more, the military) achievements of some peasant representative agencies over the last three-quarters of a century, it remains hard to doubt that Marx's estimate of the capacity of the peasantry to act coherently in national politics to ensure the representation of its own collective interests was essentially correct. Considered in the round and over its entire life-span, not even the Chinese Communist Party, the most dramatic and distinguished twentieth-century political agency of peasant representation, furnishes much ground for questioning this judgement.

Similar doubts certainly obtain about the degree to which the industrial proletariat has contrived to secure effective political representation in African countries. Some of these doubts, to be sure, are essentially ideological and turn on a fundamental scepticism as to whether this class has ever secured lasting and effective political representation anywhere.[35] (This scepticism is at least in part a product of the acute ambivalence of the intellectual and political tradition that emphasises the necessity for such representation over the issue of whether the proletariat can or cannot be expected and trusted adequately to represent itself. It is also the conse-

quence of the exceedingly hazy suggestions which this tradition offers as to how, if it genuinely can do so, its capacity to represent itself can hope to be embodied in enduring political institutions.)[36] But more important doubts, for our purposes, follow simply from the relative demographic insubstantiality of the proletariat in the vast majority of African countries north of the Union, and from the direct economic dependence of much of such proletariat upon the disbursements of the state.[37] It is hardly surprising that in Africa, as elsewhere, a proletariat should prove less well placed to represent itself than the political masters of the state and the higher echelons of its employees. But it is of some importance that in Africa such representative efficacy as the proletariat has achieved has come predominantly from its location on the public sector pay roll and from its capacity to motivate African governments to distort rural–urban terms of trade by the threat of civil and political disruption in the immediate vicinity of the seats of government.[38] At different points in modern African history the national labour movements of particular countries (Guinea, Nigeria, Zambia) have exerted considerable, if somewhat fleeting, political pressure. But their limited demographic weight and the fundamental economic weakness that follows from a more or less permanently slack urban labour market has meant that more enduring representative efficacy has necessarily been confined to individual industries or localities. Where, as on the railways or in the mines,[39] there exist relatively stable and enduring (essentially single class) occupational communities, however petty bourgeois the ultimate social ambitions of the more prosperous members of the wage labour force,[40] there can and sometimes do arise levels of solidarity and industrial self-discipline which can make the work force of a single industry not only a formidable partner in the operation of its own plant but a formidable potential opponent even to a national government still in full control of its own forces of coercion. At least at the level of the locality, it seems a fair judgement that African proletarians have on occasion come closer to representing their own interests than any other comparably extended social category.

In so doing they have in effect aligned themselves, perhaps not altogether wittingly, with the aspect of authentic political representation that has been most successfully (and least coercively) institutionalised in African societies since independence: the representation of place and local community. There is deep disagreement within European political reason how far the representation of locality as such is to be applauded. On the whole the judgement that it is to be applauded is a judgement of the political right, going back to Justus Möser's acute appreciation of *Lokalvernunft*.[41] The view entailed by the imposed universality of the world market that only universality merits (and in the end only it will be able to secure) effective self-representation is set out memorably by Marx and Engels as early as *The German Ideology*.[42] Disputes of this character tend to the irascible reiteration of tautologies; but it is not difficult in this instance to see some merit in both points of view.[43] It would certainly be a happy accident if the

representation of universal classes and the representation of localities as such coincided, especially where the localities in question (like most localities) are some way from being single class occupational communities. But whereas universal classes are a little thin on the ground in Africa, localities are certainly in plentiful supply; and whereas the authentic universality of universal classes (proletariat or bourgeois or peasant) is readily open to question, the most sceptical can hardly dispute that localities are genuinely there.

On the whole the study on a local scale of electoral competition and political development in Africa has handsomely confirmed the ideological substance of localities.[44] Village, town, chiefdom, and region – perhaps, to speak loosely, even tribe – have been discerned not merely existing in themselves but also acting for themselves. There is a measure of ideological fiction, of course, in all such presentations: on the most local of all possible social stages, within the individual domestic unit, there can be, and after all usually are, deep conflicts of real interest. But on the whole, it is not the fictive flavour of localist representation in Africa which has proved its major political defect. (Even the most class-divided community of residence does in fact possess a substantial range of common interests. Even the most sociologically determinate and culturally homogeneous of classes has a wide variety of divergent interests.) What principally detracts from the merits of effective localist representation in Africa is its palpable threat to the maintenance of national interests. Just as rebellion in the southern African monarchies (in Gluckman's functionalist analysis)[45] on balance favoured the preservation of regnal unity while the preservation of local interests by attempted secession imperilled the kingdom, so in modern Africa efficacy of localist representation has always tended to appear incipiently subversive when seen from the centre.

The plethora of languages and the multiplicity of pre-colonial and colonial units of social and political membership has rendered effective localist representation an aggressive solvent of the somewhat gimcrack national unity of African states. (This issue is commonly discussed in Africa under the rubric of 'tribalism', but it is a just complaint that 'tribalism' is a highly plastic term of common political speech and not at all one of precise social analysis.) Since political secession in Africa, as elsewhere in the world today, tends to be bloodily resisted by incumbent governments with ready access to international arms supplies, it is hard to believe, now that European colonial rule is at last over, that in the great majority of cases localist representation by attempted secession is in fact in the real interests of African populations.[46] Once it has well and truly begun, however, and once the repression is in full swing, the resulting choice between acute evils may be hard to assess rationally and even harder to resolve in practice for the better. Even where secession is not explicitly in question, the (often well-founded) suspicion that the national government is being conducted very much more vigorously in the interest of one ethnic grouping or region

of the country than in that of others greatly exacerbates political instability, even when it does not in fact lead to the military displacement of the elected or self-appointed rulers. Only within more geographically constricted confines, where localities in themselves can coincide with localities for themselves with rather little ideological fiction, does a real continuity of representative exploration and exertion subsist, as national governments come and go.[47]

The elusiveness and the often distressingly negative contribution made by political representation within modern African polities underlines, by contrast, the overwhelming significance in Africa, as elsewhere in the modern world, of the presence or absence of good government. As a concept good government is holistic and consequentialist rather than specific and procedural. It implies, *ceteris paribus*, and in relation to the policies that it actually pursues, a high level of organisational effectiveness; but it certainly does not imply the choice of a particular ideological model of state organisation: a government of laws but not of men, a minimal state, or dictatorship of the proletariat. Good government is best defined ostensively rather than by semantic prescription. It is what Sweden and Singapore enjoy, and what Zaire and Ethiopia distressingly lack. In principle, heavily repressive regimes may on occasion exemplify good government. But they can do so only where there is a direct and palpable link between the effective contributions of their rulers to popular welfare and the modes of repression which they employ – good government is not to be equated, for example, with ingratiating or virtuous government. Since any repressive regime in any public forum, national or international, is likely to justify its coercive activities by their putative contribution to popular welfare, the concept of good government is necessarily anti-ideological in intention. Its analytical purpose is precisely to distinguish the professed or actual self-understanding of ruling groups from their real causal contribution to the prosperity and misery of their subjects. The presence or absence of effectively guaranteed civil and political liberties does not in itself ensure the prevalence of good or bad government. But any set of repressive practices, as Jeremy Bentham salutarily noted, is in itself a direct contribution to human suffering. In Africa as elsewhere in the world today, by far the most important contribution of government to popular welfare in time of peace is furnished by the conduct of economic policy. The conduct of economic policy is evidently a matter of constrained choice, while the ideological resonance of the choices involved is necessarily intense. Viewed retrospectively and causally, governmental economic policy since independence in sub-Saharan Africa (at least north of the Union) has consisted for the most part in a historically readily explicable sequence of errors of judgement.[48] The most plausible exceptions to this sweeping assessment have been the states which have retained intimate relations with their former colonial masters, the Ivory Coast and Kenya being perhaps the most conspicuous and important instances. In the Ivory Coast the intimacy of

these links, administratively and indeed militarily,[49] has been such as to make the regime a direct continuation of the colonial order. Not only has the Ivory Coast continued to serve as a haven for French corporate enterprises (with a massive contingent of French expatriate personnel and a very substantial continuing outflow of personal earnings in international currency) but the economic, monetary and security policies of the country are still designed with active French advice and participation.[50]

Neither the Ivory Coast nor Kenya has been particularly delicate in its treatment of domestic political dissidents and neither can be said to have established a very egalitarian social order. But it is a striking fact that the two African governments which have proved most successful in sustaining competitive local agrarian production for the world market and in raising, however unevenly, the real living standards of their rural subjects should both have adopted the neo-colonial road with such determination.[51] In attempting to assess the domestic political viability of the two regimes it is necessary to consider their handling of rural class relations. Even the most neo-colonial of states requires a domestic class base of some kind if it is to develop any enduring political viability and solidity. The rural political base of the ruling parties in both Kenya and the Ivory Coast was established firmly in the competitive political conditions of the final decades of colonial rule. While the shape of the domestic class structure has been extensively modified since independence, in part by the exercise of governmental power, there remains an important and on the whole highly explicit political alliance between, on the one hand, national bureaucracy and party leadership and, on the other, the larger African agrarian producers of export commodities in each country (now for the most part very considerably richer than they were at the date of independence). In the light of these considerations, it is an understandably vexed question whom precisely the governments of Kenya or the Ivory Coast represent[52] – which is not to say that it deserves to be any less vexed a question in the case of governments which have been compelled by prior fecklessness to abandon control of their domestic economic policies without residue to the International Monetary Fund, or which have inadvertently abstracted their subjects, at least temporarily, from the world trading system altogether. But however ambiguous they may appear as representative agencies, and however ugly the relations of subordination that they have established and the techniques of coercion that they continue to employ to protect these, it can be said without equivocation that the governments of the Ivory Coast and Kenya have on the whole succeeded since independence in providing their subjects with good government. In contrast with virtually all other African countries but the few fortunate beneficiaries of massive rents on foreign extractive activities, Kenya and the Ivory Coast have provided the majority of their subjects with economic opportunities and rewards which have on balance improved rather than deteriorated over the last quarter of a century.[53] The erratic and depressed course of the world market in the early 1980s may

have halted this progress but, along with the sharp rise in oil prices in the previous decade, it has certainly harmed them less directly than it has harmed those African states that have stumbled or been pushed backwards towards autarky.[54]

The relations between retrospective causal explanation and prospective political choice are especially delicate in the case of economic policy.[55] It is in the selection of economic policies that in peacetime the holders of modern state power most crucially exert the impress of human understanding and will upon the actual life chances of those whom they rule.[56] Retrospective causal explanation of the choice and consequences of economic policies requires the careful alignment of two very different sorts of explanatory considerations: the objective constraints of local comparative advantage, local and world market demand structures, and the limited efficacy of incumbent governments, with the no doubt in principle equally objective constraints of the potential consequences of the full set of economic policies which might in principle have been undertaken. A fatalist vision of the history of economic policy in African countries up to the present underlines the least appealing of these elements: the tightness of the objective constraints, and the more unpleasant consequences of the particular economic policies actually adopted. A consistent fatalism would entail the prophecy of an African future little, if any, more agreeable than its post-colonial past. But at this point, understandably, fatalism is often supplanted by a substantial measure of voluntarism.[57] Since the viewpoint of the maker of economic policy necessarily balances choice against the perception of objective constraints, it is hard for it to exclude either fatalist or voluntarist elements; but it is also, of course, even harder for it to appraise the actual range of choices available and constraints given with any great accuracy. On the whole it is this last difficulty which, given the limited degree of comparative advantage with which African economies were actually endowed at the time of independence, has proved causally most important for understanding the economic vicissitudes of independent Africa. It is also, fortunately, the aspect in which gains made in understanding past experience can most readily and valuably be brought to bear on the taking of future political choice.[58]

One very obvious and currently fashionable contrast is that between fully open economies, operating with sound money (currencies pegged to the franc or the dollar) and enthusiastically committed to the deepening of domestic capitalist relations, and on the other hand a highly regimented economy, (at least in intention), with a large and decaying state sector, a rapidly inflating currency whose official international exchange value is fixed quite arbitrarily, and a more or less determinedly implemented hostility to domestic capitalist interests. Presented with a choice restricted to these terms, in the light of the experiences of post-independence Africa it now takes a genuine socialist ideologue to opt firmly for the latter.[59] As a growth strategy, the levying of heavy fiscal burdens on the deployment of

local capital, applied to the hasty construction of a substantial import-substitutive manufacturing sector, appears by now to be less a well-considered manner of winning for small African countries the geopolitical and industrial strength that Stalin once amassed for the Soviet Union, than an effective means of eliminating local comparative advantage. But this level of analysis remains unhelpfully gross. It is certainly important that socialist structures of ownership and economic organisation are hard to operate successfully and that they are decisively less efficient than nineteenth-century socialist thinkers hoped.[60] But it is, of course, possible to design and operate both socialist and capitalist economic programmes with very varying degrees of prudence, skill and dedication. It would take a real capitalist ideologue (of which there are some) to be genuinely surprised at Crawford Young's finding that the simple difference in ideological colouration between African regimes and between the economic policies that they have chosen to pursue[61] does not furnish a sufficient basis for predicting the extent of their relative economic success and failure. Both capitalist and socialist development can benefit enormously from the organisational efficiency and the simple probity of the state apparatus. Outside Europe and North America the most successful capitalist development in the period since 1945 has occurred in countries with powerful state structures very actively committed to planning and organising many aspects of the development of their economies.[62] The moral decomposition and almost neurological degeneration of the state structures in some of the wealthiest and most important African territories – Zaire, at some points Nigeria – has not only been ugly in itself, it has also precluded any soundly based local capitalist development of the economies concerned. By contrast, those would-be socialist states in Africa in which the state structures have maintained some organisational effectiveness and a reasonable level of public probity have done dramatically less damage than other regimes which have sought to compensate for their increasingly blatant organisational impotence by the spiralling application of terror.[63] This distinction is of considerable importance for the potential future of socialist regimes in Africa. The absence of institutionalised accountability of rulers to ruled in all existing socialist states in Africa, which is unlikely to be remedied in the imaginable future, has two principal implications for the welfare of the ruled in these territories. The first is that the simple effectiveness with which they are ruled (quite aside from its cruelty or humaneness) depends very largely on the capacity of their rulers to discipline themselves. Pessimism about the capacity of holders of political power to discipline themselves is the central motif of liberal political theory,[64] even if it is not a hazard for which liberal thinkers have yet discovered very precise or reliable remedies. The second implication is even more discomfiting. No regimes in the modern world can be trusted to govern very humanely where their sway is at all actively contested: compare Ethiopia and Afghanistan with Indonesia and the Philippines. Hence, amongst other things, the extreme ambiguity of the

prospective contribution of South Africa's domestic and international politics to the potential political trajectories of its African neighbours. Given the vastly greater prowess of modern state powers at brutal repression than at economic construction, one contribution to Africa's political future which could not sanely and decently be welcomed at present would be a plethora of local insurgencies.

Effective state powers in African territories are unlikely to charm well-informed liberal observers by the manner in which they govern. But, other things being equal, they may at least succeed in furnishing reasonably good government, and in doing so they will be able to spare their subjects the miseries of anarchy and civil war from which the peoples of Africa have suffered so desperately in recent years. In purely domestic terms the other principal contribution an effective state power is in a position to make is in the skilful choice of economic policies. (Both socialist and liberal political theories grossly understate the causal importance of skill in political life. Socialist political theory is especially lamentable in its almost complete failure to acknowledge the exceptionally exigent demands for economic and political skill in the effective design and management of a socialist economy.) Because a socialist economy requires a very high level of causal understanding and a very deft practical control on the part of its political masters (and also because of the intractable inefficiencies of socialist agriculture), it is in many ways ill-suited to enhancing the prosperity of poor and weakly integrated countries. The principal advantage of markets, by contrast, is the extent to which they economise on the need to centralise accurate information. Since the most important actors on modern markets are themselves very large organisations it is, of course, mistaken to think of market and command principles as systematically opposed to one another. But these organisations (especially multi-national corporations), where they do operate effectively, are designed in and sustained from comparatively wealthy, highly literate and well-organised societies. To replicate their organisational models in poor, predominantly illiterate and exceedingly disorganised societies gives no better guarantee of securing equivalent levels of efficacy than aping the design of foreign state powers has proved to do.[65]

It is an enormously intricate and specific exercise either to identify the historical significance and explain the historical consequences of past choices in economic policy or to prescribe well-considered policy choices for the future. What can usefully be said in general about such choices, either in explanation of the past or in prescription for the future, is in comparison brutally simple. There is no royal road, proudly autarkic or shamelessly dependent, to a more prosperous Africa. There are a very large number of policy proposals for economic development which have been tried out in one or other African country since the early 1950s which sounded good ideas at the time – at least to those who chose to implement them – and which have proved since to be dismally ill-conceived.[66] Socialist development strategies in Africa, as elsewhere, need to economise sharply on the

organisational demands which they place on governmental agencies; and they also need to take careful account of the reasons which ordinary economic agents possess for choosing (or refusing) to cooperate vigorously in implementing their projects. Because domestic capitalist interests, especially in agriculture, can be trusted to operate vigorously without government direction or inducement,[67] and because, therefore, they place less severe demands on the effectiveness or probity of government institutions, there is very little to be said against any domestic capitalist development which does not simply depend on the allocation of monopoly privileges by the state.

There is no intellectually cogent formula for synthesising a dependably well-conceived choice of economic policies with effective political accountability in any form of state and society in the modern world.[68] Political accountability can in principle be quite effectively institutionalised. But no modern population will in fact choose to defend, sustain and recreate it where the accountability itself is perceived to militate against economic prosperity. The synthesis of political accountability with economic prosperity is a contingent and permanently reversible historical achievement. It is not an institutionally guaranteed causal property of any form of regime. African prospects for economic prosperity will continue to depend (as they have come increasingly to do for at least a century and a half) on the credit institutions and trade flows of the world economy. There is essentially nothing that African governments – let alone African peoples – can do to influence this basic framework to their advantage. The gloomy economic and political history of post-colonial Africa is not in retrospect at all surprising and it is easy enough to explain its broad course. But even a despondent (and not necessarily very forgiving) historical understanding does not dictate a fatalism about the future. A very large proportion of the worst that has happened to Africa has happened as a result of foolish or vicious political choice.[69] Many of these crimes and follies are very likely to be repeated in the future. But not a single one of them *has* to be repeated. Africans, like the rest of us, are free agents judging on the basis of imperfect understanding and choosing under constraints. They are as well placed as any other segment of the human race to learn politically from their own history. By now, a good quarter of a century after independence in many countries, there is a good deal for them to learn.

Notes

Introduction: Thinking about politics in Africa

1 Richard Sklar, 'Democracy in Africa', pp. 17–29 below.
2 *Ibid.*, p. 17.
3 *Ibid.*, p. 27.
4 Compare, for example, Yolamu Barongo (ed.), *Political Science in Africa: A Critical Review* (London: Zed Press, 1983), and James Coleman and C. Halisi, 'American Political Science and Tropical Africa', *African Studies Review*, 26 (1983).
5 See here, among others, John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979).
6 For a recent attempt to synthesise the history of Africa, see Bill Freund, *The Making of Contemporary Africa* (London: Macmillan, 1984).
7 See John Lonsdale, 'States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey', *African Studies Review*, 24, 2–3 (1981).
8 See, among many, R. Garcia and J. Escudero, *Drought and Man* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982); but see also S. Berry, 'The Food Crisis and Agrarian Change in Africa: A Review Essay', *African Studies Review*, 27, 2 (1984).
9 It is instructive in this respect to read the latest World Bank report, *Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Programme of Action* (Washington, DC, 1984).
10 For an account of what is probably the worst of all cases in Africa, see Max Liniger-Goumaz, *De la Guinée-Equatoriale Nguemiste: Eléments pour le dossier de l'Afro-fascisme* (Geneva: Editions du Temps, 1983).
11 Compare our present assessment of Africa with that found in John Dunn (ed.), *West African States: Failure and Promise* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978).
12 See Staniland's argument in ch. 3 below.
13 The optimism is reflected in, for example, James Mittelman, *Underdevelopment and the Transition to Socialism: Mozambique and Tanzania* (New York: Academic Press, 1981); John Saul, *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1979).
14 For a comparative analysis of Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique (as well as other socialist states in Africa), see David and Marina Ottaway, *Afrocommunism* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981).
15 For a discussion of the validity of this argument as it applies to Guinea-Bissau, see below, ch. 5.
16 Disenchantment with African studies is very great indeed, as was revealed by the

Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the American Association of African Studies which Sklar addressed.

17 Among the many studies which could be mentioned, see Ivor Wilks, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge; CUP, 1979); and Frederick Cooper, *From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980).

18 See, for example, the debate on the question of slavery. Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983); Frederick Cooper, 'The Problem of Slavery in African Studies', *Journal of African History*, 20(1979); and S. Miers and I. Kopytoff (eds.), *Slavery in Africa* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977).

19 For a move in that direction, see Tom Callaghy in ch. 2 below.

20 See J.-F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979), and ch. 6 below.

21 John Dunn, 'The Politics of Representation and Good Government in Post-Colonial Africa', p. 159.

22 Sklar, p. 17 below.

23 On the notion of political accountability, see John Lonsdale, ch. 7 below.

24 For two useful studies among many, see C. B. Macpherson, *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (Oxford: OUP, 1977) and Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1970).

25 Sklar, p. 26 below.

26 For a classic statement on this process, see Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party-States of West Africa* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966).

27 For a comparative treatment of French and British forms of decolonisation, see W. H. Morris-Jones and G. Fisher (eds.), *Decolonisation and After: The British and French Experience* (London: Cass, 1980).

28 See here, among many, Aristide Zolberg, 'The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa', *American Political Science Review*, 62, 1 (1968).

29 For the case of Senegal, see Donal Cruise O'Brien, *Saints and Politicians* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975).

30 On Ghana, see David Apter, *Ghana in Transition* (New York: Atheneum, 1963) and, in contrast, Björn Beckman, *Organising the Farmers: Cocoa Politics and National Development in Ghana* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976).

31 See James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963); and Richard Sklar, 'Contradictions in the Nigerian Political System', *Journal of Modèrn African Studies*, 3, 2 (1965).

32 On Cameroon, see Richard Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroon: Social Origins of the UPC* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977); on the Belgian Congo, see Crawford Young, *Politics in the Congo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965).

33 See David Apter, *The Political Kingdom in Uganda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) and David Low, *Buganda in Modern History* (London: Weidenfeld, 1971).

34 See Henry Bienen, *Kenya: The Politics of Participation and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

35 See Iliffe, *Modern History of Tanganyika*.

36 For a recent study of the politics of the early post-colonial period, see Ruth

Berins Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa: Changing Forms of Supremacy, 1945–1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

37 On representation, see John Dunn, ch. 8 below.

38 For a useful summary, see James Coleman and Carl Rosberg (eds.), *Political Parties and National Integration in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964).

39 On elections, see Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa.*

40 See here Tony Smith, 'A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 20, 1(1978).

41 For a classic statement on British colonial rule, see Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher (with Alice Denny), *Africa and the Victorians* (London: Macmillan, 1961). For a recent reappraisal of British decolonisation, see Michael Twaddle, 'Decolonization in British Africa: A New Historiographical Debate', unpublished paper, University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1985.

42 Particularly, the former French colonies. The French intervened in Senegal, Gabon and the Congo and have since intervened systematically in Chad and the Central African Republic.

43 For a classic, and still relevant, statement, see Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa* (New York: New York University Press, 1957).

44 A useful discussion of ethnicity in Africa is Nelson Kasfir, *The Shrinking Political Arena* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

45 On Ghana, see Denis Austin, *Politics in Ghana, 1946–1960* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966); John Dunn and A. F. Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973); and Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983).

46 On the genesis of one-party states, see Zolberg, *Creating Political Order.*

47 On African economies, see A. G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1973); Keith Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982); and Douglas Rimmer, *The Economies of West Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).

48 John Iliffe, *The Emergence of African Capitalism* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

49 Hart, *Political Economy of West African Agriculture*, esp. ch. 4.

50 On the Ivory coast, see Y. Fauré and J.-F. Médard (eds.), *Etat et bourgeoisie en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris: Karthala, 1982).

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52 On Nigeria's constitutions, see B. Nwabueze, *A Constitutional History of Nigeria* (London: C. Hurst, 1982).

53 John Dunn, p. 161 below.

54 John Lonsdale, ch. 7 below.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 128 below.

56 For a discussion of the putative relation between development and ideology, see

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57 The most useful discussion of the notion of representation is Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

58 For a discussion of the notion of the overdeveloped state, see Colin Leys, 'The "Overdeveloped" Post-Colonial State: A Re-Evaluation', *Review of African Political Economy*, 5 (1976). On the soft state, see Crawford Young, 'Patterns of Social Conflict: State, Class and Ethnicity', *Daedalus*, 111, 2 (1982).

59 John Dunn, p. 173 below.

60 Donal Cruise O'Brien, ch. 4 below.

61 For a relevant background discussion see Perry Anderson, *Lineages of the Absolute State* (London: New Left Books, 1974).

62 Jean-François Bayart, ch. 6 below.

63 For what may well be the comprehensive treatment of the state in Africa, see Lonsdale, 'States and Social Processes in Africa'.

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65 For an instructive example of 'peasant' complicity in robbing the state, see Polly Hill, 'How the Farmers Outwitted the Bureaucrats: A True Tale', preamble to *Development Economics on Trial: The Anthropological case for a Prosecution* (Cambridge; CUP, 1986).

66 See Hart, *Political Economy of West African Agriculture*; Robert Bates, *Markets and States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), and *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

1 Democracy in Africa

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3 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

4 Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. I (New York: International Publishers, 1967), pp. 8–10. Preface to the First German Edition, 1867.

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6 The title of an address, delivered in 1880, in which Africa's contribution to world culture is judiciously assessed. See Edward Wilmot Blyden, *Christianity, Islam and the Negro Race*, 2nd edn (London: Whitingham, 1888).

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Statement', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 17, 1 (January 1975), pp. 91–112.

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12 Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 103.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 111; Joel D. Barkan, 'Legislators, Elections, and Political Linkage', in Joel D. Barkan with John D. Okumu (eds.), *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* (New York: Praeger, 1979), pp. 83–4.

14 *The Weekly Review* (Nairobi), 11 June 1982, p. 5.

15 Julius K. Nyerere, *The Arusha Declaration Ten Years After* (Dar es Salaam: 1977); Reginald Herbold Green, 'Tanzanian Political Economy Goals, Strategies, and Results, 1967–74: Notes Towards an Interim Assessment', in Bismarck U. Mwansasu and Cranford Pratt (eds.), *Towards Socialism in Tanzania* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 19–45.

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18 Cranford Pratt, 'Tanzania's Transition to Socialism: Reflections of a Democratic Socialist', in Mwansasu and Pratt, *Towards Socialism in Tanzania*, pp. 211, 219.

19 Nyerere, *The Arusha Declaration*, p. 11.

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21 Kenneth Kaunda, *Zambia's Guideline for the Next Decade* (Lusaka: 1968), p. 20.

22 K. D. Kaunda, *A Path for the Future* (Lusaka: 1971), p. 37.

23 *Ibid.*

24 K. D. Kaunda, *Take Up the Challenge*... (Lusaka: 1970).

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26 Ollawa, *Participatory Democracy*, pp. 319, 395, 404–6; Ian Scott, 'Party and Administration under the One-Party State', in Tordoff, *Administration in Zambia*, pp. 155–6.

27 Bratton, 'The Social Context of Political Penetration', p. 234; Ollawa, *Participatory Democracy*, p. 324.

28 William Tordoff, 'Introduction', in Tordoff, *Administration in Zambia*, p. 25; and Scott, 'Party and Administration', p. 157.
29 Statement by President Kenneth Kaunda, 28 July 1981. Embassy of the Republic of Zambia, Washington, DC.
30 In formulating this interpretation of Kaunda's ideological shift, I have benefited from the clarifying insights of C. R. D. Halisi.
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35 F. van Zyl Slabbert and David Welsh, *South Africa's Options* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979). Slabbert, a former professor of sociology, was parliamentary leader of the Progressive Federal Party between 1979 and February 1986.
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37 Heribert Adam, 'Political Alternatives', in Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee, *Ethnic Power Mobilized: Can South Africa Change?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 228.
38 *Ibid.*, pp. 290–302. Despite his cogent critique of consociational democracy for South Africa, Adam subsequently participated in the deliberations of the Buthelezi Commission and commended consociational reform as 'the only realistic alternative to escalating strife ... an institutionalized truce instead of open warfare'. Heribert Adam, 'The Manipulation of Ethnicity: South Africa in Comparative Perspective', in Donald Rothchild and Victor A. Olorunsola (eds.), *State Versus Ethnic Claims: African Policy Dilemmas* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), p. 140.
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40 *West Africa*, 3377 (26 April 1982), p. 1111.
41 R. W. Johnson, 'Guinea', in John Dunn (ed.), *West African States: Failure and Promise* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978). For the climactic, violent sequel, see Young, pp. 172–3.
42 Gregor, *Italian Fascism*, pp. 327, 333.
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2 Politics and Vision in Africa

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2 For a full exposition and documentation of this argument, see Thomas M. Callaghy, *The State–Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 7–79.
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8 Aristide R. Zolberg, 'Military Intervention in the New States of Tropical Africa', in *The Military Intervenes*, ed. Henry Bienen (New York: Russell Sage, 1968), p. 94.
9 Samuel Decalo, *Coups and Army Rule in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 240; and Aristide R. Zolberg, 'Military Rule and Political

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11 Crawford Young, 'Zaire: Prospects for the Future', paper presented to the Conference on Zaire, Department of State, Washington, DC, 24 August, 1982, pp. 3–5.
12 Crawford Young, 'Patterns of Social Conflict: State, Class, and Ethnicity', *Daedalus*, 111, 2 (Spring 1982), p. 94.
13 Howard J. Wiarda, 'The Struggle for Democracy and Human Rights in Latin America', in *The Continuing Struggle for Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Howard J. Wiarda (Boulder: Westview, 1980), p. 240.
14 See Richard M. Morse, 'The Heritage of Latin America', in *The Founding of New Societies*, ed. Louis Hartz (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964), pp. 151–7; Claudio Veliz, *The Centralist Tradition of Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978).
15 See Frederick Cooper, 'Africa and the World Economy', *African Studies Review*, 244, 2–3 (June–September 1981), pp. 1–86.
16 Morse, 'Heritage', p. 137.
17 *Ibid.*, p. 164.
18 James M. Malloy, 'Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America', in *Authoritarianism and Corporatism in Latin America*, ed. James M. Malloy (Pittsburg; Pittsburg University Press, 1977), p. 5.
19 See Cooper, 'Africa and the World Economy'.
20 Morse, 'Heritage', p. 176.
21 Howard J. Wiarda, 'Critical Elections and Critical Coups', in Wiarda, *Continuing Struggle*, p. 32.
22 *Ibid.*
23 *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 35.
24 See Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America* (New York: 1984); and Wiarda, 'Critical Elections', pp. 50–9.
25 Morse, 'Heritage', p. 137; Wiarda, 'Critical Elections', p. 55.
26 See David Collier (ed.), *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).
27 Charles W. Anderson, 'Towards a Theory of Latin American Politics', in *Government and Politics in Latin America*, ed. Peter G. Snow (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1967), p. 237; Wiarda, 'Struggle for Democracy', p. 241.
28 J. Lloyd Mecham, 'Latin American Constitutions: Nominal and Real', in Snow, *Government and Politics in Latin America*, p. 144.
28 Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, 'Continuity and Change in Politics and Society', in *Man, State, and Society in Latin American History*, eds. Sheldon B. Liss and Peggy K. Liss (New York: Praeger, 1972), p. 195.
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39 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
40 *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32, 34.
41 Larry Diamond, 'Social Change and Political Conflict in Nigeria's Second Republic', in *The Political Economy of Nigeria*, ed. William I. Zartman (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 31.
42 Jean Herskovits, 'Democracy in Nigeria', *Foreign Affairs*, 58, 2 (1980), p. 335.
43 Richard A. Joseph, 'The Overthrow of Nigeria's Second Republic', *Current History* (March 1984), p. 123.
44 See Diamond, 'Social Change', pp. 67, 79.
45 Claude Ake quoted in *ibid.*, p. 2.
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47 *Ibid.*, p. 33.
48 Quoted in Herskovits, 'Democracy in Nigeria', p. 330.
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63 *Ibid.*, pp. 914, 916,.
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65 Diamond, 'Nigeria in Search of Democracy', p. 915.
66 Diamond, 'Social Change', p. 79.
67 Joseph, 'Overthrow of Nigeria's Second Republic', p. 123.
68 Herskovits, 'Democracy in Nigeria', p. 335.
69 John Lonsdale, 'States and Social Processes in Africa', *African Studies Review*, 24, 2–3 (June–September 1981), p. 204.
70 The argument presented here about Nigeria holds equally for Africa's other major 'deviant' case – Ghana. For lack of space I am unable to analyse the Ghanaian case as it deserves; for suggestive arguments, see Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983); Donald Rothchild and E. Gyimah-Boadi, 'Ghana's Return to Civilian Rule', *Africa Today*

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71 See ch. 1 above.

3 Democracy and ethnocentrism

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4 William Graham Sumner, *Folkways* (New York: Ginn, 1905), pp. 12–13.

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6 Ake adds a second definition, that of imperialism as a stage in the development of the capitalist mode of production (Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism*, p. 99).

7 On the loyalties of American Africanists, see Martin Staniland, 'Who Needs African Studies?', *African Studies Review*, 26, 3–4 (September–December 1983), pp. 77–97.

8 Cited in George Eaton Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 99. As David Bidney puts it, Herskovits took the view that 'all cultural judgments, perceptions, and evaluations are a function of, and are relative to, a given cultural system' ('Cultural Relativism', in David L. Sills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), vol. 3, p. 544). Gwendolen M. Carter has recently commented that Herskovits and his colleagues were 'not only fascinated by the richness of African data but found it confirmed their judgments that American social scientists paid too little attention to cultural differences; that accepted social theories were chiefly applicable, in fact, only to Western experience; and that many social sciences were thus "culture-bound"' ('African Studies in the United States: 1955–1975', *Issue* (African Studies Association), 6, 2–3 (Summer–Fall 1976), p. 2).

9 Melville J. Herskovits, 'Tender and Tough Minded Anthropology and the Study of Values in Culture', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 7 (1951), p. 24 (cited in Simpson, *Melville J. Herskovits*, p. 98).

10 Melville J. Herskovits, 'The Image of Africa in the United States', *Journal of Human Relations*, 10, 2–3 (Winter–Spring 1962), p. 236.
11 'Herskovits Report Calls for Imaginative U.S. Policy', *Africa Special Report*, 4, 11 (November 1959), p. 12.
12 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
13 William Bascom, 'Obstacles to Self-Government', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 306 (July 1956), p. 69.
14 See, for example, Lloyd Fallers, 'Africa: Scholarship and Policy', *World Politics*, 9, 2 (January 1957), pp. 287–94; and Herskovits' remarks opposing involvement of American Africanists in proposals for NATO funding of language training, in 'Training and Career Opportunities for the American Specialist on Africa', *African Studies Bulletin*, 2, 4 (December 1959), pp. 25–6.
15 See, for example, Guy C. Z. Mhone, 'The Case against Africanists', *Issue*, 2, 2 (Summer 1972), p. 9 (where the author criticises the over-idealised picture of one-partyism presented in Gwendolen M. Carter's *African One-Party States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1964)). For similar criticisms, from an American scholar, see Margaret Bates, 'Some Thoughts on Research', *Africa Today*, 18, 1 (January 1971), p. 15.
16 Hubert H. Humphrey, 'A Senator Looks at Africa', *Africa Special Report*, 4, 9 (September 1959), p. 7. Humphrey, it should be said, took an overtly Cold War view of Africa's significance in international affairs, however unprescriptive this passage in his speech makes him appear.
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18 The Africa League, *A New American Policy Toward Africa* (New York, February 1960), p. 20.
19 Gwendolen M. Carter, 'The Scholar's Role in Mobile, Perplexing Africa' (text of a speech to the American Association of University Women), *Africa Report*, 7, 8 (August 1962), p. 22.
20 Editorial, 'Bourgeois Democracy in Eclipse', *Monthly Review*, 10, 10 (February 1959), 408.
21 Leo Huberman, 'Bourgeois Democracy in Eclipse', *Monthly Review*, 17, 5 (October 1965), p. 26.
22 John S. Saul, 'Portugal and the Mozambican Revolution', *Monthly Review*, 26, 4 (September 1974), p. 64. In 1975, Paul Sweezy praised the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal for not being distracted by elections which 'had no effect on the underlying class struggle'. He considered that since two-thirds of the votes had been garnered by 'quintessentially bourgeois parties', it 'might have been better to postpone the elections for an indefinite period' (Paul M. Sweezy, 'Class Struggles in Portugal', *Monthly Review*, 27, 4 (September 1975), pp. 12, 13).
23 Alphaeus Hunton, 'Guinea Strides Forward', *Freedomways* (Spring 1961), p. 29.
24 *Ibid.*, p. 29, 30.
25 See, for example, St Clair Drake, 'Prospects for Democracy in the Gold Coast', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 306 (July 1956), pp. 80, 84 and 87.
26 Leonard S. Kenworth, 'Ghana: Problems and Prospects', *Current History* (July 1959), p. 17.
27 History, James Burnham warned, would depict the European colonials as refugees, fleeing 'as the defeated fled before Genghis, Alexander, Pompey, Caesar: fleeing in thousands, in tens and hundreds of thousands, our weapons spiked or abandoned, our homes looted, our property smashed or stolen, our women raped, our children brutalized . . . Our giant warships turn and flee from

the harbors; our superb warplanes flee from the great fields built by our talents and wealth; our intricate guns are pulled from their emplacements; our soldiers get their command: Retreat!' (James Burnham, 'The African Shambles', *National Review*, 28 January 1961, p. 45).

28 James Burnham, 'The View from Outside', *National Review*, 7 July 1967, p. 128.

29 See, for example, Elspeth Huxley, 'Two Revolutions That are Changing Africa', *New York Times Magazine*, 19 May 1957, p. 69; 'The Nationalist Tide Sweeps Africa', *New York Times Magazine*, 15 February 1959, p. 35; and 'A Confusion of Colonels', *National Review*, 2 May 1967, p. 467.

30 J. D. Futch, 'The Day of the Let's Pretends', *National Review*, 12 September 1959, p. 328.

31 Not only conservatives predicted collapse. In 1960, Henry Bretton, in most respects classifiable as a liberal, proclaimed: 'It is a safe prediction that none of the African states seated in the United Nations in September 1960, with the possible exception of the Malagasy Republic, will survive the next five years in their present shape and form' ('The Congo and Emergent Africa', *Nation*, 15 October 1960, p. 242). Miss Huxley had an equally uneven record in forecasting. In May 1957, she declared :'It would, of course, be quite wrong to suggest that the greater part of colonial Africa is about to follow Ghana into independence' ('Two Revolutions That Are Changing Africa', p. 70); in February 1959, she forecast that by 1969, 75 per cent of Africans would be self-governing: 'Democracy, as we understand it, will be dead or dying ... Government will be in the hands of small cliques of power-wielders supported by parties prepared to stamp out ruthlessly any challenge ... Thanks to Nkrumah's campaign, the newly independent African states may be linked into two or three loose confederations ... Whatever happens, Africa will remain dependent on outside capital, initiative and skill for its development' ('The Nationalist Tide Sweeps Africa', pp. 32, 35).

32 Anthony Lejeune, 'The Day Lumumba Died', *National Review*, 25 March 1961, p. 182.

33 'The Image of Africa in the United States', p. 239.

34 Michael F. Lofchie, 'Political Theory and African Politics', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 6, 1 (May 1968), p. 6.

35 Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism*, introduction, unpaginated. Elsewhere, he remarks concerning political development theorists that their work is merely 'propaganda for manipulating the world and not for understanding it' (*ibid.*, p. 57).

36 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

37 See *ibid.*, pp. 60–74, 91 and (for the identification of 'capitalist values') 114.

38 *Ibid.*, pp. 91 and introduction, unpaginated.

39 Ake several times insists that he does not posit the existence of any conspiracy among Western social scientists to impose imperialism on developing countries. It is not necessary for his case, he says, 'to suppose that these scholars are conscious of the *fact* that their work serves imperialism ... what is pertinent is the *objective significance* of the scholarship in question, not the subjective states of their authors. This is fortunate because it would be extremely difficult to determine and generalize the subjective states of the author' (*ibid.*, p. 101; emphasis added).

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125.

41 See for instance, Somjee, 'Ethnocentricity and Value Ambiguity', p. 257.

42 Gabriel A. Almond, 'Political Development: Analytical and Normative Per-

spectives', in Almond, *Political Development: Essays in Heuristic Theory* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1970), p. 290. On Almond's odyssey into the world of anthropology, see Gabriel A. Almond and James S. Coleman (eds.), *The Politics of the Developing Areas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), preface, p. vii.

43 Almond, 'Political Development: Analytical and Normative Perspectives', p. 287.

44 Gabriel A. Almond, 'Approaches to Developmental Causation', in Gabriel A. Almond, Scott C. Flanagan, and Robert Mundt (eds.), *Crisis, Choice, and Change: Historical Studies of Political Development* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973), p. 2. As Coleman and Halisi remark, 'Almond's central objective in developing his universal political functions was to liberate comparative analysis from the ethnocentric bias in Western culture-bound structural categories' (James S. Coleman and Clyde D. Halisi, 'Political Science and Africa: From Nationalism to Political Economy', paper presented to the annual conference of the African Studies Association, Washington, DC, 4 November 1982, p. 25). Cf. the remarks by Gwendolen Carter on Herskovits, quoted in note 8 above.

45 See, for instance, Jinadu, 'Some Reflections on African Political Scientists', p. 237; and Kashoki, 'Indigenous Scholarship in African Universities', p. 35 n. 3.

46 Jinadu, 'Some Reflections on African Political Scientists', p. 242.

47 For critical comments on the state of African political science, see Kashoki, 'Indigenous Scholarship in African Universities', pp. 35, 36, 49; Jinadu, 'Some Reflections on African Political Scientists', pp. 236–8; Machyo, 'African Social Scientists', pp. 284–7 n. 3; A. A. G. Ginyera-Pincwa, 'The African Political Scientist and Decision-Making', *African Review*, 5, 3 (1975), pp. 298–301; and P. Kiven Tunteng, 'Pseudo-Politics and Pseudo-Scholarship in Africa', *Transition*, 41 (1972), pp. 26–34.

48 Machyo, 'African Social Scientists', pp. 284–85.

49 Coleman and Halisi, 'Political Science and Africa', p. 5 (a revised version of this paper, entitled 'American Political Science and Tropical Africa: Universalism vs Relativism', was published in the *African Studies Review* 26, 3–4 (September–December 1983), pp. 25–62).

50 Jinadu, 'Some Reflections on African Political Scientists', p. 243. In a similar vein, Kashoki remarks that he is not proposing 'an antagonistic, anti-Western, polaristic scholarship' and does not want his colleagues to be 'engaged in inquiries which seek only to prove Western man wrong'. He believes that African scholars will remain occupied with 'defensive stances for a number of years to come' and that 'the loser during this period will be positive, assertive scholarship' ('Indigenous Scholarship in African Universities', pp. 44, 45, 36).

51 For example, at the African Studies Association conference at which Sklar's paper (ch. 1 above) was originally presented, Okello Oculi, a social scientist at a Nigerian university, declared: 'Necklaces of blood drip from the throats of anthropologists.' This remark startled several anthropologists dozing after lunch into waking up and examining their shirt collars uneasily.

52 Maimire Mennasemay, 'Political Theory, Political Science, and African Development', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 16, 2 (1982), p. 236.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 236 (emphasis in original).

54 Hussein Fahim, 'Indigenous Anthropology and Local Cultures', in Fahim, *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries*, p. 1 n. 3.

55 T. N. Madan, 'Anthropology as the Mutual Interpretation of Cultures: Indian

Perspectives', in Fahim, *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries*, p. 16.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

57 Julius Lester, 'James Baldwin – Reflections of a Maverick', *New York Times Book Review*, 27 May 1984, p. 24. The effect of blacks writing about whites would be, in Baldwin's view, to 'make the concept of color obsolete'.

58 An often quoted example of such work is John Ogbu's study, *The Next Generation: An Ethnography of Education in an Urban Neighborhood* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). This work deals with the upwardly mobile. Even more satisfying would be an ethnographic monograph on tribal customs in Beverley Hills, Pacific Palisades, Scarsdale, or Cambridge, Mass. Or, for that matter, Wimbledon and Wigan.

59 For a brief discussion of the problems of Third World anthropologists working abroad, see Elizabeth Colson, 'Anthropological Dilemmas in the Late Twentieth Century', in Fahim, *Indigenous Anthropology in Non-Western Countries*, pp. 253–62.

60 Madan, 'Anthropology as the Mutual Interpretation of Cultures', p. 16.

4 Wails and whispers

1 J. P. Mayer and S. P. Kerr (eds.), trans. George Lawrence (New York: Doubleday, 1971), p. 296.

2 Aristide Zolberg, 'The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa', *American Political Science Review*, 62, 1 (1968), pp. 70–87.

3 This definition of institutions in Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 12.

4 For background reading on West Africa's Muslim history and politics, see M. Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa* (London and New York: Longman, 1984); P. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* (London: Edward Arnold, 1982), and J. S. Trimingham, *Islam in West Africa* (London: OUP, 1959): also G. Nicolas, *Dynamique de l'Islam au sud du Sahara* (Paris: Publications Orientalistes de France, 1981), and C. Coulon, *Les Musulmans et le pouvoir en Afrique noire* (Paris: Karthala, 1983).

5 See Clarke, *West Africa and Islam*, pp. 250–4.

6 The best background reading here is C. Stewart, *Islam and Social Order in Mauritania* (Oxford, OUP, 1973).

7 Coulon, *Les Musulmans et le pouvoir en Afrique noire*, pp. 4–5.

8 John Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973); M. Hiskett, 'The Community of Grace and its Opponents the Rejectors', *African Language Studies*, 17 (1980).

9 Zolberg, 'The Structure of Political Conflict'.

10 C. Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968).

11 See L. Brenner's excellent *West African Sufi* (London: C. Hurst, 1983). Also B. G. Martin, *Muslim Brotherhoods in Nineteenth-Century Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976); J. Abun Nasr, *The Tijaniyya* (London: OUP, 1965); L. Sanneh, *The Jackhanke* (London: International African Institute, 1979); also the three editions of V. Monteil's *L'Islam noir* and P. Marty's pioneering studies of Islam in French colonial territories.

12 See D. Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal* (Oxford: OUP, 1971); *Saints*

and Politicians (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); 'A Versatile Charisma', *European Journal of Sociology*, 17 (1977). Also C. Coulon, *Le Marabout et le prince* (Paris: Pedone, 1981).

13 On Hamalliyya see P. Alexander, 'A West African Islamic Movement: Hamallism in French West Africa', in R. Rotberg and A. Mazrui (eds.), *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (New York: OUP, 1970). Also Brenner, *West African Sufi*, pp. 45–59, 126–38; and A. Traore, *Cheikh Hamahoullah. Homme de foi et résistant* (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1983). The major anthropological work on Sanusiyya is E. Evans Pritchard, *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica* (Oxford: OUP, 1964). Jean-Louis Triaud's thesis on the subject is eagerly awaited. On the Mourides see Cruise O'Brien, *The Mourides of Senegal*; also P. Marty, *Les Mourides d'Amadou Bamba* (Paris: Leroux, 1913).

14 See Paden, *Religion and Political Culture in Kano*, and Hiskett, 'The Community of Grace'.

15 J. S. Trimingham, *The Influence of Islam upon Africa*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Longman, 1980), p. 142.

16 A. Merad, *Le Réformisme Musulman en Algérie de 1925 à 1940* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1967); also A. Merad, *Ibn Badis. Commentateur du Koran* (Paris: Guenther, 1971).

17 A. Bennigsen, *Les Musulmans oubliés. L'Islam en Union Soviétique* (Paris: Maspero, 1981), pp. 182–93.

18 See L. Kaba, *The Wahhabiyya; Islamic Reform and Politics in French West Africa* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974); also J. L. Amselle, *Les Négociants de la Savane* (Paris: Anthropos, 1977).

19 The reformist charges may be found for example in C. Touré, *Afin que tu deviennes un croyant* (Dakar: Imprimerie Diop, 1953). For the analysis of Islamic reform of a previous period, see M. Last, 'Reform in West Africa: the *jihad* movements of the nineteenth century', in J. F. A. Ajayi and M. Crowder (eds.), *History of West Africa* (London: Longman, 1974). Also M. Last, *The Sokoto Caliphate* (London: Longman, 1967).

20 See J. Goody (ed.), *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: CUP, 1968).

21 For an excellent case study see J.-L. Triaud, 'L'Islam et l'Etat au Niger', *Le Mois en Afrique*, 192–3 (December 1981–January 1982), and 194–5 (January–February 1982).

22 An important moment here was the launching of the slogan *umma djazaïria* (the Algerian Muslim community) by the reformist *ulama* in Algeria in the 1930s.

23 See J.-L. Triaud, 'Abdul-Rahman l'Africain, 1908–1957, pionnier et précurseur du Wahhabisme au Mali', and J.-L. Amselle, 'Le Wahhabisme à Bamako, 1945–1983', papers presented to the conference, 'Les Agents Religieux en Afrique Noire', Paris, 15–17 December 1983, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.

24 John Paden in a recent paper, writing of the fifty to sixty *ulama* on the Islamic Supreme Council of Nigeria, distinguishes those who work for the government, those who reject the government, the modernising reformers, and a sufi *ulama* group crossing the boundaries of each of these categories. J. Paden, 'The Nigerian Ulama; Orientations towards Public Policy', Northwestern University conference on '*Ulama* in Africa', March 1984.

25 Weber of course remarks that 'In its pure form, charismatic authority may be said to exist only in the process of originating.' M. Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, ed. and trans Talcott Parsons (London: Collier Macmillan/The Free Press of Glencoe, 1947, 1964), p. 364.

26 Huntingdon, *Political Order in Changing Societies*.

27 On the history of West African Mahdism, see Hiskett, *The Development of Islam in West Africa*, pp. 272–5, 317–18.
28 See for example, R. Hickey, 'The 1982 Maitatsine Uprisings in Nigeria', *African Affairs*, 83, 331 (April 1984).

5 Revolutionary democracy in Africa

1 For a history of nationalism and decolonisation in Guinea-Bissau, see Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983); Lars Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau: A Study of Political Mobilization* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1974); Basil Davidson, *No Fist is Big Enough to Hide the Sky* (London: Zed Press, 1981).
2 On Angola and Mozambique, see my comparative discussion of armed struggle in the Lusophone African countries, 'People's War, State Formation and Revolution in Africa', in Nelson Kasfir (ed.), *State and Class in Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 1984). For a more general discussion of people's wars, see Gérard Chaliand, *Mythes révolutionnaires du Tiers Monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1976).
3 For a detailed history of this period, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, chs. 3, 4.
4 See *ibid.* for a discussion on Cabral's role.
5 On the party, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral* and Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau.*
6 'Constituição da República da Guiné-Bissau', in *Guiné-Bissau: Três anos de Independência* (Lisbon: CIDAC, 1976), pp. 164–72.
7 *Ibid.*
8 See Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, pp. 124–31.
9 For Cabral's only explicit discussion of revolutionary democracy, see Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle* (London: Heinemann, 1980), pp. 93–8.
10 For a discussion of Cabral's political legacy, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, ch. 5.
11 Cabral's statement on the 1972 elections can be found in Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, pp. 277–88.
12 On the campaign and the elections, see Rudebeck, *Guinea-Bissau*, pp. 156–67.
13 Richard Sklar, 'Democracy in Africa', p. 28 above.
14 On the causes and implications of Cabral's assassination, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, pp. 132–43.
15 On the coup, see my series of articles in *West Africa*, 15 December 1980, pp. 2554–6; 22–9 December 1980, 2593–4; and 12 January 1981, 62–3.
16 On the condition of Guinea-Bissau after independence, see J. C. Andréini and M. L. Lambert, *La Guinée-Bissau: D'Amilcar Cabral à la reconstruction nationale* (Paris; L'Harmattan, 1978).
17 For an assessment five years after independence, see René Dumont, 'La Guinée-Bissau peut encore échapper à son sous-développement', *Le Monde diplomatique* (July 1979).
18 Peter Aaby, 'Development Strategy in Guinea-Bissau: Between the Scylla and Charybdis of the World Market and the Extended Family', unpublished paper.
19 On the debate about African agriculture, see Keith Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982) and Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
20 For a review of Cabral's writings on agriculture, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, pp. 48–51.
21 For an assessment of the operation of the national assembly, see Jocelyn Jones, 'The Peasantry, the Party and the State', D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford University, forthcoming.
22 On Cabral's ideas about decentralisation, see Basil Davidson, *The Liberation of*

Guiné (Harmondsworth: Penguin African Library, 1969), p. 137, and R. Buijtenhuijs, 'La Guinée-Bissau indépendante et l'héritage de Cabral', *Kroniek van Afrika*, 2 (1975).

23 For an analysis of this process and its political consequences, see Patrick Chabal, 'Party, State and Socialism in Guinea-Bissau', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 17, 2 (1983).

24 For the results of the 1972 elections, see Amilcar Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, pp. 278–87. For the results of the 1976 elections, see *Nô Pintcha*, 23 December 1976.

25 For a re-statement of the PAIGC's economic policies, see Aristides Pereira, *Relatório do C.S.L. ao III Congresso do PAIGC* (Mindelo: PAIGC, 1978), ch. 4.

26 For a comprehensive analysis of Guinea-Bissau's agriculture, see A. M. Hochet, *Paysanneries en attente: Guinée-Bissau* (Dakar: ENDA, 1983).

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 10–15.

28 The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Quarterly Economic Review of Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tome and Principe* (Annual Supplement, 1984), p. 30.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

30 Hochet, *Paysanneries en attente*, p. 18.

31 For a scathing assessment of those ambitions, see René Dumont and Marie-France Mottin, *L'Afrique étranglée* (Paris: Seuil, 1982), pp. 236–7.

32 The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Quarterly Economic Review*, p. 32.

33 *Idem.*

34 *Idem.*

35 *Ibid.*, p. 34.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

37 See here, among others, Amilcar Cabral, *Analise de Alguns Tipos de Resistência* (Lisbon: Seara Nova, 1974), pp. 48ff.

38 For a detailed discussion of this point, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, pp. 154–62.

39 Evidence for this emerged after the coup. It is instructive in this respect to read the issues of *Nô Pintcha* of the last weeks of 1980 and the first weeks of 1981.

40 Much material to support this argument is to be found in Jones, 'The Peasantry, the Party and the State'.

41 For an analysis of this process, see Chabal, 'Party, State and Socialism in Guinea-Bissau'.

42 See here Jones, 'The Peasantry, the Party and the State', and Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, chs. 3 and 4.

43 Chabal, 'Party, State and Socialism in Guinea-Bissau'.

44 The Economist Intelligence Unit, *Quarterly Economic Review*, pp. 25–6.

45 *Idem.*

46 See here an interesting assessment of the coup by a group with considerable knowledge of Guinea-Bissau's politics, CIDAC, *Relatório sobre a Situação Actual na Guiné-Bissau, Dezembro 1980* (Lisbon: mimeo, 1980).

47 See here Lars Rudebeck, *Problèmes de pouvoir populaire et de développement*, Research Report no. 63 (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1982).

48 It is instructive to read here the report of the 1981 Congress: *Relatório do Conselho Nacional da Guiné do PAIGC ao Primeiro Congresso Extraordinário* (Bissau: PAIGC, 1981).

49 See here Peter Aaby, *The State of Guinea-Bissau: African Socialism or Socialism in Africa?* Research Report no. 45 (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1978).

50 See Pereira, *Relatório do C.S.L.*, pp. 45–54.
51 Chabal, 'Party, State and Socialism in Guinea-Bissau'.
52 For some revealing evidence, see here Jones, 'The Peasantry, The Party and, the State'.
53 A point which, interestingly, emerged from my discussions with Cape Verdean PAIGC guerrilla commanders. Interviews with Manuel Santos, Bissau, 20 March 1979; and Silvino da Luz, Praia, 9 April 1979.
54 See here Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture*, ch. 4.
55 See here the interesting material collected by Jocelyn Jones.
56 Jones, 'The Peasantry, the Party and the State'.
57 For an interesting discussion of those changes in one village, see Lars Rudebeck, *Problèmes de pouvoir populaire et de développement*, pp. 36–42.
58 For a list of the names of ninety-nine among those executed, see *Nô Pintcha*, 29 November 1980.
59 See *Relatório do Conselho Nacional da Guiné do PAIGC ao Primeiro Congresso Extraordinário*.
60 On the notion of political accountability see John Lonsdale, ch. 7 below and my Introduction.
61 On Vieira's intentions in 1980, see CIDAC, *Relatório sobre a Situação Actual.*
62 On earlier socialist 'experiments', see Carl Rosberg and Thomas Callaghy (eds.), *Socialism in Sub-Saharan Africa: A New Assessment* (Berkeley: Institute of International Studies, 1979).
63 For a discussion of some of these arguments, see my 'People's War, State Formation and Revolution in Africa'.
64 For a detailed discussion of Guinea-Bissau's agricultural potential, see Hochet, *Paysanneries en attente*.
65 Note the tone of the interview he gave Davidson, in Davidson, *The Liberation of Guiné*, pp. 135–41.
66 Cabral, *Analise de Alguns Tipos de Resistência*, p. 48, for example.
67 The vigour with which Vieira and his followers proclaimed the need to return to Cabral's policies may well have been a reflection of their perception of the irreversibility of this process of dissipation.
68 This is implicitly, the thrust of Barry Munslow's argument in 'The 1980 Coup in Guinea-Bissau', *Review of African Political Economy*, 21 (1981), pp. 109–13.
69 This is, in part, Jocelyn Jones' argument, 'The Peasantry, the Party and the State'.
70 This is an important point. Cabral said: 'Above all, we want to decentralise as much as may be possible. That's one reason why we're inclined to think that Bissau will not continue to be our capital in an administrative sense. In fact, we are against the whole idea of a capital. Why shouldn't ministries be dispersed? After all, our country is a small one with passable roads, at least in the central areas. Why should we saddle ourselves with the paraphernalia of a presidential palace, a concentration of ministries, the clear signs of an emergent elite which can soon become a privileged group?' Davidson, *The Liberation of Guiné*, p. 137. Though it is clear what the political argument is in Cabral's statement, it is eminently unclear how he thought decentralisation would be carried out in practice.
71 This was clear in the argument of José Araujo, formerly Executive Secretary of the PAIGC (he was deposed after the November 1980 coup), whom I interviewed in Bissau on 24 March 1979.
72 This is an argument which, partly in reaction to my book, has gained some currency recently though its proponents have, for the moment, not gone into print.

73 Certainly, Lars Rudebeck, one of the best informed analysts of Guinea-Bissau, was not unduly pessimistic in his 1982 report. See *Problèmes de pouvoir populaire et de développement*, pp. 61–5.
74 For a discussion of some of these notions, see my Introduction above and chs. 6, 7 and 8 below.
75 On the analysis of political language and thought in historical context, see Quentin Skinner, 'Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action', *Political Theory* (August 1974), pp. 277–303, and John Dunn, 'The Identity of the History of Ideas', in Peter Laslett *et al.* (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972).
76 For a recent contribution to the debate on the meaning of political science in Africa, see Yolamu Barongo (ed.), *Political Science in Africa* (London: Zed Press, 1983).
77 Nyerere's discussion of the meaning of socialism is relevant here. See Harvey Glickman, 'Dilemmas of Political Theory in an African Context: the Ideology of Julius Nyerere', in J. Butler and A. Castagno (eds.), *Boston University Papers on Africa: Transition in African Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1967).
78 On Cabral's thought, see my 'The Social and Political Thought of Amilcar Cabral', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 19, 1 (1981).
79 See here Cabral, *Unity and Struggle*, pp. 224–50.
80 For an explanation of the notion of 'revenge', see Jean-François Bayart, ch.6 below.
81 On the events of 1963–4 which led to the Cassacá Congress, see Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral*, pp. 77–83, and Basil Davidson, *Africa in Modern History* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), pp. 341–50.
82 For a challenging discussion on the changing meaning of political accountability in Africa, see John Lonsdale, ch. 7 below.
83 Cabral's ideas here are relevant to the argument about the development of agriculture found in Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture*, as they are relevant to today's debate on agriculture in Africa. See, for example, the World Bank's latest report, *Towards Sustained Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Joint Programme of Action* (1984).
84 On the relationship between civil society and the state, see Bayart, ch. 6 below.
85 See here Carlos Lopes, *Etnia, Estado e Relações de Poder na Guiné-Bissau* (Lisbon: Edições 70, 1982).
86 For a revealing account of the gulf in political understanding and ability between Amilcar Cabral and his half-brother, Luiz Cabral, the first president of Guinea-Bissau, see Luiz Cabral's memoirs, *Crónica da Libertação* (Lisbon: O Jornal, 1984).
87 For a rather unsatisfactory attack on Cabral's notions, see Jock McCulloch, *In the Twilight of the Revolution: The Political Theory of Amilcar Cabral* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983).
88 An impressive study of the relations between civil society and state in Africa is J.-F. Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: Presse de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, 1979).

6 Civil society in Africa

1 On the distinction between person and individual, see L. Dumont, *Homo hierarchicus. Le Système des castes et ses implications* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966). On Africa, see *La Notion de personne en Afrique noire* (Paris: CNRS, 1981) and

the debate between M. Augé and A. Sempleni in C. Piault *et al.*, *Prophétisme et thérapeutique* (Paris: Hermann, 1975).

2 See, among others, the works of Ngugi, Ela, and Eboussi Boulanga. See also H. Odera Oruka, *Punishment and Terrorism in Africa* (Kampala: East Africa Literature Bureau, 1976); P. J. Hountondji, *Libertés. Contribution à la révolution dahoméenne* (Cotonou: Renaissance, 1973); J. M. Kariuki, 'Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill', in K. Munuhe, *J. M. Kariuki in Parliament* (Nairobi: Lengo Press, 1976), vol. II, pp. 31–53.

3 G. Mathias and P. Salama, *L'Etat surdéveloppé. Des métropoles au Tiers Monde* (Paris: Maspero, 1983), p. 89. Subsequent quotes are drawn, respectively, from pp. 39, 97, 126.

4 R. Fossaert, *La Société. Les Etats*, vol. 5 (Paris: Seuil, 1981), pp. 146–7.

5 J.-L. Domenach, 'Pouvoir et société dans la Chine des années soixante-dix', *Modes populaires d'action politique* (Paris), 1 (1983), pp. 49–52. Domenach writes: 'On assiste en effet pendant toute cette période au jeu de deux processus concurrents et contradictoires: un processus de totalisation du social par le politique et un processus de détotalisation ... Par totalisation, j'entends non seulement le contrôle mais l'organisation et la mobilisation de tous les éléments de la vie politique, économique et sociale dans un cadre dessiné par le pouvoir ... Les plus puissants obstacles [à la totalisation] résident ... dans le double jeu populaire qui, depuis plus de trois décennies, recouvre l'apparente adhésion populaire d'une passivité, d'une mauvaise volonté et de désordres dont l'ampleur varie suivant la gravité du mécontentement. Surtout, ces obstacles sont en permanence renforcés par un deuxieme phénomène concomitant, beaucoup plus positif, actif même, bien qu'il soit très diffus: un processus de détotalisation, c'est à dire d'avancée de la société civile sur des domaines où le pouvoir croyait avoir son controle définitif.'

6 Fossaert, *La Société. Les Etats*, p. 184.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 146–7.

8 B. Badie and P. Birnbaum, *Sociologie de l'Etat* (Paris: Grasset, 1979).

9 See my book, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: FNSP, 1979) and 'Les Sociétés africaines face à l'Etat', *Pouvoirs*, 25 (1983), pp. 23–39.

10 C. Coulon, *Le Marabout et le prince* (Paris: Pedone, 1981), pp. 289–90.

11 G. Lavau, 'A propos de trois livres sur l'Etat', *Revue française de science politique*, 30, 2 (April 1980), pp. 396–412.

12 J. Dunn, 'Comparing West African States', in J. Dunn (ed.), *West African States: Failure and Promise* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978), p. 15.

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7 Political accountability in African history

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23 Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1938), preface.

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25 Robert H. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1981); Richard Jeffries, *Class, Power and Ideology in Ghana: The Railwaymen of Sekondi* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978).

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27 Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), for the general point; John Iliffe, *The Emergence of African Capitalism* (London: Macmillan, 1983), ch. 4, for its application to Africa.

28 John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), pp. 6–25; Keith Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982).

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51 For some general approaches to colonial government and the crisis of the 1930s see, Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, 'Mutation de l'impérialisme colonial français dans les années 30', *African Economic History*, 4 (1977), pp. 103–52; Cooper, 'Africa and the World Economy', pp. 35f, 41f; Bruce Berman, 'Structure and Process in the Bureaucratic States of Colonial Africa', *Development and Change*, 15 (1984), pp. 161-202. Colonial tax and labour policies did generate more refugees than is generally supposed: Bruce Fetter, *Colonial Rule and Regional Imbalance in Central Africa* (Boulder: Westview, 1983).

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53 Ronald Robinson, 'The Moral Disarmament of African Empire, 1919–1947', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 8 (1979), pp. 86–104.

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56 Patrice Lumumba, *Congo My Country* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1962), p. 177.

57 Jean-François Bayart, *L'Etat au Cameroun* (Paris: FNSP, 1979), perhaps the most interesting study of an independent African regime.

58 And it now comes from both ends of the political spectrum; the original inspiration for the 'left' critique of what were later known as 'overdeveloped' post-colonial states was Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London:

MacGibbon and Kee, 1965); a good indication of the 'right' critique of what one might call the 'over-political post-colonial economy' is in Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*.

59 *Ibid.*

60 Goody, *Technology, Tradition and the State*, ch. 5; Ralph A. Austen and Daniel Headrick, 'The Role of Technology in the African Past', *African Studies Review*, 26 (1983), pp. 163–83.

61 The most comprehensive statistical analysis is in International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank), *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 1981); I am also indebted to instruction from David Fieldhouse.

62 Sara Berry, 'Agrarian Crisis in Africa? A Review and an Interpretation', paper presented to the African Studies Association meeting, Boston, Mass., 1983.

8 The politics of representation and good government in post-colonial Africa

1 On practical reason see in particular Bernard Williams, *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973), pp. 187–206, esp. pp. 203 ('the line between discourse which . . . has to fit the world, and discourse which the world has to fit'), 156. For the contrasting conception of theoretical reason see Bernard Williams, *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978) and *Moral Luck* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), ch. 11; John Dunn, *Locke* (Oxford: OUP, 1984), ch. 3; and Joseph Raz (ed.), *Practical Reasoning* (Oxford: OUP, 1978), esp. introduction and chapter by Wiggins. For the implications of the distinction between theoretical and practical reason in the articulation of social understanding, see Geoffrey Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds* (forthcoming). For a relevant instance from African political history see John Dunn (ed.), *West African States: Failure and Promise* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978), Conclusion. David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: OUP, 1984) provide a helpful discussion of the difficulty of focusing an analytically relevant range of counterfactuals in relation to historical examples. See also Jon Elster, *Logic and Society: Contradictions and Possible Worlds* (Chichester: John Wiley, 1978).

2 For the proposal that practical reason should in effect replace theoretical reason in its entirety, see especially Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980) and *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

3 Compare John Lonsdale, 'Political Accountability in African History', ch. 7 above and Keith Hart, *The Political Economy of West African Agriculture* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982).

4 Compare on a more local scale Jean-François Bayart, 'Civil Society in Africa', ch. 6 above; John Dunn, 'From Democracy to Representation: An Interpretation of a Ghanaian Election', in Dunn, *Political Obligation in its Historical Context* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980), pp. 112–56; J. D. Y. Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians: The Incorporation of a Yoruba Kingdom, 1890s to 1970s* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983); Naomi Chazan, *An Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics: Managing Political Recession 1969–1982* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983). Governmental accountability to a majority grouping in a plural state is not necessarily an unambiguous asset to its polity: compare the responses of the government of Sri Lanka to Sinhalese communal pressures, particularly in the last ten years. (For the earlier background see John Dunn, '*Hoc Signo Victor Eris*: Representation, Allegiance

and Obligation in the Politics of Ghana and Sri Lanka', in Dunn, *Political Obligation*, pp. 157–205.)

5 'To ask and have, comand and be obey'd,' Christopher Marlowe, *Tamburlaine*, Act II, Scene 5, line 62 (Roma Gill (ed.), *The Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Oxford: OUP, 1971), p. 77).

6 See Richard Sklar, 'Democracy in Africa', ch. 1 above.

7 See John Dunn, *The Politics of Socialism* (Cambridge: CUP, 1984) and 'Political Obligations and Political Possibilities', in Dunn, *Political Obligation*, pp. 243–99.

8 Dunn, 'Political Obligations and Political Possibilities'.

9 John Dunn, *Western Political Theory in the Face of the Future* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979), ch. 1, and compare M. I. Finley, *Politics in the Ancient World* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).

10 See John Dunn, 'From Applied Theology to Social Analysis: The Break between John Locke and the Scottish Enlightenment', in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983), pp. 119–35; Derek Parfit, *Reasons and Persons* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), esp. Part 1.

11 Compare Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Robert H. Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) and *Essays on the Political Economy of Rural Africa* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983); Dunn, *West African States*; Douglas Rimmer, *The Economies of West Africa* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984).

12 There are no very explicit modern theorists of good government (as opposed to good organisation) – in contrast with the dense seventeenth- or eighteenth-century Germanic tradition of *polizeiwissenschaft*. A misleadingly abstract version of the criterion is furnished by modern utilitarianism: compare Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams (eds.), *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge: CUP, 1982) and Stuart Hampshire (ed.), *Public and Private Morality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1978), chs. 1 and 2. The most impressive elaborations of the standpoint are perhaps given by Hume and Hegel. See Duncan Forbes, *Hume's Philosophical Politics* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); Schlomo Avineri, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972).

13 Dunn, *Politics of Socialism*.

14 Rimmer, *Economies of West Africa*; Tony Killick, *Development Economics in Action: A Study of Economic Policies in Ghana* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1978); Andrzej Krassowski, *Development and the Debt Trap: Economic Planning and External Borrowing in Ghana* (London: Croom Helm, 1974); Elliot J. Berg, 'Structural Transformation versus Gradualism: Recent Economic Development in Ghana and the Ivory Coast', in Philip Foster and Aristide Zolberg (eds.), *Ghana and the Ivory Coast: Perspectives on Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 187–230.

15 Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès, *What is the Third Estate?*, trans. M. Blondel (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963); James Mill, *An Essay on Government* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955). On Sieyès see particularly Pasquale Pasquino, 'E. J. Sieyes e la Reppresentanza politica: Progetto per una ricerca', *Quaderni Piancentini*, 12 (1984) esp. pp. 75–81.

16 See Ralph Miliband, *Capitalist Democracy in Britain* (Oxford: OUP, 1982).

17 John Dunn, 'Social Theory, Social Understanding and Political Action', in Christopher Lloyd (ed.), *Social Theory and Political Practice* (Oxford: OUP, 1983), pp. 109–35.

18 Hart, *Political Economy*; Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*.

19 Rimmer, *Economies of West Africa*, pp. 176, 178.
20 See Cranford Pratt, *The Critical Phase in Tanzania* (Cambridge: CUP, 1976); Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary Leadership and People's War* (Cambridge: CUP, 1983).
21 The best overall assessment of the role of the state in modern African history is John Lonsdale, 'States and Social Processes in Africa: A Historiographical Survey', *African Studies Review*, 24, 2–3 (June–September 1981), pp. 139–225. For its role in a single country see John Iliffe's magisterial *A Modern History of Tanganyika* (Cambridge: CUP, 1979).
22 Ruth B. Collier, *Regimes in Tropical Africa: Changing Forms of Supremacy 1945–1975* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982). But see also the review by Dunn, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 16, 1 (1983), pp. 93–5.
23 For a local instance see Dunn, 'From Democracy to Representation'.
24 The best modern study of the concept of representation is Hanna F. Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). On modern representative politics in general see especially, Alessandro Pizzorno, 'Sulla razionalità della scelta democratica', *Stato e Mercato*, 7 (April 1983), pp. 1–46 and 'Interests and Parties in Pluralism', in Suzanne Berger (ed.), *Organizing Interests in Western Europe* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), pp. 247–84.
25 James Mill, *Essay on Government*, pp. 69–72, esp. p. 69: 'lessening of duration is the instrument by which, if by anything, the object is to be attained'. On careful examination very similar problems arise within Bentham's analysis of the problem of representation: see L. J. Hume, *Bentham and Bureaucracy* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981); Frederick Rosen, *Bentham and Representative Democracy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).
26 See William Thomas, 'James Mill's Politics: the *Essay on Government* and the Movement for Reform', *Historical Journal*, 12, 2 (June 1969), pp. 249–84, 14, 4 (December 1971), pp. 735–50, and *The Philosophic Radicals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).
27 See e.g. T. B. Macaulay, 'Mill's Essay on Government: Utilitarian Logic and Politics', reprinted in Jack Lively and John Rees (eds.), *Utilitarian Logic and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. 97–129.
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44 John Dunn and A. F. Robertson, *Dependence and Opportunity: Political Change in Ahafo* (Cambridge: CUP, 1973), chs. 2 and 8; Dunn, 'From Democracy to Representation', and 'The Eligible and the Elect: Arminian Thoughts on the Social Predestination of Ahafo Leaders', in W. H. Morris-Jones (ed.), *The Making of Politicians* (London: Athlone Press, 1978), pp. 49–65; Martin Staniland, *The Lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana* (Cambridge: CUP, 1975); Paul A. Ladouceur, *Chiefs and Politicians: The Politics of Regionalism in Northern Ghana* (London: Longman, 1979); Peel, *Ijeshas and Nigerians*.

45 Max Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), ch. 2: 'The Frailty of Authority'.

46 It is conceivable, though far from self-evident, that the localisation of governmental distribution produced by the recurrent fission of state units within the Federation of Nigeria does on balance enhance local representation.

47 Chazan, *Anatomy of Ghanaian Politics*; Dunn, 'From Democracy to Representation' and 'The Eligible and the Elect'.

48 Rimmer, *Economies of West Africa*; Killick, *Development Economics*; Hart, *Political Economy*; Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa*. Compare the somewhat more sanguine judgement of Young, *Ideology and Development*, focused on varieties of political project.

49 Military links with France have continued in many cases to be of the greatest importance for a quarter of a century since independence. (See for example the *Sunday Times*, 23 December 1984, p. 22.)

50 Michael A. Cohen, *Urban Policy and Political Conflict in Africa: A Study of the Ivory Coast* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); Bonnie Campbell, 'The Ivory Coast', in Dunn (ed.), *West African States*, pp. 66–116; and particularly Y. A. Fauré and J. F. Médard (eds.), *Etat et bourgeoisie en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris: Editions Karthala, 1982). On rural political economy in recent decades see Eddy Lee, 'Export-Led Rural Development: The Ivory Coast', *Development and Change*, 11, 4 (October 1980), pp. 607–42 and subsequent discussion by Boelman and Lee, *Development and Change*, 12, 4 (October 1981), pp. 619–33; and Robert M. Hecht, 'The Ivory Coast Economic "Miracle": What Benefits for Peasant Farmers?', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 21, 1 (March 1983), pp. 25–53; for an earlier phase, see Samir Amin, *Le Développement du capitalisme en Côte d'Ivoire* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967).

51 In an impressive range of studies of Kenya in recent decades Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1975) remains outstanding.

52 Compare the roles allotted to a planter bourgeoisie in the Ivory Coast case (Campbell, 'The Ivory Coast'; but also Hecht, 'What Benefits for Peasant Farmers?') with that allotted to clerks in Björn Beckman, *Organizing the Farmers: Cocoa Politics and National Development in Ghana* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1976), esp. ch. 8. The fullest recent discussion of the Ivory Coast case is now Fauré and Médard, *Etat et bourgeoisie*.

53 Such comparisons are difficult to conduct at all fairly. But for Africa as a whole see Young, *Ideology and Development*, and for West Africa in particular see the more incisive studies by Hart (*Political Economy*) and Rimmer (*Economies of West Africa*).

54 Contrast Hart, *Political Economy*; Bill Warren, *Imperialism: Pioneer of Capitalism* (London: Verso Books, 1980); Sheila Smith, 'The Ideas of Samir Amin: Theory or Tautology?', *Journal of Development Studies*, 17, 1 (October 1980), pp. 5–21; and John Sender and Sheila Smith, 'What's Right with the Berg Report and What's Left of its Critics' *Capital and Class*, 24 (Winter 1984), pp. 125–46, with Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*, trans. B. Pearce (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); *Le Développement inégal: Essai sur les formations sociales du capitalisme periphérique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1973).
55 Compare Dunn (ed.), *West African States*, conclusion; 'Understanding Revolutions', *Ethics*, 92, 2 (January 1982), pp. 299–315; Hawthorn, *Plausible Worlds*; Killick, *Development Economics*; and Rimmer, *Economies of West Africa* with, for example, Martin Carnoy, *The States and Political Theory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
56 John Dunn, 'Liberty as a Substantive Political Value', United Nations University, August 1984; and *Politics of Socialism.*
57 Compare Samir Amin, *Développement du capitalisme*; *Développement inégal*; *L'Afrique de l'ouest bloquée: l'économie politique de la colonisation 1880–1970* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1971).
58 For a particularly compelling picture see Killick, *Development Economics*, though this is certainly *not* a study that emphasises the ease with which changes from ill-considered to better-considered policies can in practice be implemented.
59 See, for example, the case of Guinea: R. W. Johnson, 'Guinea', in Dunn (ed.), *West African States*, pp. 36–65; Claude Rivière, *Guinea: The Mobilization of a People*, trans. V. Thompson and R. Adloff (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977); and that of Tanzania: Andrew Coulson, *Tanzania: A Political Economy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).
60 Dunn, *Politics of Socialism.*
61 Young, *Ideology and Development.*
62 See especially Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy 1925–1975* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982); Bruce Cumings, 'The Origin and Development of the Northeast Asian Political Economy: Industrial Sectors, Product Cycles, and Political Consequences', *International Organization*, 38, 1 (Winter 1984), pp. 1–40.
63 Contrast the experience of Tanzania with that of Guinea and of Ethiopia.
64 For an especially striking presentation see Judith N. Shklar, *Ordinary Vices* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984).
65 Cf. Robert E. Dowse, *Modernization in Ghana and the USSR: A Comparative Study* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969).
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67 They can, however, also usually be effectively deterred by government molestation or exaction. The main exception to this capacity for independent agency is in the planning and execution of large-scale irrigation projects.
68 Dunn, 'Liberty', and *Politics of Socialism.*
69 The same, of course, also holds true of the best. See Dunn (ed.), *West African States*, introduction and conclusion.

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