factories with their land, to be run by an autonomous authority comprising representatives of management, the workers, and the government; the nationalisation of the docks, insurance, transport; greater stress on cooperatives and more diversification of the economy. *Programme Gouvernmental du MMM* (Port-Louis 1973) Since then the Programme has been revised to take into account even more the "realities" of Mauritius.

90. *Le Monde diplomatique,* July 1977.

91. The two must likely candidates are Sir Satcam Bolell (SSB) Minister of Agriculture, a high caste Hindu of the majority "calcutta" group who, for the time being. is reputed to be acceptable to the PMSD and sugar interests. The other is Sir V. Ringadoo (SVR) Minister of Finance, a Hindu of the minority "Madras" group. SVR, for the time being, is reputed to bee too soft towards the MMM. The MLP' problems have been compounded by the dismissal of the two government ministers for alleged corruption, and the defection of two or three backbenchers who have formed a new party. One way out for SSR reasonably would be to make Mauritius a Republic with himself as President. There would be consensus among the parties for that. See *WeekEnd* 13 and 29.7.79, 12.8.79, 25.11.79.

92 There are rumours of developing links between a strong French military presence based on Reunion and the Americans on Diego in which Mauritius is involved. *L'Express* 20.1.1976

Understanding African Politics: The Political Economy Approach

J.R. Baronga *

What I intend to do in this paper[1] is to indicate how African politics is to be understood and explained. In spite of the numerous differences among African countries (which no doubt produce variations in the nature of local political interaction) such as territorial and population size, historical and contemporary experience, structure of social organization, level of social and economic development, resource endowment and the number and quality of political elites, there are nevertheless common patterns that characterize Afrizan politic that can be discerned, described and explained. I am interested in the salient features of this politics namely, the intense and often violent political competition, acute ethnic and elite conflicts, tendencies towards aggrandizement of power both at personal and institutional levels, the adoption by governments of different ideologies of development in the face of more or less similar problems of development and the dependent nature on foreign policies of many African countries.

To say that there are similar patterns that characterize African politics implies the existence of certain basic features common to the countries which condition and shape the political process. The task, therefore, is to identify the characteristic features of African societies which constitute an infrastructure of politics to influence the emergence of those peculiar patterns of African politics which we are interested in explaining. However, before we proceed to identify the foundations of politics in Africa, a brief review of the current attempts at explaining African politics is necessary in order to show the point of departure of the approach proposed in this paper.

Since 1960, the year of African independence, many Western scholars professing expertise in the various branches of the science of society have been attracted to Africa to undertake studies of the problems confronting the emergent nations. Right from the beginning the political scientists, among them, were confronted with a host of political phenomena, some of them interesting and fascinating, some disturbing, which could not properly be accounted for within the established theoretical models that were used in the study of the politics of the older states.

These scholars found out quite early that unlike the familiar patterns of politics in the West, the trend of politics in the new states was tending towards what the Western theoretical precepts considered to be undemocratic rule characterised by the emergence of one party systems, authoritarian civilian and military regimes and lack of effective political participation at the mass level. It was further discovered that political activity in the new states appeared to lack well organized and institutionalized procedures for political competition and that the relationship between groups of elites and among communities was one of conflict which quite often resulted in violent

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changes in governments and forced regimes in power to adopt various methods of political repression. In an attempt to comprehend the seemingly complex political problems confronting the new states, a set of new theoretical perspectives were developed which purported to offer heuristic guides in explaining African politics and by using these perspectives certain predictions were made about its possible developments and future trends. Two perspectives — the modernization and cultural pluralism models— became particularly popular among Western scholars involved in the study and analysis of African politics.

The modernization perspective was employed to analyse and explain a wide range of problems confronting the new states.[2] This perspective set out to provide an overall framework by which certain dominant features of African politics could be understood and explained. It became fashionable to see and explain the existing political problems in the emergent nations, such as the recurrent political instabilities, tendencies towards centralization of power, the intense ethnic and elite competition for resources and political power and the various forms of political repression, in terms of the rapid rate of modernization which the new states were experiencing. The central argument of the modernization perspective was that African societies were experiencing rapid and multi-dimensional changes. The rapidity and intensity of the changes taking place tended to weaken the traditional institutions. In some cases, modernization created an institutional vacuum by completely supplanting the outmoded conservative institutions without allowing the changing society enough time to adjust and create viable alternative institutions to accommodate the impetus and the forces of change. At the same time the values and normative fabrics of society were being quickly disorganized making social relations increasingly fluid. One's role in such uncertain and unstable relationships becomes difficult to define and to be recognized and accepted by others. Accordingly, in the new states modernity was being introduced and rapidly taking ground in situations where there were no supportive institutions and cultural values. Modern institutions, capable of constraining political behaviour and structuring political relations, were non-existent and in cases where they existed they had not taken root in the culture of the society. For political life this meant that in the new states there were no agreed set of rules and procedures capable of governing political interaction, resulting in the use of unconventional means to gain elective office and unconstitutional behaviour of people in power. The absence of acceptable rules and procedures in political competition puts instability of one form or another high up on the political agenda as rival groups, determined to unseat the incumbents from power, employ various methods including enlisting the assistance of persons in the armed forces of the country. In the face of this challenge the government resorts to the use of power to suppress opposition. Opposition parties are banned, their leaders are detained and imprisoned and the regime sets out to consolidate itself in power from which it can only be dismissed through a military coup. On the whole, the modernization perspective accredits the various forms of political turmoil facing African countries to the fragility of political institutions and the lack of tradition in political competition.

In addition to the problems occasioned by the rapid changes taking place in modernizing societies, the modernization perspective also takes into account as one of its analytical and explanatory factors the scarcity of the resources available to African countries and the importance of this factor in the political life of these countries.[3] In a situation of acute scarcity of resources, politics is not only organized around the competition for the control of these resources but also because of this the struggle for them is usually very intense. Whoever controls state power controls much else patronage in the distribution of jobs and award of government contracts, and decisions in the allocation of factories, hospitals, schools and other amenities. In situations of this kind, politicians compete for power with an eye on controlling the use of available resources. Losing to an opponent does not usually augur well for the professional politician because doing so might signal the beginning of the end of career. If at one stage he does not find himself in prison he would most certainly find himself losing popularity since he would not be in position to dispense patronage to his followers in order to maintain his political support.

For the successful politician the story is quite different. Being in control of the resources means a bright political future. He can manipulate the use of the resources of the country to the advantage of his political supporters. This means therefore that politicians representing certain ethnic and sectional interests engage themselves in cut-throat battles in order to control governmental institutions through which they can also control the management of the scarce resources. The manner in which the regime uses discriminatory devices in the allocation and utilization of these resources inevitably alienates some sections of society and intensifies ethnic and elite conflicts. In consequence, a situation is created which breeds tensions in inter-ethnic and inter-elite relationships. The existence of these tensions in the political system very often leads to political instability.

The modernization perspective finds the factors and forces responsible for the various problems with the modernizing societies themselves and leads one to the conclusion that because of the rapid rate of social and economic change being experienced by African countries, political instability and other problems contingent on the process of modernization are inevitable.[4]

The other popular theoretical framework — the cultural pluralism or ethnic conflict model — also attempts to explain African politics much in the same way.[5] Like the modernization perspective, it focuses analysis on the social structure and indentifies the social-cultural forces which influence the political process and determine the structure of political relations in society. The model bases its analytical gear on the existence of groups vying for influence, control and domination. Analysts who employ this model to the study of African politics find that almost without exception, African societies are made up of many ethnic groups of varying sizes and influence. These groups are seen as culturally distinct from each other on the basis of language, social organization, values, beliefs and other cultural characteristics. In addition, the various groups have different interests and aspirations and tend to use the resources available to them to assert their differences and power in relation to other groups. Before the advent of colonialism, the disparate ethnic groups existed and functioned as separate self-contained communities but when colonial powers forced them to co-exist under centralized political systems, the relation between them became one of competition for allocation of resources and other forms of colonial favours. On attainment of independence, the struggle and competition among the groups became very intense indeed. Larger groups attempted to ensure their dominance over others by controlling the key governmental institutions while the minority groups struggled for recognition and a fair deal in the distribution of the national resources. The ethnic-pluralism model emphasizes the over continuing aggressiveness, rivalry and competition among the various cultural groups in the polity.[6]

In terms of this model, political life in African countries is organized around the desire by the various ethnic groups to further and protect their own interests. And these interests are culturally defined and have to do with what groups possess as distinct communities and what they can get from others in a competitive situation. Accordingly, the political behaviour of the people in power is influenced by particularistic considerations. Leaders use state power to ensure the dominance of the groups to which they belong and those groups which are excluded from political power and the resources. This creates a tug-of-war political area and the intensity of conflicts based on particularistic claims ultimately leads to situations of instability.[7]

By the very nature of its assumptions and premises, the ethnic-pluralism model offers no viable framework for understanding, interpreting and explaining contemporary African politics. The model assumes that the various groups which constitute the polity exist as separate communities each with its own distinct cultural values, institutional patterns and political orientations. Nowhere in Black Africa does one find such well defined and self-contained cultural units. In its original formulation and application, the model attempted with remarkable success to grapple with the realities of a colonial society in which race or colour played an important part in structuring social relations and distributing wealth, power and prestige among the different cultural groups in society.[8] In contemporary Africa, the model might conceivably be applied profitably to the racially and culturally heterogeneous white dominated societies of southern Africa. But in a Black African country where patterns of action and political alignments on the basis of ethnic indentity are fluid depending on the situation and the issues involved, an attempt to hold the ethnic factor as a major variable in the analysis and explanation of African politics is problematic and indeed misleading. At the very best and depending on how it is handled, ethnicity may be used in conjunction with class analysis to explain why a regime adopts a particular policy that appears to favour a particular section of society.

It should be stated with emphasis that the existing Western-derived theoretical perspectives used by analysts of African politics, two of which have been reviewed here, do not provide useful frameworks for understanding the dynamics of African politics. As is the problem with all Western developmentalist approaches to African problems, the modernization and the ethnic-pluralism models suffer from being static, a-historical and in the main non-explainatory. They are static because in an attempt to explain why a particular phenomenon occurs in a particular society, scholars using these perspectives do not seek possible explanations beyond the confines of the immediate environment in which it occurs. The perspectives lead the analyst to look for explanations only within the boundaries of the social structure of the society concerned and even the incremental changes in society and the problems they create are usually overlooked. They are a-historical because they do not take into account the historical experience of a society as a major variable in explaining conemporary patterns on behaviour. The perspectives are primarily concerned with the present and to them the present has no past and therefore what matters is to look at the existing society and identify the forces that account for what is happening in it. They are non-explanatory because being static and a-historical, these perspectives are not able to help the analyst in identifying the essential variables that he must take into account to understand and explain the nature, the content and the dynamics of African politics. In other words, what the perspectives offer as explanatory factors are either false or are not essentially critical to the phenomenon to be explained.

As has already been indicated, in an attempt to explain why African politics takes the form it does, the modernization and ethnic-pluralism models cannot be of much help. For instance, it is of no use when attempting to account for the problem of political instability in African countries to say that the problem exists because of the fragility of political institutions and the lack of institutionalized procedures for political competition or because of the acute shortage of resources which makes the scramble for them by individuals and groups to be very intense. For this begs answers to follow-up questions which cannot easily be formulated if the analyst is using any of these perspectives: Why are the institutions fragile? Why is there a lack of institutionalized procedures? Why are the resources in African countries so scarce than they are in other parts of the world? The search for meaningful answers to these questions must necessarily go beyond the mere fact of saying that it is because African countries are undergoing rapid socioeconomic changes occasioned by the process of modernizaton.

To answer these questions and hence to really understand the nature and dynamics of contemporary African politics, one has to go back into history to see how African societies have developed over time since the advent of imp erialism and colonialism and understand the condition of their present material base. This must be accompanied by an appraisal of their contemporary experience, and in particular an attempt must be made to understand how those countries are struggling to exist in an international system dominated by the Western capitalist powers. Institutional fragility, violent political competition and the existence of unstable political relationships among groups and individuals cannot be said to be inherent in the nature of African societies. Nor is cultural heterogeneity a peculiar feature of these societies which functions to make African politics different from that of the United States of America, Canada or even Great Britain which are equally heterogeneous societies. There are, certainly, reasons why African politics differs from that of the developed countries. Those reasons are related to the differences in the historical and contemporary experiences of African countries as compared to others. And it would seem to me that the main difference is this, that whereas politics in the developed countries is founded on sound economic bases and material abundance (made possible, to a great extent, by overseas exploitation), politics in African countries is based on poverty created by historical and contemporary exploitation of the continent by the developed capitalist countries. A full explanation of African politics cannot be attained without regard to the operation of the international capitalist system and its impact on African economies, accompanied by a thorough analysis of the functions which African countries fulfill within this system.

FOUNDATIONS OF AFRICAN POLITICS

In a very real sense, the nature of political life in a particular society, the types of institutions that are created and sustained and the peculiar patterns of political processes that emerge are a function of the interplay among three main factors, namely, the condition of the material base of society, the historical experience of that society and the actors' perception, interpretation and response to environmental stimuli. The role of culture, that is to say, the value of the people, their beliefs and the dominant systems of ideas in shaping the political process and in dictating prticular forms of political organization, is by no means being minimized. But the values, beliefs

and ideas have their basis in and reflect very fundamentally on the nature of the economic base (or the dominant mode of production, to be precise) and the relations it creates among the people as well as in the historical experiences of the society. It is primarily the material environment which determines the formation of cleavages in terms of social groups and classes with competing interests and thereby defining the character and structure of political interaction in a competitive — bargaining situation. Moreover, it is the material resources actually or potentially available to individuals and groups in the polity that determines their relative importance, influence and power.

The historical experience of a society, on the other hand, relates to the cummulative developments and changes that have taken place over time and an awareness on the part of citizens, especially among the principal actors, of the factors responsible for these developments and changes. The historical experience of a society is important in influencing political behaviour in so far as it provides a perspective in which a problem can be perceived and defined.

It is the experiences of the past that helps an individual, particularly one faced with a problem situation, to understand and intepret the present and to be able to predict with reasonably highy degree of certainty the possible outcomes of his actions. History gives meaning to the present problems, it generates new ideas, creates normas and lays down traditions which sanction and constrain behaviour. The historical experience presents the decision maker with a set of experimented courses of action from which he can choose when approaching a particular problem. In the final analysis,however,it is the actor's perception of the total environment, that influences his behaviour. The forces generated by the material environment forms the axis of political activity, history supplies information about the origins of the present problems, and individuals produce actions the totality of which structure themselves in a political process borne out of the peculiarities of a particular interactional situation.

If, therefore, we have to understand the dyanamics of contemporary African politics and if we are to be able to explain it correctly, we must first of all identify the foundations of this politics. The trend which we observe as characterizing African politics have their basis, no doubt, in certain common problems confronting African countries and the forces which these problems generate. The problems and the forces they generate combine to produce an environment which induces the emergence of patterns and processes of politics peculiar to these countries. We identify these problems as relating to poverty, dependence and the colonial experience. How these problems manifest themselves in the political life of any one country depends mainly on how the actors, particularly the political elites, perceive and respond to them and the kind of institutions created in response to the problems. Thus although the infrastructure of politics may be the same in all countries, the manner in which it affects the political process and the responses to the problem which this infrastructure creates, may not be the same in all countries depending on the perceptions and the behaviour of the actors involved. But the common infrastructural problems do influence the emergence of a politics of a special character as we now proceed to illustrate.[9]

A common characteristic of African countries is that they are materially poor,[11]

their economies are highly dependent on a world economic system dominated by developed capitalist countries and, being both a cause and a symptom of poverty dependence, their societies are grossly underdeveloped. These factors have created economic base in African societies which generate political problems of a kind ne experienced in the relatively more developed countries. African countries are poor underdeveloped not because they lack the resources necessary for development. the contrary, they have abundant human and material resources, but these resou rather than being utilized for the development of African societies, they h historically been exploited to foster the development of other countries and conti right up to the present day to be used to contribute to the development of the alre developed countries of the world.

The historical and contemporary origins of this dilemma have been documented in several studies and do not therefore require recapitulation.[10] should rather indicate here how the condition of poverty, dependence underdevelopment affects Affrican politics and in doing so underline at the same the fact that, contrary to what Western observers of African politics believe to be case, many of the political problems existing in African countries today h predominantly an **external** origin.

Our persistent position is that the dominant characteristics of African polit such as the intense ethnic and elite conflicts, the recurrent tendencies of instabil'ty, trends towards centralization of power, the excessive use of power for politi repression and the submissive character of the foreign policy of many governme are explicable, to a great extent, in terms of the material poverty of African countr and the dependent nature of these countries on the operations and manipulations the international capitalist system.

The politics of poverty is such that it fosters the formation of groups and class with conflicting materialistic conceptions and interests and tends to divide society ir hostile camps of people which are quite often armed with strong (ideologic convictions of how society should best be organized for the purpose of overcoming at least weakening the tenacity of the condition of poverty. These conflicts a interests may manifest randomly at the level of the individual or may structu themselves through organized institutions such as political parties, workers tra unions and employers associations, or informally through facades of ethnic a religious sentiments. In the political arena and at each level of political activity, the are individuals, usually members of the intellectual and political elite, whose belie ideas, actions and behaviour represent the economic interests of a particular class one group or the other.

In most African countries, the various conflicts that usually develop in situatio of instability are of elite or ethnic kind. But these conflicts are not merely t manifestations of elite, ethnic or cultural differences. Rather, they are a reflection the material interests of the various groups in society which, in the context of scar resources, manifest themselves in sharp and intense political competition. It interesting to note, in support of this assertion, that ethnic prejudices and antagonism are most prevalent and may assume a violent character in situations whe employment or business is involved. It is in circumstances involving employment i the civil service, in industry, in the universities and in other places, that one ma become suddenly consious of his ethnic tags and his difference from his competitor depending on how his employment needs and interests are satisfied or denied.[11]

situations where economic interests coincide, where they are not in conflict or where they are not at stake as normally is the case among the poorer sections of society, two individuals of different ethnic origin are able to live together in remarkable harmony and brotherhood. In fact such people do often share common attitudes to life which derive from their similar material circumstances.[12]

In order therefore to understand why there are ethnic conflicts and antagonisms in most African countries and why these conflicts develop sometimes in situations of violence and instability,[13] one has to uderstand the basis these conflicts which is essentially material. Employing the ethnic-pluralism model to explain such conflicts does not really reveal the true character of the factors behind inter-ethnic conflicts. And in the context of the present economic situation in Africa countries, ethnicity is an important political force simply because the resources are far less inadequate to satisfy the material needs of individuals and groups who compete for them and have therefore in many cases to be selectively allocated by those in authority.

In the same way elite competition and the conflicts and disagreements which arise there from, cannot be fully understood without reference to the material base. It is widely recognized, but often without proper explanation, that in Africa instabilities of one form or another are elite phenomena. We should restate the fact here that elite behaviour in (African) politics is a reflection of competing economic interests in society. There appears to be in any one African country two categories of political elites, one ideologically inclined, the other limited in outlook by parochial preoccupations. There is, on the one hand, a group of elites who act as the champions and spokesmen of the interests of economically stratified and well defined groups as is the case with those elites who represent the interests of either the underprivileged classes of peasants and workers or of those of the more economically fortunate but numerically smaller sections of society. On the other, there is a set of elites whose behaviour is influenced by the economic interests of parochial entities such as ethnic groups and geographical localities.[14] In order to satisfy these interests, political elites compete for the control of state power and when they gain this control they formulate and slant governmental economic policies in favour of the economic interests which they represent.[15]

The fact that political elites by definition represent certain economic interests in society, however hidden and inarticulated these interests may be, and seek power in order to control the use of the scarce resources to cater for these interests, has certain reactions and influences on the nature of political trends in Africa. In the first place, political competition tends to be intense, unstructured and sometimes violent. In a desperate attempt to control state power and all that that this implies, politicians may violate established procedures for competition and resort to the use of various tactics which promise to ensure their success over opponents. We should refuse to accept the suggestion made by the the modernization theorists that because politicians do not always follow the rules and procedures of political competition known to Western political practice, this necessarily means that in Africa such rules and procedures are non-existent or are not recognized by society. African countries have constitutions and electroal laws which stipulate in a clear manner the rules of the game. But some politicians may not be inclined to follow them in every detail, because what is usually at stake — the power to control the use of scarce resources — means a great deal to either of the competing parties and which must therefore be acquired or retained by any means which are not particularly inconsonant with the limits of the general standards of morality.

Political competition and manoeuvres do not usually end with the determina of the election results. The party in power is continuously faced with challenges the elites outside the government. The party which loses a particular election accept defeat but this will seldom stop its leaders from organizing, planning and ta certain actions intended to enable the opposition elites to wrest power from incumbent party in the short or long run. This creates a situation of ever contin tensions among the political elites. Two tendencies have arisen out of this situati African politics in recent years.

First, primarily as a response to the destabilizing activities of opposition gr governments of almost all African countries have at one time or another ad measures that have strengthened the power of the state. And this has been achiev two ways. There has been, on the one hand, measures that have been aim weakening the opposition by abolishing the semi-autonomous centres of dominated or used by opposition groups to challenge the government at the ce on the other hand, steps have been taken by governments to silence the oppo legally by adopting various kinds of repressive laws. The experiences of Ghana, K and Uganda, among others, illustrate fully this trend. These countries started off independence constitutions which dispersed power among the regions and provided also a framework for the existence and operation of multi-party politics a few years after independence, each of these countries had either amende constitution or abrogated the independence constitution and replaced it w republican constitution, mainly for the purpose of abolishing the power of the re and consolidating it at the centre. At the same time dentention laws have been ad the statute books of many countries to enable the governments to deal firmly individual opposition 'trouble-makers'. Under these laws, government empowered to detain in prison or in such other 'safe' places, individuals conside be a risk to the security of the state, sometimes for indefinite periods of tin sampling of a few coutries will reveal the extent to which governments have use legal instrument as a means of containing elite conflicts.

The second tendency has been the general trend towards centralization of p under one party systems and under one strong leader. With the possible except Tanzania and the countries which emerged into independence with a single mobi party, all countries which have adopted single party systems have done do main result of elite conflicts as well as disagreements among them over national p National policy over which disagreements have arisen among the political elites invariably entailed the question of development and the related ethica ideological issues of which sections of society should benefit most from the resources available to the nation. Consequently, in countries where one party sy exist, a set of leaders sharing more or less similar ideological conviction commitments have sought to consolidate and perpetuate themselves in pov develop and utilize the national resources in a manner consistent with the econ needs and interests of the classes or sections of society which they represent

The problem of poverty contributes in another important way to the explan of the nature and dynamics of African politics. Being dependent, African cou have from time to time fallen victims to the manipulation of the international cap system. The growth or stagnation of their economies are determined primarily fluctuations in the needs and interests of the dominant nations. In cases whe primary exports have continued to attract high prices in the world market, depe

the needs which the developed countries have for these exports, the domestic
nomies of African countries have tended to prosper, albeit superficially, making it
sible for these countries to enjoy periods of relative stability. But where prices of
nmodities have fallen on the world market due to a lack of effective demand from
dominant consumers, the domestic economies have been severely affected, putting
governments in serious troubles. As a result of insufficient or diminishing foreign
hange, the volume of imports decreases, investments in the productive sectors are
ted, inflation sets in, unemployment rates rise and the producers of the primary
ort commodities become poorer and restless. All these externally generated
oblems reacts on the government by weakening its capacity to cater for the needs of
people and consequently eroding its legitimacy from the point of view of its
jects. As the experiences of Zambia and Zaire in the recent past can very well
strate, the problems that arise in the domestic economy of a dependent country as a
ult of a fall in world prices of the principle export tend to form and snowball into
uations of domestic political instability.

On another plane, the dependency of African countries on metropolitan powers
ve tended to plot the patterns of their foreign policy orientation. To a very
nificant degree, the foreign policy policies and alignments of the poor countries in
international system dominated by the economically advanced powers is
termined by their needs for development and the perception of the leaders in power
how best they can manipulate these powers for assistance in the development of
eir countries. Since the issue is largely that of development, some countries like
nya and most of the Francophone states have chosen to adopt and maintain a
reign policy posture which keeps them in close political, economic and cultural
ntacts with the former colonial powers and their allies. By doing so, they hope to
sure continued enjoyment of the paternalism of Western capitalist countries in the
rm of investments, financial and technical aid and preferential trade agreements.
hers have insisted on a foreign policy of non-alignment ostensibly to safeguard their
dependence, but in practical terms of politics, in order to be able to have friends on
ther side of the competing power blocks who can offer assistance in times of need.
ther of these brands of foreign policy, however, makes African countries less assert-
e and a little timid in international political controversies. For the non-aligned
untries, a slight slanting of policy that appears to favour a country in the Eastern
lock immediately invokes hostility and intrigues of the capitalist powers, sometimes
ith disasterous consequences for the domestic economy as the experiences of
anzania can very well illustrate.[18]

For many of the problems we have discussed here, one finds colonialism to be
ther a major cause or an aggravating factor. For instance, ethnic pluralism is a social
ct in the life histories of African societies. As a political factor, however, ethnic
nflicts have their origins in the antagonistic relations of production and exchange
troduced in African societies first by the mercantilist system, which were then
nsolidated by the introduction of the capitalist mode of production and were finally
nsummated by the long reign of colonial rule. Moreover, colonialism intensified
hnic particularism and set ethnic groups against each other in many ways.[19]
cially, the colonial system of education fostered attitudes of inferiority and
periority among communities by embarking on programmes of unbalanced
ducation. Thus we find that virtually in all African countries there are ethnic groups
hich claim superiority over their neighbours on the basis of statistics which spell out

a preponderance of educated elites. The pre-emption of jobs in the civil service and
other sectors of employment by members of one ethnic group is a clear testimony of
the educational superiority of a particular group and a basis of conflict in inter-ethnic
relations. Added to this, colonial administrations are notorious for having encouraged
uneven development of the colonial territories as part of their policy of divide and rule.
Some regions or districts, usually coinciding with ethnic boundaries were favoured by
colonial development plans with the result that some ethnic groups enjoyed the highest
income, and had within their territorial boundaries, the best roads, the best health
facilities, the best schools and the best of other social amenities. The differences in the
standards of living of the various groups created a platform for conflict and
competition, the legacies of which still pose considerable problems for the politics of
the independent nations. The colonial administrative structure and subsequent
political arrangements for electoral politics had the greatest impact on the intensity of
ethnic localism. Local administrative units were established along ethnic lines and
groups tended to be administered as if they were self-contained political entities. In
most cases electoral constituencies were drawn to coincide with ethnic territorial
boundaries. Accordingly, ethnic groups became the power base of politicians, in order
to get elected to office politicians were invariably compelled to play on ethnic
sentiments. This situation made it difficult for a national leader acceptable to all
communities to emerge in post-independence politics. A leader was first and foremost
seen as a representative of a particular group and his leadership position at the
national level was cited as an instance of domination by an ethnic group to which he
belonged. All these problems created by colonialism were to impose a certain
character and particular style on post-independence politics such as can be seen today.

Another aspect of colonial legacy that has a bearing on the patterns of
contemporary African politics is the nature of inherited institutions through which
state power is exercised. As is well known, the institutions built by colonial
administrations were basically authoritarian and coercive in character. In building
these institutions the colonial power was guided by the need to provide an institutional
framework through which to achieve maximum control and exploitation of the
colonial peoples. Although at independence the purpose and functions of these
institutions became redundant many of them were retained without modification and
used by the independence government to govern and administer a people whose
needs and aspirations had changed. This necessarily bestowed authoritarian chara-
cteristics on nationalist governments. And it is noteworthy to see that the behaviour of
many African leaders today is a replication of colonial tendencies. Political repression
in the form of detention, banning and deportation of opponents of the regime, was a
tactic employed by colonial powers to silence the rise of nationalism or to slow down
its tempo. The same weapon is being used by African governments today as means of
silencing opposition and containing conflicts.[20] And since colonial rule was
essentially a one party state in outlook, hardly tolerating opposition and seeking to
perpetuate itself in power, the same characteristics are vividly replicated today in
tendencies towards centralization and aggrandizement of power under single party
systems as well as in the kind of instruments adopted by government for political
repression.

Conclusion

It is in contexts such as these that we can see clearly the impact of the colonial past
on contemporary politics as well as on the behaviour of leaders. African politics, like

politics elsewhere, is influenced by environmental forces in which it exists and functions. But what gives this politics the characteristics it has assumed since independence is the objective condition of the material base of the countries on which it is founded. As we have noted, this base is characterized by a severe shortage of material resources, being a result of a long history of imperialist exploitation and contemporary manipulations of the dependent nations by the international capitalist system. Added to this is a colonial history which, apart from creating forces of conflicts within the societies of African countries and establishing a tradition of political behaviour inconsistent with democratic practice, did bequeath to the young nations institutions that were incapable of stabilizing the political process. It is through a thorough analysis of these factors that we can be in position to understand and explain the nature and dynamics of contemporary African politics. Accordingly, therefore, in the study of African problems, the political economy approach which employs class analysis as its major theoretical guide, is to be preferred to the perspectives formulated by the so-called Africanists who invariably tend to view African politics through concepts developed in the tradition of Western bourgeois scholarship

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FOOTNOTES

1 The author benefit ed from comments made on an earlier draft of this paper by colleagues in the Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria, among whom Comrade Wang Metuge and Dr. S. Egito Oyovbaire provided written critiques.

2 The modernization perspective is used by both sociologists, economists and political scientists. Leading proponents of this perspective among political scientists include: David E. Apter, *The Politics of Modernization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) Rupert Enerson, *From Empire to Nation,* (Cambridge, Howard University Press, 1960), Dankwat A. Rustow, *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1967), and Samuel P. Huntington. *Political Order in Changing Societies,* (New havenand London: Yale University, Press, 1968)

3 This view is scattered in the various studies of the problems of modernisation in Africa and elsewhere. For a representative study see the work on India by Myren Weiner, *The Politics of Scarcity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962) and Bert F. Hoselitz and Myron Weiner, "Economic Development and Political Stability in India", *Dissent,* 8 (Spring, 1961). For a general theoretical statement on the relationship between economic modernization and political stability see, Mancur Olson, Jr., "Rapid Growth as a Destabilizing Force", *Journal of Economic History,* 23 (December, 1963).

4 See for instance, James O'Connell, "The Inevitablility of Instability", *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5 (September, 1967).

5 A theoretical discussion of this model in the context of African Studies is in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith, (eds), *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of Califonia Press, 1969), Part I. Studies of African Problems that have used this framework include: Robert Melson and Howard Wolpe, (eds) *Nigeria: Mondernization and the Politics of Communalism* (Michigan State University Press, 1971). K.W.J. Post and M. Vickers, *Structure and Conflict in Nigeria, 1960-1965,* (London: Heinemann, 1973), Holger Bernt Hansen, *Ethnicity and Military Rule in Uganda* (Uppasala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Research Report No. 43, 1977) and all paper in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith (eds), op.cit.
Other Studies are scattlaged in various Journals among which may be mentioned: H.D. Seibel, "Sone Aspects of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Nigeria" *Nigerian Journal of Economic and Social Studies,* 9, 2 (July 1967); A.R. Zolberg, "The Structure of Political Conflict in the New States of Tropical Africa", *American Political Science Review* 63 (1968): Pierre L. Van den Berghe, "Ethnicity: The African Experience", *International Social Science Journal,* 23

4 (1971) and R. Lemarchand," Political Clientelism and Ethnicity in Tropical Africa," American Political Science Review, 66, (1972).

6 The notions of "Communalism', 'aggressive ethnicity', 'political assertiveness of (ethni groups', and 'competitive modernization' are inherent in many studies of Nigeria politi which base analysis on ethnic categories. See, for instance, Robert Melson and Howar Wolpe (eds), op.cit., especially the first theoretical chapter by Melson and Wolpe, ar K.W.J. Post and M. Vickers, op.cit. For a critique of these studies, see the reviews of th above two books by S. Egite Oyovbaire in *Journal of Modern African Studies* Vol.II, No (December 1973 pp. 655—658 and Vol. 12 No.2 June 1974) pp. 336—338 respectively.

7 See, for instance, D.G. Morrison and H.M. Stevensen, "Cultural Pluralism, Modernizatic and Conflict: An Empirical Analysis of Sources of Political Instability in African Nation The Canadian Journal of Political Science 5 (March 1972).

8 The Cultural or ethnic pluralism model owes its inspiration to J.S. Furnivall's study colonial India and Burma. See his, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (London: Cambridg University Press, 1948).

9 It should be mentioned that no attempt has been made in this paper to undertake a detaile discussion of the problems of poverty, dependence and the colonial experience identifie here as crucial factors which determine and influence the patterns of contemporal African politics. The illustrations that follow are merely intended to show the linkage between these factors and the prominent features of African politics and to draw attention the need for concerted programmes of research in these directions.

10 *See* among much else,Leonard Woolf, *Empire and Commerce in Africa* (London. n.d. Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa:* Tanzania PublishinggHouse, Da es Salaam 1972); Samir Amin, "Underdevelopment in Black Africa: Origins an Contemporary Forms", *Journal of Modern African Studies 10.* 4 (1972); E.A. Bret *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa,* (London: Heineman, 1972); Colin Ley *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism,* (Berkele University of California Press, 1974),Immanuel Wallerstein, "The Three Stages of Africa Involvement in the World Economy", in Peter C.W. Gutkind and Immanuel Wallersteir *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (London and Beverley Hills: Sag Publications, 1976) and Kwame Nkurumah, *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage Imperialism* (London, Ibadan, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1965). For general works on the roo of poverty and underdevelopment in the Third World see, among others: Paul A. Baran, *Th Political Economy of Growth* (New York: Monthly Review Press 1957) and Tamas Szente *The Political Economy of Underdevelopment* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiado, 1971).

11 Many studies of the elites in Africa, have tended to emphasize the cultural and linguist differences as the bases of elite conflicts. One sociological study which rejects the earli theories and identifies the economic basis of elite conflicts is that conducted at the Universi of Ibadan. See, Pierre L.Van den Berghe, (with the assistance of others), *Power ar Privilege at an African University* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) especial chapters 8 and 9.

12 The values, attitudes and life-styles found to be shared by members of a particular class i more developed class societies testifies to this political economic tendency.

13 This was the case in Nigeria during the greater part of civilian politics from 1960 to 196 when preoccupation with ethnic claims among the top political elites tended to create force of instability. The more violent episodes among ethnic groups related to conflictin economic interests occured among the Hausa and the Ibo in Northern Nigeria in 1966 an in Burundi among the Hutu and Tutsi in 1972.

14 In the politics of the first Republic, most of the political elites in Nigeria fitted under th latter category. It should be noted that economic interests of leaders may not always b explicitly stated in their pronouncements or policies. These interests may sometimes b camouflaged in policies or sentiments that appear national in outlook and appeal.

15 This is more vividly seen in countries where politics is organized around identifiabl ideological lines as in Kenya and Tanzania, for example.

16 The alternative in some larger and more complex countries like Nigeria has been to diffuse the power of rival subnational units by dispersing it among smaller state unit which tend to compete among themselves rather than the centre.

This is true in a capitalist oriented society, like Kenya, as it is in a society dominated by socialist values, like Tanzania. Even in countries under dictatorships, such as Zaire and Malawi, there are classes of people which benefit materially from the regime for whose interests the regime attempts to consolidate and perpetuate itself in power. It should be noted further that in economies dominated by metropolitan capital, among the classes and interests served by the regime include the international capitalist classes and the whole of interest of metropolitan powers It is in this sense that we speak of regime as constituted by national elites who are members of a comprador class serving the interests of foreign capital in the domestic economy. And it is this class which operates as a purveyor of imperialist exploitation and unwittingly acts as an important agent of the underdevelopment of its own country whose interests it purports to defend.

In 1965 when the United Republic of Tanzania decided to recognize the Peoples Democratic Republic of East Germany, the government of the Federal Republic of West Germany reacted angrily by withholding its aid offer to Tanzania which had been earmarked for certain projects in the country's Second Five Year Development Plan fo 1964—69. The withdrawal of this aid meant that the National Plan could not be implemented fully. See. Julius K. Nyerere, "The Costs of Non-Alignment" *Africa Report* October, 1966. From this experience, Tanzania was forced to shift her foreign policy of non-alignment a little in favour of the socialist countries, particularly China. And it is from countries such as China that Tanzania gets the bulk of its foreign aid such as was used in building the Tanzam Railway.

These are discussed in greater detail by Professor Claude Ake. See his "Explanatory Notes on the Political Economy of Africa." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 14 (1976) pp.1-23.

When President A. Milton Obote of Uganda was faced with potential situation of instability in 1966 arising out of protracted struggle for power among elites within his own government, he had to look back to the colonial history to find ways and means of containing the situation. Accordingly, his Attorney-General advised him to use the provisions of a Deportation Law enacted by the colonial government some two decades before the independence of the country. However, legal technicalities in the application of the law to the situation at the hands of Obote, made it possible for the courts to overrule the government and to free the deportees. The government had to use different manoeuvres to keep the trouble-makers in custody. In order to avoid a similar situation in future whereby courts could rule the actions of government as unlawful, parliament hurriedly passed a Detention Law which limited the power of the courts in similar cases.

Continuity and Change in Nigeria's Political Evolution: The 1979 Elections

*S.W. Tyoden**

Introduction

It is generally agreed among analysts and commentators on Nigeria's pre-1966 politics that, foremost among the factors that led to the fall of the first Republic was the structure and mode of operation of the Nigerian political parties. The three major parties — the Action Group (AG), the National Convention of Nigerian Citizens (N.C.N.C.) and the Northern People Congres (N.P.C.) were not only based in the three regions — West East and North respectively (before the creation of the Mid-West region), but depended on the three major ethnic groups - the Yoruba, Ibo and the Hausa/Fulani for their core of support. The only way trans-regional support was secured was through a network of alliances with opposition parties in other regions.

The mode of operation of the parties was characterised by the harassment and intimidation of political opponents; campaigns were carried out in a way and with a language that served to bring to the fore and emphasise primordial differences, while elections were marked by rigging, persecution and attempted suppression of rival politial party functionaries within one's region. It is no wonder then that election time was synonymous with one of the social disorder and anarchy, when riots and violence became the order of the day. Given this state of affairs, the break-down of the system was only a matter of time.[1]

With this background knowledge and the claim to be a "corrective regime", the military, following its usurpation of power, embarked on a process of conscious structural remodelling, institutional reconstruction and social engineering of the Nigerian political system, in a bid to evolve, if not a new political party system, at least a better one than had existed hitherto — A system that would be devoid of the fissiparous elements of its predecessor, conducive to national stability and integration, and one that would reduce to the minimum electoral malpractices.

The division of the country into twelve and later nineteen states was seen as having struck a blow at the base of regionalism, ethnicity and thus political instability for instead of the four regions which served as focal points of ethnic and political loyalty and thus generators of interethnic and inter-regional conflicts, there were now nineteen states, the creation of which was not based on ethnic, sectional or other such considerations. According to Gown the new state structure "had in fact produced a basis for political instability in that the structural imbalance of the First Republic has been decisively corrected."[2]

Since the ethnic groups were distributed into various states and because, as a result, a party could not hope to win a nation-wide election based on the support of one state alone, the feeling was that sectionalism or even ethnicity would not be dominant features of post-military Nigerian politics. If the possibility of states, consisting of the same ethnic groups or belonging to the same geographical area, "ganging up" to form a political party had occured to Gowon, the occasion for putting forward a formula to solve such a dilemma never occured. The solution would have

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