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The Niger Delta Crisis: A Focus on Post-Amnesty Militancy and National Security

Ojieh Chukwuemeka Ojione*

Abstract

The government-sponsored Amnesty Programme for militants disrupting oil production in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has resulted in relative peace in the area. Consequently, Nigeria's oil production which dropped from 2.6 million barrels a day to about 1 million at the peak of the Niger Delta crisis between 2006 and 2009 has now risen to 2.1 million barrels daily. But recent events have raised doubts as to whether Amnesty Programme can tame the monster of militancy in the Niger Delta. This is because post-amnesty militancy has assumed even more frightening dimensions. The twist in the current wave of militancy, which now extends the battle outside the creeks, going upland and sometimes to the seats of government, portends a larger threat to the nation's security. This article submits that the olive branch, which the Amnesty Programme presents, would not sufficiently assuage the restive minds in the region. This is because anything short of owner-control or at least owner-participation in the management of the resources of the Niger Delta region would remain mere palliatives.

Key Words: environmental issues, resource management, amnesty, militancy, national security.

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Résumé

Le Programme d'amnistie parrainé par le gouvernement pour les militants qui perturbent la production de pétrole dans la région nigériane du Delta du Niger s'est traduit par une paix relative dans la zone. En conséquence, la production de pétrole du Nigeria, qui avait chuté de 2,6 millions de barils par jour à environ 1 million au plus fort de la crise du Delta du Niger, entre 2006 et 2009, est remontée à 2,1 millions de barils par jour. Mais de récents événements ont fait naître des doutes quant à la capacité du Programme d'amnistie de dompter le monstre du militantisme dans le Delta du Niger. Cela, parce que le militantisme qui a suivi l'amnistie a pris des dimensions encore plus effrayantes. Le changement dans la vague de militantisme actuelle, qui porte maintenant la bataille hors des criques, jusqu'aux hautes terres et parfois aux sièges du gouvernement, laisse présager d'une plus grande menace à la sécurité de la nation. Le présent article soutient que la branche d'olivier que présente le Programme d'amnistie ne va pas suffisamment calmer les esprits agités dans la région. En effet, toutes mesures autres que le contrôle par les propriétaires ou, tout au moins, la participation des propriétaires dans la gestion des ressources de la région du Delta du Niger resteraient de simples palliatifs.

Introduction

It is a little over a decade since Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999. Of Nigeria's thirty-nine years of independence up to 1999, the military ruled for twenty-nine. The consequence has been that even in the current democratic dispensation (that is, since 1999), vestiges of military authoritarianism are yet apparent. The obvious gross breaches of democratic ethos since 1999 have resulted in Nigeria's current democratic experiment being disparaged and often described as a militarised democracy or, in the words of Al-Bashir (2008:17), as 'democracy which knows no rules'. The new phase of the Niger Delta agitation is giving militant expression 'to the fundamentally political question that [over] fifty years of uncontrolled oil exploitation, massive corruption, and cynical exploitation of the local communities have raised' (Okonta 2006:3). In separate negotiations with government, the rights groups or 'militants', as they have come to be known, have argued that the roots of their grouse 'go beyond mere provision of electricity and water and focus on the political marginalisation of the Ijaw' who have been excluded 'from meaningful political participation in the Nigerian project' (Okonta 2006:4).

Recently, under President Yar'Adua, the agitations of the Niger Delta people assumed frightening dimensions with armed combats in the Niger Delta creeks between the militants and the Joint Task Force on the Niger Delta (JTF) between 13 May 2009 and 4 October 2009 (the deadline for embracing the Federal Government Amnesty Programme). This outbreak of renewed violence posed serious threat to the nation's economy and, by implication, its security. This paper is borne out of the need to re-examine the issues involved in the renewed fighting as a means of pointing up the way forward. Okonta (2006:5) sums up saying that 'the journey to peace and prosperity in the region can only commence when the civic is brought back in'.

To demonstrate government's commitment to the Niger Delta issue, within one month of former President Yar'Adua's assumption of office (precisely on 28 June 2007), the then Vice-President (now President) Goodluck Jonathan visited the Ijaw towns of Okerenkoko, Oporoza and several other communities to consult directly with the agitating leaders of the region (Amaize 2008a:14). Immediately after this, on 2 July 2007, a Presidential Committee on Peace and Conflict Resolution in the Niger Delta led by Senator David Brigidi was inaugurated. Thereafter, at a Presidential Retreat for Ministers, Special Advisers, and Federal Permanent Secretaries on 16 August 2007, former President Yar'Adua spoke of efforts to 'get the militants' leaders to come to the table for dialogue' (Agande 2007:1) with the Vice-President leading government side. On 24 August 2007, nine nominees of the Ijaw Youth Leadership Forum (IYLF) were inaugurated at the Presidential Villa, Abuja, to constitute a committee for consultation on the Roadmap to Peace Implementation on the Niger Delta.

But not long afterwards, the ceasefire in the region became threatened as violence resumed once again, leading to attacks on oil facilities in the region. This prompted President Yar'Adua to order the JTF on 20 June 2008, to fish out the militants responsible for the attack. What worsened the situation the more was that the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) had on the previous day 19 June attacked the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) Bonga Field in Ekeremo, Bayelsa State, simultaneously with another militants' attacks on the Chevron-Texaco oil pipelines in the Delta State creek settlements of Abiteye and Olero. Four days before that, militants from Egbema had blown up Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) pipelines at Iyera village in Edo State. The militants had called the bluff of the President's order to the JTF and threatened to 'declare an oil war if the military attacks any militant position' (Amaize 2008b:1).

With this development, tension again heightened in the Niger Delta. The Defence Headquarters via the JTF vowed to execute the presidential direc-

tives, and the battle line was drawn. A spate of militants' attacks on oil facilities raged in the creeks, and the JTF responded in counter operations which led to the Gbaramatu Debacle that broke out on 13 May 2009. From 26 June when government offered the militants amnesty through the 4 October deadline for the militants to embrace the amnesty offer, the war had dealt a crippling blow on the nation's economy as Nigeria's crude oil production declined from about 2 million barrels a day to about 1 million. The Amnesty Programme had been credited for bringing some respite as peace returned to the area and the nation returned to its former production level of crude. Not too long afterwards, however, there was a resurgence of militancy and this rightly raises the question as to why the Amnesty Programme has been unable to assuage the restiveness of the Niger Delta militants.

Theoretical Assumptions

In recent years, the existence of natural resources in developing countries has been seen as a source of conflict and, therefore, a threat to national security (Okogu 2007:56). The 'resource curse' theory developed by Professor Jeffery Sachs (Okonta 2006:5) seeks to 'explain the seeming inability of resource-rich states in Africa and Latin America to industrialise and prosper like their counterparts in South-East Asia' (Okonta 2006:5). The argument is that as authoritarian regimes (including civilian ones) deploy instruments of state at their whims and hijack state resources, the citizens become 'powerless spectators unable to drive economic development or participate effectively in the political arena. Poverty, corruption in high places, and religious and ethnic violence are usually the result' (Okonta 2006:3). All these add up to become a threat to national security.

Resource Curse theory argue that resource-rich countries like Nigeria inevitably degenerate into authoritarian and corrupt rule because it is easy for the elites to hijack the oil field by force and redesign political institutions to sustain the new regime of praetorian government (Okonta 2006:3).

Within the context of democratic theory, Page and Barabas (2000:339) contend that 'persistent gaps between the policy preferences of leaders and those of citizens are problematic' and thus 'constitutes *prima facie* evidence that democracy is not working well' (Page and Barabas 2000:340). The notion of democracy implies popular power. That is, governments' responsiveness to citizens' aspirations in policy decision-making. If popular power is an inference from the postulate democracy; such an inference can only apply if the postulate is tenable in the first place. Evidence since 1999 has shown that

Nigeria is practising ‘militocracy’; that is a situation where democratic structures exist but the rule of law is ignored. The consequence is violence, restiveness, rights agitations and subsequent threat to national security. In this wise, Okonta (2006:5) draws attention to Anna Zalik’s treatise called ‘Petro-Violence’ and ‘Partnership Development’ whose main thrust is ‘the problematic of development strategies devoid of democratic and participatory structures in oil-bearing communities in the region’. While it is true that under this kind of situation the development argument has gained priority over the democratic, the problem is that it is becoming harder for authoritarian regimes ‘to get away with a mode of forced development’ (Hague, Harrop and Breslin 1988:36).

The recent phase of the Niger Delta militants-government face-off (that is, since The Gbaramatu Debacle) was preceded at the dawn of the current democratic dispensation by a subtle agitation by oil-bearing states under the aegis of ‘resource control’ – for a true federal structure of administration that would ensure fiscal federalism. With no appreciable result in this regard, militant groups began to spring up, the principal ones being the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF) of Asari Dokubo and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Even though these groups insist that their objective ‘is to destroy the facilities that are being used to generate funds’ for government (Amaize 2009c:8) and ‘as freedom fighters to liberate the region from the stranglehold of the Nigerian state’ (Oyadongha 2009:9), expression of high profile violence only began with government’s incarceration of their principal officers – Asari Dokubo of the NDPVF and Henry Okah of the MEND in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Thus, violence had not always been there. In point of fact, when in 2003 the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) came into existence and in a war of attrition against Nigeria demanded ‘a reversion of the federal structure to the old 1963 type and a revision of the legal instruments of ownership that communalised their privately-owned property’, their grouse was,

that the destruction of their environment, the undermining of their occupations and threats to their continued existence, all emanating from negligent seismic, excavation and drilling activities, are all collateral damages accruing from the seizure and assumption of their proprietary rights over resources they had owned totally when Nigeria started off as a nation (Owubokiri 2009:19).

Amnesty and Economic Prosperity

Over time, and in the course of the negotiations between government and the militants over the Niger Delta crisis, the issue of amnesty had been touted. For

instance, on 27 July 2007, when former Governor Dipreye Alamieseigha of Bayelsa State was released after over two years in detention (he was arrested on 15 January 2005) on graft charges; the gesture was counted as number two (next to the release of the leader of the Niger Delta Peoples' Volunteer Forces (NDPVF), Alhaji Mujahid Asari Dokubo), out of the three main demands of the militants in order to lay down their arms and dialogue. The third was the withdrawal of military forces from the region. In between these, the militants demanded 'amnesty for those that have been declared wanted so that they can participate in the process of negotiation' (Aziken, Usiegbé & Oyadongha 2007:16).

In fact, the Vice President Jonathan who now heads the Federal Government Committee on the peace process in the Niger Delta was told pointedly by some members of the IYLF [Ijaw Youth Leadership Forum] that the government should grant amnesty to the militants for militancy to stop (Amaize 2008b:23).

Later added to these was the demand for the release of Henry Okah; firstly from an Angolan prison and then from Jos prison.

The propriety of the term 'amnesty' under the ensuing circumstance is of no pertinence here even though it has generated a bit of debate as its etymology is associated with criminals; which the Niger Delta agitators insist they are not. For the purpose of this discourse, let its pertinence reside in the search for peace to secure Nigeria's political stability and national security. Amnesty here should be a discerning of a political will to right the wrongs of the past which, for this article, is more than government embarking on massive development initiatives in the region, say, in the form of infrastructural development. This without prejudice to the argument that government could have used high concentration of development projects in the Niger Delta region as a deliberate strategy to achieve peace there such that it would be clear to all that any restiveness there would be considered criminal and dealt with accordingly. But government insisted on complete cessation of violence and the creation of an enabling environment (of peace) as a condition precedent to any genuine development initiative. This is partly because multinational construction giants are known to have abandoned contracts awarded to them in the region on the grounds of insecurity. So, government considered it better to push the amnesty agenda, get all the categories of militants to surrender their arms, and then rehabilitate the militants while government start work on the development projects.

Government's idea of a post-amnesty programme for the development of the Niger Delta region rests essentially in 'engendering enduring infrastructural and social development in the region'. This is because the problems in the region are essentially human and development-related. In this vein, the

Secretary General of the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) notes that ‘the challenge is now for the Federal Government to develop the Niger Delta following the surrendering of arms by the militants’ (Oyadongha 2009b:8). This was just as the stakeholders in the Niger Delta affairs ‘advised the Federal Government to immediately embark on massive construction of roads and bridges linking all the riverine oil communities in the Niger Delta, especially now that the amnesty has expired and militants have surrendered their arms’ (Oyadongha 2009c:8).

Upon receiving amnesty, ex-militants ‘were registered and given cards and have been collecting salaries as ex-militants’ (Nnochiri 2010:20). The Federal Government Amnesty Committee has continued to dismiss claims that the Amnesty Programme has failed by citing tangible evidence, among them the mobilisation of ex-militants for various training programmes in Nigeria and in overseas institutions. Over 7,000 ex-militants are said to have so far been allocated to both local and international off-shore training centres since August 2010 and 480 of those already trained are awaiting deployment to off-shore facilities.

Alluding to the success of the Amnesty Programme, President Goodluck Jonathan in a speech to woo delegates at the Peoples Democratic Party presidential primaries on 13 January 2011 insists that:

If we had not addressed the challenges in the Niger Delta, our oil price would not have reached the minimum the production dropped below one-third but now we can produce above the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quotas (Fabiya 2011:9).

Thus, while the Amnesty Programme has resulted in relative peace, such that Nigeria’s oil production which dropped from 2.6 million barrels a day to about one million at the peak of the unrest between 2006 and 2009 has now risen to 2.1 million barrels daily, recent upsurge of violence has raised doubts about the programme’s ability to tame the monster of militancy in the Niger Delta. The resurgence of violence has even assumed a more frightening dimension.

Post-Amnesty Violence: Nature and Episodes

Many observers who believed the Amnesty Programme would not work were surprised to see the larger of the militant groups embracing it, handing over their weapons and accepting ‘a larger share of revenue from the Niger Delta oilfields in return for suspending their independence struggle’ (Laing 2010:2). Surprisingly, just when people had come to believe the programme would succeed after all, remnants of the splinter groups began to sabotage it and to take the battle sometimes outside the creeks, upland and even to the seats of

government; and this portends a larger threat to the nation's security. This trend first became manifest in the Atlas Cove bombing on the eve of the commencement of Amnesty in 2009. This destroyed the capacity of this major petroleum products supply and distribution facility that takes petroleum products feedstock from ocean-going vessels and distributes same (Amaize et al 2009:1) from receiving petroleum products. This facility is the source of petroleum products' distribution to the entire south-west of Nigeria, including Lagos State, Kwara State and the South South states of Edo and Delta. The attack, conducted outside the boundaries of the Niger Delta by the Niger Delta militant group MEND, prompted the then NNPC boss, Mr. Sanusi Barkindo, to lament thus:

...it is the first time this type of incident has happened in Atlas Cove... everybody concerned was taken by complete surprise because this facility had been secured on a twenty-four hour basis, seven days a week... (Amaize et al 2009:5).

The event left military officers who were safeguarding the station dead, including a Navy Commander. The militants who carried out the operation came in as many as 15 boats early in the evening (8:15 pm), placed dynamites on a critical angle of the pipelines and blew it up without the Nigerian security system being astir (Amaize et al 2009:5).

This fits into the contention of Ylonen (2005:53) that 'these crises illustrate the weakness of the Nigerian state [as] they demonstrate the limitations of the governance structures to overcome challenges to the national government before they occur.' To further underscore the magnitude of the threat which the activities of the militants posed to the nation's security, a day after the militants bombed the Atlas Cove oil facility, President Yar'Adua immediately changed the Defence Minister. In a minor cabinet reshuffle affecting only two ministries, the Minister of Interior, Major-General Godwin Abbe a retired infantry soldier swapped positions with Alhaji Shettima Mustapha who moved from the Defence Ministry to that of Interior. 'Given the background of the new [Defence] Minister', the call to his new portfolio aimed at 'fast tracking the ongoing peace process in the [Niger Delta] region, especially critical issues that concern defence' (Idonor 2009:5). One would have expected that the gravity of the security concerns the Niger Delta crisis has created would compel the federal government's counter measures to be commensurate with them, but it all seemed rather cosmetic. By and large, government efforts ended in a debacle as a full-scale military action between the militants and the military (JTF) broke out in the Ijaw Gbaramatu creeks. According to Oyadongha:

What started as mere ill-equipped fighting band in the mangrove swamp of the Niger Delta has snowballed into a deadly war machine that would hold the nation by the jugular. From this poorly organised rag tag gang emerged a disciplined fighting machine using speedboats, machine guns and rocket propelled grenade launchers to carry out precise attack on installations in the region. The initial thinking that the military would rout the rampaging militants in a matter of days turned out to be a mirage (Oyadongha 2009a:9).

By 4 October 2009 when the Amnesty offer officially ended, several militant groups had embraced the scheme while a couple (especially the MEND) did not. This was a sign that militant activities in the region was not completely over. Post-amnesty militants' activities continued with upland bombings with consequential deaths and loss of property. The first of these and which aborted a post-amnesty dialogue for stake holders in the oil-rich town of Warri occurred on 15 March 2010. Here, two explosions occurred some 200 meters outside the perimeter fence of the Delta State Government House Annex, Warri, and the venue of the summit. This facility is the alternate seat of the government of the oil-rich Delta State after Asaba, the State capital. In attendance at the conference was a former Chief of Defence Staff General Andrew Owoye Azazi (rtd) who later became the National Security Adviser (NSA). He had just ended his welcome address as the occasion's chairman when the first bomb exploded. Others in the gathering included Dr. Emmanuel Uduaghan, Governor of the host Delta State; his colleagues: Adams Oshiomole of Edo State, Ikedi Ohakim of Imo State, Godswill Akpabio of Akwa-Ibom State, etc. The then acting President, Goodluck Jonathan, was represented by Ufot Ekaette, the Minister for Niger Delta among other dignitaries. The guests waived off the first blast and continued with their meeting. But when the second bomb went off at 11.15 am 'with a shattering noise that broke the outer glass of the hall and shook the building to its foundation' (Amaize et al 2010:1-5) the meeting ended abruptly as participants rushed out of the venue. One death was recorded. MEND claimed responsibility for the bombing.

Episode two happened on Independence Day (1 October 2010) when twin bomb blasts claimed the lives of 20 people, including eight security agents. This incident which occurred just about 20 meters away from Eagle Square, Abuja, the venue of the Independence Day celebrations nearly marred Nigeria's Golden Jubilee function which had a host of Heads of States and other foreign and national dignitaries in attendance. Like the Warri episode, MEND claimed responsibility for the bomb blasts. They also claimed to be protesting against government's neglect of the Niger Delta (even in the face of the Am-

nesty Programme and the stepped up process of infrastructural development in the region).

All these events constituted sufficient security breaches that resulted in the overhauling of the nation's security structure. The acting National Security Adviser to the President, Colonel Kayode Are, was dropped and General Andrew Owoye Azazi (rtd) was appointed in a substantive position. These are all pointers to the magnitude of the threat which the militants' activities posed to the nation's security (even in the face of Amnesty Programme and the ongoing development of infrastructure in the Niger Delta region). It would also be recalled that British intelligence claimed to have detected the Abuja plot in advance and sent warnings to Nigeria but this did not prevent the attack. That perhaps explains the absence of the then British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, who was billed for a key role. So far, five MEND-related suspects have appeared in court over the Abuja blasts. There were no arrests over Atlas Cove and Warri.

The United Nations Security Council on 4 October 2010 condemned the Independence Day bombings as a 'reprehensible act of terrorism' and urged all member-states to cooperate actively with Nigeria to bring the perpetrators to justice. While insisting that terrorism in whatever form was 'criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of the motive' it 'stressed the need to combat all forms of threats to international security caused by terrorist acts' (Bayagbon 2010c:6).

But these official reactions did not deter the militants nor did they stop their activities. A bloody gun duel broke out on 18 November 2010 between soldiers of the JTF and the militants who re-grouped under a post-amnesty group – The Niger Delta Liberation Force (NDLF) – under 'General' John Togo who repelled the military (Amaize 2010:5). The militants also returned to their old tactics of vandalising oil installations in order to cripple the economy.

In the renewed and post-amnesty vandalism of oil installations, MEND attacked Exxon Mobil facility in Akwa Ibom State on 14 November 2010 while threatening to resume full attack on oil installations in the Niger Delta. But why has the Amnesty Programme been unable to assuage restiveness in the Niger Delta? Government's expectation over the Amnesty Programme has been largely met: the militants have renounced violence; they have surrendered their weapons and received government rehabilitation programmes for them. Peaceful has returned and infrastructural development projects are going apace in the region. So why couldn't the new-found peace reign in the region? It seems there are still issues that the Amnesty programme has not addressed.

Causes of the Post-Amnesty Militancy

As earlier indicated, while most of the militant groups keyed into the Amnesty Programme, surrendered their arms and got their members to renounce militancy, others (particularly the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) backed out claiming that the Amnesty Programme was not far reaching enough and that the pace of development of infrastructure in the Niger Delta was too slow (Bayagbon 2010b:18). MEND 'neither accepted amnesty nor surrendered their arms' (Amaize 2009:5). While claiming responsibility for the Warri bomb explosion at the venue of Vanguard's Post-Amnesty conference, MEND said 'it was to let the world know of its continued relevance in the region' and to further protest the alleged continued marginalisation of host people from control and management of the resources of their region 'which have been distributed among mostly Northerners while indigenes of the Niger Delta can barely survive' (Nnadozie 2010:6).

There are also the factors on the part of government – of delayed considerations of the issues that led to the declaration of Amnesty. Thus the renewed militants' activities were to provoke the authorities to reconstitute the Amnesty Implementation Committee to address the specific demands of the ex-militants and make those concerned to go back to the drawing board to replan the Amnesty Programme (Aziken 2010:7). This is so because, as admitted by a member of the Post-Amnesty Committee, Dr Tony Uranta, 'the amnesty process is a failure.' In his view, post-amnesty violence like the bomb blast in Warri has 'no intention to hurt people but possibly angry elements still complaining about the failure of the process of amnesty may need to be engaged' (Amaize 2010:5&8).

This contention validates MEND's claim to seek continued relevance and the need to get the amnesty idea right. This has become imperative given the contention of the likes of Ann'Kio Briggs that post-amnesty violence 'shows very clearly that the Federal Government, the state governments that make up the Niger Delta, all of them have missed the point of the amnesty' (Amaize 2010:8). 'Captain' Mark Anthony, spokesperson of the NDLF militants said the resumption of their activities were

to draw Federal Government's attention to the fact that some of us who accepted amnesty before were abandoned and that they should dialogue with us but the JTF came for war... They should call a conference of ex-militants to know how the amnesty programme is going and take necessary steps to correct the deficiencies (Amaize 2010:5).

Even from the rehabilitation centres, there have been echoes of protests and threats to return to violence by ex-militants who have alleged several breaches

by government authorities of ‘most of the agreements reached between the Amnesty Committee and the former militants’ (Ahon 2010:9). In this regard, for instance, a group of former militants at the Sapele Naval Base Rehabilitation Centre had alleged incompetence on the part of the resource person engaged to train them who ‘was either ill-equipped or was cutting corners’ a situation that ‘has made them to stay idle in the past three months in the training camp’ (Ahon 2010:9).

Scepticism over governments commitment towards the Amnesty Programme were further heightened by ‘a new definition of oil producing states [which] includes states through which pipelines for evacuating crude or refined products pass. [As] they are to become beneficiaries of funds [meant] for oil producing communities’ (Bayagbon 2010a:18). Again, there were speculations during the arms-surrender exercise that not all the arms in the cache of the militants were turned in. ‘Information has it that not up to 40 per cent of the war arsenals in their possession was eventually surrendered. So, the incidents you’re getting today are to confirm that they have not totally disarmed’ (Ezema 2010:5). Further quoting Ayo Opadokun, Ezema (2010:5) notes that:

These militants have been busy engaging in bunkering and bunkering provides them with hard currencies. There is no amount that the Federal Government can give them on monthly basis that will satisfy them. So each time they are broke, they will like to do something to create confusion [and] explore the situation for their own economic gains.

For government, it needed ‘to rid the Niger Delta of criminal elements masquerading as militants’ as ‘government would not fold its arms and some criminals plunge the region into another orgy of violence’. It therefore ‘had the responsibility to nip in the bud all threats of militancy’ (Amaize 2010:5). Thus the renewed (post-amnesty) violence derived from the effort of the military to stem the resurgence of militancy in the region.

Conclusion

The Amnesty Programme secured for government a new lease to continue to mine oil resources in the Niger Delta and added legitimacy to the criminal aspects of the militants’ struggles. Genuine rights agitations had long slipped out of the agenda of most of the militant groups. Militant gangs are known to have rivalled one another for the control of the attention of government and oil exploring companies who distributed largesse to them to ensure that a congenial atmosphere prevailed for the continued oil exploitation. A common saying among the militants while the disarmament was going on was

‘money for the weapons’, meaning that the disarmament was cash-induced. If that was so, it also meant that the militants’ struggle was also mercenary. Government has astutely denied that militants received monetary inducements to disarm.

Other gang leaders were satisfied with the euphoria of being considered temporarily important and to interact with the highest level of power at the Presidential Villa in Abuja and being put on monthly stipends with further assurance of receiving patronage from government and the oil prospecting companies. Laing (2010) who noted that the militants ‘accepted a larger share of revenues from the Niger Delta oil fields in return for suspending their independence struggle’ maintained that such revenues went into individuals pockets – hence, were loots. It is not expected that such loots would last forever. They can only be replenished under a crisis-ridden environment. So, the orgy of war has to resurge. A near-permanent resolution to this trend would be to institute a true democratic culture which would ensure that powers reside in the people through an owner-control or at least host participation in the control of the resources of the Niger Delta – oil and gas. Otherwise the Amnesty Programme and other similar initiatives would remain mere palliatives.

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The Complex Roots of the Second Eritrea-Ethiopia War: Re-examining the Causes

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Abstract

The article highlights some of the embedded plausible causes of the war that are quite often glossed over. It argues that at the centre of the conflict stand different perceptions of history, identity, as well as claims and counterclaims of state rights, decolonisation process, and nation-state formation. Beyond the minor border skirmishes of May 1998, the contested interpretation of history and identity formation, and the concomitant search for a separate identity and sovereignty, on one hand, and denial of that separate identity and sovereignty, on the other, explain the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. In that sense the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict will be found to revolve around the status of Eritrean independence. Moreover two sets of the conflict – Tigray-Eritrea and Ethiopia-Eritrea – have further complicated the search for settlement of the conflict. The first step towards finding a lasting solution that would normalise relations between the two countries would be Ethiopia's definitive and unconditional recognition and acceptance of separate Eritrean identity and sovereignty, including its colonial boundaries. Both the people of Tigray, and Ethiopia as a whole, need to accept this reality. Secondly, Ethiopia's legitimate interest should be addressed in a manner that will not undermine Eritrea's sovereignty. Only then will Ethiopia's need to have access to the sea find lasting and amicable solution acceptable to both sides.

Key Words: Eritrea, Ethiopia, EPLF, TPLF, war, history, identity, sovereignty

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Résumé

Cet article met en relief certaines des causes profondes plausibles de la guerre qui sont assez souvent minimisées. Il soutient qu'au cœur du conflit se trouvent des perceptions différentes de l'histoire, de l'identité, ainsi que des revendications et contre-revendications des droits d'Etat, le processus de décolonisation, et la formation de l'Etat-nation. Au-delà des petits accrochages frontaliers de mai 1998, le conflit entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie s'explique, d'une part, par l'interprétation contestée de l'histoire et de la formation de l'identité, ainsi que la quête concomitante d'identité et de souveraineté distinctes, et d'autre part, son déni de. Ainsi, on notera que le conflit entre l'Erythrée et l'Ethiopie tourne autour du statut de l'indépendance de l'Erythrée. De plus, deux groupes du conflit – Tigré-Ethiopie et Ethiopie-Erythrée – ont compliqué davantage la recherche d'un règlement. Le premier pas dans la recherche d'une solution durable qui normaliserait les relations entre les deux pays serait la reconnaissance et l'acceptation définitives et inconditionnelles par l'Ethiopie de l'identité et la souveraineté distinctes de l'Erythrée, y compris ses frontières coloniales. Les tigréens tout comme l'ensemble des éthiopiens doivent accepter cette réalité. Deuxièmement, l'intérêt légitime de l'Ethiopie doit être traité de manière à ne pas compromettre la souveraineté de l'Erythrée. C'est alors seulement que le besoin de l'Ethiopie d'avoir accès à la mer trouvera une solution à l'amiable durable et acceptable pour les deux parties.

Introduction

The second war between Eritrea and Ethiopia, 1998-2000, shocked the international community as well as nationals of the respective countries. In addition to its seemingly unexpected nature, (at least to some) it defies any logic and rational explanation. The war came as a shock to many because the post-Dergue era relations between the two states began on a good footing. Indeed, it was considered a good model to replicate in other states whose relations had been marked by long and continuous wars. The amicable relations not only contributed to the bafflement to see a deadly war break out suddenly, but also many observers and analysts were put unable to provide rational explanations. It seems many analysts were caught of guard such that they had to provide diverse, and at times contradictory, explanations on the causes of the war.

The second Eritrean-Ethiopian war was depicted as one between brothers (cf. Negash and Tronvoll 2000). It was also described as a conflict between two bald men's fight for a comb, a senseless war (cf. Mengisteab 1999; Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:231). Others described it as prestige war,¹ border war, Eritrea's economic non-viability (Abbay 2001; Tadesse 1999). Yet, others were convinced that it has to do with Ethiopia's failure to accept Eritrean sovereignty (Fessehazion 2002). Ethiopia's obsession with gaining an outlet to the sea, collusion of Eritrea-Tigray identities (Abbay 1998; Reid 2003), unresolved pre-liberation problematic relations of the liberation fronts (Lata 2003; Bereketeab 2009) were also given as plausible explanations.

To majority of Eritreans, the second war was not a senseless war as many observers and the media have tried to present it. In the perception of many Eritreans the conflict had to do with Eritrean sovereignty. It was obvious that the Eritreans were afraid that the war intended to achieve what the 1993 referendum failed to complete: the demarcation of the emerging sovereign Eritrean state and territory (cf. Zondi and Rejouis 2006). The perception was reinforced by a massive campaign of Ethiopians demanding to reverse Eritrea's independence (see, e.g., Sorenson and Matsouka 2001; Lata 2003; Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005; Tadesse and Young 2002). Conversely for many Ethiopians the war represented a chance to reclaim a territory that has been 'illegally separated' (cf. Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:255-7; Sorenson and Matsouka 2001:55-7). Yet, the war was portrayed as an Eritrean making. Eritrea was presented as the invader.

Notwithstanding all this, it could be said that the good post-liberation relationship seemed to be placed on false assumptions and expectations. As things began slowly to become clear the two governments might have had contradictory, indeed, opposing expectations of their post-liberation relation. Apparently, the Eritrean government was bent to exploit the larger Ethiopian market in order to rebuild the war-torn nation. Conversely, the Ethiopian government's calculation seemed to be based on the logic that economic dependence would lead to political dependence. By allowing unfettered access to its market, the Ethiopian government intended to tie Eritrea in a situation of economic dependency. This economic dependency, in turn, was presumed to lead to political dependency (Lata 2003:377; Trivelli 1999). Statements by various Eritrean officials also complicated the issue. The issuance of the Eritrean currency in 1997 seemed to have shattered the thick cloud of illusions and misplaced expectations on the Ethiopian side. Ethiopia realised that the economic 'free rider' chance given to Eritrea failed to engender its long-term

political objectives of 'political union' between both countries. Hence, the Ethiopian government unilaterally abrogated the 1993 Friendship and Cooperation Agreement (FCA).² Ethiopia, in what could completely rearrange and reverse the FCA if implemented, proposed that all trade transactions between the two countries be carried out in foreign currency. Eritrea rejected the idea and proposed that the two national currencies trade on an equal basis. The two governments were unable to resolve this policy difference, which led Ethiopia to boycott Eritrean seaports and redirect its trade through Djibouti. After this a number of incidents followed that eventually triggered the outbreak of the war in May 1998.

Concerted efforts to end the war and resolve the dispute between the two states proved rather intractable. One of the reasons why the mediation efforts failed to yield possible results was the abject failure of the international community. The key actors failed to have an adequate understanding of the complex roots of the dispute. Rather, what obtained was a simplistic approach that saw the conflict as a simple border dispute. Thus the focus on a border resolution approach towards the war was doomed to end in failure. It took three rounds of military campaign for the warring parties to sit down and sign a peace agreement on 12 December 2000, in Algiers. Nonetheless, when the verdict of the Court of Arbitration, which the two governments signed to be final and binding, was announced in April 2002, Ethiopia rejected it because the Court awarded the flashpoint of the war (Badme) to Eritrea. Again, the international community was unable to uphold the Algiers Agreement. Eritrea accused the mediators, particularly the USA, of siding with Ethiopia and blocking the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's verdict. Failure in the implementation of the Boundary Commission verdict was also attributed to the international community whose complacency made Ethiopia to get away with the rejection of international court verdict. This is due to Ethiopia's strategic importance to the West and its alliance with the USA against terrorism particularly after 9/11. It also has to do with Eritrea's diplomatic fiasco in its dealing with the international community (Zondi and Rejouis 2006:80; Healy and Plaut 2007:9; Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:228).

Thus, the conflict has continued. From the foregoing it is logical to pose two crucial questions, notably: why have both parties to the conflict failed to resolve their differences peacefully? And why has the international mediation failed both in stopping the war and implementing the Boundary Commission's verdict?

The answers to both questions could also be sought in the complexity of factors underpinning the conflict. For the contestants it could be said that

profound and substantial issues swept under the carpet made the reaching of an amicable solution quite impossible. For the international community and the mediators in particular their failure to grasp the complex roots and substance of the conflict, and the contending geo-political strategic interests made it impossible for them to solve the conflict between the two countries. In terms of the latter it could be said more importantly and historically that Ethiopia was perceived as anchor state in the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia's significance has also increased since September 11 and the inception of war on terror. Now Ethiopia is the single most important ally of the USA in the region. Therefore any force that challenges Ethiopia's hegemony was considered as spoiler of peace, stability and order in the region. Moreover, it is seen as defying the hierarchical world arrangement of hegemony. In this sense, Eritrea is not only challenging Ethiopia's hegemony in the region but also hegemony of the New World Order led by the USA. For the USA, Eritrea is wildly out of control, thus, it has to be tamed. Because of Eritrea's disobedient behaviour and in order to appease Ethiopia the final and binding border verdict has been sacrificed. Conversely, on 23 December 2009, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) imposed sanctions on Eritrea for its alleged 'Role in Somalia, refusal to withdraw troops following conflict with Djibouti' (UNSC, SC/9833, 23 December 2009).

Two fundamental questions triggered the endeavour to write this paper. The first is how a small village could be a cause of an unfathomable carnage and, the second, why the conflict has proven extremely difficult to settle. The point of departure of this paper is that the causes of the war are more complex than is often admitted. I argue that complex interrelated causal factors should be sought to explain the conflict. Some of the underlying root causes suggested include historical incidents and concomitant memories (e.g., colonialism and colonial memories). Claims and counterclaims, that is, contested pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories, trajectories and narratives that divide the shaping of the two countries could be accounted for. Mythologies and historical constructions (Ethiopian), on the one hand, and deconstructions and reconstructions (Eritrean), on the other hand; and divergent nation and state formations and political economies; power contestations, all add to the complexity. Time and scope would not allow dealing with all these variables in detail. The primary aim here is to highlight some of these latent variables which people ignore or seem to have little understanding of, in the hope of enhancing our understanding of the conflict.

In its theoretical and methodological approach the paper is eclectic. It combines history, culture, politics, identity, mythology, reality, power relations (local and international), international relations, migration studies, etc. This

renders the paper interdisciplinary. Broadly, it draws on theories of nation-state building, colonisation and decolonisation. However, it is worthwhile to mention that the two countries use these theories differently, indeed, for opposing purposes. For Ethiopians colonialism means artificiality, fabrication and falsity. It was the evil acts of colonialism that separated Eritrea from its motherland. Therefore, decolonisation should mean returning a territory that was illegally snatched of from the motherland. It is also purported that the artificiality, fabrication and falsity of colonial creation would not enable Eritrea to exist as a sovereign nation-state. Eritreans, on the other hand, employ theories of colonialism, decolonisation and state formation, to justify their claim of Eritrea's formation as a modern nation-state. Eritreans claim modern Eritrea was created by colonialism and it should have been given its independence long ago by the act of decolonisation. They insist that Eritrea is legally entitled for decolonisation and subsequent existence as a sovereign nation-state with its colonially determined international boundaries.

The overall objective of the paper is to highlight some of the embedded plausible causal factors of the second Eritrea-Ethiopia war (1998-2000). It argues that at the centre of the conflict stand different perceptions of history, identity, as well as claims and counterclaims of state rights, decolonisation process, and state formation. The paper identifies two levels – Eritrea-Ethiopia, on one hand, and Eritrea-Tigray, on the other – as units of analysis of the embedded configuration of the causal factors of the conflict. It also aims at increasing our knowledge and understanding of the conflict by examining some of the causalities that are quite often glossed over because they are considered as less important even though they may be relevant in explaining the origin of the conflict. It interrogates history and the unfolding macro and micro events, processes, socio-psychological imaginations and prejudices, etc. that may have shaped the two nations.

In this paper I have not given space for the second war itself and the Algiers Agreement. Firstly, because I have dealt with it in another work (Bereketeab 2009), secondly, though there is no systematic interrogation of the embedded causalities, there is a lot written about it (see. e.g., Tadesse 1999, Negash and Tronvoll 2000; Fessahatzion 2002; Lata 2003; Reid 2003; Jacquin-Berdal and Plaut 2004).

The data for the paper consists of text analysis and interpretation, literature review, official documents and interviews, personal observations and experiences drawn from folkloric anecdotes and personal involvement in the Eritrean struggle.

Colonialism and Nation Formation

Most current African nations are the product of European colonialism. The Berlin Conference of 1884/5 on the scramble for Africa surgically divided the future nations of Africa using pencils and rulers without paying any consideration for cultural, ethnic, linguistic, topographic differences. The result is that the colonial nations became multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-religious societies that made the nation formation enterprise extremely precarious (Mazrui 1983; Davidson 1992; Young 1994). The first step the colonial state took, in the process of colonial nation formation, was territorial compartmentalisation. The territorial centralisation was to form the foundation of the emerging colonial nations. This territorial basis of nationhood in Africa has led some scholars to designate nations in Africa as *territorial nations* (Smith 1983: 128; Hodgkin 1956; Clapham 1985). The post-colonial nation builders were also compelled to preserve the inviolability of the colonial territorial foundation of their nations. A conscious act of nation building required not only continuity and consolidation of colonially created territoriality but also fostering loyalty and allegiance of all the variegated peoples residing within it to the territorial nation. Moreover, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) simply endorsed the inviolability the colonial territoriality in its founding conference in 1963.

It is to be recalled that the colonially induced territorial centralisation was also followed by a number of measures such as centralised rule and bureaucracy, uniform taxation, administration and political centralisation that thrust the colonial nation formation process forward. It is to be noted that this territorial delineation undertook simultaneous acts of exclusivity and inclusivity. In terms of inclusivity, all those within the compartmentalised territory were perceived as members of the nation, while in terms of exclusivity those outside the parameters of the territory were perceived as aliens. This physical infrastructure of nation formation needed, however, to be complemented by cognitive aspects. The cognitive aspects of the infrastructure of nation formation in Africa were arguably generated by exploitation, oppression, resistance and liberation struggles. This in turn is presumed to foster common experience, common suffering, common destiny that eventually bonded together the divergent ethnic groups. All this could be said to have culminated in the creation of nationalism. Nationalism, it is argued, generates three things: (i) explains common origin of people; (ii) provides a sense of identity to people and legitimacy to the ruling authorities; (iii) it proposes certain ideals to aspire to (Vincent 1987:27). It would be now possible to safely draw the inference that

colonial territoriality endowed African nations their jurisdictionally recognised state of existence.

Nonetheless colonial nation formation in Africa differs from the historical absolutist nation formation in Europe in one fundamental perspective. While in Europe the process resulted in homogenous nations, in Africa it gave rise to heterogeneity (cf. Lewis 1983:73; Diamond et al 1988). This heterogeneity in the constitution of the African colonial and post-colonial nation has given rise to conceptual, theoretical and methodological confusion in how to define and analyse the African nation.

The theories of nation formation in generic terms identify two models of nation. These are the *civic* and *ethnic* models. The models in turn are based on two schools of thought, notably the *modernist* and *primordialist* (Smith 1986, 1991; Hutchinson 1994; Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Anderson 1991; Geertz 1963; Van den Berghe 1978). The markers of the nation in the *civic model* or conception are invariably described as civic institutions, political institutions (parliament, parties, elections, enfranchisement), legal (courts, judges, jury), economic and social institutions that govern society. The binding variables are generated through residing under a centralised politico-legal governance system, with compartmentalised and centralised territory, etc. These civic, social, political, economic, legal administrative institutions glue diverse ethnic groups into an overarching socio-political organisation called nation. Markers of nation in the ethnic model or conception include common descent, common language, common cultural traits (values, norms, special types of dress, food), nativity or indigeneity. *Ethnic nations* are perceived to be objective, natural, fixed, invariable, authentic, reflecting nativity and indigeneity; civic nation are perceived to be secular, territorial, variable and malleable. While the benchmark of the former is heterogeneity, the benchmark of the later is homogeneity. African nations are by definition of the former type.

Eritrea, as a product of Italian colonialism, displays all the features characterising African nations. Equipped with theories of nations and nationalism, Eritrean nationalists embarked on defining, articulating, shaping and constructing Eritrean nationhood (cf. ELF 1971, 1975; EPLF 1977). They located the origin of modern Eritrean nationhood to Italian colonialism: they claimed Eritrean common identity was fostered by resistance to colonisation and occupation (Gebre-Medhin 1989; Lyob 1995; Bereketeab 2007); through their nationalist struggle also they hoped to achieve liberty, equality, democracy and development. This perception of Eritrean nationalism clashed with the perception of Ethiopian nationalism.

The colonially created Eritrea, by necessity, emerged as a poly-ethnic nation. The imperative of poly-ethnic nation is duality of identity. This duality of identity, in terms of nation formation in Eritrea, would be expressed in consisting of supra-ethnic (national) and ethnic (sub-national) identities (Bereketeab 2002, 2007). The ethnic identity represents the composite components of the Eritrean nation, notably the nine ethno-linguistic groups, while the supra-ethnic identity would represent the overarching and overriding national political identity. The two levels, primordial and civic, would define Eritrean identity at the sub-national and national levels respectively. Therefore, theoretically as well as practically, it would be impossible to reduce Eritrean modern national identity to its component primordial roots.

Contested History and Identity: Social Construction and Deconstruction of Mythologies

In a previous section it was suggested that some of the causal factors of the second war relate to history, identity, memories, historical trajectories and narratives, claims and counterclaims of territoriality and nation formation. In this section I deal with some of these factors very briefly. The pre-Italian colonial period is the most contested history in the Eritrean-Ethiopian relations. Two mutually irreconcilable historical narratives are presented, accompanied by strong passion and conviction. For Ethiopian history, Eritrea has invariably been, for the last three-millennium or more, the cradle of its civilisation. Eritreans are by culture, history, geography, and identity inalienably Ethiopian. The fundamental tenet in this discursive historiography is that there has always been a centralised and continuous state known as Ethiopia over those thousands of years that led to a civilisation which included Eritrea. Italy temporarily separated Eritrea from its motherland — Ethiopia. When the Italians were defeated in 1941, the Eritreans rejoined their motherland happily. Few misguided and foreign incited Eritrean separatists waged a secessionist rebellion against union with the mother country. And eventually with the help of Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) Eritrea again broke away (cf. Abbay 1998, 2001; Tadesse 1999; Gudina 2003:58).³ Following Eritrea's independence, the perception has not changed; as the overwhelming majority of Ethiopians still believe that Eritreans are Ethiopians (cf. Sorenson and Matsouka 2001; Lata 2003).

For the Eritreans, the challenge has been to dismantle this systematically assembled edifice of historiography, which according to them, has become a national ideology (Gebre-Medhin 1989; Habte Selassie 1989; Yohannes 1991;

lyob 1995). Not only do they question this mythical historiography but they also promote the idea that modern Ethiopia is, as any African state, not least Eritrea, the creation of European imperialism. The Eritrean narrative contends that Ethiopia was created at the end of the 19th century, by an expansionist emperor and with the cooperation of European colonial powers. Many non-Eritrean scholars also subscribe to this narrative (cf. Gudina 2003:59; Bulcha 2002). In the case of the formation of Eritrea itself, Eritreans maintained that modern Eritrea was created by Italian colonialism through surgical assembling of various regions and ethnic groups that had differing status at the end of 19th century with a legitimate entitlement for separate identity and sovereign statehood (Gebre-Medhin 1989; Habte Selassie 1989; lyob 1995; Bereketiab 2007). This argument, not only refutes the view that Eritrea was part of Ethiopia in the immediate pre-colonial history, but also locates the creation of modern Ethiopia and Eritrea at the same temporal level, at the end of the 19th century. The Eritrean nationalist organisations consistently argued that both Eritrea and Ethiopia were created simultaneously at the end of 19th century (cf. EPLF 1977:6; ELF 1971:17, 1975:13).

Eritrean nationalists describe the pre-colonial history of relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia as that of between raiders and the raided, where a militarily superior power from the Ethiopian side, would cross the border to Eritrea and loot the communities. Sometimes they would leave behind a representative to make sure tributes were levied regularly. These raids were not, of course, limited to what was to become Eritrea; they were also extended as far as Suakin in Sudan (cf. d'Avray 1996:52; see also Basil Davidson 1980; Richard Greenfield 1980). If these raids were to constitute a basis of a legitimate claim, then Ethiopia would rightly claim other territories as well, eastern Sudan, for instance, Eritreans argue.

To shed light on the Eritrean argument and perception, it would be of benefit to highlight a few historical episodes. Oral and written historiographic narratives in Eritrea depict how Ethiopian, and particularly Tigrayan feudal lords, used to cross the Mereb River and pillage property; rape women; massacre men, women, children and the elderly with the aim of terrorising and forcing them to submit to their will. Dejat Wube was remembered by Eritreans as one of the notorious Ethiopian lords. In the 1840s Wube carried out widespread raids causing havoc to Eritrean communities and villages. The raids, at first, focused mainly on the highland and the Massawa areas. In 1848, Wube 'switched operations to the Habab and Barka tribes, pillaging everywhere and carrying off many slaves and livestock' (d'Avray 1996:61). Wube spread his pillaging atrocities throughout Eritrea, which earned him notoriety throughout

the communities. Both in the highland and lowlands of Eritrea, Wube is still depicted, in songs and folk tales, as the cruellest invader of the time. The Tigrinya saying *b'gzie wube z'tzememe wube k'ble nebere* (one who lost hearing at the time of Wube, knows only to utter the word Wube for the rest of his life) demonstrates the lasting impact Wube's aggression had left in the Eritrean memory.

The Kunama also refer to raids of the Tigrayan Ras Alula Abanega which they reminisce as *Alula masa*. Credible accounts recall that slaves and cattle were looted and taken across the border as a result of which the mode of life of the Kunama people was changed and they were compelled to take to farming. In these recurrent raids, usually the adults would fight back; children, the old and women were hidden in caves. In one of these accounts, these caves were described as traps where members of the communities would be simply slaughtered.

Some Kunama (mostly children, elderly and women) took refuge into caves. The Abyssinians piled up firewood at the entrance of the caves and set fire. They sprinkled chilli known as *berbere* in Tigrigna and Amharic. The suffocating effect of the smoke and the pepper forced the women to come out of the caves to be victims of the Abyssinian predators (Naty 2001: 577-8).

These acts of aggression and brutality were intended to force the communities into submission. In reflecting these cruelties, thus, the Kunama say when they want to curse a person *alake ebini* meaning 'I curse you that you will be captured by an Abyssinian' (Naty 2001:578).

Before the advent of Italians Ras Alula is the last person to have had any dealings with Eritreans. Pride and heroism, on the one hand, hate and shame on the other characterised Alula's political career. Many Ethiopians (Abbay 1998; Tadesse 1999; Araia 2005) and Western Ethiopianists (Erlich 1982; Rubenson 1976; Punkharst 1964) have contributed in the personality cult making process where Alula is depicted as a person with an extraordinary talent and benevolence (Abbay 1998; Araia 2006). He is remembered as the hero of Dogali who defeated the *ferenji* (white-man) – the Italians, in 1887, where 10 000 Abyssinians under his command decimated 480 Italians (d'Avary 1996:119). He is also portrayed as a man of law and justice who ruled the people of Hamasen with fairness and determination (Abbay 1998; Abraham 2007).

To the Eritreans however, Ras Alula was nothing short of the incarnation of cruelty, mischief, and raids that they suffered from Tigrayan and Ethiopian invaders. Alula frequently raided the lowland communities, locked into fierce

competition with the Anglo-Egyptian and the Mahdi movement in a bid to conquer the lowlands (d'Avray 1996: 99ff). In one such raid of 1886, two-thirds of the Eritrean Kunama and Nara people were presumed to have been annihilated by Alula's invading army (d'Avary 1996:118; Favali and Pateman 2003:36).

Ras Alula ruled the highland of Eritrea for 10 years, 1879-1889, particularly the provinces of Hamasen and Seraye, following the defeat of Rasi Woldenkiel (Bereketeab 2000:81) and his headquarters was in present-day Asmara. This has led to the misguided view by Ethiopians and some Western scholars that Asmara was founded by Alula (Erich 1982; Abbay 1998). The incontrovertible reality is, however, that Asmara as a town was the creation of the Italians.

The Italians founded Asmara as a modern town. Prior to Italian colonialism Asmara consisted of four tiny villages (Bereketeab 2002). It can be argued that giving the credit for founding Asmara for Alula was part of the Ethiopian myth-creating scheme. It was intended to entrench the view that Eritrea has been invariably part of Ethiopia and legitimising the concomitant claim on Eritrea. While in Ethiopia, Ras Alula is highly celebrated as a hero, Tigrayan Ras, because of his role in fighting the Italians, the Egyptians, the Mahdists, as well as the subjugation of Eritreans; conversely, in Eritrea, he is perceived as a notorious villain who had reigned Hamasen and Seraye with iron-fist for ten years, and frequently pillaged the lowland. Gerald Portal described Alula, when he visited him in 1887, in this way:

he was a striking man whom we had no difficulty in recognising at once as the dreaded chief, who by courage, ferocity, unscrupulous cruelty, and considerable military ability, had risen from the ranks of the private soldier to the position of generalissimo of the Abyssinian frontier... the owner of the powerful, cruel and intelligent face would be bound to make his name known in any country, either as a leader or as a destroyer of men. But although all these details may be afterwards observed and recalled, attention was at first riveted to one striking peculiarity – a pair of gleaming tawny eyes of a much lighter colour than the skin of the face. To these flashing yellow orbs, whose effect was aided by a brilliant row of white regular teeth, was no doubt due much of the terror with which Ras Alula was generally regarded. I have seen such eyes in the head of a tiger...and of a leopard, but never in that of a human being (cited in d'Avray 1996:109-110).

It was the terror with which Alula ruled the highland of Eritrea that he is remembered. Alula's rule in the Kebessa ceased to exist with the occupation of Eritrea by the Italians. The ambition of Italians to subordinate Abyssinia plunged

them into the battle of Adwa in 1896. The Italians suffering a humiliating defeat which was to leave its impact in the annals of history. A considerable size of Eritrean *askaris* participated forcibly in the battle of Adwa on the side of the invading Italian army.

The victor, Emperor Menelik II of Ethiopia, punished cruelly those *askaris*, for siding with the invading Italian army. A right arm and a left leg of those captured were amputated as a punishment for siding with the white man (Wrong 2005: 55). This is further construed by Eritreans as being typical of Ethiopia's barbaric acts against them. When Italy invaded and occupied Ethiopia, 1936-1941, 50 000 Eritreans were presumed to have participated in the military campaign on the side of Italy (Negash 1987:51; Bereketeab 2000:153). This is used by Eritreans as a demonstration that there was no feeling of Ethiopianess among Eritreans. Ethiopians also refer to those Eritreans who deserted the Italian Fascist army and joined the Ethiopian resistance as a proof of the existence of Ethiopian identity in Eritrea.

Even the division of the 1940s within the Eritrean political parties is interpreted differently. Ethiopians, citing the Eritrean Unionist Party who advocated for union with Ethiopia, claim that Eritreans pursuant to the defeat of Italy demanded the unconditional reunion with their mother country – Ethiopia (see Negash 1987, 1997; Abbay 1998). What is conveniently glossed over is the contradictory and continuous shifts of positions of the party: opting for conditional union (revising its unconditional union position), opposition of the Ethiopian language, Amharic, as the official language of Eritrea, etc. (cf. Trevaskis 1960:117; Markakis 1987:69). Furthermore, opposition against the violations of the federal provisions by members of the Unionist Party, etc. were not also given their due meaning by Ethiopia. Eritreans on their part, quoting just these incidents and by referring to diplomatic sources claim that more than 75 per cent of the Eritrean people stood against Ethiopia, and for independence (cf. Medhanie 1986; Habte Selassie 1989; Fessahatzion 1998; Legesse 2002). Eritreans and Ethiopians also disagree on the meaning and interpretation of the UN sponsored federal arrangement. While Eritreans perceive it as endorsing the integrity and continuity of the colonially created territory, Ethiopians interpret it as acknowledging their claim on Eritrea. Based on this interpretation, Ethiopia, eventually abrogated the federation in November 1962. In response to the Ethiopian actions, Eritrean nationalists launched an armed struggle for independence.

The national liberation struggle that began in 1961 was, for Ethiopia, an act of banditry led by few who wanted to sell Eritrea to the Arabs for petrodollars (Tareke 2002:476). Both the monarchy and the military junta (the Dergue)

that replaced it depicted the Eritrean liberation fighters as shiftas (bandits), totally devoid of any support from the general Eritrean population (Wolde Giorgis 1989). For Eritrean nationalists, on the other hand, the struggle was a popular uprising in the quest for self-determination. Eritreans claimed that as colonial people, they were entitled to have the right to self-determination, which was wrongly denied them and they interpreted the liberation struggle as an expression of the non-consummated decolonisation process (Habte Selassie 1989; Bereketeab 2000).

In an act of deconstruction of Ethiopian mythology and reconstruction of their own myth, Eritrean nationalists therefore defined the pre-Italian colonial period relations between Eritreans and Ethiopians as the relationship between the invader the invaded and between the conqueror and the conquered (cf. ELF 1971, 1975; EPLF 1977). In the Eritrean narrative the treatment of Eritreans by Wube, Alula, Youhannes, Menelik, Haile Selassie, Mengistu, only demonstrated the fact that the relationship was not of one people, one identity, but of domination and resistance. Figures such as Rasi Woldenkiel, Bahta Hagos, who are vilified by Ethiopians as reneges and bandits are celebrated by Eritreans as heroes and symbols of Eritrean resistance (Bereketeab 2000:228). Eritreans argue that this historical trajectory illustrates a continuous conflict that could hardly be considered to represent the emergence of one people or common identity. They, further, stressed that the continuous raids indicated the absence of a cohesive and centralised state structure within which Eritrean identity could have been located. The significance of these narratives is to be perceived in the profound contributions they made in the social construction of differential identity through spatial and cognitive distancing and delineating from the Other.

When Eritrea achieved its independence, these claims and counter claims, social construction and deconstruction of mythology have not been resolved once and for all. This fact, probably, for the second time, constituted cause of a war. For the majority of Eritreans, the Ethiopian failure to come to terms with the inexorable reality of Eritrea's independence, and the existence of separate identity and nationhood destined to exist in the neighbourhood of Ethiopia still poses a crucial impediment for the normal and healthy relation from developing between the two countries.

In short both Eritreans and Ethiopians, and friends of respective peoples⁴ have been engaging in the act of social construction and deconstruction with great passion and determination. Ethiopian myth creation exercise is countered by Eritrean myth deconstruction and construction exercise. These unresolved contestations of history, identity, territoriality; claims and counter-

claims are therefore some of the embedded causal factors of the Ethio-Eritrean conflict.

Labour Migration: Construction of Socio-psychological Imagining

In addition to the controversy surrounding Eritrean and Ethiopian narratives related to the pre-Italian colonial period, discussed in the preceding section, prejudicial social relations induced by an emerging political economy also contributed to a deep-seated social-psychology. A social-psychology whose hallmark became a superiority and inferiority complex was produced as a result of colonialism. Communities of identical pre-colonial socio-economic formation evolved into diverse formations. The one that fell under colonial rule was influenced by the penetration of colonial political economy, while the other that escaped colonial penetration retained its pre-colonial socio-economic formation. This new political economy constituted focus of attraction where many Tigrayans flowed to Eritrea (Berhe 2004:573). This flow in search of jobs had negative social dimension that reinforced the superiority-inferiority syndrome. The first labour migration from Tigray to Eritrea was presumed to have taken place during 1920s and 1930s. The emerging urban centres and industrial firms attracted considerable labour force from Tigray. The enrolment of Eritrean men in the colonial army also created shortage of labour force in Eritrea in the emerging urban centres as well as rural areas (Trevaskis 1960; Bereketeab 2000:128).

The literature on labour migration, which also informs this section, details two factors of migration. These are persecution and economic insecurity. Further two — push and pull factors — generating labour migration are provided. The push factor refers to negative attributes operating from the centre of origin while the pull refers to positive attributes operating at the centre of destination (Datta 2004:346). ‘The traditional push-pull paradigm stresses that people are pushed to migrate from a place with poor social, political or economical conditions and attracted — pulled — to a destination with better living conditions’ (Wijk 2008:2). Precisely, these factors pushed and pulled labour migrants from Tigray to Eritrea. Primarily, it was economic insecurity that pushed them. Similarity of culture, language, religion, geographical and food habits at the place of destination also facilitated migration.

As Trevaskis (1960:53) notes ‘throughout the Italian regime, landless immigrant families — mostly from Tigray in Ethiopia — drifted into the plateau to settle as tenants of absentee landowners’; arguably the flow increased during the occupation of Ethiopia. This situation provided pull factor for many Tigrayans (Negash 1987:51) while the abysmal life conditions in Tigray con-

stituted a push factor. Many of the Tigrayans who sought jobs in Eritrea were, however, employed in a low status jobs. Female Tigrayans were primarily employed as maids in Eritrean households under conditions that were generally considered as extremely oppressive and exploitative. Many others also assumed social positions that, according to societal values, maybe perceived as lacking social respectability such as prostitution.

Ordinary Tigrayans ... for many years have taken low paid, low status jobs in Eritrea, as casual labourers and domestic servants. Tigrayans were denigrated as 'agame'-a term that implied that they were all uncouth peasants. Most Tigrayan men working in Eritrea were hired as labourers, some got work slaughtering farm animals, while others took up jobs as woodcutters, potters and shepherds. Women were hired as waitresses, housemaids and washer-women. Many prostitutes in Asmara were Tigrayans (Plaut 2004:18).

Even those Eritrean women that went into prostitution seemed to nurse feelings of superiority over their Tigrayan colleagues (the *agame*).

Overall those who moved to the urban centres could mainly be employed as manual labourers. This is not to say that Eritreans were given good jobs, yet in many ways, Eritreans fared better than their Tigrayan counterparts. The male population in rural Eritrea were lured to the colonial political economy. They abandoned their farms and cattle and streamed to centres of employment in the private and public sector as well as the colonial army.⁵ This generated acute shortage of manpower. Emigrant Tigrayans who worked as paid farm labourers and cattle tenders compensated for this shortage of manpower. They worked in serf-like conditions on the farms of a household where the adult male was absent as well as in well-to-do households where the master of the house could afford to hire servants. It was common to brag that one had an *agame*,⁶ a servant. The relation between the *agame* and the household was paradoxical, mostly based on a kind of egalitarianism. The household will, in paternalistic sense, care about the welfare of the *agame*. He (usually is a male) will be given a small resting place, food and clothes, small payment. There might also be occasions where the household will arrange a wife for him. In exchange the *agame* is expected to serve his masters loyally, and show respect and obedience as a sign of his gratitude. Beneath the politeness, obedience could, however, be disguised deep-rooted bitterness, resentment and anger, which could explode any time. Many committed crimes and ran away, others kept their rage in control, to revenge at a convenient time (many had their revenge during Ethiopian rule – the Monarchy and the Dergue – while serving in the Ethiopian security forces). Yet there were many who became 'citizens' of villages. When they had built their own family and had

lived long enough they were given land and accepted as members of the village assuming the connotation of *deki-arba'a* (literally meaning the sons of forty years). The 'forty' denotes the time limit of forty years of continuous residence in the village in order to be afforded 'citizenship' (Nadel 1946).

The Fascist invasion of Ethiopia in 1936 changed, temporarily, the political map of Eritrea. Until the defeat of Italy, in 1941, Eritrea was expanded to Great Eritrea, which included Tigray (Negash 1987:157). The joining of Tigray with Eritrea paved the way for free movement of Tigrayans to Eritrea. This opportunity was exploited to the maximum, and many Tigrayans migrated to Eritrea during this period. Notwithstanding, the creation of Great Eritrea, the Italians were determined to make sure that the Eritreans would have certain privileges.

The Eritreans were better clothed, enjoyed a greater consumption of goods, and had access to a way of life considered superior, as well as greater access to the benefits of modern, albeit extremely limited, schooling, than that enjoyed by their Ethiopian counterparts (Negash 1987:154-5).

This further widened the gap between Eritreans and Tigrayans that the overall state of development followed diverging course.

At the beginning of the 1930's Eritrea with its urban centres, its considerable wage earning population combined with an increased purchasing power was considered as a more developed (or in the colonial parlance as more civilized) than the rest of Ethiopia (Negash 1987:155).

Ethiopia, and particularly Tigray, remained poor and backward. The abject poverty in Tigray compelled many Tigrayans to cross to the relatively well-off Eritrea and were ready to take any job. Those who were not fortunate enough to get jobs were engaged in collecting the 'poor man's food', that is, *beles* (cactus fruit), earning them the nickname of *agame aray beles* (agame the collector of beles). By selling the beles that they collected in Eritrean towns (Asmara in particular) they were able to save some money and send back home. Those who saw money coming from Eritrea thought that there was fortune to be exploited, further increasing the flow of poor Tigrayan peasants to Eritrea.

During the 1970s there were scenes of Tigrayan males trekking (Berhe 2004:573) along the highways all the way from the highland to the lowland of Eritrea to work as seasonal labourers in the cotton plantation of Ali Gidir, in the Tesseney area. At the end of the rainy season they will be seen again trekking back to their home country the same way they came through, this time also instead of taking busses they used to walk for weeks or ask for lifts to save the money they earned, further earning them nicknames such as *agame*

komal (lousy), *bekak* (stingy). Many died out of starvation, exhaustion and malaria. Many stories abound depicting how money was found sewed under the ragged clothes of the dead, money they could use for fares or to buy food. Instead they preferred to almost starve themselves to death in order to secure a better life-back home. Such stories were common among Eritreans in those days. Indeed they were recounted as a source of entertainment.

All this has contributed very much to constructing of an image of stereotypes and prejudices that Tigrayans are inferior, destitute, mischievous, etc. Conversely, it has spawned a deep resentment in the people of Tigray (Berhe 2004:573) that could explain the ferocity with which the second war was fought and the intensity of the hate propaganda witnessed (cf. Sorenson and Matsouka 2001) (I will deal with this in some details later).

With this micro-sociological analysis in mind, I further highlight the socio-psychological mindset of people both in Eritrea and Tigray (also Ethiopia at large), which had a profound effect on relations between Eritreans and Tigrayans, which in turn, had significant implication for the conflict.

Paradoxes in the Eritrean Perception of Self-Identity

If primordial factors are to be taken as measurements of national identity claims, indeed, the picture could be completely chaotic. The various ethno-linguistic groups in Eritrea could with great certainty claim some kind of primordial affiliation with their immediate neighbours across the political boundary. We could have the following affiliations: the Afars with their kins in Ethiopia and Djibouti; the Saho, the Kunama, Tigrinya with those in Ethiopia; the Beni Amir, Hidareb, Rashaida with those in the Sudan (cf. Longrigg 1945; Trevaskis 1960). And still others claim descent from across the Red Sea, the Arab Peninsula, as descendents of the Prophet Mohammed (cf. Bereketieab 2000, 2002; Pool 2001). This phenomenon is not, however, peculiar to Eritrea as it obtains in other parts of Africa. For example, Somalis are divided between Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya; the Oromos between Ethiopia and Kenya; the Beni Shangul/Nuer/Anjuak between Sudan and Ethiopia, etc.

If we take the case of Eritrean Tigrinya speakers there is no doubt they could rightly refer to primordial affiliation, in terms of language, religion, tradition, etc, with the Tigray people in Ethiopia. Historically, no one could refute the fact that the highland of Eritrea including the historical port of Adulis was the hub of the Axumite Kingdom (cf. Trimingham 1952:33; Rubenson 1976). Notwithstanding this, however, as Trevaskis (1960:10-11) notes, 'Italy created Eritrea by an act of surgery: by severing its different peoples from those with whom their past had been linked, and by grafting the amputated remnants to

each other under the title of Eritrea'. Indisputably, the pillars of Axumite Kingdom were Axum, as the seat of the political power, and Adulis, as the main gate and centre of international trade. Many archaeological relics in places like Metera and Tekonda'e incontrovertibly illustrate the highland of Eritrea was a cradle of the Axumite civilisation that saw its demise by the 7th century A. D.

Modern Eritrean history and identity is, however, political history and identity as any colonially created entities that goes beyond primordiality. Eritreans in general and the liberation fronts in particular never refuted such primordial connections with peoples on the other side of the geo-political border. Nevertheless, for Eritrean nationalists historical connection is one thing and present reality is another. The indisputable fact is that modern Eritrea is a colonial creation as any colonial African nation (Bereketeab 2007). Accordingly, claims of identities that trace to history and ancient civilisation, often made by Ethiopia, and any endeavour to apply it to contemporary life, would not only defy reality but also inexorably lead to chaos and tragedy. It was this realisation that induced the founders of the OAU to declare the colonial borders sacrosanct.

This acknowledgement however would not diminish the fact that the social construction of modern Eritrean identity is replete with paradoxes and ambiguities when it concerns its primordial pedigree. This is particularly true with the Tigrinya ethno-linguistic group. Eritrean folkloric narratives are replete with proverbs and anecdotes that depict Tigrayans as deceitful, malicious, dishonest, full of intrigues, etc. At the same time there are proverbs and claims that Tigrinya speakers, and for that matter Tigre of the Habab and Mensa'e tribes, are of the same blood as Tigrayans. Let me begin with the first category (the perception of the Tigrinyans) to illustrate the paradoxes.

The road between Adi Tekelezan and Ela Ber'ed, along the highway of Asmara-Keren, Eritrea, is called *I'bi Tigray* meaning the heart of Tigray. The road is zigzag shaped and very treacherous. The reason it is called *I'bi Tigray* is to describe how difficult it is to find out how or what a Tigrayan thinks and how treacherous he/she is. The name of the road metaphorically represents what Eritreans think and feel about Tigrayans.

This perception has been so widespread that even Arab residents of Eritrea had to contribute to this perception through construction of corrupt form of hybrid of Arabo-Tigrinya proverbs. Such proverbs include expressions such as: *Mata'emen Al Tigraway wala ashera mara yekun hiyaway* (do not trust a Tigrayan even if he is ten times generous/honest), *mata'emen al agame wala intemote wala intehameme* (do not trust an *agame* even if he is dead or sick). Apparently those Arab residents, particularly of Asmara, had picked some of the

prejudices and stereotypes of the Tigrinya speakers. This is clearly demonstrated in the perverted or corrupted language mixture of Arabic and Tigrinya in the cited statements. Nevertheless, it depicts the popular apprehension of Tigrayans.

Conversely, there are proverbs that, in some ways, revered blood of a Tigrayan. Proverbs like *kab tigray zeṭ w'led ai kabti ai kapti* (one who has no Tigrayan blood has to be no one). Religious shrines located in Axume, Tigray, are also some of the coveted places. Many Eritrean Christians crave to visit Mariam Tzion, particularly the anniversary celebration. It is worth noting here that we observe two parallel processes of defining simultaneously two forms of identity notably, modernist (civic) and primordial (ethnic). The first refers to the current colonially engendered political supra-ethnic Eritrean identity while the second refers to historical mythology and primordality that relate to a particularistic ethnic sub-national identity. It is this primordial conception of identity that constitutes the basis of 'Ethiopianess' of Eritreans according to Great Ethiopia scholars and Tigray-Tigringi ethno-nationalists (cf. Abbay 1998; Tadesse 1999; Negash 1998). The fallacies underlying the primordialist perception of identity is its denial of the reality that identities are multifaceted, and that modern identity is civic rather than ethnic (cf. Smith 1986). Eritrean modern identity is based on duality. The allusion to the civic, to the overarching supra-ethnic political identity, which is the outcome of the colonial and nationalist struggle processes, on the other hand is how Eritrean nationalists would like to define and perceive their Eritreanhood. These two premises complement in defining Eritrean national identity (Bereketeab 2000, 2004). Apparently the civic and ethnic (primordialist) sources of identity explain the paradoxes in Eritrean perception of their identity.

The Tigray-Eritrea Nexus

As mentioned earlier, one of the constituents of the complexity of the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict relates to the Tigray-Eritrea-nexus dimension. Whatever political relationship existed in the immediate pre-colonial period was permanently and irretrievably severed. Hence the so-called irredentism that followed the demise of Italian colonialism in Eritrea extended beyond the glory of historical Tigray. The Unionist Party deriving from an instrumentalist conception cast its net of rapprochement with the Shewan dominated Ethiopia, while the Liberal Progressive Party motivated by its contention of the colonially produced new Eritrean identity opted for an annexionist strategy-annexing Tigray into the prospective independent Eritrea than vice versa (Bereketeab 2007:150).

For the Tigrayans on the other hand the severing of the Tigrinya speaking Eritreans by Italy, and more significantly the acquiescence of the Shewan Emperor, Menelik II, to get hold of that territory by the vanquished Italians following their humiliation in the battle of Adwa, in 1896, became a bitter pill to swallow. Emperor Menelik's failure to pursue his success in the battle of Adwa to banish Italian presence in Eritrea was seen as mischievous act intended to divide the Tigrinya speakers as a consequence of which was intended to deprive the rightful heir from ascending to the Ethiopian throne. This conspiratorially informed view is widely accepted among those who believe that the Tigrinya *ethnie* were one people. Further, it derives from the view that until the death of Emperor Yohannes IV (1872-1889), the imperial power belonged to the Tigrayans. It was argued that Menelik, petrified by the thought that the throne might pass to Yohannes' legitimate successor, Luul Mengesha, and therefore, to undermine any opposition by a united Tigrinya speakers, conspired to divide them. The argument goes that the easiest way to do this was to make sure that the Mereb-Milash remained the property of Italy (cf. Berhe 1993:9; Abbay 1998).

The Tigrayans have always perceived the failure of Emperor Menelik II to push the Italians out of Eritrea as Amhara tactics of divide and rule, and Eritrea, and particularly the Tigrinya speakers, as the lost section of Tigray that has to be regained. This understanding has led many Tigrayans to deny the emergence of supra-ethnic Eritrean identity at the end of Italian colonial rule. The Tigrinya elite were presented as manifesting Tigray-Tigrigni⁷ identity that negated any Eritrean identity (cf. Abbay 1998, 2001; Tekeste 1997, 1987:163-4; Lata 2003). Alemseged Abbay (1998:30) writes,

the different *ethnies* that were brought together by the Italians did not see one another as Eritreans. As such, they did not struggle for a common political roof. Because there were no 'Eritreans,' there was no political party in the *kebessa* that seriously attempted to 'make' Eritrea in the territory north of the Mereb. For *kebessa* elites creating 'Eritrea' first and 'Eritreans' next looked an impossible dream of putting the cart before the horse.

This *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism, up to this time systematically engaged in misrepresentation of the fact of the 1940s. Its argument flies in the face of many facts. Firstly, it glosses over the fact that there were two parties representing the *kebessa* elite. The Liberal Progressive Party (LPP), the smaller of the two, like the Moslem League (ML) demonstrated strong irredentist tendencies (Bereketeab 2000:264). Unlike the Tigrayan *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism, the LPP (Eritrean) *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism departs from the perception of a

development of a separate Eritrean identity. Its irredentism rested on the pursuit of joining of a part that was left behind when Italian colonialism created Eritrea. It advocated for the creation of a sovereign Eritrea that included Tigray. It strove to join Tigray with the multi-ethnic 'mother land' Eritrea, it even convinced the Moslem League (ML) to accept the incorporation of Tigray (Bereketeab 2000:161). For sure this endeavour was based on its conviction that the two Tigrinyans were bound by primordial affiliations such as language, religion, culture, history. This (the LPP's advocacy for greater Eritrea) has given reason for many Tigrayan scholars to present as evidence of the Eritrean elites' belief of Eritreans Tigrayaness (cf. Abbay 1998; Lata 2003). What they failed to tell is that LPP wanted to join Tigray to Eritrea not vice versa. The LPP's irredentism thus sought to bring in a part that was left behind. This was corroborated by the BMA report of 1944 when it noted:

In the first place there is the sentimental attachment to the Tigray – the consciousness of racial and economic unity, and the memory of a long common history. But the Eritreans are strongly conscious of the separate identity of Eritrea, and the ethnic affinity with Ethiopia ends at the border of the Tigrinya block (FO 371-41531, October 1944).

The paradoxical nature of the Tigrayan *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism was clearly presented in the propaganda that was unleashed in conjunction with the outbreak of the second war (1998-2000), and in which case Eritreans were depicted as chauvinists, arrogant and displaying superior race mentality against Tigrayans (later about this, in the section on Ethiopian Elites on Eritrean Superiority Complex). This contradictory perception of Eritreans, where, on the one hand, they are perceived as lacking Eritrean national identity, and on the other, as harbouring a collective Eritrean chauvinism, superiority mentality, etc., depicts the duplicity of Tigrayan *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism. This could draw our attention to the fact that instead of cultural/primordial factors, political and economic considerations guide the Tigrayan *Tigray-Tigrigni* irredentism.

The second party, the Unionist Party (UP), was the largest party and was against the idea of *Tigray-Tigrigni* and wanted a unified Eritrea to join Ethiopia. The idea of unified Eritrea was based on the notion of Eritrean territoriality, it believed in the existence of a territory called Eritrea that encapsulated different ethno-linguistic groups. A demonstration of this was the shock the president of the UP felt in the New York meeting in 1949 when they were confronted by the acceptance of the Ethiopian representative of the division of Eritrea along religio-geographic lines, notably that highland Christians should join Ethiopia while the lowland Moslems should join Sudan (Tesfai 2001:382). The UP believes therefore not only in the assumption that there was no Eritrean

identity but also in the assumption of the Eritrean Tigrinya's Tigrayan identity. The acrimonious exchange between the UP leader, Tedla Bairu, and member of the LPP, Woldeab Wodemariam, in the *wa'ala* Bet Giorgis in 1946, where the former admonished the latter saying that he should not interfere in the internal affairs of Eritrea, because he was a Tigrayan (Tesfai 2001:182), illustrates how the Party that presumably represented the majority of the Tigrinya speakers, in fact, bypassed Tigray and flirted with the Shewa dominated Ethiopia. This could, further, be taken as demonstrative of the prevalence of distinctive Eritreanness seeking to safeguard its interest through joining Shewan dominated Ethiopia.

When it comes to Menelik's 'abdication of ownership' of Eritrea, Eritreans have a different understanding. Unlike the Tigrayan perception and interpretation discussed earlier, Eritreans believe that Menelik acquiesced to jettisoning Eritrea on two occasions because he was of the view that the territory did not belong to him (his realm). He has been using it as bargaining chip with the Italians to consolidate his powers with an eye on the south of Ethiopia. Why Menelik was more interested in south Ethiopia than Eritrea is explained in this way:

Emperor Menelik readily yielded to Italian pressure to colonize Eritrea because his eyes were on another colonial prize, namely, south Ethiopia. That region was rich with huge stretches of fertile land, rain forests filled with high-grade lumber, coffee that grows wild, as well as gold, ivory, civet, spices and slaves. That and the 'fortress Ethiopia' mentality that caused the highlanders to cherish their mountain fastnesses and to avoid living in the lowlands, were the principal reason why Ethiopia never became an important player in the semi-desert regions of the Red Sea littoral during the colonial era. Again and again the Ethiopian Emperors – Tewodros (Theodore), Yohannes IV (John), and Menelik II – showed that their strategy was more terrestrial than maritime. On land they were credible adversaries for the European and Turko-Egyptian colonialists, at sea they were weak, or absent, or distracted by other ventures at those crucial moments when the colonial takeover of the coast was taking place (Legesse 2002:2).

Although the conspiratorially informed thesis of Menelik's scheme to divide the Tigrinya ethno-linguistic group (nation) might hold true to certain degree, yet, it obliterates the mythology of Ethiopian state existing continuously for more than three millennia. In other words Menelik was earnestly engaged in state building activities and thereby confirming the Eritrean claim that both modern Eritrea and Ethiopia are creation of capitalist colonial era.

The 1976 TPLF Manifesto is to be construed from the primordially informed ethnicist criteria of identity perspective as well as from expansionist political and economic calculations. It was not a matter of coincidence that the Manifesto included all Tigrinya speakers and even the Saho, the Kunama, and the Afar in the prospective republic of Tigray (more about this in the next section). This claim is made on the basis of selective constructivist reading of historiography, mythology, and hegemony, aiming at glorifying the greatness of Tigray by promoting a master narrative. From the perspective of pragmatic politics, therefore, for the TPLF, Eritrea constitutes a vital component of their existence, regardless whether they opt for independence or stay within Ethiopia. The conflict between the EPLF and TPLF of the 1976 and 1984 based on this calculation was not resolved when the two governments resumed their relation in the post-liberation period, which many observers consider as serious mistake.

There is a serious doubt concerning the validation of the primordial school of thought from where the *Tigray-Tigrigni* scholars and politicians draw their impetus for the assumption of a union of the Tigrinya speakers of Eritrea and Tigray. Indeed, in its extreme form, the school was tainted by philosophies that gave rise to extreme racial politico-social ideologies. German Romanticism giving birth to Hitlerian Nazism, Zionism paving way for the conception of chosen people, Boer Puritanism rationalising the notorious apartheid system are some of the examples that doctrinaire primordialism is associated with regarding the notion of modern identity. In the African context notions such as nativity and autochthony (cf. Marshall-Fratani 2007:32; Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007:72-3) have contributed to heinous acts of atrocities in countries such as Ivory Coast and Rwanda. Although the reason behind the *Tigray-Tigrigni* scholars cum politicians' construction of identity is not merely primordial Puritanism it has been deployed as an instrument to serve the greater Tigray agenda. It rather serves as a façade for political purposes. Tigray needs Eritrea for its political survival.

Exactly for the opposite reasons, Eritreans praise the modernist school of thought since it gives legitimacy and offers a rational explanation for the conception of their national identity as a basis of their political identity engendered through colonial rule. Political identity in modern poly-ethnic societies is necessarily defined and guided by civic affiliation (see Gellner 1983; Anderson 1991; Smith 1986; Hobsbawm 1990). It is a paradigmatic reality that, not only Eritreans, but all post-colonial societies as well as modern Western societies rest on civic identity for their nationhood. In this respect it will not be difficult to understand the claim that the EPLF rejected TPLF's struggle for

independence of Tigray because it could complicate its own ambition of independence of Eritrea (cf. Tadesse 1999).

This primordialist vs. modernist conception of identity, beyond academic debate, has far-reaching practical political consequences. The former as advocated by Tigray ethno-nationalists constitutes a serious threat to Eritrean sovereignty. The current cry of many Tigrayan intellectuals (Araya Gelowdowes, Alemseged Abbay, Medhane Tadesse, etc.) to renegotiate the referendum of 1993 through which Eritrea became formally independent; Algiers Agreement that defined the premises of delineating and demarcating of the border, EEBC delimitation and demarcation ruling aiming at either reincorporating the whole or annexing the ports of Eritrea, though based on primordially defined perception of identity, demonstrates how Tigrayan political survival is intimately connected with Eritrea (Fessehazion 1999:229). Tekie Fessahazion (1999:233) claims that the Tigrayan perception that Eritrea should serve the interest of Greater Tigray drove them to sabotage the 1993 Agreement between Asmara and Addis Ababa,

Tigray subverted the meaning and spirit of the 1993 Agreement in three key areas: preventing people from moving freely across the border; uprooting people from their land without due process; and erecting trade barriers to limit the movement of Eritrean goods into Ethiopia through Tigray.

This subversion referred to here relates to the 'Friendship and Cooperation Agreement' signed in July 1993 that entailed five points whose contents include free movements of people, goods and capital (Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:229-30).

To sum up, the Tigray-Eritrea relation constitutes one aspect of the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict. Although linguistic, religious, ethnic, cultural (primordial premises) and historical ties between Tigray and Eritrea account for the complicated causes of the war, the precarious political position of Tigray in Ethiopia also plays a significant role in the perception of Eritrea's imperative involvement in the Ethiopian polity. This imperative compels Tigrayans to yearn to get hold of Eritrea thus giving rise to two levels of causality of the conflict.

EPLF and TPLF Relations

In this section, I shift my focus away from relationship between two societies to one that existed between two movements. It is true that at certain point in time the two Fronts acting as vanguards of the struggles represented their respective people. However, not only it is possible, but also important to make distinction between the Fronts and the peoples because there have always

been groups at the margins that neither belong to the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) nor the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), but were members of respective societies.

The common view that the EPLF and TPLF relationship, during the liberation struggle, was based absolutely on friendly terms was a gross misrepresentation of reality. Indeed, it was characterised by deep-rooted differences (as was displayed in their dispute in 1976 and 1984) and was guided through a pragmatic tactical interests (Tareke 2002:496). The secrecy and lack of transparency that characterised the relationship, however, invoked deep suspicion, particularly, on the Eritrean side, where many became apprehensive of the EPLF-TPLF relation, giving rise to various interpretations. This section discusses this aspect of their relationship, the controversy surrounding it, and the unresolved problems that were transferred to the post-liberation period constituting component elements of the cause of the second war.

When the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) launched armed liberation struggle in 1975 to liberate Tigray from Ethiopia, it received crucial support from the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF). According to Aregawi Berhe (1993:28-29), 20 out of the 45 men constituting the nucleus of TPLF's liberation fighters were sent to EPLF's rear base, in Sahil, for military training. When they completed their military training they were sent back to Tigray accompanied by an EPLF veteran fighter of Tigrayan origin by the name Mehari Tekle to serve as a military leader in the emergent liberation organisation. The first batch which was trained by the EPLF, the future senior TPLF leaders and latter EPRDF government leaders include: Abay Tzehayye, Siye Abraha, Awalom Weldu, Agazi, Seyum Mesfin, Aregawi Berhe (Drar 1999:7; Berhe 2004:586).

Nevertheless, already, in 1976, due to the TPLF's Manifesto of that year, relations between the two organisations suffered serious setbacks. The Manifesto contained two crucial points that the EPLF strongly opposed. The first was the sudden change in the TPLF's objective from struggling for a democratic Ethiopia to the creation of an independent republic of Tigray. The second was its definition of the people of Tigray and the territoriality upon which the prospective Greater Tigray republic was to be established; both were elements that proved to be antithesis of the colonially created Eritrean politico-territorial entity. The definition of Tigrayans included all those who speak Tigrinya, which means including the highland Tigrinya speakers of Eritrea and the border communities (Kunama, Saho and Afar). Whereas the territoriality of the Greater Tigray republic presumably was to be founded on the territory that coincided with the rule of Emperor Yohannes IV that included the ten-year (1879-1889) Rasi Alula reign of the highland of Eritrea. The ambition, as

expressed in the Manifesto, to create a greater Tigray was thus perceived by EPLF as dangerous and became the cause for the rupture of the relation (Schlee 2003:383). Some attribute the opposition of the EPLF to the establishment of republic of Tigray to be motivated by its fear that it could complicate the Eritrean struggle for independence (Berhe 1993:30; Tadesse 1999). This complication of Eritrean independence would only constitute one dimension of the crucial problem entailed in the TPLF Manifesto. Yet, those who subscribe to the view of complicating Eritrean independence, allude to the problem that might arise to get Ethiopian consent for Eritrea's secession, if Tigray was to opt for independence. This view seems to be oblivious of the second implication of the Manifesto, notably dismantling Eritrea (Bereketeab 2009). Following the disruption of EPLF-TPLF relations, the latter began cooperation with another rival Eritrean organisation, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) which lasted until 1979 (Tadesse 1999:74; Lata 2003:373). After almost three years that the TPLF had severed relations with ELF it patched its difference with EPLF again. The restoration of relation was facilitated by the TPLF's supposed revision of its position on the Tigrayan struggle. According to Lata (2003:373), in 1979, 'the TPLF re-designated the Tigrayan question as a "national question"'. This re-designation re-positioned the Tigrayan struggle as an internal Ethiopian problem that has to be resolved through democratic reconfiguration of the Ethiopian Empire State. However, the EPLF-TPLF relation was disrupted in 1984 again.

This time the reasons for the break up of relations were: (i) ideological (the TPLF wanted the EPLF to condemn the Soviet Union as social-imperialist); (ii) military strategy (the TPLF were against the permanent rear base of the EPLF, it wanted the EPLF to convert itself into mobile units); (iii) issue of creation of a republic of Tigray (again the issue of an independent Tigray resurfaced); and (iv) the issue of nationalities (cf. Young 1996; Schlee 2003; Tadesse 1999). The fourth issue constituted very serious point of difference from the Eritrean perspective. In a way it was reminiscent of the 1976 TPLF Manifesto. The very foundation of the Eritrean struggle was anti-colonial and establishment of an independent poly-ethnic Eritrea. Here the TPLF comes and tells the EPLF to adopt the right for self-determination of nationalities within Eritrea itself. Moreover, it 'supported the right of the Eritrean Afar to secede, and further, supported the concept of an 'Afar triangle' incorporating those of Eritrea' (Schlee 2003:384). This was perceived by Eritreans as an assault on the very foundation of the Eritrean colonially created entity. It also put a question mark on the TPLF's sincerity of its commitment and unequivocal support of Eritrean independence.

In 1988, the disrupted relation between the EPLF and TPLF was restored, and continued to be characterised by amicable concordance until 1997. Yet the TPLF continued providing sanctuary to small Eritrean groups opposed to the EPLF, an act that could be easily interpreted to mean that the TPLF had a secret agenda. The Eritrean Liberation Front – Central Command (ELF-CC), also popularly known as Sagem, and the Democratic Movement for the Liberation of Eritrea (DMLE), both breakaway factions of the mainstream ELF, moved to Tigray, a stronghold of the TPLF in the 1980s. This took place when the relationship between the EPLF and TPLF was constrained. The restoration of relationship before independence and the cordial relations between the two governments after independence should have motivated the TPLF and, later, the Ethiopian government to sever relations with these groups. But they were given save heaven by the TPLF.

What is interesting to note is that when the TPLF severed relations with the EPLF, in the mid-1980s, it convened a seminar of Eritreans in Khartoum, Sudan, and told them bluntly that the existing Eritrean organisations were not progressive. They also told them their organisations were undemocratic, non-Marxist-Leninists, etc. and that, they (the Eritreans) should form a new organisation. The ‘TPLF said that the EPLF was not democratic’ (Tadesse 1999:81). The call for the formation of an alternative organisation, in the image of the TPLF, was perceived as anti-Eritrean, because many Eritreans believed that it was a move to weaken their nationalist struggle. Indeed, many Eritreans construed it as TPLF’s tactics to destroy the Eritrean organisations one by one. TPLF’s involvement in the destruction of the ELF in the 1980/81 intra-Eritrean civil war, and now the call for the creation of an alternative organisation was not reassuring for Eritreans. Many understood the assertive position of the TPLF not only as a desire to change its position as a junior partner, but also an attempt, in a disguised way, to retune the Eritrean question in a manner that serves the interest of Tigray, as the current Prime Minister of Ethiopia, Mr. Meles Zenawi also in various occasions was alleged to have asserted (Tesfai 1999:223; Fessehazion 1999:229).

Furthermore, keeping the Eritrean groups in Tigray, and later the creation of new ethnic Eritrean organisations (Kunama and Afar) after the outbreak of the second war (1998-2000) has given rise to speculations that the TPLF had a hidden agenda. What is also interesting is that these client groups adopted the TPLF’s vision of right to self-determination up to and including secession of ethnic groups. This behaviour of the TPLF was construed as epitomising the TPLF’s long-term twin strategy, and its readiness to use any Eritrean group that is ready to be manipulated.

Following the second war, the TPLF-led Ethiopian government played a significant role in the creation of the Eritrean Alliance of National Forces (EANF) that was formed around November 1998 (later changed name to Eritrean Democratic Alliance-EDA). The TPLF saw in it great political expediency to patch its differences with its archenemies, ELF groups, whom it humiliated and defeated during the 1980s (cf. Tadesse 1999:64f). The People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) government also mended its relations with Ethiopian opposition groups, particularly, with the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF).

In conclusion, one can say that, the bumpy relations between the EPLF and TPLF during the liberation struggle had its positive and negative dimensions. The positive dimension was that it enabled the materialisation of the hopes and aspirations of both peoples. The negative dimension is that it further entrenched the socio-psychological perceptions and imaginations by further deepening the suspicions and mistrusts. The fundamental points of schism that caused the rupture of the relations between the two fronts in 1976 and 1984 were neither discussed in earnest nor resolved when the relation was mended in 1988. Priority was given to the defeat of the Dergue. Therefore the points of difference were simply transferred to the post-liberation period where it could be said eventually they contributed to the outbreak of the war in 1998.

Post-Independence Relations

The foregoing section highlighted that serious differences that appeared during the liberation period were not properly addressed. The 1976 and 1984 ruptures of relation between the EPLF and TPLF were caused by profound differences whose roots and resolutions were never properly discussed. It was clear that the restoration of the alliance was pragmatically driven, intended to employ combined efforts to defeat the military regime in Addis Ababa. Not to dwell on their differences might have been considered, at the time, prudent. A crucial question that should have been grappled with, following independence was; on what foundation was the post-independence relation of the two governments to be based? Given the precarious relation of the EPLF and TPLF in the past and the seriousness of some of the points of difference, addressing this question should have been given an utmost priority, particularly by the Eritrean side.

Many Eritreans wonder why the EPLF, taking into consideration its experience with TPLF and the underlying profound issues of differences, did not show extreme prudence in its post-independence dealings with the Ethiopian

government. Moreover, why they were given mixed signals from the EPLF/PFDJ government regarding calls for confederation that would make borders irrelevant and which had given reason for Ethiopian scholars (definitely also politicians) to assume that a political union was in the pipeline.⁸ Many Eritreans resented that clear separation between the two governments, already in 1993, have not taken place. There are also those who believe that it might have been much easier to delimit and demarcate the border at the time. Many citizens of both countries received the close relations of the two governments with great apprehension.⁹ Critics argue that the major shortfalls of the amicable relation was that it was not anchored in institutions and popular support, but rather on the guerrilla organisations that ascended to power through the barrel of a gun, and more precisely on the personal good relationship between leaders (Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005; Negash and Tronvoll 2000). National institutions like the parliament, the judiciary, the press, civil society bodies were not properly informed and involved. Decisions were carried out by limited circles. When problems began to emerge also they were kept secret from the public.

Already in 1993 there were reports of simmering problems in the border areas, particularly in the Badme region. Eritrean villagers were harassed by local Tigrayan officials and forced to leave their houses and land on the pretext that the land their houses were built on and the land they were farming were Tigrayan territories (Fessahatzion 2002, 1999:233; Tesfai 1999:220). These problems successively grew in intensity until the outbreak of the war in May 1998. Yet these problems were effectively concealed from the public and mass media.

The fact that relations between the two governments began to deteriorate abruptly in conjunction with the announcement of issuance of the Eritrean currency in May 1997 gave rise to views that the relation was founded on false expectations. It has now become a commonplace knowledge that the two governments had different expectations from their post-independence relations (cf. Lata 2003; Abbink 2003). The Eritrean government is believed to have been much interested in the economic aspect of the relationship. As such it is presumably believed that it pushed for optimal exploitation of the Ethiopian market. This led to scholars sympathetic to Ethiopia to talk about, 'the Ethiopian regime's ambiguous and perhaps naïve political dealings with Eritrean government and of giving it too many political and economic advantages after 1993' (Abbink 2003:227).

Proponents of the view of different expectations further argue that the Ethiopian government on the other hand was very much concerned with the political

dimension of the relation. They maintain that the Ethiopian government was indeed aiming at through its open economic policy to trap Eritrea in a state of political dependency. Trivelli (quoted in Lata 2003:377) notes:

The TPLF Leadership... hoped that the benefits of the economic privileges given to Eritrea and Eritreans would ultimately induce or even force the Eritrean leadership to re-enter into some form of political union with Ethiopia.

Therefore, insofar as Eritrea was not sliding away from Ethiopia, it was tolerated when using the Ethiopian market to its advantage. According to this view that was why when Eritrea indicated going its way, asserting its political sovereignty – pursuing an independent foreign policy, introducing its own currency (of high symbolic value of its political independence) – the relationship began to radically deteriorate (cf. Fessahatzion 2002). The fact that the rupture in the relationship was connected with the launching of the Eritrean currency was seen by some observers as a clear indication of how the TPLF position of the Eritrean independence was driven by tactical calculation,

However, private musings by TPLF leaders and some of their one-sided policies towards Eritrea indicate their expectation that this independence would be either temporary or would at least be subordinated to the two groups' long range joint economic and security interests (Lata 2003:374).

Lata (2003:377) further continues, 'The Ethiopian Prime Minister offhandedly informed me of his expectations that Eritrea will imminently rejoin Ethiopia, although the form of such a link was not put as explicitly'. This expectation of Meles was expressed in 1992, that is, over a year after the de facto and a year before the de jure independence. A similar expectation was also expressed by Meles in an interview with Paul Henz in just before the EPRDF assumed power in 1991.

We look at this (Eritrea's independence) from the viewpoint of the interests of Tigray, first, and then Ethiopia as a whole. We know that Tigray needs access to the sea and the only way is through Eritrea. There are many Tigrayans in Eritrea. They don't want to be treated as foreigners there. They have the same history. We are worried about Eritrea because we are not sure that differences among the different groups can be kept under control (quoted in Fessahatzion 1999:229).

It might be then said that the issuance of the Eritrean currency could have shattered the illusion of the Tigrayan leadership. It is possible to assume that it spelled out to them that Eritrea was sliding away. It is not farfetched to argue then that the only way possible they saw to prevent the slide was to exert economic pressure on Eritrea. The first step of this economic pressure taken was to revoke the economic regime that was formally put in place in

1993. The FCA collapsed when the Ethiopian government unilaterally breached it and called for enforcement of new regime, which the Eritrean government resisted (Fessehazion 1999:235-7). The Ethiopian government shifted all its foreign transactions from Assab to Djibouti. It also insisted on carrying out trade transactions between the two countries if it involved more than 2000 birr in foreign currency (Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:253-4).

To sum up, from the foregoing discussion it may be possible to conclude that the Eritrea-Tigray relation is governed by the Tigrayan need to have Eritrea in the bandwagon of whatever form of political existence the former chooses to have. As a minority, it needs Eritrea if it is going to control Ethiopia. As independent state also it is difficult, if not unthinkable, to survive without Eritrea. This two-forked strategy dictates Tigrayan position on Eritrea. For Ethiopia at large, particularly, the Amhara elite, the loss of Eritrea is a great dent on their self-image and prestige, although it is currently explained in terms of the crucial impact it might have in the overall economic development of Ethiopia.

Ethiopian Elites on Eritrean Superiority Complex

Earlier I discussed the prejudiced Eritrean perception of Tigrayans. In this section I will discuss the other face of the coin of the prejudiced perception of Eritreans, notably the Tigrayan/Ethiopian one. The Ethiopian prejudiced views of Eritreans derive from their perception of the so-called Eritrean superiority complex. Discussing both prejudices will allow us to demonstrate the complexity of the problem and bring forward the latent or embedded causalities of the conflict. This would provide important insights in to why reaching for a resolution of the conflict has so far proved elusive.

Although, as we have seen, the Eritrean prejudices and stereotypes are of benign nature, the Ethiopian elite, particularly, following the outbreak of the second war has taken it perhaps too seriously because maybe it serves certain political objectives. What is interesting is that several of the ethnic groups in Ethiopia reportedly have their own prejudices and superiority complexes against others. The Amharas are said to have superiority complex vis-a-vis the other ethnic groups in Ethiopia. Prejudices and stereotypes abound; they are directed against the Oromo, Tigrayans, Gurage, Somalis, etc. Nevertheless those scholars and politicians of Amhara origin never emphasise the superiority complex within their ethnic group as they do to that of the Eritreans. Recently the Tigrayan and Amhara elites have found a common cause to blast Eritrean chauvinism. Arguably this common cause emanates from temporary political expediency. While the Amhara elite want to annul Eritrean independence the

Tigrayans want Eritrean independence to advance the Greater Tigray project. The second war conveniently gave both groups an ample opportunity to tailor common platform (Mengisteab 1999; Fessahatzion 1999; Sorenson and Matsuoka 2001), but it might reasonably be argued that it is not really Eritrean chauvinism that concerns much these intellectuals but more importantly Eritrea's aggressive assertion of its sovereignty.

Only this would make sense as to why Eritreans were subjected to these unscrupulous attacks. The Eritreans were accused of being arrogant supremacists, racists, etc. (see e.g. Tadesse 1999: 74, 78; Abbay 1998, 2001; Zewde 1999; Eshete 1998). Tigrayan officials such as Ghebru Asrat, Sebhat Nega, Dr. Solomon Inquai accused Eritreans, during the war, of super race mentality. Echoing the 'supreme mentality' of Eritreans Sebhat Nega is quoted as saying:

...calling themselves the 'Jews of Africa' and the 'Black Israelis'. They say Tigrayans are inferior and that they are a super race... that is the cause of this conflict. They say they are super race and they believe it. Our enemy is this attitude of the Eritrean people.¹⁰

One of the Tigray intellectuals Dr. Solomon Inquai also wrote,

Eritreans consider themselves more civilized or enlightened not only than the Ethiopians but also than the rest of Africans. They think that life under colonial rule makes for better people.¹¹

One of the prominent Ethiopian scholars, Professor Bahru Zewde, in an interview with the *Reporter* was quoted as saying,

Eritrean chauvinism appears to be associated with the fact that Eritreans were colonized by Italians. The existence of certain infrastructures, the use of Italian utensils and appliances, eating with knives and forks and eating pasta instead of 'injera', etc., might have inculcated in the Eritreans a false sense of modernity.¹²

These quotations highlight the feeling of strong invocations Eritrean independence arouses among Ethiopians. For many Ethiopians the second war might have provided a sense of an ample opportunity to crush Eritrean superiority complex (Mengisteab and Yohannes 2005:245). What is perilous with this concerted criticism of the so-called Eritrean chauvinism is its tendency to transcend the borderlines of perceptions. It may readily be transformed into advocacy of violence in order to reverse Eritrean identity and independence. A detailed study was carried out by Sorenson and Matsuoka (2001) about the systematic attack on Eritrean identity and 'mentality' in the cyberspace

following the outbreak of the second war by what the authors designated as Abyssinian fundamentalism. Among the several quotes and references they presented in their study one illustrative example could be cited,

The war Ethiopia must wage is not really about breaking the back bone [sic] of the Eritrean army. The latter is a small but important part of the mission. What Ethiopia must break into fragments is the thought process which gives birth to Eritreanism. Ethiopia must destroy this foundation of evil. Peace will only come to Ethiopia if Ethiopia destructs the psychogenetic force which condemns the Eritrean to be a living robot so synchronized to think and act uniformly. Ethiopia must break the back bone [sic] of this trait. Ethiopia must see that the new born Eritrea grow in an atmosphere where African values are taught and nurtured. The young of Eritrea must be reconnected to the history that is truly theirs. It is only when people are made whole that peace and happiness reign (Sorenson and Matsuoka 2001:58).

Phrases like 'African values', 'history truly theirs', refer to Ethiopian values and history to which the Eritreans should return. Further, Sorenson and Matsuoka, cite throughout the work how Eritreans are depicted to 'ADORE their conquerors and DESPISE themselves' (Sorenson and Matsuoka 2001:57, emphasis in original), etc. The message is to liberate themselves from all these pathologies Eritreans should return to their Ethiopian roots.

The pervasive campaigns by Ethiopian intellectuals and politicians about Eritrean diversity, artificiality, fabricated identity; and social-psychology expressed in chauvinism, racism, despise, in particular following the second Eritrea-Ethiopia war; without turning inward that is looking into the Ethiopian societal setting and reality could be seen as indicative of the political entrepreneurship that endeavours to bring back Eritrea to its 'authentic' identity than being an indication of the so-called Eritrean chauvinism. Eritrea and Eritreans regardless of how strongly they express their right to be people, in spite of all the sufferings and sacrifices they paid to be recognised as so, and in spite of deservedly achieving their independence; they are still Ethiopians. Eritrean national consciousness is depicted as false consciousness.

Hatred and arrogant national consciousness conspired not only against the proper assessment of the relation with Tigray or Ethiopian people, but also against the proper understanding of their own people. Misperceptions always lead to miscalculation... the same (Eritrean) arrogance also negatively affected the nature (behaviour) of the leadership which emerged aggressive out of one of the most ugly civil wars (inter-Eritrean) in the horn of Africa. It is also related to the rise and development of the EPLF as a military organisation. It has been said that as the major arm (lea-

der) of the Eritrean armed struggle, the EPLF had not flourished in its democratic and progressive sense (Tadesse 1999:104-105).

These are some few examples I picked up to illustrate the so-called Eritrean social-psychology as expressed by Ethiopians and the manner to deal with it. The crucial question is that, is it really the Eritrean mentality that worries these Ethiopian intellectuals and politicians? Most probably it is not what Eritreans feel about Tigrayans or Ethiopians, and about themselves that worries these people. Indeed, it has to do with Eritrea's struggle for a separate identity and sovereignty. Sorenson and Matsuoka (2001:52) succinctly express it, 'Ethiopia experienced Eritrean independence as a threat to their historical and national identity'. Eritreans are ridiculed for basing their national identity on colonial legacy. They are subjected to concerted and systematic belittling for claiming a separate identity from that of Ethiopia in general and Tigray in particular.

Eritrean organisations and particularly their leaders were the primary targets of Ethiopian and Ethiopianist scholars' rampant vilifications campaigns. Throughout the liberation struggle period Eritrean fronts were derogatively described by both the Emperor and its successor (the Military Junta-Dergue) as Jebha and Shaebia bandits bent to sell Eritrea to the highest petrodollar bidder. The underlying rationale behind this vilification was that the organisations and their leaders were perceived to be the sole proponents of secession, and the ones denying Ethiopian roots of Eritreans. The people of Eritrea, they claimed, have never denied their Ethiopian-ness and do not support secession from Ethiopia (Wolde Giorgis 1989). Apparently all this was used to conceal the real reason for the concerted campaigns, notably that Eritrean sovereignty is seen as grave danger for the fame and glory of a more than three millennium of uninterrupted history and existence. In this sense the squabble that burst over a small village 'is actually about Eritrea's survival as a sovereign state' (Fessahatzion 1999:237). Here, there is no doubt that the Eritrean government bears huge responsibility not only of mishandling the border dispute and the diplomatic relations but also in its imprudent dealings with EPRDF Ethiopian government in the post-liberation period. Well aware of the Great Ethiopia mythology and Greater Tigray ambition the EPLF government should have taken all necessary precautionary measure not to provide reasons for those opponents of the Eritrean independence to open another war to obliterate the gains Eritrean achieved at an extremely high price, a scenario that terrifies Eritreans most.

Ethiopians who ridicule and belittle Eritrean nationalism, nationhood and identity as artificial, fabricated and baseless are also, by implication, saying that nationalism, nationhood and identity in Africa is artificial, fabricated and baseless. Today's Eritrea as a product of European colonialism displays all the markers of post-colonial African states. If Eritreans would say that they are Ethiopians, and Eritrea is Ethiopia, then they would not be subjected to the systematic accusations of displaying the so-called prejudice, racist, super mentality or superiority complexity. Probably they would be embraced, loved and respected with their 'Italian utensils and appliances'. Invariably Eritreans have argued that what Ethiopians covet is not the Eritrean person, indeed, it was expressed by Emperor Haile Selassie some half a century ago when he said 'what we want from Eritrea is the land not the people'.

Here it is worth mentioning that it is the opponents of Eritrean independence that primarily dwell on these accusations and ridicule. As Lata (2003:371) notes, 'To the opponents of Eritrea's independence, this war is strictly an intra-state affair. Hence, for them the conflict would come to a conclusion only when Ethiopia's traditional borders are restored not in the contested locality of Badme but at Red Sea Coast'. It does not matter how many Eritrean lives are sacrificed along the way. To these Ethiopians, the independence of Eritrea invokes a feeling of a person whose hand was chopped off by accident and would not rest until grafting it back at any price (Sorenson and Matsuoka 2001:47).

Conclusion and Prospects

This paper set out to analyse the Eritrea-Ethiopia conflict. Based on the analysis, the logical inference one could reach is that the causalities of the conflict are to be sought far beyond the so obvious proximate factors, in other words we have to look for deeply embedded historical factors that underlie it.

The declared intention of the task was stated as searching for explanation and interpretation. Hence a number of assumptions thought to be root factors of the conflict were expounded in some detail. Such causal factors include identity, history, state formation, mythologies, claims and counter-claims of separate identities and concomitant sovereignty, and liberation era unresolved points of difference between the liberation movements. If these variables are to be taken as the causal factors, then, the conflict relates to the very independence of Eritrea. In addition, the paper highlights how the two levels of engagement: Eritrea-Tigray and Eritrea-Ethiopia complicate the relationship as well as the effort to find durable resolution to the conflict. The complications these two levels of relationship manifest are related to two competing

expectations. The Great Ethiopia mythology believes that separation of Eritrea was a great menace to the country's glory as well as an impediment to its development. The Greater Tigray ambition also associates Eritrean independence with the survival of Tigray whatever the form it may assume.

Eritrea, on the other hand, has been engaged forcefully not only in resisting both Great Ethiopia mythology and Greater Tigray ambition but was involved in its own process of deconstruction and reconstruction that has certainly invoked rage among Ethiopians. The reconstructed counter-claim of history, identity and statehood locked Eritrea into a collision course with both narratives of 'Greater'. This irreconcilable perception of history, identity and statehood and concomitant practices (Ethiopian vs. Eritrean sides) underpins the contours of the continuity of the conflict.

One of the arguments Ethiopian nationalists and scholars try to advance, in relation to Eritrean identity and nationalism, is that Eritrea is ethnically so divided that it cannot have deep-rooted national identity and common feeling (cf. Tadesse 1999; Abbay 1998, 2001). Eritrea's separate identity and sovereign statehood is thus doubted. Eritreans, however, questioned the sincerity of the concern with the artificiality and survivability of Eritrea. Indeed, Eritreans argue that all current African states are artificial, including Ethiopia.

It could not be over-emphasised then that proper understanding of the recent conflict would require interrogating all the complexities. The most critical root factor may be the formation of Eritrea and its subsequent yearning for sovereignty, on the one hand, and Ethiopia's uncompromising and inherent urge to hold it within its hegemonic polity perimeters, on the other. The Tigray-Eritrean, and particularly the EPLF-TPLF, relationship during the liberation struggle may further have complicated the conflict. The twin objectives of the TPLF and particularly the creation of Greater Tigray ambition (Mengisteab 1999:92; Reid 2003:386; Lata 2003:373) stood at the centre of the complication. A minor border dispute which the Eritrean government managed appallingly seem to have provided Great Ethiopia mythology and Greater Tigray ambition, or, to use Sorenson and Matsuoka's terminology, Abyssinian fundamentalism, an opportunity to try and reverse Eritrean independence.

For the Tigrayans, though overtly they seem to accept independence of Eritrea, yet covertly they have tied Eritrean sovereignty with their twin objectives. The TPLF 'conveniently followed a dual strategy of seeking solutions both within and outside greater Ethiopia. This contradictory perspective seemed to be resolved in 1991 when the larger Ethiopian cake was fully controlled by the group' (Gudina 2003:118). Yet the domination of the larger Ethiopian cake presupposes the drawing in of Eritrea in that larger political space. If it is

to retain its dominance of the Ethiopian polity, the TPLF essentially needs to soothe Ethiopian objection of Eritrean independence. This soothing would mean holding on to Eritrea. The second option, the establishment of independent Tigrayan state also could only be sustained if it could ensure a close relation with Eritrea.

For the rest of Ethiopia, from practicality perspective, Eritrea means the imperative outlet to the sea. Many Ethiopians make a direction connection between possessing seaports and development and prosperity of their country. Therefore, there is a deep resentment of the fact that while a population of four million could control two ports, a nation of eighty million people will be deprived of one. Moreover, they are convinced that they have historical, cultural, legal and international rights on the ports. As long as this legitimate right is not addressed then there will not be peace and security between the two neighbours, and the stalemate will continue.

Another perplexing dimension of the conflict is the role played by the international community. Although this was not the focus of the paper it would be of general interest to say few words about it. The UN, OAU (AU), EU and USA were guarantors of the final and binding Algiers Agreement that ended the second war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in December 2000. Nonetheless they were unable to enforce the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission verdict of April 2002. Instead of putting pressure on Ethiopia to accept an international court ruling, the United Nations Security Council delivered sanctions on Eritrea on 23 December 2009, further adding complication to what was already an intractable problem. The sanction may be tempting for Ethiopia to exploit and take military actions against Eritrea. If that temptation is put into action not only we will have a chaotic Eritrea in our hand but also it will have a far-reaching implication for Ethiopia and the region as a whole.

The international community was already on record for failing to stop the war. The double failure imperatively emanates, firstly, from lack of understanding of the complex factors underlying the conflict; secondly, from an act of complacency that allowed one party to get away with the rejection of the Permanent Court of Arbitration's legal verdict. The policy of complacency is dictated by superpower strategic interest in the region, particularly by the war on terrorism. The international community therefore needs to devise fair, just and even-handed policy that engages not only two nations but also all actors in the region. In other words a holistic regional approach is needed.

By way of conclusion I would like to propose some suggestions that may move the situation forward.

- Implement immediately and unconditionally the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) verdict. This will ensure Eritrea's security and sovereignty.
- Following the implementation of EEBC verdict the two countries should engage in dialogue with the aim of entering into new agreement similar to that of the friendship and cooperation agreement they signed in 1993. This time all pending issues of difference should be discussed in a transparent way and be properly resolved. Above all Ethiopia's need of outlet to the sea through Eritrean ports should be addressed in a manner that satisfies both countries.
- Enhance regional integration. Probably reinvigorate the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) with clearly and concretely defined objectives of integration with a defined timeframe. This may assuage the mutual suspicions and fears that may exist in bilateral relationship.
- Stop interfering in the internal affairs of the other. Supporting opposition groups based on the principle of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend' often leads to 'proxy wars' and is plunging the whole region into turmoil.
- Strengthen historical, traditional and institutional ties among communities. Along the whole borderline there are communities divided by international political boundaries that may serve as a bridge for cooperation, stability and peaceful coexistence

Notes

1. Richard Reid (2003:274) notes, "the terms in which much of the world's media framed its thoughts on the war between Eritrea and Ethiopia were markedly one-dimensional... These were two bald men fighting over a comb; two poverty-stricken African nations (the 'hostile tribes' concept was lurking just below the surface) fighting for pride at the expense of the material dignity of their populations; two ignorant governments engaging in brutal and bloody 'First World War tactics' for pieces of insignificant land".
2. The Friendship and Cooperation Agreement (FCA) between the Ethiopian and Eritrean government's was signed after the Eritrean referendum that declared the de jure independence of Eritrea in July 1993. The FCA consists of five points and these are: "1. Preservation of the free flow of goods and services, capital and people; 2. Ethiopia's continued free access to Eritrea's sea ports paying for port services in its own currency, the *bir*; 3. Cooperation in monetary policy and continued use of the *bir* by both countries until Eritrea issued its own currency; 4. Harmonization of customs policies and; 5. Cooperation and consultation in foreign policy" (Mengisteab and Yohannes 2004:229-30).
3. This Ethiopian perception is too familiar and the literature has dealt with it extensively so, I don't see any need to replicate it here in detail. It would be enough to

mention works by such scholars as Richard Pankhurst (1964), Erlich Haggai (1982), Donald Levine (1974), Bahru Zewde (1991), Sven Rubenson (1976).

4. Scholars like Basil Davidson, Lionel Cliffe, Richard Greenfield, David Pool, Dan Connell are some of the friends of Eritrea who have advocated for the rights of the Eritrean people to exist as a sovereign people. On the Ethiopian side there are scholars like Sven Rubenson, Harold Marcus, Donald Levine, Haggai Erlich, Richard Pankhurst, Paul Henz to mention but few who have adopted the position of the Great Ethiopian Tradition mythology.
5. By the end of the 1930s the colonial army constituted the largest employment opportunity in the territory that Eritrean soldiers in the colonial army consisted of about 70 000 which was more than 40 per cent of the active labour force (see Bereketab 2000:128).
6. The word *agame* is a name of a district in Tigray. In its popular connotation in Eritrea, however, is used to denigrate people from Tigray. It is used in its pejorative and derogatory meaning. Within the Eritrean demographic structure and social cleavage also it assumes further additional connotation. When used by lowland Eritreans it is to show that one is a Tigrinya speaker connoting primordial (language, religious and cultural) affiliation with the Tigrayans.
7. The Tigray-Tigrigni compound phrase denoting unity of the people of Tigray and Tigrinya speaking Eritreans is associated with the Liberal Progressive Party (LPP) which in its advocacy of Eritrean independence in the 1940s also campaigned for the joining of Tigray in the emergent independent Eritrea. The LPP, contrary to the belief of many Tigrayan intellectuals, however, derived from the perception of sovereign Eritrean identity and craved to annex Tigray (see LPP Memorandum to "Four Power Commission of Investigation for the Former Italian Colonies Report on Eritrea", FO 371-69365, Appendix 101).
8. The historian Tekeste Negash, in article 'Eritrea and Ethiopia: From Cooperation to Competition', 2 May 1998, writes 'How could the Eritrean leaders talk of political and economic integration without attempting to explain why they had in the first place waged a war of independence which brought so much suffering to millions of Ethiopians? Wasn't the idea of keeping Eritrea within Ethiopia, after all, correct when the Eritreans themselves were pleading for economic and eventually political integration...To begin with, Eritrean leaders could (and ought to) take the initiative and commemorate all the innocent soldiers who were killed in the war. The EPLF is equally to blame for the death of hundreds of thousands of Ethiopian soldiers as much as the regime of Menghistu Haile Mariam'. This is tantamount to asking the EPLF to apologise to the people of Ethiopia for waging a war of independence.
9. When the war broke out in 1998 many Eritrean Moslems expressed their relief that they felt it was now that they could say Eritrea became independent. The writer was told by Moslem acquaintance of his that in Stockholm many Moslem lowlanders became cheerful when they heard that war has begun between Eritrea and Ethiopia. It is also widely believed that the Ethiopian populace expressed similar feelings albeit for a different reason.

10. Ghidewon Abay-Asmerom, 1999. Super Race Mentality? Who is guilty of it?. <http://www.primenet.com/~ephrem/ghidewona.html>
11. Ibid. Yohannes, O., 1991, *Eritrea, A Pawn in World Politics*, Gainesville: University of Florida Press.
12. Professor Bahru Zewde 'A Historical Perspective of the Ethio-Eritrean Border Conflict'. <http://Addis-Tribune.EthiopiaOnline...ves/1999/01/01-01-99/P-Bahru.htm>

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Nigeria-China Economic Relations Under the South-South Cooperation

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Abstract

The defining characteristic of the South-South solidarity is cooperation among the member countries of the South. The original vision was for member countries to promote trade as well as to demonstrate, through practical examples, how commercially viable projects can be implemented using the technology, experience and capital from the South. Regrettably, these dreams still remain unfulfilled. The experience gained by the developing countries after several years of bilateral interaction with the North underscores the idea that South-South trade should be symmetrical. However the most discernible pattern in the South-South relationship is still asymmetrical. A case in point is the Nigeria-China relations which appear to be in great disequilibrium and to China's advantage.

As the bilateral relations have progressed from cultural linkages to intense economic penetration of the Nigerian economy, observers of Nigeria's international relations have become highly conscious of the reciprocal need to transform this intensive relationship into a mutually constructive one, that is towards the promotion of a more symmetrical relationship. This article, using dependency approach, demonstrates that these disparities actually account for the sharp differences in the outcomes of the bilateral trade and the level of development in the two countries. It also draws some vital lessons not only for Nigeria but also

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for other sub-Saharan African countries to learn from China in terms of the approach to economic reforms and development experience.

The study seeks also to identify the crucial aspects of Nigeria-China bilateral interactions, assess the receptivity to the Chinese penetration of the Nigerian economy and the changing perspectives on the viability of the bilateral relations.

Résumé

La caractéristique qui définit la solidarité Sud-Sud est la coopération entre les pays membres du Sud. La vision originale était que les pays membres promeuvent le commerce, et démontrent par des exemples pratiques comment des projets commercialement viables peuvent être mis en œuvre en utilisant la technologie, l'expérience et les capitaux du Sud. Malheureusement, ces rêves ne se sont toujours pas réalisés. L'expérience acquise par les pays en développement, après plusieurs années d'interactions bilatérales avec le Nord, met en évidence l'idée que le commerce Sud-Sud doit être symétrique. Or, le modèle le plus perceptible dans les relations Sud-Sud est toujours asymétrique. A titre d'exemple, on peut citer les relations sino-nigériennes qui paraissent très déséquilibrées à l'avantage de la Chine. Alors que les relations bilatérales sont passées de liens culturels à une intense pénétration de l'économie nigérienne, les observateurs des relations internationales du Nigeria ont pris pleinement conscience de la nécessité réciproque de transformer cette intense relation en une relation mutuellement constructive et axée davantage sur la symétrie. En utilisant l'approche de la dépendance, le présent article démontre que ces disparités expliquent effectivement les différences nettes des résultats des échanges bilatéraux et du niveau de développement des deux pays. Il tire aussi des leçons capitales de la Chine non seulement pour le Nigeria, mais aussi pour d'autres pays d'Afrique subsaharienne en termes d'approche des réformes économiques et d'expérience du développement.

L'étude cherche en outre à identifier les aspects essentiels des interactions bilatérales sino-nigériennes, à évaluer la réceptivité de l'économie nigérienne à la pénétration chinoise, et les perspectives changeantes de la viabilité des relations bilatérales.

Background to the Study

Nigeria and China established formal diplomatic ties on 10 February 1971 with an understanding to abide by a set of five principles, namely mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-ag-

gression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, sovereign equality, and peaceful co-existence (Musa 2007:6). Nigeria's establishment of diplomatic ties with China was in furtherance of efforts to promote and strengthen the objectives of the South-South Cooperation which, among other things, aimed at promoting cooperation among countries of the Southern Hemisphere in a wide range of areas such as trade, investment, technical cooperation, industrialisation, energy, food and agriculture, and technology (Eze 1986:165).

The formal history of South-South Cooperation is tied up with the activities of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which was established in 1945-55. The initial focus was neutrality from the Cold War politics between the Western and Eastern blocs (Onimode 1995:222; Ojo1981:28). The defining characteristic of the South-South solidarity is cooperation among the member countries of the South. The original vision was for member countries to promote trade as well as to demonstrate, through practical examples, how commercially viable projects can be implemented using the technology, experience and capital from the South (Obasanjo 2001:274).

Nigeria and China share a lot in common from ethnic diversities to rich endowment of mineral and human resources. China is the largest single market in the world with a population of 1.3 billion, while Nigeria is the largest single market in Africa with a population of 140 million. Unlike Nigeria, China has been able to harness its vast demographic, human and material resources to build a strong and virile domestic economy which has impacted positively on its citizenry (Agbu 1994:215).

In addition, Nigeria and China are burdened by destiny in their respective regions. In terms of population, one of every three Asians is Chinese, so also one in every four persons in Africa is a Nigerian. With a population of 1.3 billion, China is in fact the most populous nation in the world. Nigeria on the other hand, with a population of over 140 million people is the largest concentration of black people in the world. In terms of mineral resources China, like Nigeria, is well endowed (Oche et al. 2003:9).

These factors, among other things, predispose Nigeria and China to play prominent roles in the politics and security of their respective regions. They also constitute a common ground that should serve as a basis for nurturing close bilateral relations between the two countries, while fostering their collaboration in multilateral diplomacy on a wide range of issues of general international concern (Akinterinwa 1994:136) China, one the fastest growing economies in the world today, is gradually overwhelming the economies of Europe and the United States. It is also a strong technological nation with proven

expertise in iron ore, steel aluminium, petroleum, textiles, electronics, fertilisers, transport, toys, etc. The Chinese economic model, bolstered by the legendary visionary leadership of modern China, has assisted the once communist nation to become a global power (Xiang 1984:9). Nigeria, on the other hand, is yet to translate its enormous natural endowment and demographic strength into economic buoyancy (Akinjide 2005; Bello 2005). Nigeria's image of China as well as China's image of Nigeria played a prominent role in the initial effort to establish relationship between the two countries. A country's image is an important factor in international relations and can contribute a great deal to the realisation of certain foreign policy goals (Udeala 2008:254). A state's activities beyond its borders are motivated by its self-perception and image, and its perceived interests in relation to other states in the international system (Ogwu 1986:383). Nigerian leaders exposed during the colonial days to both western tutelage and propaganda were afraid of communist infiltration and subversion. They consequently believed that their country's liberal democratic and capitalist orientation as well as its independence might be endangered by communism. The Chinese on their part, while recognising that Nigeria is the most important of all of all the English colonies in Africa held the view that its leaders were bourgeois reactionaries or feudal-monarchical nationalists (Ogunsanwo 1974; Hutchison 1975).

At independence, Nigeria's political leadership was not only pro-West but apparently anti-communist. The effect of this disposition was that Nigeria's attitude towards communist China followed what had then emerged as a clear pattern of most of its relations with the then socialist states – that is, diplomatic isolation accompanied occasionally by bitter attacks against communist subversive ideology at home (Owoeye 1986:295).

Thus, the establishment of diplomatic ties in February 1971 was appropriate and full of practical implications for both countries. The pattern of bilateral interaction between Nigeria and China is compressed into mid-level position. Both Nigeria and China have the West as well as Japan as their major trading partners. Below this level, they jointly operate their own system of exchange where China has the advantage of importing advanced industrial materials from the West and exporting its goods and technology to Nigeria (Bukarambe 2005:248). China and Nigeria have production structures which are convergent in the West. But the advantage that China has over Nigeria is that it has since 1979 used its developmental state and capitalist enclaves of export processing zones at home to establish a strong industrial base (Egom 2007:4).

Since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic links, there has been a substantial expansion in Chinese exports, essentially conditioned by the demands of the economy and requirements to keep up economic growth. In consonance

with this need, China devised economic policy strategies to penetrate the markets of the South particularly Nigeria (Moghalu 2007:15). Currently, the Nigeria-China bilateral economic relations are underpinned by the following agreements:

1. A bilateral trade agreement, signed on 3 November 1972. This agreement expired in 1985. Subsequently; the two countries exchanged a draft bilateral trade agreement with each other through the diplomatic channel.
2. A Bilateral agreement on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation. This was first signed on 12 November 1972 and subsequently renewed on 8 July 1982.
3. Agreement on Cultural and Educational Cooperation. This was first signed on 20 November 1981 and subsequently renewed under the implementation programme of cultural and educational agreements on 28 March 1990.
4. The May 1997 Agreements include:
 - (a) Reciprocal Promotion and Protection of Investments;
 - (b) Protocol on Cooperation in Electric Power Project in Nigeria;
 - (c) Protocol on Bilateral Cooperation on Steel Industry;
 - (d) Oil Cooperation; and
 - (e) Agreement on the establishment of Nigeria Trade Office in China and the China Investment Development Commission 22, 2001 (Bukarambe 2005:43).

China's renewed interest in the Nigerian economy predated the 1999 inauguration of civilian administration. It was the Sani Abacha Government that tactically and diplomatically brought the Chinese closer to Nigeria in 1995 to fill the yawning gap created by the isolation of the country by the United States and its Western allies as a result of political crisis. China did not join the West in criticising Nigeria's human rights abuses, killings and other tyrannical measures of the Sani Abacha regime particularly the execution of Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni environmental activists (Ogunsanwo 200:24). The period between 1994-1998 witnessed an attempt by the Abacha administration to cultivate stronger political and economic ties with countries other than Nigeria's traditional Western allies. The imbroglio in which Nigeria found itself with its traditional allies was what compelled the Abacha administration to develop and strengthen pre-existing ties with some countries on the Asian continent. This change in the emphasis and focus of Nigeria's foreign policy is what a number of scholars referred to as a 'policy shift to Asia' (Oche 1999; Adegbulu 2006). The Chinese took advantage of the gap created by reduction in the

level of trade with Nigeria's western allies by quickly filling it. Consequently, the trade figures indicate that Nigeria's imports from China increased considerably in 1997 and have kept rising since then. In 1995, the Nigerian Government signed an agreement with the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation (CCECC) for the rehabilitation of the Nigerian Railways at a cost of US\$529 million which included the supply of coaches (Chibundu 2007; Udeala 2003).

Nigeria-Sino relations enjoyed a steady growth during the Obasanjo era. President Olusegun Obasanjo visited China twice, first in 1999 and again in 2001 to underscore the importance the Nigerian government attached to its diplomatic ties with China. As a result of these visits, a number of trade, economic, technical, scientific, technological and investment protection agreements were signed by both countries (Ogunsanwo 2007; Abua 2004).

To further consolidate existing bilateral relations between the two countries, the Chinese President Hu Jintao paid a two-day official visit to Nigeria starting from 28 April 2006. President Jintao and his Nigerian host signed a Memorandum of Understanding on petroleum cooperation. The deal provides for substantial Chinese investment in the Nigerian oil industry. As part of the agreement, Nigeria granted China four drilling licenses in exchange for commitments to invest US\$4 billion in oil and infrastructural projects (Ley 2006; Costa 2006).

During President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's visit to China in February 2008, many financial agreements were also concluded. These include US \$500 million concessionary loan for projects to be identified by Nigeria, construction of a hospital in Abuja to be facilitated by a US\$4.2 million grant, grant of US\$25 million for the construction of the China-Nigeria Friendship Cultural Centre in Abuja, grant of US\$7.2 million for the construction of four rural schools in Nigeria, placing of balance of US\$2billion loan under public-private sector partnership with insurance cover to be provided by a Chinese company and Nigeria providing guarantee when absolutely necessary, and the removal of linkage of oil block to the EXIM bank facility (Okeke 2008:4).

Since the inception of China's open door policy in 1978 which involved readjustment, restructuring and consolidation of its national economy, the urge to modernise has made it necessary for the country to engage in multiple forms of interaction with its external partners, western industrialised nations and, to some extent, countries of the South. With the end of the Cold War that witnessed the disintegration of Soviet Union and the replacement of state communism as the mode of economic organisation as well as the upsurge of liberal democratic values and ethos all over the world, China emerged as one

of economic powers in the current multi-polar power configuration (Breslin 2009:817). The New World Order that saw the triumph of capitalist ideology made it imperative for China to adopt capitalist strategies and manoeuvring in its economic relations with the developing countries, hence concepts such as asymmetry, unequal exchange, imperialism, dependency associated with North-South economic relations are employed in analysing China's economic relations with developing countries. The arguments of this paper are largely theoretically framed on the dependency approach drawing on works of scholars like Amin, Frank, Emmanuel, Lenin.

This study has both theoretical and empirical significance. From a theoretical standpoint, it would advance the frontiers of knowledge, especially as it relates to the conduct of Nigeria's external economic relations. Theoretically, the research enriches the available theories and knowledge on matters relating to Nigeria-China bilateral relations, especially since Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999. It adds to existing knowledge on Nigeria's foreign economic relations and indicates the nature of her relationship with China under the configuration of South-South Cooperation. In addition, the scholarship upon which this article is based can benefit from a more robust engagement with the principles and structure of Nigeria's foreign policy and economics of post-Cold War international relations, particularly as it relates to China-Africa relations and the place of Africa in international affairs.

Nigeria-China relations is a very topical issue, both within the context of the 'new' scramble for Africa, and the reconfiguration of international relations where Africa now has new options based on the exploration of South-South solidarity in charting an alternative development course that is free from dependence on the West.

In effect, there exists a gap in knowledge in bilateral relations between Nigeria and China. It closes gap in literature by seeking to promote a deeper understanding of the complex problems of bilateral relations in the context of rapid economic change in South-South Cooperation.

In summary, this work will be a welcome contribution to the field not only because it gives the theoretical clarity and critical perspectives to the theories of unequal exchange but it also throws constructive light on the contemporary inquiry and insight into the dependency and underdevelopment in developing countries. The study will hopefully stimulate those interested in Nigeria-China foreign economic policy and fill a gap in our knowledge of Chinese involvement in the developing world, particularly in Nigeria.

Empirically, foreign policy makers, operators of the public and private sectors of the Nigerian economy, the academia, and the general public alike, will benefit from the study. In all, the work is a valuable input to the understanding

of the present-day problems facing bilateral relations in Nigeria. Given the wide-ranging issues this study addresses, it would be an enriching and inspiring volume for most readers.

Against this background, this study which examines critically the Sino-Nigeria economic relations under the configuration of South-South Cooperation, particularly since Nigeria returned to democracy in 1999, makes recommendations on how bilateral relations can be fine-tuned to ensure that the unequal trade relations deal which is to China's advantage is balanced in favour of both countries. However, the paper argues that there is the need to reinvigorate and refocus strategy for South-South cooperation. The members should encourage investment across the borders of the countries of the South. Both Nigeria and China must rededicate themselves to exploiting the comparative advantages and complementarities inherent in their respective economies, and adapting new and innovative approaches in pursuing this objective. Nigeria can understudy the leadership of the Chinese Government over the years and imbibe those policies that have helped it to identify the way China should go and consequently lead the people accordingly.

Africa and a Rising China

China's relations with Africa have become the subject of much speculation and controversy in recent years. Much of the debate has been about the fact that Sino-African relations bring into focus, particularly for the industrialised powers, the emergence of a competitor for the continent's vast natural resources (Naidu, Davies 2006). China's contemporary relations with Africa are driven by four factors. These are: resource security; the need for new markets and investment opportunities; symbolic diplomacy, development assistance and co-operation; and forging strategic partnerships. But this description of the drivers of China's engagement with the continent does not adequately explain the underlying strategic vision of the Chinese vis-à-vis Africa (Alden 2005). China's interest in Africa is not new. In the 1960s and 1970s, China's interest centred on building ideological solidarity with other underdeveloped nations to advance Chinese-style of communism and repel Western 'imperialism' (Ogunsanwo 1974). During the Cold War, Chinese interests evolved into more pragmatic pursuits such as trade, investment and energy. In recent years, China has identified the African continent as an area of significant economic and strategic interest (Taylor 2007; Melber 2007).

America and its allies and friends have since discovered that their vision of a prosperous Africa governed by democracies that respect human rights and the rule of law, as well as embrace free markets, is being challenged by the

escalating Chinese influence in Africa. For the past decade, the Chinese economy has been expanding at a nearly double-digit annual growth rate. This rapid expansion requires enormous resources, especially energy. China's rising domestic energy demand, combined with declining domestic petroleum production and insufficient coal output, has spurred the country to pursue stable overseas sources of hydrocarbon fuels.

In recent years, with rapid economic development of both China and Africa, the interaction between the two sides, which used to centre on political spheres, is featuring cooperation in various areas including the economic field. Building upon historical experiences, the two sides have translated the political gains into economic advantage with increasing Chinese investments of capital and technology in Africa, which help unlock the Africa's vast resources and potentials (Musa 2007:5). China is rapidly becoming one of Africa's main sources of investment. By the end of 2005, China had established more than 800 enterprises in Africa involving a total commitment of US\$6 billion; it had signed investment agreements with 28 African countries and its engineering projects covered construction, petrochemical, power, culture, education, health and food processing sectors (Ogunsanwo 2007).

After several centuries of being strikingly inward-looking, China is today expanding in search of relationships that will help underpin its capitalist wealth. Previously led for centuries by monarchic dynasties, China established as a communist nation, the Peoples Republic of China in 1949, after the Chinese civil war in which the communist led by Mao Zedong chased out the previous nationalist government out of China's mainland to Taiwan. The Chinese had broken ranks with the communist Soviet Government and had begun to position itself as another Socialist superpower. The country became a nuclear power in 1964, however, it was its admission to the United Nations in 1971 and its seat as one of the permanent members of the Security Council that brought communist China into full reckoning as a global power (Bukarambe 2005).

With the death of Mao, communist China's founding father in 1976, Deng Xiaoping emerged as the official leader of China. Deng promptly began an economic reform programme that was to lead China's status today as a rising economic power. Thus, China has one of the fastest growing economies in the world today. It has US\$1.3 trillion in foreign reserves, making it the highest reserve in the world today. It is predicted that it may become the highest economy by the end of the 21st century, overtaking the United States and Japan. The present economic status of China has created a fundamental shift in the global strategic power balance (Moghalu 2007:65).

China is also strengthening and deepening diplomatic ties with other African countries, state-owned companies have been investing heavily in agriculture, fisheries and related production facilities in Gabon, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Tanzania. Chinese construction firms, supported by the state apparatus and low-cost but effective Chinese labour, have been able to outbid contractors from other parts of the world and winning substantial contracts in African construction sector. They have been building roads in Ethiopia, railway lines in Angola, Stadia in Mali and Djibouti as well as government offices in Mozambique and Uganda. Even in Nigeria, they constructed the headquarters of Nigeria Communications Commission (NCC) and the new office of the Accountant General of the Federation. China has recently broken long-standing protocols and has provided peace keeping troops to Liberia and Democratic Republic of Congo. Its donations to UN operations in Africa have increased substantially and has provided humanitarian assistance to combat drought in the horn of Africa and recently to Darfur (Musa 2007:5).

China's interests in Nigeria and Africa at large are two folds: First is diplomatic and second economic. The Chinese people will not forget that it was due to strong support of vast number of developing countries including Africa that China successfully regained its lawful seat in the United Nation Security Council in 1971. Nigeria was in the forefront of the support for China right from the beginning. Nigeria voted in the United Nations General Assembly in support of China's admission to the United Nations. That was Nigeria's debut at the United Nations General Assembly with Mallam Aminu Kano representing Nigeria.

The Second is Nigeria's oil and gas which China desperately needs to sustain its 10 per cent annual economic growth. Africa now supplies 25 per cent of China's oil import. China is more acceptable in Africa partly because it is viewed with more credibility than Western Nations with their imperialist legacies (Akinjide 2005:18) As noted, China's main interest in economic front lines is securing supply lines for oil and minerals. China has only 2.3 per cent of the world's oil reserves and even less of gas (1%). Meanwhile, it consumes 6.7 million barrels per day, which is the second largest consumption after the United States. China thus relies on Africa for about one third of its oil supplies.

China has no doubt, identified Africa as an important strategic partner not only for economic growth but also in its quest to establish itself as a major global power. This is evident in the tours the Chinese President Hu Jintao undertook to African countries in quick succession in 2004, 2006 and 2007, where he signed a lot of agreements.

The third China-African Cooperation Summit held in Beijing in November 2006 drew 46 African leaders and was given global prominence. The meeting

was a pointer to several aspects of Sino-African dynamism. The summit approved a three-year action plan to create a new 'strategic partnership' between China and Africa based on equality and mutual benefit. The plan included a doubling of aid to Africa. The Sino-African summit grabbed the headlines of the global media for obvious reasons, the West, especially America, which dominates the global media is concerned that China with its vibrant economy and 1.3 billion people may easily overtake them (the West) as a model of economic development. The West is also concerned that China, along with India, may soon become a more attractive destination for Africa's raw materials and primary products and in general supersede the West as the continent's biggest trading partner (Haruna 2006:18).

Concept of Unequal Economic Relationship and Dependency

The arguments of the paper are largely theoretically framed on dependency approach, drawing on the works of scholars like Amin, Frank, Emmanuel, Lenin, Hobson and others. Dependency theory has been the directing light in Latin America and, indeed, the developing countries as well as major opposition to the modernisation theory. Basically, the dependency approach is a general analysis of the process of capitalist development of these peripheral economies and the characteristic mode of analysis has been to focus on the relationship between internal and external structures, with emphasis on the asymmetric interplay depicted in many different ways. A common strand in these ways is the identification, recognition and acceptance of imperialism as the principal adversary (Ndu 1999).

Dependency theorists (Frank 1976; Sunkel 1979; Furtado 1964; Dos Santos 1970; Emmanuel 1972; Ake 1981; Onimode 1982), argue that the dependence of the South on the North is the main cause of the underdevelopment of the former. They hold that the present economic and socio-political conditions prevailing in the periphery are the result of a historical international process. This development emerged as a global historical phenomenon consequent on the formation, expansion, and consolidation of capitalist system, known as dependent capitalism. At the first level, many countries in the periphery have been incorporated into the world economy since the early days of capitalism. At the second level, many countries have become capitalist economies through incorporation into the world economy. At the third level, the world economy has led to metropolis-satellite chain in which the surplus generated at each level in the periphery is successively drawn off the centre as a result, the periphery is impoverished and the centre is enriched (Jhingan 1966:330).

Baran (1957) argues that the advanced capitalist countries of today had managed accumulation of capital by exploiting the colonial territories. Similarly (Frank 1967), maintains that national capitalism and national bourgeoisie, unlike their counterparts in the advanced capitalist countries cannot promote development in Latin America. In Western countries, capitalism played a different role because it was rooted in imperialism. Frank advances a centre-periphery model to enunciate the role of imperialism. He likens metropolis to centre and satellite to periphery. They are linked in such a way that the development of the centre leads to corresponding underdevelopment in the periphery. This relationship continued even when the satellites had gained political independence. Frank suggests that the way to stop underdevelopment of the new nations is to delink them 'from the capitalist economies'. Nkrumah (1971) argues that states that rely heavily on foreign countries is in theory independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality its economic system and political policies are directed from outside. According to Mac-Ogonor (1999), flag independence in the developing countries could not break the yoke of economic dependence on colonial countries. The result of this heavy reliance on colonial institutions is that foreign capital is used for exploitation rather than development of the developing countries.

The theory of unequal exchange advanced by Classical Marxist scholars is used to explain the unequal economic relations between a developing economy like Nigeria and a developed economy like China. The theory of unequal exchange in the sphere of international trade between developed and underdeveloped countries asserts that the developed countries get higher value of the labour inputs of their products (because they use superior technology and produce at a large scale) whereas the developing countries get lower value of the labour inputs of their products (because they use inferior technology and produce at a small scale).

Emmanuel (1970:10) propounded the theory of unequal exchange in international trade between the centre (Developed Countries (DCs) and the Less Developed Countries LCDs) which has led to the exploitation of the latter by the former. According to Emmanuel unequal exchange (relationship) occurs when two unequal countries produce two different commodities so that they are not in direct competition with each other. Since wages are low in LCDs, the cost of production is also low, and so is its price. On the other hand, wages being higher in DC, the cost of production of commodity is high, so is its price. Thus, the commodity of LCDs being cheaper than that of DCs, engenders unequal exchange in trade between the two.

Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange is in tandem with such other classical writers on imperialism as Hobson, Lenin and Schumpeter who assert

that the impetus for imperialism comes from economic interests related to the process of capitalist accumulation. Emmanuel's theory is based on Marx's theory of 'prices of production' for the determination of international prices and technological changes in production. He believes that the main reason for economic inequality between the South and the North lies in the differences in techniques of production and difference in wages which lead to unequal exchange in trade.

The relevance of the dependency theory and, to a large extent, the development theory to this study is that the defining features of the developing countries are their dependency and underdevelopment, which derive from the unequal manner in which they have been incorporated into the periphery of world capitalism. The relationship between periphery and the centre is sustained and perpetuated through certain structures, agencies and institutions. Since dependency is an organic feature of world capitalism, whenever there is a general crisis it spreads to its peripheries with varying degrees of intensity, depending on the extent of control the capitalists have over the peripheral economies (Mac-Ogonor 1999; Badejo 1990).

Focusing on Nigeria's bilateral economic relations, dependency theory enables scholars explore how Nigerian leaders should consciously and effectively use the nation's foreign policy to construct a self-reliant and just society. The failure of the leadership to conduct foreign policy for economic development and the inappropriate development path pursued by them in the past are blamed for the country's continued state of dependence and underdevelopment.

Contending Discourse on Nigeria-China Bilateral Relations

In contemporary international relations, trade cannot be realistically divorced from politics. Nigeria's bilateral relations with China have gradually become an issue of domestic concern as Nigerians have become aware of lack of balanced trade. It has been observed, that this situation has led to a great economic disequilibrium and to China's advantage. This signifies that the economic advantage has gone to China, regardless of increased trade volume between the two countries (Onwubiko 2006:43).

The expansion of Nigeria's economic interactions with China is constrained by a number of factors. These include the imbalance in the structure of level of their trade, the inadequacy of the industrial infrastructure for promotion of relations, the incidence of flooding of the Nigerian market with substandard goods from China and inability to implement various bilateral agreements between the two countries among other problems.

The trade between Nigeria and China has largely followed a classical pattern of trade disequilibrium between the developing and the developed econo-

mies (Jumbo 2007:56). The structure of trade between Nigeria and China reflects the difference in the level of development of the two partners as well as high degree of complementarities that exist between their economies.

While Nigeria's exports to China consist mainly of primary commodities, its imports from that country are made up of largely of industrial goods. Within this commodity groups, there have been some important changes in the structure of trade over the years (Soludo 2006; Agbu 1994).

Since the establishment of bilateral diplomatic links, there has been a substantial expansion in Chinese exports, essentially conditioned by the demands of the economy and requirements to keep up economic growth. In consonance with this need, China devised economic policy strategies to penetrate the markets of the South. China's rapidly expanding industrial base has provided impetus for its expanded economic penetration of Nigeria, a relatively large market with immense purchasing power.

Over the years, Nigeria has served as market outlet for Chinese products (Michael 2006:17). The immediate problem posed for Nigeria is the negative role which the big Chinese companies have played and are likely to continue to play in Nigeria and Africa, and its consequences for the fulfilment of the aspirations and goals of the Nigerian people (Olisa 2006:24).

Nigeria's bilateral trade relationship with China after several years shows that the most discernible pattern in this bilateral relationship is still lopsided. It is observed from the trade data that this unequal economic relation is in great disequilibrium and to China's advantage. It means that despite the increase in trade volume between the two countries, the bilateral economic relations have favoured China, thus creating a feeling of lopsided distribution of the benefits from the bilateral trade (Bukarambe 2005).

Crude oil has replaced agricultural commodities as Nigeria's dominant export to China, while there has been a shift of emphasis in Nigeria's imports from that country from consumer products to capital and investment goods. Thus, Nigeria's exports to China consist mainly of primary commodities while manufactured goods constitute the bulk of its imports from China. In fact, Nigeria's strength lies on the production of crude oil which alone accounts for over 90 per cent of its foreign earnings (Michael 2006).

Since 1971, when diplomatic relations were established with China, the volume of trade has increased significantly (Akinjide 2005). For example, trade figures from the Federal Office of Statistics (FOS) now Federal Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) between 1999 and 2008 shows the level of trade volume between the two countries. Nigeria's imports which were ₦39,890,423,259 million in 1999 increased to ₦502,302,250,4.8 million in 2008. As a result of the considerable growth of its trade with China,

Nigeria has become one of China's largest Africa trading partners. Similarly, Chinese imports from Nigeria increased from ₦10,671,356.489 billion in 1999 to ₦31,353,471,339 billion in 2008 (FOS, CBN 1999-2008).

The main problem in Nigeria's trade with China, as indicated in the Tables 1-3, is its asymmetry and one-sidedness. For example, in Table 1, from 1999 to 2008, Nigeria recorded a deficit in its trade with China every year. Between 1999 and 2008, the cumulative deficit sustained by Nigeria in the trade with China was put at ₦198,594,804,890 (FOS, CBN 1999-2008). While the cumulative amount of Nigeria's imports from China was ₦229,678,601,6089 billion, China's imports from Nigeria totalled ₦31,083.796,7188.489 Million within the period under review. The years 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2008 are noteworthy for the relatively large size of deficit Nigeria recorded. For example, in 2007, the trade deficit stood at a staggering record level of ₦515,322,082,120. To some extent, the pressures on Nigeria's balance of payments since 1999 can be attributed to the imbalance in the trade with China and other developed countries. Nigeria's export to China is largely characterised by the structural imbalance which afflicts the overall export trade that is excessively concentrated on crude petroleum (FOS, CBN 1999-2008).

Table 2 shows the country's oil export to China. The cumulative barrels of oil exported to China were put at 70,572,912 million which amounted to ₦37,124,69 billion between 1999 and 2008. Similarly in Table 3, which covers the same period under review, the cumulative quantity of non-oil export to China was ₦1,591,411.92 which was 0.81 per cent of the total revenue realised by the country during this period (FOS, CBN 1999-2008).

Over the years, while the broad commodity profile of Nigeria's exports to China remained virtually unaltered, being consistently dominated by primary commodities, there have been some significant changes in the relative importance of the individual products.

Experience has shown that bilateral relations between the two unequal partners invariably end up to the overall disadvantage of the weaker party, in this case, Nigeria. One effective approach of addressing the trade imbalance is a cooperative mechanism that would enable Nigeria to increase her export of manufactured goods to China. There is no doubt that the persistence and the intractability of the challenges which confront the two countries in addressing the problem of trade imbalance have not been the dearth of sound economic ideas or policy initiations, rather what has been seriously lacking is the political will and resolve to implement these agreements. In order to achieve these goals, there is need for faithful implementation of all outstanding bilateral agreements between the two countries, particularly agreements on investment protection and promotion, avoidance of double taxation and general

economic agreement in the area of oil, gas and solid minerals in their respective economies.

The consequence of intensive asymmetric bilateral interaction to the achievement of Nigeria's broader national goal should not be glossed over by the Nigerian policy makers as such relationship could be jeopardised if one-sided economic relation continues. A continuation of this pattern of lopsided relationship might have serious repercussions for Nigeria. The intensification of dependent relationship can provide an enormous advantage to China in continuation of its economic and industrial expansion.

Table 1: Nigeria-China Bilateral Trade, 1999-2008

Year	Exports (N FOB)	Imports (N. CIF)	Trade of Balance
1999	10,671,356.489	39,890,423,259	- 29,219,066,770
2000	11,413,354,432	46,367,894,115	- 34,954,539,680
2001	14,127,160,262	58,595,546,570	- 44,468,386,308
2002	8,812,197,309	89,138,079,432	- 80,325,882,123
2003	15,954,209,434	137,917,168,694	- 121,962,959,260
2004	70,531,578,270	147,913,615,216	- 77,382,036,946
2005	46,742,407,524	244,653,672,626	- 197,911,265,102
2006	527,401,740	403,319,768,287	- 402,792,366,547
2007	111,365,515,522	626,687,597,642	- 515,322,082,120
2008	31,353,471,339	502,302,250,248	- 470,948,778,909

Source: National Bureau of Statistics formerly Federal Office of Statistics (1999-2008).
N = Naira.

Table 2: Nigeria's Oil Export to China

Year	Quantity (Thousand of Barrels)	Value of (N in Million)
1999	4,456.7	10,511.6
2000	5,614.3	13,241.8
2001	7,614.7	17,960.0
2002	2,848.9	7,107.7
2003	3,447.2	12,941.7
2004	8,752.5	44,670.8
	9,269.0	69,923.4
2005		
2006	10,667.8	80,475.7
2007	9,445.6	71,255.6
2008	8,456.2	43,158.6

Source: Compilation from Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Annual Reports and Statement Account 1999-2008. N = Naira

Table 3: Nigeria's Non-Oil Export to China (Naira in Million)

Year	Quantity	% Share of Total
1999	4,305.79	3.4
2000	4,489.88	4.1
2001	4,751.2	5.5
2002	4,989.72	6.9
2003	178,719.14	10.4
2004	187,307.16	10.4
2005	251,112.32	12.0
2006	285,012.48	13.5
2007	326,054.28	14.4
2008	374,310.31	14.8

Source: Compilation for Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Annual Reports and Statement Account 1999-2008.

As the bilateral relations have progressed from cultural linkages to intense economic penetration of the Nigerian economy, observers of Nigeria's international relations have become highly conscious of the reciprocal need to transform this intensive relationship into a mutually constructive one, that is towards the promotion of a more symmetrical relationship. It is observed that the consequence of intensive asymmetric bilateral interaction to the achievement of Nigeria's broader national goal has not been given the desired attention by the Nigerian policy makers given that such relationship could be jeopardised if one-sided economic relations continue.

A continuation of this pattern of lopsided relationship might have serious repercussions for Nigeria. The intensification of dependent relationship can provide an enormous advantage to China in continuation of its economic and industrial expansion. There is no doubt that issues foreseeable in the Nigeria-China bilateral relations present formidable challenges. Given the complexity of the interaction, uncertain domestic setting and the volatile global environment, unseen situation of friction and opportunities for more reciprocal relations would likely arise.

How Relations Can Lead to Mutual Beneficial Outcomes for Both Countries

There is no doubt that China's failure to implement many of the bilateral agreements signed between the two countries has affected the growth of the economic relations and contributed to imbalance in the trade volume. In addition, the incidence of flooding of the Nigerian markets with substandard goods from China has militated against the growth of the bilateral relations. Development analysts have criticised the Chinese economic drive in Nigeria and argued that China is far more interested in hoarding national resources, including oil, which the country is importing from Nigeria and other African countries than assisting the development processes of these countries (Echiebiri 2006; Jumbo 2007).

Political economists have also often written about how Europe and the West underdeveloped Africa. While these allegations are cogent, given Africa's unsavoury history of slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, the growing relations with China raises a spectre which if, not addressed urgently, might lead future scholars to grumble again, this time about how the Chinese underdeveloped Africa. The current trend in Sino-Nigeria relations is laden with strategic cooperation and collaboration as well as mutual cooperation. But a dispassionate analysis shows that it is mostly one way traffic of raw materials to China and finished goods to Nigeria, an equation that replicates a similar one the West has with Africa. We are once more being confined to consumerism rather than production, which ought to accelerate growth, development and, therefore, advancement (Azaiki 2006:50). As stated before, China's failure to implement some of bilateral agreements signed between the two countries has become a source of concern to Nigeria's policy makers. Nigeria certainly has had a history of chequered relations with China on the Nigerian Railways project since 1995 when the Sani Abacha administration entered into an agreement to overhaul its railway system. The Chinese Civil Engineering and Construction Corporation (CCECC) was awarded US\$529 million railway contract by the Abacha administration to supply rolling stocks and engines. The Chinese firm did not execute this contract successfully and nothing has been done today to revamp the rail transport system. In fact, the Nigeria Railways Corporation is still as moribund as it was when the contract was signed over fifteen years ago (Udeala 2001).

Similarly, the shoddy execution of Nigeria's ₦40 billion satellite project called Nig-ComSat-1 by the Chinese also generated another controversy (Ezuka 2009). What had appeared in 2006 to be a laudable effort by government to

leap frog the nation into space age communication took a tumble with the missing in action of Nigeria's first ever communication satellite. However, barely 18 months into its 15 to 18-year designed life expectancy, the Nig-ComSat 1, was packed up and powered down because its solar power system failed to function. Like the railway contract controversy, there was diplomatic ripples by the two trading partners over the project (Quadri 2008:14).

Another noticeable problem in the Sino-Nigeria economic relations is that Nigeria has been turned into a dumping ground for all finished goods manufactured in China. Nearly everything Nigeria consumes is now imported from China and the Nigerian government has not done much to stem the tide. Even when the Nigerian Government announced that it had banned foreign textiles in order to encourage the local production, the Chinese businessmen constructed a small village in Lagos called Chinese Village where banned Chinese goods were freely traded (Oyewale 2004).

The glut of cheap goods from China is a problem not only because it brings national industries to their knees but also because imports are increasingly taking place via Chinese trade merchants. The migration of Chinese nationals who are engaged in various economic crimes in Nigeria has constantly raised ripples in the diplomatic circle with the result that several Nigerians have called for total overhaul of Nigeria's trade relationship with China (Oyewale 2004:42)

Another Nigerian concern is the influx of substandard goods from China. Even pharmaceutical drugs in the Nigerian markets are counterfeit, adulterated or substandard and they are mostly of Indian or Chinese origin. The negative effects of such bad publicity on Chinese goods are ignored by China itself. Nigeria's regulatory agencies such as the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) and National Agency for Food and Drug Administration (NAFDAC), Customs and other agencies have regularly alerted the Nigerian authorities on the implications of these economic crimes for Nigeria-China bilateral relations (Okoya 2010:18).

Despite these problems, there is the need to ensure that these obstacles are surmounted and that the trade imbalance is addressed to mutual beneficial outcomes for both countries. One effective way to address the trade imbalance is to evolve a cooperative mechanism that would enable Nigeria to increase its export of manufactured goods to China. Over the years, the bilateral trade between China and Nigeria has been growing steadily, but its total volume has been to Chinese advantage. The Chinese Government should encourage Chinese enterprises to give preferences to Nigerian goods with a view to addressing a trade balance between China and Nigeria.

Another approach to the problem is for Chinese companies in Nigeria to diversify their economic activities. Rather than restricting themselves to merely importing finished goods from China for sale in Nigeria, they should invest in the productive sectors of the Nigerian economy and thereby gain from the export of such Nigerian made goods. In this regard, there is the need to bring into Nigeria the kind of technology that Nigerians can easily adapt to. Continued effort should be made to further explore the potentials of economic and trade cooperation and address problems that exist between the two countries through joint efforts. By investing in Nigeria, the Chinese investors will not only be enhancing our bilateral cooperation and relations, they will also help to create employment opportunities, and by extension, contribute to the stability of democracy and good governance in both countries.

In addition, the two countries should vigorously develop and consolidate on investment co-operation. The Chinese should set up special funds and take other incentive measures to encourage its strong and creditworthy enterprises to make investments in Nigeria and to set up export-oriented processing industries, explore natural resources, launch projects with marketable products and economic returns. China should be encouraged to strengthen and improve its co-operation with Nigeria in engineering projects and take part in their economic development and project development through project contracting, technological co-operation, management co-operation and labour cooperation among other things.

Above all is the recurring question of how to borrow a leaf from the Chinese small scale industries and self-reliance on the one hand and from the Chinese conduct and management of its population census on the other. Without doubt, what Nigeria needs is an efficient productive base in the rural areas and a non-controversial census which can be used and relied upon for economic planning. Chinese technology is really down-to-earth and Nigeria needs this type of technology in its search of self-reliance.

Efforts should be made to constantly increase and improve the co-operation between China and Nigeria in agriculture, transportation, medical care and public health, the exploration and exploitation of natural resources, banking, information technology and other areas. China should set up a foundation for Human Resources Development in Africa, specifically for the purpose of training professionals for African countries. In addition, we should enhance our cooperation and consultants in multilateral and regional organisations in order to safeguard the interests of both sides.

The private sectors of both countries should urgently establish bilateral chamber of commerce in order to promote improved Sino-Nigerian relations.

Such a body would be indispensable in identifying areas of cooperation and educating business people and groups about opportunities for mutually beneficial economic ties between both countries. In fact, this would complement the objectives of Nigeria-China Friendship Association (NICAF) which seeks to encourage Chinese investments in Nigeria, and enable its members to tap and adapt China's less sophisticated technical skills in tool and machine fabrication to Nigeria's needs.

The time to reinvigorate and refocus the strategy for South-South cooperation is now. Members should encourage investment across borders of the countries of the South. An effective and productive linkage among the private sectors of member countries is indispensable if the numerous opportunities in respective countries are to be fully exploited to their collective advantage. Both Nigeria and China must rededicate themselves to exploiting the comparative advantages and complementarities inherent in their respective economies, and adapting new and innovative approaches in pursuing this objective.

Conclusion and Options for the Future

Nowhere in the world is China's rapid rise to power more evident than in Africa, particularly in Nigeria. From multi-billion dollar investment in oil and minerals to the influx of thousands of merchants, labourers and cheap consumer goods, China's economic and political reach is redefining Africa's traditional ties with the international community. This paper investigates the emerging relationship between Nigeria and China to determine whether this engagement is that of a development partner, economic competitor or new hegemony. The paper, therefore, argues that in order to understand the Chinese involvement in Nigeria, we need to recognise the range of economic and diplomatic rationale behind China's Nigeria policy as well as Nigeria's foreign policy responses to China's entreaties. From our study, this article came up with the following findings.

1. Nigeria-China bilateral relations are in great disequilibrium and to China's advantage:

The trade between Nigeria and China has largely followed a classical pattern of trade disequilibrium between the developing and the developed economies. The structure of trade between Nigeria and China reflects the difference in the level of development of the two partners as well as high degree of complementarities that exist between their economies. While Nigeria's exports to China consist mainly of primary commodities, its imports from that country are made up of largely of industrial goods. Within this commodity groups, there have been some important changes in the structure of trade over the

years. The paper analyses from the trade data that despite the increase in trade volume between the two countries, the bilateral economic relations have been in favour of China, thus creating a feeling of the lopsided distribution of the benefit from the bilateral trade.

2. The imbalance in economic relations can be addressed to ensure that the relations lead to mutual beneficial outcomes for both countries. The structure of trade between Nigeria and China reflects the difference in the level of development of the two partners as well as high degree of complementarities that exists between their economies. Although trade remains the most important element in Nigeria's economic relations with China, it has not been complemented significantly by the flows of investment and aid between the two countries. The consequence of intensive asymmetric bilateral interaction to the achievement of Nigeria's broader national goal should be given serious thought by the Nigerian policy makers and the public alike as such relationship could be jeopardised if one-sided economic relations continue. A continuation of this pattern of lopsided relationship might have serious repercussions for Nigeria. The intensification of dependent relationship can provide an enormous advantage to China in continuation of its economic and industrial expansion.

The expansion of Nigeria's economic interactions with China is constrained by a number of factors. These include the imbalance in the structure of level of their trade, the inadequacy of the industrial infrastructure for promotion of relations, the incidence of flooding of the Nigerian market with substandard goods from China and inability to implement various bilateral agreements between the two countries among other problems. However, despite this trade imbalance and other challenges, the bilateral relationship should be symbiotic and mutually beneficial to both countries.

3. Nigeria can benefit from the objectives of South-South Cooperation by learning from the Chinese socio-economic transformation. The paper demonstrates that Nigeria can learn from the Chinese success story. The government and people of China are noted for discipline that promotes hard work and dignity in labour. The leadership itself is both frugal and sacrificial with little or no room for ostentation and corruption. This type of leadership that is committed to people-oriented development, except in a few instances had been absent in post-independent Nigeria.

In conclusion therefore, it must be emphasised that Nigeria's economic policy towards China has undergone a number of shifts of emphasis and reappraisal of priorities. Nigeria-China relations should, however, go beyond rhetorics. The possibilities and potentials of a bilateral cooperation between the two countries have not been fully exploited. Nigeria and, indeed, Africa should move beyond the bounds of marginality and peripheral association where we are looked upon as marginal factors merely for tilting matters in favour of

developed market economies. Nigeria abounds with immeasurable reservoir of opportunities for trade, investments, business, and cooperation. The phlegmatic response to invitations of Chinese investors to come and invest in the country has not been encouraging as one would have expected.

In addition, therefore, for Nigerian-Chinese relations to wear a more acceptable face, the two countries must go beyond the formalities of signing bilateral agreements. Rather concrete steps must be taken by the two countries to actualise the dreams of these agreements. This will be to the mutual benefit of both countries. By this initiative, Nigeria will take advantage of this bilateral interaction to improve on its domestic economy rather than being a mere provider of raw materials and importers of finished goods from China. The pattern of economic relations between the two countries in future would significantly be determined by the extent to which both countries understand each other's problems and interests and adopt a cooperative attitude towards solving them.

Recommendations and Options for the Future

1. Nigeria's relationship with China should henceforth reflect a profound understanding that our basic national objectives are long-term. Our policy now and in the near future, must be informed by our ultimate national interests. Nigeria has the responsibility to protect its economy from domination by foreign enterprises which are interested not in the local economies, but in the economies of the developed industrialised states.
2. One effective approach to address the trade imbalance is to evolve a cooperative mechanism that would enable Nigeria increase its export of manufactured goods to China. In addition, Chinese companies in Nigeria should diversify their economic activities. Rather than restricting themselves to merely importing finished goods from China for sale in Nigeria, they should invest in the productive sectors of the Nigerian economy and thereby gain from the export of such Nigerian-made goods.
3. Nigeria should diversify its economy as well as create an enabling business environment to encourage Chinese and other investors. We must work towards addressing basic and other infrastructural impediments to the spread of knowledge, such as provision of electricity, transport and better telecommunication facilities, as well as finding ways, where appropriate, to remove the impediment on regional integration.
4. In Nigeria and other parts of Africa, there is growing concern about substandard products coming from China. Nigeria needs firm commitment from China to tackle and stop this menace. One expects, in the long run, that the several Chinese companies now operating in Nigeria will transfer their technical and managerial skills to Nigeria workers to ensure strengthened cooperation and accelerate economic development in Nigeria.

5. There is a need for the two countries to coordinate their foreign policy approaches in order to facilitate international response to pressing international economic issues such as globalisation, regional integration and global economic crisis. There is need for continuous exchange of visits at the highest level to be strengthened. However, in spite of the high level of official visits, the two countries are yet to forge a close political understanding necessary to boost their cooperation in the economic and technological sectors.
6. Nigeria and China have long standing ties of bilateral relations and a mutual commitment to the quest for global peace, progress and economic prosperity. There is need for the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), Nigerian Institute for Policy and Strategic Studies (NIIPS), various Departments of International Relations in both the Nigerian and Chinese Universities and the Chinese Institute of International Studies (CIIS) not to restrict their activities to strictly academic endeavours. The CIIS and NIIA, for instance, should make the governments of China and Nigeria take and implement policies proposed by both institutes.
7. Nigeria should learn from Chinese socio-economic transformation. As Nigeria rallies to industrialise its economy, it will not be out of place if it copies the Chinese model that is relevant to our local environment. But more than anything else, the Nigerian government should encourage Nigerians to effectively adopt technology that has kept China at the cutting-edge of global economy. For example, Nigeria has a lot to gain from having access to China's low-cost technologies, because they are easily exportable and transferrable because of their adaptability and simplicity.
8. Nigeria's interest in entering into bilateral economic relations with China in 1971 arose partly from the fact that such a relationship would be devoid of the master-servant relationship which tainted historical and economic links with the developed market economy countries of the West. It is hoped that, unlike the unequal economic relationship that existed and continues to exist, economic relations with China in future will be built on a foundation of equity, mutual respect and equitable distribution of the fruits of international division of labour.
9. The time to refocus strategy for South-South Cooperation is now. Members should encourage investment across the borders of the countries of the South. An effective and productive linkage among the private sector of member countries is indispensable if the numerous opportunities in respective countries are to be fully exploited to their collective advantage. Both Nigeria and China must rededicate themselves to exploiting the comparative advantages and complementarities inherent in their respective economies, and adapting new and innovative approaches in pursuing this objective.

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Avoiding the Oil Curse in Ghana: Is Transparency Sufficient?

Franklin Obeng-Odoom*

Abstract

This article assesses measures put in place by the government of Ghana to manage Ghana's newly found oil. It uncovers two actors – the people in the 'oil communities' and the oil companies – that have been 'forgotten' by the government and yet are critical to unlocking the so-called 'oil blessing'. It is argued that the existing policies do not sufficiently account for the peculiar needs of the communities in which oil will be drilled. The existing policy paradigm implies that the activities of the oil companies might set in motion corrupt practices among public officials and worsen the plight of the poor.

Key Words: Oil, poor, curse, corruption, Ghana, activism.

Résumé

Cet article fait l'évaluation des mesures prises par le gouvernement du Ghana pour gérer le pétrole récemment découvert dans le pays. Il révèle deux acteurs – les habitants des 'communautés productrices de pétrole' et les compagnies pétrolières – qui ont été 'oubliés' par le gouvernement et qui, pourtant, sont essentiels pour libérer ce qu'il est convenu d'appeler la 'bénédiction du pétrole'. D'aucuns soutiennent

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que les politiques existantes ne tiennent pas suffisamment compte des besoins particuliers des communautés dans lesquelles il y aura des forages. Le paradigme politique existant implique que les activités des compagnies pétrolières pourraient mettre en branle des pratiques de corruption chez les responsables publics et aggraver la situation déjà difficile des pauvres.

Introduction

‘What do you wish for?’ asked the god. ‘Gold’, begged the king. ‘I wish that everything I touch would turn to gold.’ ‘It may not make you happy’ warned the god, ‘but if that is what you want I grant your wish’!

Al Perkins, 1969, *King Midas and the Golden Touch*, pp.16-21, Random House Inc

Ghana is at a crossroads. On the one hand, it faces severe economic challenges: an estimated 28.5 per cent of the Ghanaian population lives under the poverty line (Ghana Statistical Service 2007); about 80 per cent of Ghanaians live under US\$2 a day (Gary 2009) and GDP per capita is less than US\$400 (Moss and Young 2009). At the urban level, it is estimated that 82 per cent of the urban population in Ghana have no access to improved latrines (World Health Organisation and the United Nations Children’s Fund 2010) and 45 per cent of the urban population live in slums (UN-Habitat 2009).

On the other hand, it has the potential to change its socio-economic fortunes. By the first quarter of 2010, Ghana will export oil in commercial quantities. The country’s first oil field is called ‘Jubilee’ because it was discovered around the same time Ghana celebrated 50 years of independence from British colonial rule (Hufstader 2008). Ghana is likely to become the seventh largest oil producer in Africa (Staff Writers 2008).

The initial reaction to the discovery of oil in 2008 was euphoric. The pomp and pageantry that greeted the news started at the seat of presidency in the castle, Accra, where ‘President Kufour gave an impromptu speech to the media with a glass of champagne in one hand and a glass of crude oil in the other. He expressed ‘joy’ that he would ‘go down in history’ as the president during whose tenure oil was found. Oil, he said, was ‘a shot in the arm’, and Ghana was now ‘going to fly’. He said Ghana was going ‘to really zoom, accelerate’, and ‘if everything works, which I pray will happen’ then in only five years [Ghana] would ‘truly’ emerge as an ‘African Tiger’. ‘Ghana will suc-

ceed' 'because this is our destiny'' (McCaskie 2008:323). Not only will oil provide jobs, it will also bail the country out of its perennial energy crises. According to the president,¹ 'we pray that the company would be successful so that our country would not become a beggar in the energy sector anymore' (Boakye-Dankwa 2008).

The euphoria spread to other sectors. In the energy ministry, the Energy Minister literally ran to parliament House with a receptacle that contained a sample of the oil. According to the minister, the previous government was only able to discover salt, while his government had been more focused and, hence, had been rewarded with oil. To make his case more picturesque, he lifted two containers – one with oil and the other, salt, – for members to see for themselves the difference between the two governments; a gesture that was greeted with the traditional majority 'yeeh yeeeh!' (Joy FM 2008). Churches organised well-attended 'all night' prayer sessions to thank God for the discovery of oil. One of them had a banner that read, 'National Prayer and Thanksgiving Service for Oil Discovery in Ghana All are cordially invited. Be aglow for Jesus'.²

Subsequent reactions have been more tempered, particularly because of a fear of the resource curse – the phenomenon where the presence of natural resources like oil leads to stagnation or perhaps retrogression in the fortunes of the host country as 'resource curse' or the 'paradox of plenty'. It is a paradox because it is assumed – and reasonably so – that in the midst of plenty, countries should flourish but, concurrently, natural resources like oil tend to set in motion an array of challenges that can lead to socio-economic and political stagnation in the host country. Conflicts may arise over gaining more access to the oil resource. Overdependence on oil may lead to revenue volatility, the neglect of other sectors of the economy like agriculture, human resource development and the collection of taxes. These may culminate in excessive borrowing (in the hope that petrodollars would easily pay the debt (see Karl 1997 for fuller discussion).

This paper has two aims. First, it discusses the resource curse thesis by looking at the theory and empirical evidence in Africa. The second aim of the paper is to examine the effectiveness of 'good governance', particularly transparency, as a key policy prescription, which the Government of Ghana is pursuing to avert a possible resource curse. The paper is divided into five sections. Section 2 looks at the resource curse thesis, section 3 examines the effectiveness of policy prescriptions from a conceptual perspective, while section 4 complements the analysis by considering Nigeria's experience with oil. Finally, section 5 discusses the lessons of the Nigeria case for Ghana.

The Resource Curse Thesis

Those on the 'resource curse' train in Ghana have been many, ranging from academics, the clergy, politicians, journalists and civil society. The warning about resource curse comes in different shades and under different titles. For example:

- 'Mr. President, Watch out! Oil money is coming, but corruption will follow' (Saminu 2009).
- 'Oil will be hot potato for energy minister' (Public Agenda 2009).
- 'Oil hot spot Ghana must proceed with caution' (Hart 2009).
- 'Ghana: Why Country Should Not Bank on Oil' (Osei 2009).

It is important to insert these concerns within the broader discussion of the oil curse thesis. Before the 1980s, the prevailing view was that countries with significant deposits of natural resources were most likely to develop their economies and institutions. Scholars from various disciplines expounded this view. In geography, Norton Ginsburg and in economics, Arthur Lewis, Walter Rostow added their voice, and perhaps weight, to such claims (Rosser 2006).

However, since the 1980s, the phenomenon known as the resource curse became the more accepted view. The phenomenon was first discovered in the Netherlands where the discovery of natural gas in the 1960s led to negative effects on the Dutch economy: the Guilder, the Dutch currency, appreciated and led to negative effects on made Dutch exports uncompetitive and national attention was given to the development of the natural gas resource to the detriment of the manufacturing. In 1977, *The Economist* periodical coined the term 'Dutch Disease' to describe the fate of the Netherlands (Goodman and Worth 2008:204; Collier 2009:39).

As a concept in economics, however, the term has come to be used more generally to refer to the negative relationship between resource wealth and the economy. Hence, the resource curse is sometimes called 'the paradox of plenty' (see, for example, Auty 1993). Indeed, resource poor countries such as Switzerland and Japan have usually outperformed resource rich countries such as Russia. The Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs) of East Asia, such as Korea and Singapore, have consistently surged ahead of resource rich countries such as Venezuela (Sachs and Warner 1995). Such is the paradox that led Sheik Ahmed Yamani, Oil Minister of Saudi Arabia, to contend that 'All in all, I wish we [Saudi Arabia] had discovered water' (cited in Goodman and Worth 2008:201).

The curse can plague all continents. However, Africa is the focal point of considerable research and interest regarding the resource curse thesis (Obi

2009), perhaps because of the increasing amount of hydrocarbons which have been discovered on the continent in recent times (Lesourne and Ramsay 2009). Africa is a continent with significant amount of oil, particularly in the Gulf of Guinea. As of 2007, Nigeria, Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon were producing an estimated 5,120 million barrels per day. The Gulf of Guinea alone produces 7.1 per cent of total world production (Lesourne and Ramsay 2009:8).

Is it likely that the resource curse will whittle away the potential 'blessing' of oil? The curse is potentially multi-dimensional: war, conflict, corruption and dictatorship. A negative relationship between natural resource plenty and economic development has been empirically established in many parts of Africa.

In Chad, oil from the Chad-Cameroon Pipeline, alone stood at 140,000 barrels per day in 2004 and by the first half of 2005, it had increased to 180,000 barrels per day. Macroeconomic indicators showed some positive trends: GDP averaged 1 per cent between 1997 and 2001, but rose to 9.3 per cent in 2005. Yet, in terms of social effects at the household level, the oil seems to have had limited impact. A substantial part of the revenue goes into military spending. In turn, spending on health is low. Not surprisingly, an estimated 80 per cent of the population live in poverty (Pegg 2006).

The experience of Angola is similar to that of Chad. A recent evaluation by Nicholas Shaxson (2009) reports that the 2009 budget shows significant returns from oil, totalling about US\$42 billion, bigger than all the Overseas Development Assistance the OECD countries give to the entire African continent. In fact, oil production has kept rising: from 1.2 million barrels per day in 2005 to 1.6 million barrels per day in 2007 and an estimated 2.0 million barrels per day in 2009. Yet, there is conflict and violence everywhere, corruption abounds, social services are weak, mortality rates are high and the country has become increasingly unequal (Shaxson 2009).

Similar effects have been found in other African countries, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo where Ross (2001) has recently found that, in spite of large reserves of oil, progress in economic development has been low as corruption and diversion of oil wealth into militarisation has soared. Also, oil revenue has done greater damage to democracy as states are less accountable and more authoritarian. Auty and Pontara (2008) have recently analysed the possibility that a resource curse awaits Mauritania where production started in 2006. They find that, although it enjoys a significant production, totalling about 45,000 barrels per day, the country risks the resource curse in such a way that the political structures can be crippled and the economy can suffer setbacks (see also Auty 2007). Across Africa, the research on the resource

curse has focused on oil and the economy and oil and institutions of governance. Both themes show negative relationships: more oil; weak economy and more oil; weak institutions of governance (Collier and Hoeffler 2005).

The negative effect of oil on institutions and economic development in Africa raises the question of what factors may be driving this curse. According to Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2003), there are three ways to explain the inverse relationship between resource boom and the curse of plenty. First, resource wealth increases the chances of rent-seeking behaviour which, in turn, may lead to corruption and its concomitant negative effects on the economy. Second, dependence on oil makes a country vulnerable to global fluctuations in oil prices. Third, oil may drive out investment in other sectors.

Within this simplified framework, several studies have shown the more complex picture. For example, Collier (2009) has found that oil-rich countries with democratic governments tend to under invest because they are more interested in projects which would make them win the next elections. When they do invest, their choice of investment is usually unwise. Thus both the rate and return of investment in oil-rich countries are low (Collier 2009:44). The work of Collier reflects the general concerns about the 'rentier state'. Resource-rich countries tend to rely less on taxation by citizens and more on economic rents from the oil resource. The lack of accountability weakens democratic institutions as government officials tend to use the rents to corrupt voters and opinion leaders. Rentier states prefer not to invest in public services because they do not feel any pressure from citizens, whose taxes tend to make them hold governments to account. By avoiding investment in labour-intensive infrastructure development and the provision of social services, unemployment tends to be high in resource-rich countries (Auty 1997; Auty and Pontara 2008).

Another perspective on the causes of the curse is how natural resource abundance crowds out other economic growth-enhancing sectors, such that those sectors contribute little to national growth. The oil sector may also have a wage premium that can crowd out entrepreneurial activity. If such entrepreneurial skills are in short supply and they enhance growth, drawing them into the oil sector may constitute a brake on economic growth (Sachs and Warner 2001). These drivers of the Dutch Disease build on concerns arising from the Prebisch-Singer model, which suggests that the prices of primary commodities such as oil are volatile and typically tend to decline over time, compared to manufactures, so that dependence on natural resource is not good for a country as the country is likely to suffer price shocks. Other economic reasons for the paradox of plenty come from the idea that wealth obtained without sweat

leads to indolence (Sachs and Warner 1995).

These various concerns about the effect of the resource curse suggest that an array of political and economic problems is the likely outcome: widening inequality, worsening poverty levels, low economic growth, underinvestment and low returns to investment and corruption, dictatorship and civil strife (see, for example, Ross 2006; De Soysa and Neumayer 2007). The distributional dimension is important but the research on 'who suffers what' is sparse (Frederiksen 2007). However, the few studies suggest that women and children face a more precarious situation when the curse strikes while corporate elites and politicians, often men, win. Ross's (2008) work is revealing. Based on global data, he finds that oil abundance leads to the contraction of the traded sector, a fall in the wages there and a rise in the non-traded sector and the wages there. Since women tend to be disproportionately in the traded sector, their participation in the labour force declines. In turn, their political influence declines. Children also bear a disproportionate burden. For each increase of mineral dependence of five percentage points, the mortality of children who are under 5 years rises by 12.7/1000 (Vidyasagar 2005:743-744). On the other hand, politicians, the elite and corporate power benefit considerably from the exploitation of the oil resource as a result of corruption and patronage politics (see, for example, Rosser 2004; Watts 2005). The concern with these aggregate and distributional aspects of the presence of the resource curse leads to the question of what can be done to avoid it.

Avoiding the Resource Curse: The Main Policy Prescriptions

How can the resource curse be avoided? Neo-liberal thinking is that, with transparent management and incorruptible institutions, the resource curse will be avoided and turned into a resource blessing for all. As noted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), 'Given the potentially substantial costs of non-transparent practices, institutional strengthening to improve transparency in vulnerable resource-rich countries should provide ample pay-off for a relatively modest investment. In particular, transparency can help establish and maintain credibility in regard to the collection and distribution of resource revenue' (IMF 2007:4).

The most authoritative writers on the resource curse agree. Auty (2000, 2007) has argued that a more accountable state is all that is required to cure the curse. Collier (2009:140-151; see also Collier and Hoeffler 2005) comments at length about how transparency and democracy can help the situation. Other scholars (e.g., Dietz et al. 2007) have lent their support to the

‘good governance, less corruption thesis’, claiming that greater liberalisation and, hence, internationalisation reduces corruption (See, for example, Rosser 2004 and Rosser 2006 for a review). Of all these exponents, the World Bank has been the most outspoken advocate of good governance. According to the Bank, extraction of oil in a context of good governance leads to the reduction of poverty and improvement in social conditions (see Pegg 2006). To the question ‘why is there the resource curse?’ Paul Collier (2009:42) says, ‘I think the evidence points to governance as the key problem’. Several initiatives have been launched in furtherance of this view. In 2002, Tony Blair, former UK Prime Minister, launched the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) as a measure to improve transparency in the extractive industry. Other initiatives include George Soros’ ‘Publish What Your Pay Campaign’ and the G-8 Declaration in 2003 on transparency (See Jerome et al. 2005 for discussion).

The government of Ghana has emphasised the need for transparency and good governance too. According to a minister for energy, Mr. Felix Owusu Agyapong, ‘if we can begin to improve the level of transparency, the oil find can be a blessing’ (GNA 2008b). When president John Mills recently met the diplomatic community in Accra, he said:

Your Excellencies, I am aware that in Africa and elsewhere, the onset of oil wealth, in the absence of adequate legal structures and safeguards, tends to erode democratic accountability. This government will take steps to address transparency and governance concerns relating to the nation’s oil find (GNA 2009).

To make oil benefit all, Boakye-Dankwa (2008) argues, government institutions like the Ghana Standards Board and the Environmental Protection Agency should be strengthened. The government of Ghana has commissioned numerous committees and called for ‘technocratic’ management in order to make Ghana’s oil a blessing. In fact, a ministerial committee on oil and gas and a ‘technical’ committee have been put in place to produce a National Oil and Gas Policy and a Gas Master Plan; and plans have been made to set up an Oil and Gas Authority to regulate the commercial production of oil (Hope and Yeboako, 2008). Ian Gary, a senior policy advisor with OXFAM America, has also observed that ‘Ghana’s challenge will be to ensure that the right institutions and transparent policies are in place before oil production starts’ (Gary 2009:3).

This emphasis on transparency is summarised in an article that appeared in the *Economist* on ‘The curse of oil’. The article quotes the response of an elderly American parishioner who asked an African who had come to the church to complain about the devastations of America gasoline on ‘faraway lands’: ‘I

know Africa is very rich in diamonds, gold and oil, but the people are very poor. Why are your governments so bad at managing that wealth?' (*The Economist* 2005). From this background discussion, it is important to ask two key questions: Is corruption the *genesis* of the oil curse and therefore will incorruptible institutions and officials guarantee an oil blessing for 'all Ghanaians'? And does good governance have a trickle-down effect?

Is Corruption a Precursor for Oil Crisis?

In reviewing the resource curse literature, Pegg (2006) depicts the following typical sequence: 'natural resource booms, less accountability, increased corruption, misallocation of resources, poor economic and political performance' (p.4). When oil falls into the hands of states, they become less reliant on taxes from the people. This makes them less accountable to the people and more corrupt. The major driving force in the resource curse thesis is corruption, but this can be linked to conflict and war too. To borrow from Kaldor and Karl (2007, np) 'the main reason why oil-rich countries are prone to war is because of the character of their society and economy. Sectarian groups compete for access to oil resources and finance their military adventures through smuggling oil, kidnapping oil executives, or blowing up pipelines. Outside intervention only makes things worse...' The literature on the devastations of oil has persistently placed corruption as a driver of the crisis. However, this depiction is ahistorical and does not tell us what exactly triggers corruption.

Generally, the role of transnational corporations (TNCs) in the oil industry can cause and usually intensifies the likelihood of corruption. One way to look at the role of TNCs is to examine them in the owner-worker relationship. TNCs in the oil industry tend to exploit their workers, leading to agitations for fairer treatment. This agitation is intensified as many of the workers, who hitherto were tilling the land, cannot go back to the land, having been expropriated with neither fair nor adequate compensation. However, this 'worker alienation' framework is inadequate. The role of TNCs in the oil-development nexus is a more complex terrain of transnational capitalist accumulation and dispossession, mediated by various global, national and local factors (Obi 1997; Ikelegbe 2005).

Oil companies tend to bribe the key personnel in neo-liberal state apparatus, the media and the community leaders that are too 'loud'. Such corrupt states have curiously obtained support from Western countries like the USA and UK. This support has come in the form of international praise, refusal to reprimand dictatorial regimes, selling of arms to dictators or directly funding their activities. The rationale for this 'unholy alliance' between the western

countries and the neo-liberal states in Africa, according to a middle-level state department USA official, is that corrupt states, and especially military ones, are better able to guarantee USA interest in oil even though they use crude means (Fleshman 2002). A Few months before his illegal execution, the Nigerian political activist and writer, Ken Saro Wiwa (1995:245-246), wrote of Britain:

Ultimately the fault lies at the door of the British government. It is the British government, which supplies arms and credit to the military dictators of Nigeria, knowing full well that all such arms will only be used against innocent, unarmed citizens. It is the British government, which makes noises about democracy in Nigeria and Africa but supports military dictators to the hilt. It is the British government, which supports the rape and devastation of the environment by a valued taxpaying labour-employing organisation like Shell. I lay my travails, the destruction of the Ogoni and other peoples in the Niger Delta, at the door of the British government.

Western countries and their multinational corporations tend to support predatory states once these states guarantee them oil. In exchange, these governments are not pressured to live up to democratic standards and, even when this unholy alliance becomes too glaring for worldwide condemnation, the predatory states are still left untouched because, according to their western collaborators, they are 'sovereign' (White and Taylor 2001). The opposite logic is true. Whenever the state proves to be unsupportive of these oil hungry western countries, there is military intervention in the name of securing human rights (Ifeka 2004). Thus, Markusen (1978) has argued that there is a negative correlation between a state guarantee of oil and violence or corruption in oil countries. According to Markusen:

The stronger the local or state level opposition to development, or assertions or right to control development, the greater the corporate pressure at higher levels to override or buy off opposition (Markusen 1978:128).

The notion that oil companies and some western states collude is neither new nor unknown. The General Communiqué of Oilwatch Africa (1999:186-187) begins as follows: 'transnational companies have supported dictatorships, authoritarian and corrupt governments, in order to favour their profit interest in different regions of the world'. Corruption is nearly always part of this process (see for example Omeje 2004; Malaquias 2001; Kibble and Vines 2001), but it is usually at the heels of dramatic exploitation of oil communities by transnational corporations. This 'international criminality' (Power 2001) is lost under hue and cry about massive corruption in Africa in western media. For example, a *New York Times* article, titled 'No oil yet, but African Isle finds

slippery dealings' suggests that African leaders are pathologically corrupt. The authors state:

The first drop of oil has yet to be produced but Federal investigators suspect oil-related corruption. All of this might not seem unusual in Africa, where oil and corruption often go hand in hand (Meier and Mouawad 2007).

It is important to note, however, that corruption may be a systemic feature of the neo-liberal state. According to neo-liberal analysis, the state should be minimalist because its general tendency is to be corrupt and inefficient. The state should not regulate private enterprises since the market is competent enough to do this. Also, with reference to direct production by the state, neo-liberal thinking is that the public sector should be downsized to attain cost efficiency (Martinussen 1997). In other words, the market can 'sanitise' a corrupt and non-entrepreneurial state.

However, downsizing and deregulation can themselves be seeds of corruption. For example, downsizing has weakened the capacity of governments to conduct state-of-the-art audits, given that the public sector has had to reduce expenditure. By creating opportunities for the privatisation of state enterprises, deregulation has opened a window for some government officials to loot state coffers in order to secretly buy some hitherto public enterprises. With privatisation, these corrupt state officials have also had the option of operating bank accounts in private banks (Szeftel 1998). The growing demand for oil from newly industrialised countries like India and China, coupled with shortage of oil and new oil finds, is incentive for the (already) industrialised countries to pursue strategies that weaken the state in oil producing countries (Kaldor and Said 2007). An environment of weak 'small' states and powerful 'big' private companies competing for the most profit is *sine qua non* for corruption.

While it would be preposterous to contend that corruption did not exist before the influence of neo-liberalism, 'it is also clear that liberalisation creates a set of new problems while not always eradicating the old sources of dishonesty. The use of patronage and bureaucratic 'rent-seeking' have not been ended by market reforms; rather they have been joined by new kinds of graft' (Szeftel 1998:233-4). Profit-seeking enterprises can be expected to consider any strategy that contributes to higher profitability.

Does good governance³ have a trickledown effect?

Initial deposits of Ghana's oil are around 3 billion barrels. It is estimated that about 60,000 barrels of oil will be exported per day at the initial stages in 2010, 120,000 barrels a day in 2011 and thenceforth, about 200,000 bar-

rels a day. The country is expected to earn US\$836 million annually and \$20 billion over the production period 2012-2030 from offshore oil deposits, mainly at Cape Three Points near Efasu, Axim and Takoradi in the Western region. The prospecting companies are Kosmos, Tullow and Anadgo (*Daily Graphic* 2008; Achiaw 2008; Gary 2009). LukOil has also invested US\$100m to support on-shore oil exploration in Ghana which is said to cover about 40 per cent of the landmass of Ghana, specifically in the Volta, Brong Ahafo and Northern regions (GNA 2008a).

Out of the US\$836 million annual revenue from oil, it is estimated that about 50 per cent will accrue to the state as economic rent (Breisinger et al 2009). Estimates of 'local content' in the supply of goods to the oil sector and job creation seem to be positive. For instance, 40-60 per cent of the jobs to be created directly from the Jubilee 1 phase will go to Ghanaians (World Bank 2009:22). The impact of oil on the macroeconomy of Ghana is likely to be substantial: oil will add about US\$5 billion to the GDP, push the GDP growth rate up by about 28 per cent and bring in about US\$1 billion in taxes from the Jubilee field alone (Akufo-Addo, 2010). From 2010 to 2015, oil revenue is predicted to constitute an estimated 4 to 6 per cent of GDP (Dagher et al. 2010).

It is expected that the country will produce gas from the oil at a rate of one thousand cubic feet of gas per barrel of oil. Assuming a peak Phase 1 production from the Jubilee field alone, Ghana could produce 120 million cubic feet of gas per day. Assuming current world market price for natural gas liquids (NGL) of US\$2 per thousand cubic feet, the country is expected to obtain gross revenues of approximately US\$260 million per year in addition to the oil revenues. From these figures, a 50 per cent equity ownership in the gas infrastructure by the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC), Ghana's power production company, could lead to corporation tax revenues of about US\$120 million per year for the government of Ghana (World Bank 2009:2-3).

The government of Ghana believes that, once Ghanaians occupy key positions in the oil company, environmental institutions are strengthened, corrupt officials are dealt with and jobs are given to Ghanaians and not foreign consultants, oil should be a blessing to all Ghanaians. A similar argument has been advanced by Kibble and Vines (2001) who studied the oil industry in Angola. But can this 'macro view' impact positively on local oil communities?

This logic is not new; it is called the 'trickle down' thesis and was popularised under president Reagan of USA. Reagan gave high tax cuts to the rich, believing that 'a rising tide lifts all boats'. Applied to development studies, the

thesis holds that poverty reduction follows from economic growth or that, with increased wealth in a country, it trickles down to the poor. The World Bank's policy of infrastructure-led poverty-reduction is a classic example. A recent study by Dollar and Kraay (2002) argues that 'growth is good for the poor' although, according to the authors, their 'evidence does not suggest a 'trickle-down' process or sequencing in which the rich get richer first and eventually benefits trickle down to the poor'. They contend that privatisation is good for the poor, as much as for everyone else, while social spending does not in any way help the poor.

Though trickledown theory is widely criticised (see for e.g. Frank 2007), some economists still place enormous faith in it (see for e.g. Aghion and Bolton 1997). Applied to the discovery of oil, 'trickle down' means oil will bring jobs, money for schools and community development for *all Ghanaians* (that includes poor Ghanaians). According to former President Kufour, 'oil is money, and we need money to do the schools, the roads, the hospitals. If you find oil, you manage it well, can you complain about that?' (BBC 2008).

Indeed, we cannot complain about that, but we may question whether the poor – especially those in the communities on whose lands oil exploration will take place – will benefit from the 'blessings for all Ghanaians'. In order to analyse the distribution of the so-called benefits of oil, we should return to basics – the consequences of an oil boom. According to Goodman and Worth (2008), oil booms lead to socio-economic disadvantages (like the weakening of non-oil sectors such as agriculture and lack of community transformation), political disruption (like clientelism and corruption) and environmental degradation (pollution of water bodies, for example).

In a slightly elaborated version, oil attracts the labour force from other sectors like agriculture and frequently induces in-migration for jobs in oil communities. However, because oil production is capital intensive, these jobs tend to be relatively few. Many of the jobs are short-term, during the initial drilling and construction state, while ongoing operational jobs are few. Long-term construction jobs require some skill which frequently has to be imported from outside the oil communities. In any case, where those who eventually get jobs had been unemployed for a long time and have low incomes, they do not tend to agitate for better working conditions, given that the oil jobs pay relatively more. These jobs are insecure; not only because of their brief nature but also because of the volatility of oil prices, the non-renewable nature of oil and the specialised nature of the machinery input which is often imported.

The development of an oil industry also deprives the local community of its land, either because pipes have to be laid across farms or because oil activities

despoil land previously used for agriculture or tourism (because of say, spillage). Even locals in tertiary sector jobs like restaurant businesses may lose their current jobs because oil boom attracts multinational businesses like MacDonald's that easily outcompete the local industry (Markusen 1978:123-124). Olien and Olien (1982) have also argued that, apart from the boost to the real estate industry, oil brings with it a desecration of cultural values and a proliferation of prostitution and general crime. All these consequences of an oil boom could be positive or negative. Take the real estate example. An expansion in real estate could be a boon when it employs the local people and trains them in construction technology. It could, however, be a bane when developers try to maximise profit by employing the *highest and best use* principle which may prevent them from 'greening' their developments.

To cast further light on these issues, the next section of this paper analyses the interlinkages between corruption and oil and the related transparency argument for insulating Ghana against the oil curse. Reference is made to the experience of Nigeria, Ghana's neighbour that has long mined oil.

Empirical Evidence from Nigeria

Nigeria is one of the wealthiest countries in Africa. It produces about 2.46 million barrels of oil on a daily basis. It is also a major producer of natural gas, which amounts to about 22 million tonnes per year (Obi 2009). Between 1970 and 1999, US\$231 billion in oil rents accrued to Nigeria (Ross 2003).

The thinking that governance can change a curse to a blessing has led to a proliferation of governance institutions or initiatives, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independence Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission, the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative and the Department of Petroleum Resources (See, for example, Obuah 2010). Have they been effective in preventing the oil curse?

Some gains have been made. The EFCC, for example, has succeeded in putting over 500 corrupt people in jail and recovered money and assets wrongly obtained, totalling over US\$700 million (Obuah 2010). Nuhu Ribadu, an anti-corruption chief, has claimed that between 2003 and 2005, the amount of oil money stolen fell by 30 per cent (Watts 2006).

Yet, 57 per cent of Nigerians are poor (Aigbokhan 2008:13). Also, the country is polarised between the extremely rich and the extremely poor. For instance, in 1970 the income of the bottom 17 per cent of the population was equivalent to the top 2 per cent of the population. However, by 2000, the income of the top 2 per cent had increased so much that it was equal to the

income of the bottom 55 per cent which was equivalent to that of the top 2 per cent (Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian 2003:4). Over the period, 1965 – 2004, income per capita fell from US\$250 to \$212 (Watts 2006).

Most of the oil production in Nigeria comes from the Niger Delta area (Obi 1997a) but social conditions in the area are poor (Obi 2007a). An estimated 70 per cent of the people in the Niger Delta area have no clean water, passable roads, electricity supply and adequate medical supplies (Idemudia 2007:3). In the oil-rich states of Delta and Bayelsa, the patient-doctor ratio is 150,000 to 1 (Watts 2006). Between 1970 and 1999, revenue from oil rose but per capita income fell (Ross 2003). An estimated 80 per cent of Nigeria's oil accrue to only 1 per cent of the population, while the remaining 99 per cent of the population struggles to share only 20 per cent of the oil revenue (Obi 2009:123). There are also severe environmental problems in the form of pollution and degradation in areas where oil is drilled (Obi 1997b). The area is a source of recurrent violent conflict. Several foreign oil workers have been captured. For instance, in 2007, nine Chinese workers were abducted and a car bomb detonated (Obi 2008:418). In 1999, it was estimated that there were 20 deaths from oil violence per day. The figure rose to 50 deaths per day in 2004 (Arowosegbe 2009:588).

So, if Nigeria is a case study of good governance, why has so little been achieved? The assumptions underpinning that posited solution are mainly to blame. Advocates presume that the resource curse is mainly the result of bad behaviour of individuals or arises from the culture of actors. But, in fact, the curse is a function of systems and processes (Shaxson 2007). Ifeka has argued that Western advocates of the 'governance solution' to the resource curse misunderstand the nature of African politics: hierarchical clientelism is never resolved by good governance (Ifeka 2004). Political scientists specialising in the political economy of Africa (e.g. Obi 2009) have even suggested that the institutions of governance are themselves caught in a symbiotic relationship with the state, local elites and transnational co-corporations such that it is difficult to independently ensure transparency. Foregrounded on the wrong assumptions, the posited governance framework has attained little and has, in fact, become a vehicle for further accumulation by dispossession (see also Watts 2004). To illustrate the systemic nature of the resource curse in Nigeria, the relationship between local people and Shell, the Anglo-Dutch global oil giant, which produces about half of the oil in Nigeria (Obi 1997a and b, 2008), should be carefully unpacked.

A recent study by Okonta and Douglas (2003)⁴ is an informative source on the effect of oil in the Niger Delta area in Nigeria. It focuses on the activities of Shell but looks generally at the oil industry in Nigeria. The historical analysis is impressive because of the variety of sources on which the conclusions of the study are based. Shell, according to the authors, arrogantly breaches environmental laws in the Niger Delta area. It leaves oil pipes naked and rusted. These lead to frequent oil spillage and fires. The natural result is massive ecological destruction. In many cases, Shell has failed to compensate the oil communities for their lands. In the few cases where compensation has been paid, Shell had to be dragged to court to force the compensation payment. In *Farah v Shell Petroleum Development Co. Ltd*, an oil spillage by Shell saw the plaintiff going to court to seek redress. Shell, according to the authors, battled the plaintiff for 25 years before the court finally ruled against Shell and compelled it to pay adequate compensation to the plaintiffs. 'Fair and adequate', however, is very difficult to define since in Nigeria the compensation figure is based on crop yields. There is room for independent valuation using fairer approaches, but poor farmers do not have the money to retain the services of independent valuers.

In terms of physical development, Shell contributes little to the oil towns because it is not legally bound to develop these communities once it pays its taxes to the central government. Thus, infrastructure such as electricity, water, roads, hospitals and schools has eluded the oil communities, even though Shell continues to make millions from these communities. Jobs promised to the local people have not been forthcoming and, in Ogoni alone, unemployment is about 70 per cent. Expatriates have sometimes been flown into Nigeria to replace local staff. According to the authors:

Shell made a lot of promises: the hospital and toilet houses were destroyed, as were the burying grounds. They pumped out water and destroyed the farmland with promised compensation like community and secondary schools, a road to Nembe and pipe-borne water....but nothing has happened. It is like a dreamland (Okoraba community leaders in November 1993, cited in Okonta and Douglas 2003:96).

Exploitation of the oil communities, according to the authors, has led to poverty, hunger and anger. Naturally, anger has led to civil unrests in the area. Such agitations have sometimes forced Shell to halt operations, re-strategise – which in Shell's case, Okonta and Douglas note, means bribing officers of the state and causing divisions among activist groups and community leaders – and resume operation. The 'dissident' few, who attempt to stand in the way of Shell, are 'dealt with', by violence meted out sometimes by the Nigerian

army. The Coalition Against Dictatorship (CAP) (1995:474) has alleged that one memo signed by Major Okuntimo of the Rivers State Internal Security Task Force, and dated 12 May 1994, read, 'Shell operations still impossible unless ruthless military [sic] operations are undertaken for smooth economic activities to commence'.

The struggle of the Ogoni people against Shell and the Nigerian state has historical roots, it dates back to 1958. As global forces became interested in oil on the land of the Ogoni people, landowners were alienated from their land. As oil was drilled, the environment was degraded. In turn, the basis of their livelihood, farming, was destroyed, without compensation (Mustapha 1996). Ogoni used to be the main provider of food to Rivers State and, since 1958, a major source of oil revenue. An estimated US\$30 billion worth of oil had been drilled by 1995 (CAP 1995: 473). The conflict had other catalysts such as the Nigerian civil war (which led to the creation of new states and subsequent loss of control of oil by the minority ethnic groups), military coups, which altered land rights, and the effects of free market reforms which removed social support for many Nigerians (Mustapha 1996; Obi 1997a:142-146).

Many have lost their lives, including the writer and political activist, Ken Saro Wiwa. Supporters of Wiwa have been massacred and oil communities reduced to rubble (Okonta and Douglas 2003). According to Okonta and Douglas (2003:131-132), Colonel Paul Okuntimo, gave a detailed account of his activities at a press conference broadcast on the Nigerian Television Authority:

The first three days of the operations, I operated in the night. Nobody knew where I was coming from. What I will just do is that I will just take some detachments of soldiers; they will just stay at four corners of the town. They...have automatic rifle[s] that sounded death. If you hear the sound you will just freeze. And then I will equally now choose about twenty soldiers and give them grenades explosives very hard ones. So we shall surround the town at night...the machine gun with five hundred rounds will open up. When four or five like that open up and then we are throwing grenades and they are making 'eekpuwaa!' what do you think people are going to do? And we have already put roadblock[s] on the main road; we don't want anybody to start running.

Okuntimo and his men, according to the authors, were sometimes spotted using Shell aircraft for their operations. Shell has been accused of being behind these infamous activities, though it has persistently denied these allegations. Two cases: *Wiwa v. Royal Dutch Petroleum (Shell)* and *Wiwa v. Anderson*,

which were filed against Shell and the head of its Nigerian operation, Brian Anderson, respectively were re-opened in New York on 7 October 2008. It is significant to know that Shell had attempted to seek an adjournment of the case. The attorney from the Centre for Constitutional Rights (CCR), Jennie Green, said that: 'We are looking forward to finally bringing Shell into court, where we will prove their role in the torture and murder of our clients and their pattern of human rights abuses... It's time for our clients and their families to see justice' (CCR 2008). And on 8 June 2009, it finally happened: on the basis of the evidence against Shell, the company was forced to pay US\$15.5 million in compensation to the plaintiffs in an out-of-court settlement (CCR 2009).

The mayhem has been described by BBC as follows:

With oil prices at a 25-year high, this should be a boom time for Nigeria's oil capital, Port Harcourt but it isn't. Instead, the towns's business is reeling with militant attacks on oil installations, kidnappings and a general rise in lawlessness (Gregory 2006).

Shell continues to laugh all the way to the bank. It makes about 13 per cent of its worldwide profits from Nigeria alone and apart from USA; production in Nigeria is the highest globally (Okonta and Douglas 2003).

The experience of the Ogoni people in engaging Shell and the Nigerian state reflects how local, national and global social forces interact to influence access, production and distribution of natural resources. It shows how the state can be used by local and global forces of capital for private gain in an era of globalisation (Obi 1997a:137).

More recent studies by Obi (2007, 2008, 2009) shed further light on this account, focussing on the activities of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) but looking more broadly at the factors that drive and sustain the status quo in the Niger Delta area. The studies reveal that mono causal models are inadequate descriptors of the 'curse' in the area. Obi dissects the causes of the curse in the Niger Delta area into historical and contemporary factors; local and international factors. Four of them are particularly prevalent. Historically, the creation of the states and the Biafran war and subsequent control of the Niger Delta by federal government sowed the seeds of discord. The allocation of resources and the attempt to use the Distributive Pool Account to undermine the derivation principle, whereby states which contribute the most to the federation obtain the most from the resources. The derivation principle – the percentage of the revenue from oil set aside for the development of the area from which oil is drilled – has been reduced from 50 per cent in 1966 to 13 per cent in 1999. Attempts by the oil producing

states to get an increase through the Supreme Court of Nigeria have failed. The situation effectively means that the Niger Delta area, which produces the most of the oil of Nigeria, is the least developed and gets the least oil revenue.

It is this injustice that has led to the formation of MEND, to demand social justice. Obi (2009) shows that a key driver of the problem is the issue of land. A policy of central control of land, which is locally owned, means that the centre which is controlled by elites from the majority ethnic groups, control the oil produced from the minority states. These four factors are intensified by local (e.g. elites in the Niger Delta leadership), national (e.g. officers of the state and the military) and global forces (e.g. oil multinational corporations). The local forces have two faces, one for the people and the other for their self gain. The national forces perceive the struggles as attempts by criminals to bring the Nigerian economy to a halt. Besides, they want to protect the oil companies which are influential even within their countries. The multinational oil companies would do anything to ensure their profits are secure (Obi 2008, 2009).

This complex interplay of factors cast doubt on the one-size-fits-all analysis by neo-classical economists like Collier (2003:40), who recently claimed that:

Every time a civil war breaks out, some historian traces its origin to the 14th century and some anthropologist expounds on its ethnic roots. Don't buy into such explanations too quickly. ...distant history and ethnic tensions are rarely the best explanations of a conflict...look instead at a nation's recent past and, most important, its economic conditions.

Looking at the resource curse from a purely economic perspective is unhelpful (see also Olarinmoye 2008). Why? methodologically, the reliance on simplified statistical analysis with simplified assumptions is problematic. The recent work of Alexeev and Conrad (2009) has shown severe computational errors in the econometric work as well as weak conceptualisation of the variables used.⁵ In any case, no one monolithic explanation can suffice. At the root of the problem are questions of self-determination and resource control (Obi 2008:430) and questions of neglect, particularly of the youth in the Niger Delta area (Arowosegbe 2009), but also of a general feeling that the wealth of Nigeria is not even invested there but in foreign private banks. Because of this 'volatile mix' of factors (Obi 2007), the statistical evidence cannot stand on its own. Rather, all evidence of the phenomenon must be carefully studied, particularly taking account of the differences in institutions and ideologies prevailing in different countries.

Is Ghana Different?

Based on the liberal thesis of transparency, one may argue that the Nigerian experience would not be replicated in Ghana, because Ghana has better governance institutions compared with Nigeria's rankings (and many other oil rich African countries like Chad, Angola and Congo). Ghana scores above the 50th percentile in the World Bank Institute's Worldwide Governance Indicator rankings based on rule of law, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, and voice and accountability. Also, on corruption, Ghana ranks 67 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's Global Corruption Report 2008 (Gary 2009:7).

It is useful to ask how valid this argument is. We may draw some brief insight from Ghana's experience with gold mining.

The abundance of gold in Ghana earned it the name, 'Gold Coast'. But gold mining has severely impoverished gold mining communities. The majority of people in gold mining towns like Obuasi, Tarkwa and Akwatia are landless, homeless, unemployed, poor and weak. Many have died as a result of mining and the environmental impact has been devastating (Hilson and Banchirigah 2009; Yelapaala 2004; Akabzaa and Darimani 2001).

Mining employs 15,000-18,000 people in Ghana, less than 1 per cent of the total labour force. Yet, the operations of only two companies, Newmont Ghana Ltd and AngloGold Ghana Ltd., have displaced over 50,000 people who have been poorly compensated (Owusu-Koranteng 2008). A comprehensive study of the effects of gold mining in Ghana undertaken by the *Operations Evaluation Department* (OED) of the World Bank acknowledged, rather solemnly, that

It is unclear what its true net benefits are to Ghana. Large-scale mining by foreign companies has a high import content and produces only modest amounts of net foreign exchange for Ghana after accounting for all its outflows. Similarly, its corporate tax payments are low, due to various fiscal incentives necessary to attract and retain foreign investors. Employment creation is also modest, given the highly capital intensive nature of modern surface mining techniques. Local communities affected by large-scale mining have seen little benefit to date in the form of improved infrastructure or service provision, because much of the rents from mining are used to finance recurrent, not capital expenditure (OED 2003:23).

Generally, the state has been directly or indirectly endorsing these attacks on the livelihood of workers and the poor. This was documented by Jim Silver in the most detailed work on this topic. Silver (1978:67) noted that 'the alliance of mining capital, the state and the trades union bureaucracy which faces the

mineworkers has resulted in their development of a militant class consciousness. ...[this] is a defensive consciousness, disruptive, but not linked to any socialist transition in Ghana.' While Silver's analysis is dated, there exists some more recent anecdotal evidence of the 'favourable' role of the Ghanaian state to capital. For example, though the mining law obligates the mining companies to pay royalties of between 3-6 per cent of the value of gross minerals mined, the state allows mining companies to pay the barest minimum of 3 per cent. Also, court cases against mining companies drag for a long time, as in the case of forced evictions instituted by the people of Nkwantakrom against AngloGold Ashanti, which has lasted 10 years and is still unresolved (Owusu-Koranteng 2008). Also, a recent study by researchers from the University of Ghana revealed that mining activities in Obuasi had created dramatic levels of arsenic values, 10 to 38 times higher than levels permitted by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of Ghana and over 1,800 times higher than the values allowed by the World Health Organisation (GNA 2008c). This abuse of environmental standards has been allowed by the state.

Such devastation sometimes leads to protest by the mining communities, often led by farmers who stand the risk of losing their farmlands. In this regard, there have been protests in Obuasi and Asunafo North lately. But, as noted by Owusu-Koranteng (2008), there is lack of organisation in many mining communities, which has led to the emergence of some civil society organisations like the *Wassa Association of Communities Affected by Mining* to help in the organisation of struggles and protests against the mining companies. Such struggles have pressured the companies to make minor changes in their operations and have also created national awareness on the dramatic devastation of mining companies (see Owusu-Koranteng 2008).

The evidence from the gold mining experience in Ghana may be anecdotal, but it suggests that the Ghanaian state is not a 'class'-neutral state. Rather, it supports the interest of powerful groups such as corporations. It suggests that there is a limit to which 'transparent' or 'incorruptible' or 'governance' models can prevent an oil curse. The liberal analysis that corruption and opaque 'deals' are the root cause of the devastation of oil is palpably flawed.

In any case, many of the root causes of the problem in Nigeria exist in Ghana too. One crucial issue relates to the question of land ownership - who is the owner of the oil resource: the people or the state? According to article 257 (6) of the Constitution of Ghana, 'Every mineral in its natural state in, under or upon any land in Ghana, rivers, streams, water courses throughout Ghana, the exclusive economic zone and any area covered by the territorial

sea or continental shelf is the property of the Republic of Ghana and shall be vested in the President on behalf of, and in trust for the people of Ghana'. If it is government that owns land (defined as water bodies and physical land) which contains natural resource wealth, then it is unlikely that any special consideration will be given to the people in oil communities. Indeed, clause 22 of the draft Petroleum Revenue Management Bill stipulates that 70 per cent of the revenue from oil will be centrally managed by politicians and bureaucrats (Akufo-Addo 2010).

From this perspective, the trickle-down idea begins to look extremely shaky because there are insufficient policies to give particular attention to the local communities. What about at the macro level: what social policies are being developed to connect the oil industry to the public interest?

Most of the laws about oil were enacted over two decades ago, when Ghana did not have oil in commercial quantities, so there are fears that most of these laws are not relevant. For instance, the Fundamental Petroleum Policy of Ghana is believed to be too vague about how the oil industry can be regulated (Cavner 2008). Also, most of the existing laws such as the Petroleum (Exploration and Production) Law of 1984 (PNDC Law 84) and the Petroleum Income Tax Law of 1987 (PNDC Law 188) were promulgated in the 1980s when Ghana was governed by a military dictatorship, so they were not subjected to broad public scrutiny, parliamentary debates, discussion and approval (Gary 2009).

Further, as of 2009, there were no specific laws about how emission standards and compensation for oil-related abuses would be decided. There is currently a Petroleum Revenue Management Bill before the Parliament of Ghana. However, according to Akufo-Addo (2010), a former attorney general of Ghana, it is necessary to revise many of the clauses if an oil curse is to be avoided. Yet, even before the Bill is discussed by parliament, there are clear signs that the content will inform government budgeting, for instance. At best, the government, using its majority in parliament, can rush the bill through the house and get it passed into law, assuming that it wants to score political points by not using a bill, instead of an act, to guide its policies (Akufo-Addo 2010).

These weaknesses in oil-related regulations have several implications. First, they open up the possibility that the oil companies may act in ways which are socially suboptimal and environmentally degrading (Adu 2009). Secondly, they give the ingredients for avoidable litigation. Take, for example, the oil activities in Ghana's exclusive economic zone (200 miles from shore), for which there are no clear laws. Ghanaian laws are applicable to its territorial sea (12 miles from shore), a subset of the economic zone, however, sections

of the zone are covered by Public International Law (e.g. the Law of the Sea) rather than local laws (Allan 2009).

Meanwhile, the global interest in Ghana's oil has soared. Tom McCaskie (2008) was the first to raise the issue of the global interest in Ghana's recent oil discovery. In particular, he showed how the United States, using the discourse of promoting USA-Ghana security relations, is keenly interested in securing its share of Ghana's oil under the auspices of a military command for Africa (AFRICOM). Some of the leading companies in Ghana's young oil industry are Kosmos Energy,⁶ Anardako, the EO Group, Sabre Oil and Gas, Tullow, Exxon Mobil Lukoil and the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation. Although rising global powers such as China have not been as dominant as the USA in Ghana's oil industry, by financing infrastructural projects such as energy-producing dams (e.g. the Bui Dam), China is seen not to be a disinterested party in Ghana's oil. But, again, it is not only China and the USA that are interested in oil in the New Gulf: all industrialised countries are seeking to move away from the Middle East-centric focus in their pursuit of oil supplies (Mohan and Power 2009).

Since 2007, there have been at least 41 companies, from different countries, which have applied for prospecting licenses. The approach adopted by the Government of Ghana in dealing with these applications is to negotiate with individual companies rather than use a competitive tendering process. This method raises concerns about transparency and competitive contracts (Gary 2009).

Other questions loom large: can Ghana absorb such revenues without upsetting macro-economic stability? Will the oil industry being established be linked to other sectors of the domestic economy or will it operate as an extractive enclave industry primarily serving global interest?

Definitive answers are hard to find at this stage. There are a few tentative statements that can be made, based on econometric studies. The World Bank (2009) reckons that the oil reserves are not so large as to structurally change the Ghanaian economy. Yet, it cautions that effort should be made to remove the bottlenecks in non-oil sectors, such that they do not get crowded out in a Dutch Disease scenario. Dagher and her colleagues (2010) have reached similar conclusions. According to Breisinger et al. (2009), whether Ghana will be plagued by Dutch Disease depends on how it uses the oil resources, whether it invests in local communities and agricultural areas or in urban and non agricultural areas. Moss and Young (2009) believe a Dutch Disease scenario can happen in Ghana, especially if revenues are poorly managed. Anything short of this and a Dutch Disease scenario becomes highly likely.

All in all, in the light of the evidence considered in this paper, it is hard to be optimistic. There are weak regulations, little interest in making special arrangements for local communities, the issue of ownership looms, the issue of land revenue management is unresolved and transnational oil companies are already scrambling for Ghana's oil. Transparency – real or rhetoric – is not sufficient.

Conclusion

In order to avert a potential 'curse' of oil and turn Ghana's oil into a 'blessing', the government of Ghana has called for, and put in place, measures to promote anti-corruption and transparency. To the government, these liberal measures are expected to unlock the blessings of oil for all Ghanaians. However, the government overlooks crucial actors in the resource curse problem, namely the oil communities and the multinational companies. To what extent are oil communities catered for in government policy? Who owns what? Who gets what?

The liberal analysis that mystifies the oil problem as a 'paradox' unsurprisingly leads to attempts to 'throw light' or be 'transparent' in order to demystify the 'paradox'. However, it is more fruitful to see oil as a part of the bigger agenda of capitalist accumulation – by expanded reproduction and dispossession (Harvey 2003). The resource curse is complex, it comes about and is sustained by transnational accumulation and dispossession, mediated by various global, national and local factors. It follows that not only are existing regulations weak but also the assumptions underpinning them are shaky. On these bases, it is hard to be optimistic about the effectiveness of the government of Ghana's liberal solutions to avert the oil curse: transparency and anti-corruption measures *per se* are unlikely to be sufficient to cause the blessings of oil to trickle down to the poor, especially those in the oil communities.

Notes

1. President Kufour finished his term as president on 6 January 2009. He was replaced as president by John Atta-Mills.
2. See picture of banner at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2007/jul/30/oilandpetrol.news>
3. Note that 'good governance' in this paper refers to transparency and zero tolerance for corruption.
4. Other studies that generally corroborate the account above are Ifeka (2004), Turner (1976) and Omeje (2004).

5. When they correct the computational and conceptualisation errors, there seems to be no problem with resource wealth: it neither undermines institutions nor reduces economic growth. It is 'normal' and there is no 'curse'!
6. Its expertise is oil discovery. After discovery, it typically sells off its interest to other companies specialising in the 'oil business' (see *Daily Guide* 2009).

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United States Foreign Policy and the Second Liberian Civil War

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Abstract

After about three years following the end of its first civil war in 1996, Liberia was again plunged into another civil war, when the Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), a group of rebels, attacked the country from neighbouring Guinea. The efforts by the Taylor regime to repel the attack occasioned a full-scale war. Initially, the war was confined to the western and north-western portions of the country. But, by early 2003, LURD's forces had advanced to the outskirts of Monrovia, the capital city.

For the initial four years of the war, the United States displayed a non-chalant attitude. This was because Liberia was no longer of any strategic value to the US. Also, given the adversarial relationship between the Taylor regime and Washington, the latter thus had no empathy for the former. However, amid the escalation of the war and its attendant adverse consequences, especially the death of hundreds of civilians, ECOWAS, the AU, the EU, the UN and various actors within the American domestic setting, including Liberian Diaspora Groups, pressured the Bush administration to join the efforts to end the carnage. Consequently, the Bush administration obliged. After an ECOWAS-brokered agreement that led to the resignation of President Taylor and his subsequent departure to Nigeria in exile, the United States intervened by supporting ECOWAS' peacekeeping operation.

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Against this backdrop, this article has interrelated purposes. First, it examines the nature and dynamics of American intervention in the second Liberian civil war. Second, it discusses the impact of the American intervention on the civil war. Third, it maps out the emerging trajectory of US–Liberia relations in the post-Taylor era. Fourth, it proffers ways of rethinking the relationship so that it would be mutually beneficial.

Résumé

Environ trois ans après la fin de sa première guerre civile en 1996, le Liberia a été de nouveau plongé dans une autre guerre civile, lorsqu'un groupe de rebelles, les Libériens unis pour la réconciliation et la démocratie (Liberian United for Reconciliation and Democracy – LURD), a attaqué le pays à partir de la Guinée voisine. Les efforts du régime de Taylor pour repousser l'attaque ont entraîné une guerre totale. Celle-ci était confinée au départ aux régions ouest et nord-ouest du pays, mais au début de l'année 2003, les forces de LURD avaient progressé jusqu'aux abords de Monrovia, la capitale.

Pendant les quatre premières années de guerre, les Etats-Unis ont affiché une attitude nonchalante, car le Liberia n'avait plus aucune valeur stratégique pour eux. En outre, compte tenu des relations conflictuelles entre le régime de Taylor et Washington, ces derniers n'avaient aucune empathie pour le premier. Cependant, face à l'escalade de la guerre et des conséquences négatives qui en découlent, en particulier la mort de centaines de civils, la CEDEAO, l'Union africaine, l'Union européenne, les Nations Unies et divers acteurs à l'intérieur des Etats-Unis, y compris des Groupes de la diaspora libérienne, ont mis la pression sur l'administration Bush afin qu'elle se joigne aux efforts pour mettre fin au carnage. Ce qu'elle accepta donc. A la suite d'un accord négocié sous l'égide de la CEDEAO qui a abouti à la démission du Président Taylor et son départ subséquent en exil au Nigeria, les Etats-Unis sont intervenus en soutenant l'opération de maintien de la paix de la CEDEAO.

Dans ce contexte, le présent article a des objectifs étroitement liés : un, examiner la nature et la dynamique de l'intervention américaine dans la seconde guerre civile libérienne ; deux, discuter de l'impact de l'intervention américaine sur la guerre civile ; trois, dresser la carte de la trajectoire émergente des relations entre les Etats-Unis et le Liberia après l'ère Taylor ; et quatre, offrir des moyens de repenser les relations pour qu'elles soient mutuellement bénéfiques.

Introduction

For almost four years, the United States demonstrated nonchalance in its foreign policy behaviour toward the second Liberian civil war. Several factors accounted for this. First, with the end of the 'Cold War,' Liberia was no longer of strategic importance. Second, given the hostile relations between the United States and Liberia during the Taylor regime, Washington therefore saw the insurgency launched by the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), an amalgam of former leaders and members of the various warring factions from Liberia's first civil war (1989-1997), as an opportunity to oust the Taylor regime from power. Toward this end, despite its foreign policy behaviour, the United States acquiesced in the transfer of its weapons from Guinea (LURD's sub-regional patron) to LURD (Coalition to Stop the use of Child Soldiers, 2004). The weapons were then used by LURD's forces to wage the war and the campaign to oust the Taylor regime from power. Third, the theatre of the war was limited to the western and north-western regions of Liberia from early 1999, when the war commenced, to early 2003. Thus, the horrendous human rights violations (Human Rights Watch 1999; Human Rights Watch 2000; Human Rights Watch 2001; Human Rights Watch 2002) that were committed by the belligerents – Taylor's government forces and those of LURD – were not publicly known. Thus, there was no public outcry at that time for intervention by the United States and other global actors.

However, by March 2003, the theatre of the war expanded to the outskirts of the capital city, Monrovia. The resultant 'tugs and pulls' between government and LURD forces witnessed an escalation of the violence, as hundreds of civilians were wounded and killed by both targeted and indiscriminate attacks from the warring parties. With the war and its associated unmitigated violence within full view, there were calls from various quarters for the international community to intervene and halt the orgy of violence that had engulfed the entire country with the emergence of the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), an offshoot of LURD, as the so-called 'second' insurgent group. As Liberia's neo-colonial patron, the United States came under an avalanche of pressure from the European Union, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and various Liberian Diaspora groups based in the United States to intervene in the war. Ultimately, the United States shifted its policy from nonchalance to engagement in the second Liberian civil war.

Against this background, the article has several interrelated purposes. First, it will examine the nature and dynamics of the United States' engagement in

the second Liberian civil war. Second, the study will assess the impact of the American engagement in the war. Third, the article will probe the state of US–Liberia relations in the post-Taylor era. Fourth, it will suggest ways for rethinking US–Liberia relations as a strategy for helping to forestall the re-occurrence of war in Liberia.

The Stabilization Support Model

The study uses the stabilisation support model as its theoretical framework for describing and explaining the thrust of the United States' engagement in the second Liberian civil war. The model is anchored on several pillars. First, stabilisation support takes place in the context of armed violence. And the violence serves as a barrier to the delivery of humanitarian relief and peace-making.

Second, stabilisation support entails the indirect participation of an actor in the efforts to terminate a war by supporting the military intervention of another actor. The support usually takes the form of assistance with training, planning, the transporting of troops, and the provision of equipment, logistics and intelligence. Importantly, the 'supporting actor' may use its military forces as the conduits for aiding the 'engaged actor'.

Third, the 'supporting actor' collaborates with the 'engaged actor' in the identification of the sources of the violence that undergirds the war. Subsequently, the former helps the latter in bringing the intervention assets to bear on halting the violence, and stabilising the environment. In turn, this creates the conditions for the distribution of humanitarian relief to civilians. Ultimately, this helps to restore hope to, and comfort for the civilian population (Freedman 2007:248). Also, the mitigation of the violence and the stabilisation of the environment provide propitious conditions for the undertaking of peace-making efforts to resolve the war and its underlying conflict.

The Second Liberian Civil War

Background

Based on ECOWAS' 'exit strategy', post-conflict election was hastily organised when the conditions were not propitious. The 'exit strategy' was informed by intervention-fatigue. That is, the peacekeeping operation had exacted substantial human, financial and logistical costs on the participating West African states, especially Nigeria that provided the majority of the troops and the funding (Adebayo 2002). It is estimated that the peacekeeping operation cost Nigeria in excess of \$500 million (Hutchful 1999). Against this background, the

leaders of the sub-region led by President Sani Abacha of Nigeria made the determination that the holding of election would be the best 'exit strategy' (Interviews 1998a and 1999).

ECOWAS' 'exit strategy' adversely affected the electoral environment in various ways. One major way was that the disarmament and demobilisation phases, which were critical to what Lyons (2001:1) calls 'the demilitarization of politics', were incomplete (Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005). By the time these two phases ended on 7 February 1997, only 21,315 of the estimated 60,000 fighters had been disarmed (Human Rights 1998; Tanner 1998). This worked to the advantage of the Taylor-led National Patriotic Party (NPP), the political expression of the NPFL, the largest warring faction. With the military and administrative machinery of the NPFL intact in the majority of Liberia's territory, the NPP had the machinery for waging the presidential campaign through the use of intimidation and fear (Tanner 1998; Lyons 1999). With the political space still militarised, voters were fearful that if they did not support Taylor and the NPP, harm would either befall them personally or the country as a whole (Lyons 1999; Lyons 2002). The fear was buttressed by Taylor's recurrent claim that if he did not win the Liberian Presidency, he would revert to the waging of war (Lyons 1999).

Another advantage for the NPP was that the NPFL's military machinery was used to intimidate and make it difficult for the other presidential candidates to campaign freely throughout the country (Lyons 1999; Lyons 2002). Two cases are instructive. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the flag bearer of the Unity Part (UP), was intimidated and harassed by NPFL operatives, while she campaigned in Nimba County, the north central region of the country (Interviews 1998b). Similarly, NPFL militiamen obstructed H. Boima Fahnbulleh, the standard bearer of the Reformation Action Party (RAP), as he tried to campaign in Grand Cape Mount County, his home region, in the western section of the country (Interviews 1998b).

Additionally, Taylor had an overwhelming advantage over the other political parties (mainly civilian-led) in the critical areas of financial and material resources. Given the fact that Taylor used the war to plunder and pillage Liberia's rubber, diamond, gold and timber (Reno 1996), he had a huge 'election war chest,' including money for vote-buying, a radio station, automobiles, t-shirts, posters and other resources that far exceeded the combined resource bases of all of the other political parties (Lyons 1998). Also, given ECOWAS' plan to award Taylor the presidency, he was allowed to begin campaigning in advance of the official commencement of the campaign season (Harris 1999). Even though, this was clearly in contravention of the electoral code, Taylor was never penalised.

From 'Democratic' Elections to Failed Peacebuilding

With the 'electoral playing field' not levelled, and amid major security challenges, Liberians went to the polls *en masse* to choose its new president. To the chagrin of some Liberians and observers of Liberian affairs, the overwhelming majority of the electorate, for a variety of reasons, gave Taylor and his NPP a landslide victory in the presidential election – over 75 per cent of the votes (Independent Election Commission, 1997a). Based on the proportional representation electoral formula, Taylor's political party was allotted 21 out of 30 seats in the Senate, and 49 of the 64 seats in the House of Representatives (Independent Election Commission 1997b). This meant that Taylor was in complete control of the government.

Clearly, Taylor's victory was a great disappointment to the Clinton administration, which despite its chequered involvement in peacemaking efforts, showed considerable interest in the election. Specifically, the Clinton administration was hopeful that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (now the incumbent president), a member of the 'old local wing' of the Liberian ruling class spanning the Tubman (portion) and Tolbert regimes, would have won the election. As a member of what Prado (1966) calls the 'bureaucratic wing' of the local ruling class, Madam Sirleaf held several positions, including assistant minister of finance, deputy minister of finance for expenditure and debt management, minister of finance and President of the Liberian Bank for Development and Investment (LBDI). As well, she held positions at Citibank in the United States, the World Bank and the United Nations (Sirleaf 2009). The 'old local wing' of the Liberian ruling class had a 'patron-client relationship' with the United States and its ruling class (Lumumba-Kasongo 1999). Under this relationship, the 'old local wing' of the Liberian ruling class performed an assortment of functions and services on behalf of the United States and its ruling class, including creating propitious conditions for the accumulation of capital by American multinational corporations like Firestone (Mayson and Sawyer 1979; Lumumba-Kasongo 1999; Kieh 2007).

Having achieved his ambition of becoming the President of Liberia, the hope was entertained by Liberians and various actors in the international community, including ECOWAS, the OAU (now the AU), the UN and the United States, that Taylor would provide the requisite leadership for shepherding the post-conflict peace building project, especially the exigency of addressing the root causes of the first Liberian civil war. Unfortunately, the Taylor regime undertook various actions that undermined the peace building project and eventually led to its failure. At the vortex, the Taylor regime refused to set into motion measures for addressing the taproots of the first Liberian civil war. The

overarching failure was the refusal to democratically reconstitute the neo-colonial Liberian state, the generator of the crises of underdevelopment that occasioned the war. To make matters worse, the performance of the Taylor regime was horrendous. For example, the social and economic conditions of the members of Liberia's subaltern classes grew worse. By 1999, the poverty rate was 76.2 per cent, and the unemployment rate stood at an alarming 85 per cent (United Nations Development Programme 2006). During the same period, the Human Development Index (HDI) was 0.276, ranking the country 174th out of 175 countries worldwide (United Nations Development Programme 1999). Politically, Taylor reverted to authoritarianism as evidenced by, among other things, the unmitigated violation of human rights (Freedom House 2010). In the security realm, the Taylor regime reneged on its commitment to undertake security sector reform as required by the Abuja II Peace Accord. Instead, President Taylor transformed his militia into Liberia's new military, security and police apparatus (Lehtinen 2002). One of the major consequences was the heightening of the sense of insecurity that had enveloped the leaders of the various former militias, who were apprehensive about a Taylor presidency, especially in terms of its impact on their security.

At the sub-regional level, President Taylor embarked upon a campaign of destabilisation in the extended Mano River Basin of West Africa. At the core was the continuation of his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone (Human Rights Watch 2006). Also, in Guinea, President Taylor supported the Rally of Democratic Forces of Guinea (RFDG), a rebel group, in its effort to depose the government of President Lasana Conte (Ploughshares 2000). In Côte d'Ivoire, the Taylor regime provided military and other support to the rebel outfit Movement for Peace and Justice (MPJ), which was determined to overthrow the regime of President Laurent Gbagbo (Dukule 2002). Significantly, President Taylor's sub-regional destabilisation project was propelled by two major objectives: Taylor's insatiable appetite for the personal control of natural resources as the locus of his private accumulation of capital project, and his penchant to become a sub-regional 'power broker.'

Clearly, President Taylor's actions helped to fuel the antagonistic relationship between his regime and the United States government. Particularly, the American government was incensed by Taylor's destabilisation campaign, especially in Sierra Leone and Guinea, whose regimes were friendly toward the United States. Accordingly, the United States government pursued three major sets of interrelated measures as the cornerstones of its relations with Liberia. The locus was the political and diplomatic isolation of the Taylor regime, although as Human Rights Watch (2002:2) aptly observes, 'The U.S. was less public in its approach.' Another measure was the imposition of sanc-

tions on the importation of Liberian rough diamonds (Human Rights Watch 2002:2). Washington also pursued a humanitarian assistance programme through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which focused on the resettlement of refugees and internally displaced persons, and a modest but less successful democracy and governance programme (Human Rights Watch 2002:2).

The Return to Warfare

Despite its efforts to construct a 'garrison state,' the Taylor regime was unable to dragoon the Liberian people into supporting it. Hence, with the evaporation of the euphoria and the resultant legitimacy which it enjoyed both prior to, and immediately after the 1997 election, the Taylor regime became vulnerable to insurgency. Accordingly, an amalgam of some of the leaders of the former militias (Taylor's adversaries), their supporters and some of Taylor's disgruntled supporters established LURD as an insurgency movement with the sole goal of removing Taylor from power, and assuming control of the state. Then, using Guinea as the 'launching pad,' LURD's forces attacked the western and northwestern portions of Liberia in 1999 (Brabazon 2003). In return, the Taylor regime mobilised the full battery of its military assets and sought to repel the attack. The resultant 'tit for tat' plunged the country into its second civil war.

As has been discussed, for almost four years, the war was focused in the west and northwest regions of Liberia. It was not until mid-2003 that the war progressed to the outskirts of the capital city region. This development was helped in part by the decision of LURD to split into two groups: LURD, the original militia, and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). As Joe Wylie, one of LURD's military advisors boasted, 'MODEL [was] an integrated force of LURD' (Global Security 2005a:1). The decision to create MODEL was propelled by the determination that a two-front war would exert enormous pressure on the Taylor regime, especially its demoralised military. Accordingly, MODEL opened a 'second front' in the south and south-eastern regions of the country, while LURD continued to focus on the west, north-western and capital city regions.

By May 2003, the Taylor regime had lost control over the entire country with the exception of an enclave in Monrovia, the capital city, where Taylor and the core of his fighters were ensconced. So, for about two months, the residents of the capital city region were subjected to attacks from LURD and the Taylor regime. And this resulted in the injury and death of thousands of innocent civilians (Clapham 2003). The escalation of the violence and the result-

ant injuries and deaths eventually led to a humanitarian crisis. In turn, there were calls from various quarters for the international community to intervene and halt the carnage.

The Bush Administration and U.S. Policy Responses to the Second Civil War

The Phases of American Policy Responses

American policy toward the second civil war went through various phases spanning the 'wait and see' to engagement through the stabilisation mission. In this section of the article, the nature and dynamics of the various phases will be examined.

The 'Wait and See Phase'

The United States was cognizant of the deteriorating security conditions in Liberia as a consequence of the outbreak of the latter's second civil war, long before the highly publicised siege of the capital city region by LURD in mid 2003. This was evidenced by various actions taken by the United States' European Command (EUCOM), which then had responsibility for American military and security activities in the African region. In early 2003, EUCOM sent a survey and assessment team and a Naval SEAL platoon to Monrovia (Ross 2005:1).

Few months later, with the security situation in Liberia deteriorating at a fast pace, EUCOM increased the security at the US Embassy in Liberia with a Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team Platoon (Ross 2005:1). Also, EUCOM deployed a humanitarian and assistance survey team to determine the extent of the humanitarian crisis (Ross 2005:1). Then, in late July 2003, EUCOM pre-positioned the 398th Air Expeditionary Group in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and Dakar, Senegal (Ross 2005:1). EUCOM also placed Special Operations Forces (SOF) in neighbouring countries, in preparation for a possible non-combatant evacuation of US citizens (Ross 2005:1). In late July 2003, a Joint Task Force for Liberia was established. The force trained in case a military operation in Liberia was ordered by the President of the United States.

The Nonchalance Phase

Despite being cognizant of the reign of violence and its associated consequences of injuries and deaths in Liberia, the Bush administration decided that the United States would not intervene militarily in the civil war. Two major factors accounted for this. First, consistent with the United States' realpolitik foreign policy framework, Liberia was of no strategic value to the United States;

hence, a military intervention and its attendant risks were unwarranted. As Beinart (2003:1) laments, 'In countries that lack oil and strategic location, rescuing suffering people still falls into the Clintonian category of 'foreign policy as social work'.' Second, the Bush administration was still suffering from what has been referred to as the 'Somalia overhang' (Crocker 1995). This mindset, which is based on the failed American-led peacekeeping mission in Somalia in 1992, militates against any American 'armed humanitarianism' in civil war ravaged African countries that are enveloped by humanitarian crisis.

Accordingly, like the administration of 'Bush 41' did during the first Liberian civil war in 1989, the regime of 'Bush 43' chose to watch the Liberian civil war and its deleterious consequences. Thus, the US Joint Task Force Liberia, which was organised in the case of an eventuality, was ordered to change its former stance, since no American military intervention in the conflict was in the offing. So, as the second Liberian civil war raged on, the United States took a non-chalant attitude toward the conflict. In fact, as thousands of Liberians besieged the US Embassy for help, the Marines stationed at the American Embassy simply protected the facility (Beinart 2003:1). This attitude on the part of the Bush administration disappointed many Liberians, who expected the United States to intervene in their country's civil war. To express their anger at the Bush administration's indifference, some people of Monrovia lined up bodies of civilians killed during the fighting in front of the US Embassy (Cherin 2003:1).

The Engagement Phase

Riveted by an avalanche of domestic and international pressure amid the 'killing fields' in Liberia, the Bush administration finally decided to get involved in the efforts to help end the civil war and its attendant human suffering. Several factors contributed to the policy shift. Within the Bush administration, some officials of the Department of State led by Secretary of State Colin Powell, pressed the case for American involvement (Matthews 2003:1). Another factor was that several civil society groups in the United States pleaded for American intervention on humanitarian grounds. In making the case, the *New York Times* (2003:A18) asserted, 'Swift American intervention could help end two decades of carnage that has destroyed Liberia and crippled several of its neighbours. It can save lives, stabilise the region, and prove that America's commitment to Africa is real.' As well, the Liberian Diaspora community pressed for American intervention (Africa Focus 2003:1). At the global level, ECOWAS, the AU, the EU and the UN exerted pressure on Washington (O'Connell 2004).

Yet, another major factor revolved around American security interests, especially against the backdrop of the post-9/11 international environment. In

this vein, the United States is concerned about so-called 'failed states' being used as 'terrorist beachheads.' In accentuating this point in the context of the second Liberian civil war, Condoleezza Rice, the then National Security Advisor to President Bush noted,

The President does believe that Liberia and the stability of West Africa [are] important to U.S. interest. In addition to the humanitarian situation there, we've also recognized since 9/11 that one wants to be careful about permitting conditions of failed states that could lead to greater sources of terrorism (Freeman 2003:1).

Specifically, President Taylor was accused of having ties to Al Qaeda. For example, a confidential investigation by the Special Court for Sierra Leone found that there were links between Taylor and Al Qaeda (Global Witness 2003; allAfrica.com 2004:1-2; O'Connell 2004). Similarly, according to Farah and Shultz (2004:A19), 'American security agencies like the FBI found that Al Qaeda was involved in the diamond trade under the protection of President Taylor.' Against this background, 'the U.S. was planning strikes against Al Qaeda operations in Liberia, but the intervention was called off' (allAfrica.com 2004:1-2).

However, the puzzle remained the instrument through which the United States' involvement would be channelled. Hence, several options were considered by the Bush administration, including American involvement in a multilateral peacekeeping operation that would require deploying thousands of troops (Steams 2003:1). With regards to the peacekeeping option, Bush administration officials were divided over the risks of American involvement in such a military operation (Steams 2003:1).

Ultimately, President Bush decided that the United States' involvement in helping to end the second Liberian civil war would be through the provision of support for a stabilisation project undertaken by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Against this background, the Bush administration's 'stabilization promotion strategy in Liberia' was based on three interlocking tenets. First, ECOWAS would establish a peacekeeping force, and the United States would provide financial, logistical, training and operational assistance for the stabilisation mission. Second, prior to the ECOWAS peacekeeping force's intervention into the conflict, President Charles Taylor had to resign and leave Liberia. The rationale was that this would help create a conducive environment for both peacekeeping and peacemaking, especially the termination of the war and the formulation of a peace building project embodied in a peace settlement. Third, a ceasefire agreement needed to be negotiated and implemented among the belligerents. This would then provide the

requisite space within which the ECOWAS peacekeeping force would operate. Subsequently, a stabilised environment would serve as the *terra firma* for the intervention of a much larger United Nations peacekeeping force.

War Termination and Stabilisation Support Activities

The Bush administration undertook various steps to support efforts to terminate the second Liberian civil war and stabilise the country. First, as a demonstration of American support for the stabilisation mission, three warships with 2,300 marines were initially deployed off the Liberian coast (Pham 2006:38). Then, following President Taylor's resignation, and subsequent departure from Liberia for exile in Nigeria, the warships were brought in full view closer to the Liberian coast. This was designed to show support for the stabilisation mission, and to send a signal to the belligerents that the United States was determined to help terminate the war, and stabilise Liberia (Lawson 2007).

Second, the Bush administration helped to pressure President Taylor to resign and leave Liberia. In framing his administration's position on the matter, President Bush insisted, 'President Taylor needs to step down so that his country can be spared further bloodshed' (Law 2008:1). Subsequently, President Bush and some of his senior foreign policy advisors recurrently urged President Taylor to resign and leave Liberia. The resignation refrain made President Taylor to believe that if he failed to comply, the United States would use military force to oust him from power. President Taylor's position was informed by the widely held perception that the Bush administration did not hesitate to use military force inducing compliance. As well, the leaders of ECOWAS played a pivotal role in negotiating the agreement that led to Taylor's resignation as the President of Liberia on 11 August 2003, after the expiration of his term of office, and his subsequent departure for Nigeria.

Third, the Bush administration collaborated with ECOWAS in the brokering of a ceasefire agreement among Liberia's warring parties. Consequently, a formal ceasefire agreement was signed on 17 June 2003. The signing of the ceasefire agreement provided the requisite space for the intervention of the Economic Community of West African States' Military Mission to Liberia (ECOMIL), the sub-regional peacekeeping force. The Bush administration had insisted that its support for the peacekeeping force and the broader war termination and stabilisation project was contingent upon the signing of a ceasefire agreement.

Fourth, the U.S. Joint Task Force Liberia (JTFL) provided assistance to ECOMIL, the peacekeeping force, in the prosecution of the war termination and stabilisation project. One critical area was the provision of assistance with

troop readiness. Moreover, the JTFL assisted the peacekeeping force with the deployment of its troops in the various strategic zones in Liberia's capital city region. Another was the provision of equipment and logistics. In the area of intelligence, the JTFL assisted with the gathering of information on the security situation, including the activities of the belligerents. The locus of the intelligence collection dimension was the conduct of daily aerial patrols over Liberia by JTFL.

The Dividends of the United States' War Termination and Stabilisation Activities

The various war termination and stabilisation activities undertaken by the United States produced several benefits. First, President Taylor resigned, and left for Nigeria. This helped removed one of the major obstacles to the termination of the war. Both LURD and MODEL had recurrently insisted that the *sine qua non* for the termination of the war was the resignation of President Taylor, and his departure from the country.

Second, American assistance was pivotal to the deployment of ECOMIL, the peacekeeping force, and the subsequent stabilisation activities. For example, ECOMIL was able to secure Roberts International Airport and the Freeport of Monrovia, two strategic assets. In turn, this helped to facilitate the flow of humanitarian assistance from various countries and non-governmental organisations. Similarly, the peacekeeping force established security corridors through which food, medicine, clothing and other items were delivered to civilians, especially in the capital city region. Additionally, the peacekeeping force removed the forces of the warring factions that were occupying various locations around the capital city region. Subsequently, the peacekeeping force established various 'buffer and security zones.' The resultant effect was that the various warring factions were confined to specific zones, especially in the capital city region. This enabled the peacekeeping force to monitor their activities more effectively.

Third, the mayhem and the resultant humanitarian crisis were reduced, particularly in the capital city area. However, the size of the peacekeeping force (3,600 troops) militated against ECOMIL's capacity to police the entire country. Hence, the peacekeeping force was only able to effectively reduce the rate of the wanton killing of civilians, and to halt the emergent humanitarian crisis principally in the capital city region. Although the peacekeeping force eventually extended its activities to various regions of Liberia that were closer to the capital city, its limited size vis-a-vis the forces of the three warring factions – the total size of the combined forces of the Liberian government, LURD and MODEL was estimated at 40,000 (Global Security 2005b).

Fourth, the stabilisation project helped to create propitious conditions for the undertaking of the 'Akosombo/Accra Peace Process,' and the eventual brokering of the 'Accra Peace Accord' or the 'Comprehensive Peace Agreement' by ECOWAS. The agreement, among other things, embodied the ceasefire agreement signed on 17 June 2003, the modalities for the termination of the war, the composition, mandate and term of office of the interim government, and some of the major rubrics for post-conflict peace building. The subsequent signing and promulgation of the peace accord fundamentally altered the security environment in Liberia by shifting from war to post-conflict peace building.

Fifth, the stabilisation activities were central to the creation of an enabling security environment for the deployment of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. That is, with American assistance, ECOMIL was able to create the requisite space for the UN peacekeeping force to assume the security functions in Liberia. Also, ECOMIL, drawing from the lessons of its intervention, was able to provide the UN peacekeeping force with valuable information covering a broad range of issues. Clearly, this has been critical to the success of the UN peacekeeping force over the past five years.

US–Liberia Relations during the Post-Taylor Era

Taylor's Resignation and Departure to, and Arrest in Nigeria

As earlier discussed, ECOWAS brokered an agreement that led to the resignation of President Taylor (BBC News 2003). Although Taylor's term of office expired on 2 August 2003, under the Liberian Constitution, he would have remained in office until January 2004, when the new president was sworn in (*Constitution of Liberia* 1986). Taylor resigned on 11 August 2003, and departed for Nigeria, where he was granted political asylum (BBC News 2003). The locus of the plan, according to Femi Fani-Kayode, the Presidential Spokesperson for former President Obasanjo, was that 'Taylor reached an agreement with the African Union (AU) and ECOWAS to trade prosecution at the hybrid court in Sierra Leone for exile in Nigeria' (*The Analyst* 2010:1). Vice President Moses Blah was sworn in as President on 11 August 2003. Under the terms of the ECOWAS brokered agreement, Blah served until 14 October 2003, when the National Transitional Government of Liberia headed by Gyude Bryant assumed power.

Interestingly, on 29 March 2006, Taylor was arrested by the Nigerian Police in the State of Borno on the border with Cameroon (Associated Press 2006; Reuters 2006). There are several explanations for Taylor's arrest. One of them is that the United States pressured President Ellen Johnson

Sirleaf, the new Liberian chief executive, to request that Nigeria revokes Taylor's asylum status and return him to Liberia, so he could be sent to the Special Court for Sierra Leone to face trial for war crime charges (*The Analyst* 2010). The related point is that during a state visit to the United States in March 2006, President Bush 'refused to see [President Obasanjo] until Taylor was produced' (*The Analyst* 2010).

On 29 March 2006, Nigeria returned Taylor to Liberia. After a very brief stay, on the same day, Liberia sent Taylor to Sierra Leone to face war crime charges at the Special Court for Sierra Leone for his alleged involvement in the Sierra Leonean civil war (Soares 2006). About a month later, Taylor was sent to the Hague, Netherlands to stand trial at the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which was moved from Freetown (*Afro News* 2006). Taylor's trial commenced in the Hague in January 2007 (*The Guardian* 2009).

The Transitional Period

The end of the Taylor regime occasioned a shift in US–Liberia relations from a state of hostility back to the traditional amity. During the Taylor regime (1997–2003), an adversarial relationship developed between the two countries (US State Department 2010). From the American perspective, the situation was caused by the confluence of three major factors: 1) Taylor did not improve the lives of Liberians (US State Department 2010); 2) Taylor supported the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the insurgency group, to destabilise Sierra Leone (US State Department 2010); and 3) Taylor's misrule led to the second Liberian civil war (US State Department 2010). Accordingly, the US cut direct financial and military aid to Liberia, imposed a travel ban prohibiting Taylor and his senior officials from visiting the United States, and recurrently criticised the Taylor regime for human rights violations (US State Department 2010). With one exception – the charge that Taylor supported the RUF –, all of the US' client regimes in Liberia – Tubman (1944–1971), Tolbert (1971–1980), and Doe (1980–1990) – neglected the needs of the subaltern classes in Liberia as well. And overtime, this created the contradictions and crises that led to the first Liberian civil war in 1989. Without holding brief for Taylor, the point is that the welfare of ordinary Liberians has never been a concern of US foreign policy toward the country. If this were the case, then the US should not have supported its aforementioned client regimes.

Against this backdrop, an assessment of some of the claims that Taylor has made at his war crimes trial indicate that the ruptured cordial relationship between Taylor and the United States prior to, and during, the first Liberian

civil war could be the critical causative factor for the development of hostile relations between the United States and Liberia during the Taylor presidency. It seems that Taylor may have 'double-crossed the United States' at some point. In this vein, two important assertions by Taylor are noteworthy. First, Taylor claims that the US government freed him from prison in 1985, while he was awaiting extradition to Liberia on embezzlement charges (Keating 2009:1). Second, according to Taylor, during the first Liberian civil war, 'The NPFL [his militia] provided information to the CIA... And there was information from the CIA to the [NPFL]' (Sesay 2010:1). In addition, Taylor asserts that the CIA provided sophisticated communications equipment to the NPFL (Sesay 2010:1). As I have argued, it appears that there were factors related to the 'US-Taylor relationship' that shifted the tenor of the relationship from friendship to enmity, beyond the official American government position.

The National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL)

During the tenure of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), US-Liberia relations returned to its normal complexion based on friendship and cordiality. Two clusters of actions that were undertaken by the United States demonstrated the return to normalcy. The US supported the United Nations Mission in Liberia, as it undertook various peace building activities.

At the bilateral level, from 2004-2006, the United States contributed over US\$1 billion to the reconstruction of Liberia (US State Department 2010). As well, both the National Democratic and National Republican Institutes played pivotal roles in the development of the modalities for holding Liberia's second post-conflict elections in October and November 2005. In addition, the United State Agency for International Development commissioned, as well as undertook various studies on economic, political and social issues in Liberia.

The Sirleaf Regime

The election and subsequent inauguration of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf as the new President of Liberia on 16 January 2006, witnessed the resurgence of increased American involvement in Liberia. The process was set into motion by then First Lady Laura Bush and then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice attending President Sirleaf's inauguration as official representatives of the United States government. About three months after her inauguration, President Sirleaf was invited to the United States to meet with then President Bush and to address a joint session of the United States' Congress (allAfrica.com 2006). In November 2007, President Bush awarded President Sirleaf 'The Presidential Medal of Freedom,' the United States' highest civilian award (Executive

Mansion 2007). In February 2008, President Bush visited Liberia during his second tour of selected African states (US State Department 2010). As well, Liberia is currently the second largest recipient of US bilateral development aid in Africa (US State Department 2010). Under the Obama administration, the cordial relationship between the two countries has continued. For example, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton has visited Liberia, and held several other meetings with President Sirleaf. Similarly, President Obama met with President Sirleaf at the White House on 27 March 2010.

In appreciation for the unprecedented American support for her regime, President Sirleaf, amid widespread opposition from her fellow African leaders, mounted a 'full court press' in strongly supporting and defending the establishment of AFRICOM, the US African Command, and offered to host the command's headquarters in Liberia (Nhamoyebonde 2010). Moreover, the Sirleaf regime has been courting American businesses to invest in Liberia under very generous investment terms, including the right to repatriate profits. So, the Sirleaf regime has emerged as a reliable advocate for the expansion of American imperialism on the African Continent.

Beyond War Termination and Stabilisation: The Imperative of Rethinking US–Liberia Relations

There is no doubt that the United States played a pivotal role in helping to terminate the second Liberian civil war, and to subsequently stabilise the country. Although these efforts are commendable, they however only addressed the consequences or effects of the underlying civil conflict that occasioned Liberia's two civil wars. Hence, in order for the American efforts to contribute to the construction of durable peace and the building of a new democratic and prosperous Liberia, it is imperative that US–Liberia relations be rethought. Overall, the overarching framework in which the bilateral relations are conducted needs to be changed. That is, the *realpolitik* model, which casts Liberia and other developing countries simply as objects of American foreign policy to be exploited for the benefits of the United States, needs to be rethought. This is because the resultant 'realist trap' would make it difficult for the United States to support the democratic reconstitution of the Liberian state, the generator of the crises of underdevelopment that led to the country's two civil wars. Instead, the United States would continue to support any regime in Liberia, irrespective of whether it is authoritarian or otherwise, on the basis of the latter's support for American national interests.

Such a myopic realist calculation would make the United States to continue to ignore critical problems such as human deprivation, ruling class-led pillage and plunder, political corruption, the lack of transparency, and the lack of accountability in Liberia. Over time, these problems could generate crises that could again lead to a violent conflict. Thus, in order to forestall such an outcome, the United States needs to use a new framework based on an equitable partnership with Liberia that advances political rights, civil liberties, accountability, transparency, the rule of law, serious efforts to combat political corruption, and policies that seek to address basic human social and economic needs such as jobs, education and health care in the latter.

Drawing from the new framework, the relations need to be anchored on several core pillars. First, the United States needs to encourage the Sirleaf regime to democratically reconstitute the Liberian state. This is the principal precondition for setting into motion the process of addressing the civil conflict that undergirded Liberia's two civil wars. Clearly, the state that was established in 1847, and subsequently transformed from a settler to a neo-colonial construct in 1926 is of the wrong type. This is because as the repository of evidence shows, this state construct has been anti-people, anti-democracy and anti-development. For example, the various regimes have asphyxiated political human rights (Freedom House 2010). On the social and economic fronts, the subalterns have lived in a state of abject poverty, deprivation and destitution (United Nations Development Programme 2006).

Additionally, the nature of the Liberian state does not reflect the historical and cultural experiences of the amalgam of Liberia's various ethnic groups. Since the Liberian state was primarily established to help 'resolve the race problem in the United States' (Smith 1972; Beyan 1991; Kieh 2008), the vision and national symbols, such as the national emblem, the motto and the flag reflect the experiences of the freed Black slaves, who were repatriated to Liberia beginning in 1820 (Dunn and Tarr 1988; Kieh 2008). In order for durable peace to be established, the vision and national symbols need to be changed, so that they can represent the collective historical-cultural experiences of Liberia's various indigenous ethnic groups, the repatriated Africans, as well as immigrants from other African countries, and the Caribbean.

Historically, the state's mission has been to create propitious conditions for the prosecution of the profit-seeking agenda of multinational corporations, and the predatory accumulation process of the members of the local Liberian ruling class (Mayson and Sawyer 1979). This has exposed the 'Janus-faced' complexion of the neo-colonial Liberian state: on the one hand, the Liberian state has created the conditions for the members of the local wings of the

ruling class and their relations to have their basic human needs, including jobs, education, health care, housing and food. However, on the other hand, the Liberian state has visited deprivation on the subalterns (Kieh 2007; Kieh 2008).

Similarly, by its character, the Liberian state is, among other things, exclusionary, predatory, criminalised, privatised, prebendal, exploitative, and non-hegemonic. Hence, it is controlled by the particular faction or fraction of the Liberian ruling class that has control of state power. Alternatively, Liberia needs a new democratic state type that is based on holistic democracy – cultural, economic, political and social. By this I mean the establishment of a comprehensive form of democracy that transcends political-centric nature of liberal democracy. To paraphrase Ake (1996), holistic democracy entails a ‘real democracy’ in which ordinary people have real decision-making powers, and the thrust is on the welfare of the people, and the associated investment in jobs, education, public health care, food security, public housing and public transportation. Such a construct would be inclusive and will serve the interests of all Liberians. It is critical to note that an exclusive focus on political restructuring would be inadequate, given the nature of the civil conflict that underpinned Liberia’s two civil wars.

The other major issue is that American policy toward Liberia needs to transcend regimes or the so-called ‘big man’ or now ‘big woman’. This is because such an approach in the past has made the United States to ‘look away’ as incumbent Liberian regimes violated political rights and civil liberties, and neglected the basic human needs of the members of the subaltern classes. Accordingly, a new approach is needed that emphasises the promotion of democratisation in concrete ways not simply by rhetoric. In other words, the United States must make the support for democratic principles a cornerstone of its new relationship with Liberia. The major advantage of such an approach is that it would help to cage the ‘authoritarian demon’ that has perennially terrorised Liberia, by promoting the institutionalisation of both procedural (political) and substantive democratisation (basic human needs, social justice, equitable power relationships, etc.).

Furthermore, the United States needs to support the rights of Liberian workers to receive decent pay and humane working and living conditions, and to use its influence in encouraging the Liberian government and Western and Japanese multinational corporations such as Firestone to do likewise, and to balance the need to get returns on their investments with the imperative of making concrete and meaningful contributions to the reconstruction of Liberia. Such an approach is exigent, because the history of private investment in Liberia is replete with evidences of collusion between the Liberian government

and Western multinational corporations with the acquiescence of the United States government in the exploitation of Liberian workers and the country as a whole. Clearly, the transformation of the dynamics of private foreign investment in Liberia would help to provide the financial resources that are exigent for reconstructing Liberia.

As well, the United States needs to tailor its foreign aid to Liberia to the critical areas of education, health care, and the rebuilding of the infrastructure – schools, hospitals, clinics, roads, bridges, electricity, running water, etc. Given the current pervasiveness of political corruption in Liberia (Frontpage Africa 2010), the American government should devise modalities for ensuring that the Liberian government spends American aid on human needs projects. One of the major contingent modalities that could be used by the American government is the contracting of projects directly to private companies. This would help circumvent the constraints that are imposed by political corruption.

Conclusion

The article has attempted to examine the role of the Bush administration in the termination of the second Liberian civil war, and the subsequent stabilisation of the country. Clearly, the evidence shows that the United States played a pivotal role in the twin processes of war termination and stabilisation. For example, the exertion of pressure by the Bush administration on President Taylor to resign as part of the process of ending the war helped to remove a major obstacle. Similarly, the support provided by the Bush administration to ECOMIL, the peacekeeping force of ECOWAS, in the areas of troop preparation, troop transportation, intelligence collection, equipment and logistics was critical to stabilising Liberia. In turn, the termination of the war and the subsequent stabilisation of the country produced several dividends, including the delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians, the brokering of a peace agreement, the deployment of the UN peacekeeping force, the establishment of a transitional government, the holding of the 2005 national presidential and legislative elections, and the creation of an enabling environment for setting into motion the arduous process of post-conflict peacebuilding.

However, the study argues that the United States needs to transcend its role in the termination of the civil war and stabilisation by rethinking the framework that provides the tapestry for the conduct of its relations with Liberia. Overall, this would require the changing of the realpolitik *Weltanschauung*. As the derivatives, the United States needs to build an equitable partnership with Liberia that is based on the support for the democratic reconstitution of the Liberian state, the support for democratic principles over a regime or a ‘big

man' or 'big woman', the transformation of the nature and dynamics of private foreign investment by Western multinational corporations, and tailoring its foreign aid to Liberia to human needs-based projects, and the reconstruction of the infrastructure. If these can be done, the United States would then be making a lasting contribution to the building of durable peace in Liberia based on 'real democracy' (Ake 1996).

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