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# Africa Since 1940

## *The Past of the Present*

Frederick Cooper

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## 7 The recurrent crises of the gatekeeper state

African states were successors in a double sense. First, they were built on a set of institutions – bureaucracies, militaries, post offices, and (initially) legislatures – set up by colonial regimes, as well as on a principle of state sovereignty sanctified by a community of already existing states. In this sense, African states have proven highly durable: borders have remained largely unchanged, and virtually every piece of Africa is recognized from outside as a territorial entity, regardless of the effective power of the actual government within that space. Even failed states – those unable to provide order and services for their citizens – are still states and derive resources from outside for that reason.

Second, African states took up a particular, and more recent, form of the state project of colonialism: development. African political parties in the 1950s and 1960s generally insisted that only an African government could insure that development would serve the interests of “their” people. Here, continuity is less striking. By the 1970s in most African states, the development slogan had become either tragedy or farce, and people now viewed such claims with either bitterness at the politicians who developed their own wealth at the people’s expense, or a continued yearning for development in the form of schools, hospitals, marketing facilities, and a chance to earn money and respect.

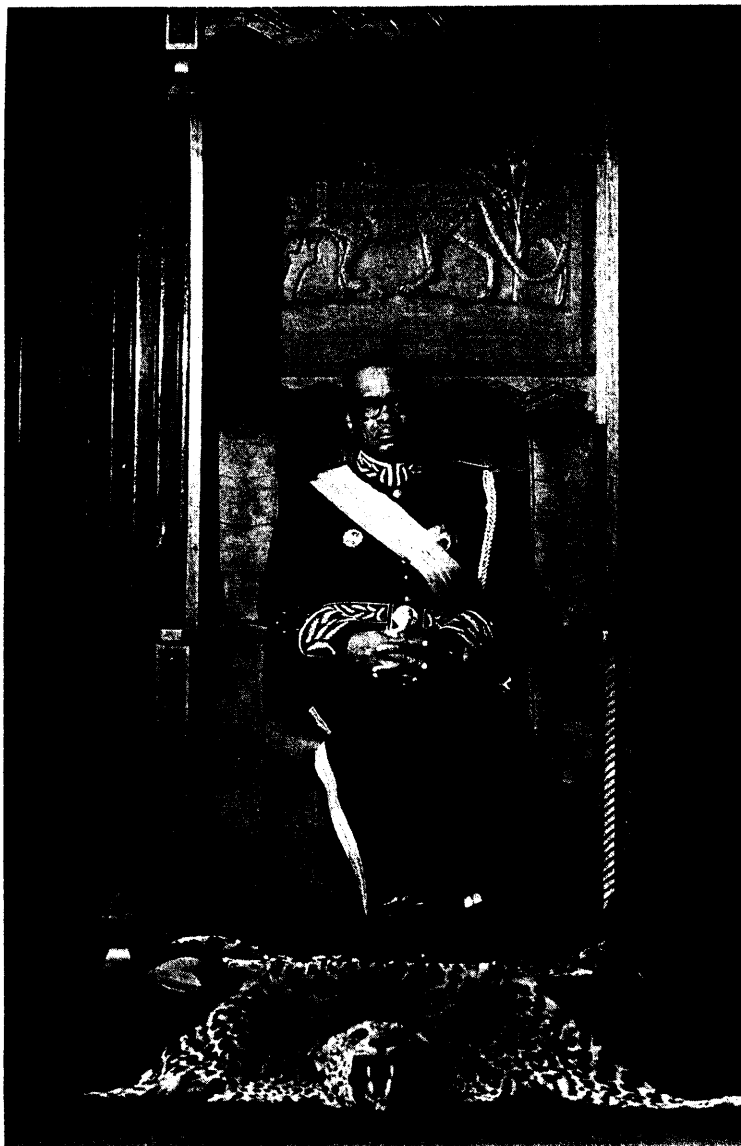
The early governments thus aspired both to define their authority over territory which, however arbitrary its borders, was now theirs, and to build something on that territory. But the dual project was born into the limitations of the old one, the colonial version of development. African states, like their predecessors, had great difficulty getting beyond the limitations of a gatekeeper state. Their survival depended precisely on the fact that formal sovereignty was recognized *from outside*, and that resources, such as foreign aid and military assistance, came to governments for that reason. Like colonial regimes, they had trouble extending their power and their command of people’s respect, if not support, inward. They had trouble collecting taxes, except on imports and exports; they had trouble setting economic priorities and policies, except for the distribution of

resources like oil revenues and customs receipts; they had trouble making the nation-state into a symbol that inspired loyalty. What they could do was to sit astride the interface between a territory and the rest of the world, collecting and distributing resources that derived from the gate itself: customs revenue and foreign aid; permits to do business in the territory; entry and exit visas; and permission to move currency in and out.

Colonial states had ultimately derived their authority from the movement of military force from outside; their coercive power was more effective at staging raids and terrorizing resistors than at routinizing authority throughout a territory; they had built garrison towns and railways to extend their capacities for such deployments; and they had come to rely on localized systems of “traditional” legitimacy and obedience. Their successors faced similar limitations and often hesitated between alliances with the same decentralized authority structures, with the risk of reinforcing ethnic power brokers or breaking them via another deployment of military power likely to provoke regionalist opposition. Colonial states could turn to the armed forces of the distant metropole to insure control of the gate. Their successors could not call in such support. Keeping the gate was more ambition than actuality, and struggles for the gate – and efforts of some groups to get around it – bedeviled African states from the start.

What independence added was the possibility of weaving patron-client relationships within the state, something colonial officials did too, but not so well. One also has to avoid the temptation of being overly institutional in one’s analysis – to look for a “state” (bureaucracy, executive, military, legislature) attempting to rule over and interact with “civil society” (interconnections and collectivities formed among the people of a territory). At least as important were the vertical ties formed by a political elite, the connections between a “big man” and his supporters, who in turn had linkages to their own supporters. A person might hold an office – for example as a commissioner in charge of a region – with certain duties and powers, but his daily reality might be to distribute rewards and cultivate support, shaping vertical ties that did not quite coincide with his official role. It is too simple to call that corruption, although many Africans as well as outsiders would do so.

Not all manage vertical ties successfully, for one of the origins of instability in Africa is the inability of gatekeepers to keep the gate. Traders bypass customs collection; oppositional networks establish connections with outside powers and get arms and support; and people often try to live their lives within and across territorial borders as if the state had limited power over them. Some states, Senegal for instance, have managed patron-client systems with relative stability, whereas others, like Zaire, turned them into crude machines by which a single leader and



13 Self-representations of power, Zaire, 1984. President Mobutu Sese Seku sitting on a throne, with the leopard skin that was his personal symbol at his feet. Mobutu cultivated an image of the all-powerful ruler, blending symbols of European power (the throne) and African power (the leopard).

his shifting entourage extracted resources arbitrarily from poor peasants and rich merchants to such a degree that the formal dimension of state rule collapsed. In Sierra Leone or Angola, rivals developed cross-border networks that smuggled out valuable resources, notably diamonds, and smuggled in arms and luxury goods for the gate-evading leadership.

During the struggles for independence, leaders of parties, trade unions, farmers' organizations, merchants' groups, students, and intellectuals aspired to a view of state-building with a strong "civic" dimension: the state would act in the interest of citizens as a body, through institutions accessible to all. Once in power, African regimes proved distrustful of the very social linkages and the vision of citizenship which they had ridden to power. Nkrumah set a dangerous and revealing precedent when he attacked trade unions and cocoa farmers' organizations in his first years in office. New presidents and prime ministers used their control of access to import-export markets and revenues to reward followers and exclude rivals.

The gatekeeper state was vulnerable: it made the stakes of control at a single point too high. Politics was an either/or phenomenon at the national level; local government was almost everywhere given little autonomy. Leaders often saw opposition as "tribal," which could encourage regional leaders to accuse the "national" elite of being tribalist itself. Gatekeeper states' insistence on the unity of the people and the need for national discipline revealed the fragility of their all-or-nothing control; they left little room for seeing opposition as legitimate. All states, undoubtedly, function via a mixture of personal ties and formal structures. That African history has encouraged people to form rich webs of connections, based on kinship, trading diasporas, religious networks, and so on is not necessarily a political liability; it was most often a strength. A combination of predictable state institutions, a civic-minded political culture that emphasizes the accountability of leaders to the citizens, and a measure of personal politics and networking may produce tensions, but also balance civic virtue and personal connections. What is problematic about gatekeeper states is the focus of patronage systems on a single point and the undermining, in the midst of intense rivalry for that point, of alternative mechanisms for influencing decisions and demanding accountability.

Western governments and international institutions were only too willing to work with gatekeeper states, which were permeable to their influence and useful in cold war rivalries. Even a modest amount of economic or military aid could be a major patronage resource to a leader, or to an insurgency trying to evade the gatekeeping state, when other forms of access to the world economy were weak. From the moment of independence, notably in the Congo crisis of 1960 (see below), western states signalled that they might intervene against a radical *national* policy because

they judged that its international implications were unfavorable to their interests. Some of Africa's most conflict-ridden states in the 1980s and 1990s had been among the largest recipients of economic and military aid intended to foster Cold War alliances: Angola, Zaire, Somalia, and Ethiopia. Both sides sometimes left in place former proxy combatants, either ruling cliques or insurgent movements, which continued to reap havoc – in Angola and Somalia for instance – after the Cold War ended.

Even more important, the huge disparities in the world economy accentuated the importance of gatekeeping to state elites: they could not bring their domestic economies to the level of Europe, North America, or East Asia, but they could try to police their citizens' access to the wealth that lay outside and find a profitable niche for themselves. Even a small quantity of resources – a marketing deal, remittances from migrant labor, foreign aid, automatic weapons – could make a decisive difference to whoever could control the asset. Hence the importance of guarding the gate to those who possess it or of building networks to get around state-regulated export-import institutions to those who do not.

When African states proved unable to cope with the difficulties of the post-1973 world economy, western development institutions were quick to blame the corruption and ill-considered policies of African governments. The remedies proposed, under the rubric of structural adjustment, do not necessarily address the structural or historical conditions that gave rise to gatekeeper states. Both African rulers' fear of the kinds of mobilized citizenries through which they challenged colonial rulers and the diminished resources which African states have to offer their citizens in the age of structural adjustment make gatekeeping and patronage more attractive strategies of rule than the democratic bargain by which governments ask for votes and taxes and provide needed services. Gatekeeper states are thus not "African" institutions, nor are they "European" impositions; they emerged out of a peculiar Euro-African history.

What follows is a series of short case studies of different African states from their emergence from colonial control until the mid-1990s. They illustrate both how hard it is to escape effects of the historical trajectory this book has brought out and the variety of forms these processes have taken. One of the hazards in talking about African politics in the United States and Europe is that news stories about violence in Rwanda, Liberia, or Sierra Leone turn into a single set of images applied to Africa as a whole. African realities should not be contrasted to an idealized picture of "democracy" elsewhere in the world; there is not a polity on earth where every member has an equal chance to have his or her political opinion heard or where patronage and corruption are absent from political life. But there are vast differences, within and beyond Africa, in the degree to

which people can express their views openly and without reprisals, in the capacity of government institutions to implement policies demanded by a voting public, and in the fairness with which government services and protection are provided to citizens. In many places across the continent, African people are posing demands on government as citizens; Claude Ake considers this a call for a "second independence." What one does not yet see is an example of a government which both guarantees civil rights and choice of leadership and has a long-term record of delivering economic growth and widespread opportunity. No one has found the magic formula.

### The trials and tribulations of states

#### *Ghana: the pioneer guards the gate*

There is a particular poignancy to the history of Ghana because it was the pioneer. Kwame Nkrumah was more than a political leader; he was a prophet of independence, of anti-imperialism, of Pan-Africanism. His oft-quoted phrase "Seek ye first the political kingdom" was not just a call for Ghanaians to demand a voice in the affairs of state, but a plea for leaders and ordinary citizens to use power for a purpose – to transform a colonized society into a dynamic and prosperous land of opportunity.

But even when Nkrumah became Leader of Government Business in 1951 and prime minister of an independent country in 1957, he was operating under serious constraints. His government, like its colonial predecessor, depended on cocoa revenues for its projects to diversify the economy. A clash with cocoa farmers was virtually inevitable, as the government retained in its Cocoa Marketing Board accounts up to half of export earnings. As described in chapter 4, Nkrumah had by 1959 suppressed the cocoa farmers' own organizations; he had also banned all regional political parties, and hence eliminated the Asante-based National Liberation Movement. Meanwhile, the world price of cocoa was falling, farmers' income plummeting, and incentives to maintain and replant cocoa trees diminishing. After 1965 cocoa production fell by over half as farmers turned to growing food crops, depriving the Ghanaian state of its main source of revenue for everything it was trying to do. Meanwhile, Nkrumah's biggest project to challenge the "neo-colonial" monocrop export economy, the Volta River dam and aluminum processing industry, actually put much of the Ghanaian economy into the hands both of multinational aluminum companies, which had the needed technology, and of international financial institutions, which had the money.



this vast and potentially wealthy territory remains as far removed from stability, democracy, and social progress as it seemed in the summer of 1960. Yet if the breaking up of this state has appeared to knowledgeable observers, for the same forty years, to be imminent, the borders of the state remain the same.

This story crosses the frontier of independence. Belgium's hasty decolonization, in the footsteps of France and Britain and following the 1959 Leopoldville riots, came on the basis of inconclusive elections involving two regionally based political parties, the Bakongo Abako and the Katangese Conakat, plus Patrice Lumumba's MNC (Mouvement National Congolais), which was at least trying to offer a national vision and a critique of Belgian colonialism. The independence deal-making made Lumumba the Congo's first prime minister and Joseph Kasavubu, the Abako leader, its president.

Whatever chance there was for Lumumba's national vision to be translated into concrete policies is hard to know, for he had no time. Some want to see him as a revolutionary hero, but his views fell within the more liberal politics of 1950s African nationalism: a man who sought liberation from an oppressive colonial regime and who sought some kind of social and economic liberation beyond that, but was not quite sure what that concretely meant. He was catapulted to leadership without the experience of an Nkrumah or even a Sékou Touré. His speech at the ceremonies of independence, in front of the King of Belgium, which spelled out a devastating – and accurate – portrayal of the violence and exploitation of Belgian colonialism, encouraged Belgian intrigues against him and helped attach the labels of radical or communist to his name in western capitals.

Lumumba had little room to maneuver. Within two weeks of independence, the Congolese army mutinied, largely in revolt against the continued presence and arrogance of Belgian officers. Belgian civil servants left the central government *en masse*, having done nothing to train Congolese successors. Then Katanga, whose leading political figure Moïse Tshombe had excellent Belgian connections, seceded, and in this case, Belgians stayed to help the secessionists. Lumumba's unwieldy state depended vitally on the revenues of Katanga's copper. Here was a gatekeeper whose gate was about to become irrelevant. Lumumba scrambled for outside support, including from the Soviet Union and its allies, which proved of little help except to tie the label of Marxist more closely around his neck.

Within a month, then, a war of secession had started, alongside urban riots, the army mutiny, threats to Europeans, and the undermining of government capacity to act. The UN, with Congolese consent, sent troops to restore order, but Lumumba and Kasavubu represented two different Congos. Kasavubu soon fired Lumumba, whether legally or otherwise,



15 Patrice Lumumba under arrest in the Congo, December 1960. After being ousted from the office of prime minister and placed under house arrest, Lumumba escaped and tried to flee to his home region in eastern Congo. He was captured by government troops and shortly thereafter murdered.

and the UN – pressed by the United States and western European powers – worked with the president, not the prime minister. Lumumba was placed under house arrest, but he escaped and fled towards his home base in eastern Congo. By then Joseph Mobutu, an army officer who had initially worked with Lumumba, was becoming the real strong man in the Congo. He played a decisive role in Lumumba's arrest and later in the effort to track him down. In January 1961 Lumumba was captured and murdered with the connivance of Belgium, the CIA, Mobutu, and local henchmen. Mobutu acted in the background behind a series of weak prime ministers, and he displaced Kasavubu. UN troops played a crucial role in stabilizing this kind of state. By 1963 they defeated Tshombe and restored Katanga, renamed Shaba Province, to the Congo. A semblance of order, albeit of an authoritarian sort, returned, and the copper revenues began to flow again.

The Congo's tradition of millenarian movements blended with its radical, Lumumbist one in the form of rebellions led by Pierre Mulele in 1964. Other regional rebellions broke out. The Congo was clearly not working as a nation-state. But the fact that it was a state was crucial, for outside

interests feared a power vacuum in so large, central, and well-endowed a space within Africa; Belgian, American, French and UN military resources were used in various ways to quell rebellions that threatened the territorial integrity of the state. Algeria, Egypt, and Cuba helped out rebels, particularly Lumumbists in the eastern region. The rebellions between 1960 and 1964 are thought to have cost a million people their lives.

In 1965, Mobutu put an end to the masquerade of the prime ministers. He ruled for the next thirty-two years as dictator. He did so with a great deal of western support, both military and financial, from those who knew how corrupt and undemocratic his regime was but saw him as a bastion against communism or other destabilizing forces. Thomas Callaghy argues that Mobutu went from running a "typical military autocracy" to another level of despotism. Formally, his system was "prefectoral": top-down rule by appointed representatives, hired and fired in order to keep them loyal and intimidated, plus efforts to attach each ethnic group, each locality, and each region directly to presidential authority. This version of state-building was not without its achievements; even opponents saw Zaire, as Mobutu renamed the country in 1970, as a unit to which to aspire. "Mobutuist" ideology emphasized the personality of the ruler and Zairian "authenticity," with everyone ordered to drop European names in favor of African ones. Mobutu renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko. Frequent and arbitrary changes of administrative personnel, and the taking of a personal cut out of all sorts of business activity, were his hallmarks; he is thought to have sent billions of dollars into personal investments in Europe. He was shrewd at staying just one step away from the behavior western powers would not tolerate, and he was bailed out by France, Belgium, and the United States in 1978 when exiles invaded Shaba Province; projects of dubious economic merit were financed by western banks.

Over time, the state became less like a state and more like a mafia. Its weak point was money, for not only did Mobutu loot the treasury, but his security depended on his licensing others to do likewise. By the late 1970s, as copper prices fell, he was in trouble. The formal institutions of Zaire, from health facilities to transport, failed long before the system of clientelism and redistribution of spoils did. But by the 1990s, Mobutu could no longer pay very much of his army, which for a time kept functioning by using its "state" authority as a license to pillage. For a time, the gatekeeping function of the state kept going: copper revenues were funnelled through the state, which took its official and unofficial cuts. That became less reliable as prices fluctuated and industry capacity faltered. Zaire both provided a way around other states' gatekeeping efforts (allowing diamonds to be smuggled out of Angola) and saw its own wealth smuggled out in other directions – notably, gold through East Africa.

Most people lived off their own production and networks of social relations independent of the state. The other side of the parallel economy was a parallel society: a cultural dynamism in Kinshasa, with rich and critical forms of expression, particularly in painting and music.

Mobutu's downfall might not have happened if Mobutu had not lost his ability to insert himself into the social relations by which people survived. It might not have happened if he had kept paying his army, which stopped fighting before it stopped pillaging. Student protests in Lubumbashi in 1990 led to massacres by police; riots and looting took place in Zairian cities in 1991 and 1993. There was pressure starting in the 1990s from western human rights organizations and then from governments; financial institutions wanted him to clean up corruption. Mobutu probably could have survived all that: his gestures toward allowing opposition, debate, and political contestation opened a little space, and he outmaneuvered his domestic opponents and his foreign interlocutors. He turned an outside threat to his advantage, as the influx into Zaire of refugees from the crisis in Rwanda in 1994 (chapter 1) meant that relief agencies had to deal with Mobutu. Sovereignty, once again, had its compensations.

But he could not control the situation. The presence of Hutu militias that had been involved in the Rwanda genocide in the refugee camps led to clashes with Zairians from groups related to the Rwandan Tutsi, who organized to defend themselves. With multiple oppositions in eastern Zaire to the exactions of Mobutu's prefects and soldiers, this proved to be an important catalyst, and the rebellion was supported by the new Tutsi-led regime in Rwanda, backed in turn by Uganda. For reasons little understood, a man with a strange history put together the diverse elements into a coherent fighting force focused not on the border region but on the state of Zaire itself. Laurent Desiré Kabila, originally from Shaba, had been a Lumumbist and then a regional warlord, running a small fiefdom isolated enough that Mobutu's army couldn't get him, connected enough to run smuggling operations and to survive for decades. His rag-tag army, with Rwandan and Ugandan support, expelled Hutu refugees and militias alike from camps, at terrible human cost, and began an odyssey across Zaire. The long march was at least made possible by the unwillingness of the Zaire army to resist and much of the population's hope, after three decades of predation, that the young soldiers of Kabila offered something.

Kabila's dramatic entrance into Kinshasa in May 1997 was extraordinary. He was welcomed by a populace where an anti-Mobutuist popular culture had taken strong root, but without ties either to Kabila's Shaba or eastern Zaire, where his soldiers and backers came from. They were soon disappointed. Kabila was dubbed Mobutu II; even his renaming (again) of the country as the Democratic Republic of Congo had a Mobutuist tinge to it; he made similar deals with foreign mining firms to pass out



the country's wealth for uncertain long-term development prospects; he showed no patience with political debate and alternative organizations; he had few scruples about human rights; and he was not the man to turn personal and clientalistic authority relations into routine performance of state functions. His inability to control violence – including that of surviving Hutu militias – cost him the support of Uganda and Rwanda, and another rebellion, with parallels to the one Kabila himself led, took over much of the eastern part of the country, while Zimbabwe and Angola provided key support to Kabila. In 2001, Kabila was killed by one of his bodyguards, and he was succeeded by his little-known son, who like Kabila himself was notably detached from the society he was trying to rule.

Kabila's rebellion aimed at transforming Zaire, not breaking it up. While Mobutu was skilled at using the western desire for stable states to maintain his fragile internal hold on the country, Kabila made use of similar desires on the part of rulers of Zimbabwe and Angola to maintain the sovereignty system and have a share of the spoils of Congo. And despite the unwieldiness of Congo and the inability of the state to monopolize outside outlets, the gatekeeping state still controls potentially large export revenues and access to the international system that gives its leadership real resources to distribute and to use.

#### *Senegal: managing the gate*

Senegal is a state with few natural resources; its most important export has, literally, been peanuts. But its history reveals that gatekeeping itself can be managed by an astute elite.

Senegal, whose leading city, Dakar, was once the capital of French West Africa, lost its special position from France's territorial approach to decolonization (chapter 4). Léopold Sédar Senghor's attempt to salvage a smaller federation by uniting with Mali had failed as both leaders realized the risks they ran of challenges to their carefully built political machines. Senegal ended up a small, resource-poor country whose major assets remained those of connections: Dakar's attractiveness as a headquarters to business and development agencies; an educated urban population; and a good harbor.

Senghor's rise to power had come from his understanding of the French citizenship law of 1946; by working through Islamic brotherhoods, he had obtained the allegiance of former "subjects" in rural areas neglected by his urban rivals. But he still appealed to educated Senegalese with a new vision of politics, simultaneously appropriating the best of European science and culture to aid economic and social progress and insisting that African culture had something of value to offer the rest of the world.

The territories of French Africa acquired local self-government in 1958 and independence in 1960. Senghor and the left-leaning Mamadou Dia, his second-in-command in the Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais, planned to emphasize education and Dakar's linkages, but they also commissioned an economic study that instead of assuming that a prefabricated model would be imposed on all of Senegal, asked what resources and possibilities each community within the country possessed. Senghor and Dia saw rural community mobilization as a new way forward.

But they had little room for maneuver. Dakar's commercial establishment was divided between old colonial firms and Senegalese entrepreneurs connected to the Mouride Islamic brotherhood. These were conservative forces, and they fit poorly with Dia's "rural animation." Senghor's politics was one of drawing fine lines. He did not, unlike Nkrumah, seek to dismantle the organizations which had brought him to power, most especially the Mourides, and he did not want to break his French connections, which Senegalese were now in a position to take advantage of. Senghor moved back and forth between a politics that was at times authoritarian and at times open to dialogue, sometimes oriented toward mobilizing a population toward national progress, and sometimes tending toward rule by experts.

In 1962 Senghor, feeling threatened from the left, fired Dia and imprisoned him, along with some of his allies. From 1963 to 1976 Senegal was a one-party state, under Senghor's Parti Socialiste. In 1968 a wave of strikes and student uprisings brought harsh crackdowns and imprisonments. The autonomy of trade unions was undermined and student organizations dismantled. In 1974 Senghor was challenged from the rural areas, as Mouride leaders helped to organize peanut farmers to resist the government's setting of the purchase price of peanuts at a low level. The government gave in. The regime slowly returned to allowing a measure of debate and electoral contestation. Senghor allowed other parties to organize in 1976 and, in 1978, elections were finally held.

In 1981, in one of Africa's few legal, orderly successions, Senghor retired in favor of his long-time protégé Abdou Diouf. Diouf came up through the bureaucracy; he had built his legitimacy on claims to be a skillful technocrat and loyal follower, not the "father of the nation." He allowed – and won – elections in 1983, 1988, 1993, and 1998; the press has mostly been open enough to allow political debate but threatened enough by the possibility of censorship to keep the debate within limits. If certain opposition leaders spent time in jail, some of the same ones spent time in Diouf's cabinet, as he attempted to build coalitions. However, low peanut prices, poor harvests in Senegal's arid rural areas, and IMF-imposed structural adjustment policies limited the state sector

when Diouf needed to strengthen his networks of clients. Opposition parties drew on students, teachers, health care workers, and a few other public-sector employees with a populist message. Many people built their trading relationships and communities outside of official channels, while strikes, student rebellions, and peasants' periodic refusals to grow market crops kept up an oppositional ethos.

Until the election of 2000, the state – and the Parti Socialist – controlled all the patronage, so that competition at the level of ideas took place, but only one political apparatus offered concrete rewards. Minority parties could aspire to few resources by competing for municipal or provincial offices, and because the state controlled a large percentage of salaried employment, party control of patronage signified more than it did within a more varied capitalist economy. The Diouf regime was better at containing opposition within its “vertical” patronage system than addressing the overburdened school system, high unemployment, the failures of agriculture, and the impossibility of industrialization.

Diouf's grip failed because both the state's and the party's resources diminished in the era of structural adjustment and atrophied export markets; people had less to lose by voting for the opposition. Its criticisms of Diouf's ineffectiveness rang true. Whereas Diouf needed the support of the Mourides, successful Mouride traders had less need of the state, and they ceased to be an automatic source of electoral support for the Diouf regime. The victory of Abdoulaye Wade, a long-time, populist opposition leader, over Diouf in the 2000 election, signifies a real change in politics; whether it will in policy remains to be seen.

The art of politics in Senegal is more about building connections than mobilizing ethnic or other forms of solidarity. The Islamic brotherhoods cross lines of region and ethnicity for the 80 percent of the population who are Muslim. Moreover, the relationship of religious leader (marabout) to follower (*talibé*) is similar in some respects to that of patron and client – personal and long term, with broad mutual expectations rather than contractual ones, and with both sides having to take care to maintain the other's enthusiasm for the relationship. Political and socio-religious connections reinforce each other, but provide enough distance so that neither can impose its will on the other. The co-existence of these two sorts of vertical relationships has helped keep Senegal from the extremes of state efforts to exclude all nonclientage relations or of religious organizations to promote a “fundamentalist” alternative to the state's role in society. And because people expect something from their vertical relationships, they expect less from horizontal – that is, class – relationships. Rich and poor interact with each other but not as equals.

The relationship between Senegalese remaining in Senegal and those abroad has also been crucial. Many young men from the arid regions of

the country and from its inland neighbor, Mali, have migrated to Dakar and then onward to France. For a time, they, along with North African immigrants, became vital components of the French working class. Since 1974, immigration to France has been severely restricted and harsh measures of deporting illegal migrants have been taken, but a West African population is well established in European cities. This population is not cut off from Senegal, and indeed particular villages along the Senegal River Valley have close links to particular neighborhoods outside of Paris, and Senegalese in Europe send regular remittances “home.” Mourides, meanwhile, have been at the core of a commercial diaspora extending from Rome to New York, giving street sellers a strong social base in the cities where they work and strong links to Senegal. The horizons of Senegalese are thus quite broad, and their contribution to keeping their arid country of origin going is a vital one, despite the pain of separation and the harshness of American and European immigration regimes.

#### *Nigeria: the excesses of the spigot economy*

Africa's most populous state has been doubly constrained, first by an administrative structure of British design which turned its social and religious divisions into a politically deadly polarization, and then by the discovery of oil, a blessing which became a curse. Nigeria's educated elite had roots extending to the nineteenth century and a cosmopolitan outlook, from its linkages across much of West Africa and to Pan-Africanist circles in England. Its lawyers, teachers, and clerks had experience in state services for decades and familiarity with local, regional, and national deliberative councils, under limited self-administration programs. Nigerian cocoa farmers and commercial entrepreneurs, like urban lawyers, teachers, and clerks before them, constituted a politically aware class, with the means to support an active press and political organizations. The human resources which Nigeria brought to independence were thus considerable.

It also faced all the weaknesses of colonial economies and political structures. By the 1950s, the British policy of allowing African involvement in government at the regional, rather than federal, level was having divisive consequences (chapter 4). In each region, a single party, dominated by members of the majority ethnic group, obtained office and used it to provide services and patronage within its bailiwick. In each region oppositions developed, to some extent (notably in the north) as populist challenges to the governing elites, but most importantly among regional minorities.

This kind of politics took place both before and after independence in 1960. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, exports of cocoa from the

Western Region and a variety of other agricultural products from the Eastern and Northern Regions were sufficient to allow politicians to play their patronage games, for real progress to be made in education, and for Nigeria to build the symbols of its national independence. The modest powers of the federal government, from independence, were in the hands of Alhaji Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, leader of the Northern People's Congress (NPC). All regional parties worried that their rivals would intrigue with other regional groups to gain solid control of the federal government. The east and west feared the north, which was populous and tightly controlled by an Islamic elite, while the north feared that east and west would gain control by insinuating their better-educated population into the bureaucracies that actually ran the state. But Nigeria's worst luck was that it was lying atop one of the world's largest pools of high-grade oil, and by the mid-1960s it was coming into production.

Oil can turn a gatekeeper state into a caricature of itself. Unlike agriculture, which involves vast numbers of people in the production and marketing of exports, oil requires little labor, and much of it from foreigners. It also entails relationships between the few global firms capable of extracting it and the state rulers who collect the rents. It defines a spigot economy: whoever controls access to the tap, collects the rent.

Nigeria plunged into civil war soon after oil exports began. Oil came from the east, and potential oil revenues threatened a shifting regional balance. The diaspora of educated Igbos to Western and Northern cities was also causing tension. In January 1966, the Balewa government was toppled in a coup and Balewa was assassinated. General Johnson Ironsi soon took over from the coup leaders. Ironsi's government was one of Africa's outbursts of military populism: a military elite, trained to get things done, perceiving a government of elected politicians as self-interested, corrupt, and incompetent, announcing its determination to restore competence and regularity to government. It was not seen that way in the north, where Ironsi was less the national reformer than the Igbo power grabber. There had been anti-Igbo riots in the north in the 1950s, but the pogroms that broke out in the Igbo ghettos in northern cities – with the connivance of local elites – killed tens of thousands and made many more into refugees. In July northern officers instigated Ironsi's overthrow and assassination, and he was replaced by another officer, Yakubu Gowon, who was to rule for the next nine years.

In Eastern Nigeria the second coup was seen, in the context of the pogroms and the tensions over oil revenues, as an anti-Igbo move. Eastern autonomy seemed the only way to keep regional hands on the spigot. Eastern Nigeria declared itself independent and named itself Biafra. What followed was a horrific war: a small regional army, convinced of its righteousness, fighting a larger one which claimed the legitimacy of a

nation-state. Biafra had its outside supporters – France, most notably – and as the war and blockade had a devastating impact, particularly on children, the publicity generated sympathy for Biafra and deepened the image of Africa as a land of starving children victimized by wars that seem a product of irrational tribal enmity. That it was a war of maneuvering politicians, as much to do with geographic region as with ethnicity, was more difficult to convey than the stark images.

The federal government won the war, and Gowon tried to avoid a redistributive peace. Gowon had earlier divided Nigeria into twelve states, blurring the correspondence of region and ethnicity of the British three-state system. Each region would have its own governmental institutions, services, and educational system. Building twelve universities in the years after the war, for example, created numerous jobs and diffused ethnic competition. The patronage structure was pyramidal, going down to urban neighborhoods, with the head of each pyramid jockeying for access to the next level. At the heart of politics were personal, vertical relationships, as individuals sought help from local "big men" who had access to information, jobs, and construction permits, and as brokers sought state funds for roads, clinics, and meeting halls for their areas. Women turned their active role in running markets into participation in municipal politics. The possibility of using vertical ties provided alternative strategies to organizing horizontally – by the working class, for example – and while patron-client ties reinforced in some ways ethnic and regional affinities, they were not the same as dividing the population into ethnic groups. This did not prevent certain moments of mobilization on a class, ethnic, or religious basis – Nigeria witnessed general strikes from the 1960s to the 1990s and severe flashes of ethnoreligious conflict.

Oil revenues made this distributive logic possible, but they also entrenched Nigeria in its gatekeeper role. Instead of providing capital for the diversification and the industrialization of the Nigerian economy, oil revenues were used above all for the primary task of the political elite: patronage. Having so much to distribute provided some political stability and a model of uneconomic spending. The building boom, focused on schools and roads, sent the cost of labor so high that cocoa farmers could no longer hire, and they themselves saw little reason to invest in developing their farms, when getting their children an education and contacts in the provincial or federal capital were far more likely to bring them prosperity. Oil became the only significant export; agriculture collapsed (see figure 3); industry developed in only the narrowest of niches; port facilities choked on imports; and the dream of a balanced, integrated economy went nowhere. With the fall of oil prices in the 1980s, Nigeria had much less money to throw around so inefficiently. Nigeria could no longer maintain roads, electricity, or hospitals; it became an oil

producer with gasoline shortages. Its oil-producing zones, receiving little from foreign oil companies other than disruption, pollution, and heavy-handed security interventions, became discontent, and the government's execution of the regional activist Ken Saro-Wiwa in 1995 dramatized to Nigerians and others the politics of neglect and repression in the oil-rich region.

There was, however, no repetition of the Biafran war. Ethnic tension and violence there has been, much of it between groups within the old regions, some between Muslims and Christians. The most important tensions have been over control of the gate. There were successions of coups, tentative attempts at civilian rule in 1979–93 – no less dishonest than the military variant – and reimposition of military rule. The military's annulment of the 1993 election was a bitter disappointment to the democracy movement, and the ensuing dictatorship of Sani Abacha was particularly harsh, brought to an end only by Abacha's fortuitous early death in June 1998. The Nigerian labor movement, especially during the huge general strike of 1994, was one source of organized opposition; the efforts of lawyers, doctors, students, and others in the Campaign for Democracy to forge links between Nigerian democracy activists and overseas human rights organizations were another. The election in 1999 of Olusegun Obasanjo, under conditions that were less than ideal but better than anything in recent memory, is another of those moments that just might turn out to be a turning point.

#### *Kenya: a capitalist alternative?*

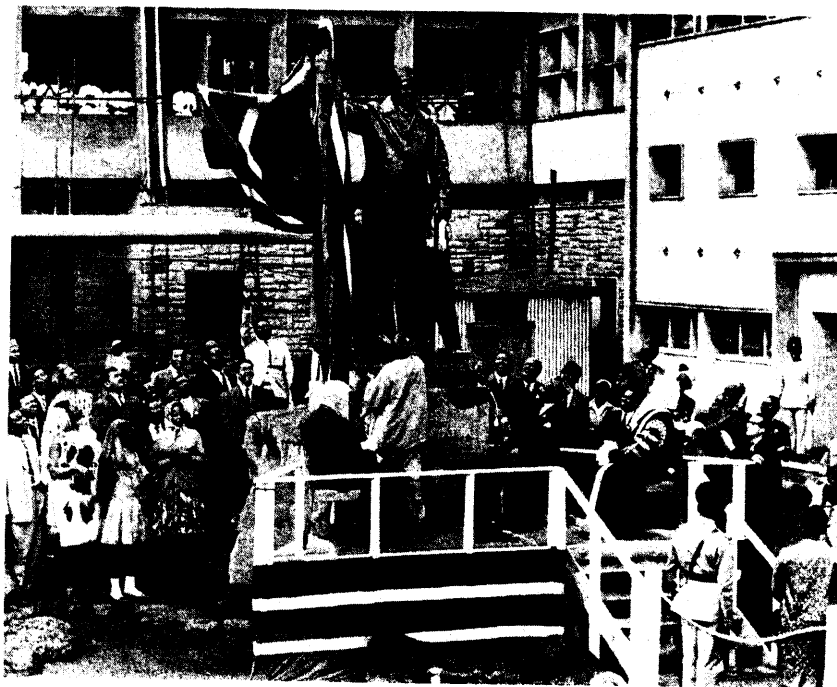
In the late 1970s, some Kenyan and foreign scholars thought Kenya might be moving beyond the political economy of the gatekeeper state. They saw a Kenyan elite actively buying up farms, including those left by departing British settlers, investing in industry and commerce, and founding joint ventures with multinational corporations. Marxist scholars thought that a property-owning, labor-employing – that is capitalist – class seemed to be taking root. Market-minded observers thought agricultural investment of particular significance too, for it seemed an antidote to the biases of urban-dwelling state elites. Other scholars were skeptical of the “Kenyan exception”: they thought that multinational firms still controlled the most crucial sectors of the economy and that the new bourgeoisie was more statist than bourgeois.

With independence in 1963, Jomo Kenyatta tried to reassure foreign investors that Kenya was not still the land of Mau Mau. With British loans, elite Kenyans bought property from departing settlers and so acquired a vested interest in maintaining the security of private ownership of

land and other resources. The government was challenged from the left, and alternated between cooptive gestures – making designated portions of land available in small units to the landless poor, bringing union leaders into the government, and providing a measure of services to poor urban zones – and repression, banning populist opposition parties, arresting or assassinating threatening leaders, suppressing free speech, and trying to paint opponents as “tribalists” standing in the way of national advance. Official political culture focused around meetings (“barazas”) where politicians made their distributive gestures in public: putting money into a school or road and encouraging local self-help projects. But the politicians around Kenyatta who were enriching themselves were largely Kikuyu, and it wasn't clear in the late 1970s whether the central issue was the emergence of class divisions – bringing potential economic growth as well as exploitation – or the more typical instance of the clients of a gatekeeper state enriching themselves. In Kenyatta's Kenya, modestly sized businesses did have a certain autonomy, which they did not in Nkrumah's Ghana or Nyerere's Tanzania, and the civil service was relatively effective, but it is not clear that business ever broke out of the limits of an economy dominated by peasant producers, multinational firms, and a government that policed the gate between the two.

Doubts became stronger when Kenyatta died in 1978 and was succeeded by his vice president, Daniel arap Moi, who was from the Kalenjin region. Moi set about dismantling the Kikuyu-centered patronage system, enhancing the position of Kalenjin clients, and working with other small ethnic groups to redress the regional balance. He had the disadvantage of doing this in a time of global economic contraction. His methods ran to the heavy-handed, including imprisonment and assassination as well as harsh ethnic politics, such as the use of security forces to remove Kikuyu from land coveted by Kalenjin. But he also tried to strengthen Kenya's single party, KANU. His regime was opposed, especially since 1986, by Kenyan activists, notably in the legal profession and in established churches, as well as by international human rights organizations, who now worked more closely with Kenyans than they had before. International financial organizations, concerned with the regime's corruption and economic mismanagement, on occasion suspended aid. Student demonstrations and strikes have been frequent; professionals, like doctors and nurses, have struck as well against the state's degradation of working conditions in public service. Kenyan business people hurt by the reconfiguration of the patronage system helped to finance and organize opposition parties when they were legalized.

The KANU government has had to respond to internal and external pressure by gestures towards democratization, including the legalization



16 Personality and politics: President Jomo Kenyatta watches the unveiling of his statue at a ceremony in Nairobi, December 14, 1964. The statue is being unveiled by Oginga Odinga, then the vice president, but who later became a populist opponent of the Kenyatta regime and was isolated and at times detained for his political actions.

of multiple parties and the holding of elections in 1992, which were open enough that Moi won only a narrow plurality of the votes. Moi has been helped by the fact that opposition parties, notably the two different branches of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy, were as much built around the personal networks of their leaders as was the apparatus of Moi himself. Kenya's economy, meanwhile, has moved between stagnation and periods of modest growth; it remains dependent on exports of coffee and tea; it is still highly penetrated by foreign capital; and its indigenous capitalists remain closely linked to the state and vulnerable to the whims of its leadership.

#### *Tanzania: a radical alternative?*

In the abstract, the leaders of African states had choices beyond those described in the narratives above. The very thinness of the social basis of

the regimes – the absence of powerful pressure groups – gave leaders flexibility in how they would represent their goals. At some level, independence movements had been popular mobilizations, and given the small size of the property-owning classes could hardly have been anything else. So “development” was a near universal watchword and building schools and clinics a near-universal policy; and many regimes called themselves socialist, including some (Senegal) whose policies were not very different from those who represented themselves as “pro-market” or “pro-west.” The stakes of ideological positioning could be high, mainly because the Cold Warriors rewarded their friends and punished their enemies. But that would not necessarily translate into differences in how regimes actually operated domestically.

A few governments, either at the moment of liberation or with a change of regime, proclaimed themselves to be “Marxist-Leninist” and espoused a Soviet-style version of scientific socialism. The self-proclaimed “people’s republics” of Bénin and Congo-Brazzaville and the revolutionary regimes of Angola and Mozambique set forth programs of radical economic reform stressing state ownership of industries and commercial organizations, rural cooperatives or collective farms, the expansion of educational and health facilities, and also attacks on the wealthy and on traditionalist chiefs. But in practice, how much did they differ from other gatekeeper states, with their tendencies to eliminate autonomous sources of wealth and power and to try to control key commercial institutions? It is not clear that any African state had the capacity to plan on a national scale or control production in a truly Soviet fashion. The “Afro-Marxist” states were not run by parties solidly rooted in working-class or peasant movements; the radical impetus was more likely to come from urban intellectuals, students, young soldiers, and bureaucrats. The reformist projects in these states most often focused on education and on involving rural people in the national economy and national political institutions. They sent students to the USSR or East Germany rather than to France or the United States, and they received aid workers and military attachés from the Soviet bloc in their cities.

But in their Marxist phases, Bénin or the Congo could do little more than populist, but non-Marxist, governments to provide education or reform agriculture. The Soviet Union provided little capital and dubious expertise. It did provide some of its allies with military support, but whether that provided a real alternative to western “imperialism” is another question. If some of the Afro-Marxist regimes made stronger efforts than others in the realms of education and health, none achieved significant breakthroughs against poverty.

There was still another alternative: to work out an ideology and a program that were original and focused on conditions in Africa, and

that might resonate outside the universities and capital cities. Tanzania's "African socialism" was a notable example of such a quest, positing "self-reliance" against the trade-and-aid model of development and emphasizing the engagement of rural communities with a national project.

Tanganyika, which was to join with Zanzibar in 1964 to create Tanzania, had a few zones of export potential: the sisal growing area inland from the coast and, above all, the coffee growing area near Mount Kilimanjaro and other highland regions, surrounded by much larger areas where a culturally diverse population lived in resource-poor environments. Tanganyika was led into independence by a former school teacher, Julius Nyerere, a small educated elite, and a modest trade union leadership. In the few tense years before independence, TANU forged ties with a variety of rural movements, particularly those aggrieved by heavy-handed British development and soil conservation programs. At first, TANU's development policies were close to the orthodoxy of western experts. But given Tanganyika's spread-out and meager resources, it was not attractive to investors.

In 1964 Tanganyika negotiated its union with the island nation of Zanzibar, which had recently undergone a revolutionary struggle that threw out its substantial land-owning class of mainly Arab origin, and sought to install a radical, self-consciously African regime. Taking stock of the post-independence years in 1967, President Nyerere argued that trying to base development on "money" had failed. We will not get the money, he concluded, and moreover, the danger of eroding fundamental African values and community solidarity was all too real. Nyerere's "Arusha Declaration" called for togetherness and self-reliance, a strategy based on the allegedly communal nature of African society. The state, and the party in particular, would breathe dynamism into Tanzania's communities, and they would bring shared values to the nation.

The new plan entailed nationalizations, particularly in banking and commerce. The government improved education and tried to emphasize rural clinics over fancy urban hospitals. At the heart of its strategy was the building of *vijiji vya ujamaa* – solidarity villages. Intended to turn African values into practical cooperation, the program envisioned bringing people who were living in scattered homesteads into villages that could be provided with schools and clinics – and party offices. The program promised peasants a voice within the single party. By 1972, 15 percent of the rural population had been brought into the *vijiji vya ujamaa*, by 1976, 91 percent. But the results were disastrous. Many, probably most, peasants did not want to move. The government was able to force them into villages, but not to produce in accordance with its plans. Bringing them closer to a disliked political party did not make Tanzanians more active participants in "self-reliance." The nationalizations in the commercial



17 A "village of solidarity" (*kijiji cha ujamaa*), Tanzania, 1974. Women hoeing a communal plot. These villages were heralded by the socialist government of Julius Nyerere as a way of integrating farmers into the fabric of the nation, but the farmers resented a new form of state imposition.

sector had equally bad results, so that Tanzania fell into a pattern of de-development – less production, less trade, less integration into a truly national economy. The standard of living fell 40 to 50 percent between 1975 and 1983. And self-reliance never meant what the words implied: heavily supported by Scandinavian countries and even the World Bank, Tanzania became one of the world's biggest per capita consumers of foreign aid, and it needed every penny to stay afloat. Ironically, the *vijiji vya ujamaa* bore a considerable resemblance to colonial programs of "villagization," intended to bring dispersed rural populations under closer surveillance.

Nyerere, architect of the one-party state imposed in 1965 as well as of socialism and self-reliance, had the wisdom to recognize that things had gone wrong. Having done his share of arresting opponents and stifling dissent, he was one of few heads of state who willingly passed on the torch (in 1985), remaining as party head and elder statesmen, and in 1990 he was willing to admit that the one-party state was not a good idea. Multi-party, competitive electoral politics was reinstated in 1992. Tanzania



backed away as well from its collectivist economic strategies. With the loosening of control of production and prices a semblance of economic order returned, coffee exports rose, and a wider range of goods became available. Cooperating with the IMF's structural adjustment strategy, Tanzania allowed its budget allocations for education and health to be cut, and literacy rates fell. Tanzania's economy came back from the nadir; it slowly returned to being a conventional impoverished country.

*Can the gatekeeper state become democratic?*

Fifteen years ago, some observers thought that pro-trade, agriculturally oriented countries like Kenya and Côte d'Ivoire were exceptions to the rule of African economic stagnation; they were "miracles of the market." Since then, they have proven to be less than miraculous, constrained by their inability to do more than produce larger quantities of primary commodities which world markets want less of and by their leaders' perceived need to put their own control of patronage ahead of economic growth and diversification.

At the other end of the policy spectrum, African states like Nkrumah's Ghana tried to restructure a colonial economy radically, but had little other than mounting debts to show for the effort. The disasters of African political economy range from the self-proclaimed market-oriented (Zaire, Nigeria) to the self-proclaimed socialist (Tanzania, Guinea). The grossest violations of human rights have occurred in states whose formal ideologies have covered a wide spectrum (Zaire on the right and Guinea on the left), and in others where ideology was less important than the *folies de grandeur* of a leader (Idi Amin in Uganda or Jean-Bedel Bokassa in the so-called Central African Empire). Some states have broken down nearly completely, Somalia notably, where not only basic institutions – bureaucracy, judiciary, army – have failed but where rival warlords construct distinct patron-client systems.

Ideology is not the theme around which the most important variations occur. But gatekeeper states can be managed so tightly that they destroy all sources of social cohesion and economic dynamism other than that which can be controlled from the top, as in Mobutu's Zaire, or they can be more flexible, allowing somewhat diverse economic and social relationships to develop, as in Senegal. As I have argued, gatekeeper states are distinguished not by effective control of the gate, but by the intensity of struggle over it, which has had varying outcomes. While it is clear that it is a mistake to turn the worst failures of gatekeeper states – Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zaire, Guinea – into stand-ins for all of Africa, it is harder to look at the other end of the spectrum, to find clear paths for a way out.

In the classificatory scheme of political scientists Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, there were in 1989 only five multiparty regimes in Africa, compared to eleven military oligarchies, sixteen one party-regimes that gave people no choice but ritual ratifications of pre-selected candidates, and thirteen one-party systems that allowed some choice of candidates within the party. In the 1990s, there seemed to be an opening, and some commentators spoke of a "wave" of democracy pushing aside dictatorships and military governments across the world, including Africa. Was this a conjuncture in which the exercise of national citizenship was reinvigorated, perhaps comparable to the post-1945 conjuncture in which the notion of imperial citizenship opened up and then exploded the very idea of reformist colonialism? Some elements were coming together that shook up the gatekeeper state:

1. Over a decade of economic contraction eroded the patronage resources of ruling elites and left them searching for new ways to obtain support.
2. Key categories of African societies, notably professionals and students, found their paths to the future blocked and little outlet for their talents.
3. Workers and the urban poor may have remained desperate enough to keep trying to use whatever personal connections they could, but were doing so badly that many were *available* (as with youth in the 1940s) to be mobilized in strikes, demonstrations, and sometimes anti-regime violence.
4. Donor agencies like the World Bank were frustrated at the dissipation of aid via corruption and were demanding "good governance" as a condition for the assistance which rulers desperately needed.
5. An expanding range of nongovernmental organizations, concerned with human rights, legal reform, women's empowerment, and ecology, were involved in Africa, and they were interacting more closely than before with African activists.

Just as the revolution which overthrew colonial rule came about not as the bottom overthrew the top but as interaction became more intense and the path of change less controllable by rulers, the uncertainties within African regimes seemed to promise an unfolding dynamic of political restructuring. Movements for multiparty elections and increased freedom of speech can be infectious; a contested election in one country suggests a possibility in another.

But the results were mixed and short of the dynamic of the 1950s and 1960s. A wave of national conventions, of rewriting of rules of electoral competition, of legalizing multiple parties, and of elections with at least a measure of fairness took place after 1989, starting with Bénin's

calling of a national convention to write a more democratic constitution. In the 1990s, there have been more elections – some of them offering genuine choice – than in any time period since the early days of independence. In Bénin, Zambia, and Senegal, old-guard leaders were voted out of office; second rounds of more or less open elections have occurred in several countries. Bratton and van de Walle claim that between 1990 and 1994 progress toward democratic elections occurred in sixteen African countries (out of forty-seven), and limited transitions in others, and civil liberties improved at least a little in thirty-two countries.

The degree to which electoral choice and freedom of expression and organization have progressed varies, but there are only a few clear models – Botswana, Mali, and newly “free” South Africa – of the institutionalization of political reform and new expectations of ordinary people that their voices will be heard. Leaders remain wedded to winner-take-all models of government, fearful of allowing rivals to have access to provincial or local patronage and other resources. If they concede multiple party elections, they still use patronage and coercion to maintain control of the process. Opposition parties, meanwhile, have tended to be built around the same kind of patron-client ties as the ruling party. Moi’s Kenya remains a clear example of a regime facing all the pressures cited above, but manipulating a multiparty system as it had a single party system, as a divided and clientelistic democracy movement fails to bring together professional and popular opponents of the status quo. In Bénin and Zambia victorious oppositions soon replicated the regime they had replaced. Nigerian political scientist Julius Ihonvbere fears that “elections and more elections” have “recycled” old leaders, old ideologies, old political styles, and old suspicions. They have neither ended the politics of patronage and suppression of dissidence nor put in place governments capable of addressing fundamental problems.

At first glance, pressures to “liberalize” politics – to reduce rulers’ arbitrary power, foster electoral competition, and encourage debate – may seem congruent with pressures to “liberalize” economies – to reduce the size and power of government, privatize public enterprises, and stimulate market competition. But the effects of such double liberalization can be contradictory. Decreased government services, under pressure from the IMF, are not the best selling points for democracy. Thandika Mkandawire fears that without more resources, African states will become at best “choiceless democracies.” Privatization of state enterprises may not release assets into an open “market” but put them into the hands of leading politicians and their clients, who in their “private” capacity as businessmen do what they did as “public” managers.

Indeed, the private-public distinction is a misleading one, where politics depends on the “big man” who controls a range of resources, from

money to kinsmen to clients to state office. Downsizing the state might do less to reduce clientalism than to reduce the effectiveness of those institutions, including the civil service, which provide services to the population as a whole, making the search for a patron all the more necessary. At an extreme, public service can collapse altogether and the “state” loses control of even the gate, leaving in place a series of power brokers who acquire followers and weapons and transform themselves into warlords. This has happened most clearly in Sierra Leone and Somalia and was resisted where state institutions retain at least some respect and effectiveness, as in Senegal or Kenya. At the positive end of the spectrum is Botswana, where a relatively coherent leadership, with traditional legitimacy, education, and business acumen, has maintained a strong civil service, governed through recognized institutions rather than personal deals, allowed room for debate and decision-making at the district level, bargained firmly with foreign corporations to insure adequate state compensation and control, aided private enterprise, and insisted that state enterprises be commercially viable. Electoral democracy has remained intact, and Botswana has maintained one of Africa’s highest rates of growth – 9.9 percent annually in 1960–80 and 5.6 percent in 1980–91 – although the distribution of income and wealth is wide and growing.

Despite the variations, the widespread sense of frustration after the era of “democratic experiments” in the early 1990s should be no surprise, for the historical patterns and global conditions which gave rise to gatekeeper states in the first place have not fundamentally been altered, and the political economy of an African state cannot necessarily be remade by an act of will of even the most enlightened leadership. But the fact that economic and political reform have been debated and attempted in different African countries is itself of great importance. Such debate has, perhaps in a way unseen since the 1950s or early 1960s, enhanced among ordinary citizens a sense that citizenship entails multiple possibilities: that officials can be held accountable for their actions; that constituencies for reform can be built; that associational life and public discussion can be enriched; and that trade unions, women’s associations, and political parties can be organized.

### Other Africas: connections beyond the nation-state

As emphasized in previous chapters, the national focus of African elites in the mid-1950s represented a shrinking of spatial perspectives. Senghor, for one, regretted the narrow territorial focus of politics in the late 1950s, but his broad defense of equality within the French Union and even within smaller federations in West Africa proved untenable. By hosting the All-Africa Peoples’ Congress in 1958, Nkrumah tried to revive



Pan-Africanism, which had lost ground to territorial politics since the Manchester Congress of 1945. Pan-Africanism, however, was becoming a relationship of states, not of people. Nkrumah's hope for a United States of Africa achieved little support from African leaders intent on protecting the sovereignty they had so strenuously fought for.

State-centered Pan-Africanism became institutionalized as the Organization of African Unity (OAU). It met regularly, discussed common action on various fronts – above all seeking global economic policies more favorable to developing countries – but its possibilities were constrained by what it was: an assembly of African heads of state, many of whom were part of the anti-democratic trends of their own countries. The OAU failed its most obvious moral test, failing to act in the name of values shared across Africa against those leaders who were the most egregious violators of them.

Economic cooperation, as described in chapter 5, had its failures, such as the East African Federation, and also its moderate successes in regard to tariff reduction, shared banking institutions, and other interstate arrangements, notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and SADCC. ECOWAS also has a political and military component, which performed more credibly than previous efforts in its interventions in Sierra Leone, where it contained a rebellion against an elected government. But after 1994, African institutions failed to contain the worst border-crossing conflict, when Uganda, Rwanda, Angola, and Zimbabwe fanned the flames of conflict in Central Africa and became involved in the trafficking of Congo's resources of gold and diamonds. Charles Taylor, once a rebellious warlord in Liberia, laid successful claim to recognized sovereignty over that country, while intriguing with shadowy movements in Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, and other neighbors in pursuit of the diamond trade. In short, intra-African cooperation has sometimes taken the form of covering up the vices of gatekeeper states and participating in the vices of cross-border networks that bypass the gate. Constructive interaction of African states remains an elusive goal.

African states have been more likely to be the targets of intervention from outside than active participants in international regulatory processes. Their need for periodic financial bail outs has made it hard for them to pose alternatives to IMF policies. Africa has been the focus of operations by refugee and famine relief organizations, whose services have been desperately needed, as in the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide of 1994 or the Sahelian famine of 1974. International humanitarian organizations have given Africans a means to find allies in their struggles against abusive regimes, in obtaining support for sustainable agriculture, or in combating AIDS, but some have defined the problem in terms of African

helplessness – its need of outside help to feed starving babies – rather than that of cooperating with Africans to address issues of injustice and impoverishment.

At the same time, Africans have actively participated in international organizations which address the continent's problems. A Ghanaian, Kofi Annan, heads the UN. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), where "Third World" economists and other specialists play important roles, has been instrumental in keeping alive the idea that growth and structural change in Africa require participation of its citizens in the process. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which for many years was directed by Mochtar M'Bow of Senegal, has called attention to the diversity of historical and cultural contributions of peoples throughout the world, and while opponents have criticized it for wastefulness, intellectual and cultural innovators have made use of its resources to promote the idea that not all literary, artistic, and musical contributions fit within canons derived from European experience. The UNESCO-sponsored history of Africa has its virtues and its flaws, but the fact that a substantial portion of its editorial board have spent time in detention or in exile reveals clearly that African intellectuals can both argue for specifically African perspectives and criticize the nation-states which claim to embody Africa's uniqueness.

Cross-border relationships take more forms than this. Every border gives rise to specialists who figure out how to cross it; they constitute a "community" as much as any people located firmly within a given set of boundaries. Islamic networks link much of Africa to other parts of the world, through annual pilgrimages, the training of religious leaders in Egypt or Saudi Arabia, and financial support from oil-producing states in the Middle East. Islam, as in Senegal, may mean participation in a brotherhood deeply rooted in local social and political relations, and it can mean participation in a universalistic faith with adherents around the world. Christian churches, as noted in other contexts, participated in a variety of transnational linkages. The numerous Africans who have obtained higher education in Europe and North America, who participate in international professional organizations, and who work for NGOs, participate in world-wide networks. The extent of labor migration and the fact that African communities are now well established in European countries shape other sorts of connections.

All this suggests that political imaginations of Africans, from poor migrants to sophisticated professionals, have multiple roots and may provide alternative models for changes. Some forms of political organization have been – for good, one hopes – excluded from the realm of possibility: the empire and the white supremacist state, for instance. The 1950s and

1960s witnessed an opening of opportunities for Africans to participate in politics, but the very possibility of attaining power focused imaginations on the units in which power was available.

Some argue that the problem is the nation-state itself. Basil Davidson, a stalwart supporter of African nationalism in its heyday, now sees the nation-state as the "black man's burden," an imposed institution inappropriate to the conditions of Africa. We have, however, seen something worse than the nation-state: its absence. The collapse of state institutions in Somalia, and their weakness in the face of warlordism in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Zaire, reveal how much, in today's world, we depend on state institutions to regulate conflict and provide basic infrastructure. Anthropologists can celebrate the ability of the Somali clan structure to balance the relative strengths of different kinships, foster equality among males, and settle conflicts within the kinship system itself, but once – following the cynical manipulations of both the United States and the Soviet Union – Somalis got access to AK-47s and truck-mounted artillery, clan conflict took on an altogether different aspect. Seeing the possibility of actually dominating others, clan leaders carried warfare to a more devastating level, tearing down state structures altogether. The effects of vacuums in state power in Sierra Leone and Zaire are no less devastating.

It may also be too simple to lament the "western" character of the state, for states as they exist throughout the world reflect a history shaped by the struggles of once-colonized people, and state institutions take new forms when they are used in different contexts. But the history of decolonization did foreclose alternatives that were once the object of attention – supranational federations and Pan-Africanism – and it put in place a particular kind of state as well as a ruling class conscious of its own fragility. The devolution of sovereignty by European states was accompanied by a denial of responsibility for the historical process which had put in place this institutional nexus. This leaves the question of whether in the future the range of possible forms of political action can be expanded as well as constricted. Here, the question is not whether Africa should maintain or abolish the nation-state, but rather what kind of state can be constructed, what kinds of relationships can be forged across state lines, and what kinds of recognition within states can be given to the variety of forms of affinity to which citizens subscribe.

The tragedy of Africa's decolonization lies in the foreclosure of possibilities that once seemed genuine: of a citizenry choosing its leader; of a socially-conscious citizenship, in which education, health services, and other services are seen as a duty of government; and of cooperation across borders against the injustices of imperialism and for recognition of Africa's contributions to global culture. That states are units of

electoral politics and territorial administration does not preclude a politics of larger and smaller units, of activism across borders. If some see sovereignty as a barrier against any questioning of the good or evil done within borders, others argue that sovereignty is a part of an effort to share the planet and that the abuse of sovereignty concerns people everywhere. African states will probably remain stuck within the limitations of the gatekeeper state – with its brittle and heavily guarded sovereignty – unless nation-states in Europe and North America as well as Africa acknowledge a shared responsibility for the past which shaped them and the future to which they aspire.

### Other Africas: popular culture and political critique

One of the mistakes of western critics of African governments and their policies, coming from journalists and international financial "experts" alike, is to think that they were the first to diagnose problems. The fact is that African intellectuals became aware of fundamental difficulties within their countries while most of their western counterparts were still celebrating the arrival of Africans into the "modern" world. In city after city and village after village, even under oppressive conditions, popular discontent has found powerful forms of expression.

A key moment in the emergence of a critical intelligentsia was the publication in 1968 of Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born*. Armah evoked the disillusionment of young Ghanaians who had been captivated by the idealism and dynamism of the new state, only to see their classmates and families caught up in the greed and corruption of the new order. The book ends with the chaos of a coup, in which the hero helps his corrupted former classmate escape; an ending which evokes the shared humanity of people whose political and ethical decisions differ and which opens the possibility that a new generation will have another chance. Other novelists and playwrights of that era – Mongo Beti, Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ngugi wa Thiong'o for example – developed a politicized fiction written for Africans literate in French or English and for foreigners as well, and which brought out the moral dilemmas of people who had struggled against colonialism and were facing new struggles. Other writers refused to be typecast into the mold of writing political fiction and saw themselves opening up a wide variety of imagined worlds, as writers in many contexts have done. But most important were the efforts of intellectuals familiar with a variety of oral and written literary forms to perform in ways accessible to a wider populace. The emergence of a Yoruba popular theater in western Nigerian cities is a case in point, as was the performance of plays in Kikuyu by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, an

effort which, unlike his equally critical writing in English, landed this distinguished writer in prison.

Critical artistic creation took more forms than the literary. The Nigerian singer Fela Ransome Kuti, the scion of a family active in the Nigerian nationalist movement, developed a politicized and highly popular musical style in Lagos, for which he was harassed and detained by the police. In Kinshasa, renowned for decades for its musical creativity, a subtle form of criticism of Zairian society under Mobutu crept into what at another level were love songs and dance music. The café/club/bar scene was entertainment, but it was also part of forming new kinds of sociability, which as in the 1940s and 1950s was not without political content. Zairian musicians – including Papa Wemba and Franco – were influenced by African-American jazz and Ghanaian high life, and they in turn influenced music throughout Africa, Europe, and North America. So, too, with visual art. Kinshasa was the home of a vigorous community of painters, Cheri Samba and Kanda Matulu Tshibumba the best-known of them, who were influenced by comic book art as much as by formal schooling in painting to create a style that was in part moral lesson, in part political critique, and in part a colorful, visually appealing form of self-expression.

African writers, artists, singers, and film-makers have long debated what it means to “decolonize” African culture as well as to distance the artist from the rigidities of the post-colonial successor states. Does it mean rejecting European ideas of what constitutes a novel, a painting, or a film as much as refusing Eurocentric content? Does it mean searching for some sort of African “authenticity”? Or does it mean that the artist is open to whatever influence he or she wishes to turn to, to whatever themes he or she wishes to engage?

It would be a mistake to see African urban culture, in Kinshasa, Lagos, or elsewhere, as simply a popular, critical form standing in stark opposition to a detached form of “power.” Power is much more ambiguous than that. Achille Mbembe finds a culture of “vulgarity” in African cities. The “big men” of the regime are seen literally to “eat” the country, to have huge sexual appetites as well, to flaunt their wealth and power. Popular culture is at one level angry at this, but at another level desirous. The vulgarity itself marks both an evil – dangerously close to witchcraft, for supernatural forces are also seen to “eat” their victims – and a sign of power, something deeply desirable as well as immoral.

The insight is especially crucial when one is not limited to seeing society divided into categories – elite versus popular classes or ethnic, racial, or gender divisions – but rather stresses *relationships*, and in particular vertical relationships. Rich and poor see each other not just in terms

of antagonism, and not just via the desire of the latter to become the former, but by interaction and mutual expectations between the two. The poor seek access not just to wealth, but to the wealthy. The rich have access to many poor – who can provide political support, muscular action, and cheap services – while poor people have limited access to the rich. The jockeying for access gives rise to both connection and antagonism and gives African political culture, particularly in cities, a high degree of volatility. Outbursts of popular rage, whether riots against price increases in Zambia or strike action against the Abacha regime in Nigeria, alternate with periods when patron-client networks offer at least a possibility for vulnerable members of society to get something – even if most will end up disillusioned.

The importance of the quest for a rich relative, a marabout, a former classmate, or a well-placed fellow-villager is thus incorporated into popular culture, even as patron-client relationships are also crucial to the very summit of power. Patron-client relationships are part of any political system, but a particularly big part of African politics. And the reason is partly that of the structure of the world economy, above all the enormous gap between the resources available within African countries and those in Europe, North America, East Asia, and parts of the Middle East.

Africans as much as outsiders have expected state institutions to perform certain functions: to organize schools and clinics; to deliver mail; to guarantee security of persons and of transactions; and also to promote a common sense of affinity and shared responsibility among the nationally-defined community. States can and should be judged on whether they can perform such basic tasks for the benefit of the large majority of citizens. But states consist of people and people build networks. The institutional strength of states and the networks of its most important leaders may reinforce each other or stand antagonistically to each other. A political leader may benefit from fostering economic growth in which many people share, adding to his political capital, or he may also try to deny potential rivals access to resources and insure control by eliminating alternatives. One process fosters institution-building and resource generation; the other weakens institutions and consumes resources. Both are rational strategies, and both are used by leaders of African states in various combinations. Nothing guarantees that the virtuous circle will triumph over the vicious one. It helps little to point out the failings of governments without understanding the constraints and their causes, but historical reflections should deepen discussions of accountability, not foreclose them. Governments, oppositions, and concerned citizens have choices, and their consequences are enormous.

SUGGESTED READING

A full bibliography for this book may be found on the website of Cambridge University Press at <http://uk.cambridge.org/resources/0521776007>. It will be updated periodically.

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