United Nations Development Programme

Human Development Report Office

OCCASIONAL PAPER

Background paper for HDR 2004

**African Wars and Ethnic Conflicts –
Rebuilding Failed States**

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2004/10

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Introduction

There has been a popular misconception that Africa's numerous wars and conflicts are caused by ethnicity. This paper attempts to demonstrate that this idea is mistaken. Ethnic characteristics are a universal and ubiquitous feature of humanity. It is how they are accommodated in the state and the policies, which govern their social expression, which ensure whether they become easy and enriching facilities in the plural societies of our times, or exploitable reference points by rival ruling or dominant elites. The argument here is that, it is elitist rivalry, which mobilizes ethnic sentiments for narrow political, social and economic objectives.

As we enter the fourth year of the 21st century, Africa is searching for a suitable mix of ideas which are developmentally realizable and addresses the question of how to create modernity which is both African and eventually cosmopolitan. This formula by implication points to the fact that Africa needs a workable paradigm for political order, which answers to the economic, social and cultural challenges and peculiarities of African society without suggesting exceptionalism in an increasingly globalizing world in which universal institutions and shared political ideals are becoming more the rule than the exception. This will require that we eschew imitative or a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. One of the popular insights of our times is that, while we acknowledge the global we must permit fully the celebration of the local. Africa's solutions will need to be defined and implementationally advised by policies, which reflect the cultural realities of the society they are intended to serve. The solutions would need to be constructed on African cultural characteristics, the cultures of mass society. But such social engineering would need to acknowledge both in theory and practice tolerance, social inclusivity and the coexistence of cultural diversity.

Africa's developmental malaise continues. Most African states are in serious economic stagnation or at best developmental torpor, and have for decades been in this condition. From the five-year development plans of the early independence period, to the *Lagos Plan of Action*, Africans have hungered for answers to the challenge of pervasive and benumbing under-development. The *New Partnership for Africa's Development* (NEPAD) is the latest attempt at a development paradigm for the continent, produced largely under the aegis of the Mbeki administration in South Africa, closely supported by the Nigerian, Algerian and Senegalese governments.

The NEPAD initiative will need to turn the cross-border nature of African cultural groups and ethnicities to the advantage of African people. Tolerance and democratic trans-border institutions would need to be encouraged. With war and conflict rather generalized on the continent, there are today more refugees on the African continent than any other continent in this world. According to World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Africa Dr Ebrahim Samba, 23 of the 46 countries in the WHO African Region were experiencing some kind of emergency, which had now created at least nine million refugees and over 35 million internally displaced persons across the continent. (OCHA.2003) This exposes greater numbers of Africans to xenophobia and mistreatment at the hands of fellow Africans. If the ideals of NEPAD and the unity of Africans are to be realized, Africans will need to quickly move away from regarding their fellow Africans, who happen to be citizens of other African countries or refugees as, at best, undesirable rivals and, at worst, enemies.

A cursory examination of the history of post-colonial Africa reveals that, in the first decade of African independence, the elected governments, which opened the independence era in Africa either changed character and became autocratic one-party regimes, or lost power to military-bureaucratic dictatorships. For decades none were voted out of government and the lesson, which many drew from this, was that the only free elections Africa has experienced are the elections, which ushered in governments at independence. During the 1970s and 80s, military coups and consequent military dictatorships gained ground in one country after the other. From the late 1980s to the 90s, movements and struggles for democracy steadily increased. By the mid-1990s African ruling groups had become more sensitive to charges of mis-government and undemocratic practice. It became fashionable for military rulers and strongmen to seek legitimacy to their rule through the ballot-box.

Failed States, Wars and Warlordism: The Profile
War and warlordism have taken over large parts of the continent. War is sweeping across Africa more decisively than the growth and consolidation of democratic practice. As things stand today, about two-thirds of the continent is embroiled in various levels of

conflict and war, and most attempts to stem the rising tide of war have been, at best, only limitedly successful. At no time in Africa's history over the past hundred years has war on this continent been so generalised. Some of these wars are civil wars while others are interstate wars. Increasingly, civil and inter-state wars are becoming inter-connected. Currently, six of the conflicts and civil wars show little sign of resolution.

About 60% of the deaths from armed conflict in the contemporary world have occurred in the region. Arms exports to the region nearly doubled over the year as different factions fought not only over territory but also for valuable mineral resources. During the past ten years, over half of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have been engaged in armed conflict or confronted by a significant threat from armed groups at one point or the other. If military assistance and funding of opposition groups and mercenaries are taken into account, military expenditure in the region totalled about 12 billion (USD) in 2003. With the exception of South Africa, over the past decade, spending on arms in sub-Saharan Africa increased by 15% at a time when the region's economic growth rose by less than 1% in real terms. In March 2003, Komla Siamevi, of the WHO Regional Office for Africa, Brazzaville put the economic losses due to wars in Africa at $15 billion per year. (OCHA.2003)

Disease is rife, poverty excruciating, education in decline; administrative mis-management, corruption, violations of human rights and mis-rule have been rampant for most of the post-colonial period. Inert and corrupted bureaucracies have been spawned in societies in which graft and pilferage have become commonplace. People in bureaucratic organizations treat their office as agencies through which they make money, largely because their salaries can hardly meet their needs in an ever-inflationary economy. Massive and crushing international debt-burdens, unfavourable terms of trade, high tariff walls, subsidies and protectionism prevent African agriculture from penetrating lucrative international markets. Only unity of purpose and common action by African states will strengthen Africa's position in international trade negotiations. The sum total, of these factors and conditions have translated into the realities of what in recent years has come to be described as the "failed state" syndrome. Some observers suggest that all African states are headed in that direction, while others deny this. (Tull.2003.429-446)

"Failed states" are states at differing stages of transition from order to disorder, from stability to chaos. These are states whose developmental and governmental ineptitude has become so entrenched that they fail to live up to universal expectations of the state in the contemporary world. The overwhelming majority of "failed states" are in Africa. "Failed states" are typified by patterns of governmental paralysis within a state. The hallmark is that, the groups, which are entrusted with the bearing of arms on behalf of the state face rivals, mainly putschists, warlords, brigands and vigilantes who terrorize town and

countryside extracting goods and services from a terrified population. In factions and gangs, they fight each other and the state forces for control and access to resources. This invariably triggers involuntary migration, rampant human rights abuses, expanding starvation and aggravated conditions of disease infestation, HIV expansion and endemicity. As one victim of war in a "failed state" made the point recently in Liberia (2003), "I am always running from place to place, place to place". (Philipps.2003)

Diamonds, which have earned the sobriquet "blood diamonds" on account of the bloody way in which they are won, and other strategic minerals sustain the warlords. In most of Africa's "failed states", the infiltration of small arms and their cheapness brings them easily into the hands of all and sundry. Failed states, by their very nature, as decomposing entities, diffuse their rot across borders and invariably endanger the security of their neighbouring states and regions. Unending cycles of lawlessness, violence, looting, pillage and rape marks everyday life. Production collapses as economically hemorrhaging depredations take their toll. With time, the "failed state" becomes an entity totally incapable of maintaining itself as a viable member of the international community and depends on charity and largess for its existence. "Failed states" in Africa are increasing in number.

Africa's wars are not entirely due to locally inspired factors. International interests have invariably colluded with different warring parties for purposes of financial gain and geo-political interests. For one thing, the profusion of arms that have been flooding Africa, originate from the industrialized countries of the northern hemisphere. It is from these sources that sales are being made to African warring parties. In the World Bank Report, *Economic Causes of Civil Conflict and their Implications for Policy*, it is suggested that countries, which earn about a quarter of their Gross Domestic Product from raw materials have a far higher likelihood for civil war than countries with greater diversification of their economies. The report also argued that rebel insurgents loot primary resources in order to continue operations. (Anthony.2003.52) Since the beginning of the post-colonial era, mercenaries have been frequently employed in conflict situations, by both African governments and international mining interests, in pursuit of their interests. (Aning.2002.149-171)

Africa in the Global Village
In the new global village of the contemporary world, with countries and peoples living literally cheek to jowl, the touchstone for peaceful and prosperous coexistence is a pluralist paradigm in the international field, which allows diversity to flourish as a source of universal strength, and multi-lateralism as a methodological tool for the achievement of international order. The international community has lived with the ideal of peaceful coexistence since the foundation of the United Nations. But, by and large, people around

the globe are more connected to each other than ever before. Information and money flow more quickly than ever. The international marketplace has become tightly global. Goods and services produced in one part of the world are increasingly and quickly available in all parts of the world. International travel is common. This phenomenon has been titled "globalization". In some people, globalization evokes feelings of triumph, the conquest of nature and the unity of humanity. Some others regard it as imperialism in our times. For others, it strikes fear, it is seen to mean an inevitable homogenization of experience and the hegemony of the powerful over the rest, in the emergent shared cultural space. Still others regard it as the destruction of individuality and existential freedom; the obliteration of the unique.

Away from the material conditions of human existence, globalization is challenging the ability of smaller and weaker cultures in their diversity to share a common space, especially where rival nationalisms; power and religion intersect and vie for influence and hegemony. This, plus the attendant tensions of terrorism has led some, like Samuel Huntington to suggest a coming "clash of civilizations". Others argue more forcefully for the need to develop higher tolerance levels, stronger global consciousness and a purposefully constructed interdependence between peoples and cultures, "a dialogue of civilizations".

It is in these cultural realities that our humanity is ultimately defined. It is culture, which distinguishes us from and raises us above other animals. Humans learn and create culture as a social heritage, which is generationally transferred as material and non-material fabrication of the human genius. Thus, much as we make culture, culture makes and defines us both as individuals and as members of groups. Its assemblage of ideals, values and patterns of institutionalized behaviour, socialized symbols and shared meanings underscore the centrality of language. The social character of language and its function as the key transactional instrument for human groups makes it both the supreme divider and at the same time invisible instrument for uniting people. The shared civilization of humanity is based more on achieved social characteristics than ascribed criteria. How we manage diversity will determine whether we are successful in institutionalizing cultural pluralism in a democratic world or a divisive conflict-ridden scenario with mindless bloodletting as has been in recent years seen in the Eastern Congo and the Sudan.

The Social and Cultural Structures of African Societies
Africa is one of the most diversified cultural areas in the whole world. While such extensive diversity is not unique to Africa, given the geographical size of the continent as the second largest continent in the world, the profusion of this cultural variegation sometimes gives the impression of unending differences. Closer anthropological examination however reveals extensive convergences and structural similarities between

superficially distinct cultures. The traditional religious systems of Africa, in particular, display a great deal of formal and structural unity across the continent. The dynamics of clanship show very little variation over wide areas and often involve groups, which are considered to be distinct and which are scattered across existing state borders. Thus among the Sotho/Tswana peoples of Southern Africa clanship and the allied totemism of the Bakwena (crocodile people) involve communities in Lesotho, South Africa and Botswana. The Oyoko clan cuts across all the Akan groups of littoral West Africa, including, the Akyem, Asante, Akwamu, Akwapim, Fanti, Nzema, in Ghana, and the Brong, Agni, Baule, in the Ivory Coast.

These cultural unities become even more perceptible when viewed as ethno-linguistic characteristics with age-long foundations. Most of what are counted as distinct languages, in Africa are actually dialects of what can be called "core languages". Within each of these core languages there are mutually intelligible speech varieties or dialects. Thus the Nguni cluster of mutually intelligible speech forms will include, Zulu, Xhosa, Swati, Kangwane, and Ndebele. Sotho-Tswana includes, Pedi, Sotho, Tswana, and Lozi. The two clusters, Nguni and Sotho-Tswana have speakers in six countries in each instance in the SADC region. What the *Centre of Advanced Studies of African Society's* (CASAS) work has so far revealed is that as first, second or third language speakers (we need to remember that most Africans are multilingual), over 75% of Africans speak no more than 12 core languages, these being, Nguni, Sotho-Tswana, Swahili, Amharic, Fulful, Mandenkan, Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Luo, Eastern Inter-lacustrine and Western Inter-lacustrine (Kitara). 15 core languages will take us up to about 85% of the African population of the continent; the three additions being the Somali/Samburu/Rendille and Oromo/Borana clusters, the Gur group. The addition of languages like, Kikonga, Luba, Akan, Mbundu, Lingala and Ovimbundu takes the percentage of Africans to about 90 percent. For a population of 600 million to 700 million people, these languages cannot be described as small speech communities. These ethno-linguistic or cultural realities of Africa provide Africans with senses of identity, which often transcend the identities, which emerged under colonialism.

The Colonial State and Ethnicity in Africa
The colonial state and the defining borders, which have been largely inherited in the post-colonial arrangement defied the age-long identities, which ordered the lives of Africans. Colonial power imprinted new identities and labels. Little attention was paid to the implications of colonial borders for Africans. They negated the realities of African identities and autonomous African perceptions of the world. Asiwaju has made useful anecdotal references, which illustrate the confusions regarding such primordial references of identity among Africans arising out of the colonial border-demarcation activity at the junction of the 19th and 20th centuries. "The Alaketu (King) of Ketu (Ketu is the

renowned ancient Yoruba city in the present-day Republic of Benin, formerly Dahomey) is reported to have said: 'We regard the boundary as separating the English and the French not the Yoruba'. This statement is identical with that credited to a Maasai warrior protesting against the 1898 Anglo-German Boundary Commission carrying out the demarcation of the Laitokitok section of the present-day Kenya-Tanzania boundary; the commissioners, he said, 'were labouring under a misapprehension, as the land belonged, not to the European, but to his own tribe …' " (Asiwaju.1985.9) The dissonance in perceptions between colonizer and colonized is both striking and telling. The chief of Aflao (Ghana) in 1975 complained in the presence of the present author that in order to visit his subjects on the other side of the border (which runs along people's backyards on both sides of the border), in Lome (Togo) he needs a passport.

Thus the emergence of the colonial state meant a revision of the sense of identity, which Africans had prior to the establishment of colonial rule. These new terms of reference over-rode and downgraded the precolonial identities but, did not obliterate them. The precolonial identities were submerged, but continued to exert powerful influence on the thinking and practice of colonized Africans. This remained particularly so, for those whose mode of livelihood and existential conditions were close to their time-tested habits and traditional practices. Thus whereas those, like the new urbanites, who were more radically drawn into the economic, social and political nexus of colonial society accepted more easily the identities imposed by colonialism, for the teeming majorities whose lives and modes of livelihood were anchored more firmly in traditional and rural society, with interests closely tied to the old order, the new points of reference for identity, introduced by colonialism had a much lesser effect. But, for even these groups, colonialism suggested new ethnicities; labels and identification, based on colonial administrative units, missionary engendered linguistic identities and other novel points of identification.

During the course of the colonial period colonial administrators and missionaries, sometimes through considerations of administrative expediency and conveniency, at other times through evangelical work, and biblical translations in particular, elevated small dialects and narrow local groups to the status of 'tribes' or ethnicities. Some ethnologists have also been inordinately keen 'to discover' their own tribes, and in this drive 'tribes' have been 'discovered' which are more appropriately subunits of much larger groups and extended cultures. Thus, the Bari-speaking peoples, i.e. the Mondari, Fajelu, Kakwa, Bari, Nyangbara of the Southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda have been identified as separate groups when in fact they represent sub-sets of one ethno-linguistic and cultural formation. During the Banda era in Malawi, the Nyanja variety spoken in Malawi was, in order to stress ostensible cultural and state autonomy or separateness, insistently labeled as ciCerwa with an orthography distinct from the Zambian variety. The Gbe-speaking peoples of West Africa, starting

from the Aja in Badagry/Nigeria, the Aja in Benin, the Fon in Benin, the Gun in Benin, the Mina in Benin, the Mina in Togo, the Ewe in Togo and the Ewe in Ghana have a broadly mutually intelligible speech form, and enjoy very proximate cultural patterns and customary usages. In the literature, they are treated as totally different ethnic groups. (Prah.2002) The same can be said for the groups the German adventurer Schweinfurth gave the name "Pygmies" in 1873. The generic term for this ethno-cultural group is the Baka. In the North of the Gabon they are called the Baka people. In the East they are called the Bakoya people. In the region of Lastoursville, they are called the Bakuyi people. In the hills of Chaillu, they are called the Babongo people. Near Moabi, they are the Barimba people. While they come under these various names they are ethno-culturally essentially the same people.

In precolonial Southern Africa, the spectrum of Shona varieties actually ran from Mozambique, where the Ndau variety predominates, through possibly eight variants, ending up with Kalanga in the Northern Botswana border area. By the third decade of the 20th century, Catholic and Protestant missionaries had orthographically created three distinct written forms as separate languages out of this reality, to demarcate spiritual boundaries and catchment areas. Remarkably, although Trappist Marianhill missionaries and Jesuits were denominationally both Catholic they constructed ciManyika and Zezuru, both mutually Shona varieties as separate and distinct written languages. It is for these reasons that some have argued that ethnicity is a colonial invention. (Ranger.1989.127)

This latter argument, however, throws the baby out with the dirty bathwater. While colonialism conveniently created ethnic labels for groups which were neither sufficiently distinct from their neighbours nor were regarded as separate or distinct from others by the people themselves, from precolonial times to the present, cultural features like kinship systems, belief systems and religious practices, mythology, languages, cultural value systems and other customary usages have been real. They are the sub-units of culture around which socialization occurs. As historical and societal categories they are hardly fictitious. Indeed, they characterize the lives and behaviour of most Africans. The challenge as Seyoum Hameso rightly suggests is to turn these realities to positive use through judiciously selected policies. (Hameso.1997)

While most of African societies at the beginning of the colonial period had evolved elaborate state structures, others were only weakly stratified, while still others, showed only segmentary lineage and clan formations of tribal nature. In most instances, interpenetrative institutional relations existed between proximate and cognate ethnic groups. Some societies were oriented towards extensive long-distance trade, while others were more inward looking and localist in their political economies. Identities, allegiances and loyalties revolved around, the lineage, the clan, the chief and cultural practices

related to these institutions, and not ethnicity *per se*, in the exclusivist sense that it is often understood today. Ethnicity in precolonial Africa was generally not caste-like or closed. Moshoeshoe's Basotho kingdom was an amalgamation of elements from all over the area. The Zulu constantly absorbed conquered or tributary states. The same is true of Ashanti, Benin, Sokoto, the interlacustrine Bantu or the Tswana groups. The Ila in Central Africa, the Karamojong, Suk, Turkana, Muerle, Didinga in Eastern Africa institutionalized the absorption of war captives and foreigners. The list is hardly exhaustive. Precolonial ethnic formations in Africa were largely in this sense open systems. (Prah.1997.1-25)

Much in the literature has been made of the paradigms of "direct and indirect rule". Obviously for those precolonial societies in which social differentiation and social stratification were minimal, colonialism in general and colonial administration in particular encouraged the articulation of social structures which would make colonial rule easier by contriving the elevation of headmen and lineage heads to positions of authority, far beyond what they enjoy in the traditional order. Thus the age-long gerontocratic structures were systematically abrogated. Sometimes such social engineering elicited stiff resistance from the wider populace. In those societies where stratification and state formation was fairly well developed before the arrival of colonial power, the existing structures became easy and ready instrumentation for the control of the societies. This was the hub of the Lugardian system. In either case the usurpation of traditional power and social structures created sources of considerable and sometimes seething tension in African societies.

Africa's precolonial states ceased to have their political, economic and social meanings and implications with the onset of colonial power. None of the precolonial states survived with its power untouched. With the scramble for Africa and the partition of the continent the precolonial order was unceremoniously cast aside. This profoundly affected allegiances and identities on the continent, especially, since the new order created new economic and social interests to which people became differentially identified depending on the stake they had in the new order.

The Post-Colonial State and Ethnic Realities
Part of the socio-political evolution which went on during the colonial period, especially during the late colonial era, was the establishment of the structure of what was to become the post-colonial state. Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 1960s colonial powers fashioned for different reasons new states, which were transferred to the rule of indigenous elites at the onset of post-colonial era. These new states, more than the colonial states, asserted the basis for new identities. Whereas colonial power from a position of great strength could tolerate, and indeed in many cases encouraged

ethnic identification, the post-colonial state in the name of unity denied, wished away, stamped under-foot or brushed under the carpet, all serious reference to ethnic identities and denied their place in the post-colonial, political, social and economic order. The generally espoused rationale for this has been that ethnicity is divisive and inimical to the unity of the post-colonial state. This refusal to accept the reality of ethno-cultural differentiation, and rather adopt policies and institutions, which enable Africans to enjoy the benefits of cultural pluralism and cultural freedom has been the bane of the post-colonial state.

Thus, while in the real world of everyday life Africans relied on their age-long ethno-linguistic affinities, at the level of state power and organization the tendency was to deny the reality of ethnicity. It was against the danger of railroading ethnic identities into an artificial unity that both Obafemi Awolowo and Nnamdi Azikiwe warned Nigerians in the 1960s. (Azikiwe.1964.22-28; Awolo.1968.83-89) Busia's wisdom, in turn, was that, "as we see it, the social realities suggest that a sounder approach to the problem of tribalism in Africa is to accept the fact of pluralism, rather than fly in the face of the facts and attempt to achieve monolithic structures through coercion. It is no sign of backwardness to recognize the fact of the existence of different tribes and ethnic groups, nor is it reactionary to seek accommodation with tribal loyalties. Ethnic groups exist everywhere in the world." (Busia.1967.27-34)

Ethnic sectionalism, which is generally known as tribalism, defines the interests of the ethnicity above wider interests. It is a phenomenon in which favour and preference tends to be advised by largely ethnic considerations. So that, whereas more open and relevant criteria should guide the selection of people and options in an open and fair basis, ethnic allegiances become overriding factors in the selection of people for office or options in policy-making and implementation. Much of such practices can be avoided if selection processes are open and transparent so that justice is not only done but is also, seen to be done. It is misleading, as is often the case, to suggest that mass society in Africa is fundamentally prone to tribalism even when the rules of the game of modern politics forbid such practices.

The case rather is that, in the competition for resources, under conditions of steadily diminishing availability of resources, rival elites employ ethnic sentiments as mobilizing instruments to gain power, control and access to resources and resource management. Such realities are aggravated by the expanding poverty in African societies. It is for these same reasons that corruption has become such a pandemic problem in African societies. Anyang' Nyong'o has rightly suggested that, "I do not think that what is really ruining Africa's chances for development is simply corruption. Corruption is the end result of a trait that is pathological in the culture of the ruling elite. It begins with the endemic

impulse to want to escape poverty through the use of political power and the exhibition of a culture of richness that must be displayed in ostentation and consumption. The more ostentatious one becomes the more one wants to improve on the artifacts of ostentation, be they houses, cars, wives, holidays, rings, public donations and so on. This propels a never-ending consumer culture that, of necessity, must misappropriate public goods and misuse public power." (Nyong'o.2002.101)

The Post-Colonial State and Resource Allocation
The agrarian base of the colonial state was oriented towards primary produce for the metropoles of the contemporary world. Mining and related activity held most of the limited industrial infrastructure of the colonial state. The post-colonial state has not been able to seriously improve the productive capacity of African states as inherited from the colonial era. Accumulation processes and structures were for citizens poorly developed, and the capacity to transfer capital generationally is only rudimentarily successful. In as far as inheritance is concerned, Africans need to learn to be more custodians than consumers.

Creative institutional changes will need to be in place if modern production is to acquire a variegated skill-based productive population, literate in local languages and able to transfer skills and knowledge on the basis of the so-called cross-border languages of Africa. Indeed, almost all African languages are cross-border. Language in Africa is invariably a cross-border speech-form. Less than five percent of Africans speak only languages understood within the borders of the country in which they live.

The Chronology of War in Africa
While colonialism brought precolonial wars to a close, colonialism itself was met with wars of resistance throughout Africa. Such resistance was not infrequently grounded in millenarian and messianic ideology, which drew on the traditional institutions of ritual and religion.

For the first part of the 20th century, African wars were in effect anti-colonial in object. From the beginning of the 1st World War Africans were drawn into the conflict of imperialist rivalry as soldiers of the rival imperial powers. The wars of resistance however trickled on until the Nuer Settlement in the early 1930s. In the words of Evans Pritchard, "the Nuer likewise treated British rule with open disrespect till, as a result of lengthy military operations between 1928 and 1930, their opposition was broken and they were brought under effective administration." (Evans-Pritchard.1940.282) From the middle of the century onwards, as part of the struggles for colonial freedom, armed struggle against Portuguese colonial rule and settler colonial rule emerged. The "Land and Freedom War" otherwise called the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya commenced in

1952 with the declaration of an emergency. The Algerian war of independence was next in the queue. The first war for independence in Portuguese colonial Africa started in Guinea Bissao and Cape Verde in August 1959 after the Pidjiguiti Massacre. Portuguese Africa was in ferment. In March 1961 war against Portuguese colonialism was launched in Angola. Three years later in September 1964 Mozambican freedom fighters also initiated an armed struggle. In the settler-colonial areas, after some procrastination, two years after the white-settler Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) in November 1965, in 1967 the war for colonial freedom was launched. The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) started its armed struggle for independence, in August 1966. In South Africa, where settler rule was most entrenched, after the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 preparations for armed resistance started in earnest. *Poqo* and *Mkonto We Sizwe* became the first manifestations of this.

With the exception of the case of Guinea Bissao and Cape Verde, none of the insurgents in the wars of independence in Africa, since the 1950s have been able to maintain a totally united front in the war against colonial power. This splintering of the nationalist front was stimulated by the Cold War, but the mobilization and exploitation of ethnic sentiments by contesting leaderships; the manipulation of rivalries and localism also played a not insignificant role. Angolan, Mozambican, Zimbabwean, Namibian and South African freedom fighters were all divided. In Zimbabwe, the Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) was associated with Ndebele leadership. SWAPO in Namibia was seen as Ovambo dominated. In Mozambique there have been suggestions that the Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO) was directed by southerners and in Angola, by *assimilados* and *mestize,* as opposed to the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which was predominantly Ovimbundu in leadership. This sort of perceived sectionalism had an effect on the profundity of the independence dispensation, the political and economic content of what in the end was achieved. In the cases of Angola and Mozambique, independence ushered in a new era of war between elements of the previous anticolonial nationalists. In the case of Mozambique, the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), which went to war against the FRELIMO government, was initially a proxy instrument of Rhodesian securocrats and the apartheid regime in South Africa. In the Angolan case, South Africa and the Western world supported UNITA while the Soviet Union and its allies supported the MPLA in the postcolonial civil war, which continued until 2002. (Prah.1999.51-52)

In the last three decades of the century, civil wars became increasingly rampant. Africa has experienced innumerable coups or palace revolutions since the onset of the independence era. This period started with the Zanzibar revolution of 1964, which overthrew the sultanate. The Nigerian coup of 1965 was quickly followed by the Ghanaian coup, which overthrew the Nkrumah regime. Over the years Africa has seen as

many coups as Latin America. The coups represent intra-elitist "changing of the guards". None of the coups that have taken place in Africa can in any serious sense be said to be emancipatory as far as the broader sections of the population are concerned. The first Nigerian coup led directly to the commencement of the civil war. Ethnic affiliations were exploited by politicians and soldiers in the instigation of both the coup and the civil war, which followed. The perception was rife that it was a war between the Igbo and the Hausas, with the Yoruba siding with the North, i.e. the Hausa. In actual fact, control over oil resources by rival elites was the hard economic basis of the war.

Ethnic factors have been consistently utilized from the colonial period as a mobilizing agent in African politics. A Fang migration legend was used to rally the dispersed Fang groups of Gabon and Cameroon the common purpose of ending colonial rule. A Yoruba myth served as the basis of establishing the '*Society of the Children of Oduduwa*' for the purpose of uniting the people of the Western Region of Nigeria. Bakongo mythology has been used for political purposed by Kasavubu's ABAKO party in the Congo, Luena and Chokwe should unite in support of Tshombe and his CONAKAT party, or conversely why the Luena and Chokwe should unite to oppose the Lunda. (Bascom.1965.477) In post-colonial politics, such manipulation of ethnic sentiments and mythology has continued. During Daniel arap Moi's rule in Kenya (1978-2003), or the Mobutu Sese Seko's period in Zaire (1965-97), ethnic groups were consistently been played against each other to prevent the emergence of a broad, coherent and unified opposition block capable of challenging and unseating these regimes. In the decade leading up to the commencement of the second civil war (1983) in the Sudan, Numeiri successfully used such tactics to divide the Southerners. Migration myths are today, being used by diamond and gold-looting warlords to mobilize support among opposing Hema and Lendu groups.

Oyetade has drawn attention to the fact that in Nigeria there has been a tendency for political party affiliation and voting patterns to be mobilized along ethnic lines. The 1973 National Census was cancelled on account of suspicions that one particular ethnic group had been over-represented in the voting register after the Civil War. There emerged ethnically based groups, "which came into existence to champion the cause of particular ethnic groups. Mention could be made of the Afenifere and the Oduduwa a Peoples Congress (OPC), for the Yoruba; the Arewa and the Turaki groups for the Hausa/Fulani, the Indigbo – The Pan Igbo Cultural Association, The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, all for the Igbo ethnic group. The Ijaw Youth Movement, Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, etc." (Oyetade.2003.106) These groups emerged, ostensibly, to protect the interests of the ethnic groups concerned in the face of "the intense competition between the elites for the control of the economic, political and social infrastructures of the country." (ibid.)

The civil wars in postcolonial Africa have been testing the political assumptions and foundations of the postcolonial state. The Nigerian civil war, the Ethiopian civil war and the Eritrean independence struggle, the Sudanese, Liberian, Senegalese, Sierra Leonean, Somali, Angolan and Mozambican civil wars have all raised the problems of regionalist and ethnic factors in the structural arrangements of the postcolonial state. How far has a unifying state, copied from the European nation-state model, permitted the existence of localist sentiments in democratic organization? This structural shortcoming of the postcolonial state has been largely accountable for the tensions and conflicts we have seen and continue to see. Phenomena like the *Mati Miho* movement in Ghana an Ashanti based of the 1950s and 60s; the *Kabaka Yekka* a Baganda derived formation in Uganda; *Inkatha* a Zulu based rival of the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa; the *Oduduwa*/Yoruba movement and the Ewe unity movement of Togo and Ghana, all demonstrate the structural inadequacies of the postcolonial state. There is need for policies, which in no way stifle cultural expression, but rather, welcome diversity in a collectively enriching social environment.

The structure of the postcolonial state would benefit from openings, which allow for the accommodation of democratic institutions, with respect for cultural and ethnic diversity. Such approaches will ensure that the road to peace in Africa is not fraught with internecine conflict. This can be achieved under wider pan-Africanist structures which, while recognizing the realities of the heritage of the postcolonial state, endeavour to create cross-border institutions of cultural, economic and social relevance, in such a way that they enhance democratic expression, the cultivation of civil and collective rights of cultural groupings, and wider African markets and production units, without pandering to territorial balkanization or Bantustan solutions. The celebration of diversity under a common African unitary institution appears to be the realistic approach to ethnic, regionalist and localist conflicts in Africa. Herein also lies the route to an African renaissance, the institutional development of labour and capital across borders. (Prah.1999.52-53)

Ethnicity, Language, Religion and Conflict in Africa
Intolerant and misguided policies in the cultural and linguistic field have been responsible for creating conflict scenarios. In some countries like the Sudan, South Africa and Ethiopia, language policy issues have become in recent decades, the flashpoint for bloody conflict and civil strife. Undemocratic politics of language is never far from ethnic tensions. Cultural and linguistic Arabization has been the ideological bone of contention of the Sudanese conflict since the late 1950s when with the impending departure of British colonial power, African fears of Arabization and economic and political dominance was ignited by the Torit Mutiny (17th August 1955) which propelled the Sudan into the conflict which has lingered on to the present. The rejection of Afrikaans as

a medium of education by South African youth in 1976 in Soweto proved to be a decisive turning point in the struggle against Apartheid and white minority rule in South Africa. A principal and underlying factor in the Ethiopian conflicts, which has shredded the fabric of the society in recent decades, has been the revolt against Amhara cultural dominance within the contemporary Ethiopian state. Oromo linguistic and political resurgence has become the latest manifestation this fissiparous history. Insurgents in Ethiopia have placed the use of native languages at the centre of their demands for autonomy. For decades, resistance to Amhara cultural domination especially regarding language-use has been a rallying issue for those opposed to successive governments in Addis Ababa. In Ghana, for decades, some politicians particularly among Akans have derisively referred to the Ewe language as "channel nine", implying that it is a language of secrecy and conspiracy; a language nobody understands. In the Sudan, resistance to Arabism by the majority has found much expression in resistance to the use of the Arabic language by Africans particularly in the South of the country.

In South Africa until the rise of the Afrikaner elite, much of the rivalry between Boer and Brit found manifestation in the struggles of the Afrikaners to place their language (*Taal*) on an equal footing with the English language, a language which Boer nationalist leaders regarded as 'the language of the oppressor'. The rapid development and supremacy of Afrikaans under Apartheid took place mainly over the past fifty years. In time, with the application of *Broederbond* advocacy and generous governmental support with resource and single-minded patronage, the white Afrikaner was able to raise the status and role of his *'kombuis taal'* (kitchen language) to equality in most senses of the word by the mid-sixties. This period also saw the rapid improvement of the economic fortunes of the Afrikaans-speaking group. From the situation of the language spoken by a relatively deprived group at the turn of the century, significantly developed in its early years by the so-called Coloured group, by the end of the sixties, Afrikaans in its standardised and educationally taught form had become the social prerogative of the white Afrikaner elite and was fast becoming a language embodying some of the most advanced ideas of science and technology in the twentieth century.

In Eastern Africa, during the past two decades the role and significance of Swahili has increased. Today the usage of Swahili with official blessing covers Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and Zaire (about a third in geographical spread of Black Africa). The expansion in usage of Swahili has also in its wake generated debate about whether this expansion should be allowed to proceed at the expense/neglect of the other indigenous languages and older African languages of the area. In the Central African Republic, Sango, which is understood by most, is beginning to societally feature as a lingua franca, the same way Swahili does in East Africa.

The social superiority, which the usage of European languages gives in African society, has grown in most of Africa since the commencement of the post-colonial period. There is in Africa today, little remarkable contestation of the extended hegemony of the colonially received languages.

European languages in Africa have a history of association with the development of an elite created and culturally shaped in the image of the westerner. During the colonial period, to ensure the effective running of the colonial project, it was important for the authorities to have an indigenous cadre culturally and linguistically groomed to facilitate entry into colonial society. Such natives who culturally had one leg in the culture of the colonized and another leg in the culture of the colonizer served as a bridge or entry point for the colonial enterprise. There is no evidence that under colonial rule the intention was to totally replace African language-use with European languages at the level of mass society. Africans were taught in their own languages only at the elementary levels of education. Beyond that they were to carry on in English, French or Portuguese. This approach was earmarked for the elite. For mass society it was implicitly understood that people would carry on in their own languages. The postcolonial state in Africa, inherited this policy and although, sometimes, African ruling groups have questioned its wisdom, no serious attempt was made to alter it. Thirty to forty years down the road, European languages have so far failed to reach the rural population and urban underclass in any meaningful way. Their social dominance has however continued to grow, and they have continued to socially entrench amongst the elites.

The overwhelming masses of Africans continue to live in fairly coherent tradition-bound communities in rural Africa, and have scant or sketchy understanding of European languages, social relations and regular communication is carried out largely through the usage of their indigenous languages. Needless to say, it is in these languages that Africans display their core abilities and creativity within their environments. It is also remarkable that these languages represent the socio-cultural and historical repositories of the overall cultural patterns and usages of African people. In other words, African languages are today possibly the most crucial factor in the propagation and development of culture, science and technology based on known and historical foundations rooted in the practices of the people. Additionally, the argument can be advanced that sustained development, in an overarching sense, which engages the grassroots of African societies can be achieved by building on indigenous usages and knowledge bases. African development projects and efforts have the greatest chance of success if innovative ideas and their communication are couched in indigenous languages, which reach the rural masses more immediately and more directly. The attitudinal ambivalence of those elements in African society whose livelihood and way of life hinges of the use of

European languages poses difficulties for the societal approval of the use of African languages

Most interested parties in Africa tend to admit that some western languages have currently a universal quality and common global currency for which reasons, they must be maintained as second or third languages by Africans in the search for universal social intercourse. However, increasingly the view is emerging that much of this expansion has been taking place in conditions under which indigenous African languages are being relatively fossilized, *en route* to extinction.

In some countries disingenuous policies, insensitivity and competition for pre-eminence amongst African languages has tended to fuel feelings and attitudes of dominance and "tribalism" amongst the wider citizenry. Such tensions have in the past been particularly acute amongst the Ibo, Yoruba and Hausa of Nigeria, the Akan groups and the Ewe in Ghana and Togo, the Kalanga and Tswana of Botswana, the Shona and Ndebele of Zimbabwe, the Bantu speaking groups and the Nilotics of Uganda, the Kran and Gio/Mano in Liberia, to mention a few. Only fair, even and balanced treatment of the cultural and linguistic rights of all citizens based on clear equalitarian principles can deal effectively with this situation.

The contribution the Centre for Advanced Studies of African Society (CASAS) has made to the debate on language of instruction (LoI) policies in Africa is that, while language is certainly not the only important factor in African development it is definitely a very crucial factor in human and societal development. It is the social grid on which the development process is constructed. Africa can hardly move forward in human development if it continues to base its development endeavours culturally on the received colonial languages. Elsewhere the present author has argued that the use of African languages for education and human development will strengthen the sense of collective cultural confidence attached to the local production and reproduction of knowledge in languages understood by the wider citizenry. This argument is beginning to win support. Most international organizations, donor groups and education specialists are agreed about the fact that language of instruction policies in education should definitely use African languages consistently at the primary level. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in a report put out on behalf of African Ministers of Education indicated that:

> On the question of pedagogical effectiveness, research shows that (language of instruction) LoI policies that favour mother tongues in the early years of basic education result in improved and faster acquisition of knowledge by pupils. Furthermore, mother-tongue LoI is effective in promoting the acquisition of second-language competencies. On the issue of cultural development and the

promotion of individual and collective identities, research (though limited) shows that LoI policies favouring the use of African lingua francas result in students; developing integrative attitudes across ethnic groups (Kenya). It should be noted that these findings are contrary to the previously held assumption that theuse of African lingua francas as LoIs or as official languages would prove to be ethnically divisive. (IDRC.1997.xiv)

Most African governments accept this viewpoint but few are willing to advance the resources necessary to realize these objectives. In the short term, it is necessary for African countries to implement the policy of utilizing African languages for primary education. In the long run one would further argue that policies should be put in place to realize the use of African languages at all levels of education, and widespread use in all areas of social life. (Prah.2003)

What is also obviously required is that African languages need to be developed in such a way that they can be utilized. The first step is to harmonize those languages, which enjoy a high level of mutual intelligibility so that on the economies of scale it is possible to produce books for large speech communities. CASAS has over the past six years worked actively in this field and pioneered the development of new and revised orthographies for the very large African languages. CASAS' work in this field is beginning to attract the strong attention of some of the authorities on the continent. The Ministry of Education of the Government of South Africa has expressed active interest in the harmonization of South African languages. Contacts are being forged with the Namibian Ministry of Education. Initial steps have been taken to work with the Angolan authorities in this respect. The Gabonese Ministry of National Education in 2003 invited the Director of CASAS for discussions on the possible harmonization of Gabonese languages. Similar discussions have been held with the Minister of Education in Ghana. These developments represent positive steps in the right direction. The opposition to the use of African languages in education in Africa is related to the fact that the cultural base for the influence and power of the elite is tied to the use of the colonial languages. Furthermore even where the logic of the argument for the use of African languages in the education is clear there is an inertia created by the fact that the familiar policies and practices of the past are difficult to change. It is easier for the authorities to stick to practices they know than adopt practices they do not know.

Elites, Resource Management and War in Post-Colonial Africa
The elites, which have dominated post-colonial states in Africa, have been mostly social elements with little or no independent socio-economic bases. In Africa elite formation have gone on hand-in-hand with education. For most, it is through education that social mobility has been achieved. However in recent decades a new element has emerged in elite formation, which is based not so much on the elevation which education brings but

rather the emblems of social success which purchasing power provides. The ethos of admiration for the educated has over the past three decades receded in significance when compared to admiration for societally demonstrated access to wealth and conspicuous consumption. It is arguable that a good part of the youth in contemporary Africa are not as much concerned with how wealth is acquired but more with access to wealth by fair or foul means. This ethos does not therefore frown on corruption, graft or greed. Too many have seen educated people unable to put three square meals on the table per day and see corrupt public figures amass wealth through illegal, criminal and other unethical means. In the face of the diminishing fortunes of African states, rivalry by elites for resources has become more intense. Civilian elites rob state coffers under conditions of expanding pauperisation of the masses. This scenario lends itself to the emergence of armed gangs, thugs and warlords who then compete with the others for resources in collapsing economies.

The ultimate price during the Sierra Leone civil war of the 1990s was the control of the rich Kono and Tongo diamond fields. During the late stages of the civil war in Angola, on both the government side as well as the rebel side, the general and warlords helped themselves to the mineral wealth of the country. In the Sudan, government officers in the war in the South have looted at will, while some of the insurgents have also forcibly extracted resources from the general populace.

Cultural Pluralism and the Myth of the Unitary State
The post-colonial state in Africa has been in all instances multi-ethnic and multi-cultural in character. At the beginning of the independence period there were many who felt that a centralized unitary structure of the state was crucial to the survival of the countries. This was because it was felt that given the diversity of ethnic groups within a state any attempt to allow political expression along ethnic lines would tend to break up the newly emergent states. As a result of this reasoning, African states invariably pursued policies of almost zero tolerance to expressions of ethnic or cultural affiliation or the construction of political parties bases on regionalist, localist or ethnic identities.

With the benefit of hindsight it is clear that the attempts to insist on centralized unitary models have in almost all instances failed. There was too much of an attempt to deny the reality of ethno-cultural sub-units within the wider state. So that, instead of creating a framework for the democratic expression of diversity, such diversity was rejected by the ruling parties, at all cost. Whilst this repudiation of ethnic affiliations took place, at the same time, many members of the political elite sought support from their constituencies by exploiting ethnic sentiment. The lessons of the past would suggest that in order to avoid ethnic affiliations being utilized for political objectives by elites, it would be more beneficial to acknowledge ethnic diversity and rather give this democratic institutional

form. A World Bank report of 2000, which examined 47 civil wars between 1960 and 1999, suggested that civil wars are more often caused by rebel insurgents competing with governments for resources, than political, ethnic or other factors. (Anthony.2003.53)

The Regionalization of Conflict in Africa

Over the past decade and a half Africa's wars have invariably acquired regional character. War in the Casamance in the south of Senegal, for the part of the insurgents, feeds on the solidarity of ethno-linguistic constituencies in Guinea Bissau and Guinea. Likewise the civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia exploited cultural sentiments from related ethnicities in the Ivory Coast and Guinea. One of the charges that have been made by insurgents in Liberia is that support for the war in Liberia has been partly based in Sierra Leone. The charge has also been made that the Sierra Leonean warlord Foday Sankoh was aided and abetted by Charles Taylor in Liberia. Indeed, after Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) brutal war of ascendancy, he helped to create the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone and in exchange was remunerated with diamonds and concessions in Sierra Leone. These cases show how mineral wealth and access to this is pursued through the exploitation of primordial ethno-cultural affiliations.

Angolan forces have operated in the Congo-Brazzaville. Zimbabweans, Angolans and Namibians have fought in the Congo DRC. Mineral extraction has been a factor in some of these involvements. Libya has, over the years, sometimes supported with resources at other times with armed forces both governments and insurgents in a host of African countries including the Sudan, Chad, Niger, the Central African Republic and Uganda. The implication of this process of regionalizing African conflicts is that the solutions to these conflicts can no longer be considered to be restricted to parties within the countries concerned. Collective African effort and solutions have become crucial to the settlement of war and conflict in Africa. Such multi-lateral approaches to conflict resolution in Africa are likely to increase in the coming years. (Anthony.2003.52-57, see note 1)

Democracy in an Era of Reconstruction

If democracy is the most efficient political principle of our times, how can Africa pursuing the institutionalization of democratic practice utilize the democratic principle as a successful instrument for social development, in the emergent era of reconstruction or renaissance? A number of relevant points need to be made in the above respect. For one thing, democracy, cannot be imposed by force of arms, it evolves. It is nurtured to grow and deepen. It must also wear the *habitments* of the local culture. Democracy in Africa must mean the involvement, participation and sovereignty of the majorities in the selection of policy, implementation, and control of instruments of leadership. Use of the

languages and cultures of the mass society are crucial for the development of democratic cultures at the grassroots of society.

Decentralization provides a structural lead to the infrastructure of a democratic culture. Decentralization permits the exercise of democratic rights at the local level, at which point most Africans carry out their everyday activities. The translation of democracy to satisfy representation and voice at the most local setting, for example at the village level, empowers people at the social points in which they most need to have a say and influence. Decentralization brings the possibility of democracy to the elementary structures of social organization.

Democracy in Africa will be unattainable if human rights are not societally acknowledged and respected. A society, which respects human rights, is very well on the way towards the cultivation of democracy. But human rights must be clearly understood to refer not only to individuals but also to groups including cultural units of wider society. Cultural freedom, tolerance, pluralism, and the permeability of cultural borders are ideals of democrats in our times. Democrats not only tolerate difference but also celebrate diversity. "Failed states" cannot operate democratic systems. They are, indeed, the direct opposite of democratic orders. Likewise, democracy in Africa cannot survive economic collapse. Democracy thrives best in buoyant economies.

The Principle of Celebrating the Local in a Globalizing World
Closely allied to the necessity to construct democracy in Africa from the most elementary units of social organization is the need to allow political difference and cultural variety to be displayed, acknowledged, honoured and celebrated. This principle, we would argue, is true in both national and international contexts. The logic of multi-culturalism and composite cultures is a simple one. Given our diversity, the need to tolerate and celebrate difference is the only rational way to collectively prosper. There is also the inherent wisdom in preserving the rich variegation of social and cultural habits created and rooted deeply in the past. Cultural freedom offers the best approach to the management of diversity.

Politically the idea of democratic pluralism captures the mood and need of our times. The pursuit of democratic pluralism bets on diversity, instead of regarding cultural diversity as a source of social disunity. *The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001)*, which is the first of its kind within the international community, has elevated cultural diversity to the status of 'common heritage of humanity - as necessary for the human race as bio-diversity in the natural realm'. Accordingly, the defense and protection of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, which is inseparable from respect for human dignity. The Convention emphasizes the understanding of moving from cultural diversity

to cultural pluralism. "In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life." (UNESCO.2001) Human rights as guarantees for cultural diversity; cultural rights as an enabling environment for cultural diversity; the preservation and cultivation of cultural heritage; and access for all to cultural diversity are issues that have been appropriately recognized by the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.* (MONDIACULT.1982)

The permeability of ethnic borders is crucial for pluralism. To share, people must cross cultural demarcations and freely select affiliation at will. The more we augment scope for communion, the more enriching and fulfilling the offering of *homo sapiens* as a historical and cultural producer and product can make to Africans as global players both individually and collectively. An important ingredient for the flourishing of multi-culturalism and cultural diversity is the need to ensure the institutions of secularism and religious tolerance. Non-African citizenry with historical, religious and cultural roots in other continents will need to enjoy equal and even treatment in African states as a matter of policy. A global village means that, more than ever, differing religious groups exists side-by-side. For peace to prevail and citizens to enjoy equal rights religion has to be removed from the ambit of the state. While religion and ritual can be openly practiced in their variegation, religious confession must be treated as an attribute belonging to the private domain of citizens. The state in the global world should stay out of the arena of religious practice.

Policies Towards Conflict Resolution
In Africa terror is primarily carried out by warlords, brigands and, states which terrorize their own citizenry. Arguably, the pressures for democratic governance have increased over the past two decades and governments are continuously under pressure by civil society in Africa for more open and democratic rule. Whilst some progress has been made over the past decade in countries like Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Angola and Madagascar, there are other areas where deterioration in human rights and the acknowledgements of civil liberties are increasingly in question.

Many of the over forty-odd sub-Saharan states which have come to political independence since the 1960s have for a large part become or becoming "failed states", with unviable economies, poor governance, cultural and ethnic intolerance and both

Christian and Muslim fundamentalism (with Christian fundamentalism taking the form of fanatical pentecostalism). If Africa and Africans are to begin to transform African societies, pan-African institutions which emphasize cooperation would need to be developed. Wide pan-African umbrella institutions will diminish the strength of ethnic affiliations in the post-colonial African state and permit cross-border linkages, which have long historical and cultural roots.

Traditional modes of reconciliation speak easily and primordially to the masses of Africa. They therefore represent very crucial and useful instruments for conflict resolution. The use of such institutions in recent times in the Great Lakes area, particularly after the genocide in Rwanda, has had limited but recognizable success. A judicious adaptation of traditional peace-making institutions to contemporary needs for societies, which are largely tradition-bound would be useful and possibly more meaningful than the imposition of norms and ideas which are totally strange to erstwhile conflicting communities. "Extreme ideologies" which exacerbate ethnic tensions need to be exposed at very early stages of their emergence. But perhaps more crucially, advocacy of the ethos of democratic pluralism and the peaceful co-existence of diverse socio-cultural groups needs to be advanced and propagandized as a matter of policy. The creation of ethnic mythologies, ethnogenesis and the use by rival elites needs to be exposed and unmasked so that the drift into conflict as we have seen in the Great Lakes area can be avoided. (Lemarchand.1999)

Closing Remarks
African ethnicities cannot be obliterated. In itself, ethnicity does not cause conflict. In the context of the unitary structure of the post-colonial state, ethnicity is a possible fault line, which reacts to deeper socio-political and economic factors. It has been consistently mobilized in Africa by elites, as an instrument, to justify the pursuit of leadership interests and access to resources, to the point of resorting to conflict in order to achieve these ends. In fact, ethnicity can be put to constructive use if it is given democratic expression in a pluralist, tolerant, transparent and secular society. Ethnic diversity should be celebrated and turned to Africa's advantage, so that culturally and sociologically it becomes an enriching patrimony with permeable borders which wider society enjoys in a free and accessible fashion. Cultural space should be available so that cultural variation is openly tolerated and hegemony or tribalism becomes meaningless and pointless. The institutions for the cultivation of diversity can only be cross-border since all African ethnicities are cross-border phenomena. Inter-state cooperation and pan-Africanist approaches are therefore crucial. Appropriate policies need to be put in place to enable cultural pluralism to flourish.

Durable peace in Africa requires much more than what can be described as limited 'fire brigade operations' which may put the lid on the immediacy of a given case of festering conflict, but does not address the root causes of war. The roots of war in Africa are primarily economic and political. They are conditions which have histories rooted in the colonial past, the checker-board of economically unviable states arbitrarily created by the departing colonial powers, with no respect for Africa's cultural, economic and political realities.

Notes

1. "War and the migratory labour process are contributing immensely to the expansion of the HIV pandemic in Africa. The pandemic is affecting the most productive sectors of the African population. Amongst miners, peasants and farmers, teachers, health workers, students and pupils, hawkers, etc, on a daily basis, the pandemic keeps destroying the demographic and expertise profile of Africa's working population. The emergence on a large scale of a socially disempowered orphan class of people in both rural and urban areas taxes the capacities of African countries to provide the sort of social support and welfare which our countries so limitedly can provide."

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