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Africa at 50
Some Perspectives

2013, Year of Pan Africanism and African Renaissance
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Editor's Note

FEW areas of the world have suffered from the excesses of the international media as Africa has. In general, the picture that emerges of the continent is one of unrelieved gloom. Wars, coups, famine, natural disasters and human degradation are, it appears from press reports, the staple produce of Africa. The news from the continent is so hopelessly and inexplicably dismal that it justifies the colonial epithet of the 'dark continent'.

More recently, however, a different, almost euphoric picture is being projected of the continent – at least in some sections of the financial and business media. 'Africa rising', readers are advised, should be the new watchword for investors. Africa is 'booming' as its middle class begins to flex its new purchasing power. Leaving aside the key question of whether growth translates into development, if some analysts are to be believed, the continent is set to challenge Asia as the next growth centre.

The attempt to portray a continent as large and varied as Africa as either a centre of endless catastrophes or the new economic and financial power is wholly misplaced. Africa has its bright spots which show economic promise, its share of success stories and failures. Most importantly, like the rest of the Third World, it is struggling against the blight of economic underdevelopment and the structural impediments that underpin it. What the Western media has failed to do is view this whole process in its proper perspective and provide balanced analyses and reporting.

What is particularly galling is the failure of the Western media to appreciate the complexities of the continent's problems. This is compounded by an obliviousness to how foreign interests and their proxies have succeeded in shunting many an African country from its chosen course of development. For example, one hardly finds a media analysis of the current upheavals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo which acknowledges that these have continued since independence principally because of Western political and corporate intervention in the country's affairs. And when one turns to another theatre of upheaval in Africa, the Central African Republic, the question of how French intervention over the years, by propping up dictators, has contributed to that country's current problems is barely raised in any discussion. But quite apart from such interventions, the crucial role of international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in pauperising Africa barely figures in any discussion of Africa's current economic problems.

Much Western media analysis of Africa's problems is centred on the lack of good governance, and this is quite often reduced to the issue of corrupt leaders who have overstayed in their tenure of office. Here there is a large element of selectivity, with the media ignoring the misdeeds of pro-Western leaders while highlighting those of African leaders who are not.

But the real point is that such analyses, by focusing on individuals, ignore the broader social basis of the problem. Frantz Fanon, the ideologue of African liberation, warned more than half a century ago of the emergence of a parasitic class which had grown up and been nurtured under colonialism and which would treat the political offices and resources of the newly independent nation as its personal patrimony. Decades may have elapsed since independence but the power and influence of this class reinforced by new social groups in the post-colonial era still continue. Admittedly, Africa today has its quota of corrupt and incompetent leaders, but to ignore this problem's linkages with the colonial legacy would be sheer dishonesty.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Africa's first steps towards unification of the continent, a project which strongly animated its first generation of leaders. As its current leaders commemorated this occasion earlier this year with another, albeit small step in the same direction, this is probably an opportune time to take stock of some of the developments in the continent. Our cover story attempts to provide some perspectives on these trends.

In addition to broaching the question of the drive towards continental unity and the form it should take, we publish some articles on various aspects of economic development, including a return to economic planning which had been scuttled by World Bank and IMF programmes when a number of African countries came under the tutelage of these institutions. The question of political violence is explored in one article, while another attempts to answer the central issue in North Africa: the fate of the Arab Spring. Finally we assess the progress and gaps in advancing the cause of gender equality in the continent.

– The Editors

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COVER: A summit was held in Addis Ababa in May *(pic)* to mark the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity. As Africa strives for greater unity, it has to overcome some serious economic and political challenges. 8

THIRD WORLD RESURGENCE is published by the Third World Network, an international network of groups and individuals involved in efforts to bring about a greater articulation of the needs and rights of peoples in the Third World; a fair distribution of world resources; and forms of development which are ecologically sustainable and fulfil human needs.

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Open for business?

As Myanmar transitions to democracy after decades of military rule, its increasingly vocal civil society is scrambling to protect forests and farmland from rapacious development.

Mike Ives

A man looks at his watermelon field near the site of a planned 'special economic zone' in Thilawa. Villagers in the area have protested their eviction to make way for the SEZ.

LATE last fall, the government-built irrigation pipelines in the village of Alwan Sok stopped pumping water to rice fields. Local officials governing this small farming area about 13 miles southeast of Yangon, Myanmar's former capital, offered no explanation. The fall rice crop had been harvested already, but without irrigation farmers wouldn't be able to plant the year's second crop in the dry season. That was troubling. Rice is the farmers' staple food, and most of them are heavily indebted to an agricultural bank where they buy seeds and fertiliser. Even 30-year-old Ko Aye Htay, whose family owns the most land in the village, says he borrows up to half his income on credit.

As the weeks without irrigation morphed into months, hope of a spring harvest evaporated. Some villagers began selling their cows and motorbikes to cover basic expenses, or sharing rice with those who were going hungry. Then, on 31 January, hundreds of households in the village found notices posted on their doors ordering them to leave their land in 14 days or face arrest. 'Some of us thought it would be better to be in prison, because at least there we could be sure to eat,' Ko Aye Htay says.

The villagers weren't entirely surprised by the eviction notice. For decades, Burma's military government had been trying to convert the fields around Alwan Sok into factories that would complement the adjacent Thilawa port – the largest deepwater port in the country. Back in 1982, officials confiscated a chunk of the village's farmland, saying they planned to build an industrial park. The complex never materialised, but the government kept the land. In 1996, it confiscated another parcel and built a tin factory that has long sat idle. Residents were told that while they could continue farming, their land was state property. They knew there would be trouble again, but they didn't know when.

In April 2012, the government signed a memorandum of intent with Japanese investors to build a 2,400-hectare 'special economic zone', or SEZ – a term coined by the Chinese government in the 1980s to describe sprawling industrial parks that woo foreign investors with tax incentives. By November, Japan had agreed to provide $270 million for the Thilawa SEZ and other economic projects across Myanmar. Construction was scheduled to begin in early 2013. A total of 3,900 people in Alwan Sok and nearby villages were ordered to move.

Ten years ago, the villagers might have gone quietly. In this case, they protested. Their grievances were widely reported in the local media, which until last year was governed by draconian censorship laws. The international press has chimed in with occasional reports on the conflict, and a Yangon nonprofit, Paung Ku, has advocated for the farmers in consultations with investors and the government.

On 14 February – the day of the planned eviction – the government backed off. A private newspaper, *The Myanmar Times*, quoted an agriculture officer telling villagers that although the government technically owned their land, they would be treated fairly. But when I visited Alwan Sok a month later, the irrigation pipes were still shut off. Villagers said their only hope for a 2013 rice harvest was the annual monsoon that typically enables them to plant in June without irrigation.

'All of the newspapers and magazines are saying that Burma is changing, but the way the officials act, it's like the old way of ruling the people,' farmer Ko Aye Htay told me, his voice tinged with anger as he sat cross-legged in a wooden hut beside a stack of newspaper clippings one sultry March afternoon. 'They're always talking about Burma's history, about how things were done in the past. Well, we don't feel that the changes are real.'

Activists say the Thilawa SEZ has elements of both the old Myanmar – the repressive military dictatorship that ruled the country for a half-century – and the new Myanmar that has attracted a flood of international attention and development aid since March 2011, when a quasi-civilian government came to power on the heels of the Southeast Asian country's first general elections in 20 years.

The new government – which later introduced a series of landmark reforms including freeing political prisoners, legalising labour unions, and passing several environmental laws – has raised hopes that the country's days of suppressing dissent are coming to an end. But it is still unclear if the ostensibly pro-democracy government will respect the rights of its citizens and protect its ecosystems as it opens its doors to international investors. Or if it will sell them out to the highest bidders.

Observers say the answer depends to some degree on how it handles the Thilawa farmers' protests and other land-acquisition conflicts that are flaring up across the nation.

'The space has opened up,' says Paul Donowitz, campaign director for Earth Rights International, a Washington-based nonprofit that supports Myanmar activists campaigning for social and environmental justice. 'The level of opposition is definitely new.… That's why we're seeing protests popping up around major projects.' However, he adds, there still is no community consultation process around big development projects, nor any debate at the highest levels over whether such projects should go forward.

Investors view Myanmar, formerly called Burma, as Asia's newest 'frontier market'. A central part of the appeal is the country's 55 million people – a potential consumer market – and the vast natural resources that once made the country a jewel of the British Empire. Although profits from timber, minerals, oil, and gas have been a key source of funding for Myanmar's junta, the country's half-century of isolation also meant that much of its natural resources remained undeveloped.

Villagers laying a roadblock to protest the lack of compensation for confiscation of their lands to build a road link for a 'special economic zone' in the city of Dawei. Faced with a barrage of industrial projects, local activists and civil society groups are trying to decide what to fight for, how to organise advocacy campaigns and what policy reforms to realistically expect.

Today Myanmar still has huge swaths of intact forests, sizeable offshore oil and gas deposits, and a vast catalogue of rare and endangered species. But as the US and the European Union have lifted or conditionally suspended longstanding economic sanctions, many worry that an influx of foreign capital may set off a rush to extract resources that could cause significant environmental damage and negatively impact, rather than improve, the lives of ordinary citizens.

Faced with these complex challenges, activists say they are encouraged by a growing network of civil society groups that appear willing to speak out about simmering land and resource conflicts. The groups range from Paung Ku, an umbrella organisation that operates from Yangon with assistance from embassies and development agencies, to grassroots groups that are fighting proposed hydropower dams and oil and gas pipelines in Myanmar's restive hinterlands.

Casual observers of the country's politics might think its civil society remained silent throughout its long era of military rule. Not so: There were high-profile uprisings against the government in 1988 and 2007, and community groups rallied to help the country recover from natural disasters like the devastating 2008 Cyclone Nargis. Still other groups have been working quietly for years to fill gaps in government-provided social services by hosting municipal blood drives or raising funds for families that can't afford to bury their dead. Although the military government regarded civil society groups with suspicion, activists say officials weren't categorically opposed to grassroots advocacy work – so long as it didn't threaten the regime.

What's new, activists say, is a sense that they can now be more politically outspoken. Local journalists, too, feel empowered thanks to recent laws that have eradicated some, though not all, censorship. And the new government, hungry for foreign investment, appears eager to make a good impression. For example, the country is preparing to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, a voluntary agreement by more than 30 countries that governs environmental safeguards and financial disclosure requirements for natural-resource-extraction projects.

On the flipside, activists say, business in this largely rural and densely forested country tucked between China and India is still primarily driven by crooked officials who strongarm farmers off their land to build industrial parks, copper mines, and other large-scale economic projects. Activists complain that most of the new laws that are supposed to protect the environment and the poor are weak, and that many politicians in Myanmar's parliament lack the capacity or desire to implement them.

To what extent political reforms and increased media attention will translate into victories for Myanmar's poor and marginalised is still unclear, says Kyaw Thu, director of Paung Ku and one of Myanmar's leading activists. His group is advocating a slow, methodical pace of development that will give all stakeholders – foreign and local companies, the Myanmar government, and affected citizens – enough time to assess new projects.

'The speed and scale of reform and investment is quite huge,' Kyaw Thu told me. 'We still have weak laws and poor knowledge of dealing with international players. It's too much for us.… We don't need to rush.'

Ruled for half a century by a military junta that overthrew a democratic government in 1962, Myanmar has long been seen as a pariah state. For decades the junta pillaged the country's vast natural resources while allowing basic civil services like schools, roads, and hospitals to languish. As Myanmar's neighbours developed their economies, the junta's widespread human rights abuses led Western governments and aid agencies to impose economic sanctions against the repressive regime, although some investment did trickle in – mostly from China and other Asian countries. Tourists largely steered clear.

As the decades wore on, Myanmar became increasingly isolated and impoverished, even as its leaders grew richer on their citizens' backs. Today, parts of central Yangon look decrepit, as if a tropical storm has just torn through. Weeds sprout inside its abandoned British colonial buildings, and at night a handful of streetlights cast an uneasy, fluorescent pallor over trash-strewn alleys. According to Transparency International, Myanmar is among the most corrupt places on earth, beating only Sudan, Somalia, Afghanistan, and North Korea in a ranking of 176 countries.

Nation in transition

But Myanmar also feels like a nation in transition. New construction projects are sprouting up in Yangon and property values are soaring. (International businessmen are paying $4,000 a month for two-bedroom serviced apartments in a country where the average annual income is about $1,400.) Oil and gas prospectors are vying for offshore energy blocks and international aid is flowing in. The Asian Development Bank is planning to overhaul the country's crippled road infrastructure; educators from American universities are preparing to help rebuild the country's creaky university system; multinational brands are staking claims to potential factory space. Thousands of imported cars are rolling through Yangon's potholed streets, adding to growing traffic jams that are typical in Southeast Asia's megacities.

These changes mainly kicked off in 2011, a few months after Burma's junta surprised the world by holding its first general elections in 20 years. For most of 2010, it wasn't clear to international observers if the junta was serious about reform, or how it would deal with its outspoken political foes – notably Nobel Peace Prize recipient Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who had been held under off-and-on house arrest since 1989. Her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), had won a landslide victory in Myanmar's 1990 elections but the junta refused to accept the results and arrested and imprisoned many NLD leaders. Six days after the 2010 election brought to power Thein Sein, a former general and self-professed reformer, he freed Suu Kyi. Two years later, the NLD, which had boycotted the 2010 elections, won 43 of the 45 parliamentary seats it contested. Newly elected Suu Kyi went on a tour of Europe and the United States, meeting with world leaders and attracting large, adoring crowds. In November 2012 Barack Obama made the first visit to Myanmar by a sitting American president.

Suu Kyi's release and subsequent election were a key justification for the US and the European Union to loosen their longstanding economic sanctions. But observers remain wary of the Thein Sein government, which is still dominated by the military. The constitution, written by the junta in 2008, reserves a quarter of the seats in both chambers of parliament for the military, and requires three crucial ministries – defence, interior, and border affairs – to be held by generals. (Amendments need more than 75% of votes to pass.) It also bars anyone with a foreign spouse from running for president – a clause that applies to 67-year-old Aung San Suu Kyi, whose late husband was British. And rights groups have accused the government and military of fuelling sectarian violence that has flared up across Myanmar in recent months. Given the junta's continuing hold over the government, observers wonder whether the policy reforms will improve the lives of everyday citizens like the farmers of Alwan Sok and help responsibly manage the country's rich natural resources.

Meanwhile, the race is on for Myanmar's natural resources. A hotly anticipated foreign investment law, passed in November 2012, allows international firms up to 100% ownership in most ventures and offers companies five-year tax holidays and 50-year land leases. International investors are now scrambling to get a toehold. The biggest investors so far are China and Thailand, which have committed $14.2 billion and $9.6 billion respectively for mining, hydroelectric, and mega-SEZ projects. The World Bank has approved at least $480 million in 'support credit' and community development grants. Companies such as Nestle, Unilever, DuPont, Carlsberg, Ford, PepsiCo, Coca-Cola, and General Electric have all signed distribution deals. Although many other international investors are hanging back, the World Bank predicts the country's economy will grow by more than 6% this year.

As the government clears land for investment projects, public resentment appears to be growing. The conflict over the Thilawa SEZ is just one example. Last year, a police raid of villagers protesting the expansion of a military-backed copper mine sparked nationwide outrage. (Anger was later directed at Aung San Suu Kyi, who tried to persuade the farmers to stop protesting and allow the mine to go forward.) And near the coastal city of Dawei, residents concerned about environmental and public health impacts are pushing hard against a proposed deepsea port and a 155-square-mile SEZ that would include steel mills, power plants, refineries, and a petrochemical plant. The project – funded mainly by a Thai company and slated to be Southeast Asia's largest industrial complex – would be a key transport link connecting Southeast Asia with India, Africa, and the Middle East. It also would displace about 30,000 people, mostly poor rice, cashew, and rubber farmers.

Faced with a barrage of industrial projects, local activists and civil society groups are trying to decide what to fight for, how to organise advocacy campaigns, and what policy reforms to realistically expect. 'People are braver about showing their feelings and desires, but what do they want to be? They don't know,' Bo Bo Aung, a 29-year-old activist with Dawei Development Association, a coalition of 50 grassroots groups that is pressing for more transparency about SEZs, told me at a Yangon café. Part of the problem, he said, is that activists opposed to development projects often don't propose alternative ways of creating jobs or boosting Myanmar's economy.

Thein Sein's government has taken a few environmentally favourable steps: suspending until 2015 the construction of the Chinese-sponsored Myitsone dam on the Irawaddy River; cancelling a proposed coal-fired power plant in Dawei; and banning mining within 100 metres of Myanmar's four largest rivers. But analysts say Myanmar still needs better laws that are strongly enforced. The country's first environmental conservation law, which passed last year after languishing for years in parliament, has been widely criticised for being too weak. (Firms are not required to conduct international-standard environmental impact assessments before beginning construction.) Environmental activists say while it is positive that the Myitsone dam has been suspended, six others are going forward – all of them in hotbeds of sectarian violence.

Tobias Jackson, a forester at Oxfam who is advising a local Yangon nonprofit that works with marginalised farmers, says most citizens are yet to see tangible benefits from policy reforms. Some new laws, he adds, have troubling implications. For example, he says a 2012 land use law designed to clarify procedures around 'vacant' farmland may be used by developers as a pretext for seizing land from small-scale farmers who don't hold land titles.

'All of the laws are open to interpretation,' Jackson says. 'You could interpret them to be pro-industrial agriculture, pro-big business, and sometimes you could interpret them to actually be supportive of smallholder [farmers]…. But in a country where the rule of law has not been a strong point – where an independent judiciary does not exist – those interpretations, in our assessment, are often unlikely to favour smallholders.'

Back in Alwan Sok, two older farmers – U Aung Tint and U Sein Htay – agreed to show me around the Thilawa port and the site of the planned SEZ that could upend their lives. We climbed into my rented car and drove toward the port, which lay across a large expanse of barren fields. It was mid-March, weeks before the annual monsoon, and the empty land looked parched.

As we drove by the port on a two-lane road, I saw a large parking lot full of brand-new Toyotas. The government had recently loosened car import duties, and my driver said Thilawa has become the entry point of most new cars coming into the country – including the one we were in. As some trucks peeled away from the port carrying Camrys, others drove in loaded with thick logs. In the early 20th century, Myanmar's forest-management policies were among the world's best, but now illegal logging is business as usual. Security guards shooed me away as I tried to take pictures.

We moved onto a roadside shack for lunch. As we ordered tea and some fermented meats and fish, the farmers told me they were hopeful that the dispute would be settled in a way that gave them a place to grow rice, whether in their current village or a new one. They didn't seem angry, just deeply disappointed.

I asked U Aung Tint, who is 61, whether he would consider working in a factory at the SEZ. His answer was complicated.

Local officials had promised that when the industrial park is built he and his neighbours would have jobs. But the officials didn't say how long it would take for the facility to be built, or how much the farmers would be compensated for their land. He said the officials had made it clear that they wouldn't find the farmers a new place to live. Because many of the farmers are sharecroppers without cash or assets, the idea of buying new land – in an area where it is now valued at between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per acre – was daunting. And while most of the factory jobs would require an eighth-grade education, most of the village's older residents stopped school in fourth or fifth grade.

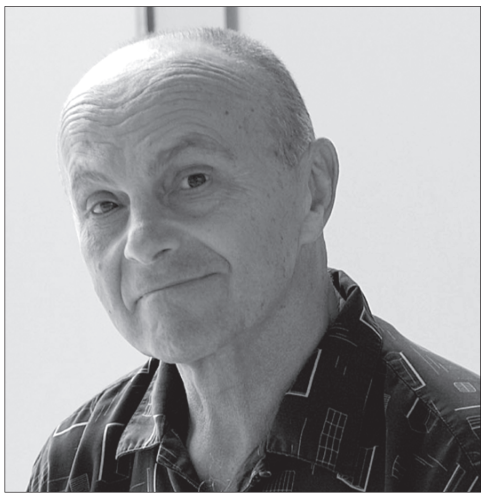
As our plates were cleared, U Aung Tint sipped his tea and looked at the road as trucks whizzed by the roadside eatery, kicking up stones and dust. 'They've made an impossible promise,' he said. ◆

Mike Ives is a freelance journalist based in Hanoi. This article is reproduced from Earth Island Journal *(Summer 2013).*

The man who won a Nobel for helping create a global financial crisis

The award of the Nobel Prize for economics to Eugene Fama (along with two other recipients) came as something of a shock as it was his theory of 'efficient financial markets' which, by providing the ideological rationale for financial liberalisation, helped to create the 2007 financial crisis. *James R Crotty* comments.

EUGENE Fama just received a Nobel Prize for his contributions to the theory of 'efficient financial markets', the dominant theory in financial economics which asserts that markets work ideally if not constrained by government regulation. The fact that economic 'science' teaches that unregulated financial markets work effectively helped financial institutions and the rich accomplish their goal of radical financial market deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s. Deregulation, in turn, not only contributed to the rising inequality of the era, it helped cause the global financial market crisis that began in 2007 and the deep recession and austerity fiscal policies that accompanied it.



Eugene Fama ***(pic)*** **won a Nobel Prize for his contributions to the theory of 'efficient financial markets'.**

The theory of efficient financial markets requires the union of two ideas: the 'efficient market hypothesis' (or EMH) and optimal (security) pricing theory (OPT). Both the EMH and OPT are built on crudely unrealistic assumptions that would lead anyone not indoctrinated in a mainstream PhD programme to conclude that efficient financial market theory is a fairytale rather than serious social science.

The EMH is simply an assumption or assertion, with no supporting evidence, that all information relevant to the correct pricing of securities is known by all market participants. For long-term assets such as stocks and bonds, the relevant information is the cash flows associated with each security in every future time period. Yet it is logically impossible for anyone to know this information because the future is not yet determined in the present; the future is uncertain. Nevertheless, defenders of efficiency adopted the 'rational expectations' hypothesis, perhaps the most ludicrous assumption in the history of social science, which asserts that all investors know the correct probability distributions of all future security cash flows and believe that they will not change over time.

The assumed complete and correct data about the future is then plugged into one of the basic mainstream models of optimal security pricing, such as the capital asset pricing model (CAPM), which specifies agents' preferences concerning the risk and return associated with every possible portfolio of securities. The combination of EMH and a theory of optimal pricing determines security prices that are efficient in that every investor has selected the risk-return profile in a portfolio that maximises her welfare, and financial resources are made available to those who can make the most productive use of them. Market prices are assumed to be in equilibrium at all times, even though the data show that market prices are much more volatile than would be compatible with the assumption of perpetual equilibrium.

The capital asset pricing model itself embodies a large number of grossly unrealistic assumptions in addition to the assumed knowledge of the future embedded in the EMH. For example, it assumes that every investor holds the same portfolio (those who want more risk borrow money to build a larger version of this portfolio), no one trades securities, and no one ever defaults on debt.

The theory of 'positivism'

One might think that the whole financial market efficiency project should have been rejected out of hand because it is founded on a large set of unrealistic assumptions about how financial markets work. Yet not only is it still the dominant theory of financial markets, Nobel Prizes have been awarded to its originators.

Why would an academic profession sanction the use of theories based on such unrealistic assumptions? The answer given by proponents of efficient financial market theory is that the economics profession relies on the theory of 'positivism' associated with

Milton Friedman as its guide to the acceptance and rejection of theoretical propositions. Friedman's positivism states that the realism of assumptions does not matter: it has no relation whatever to the acceptability of a theory or its derived hypotheses. As Friedman put it, '[T]ruly important and significant hypotheses will be found to have assumptions that are wildly inaccurate descriptive representations of reality.' The only acceptable test of a theory is 'comparison of its predictions with experience'.

There are at least three serious problems with this method. First, if patently false assumptions are adopted, as in efficient financial market theory, and impeccable logic is used to deduce hypotheses from them, they cannot – as a matter of logic – be accurate reflections of reality. Fairytale assumptions can only generate fairytale hypotheses.

Fairytale assumptions can only generate fairytale hypotheses.

Second, econometric tests can at best provide suggestive, not conclusive, evidence in support of the empirical validity of predictions generated by economic theories. With today's computing power, it is possible to run literally millions of regressions to test a theoretical proposition. Such regressions may use different data sources, time periods, empirical measures of theoretical variables, functional forms, lag structures and so forth. For example, investor expectations of future cash flows from all available securities are a central determinant of efficient equilibrium security pricing, yet there are numerous ways to choose empirical measures of expectations. And the theory itself does not tell us what the appropriate choice among this vast menu of possible alternative measures is.

As a result, virtually any hypothesis can be shown to be statistically significant if enough different regressions are run. This is why both sides of every important debate in economics can provide econometric evidence in support of their positions. And it is why economists should not rely exclusively on econometric hypothesis-testing in assessing alternative theories as positivism demands. The realism of assumption sets is crucial to this task, as are historical and institutional analysis, surveys and experimental studies.

Third, when positivist economists insist that econometric 'prediction' is the sole judge of the acceptability of a theory, they put the entire burden of proof on econometric tests. But when the preponderance of such tests turns out to be inconsistent with their favourite theory, they never reject the theory, as their methodology says they must. Rather, they move on to additional econometric tests on alternative specifications in a potentially endless process of data mining. In a widely discussed survey of empirical tests of hypotheses derived from the CAPM in 2004, Eugene Fama and a co-author arrived at a striking conclusion: 'despite its seductive simplicity, the CAPM's empirical problems probably invalidate its use in applications'. The tenets of positivism require that the CAPM should be rejected. However, financial economists kept mining the data in an endless effort to find econometric results that fit the theory. Meanwhile, the CAPM sustained its canonical status and efficient market theory remained unscarred in spite of its lack of empirical support.

Why would an academic profession adopt a methodology such as positivism that supports theories that are based on unrealistic assumptions? After all, there is an obvious alternative – begin with a realistic assumption set and use it to derive realistic hypotheses about the behaviour of financial markets. This is the method used by Keynes and Minsky to show that financial markets have no efficiency properties and are properly thought of as gambling casinos.

The answer is that the economics profession is committed ideologically to a defence of the proposition that financial markets are efficient, yet it is impossible to derive this proposition from a realistic assumption set. Thus, the profession had no choice but to adopt a positivist methodology that sanctioned the use of even absurdly unrealistic assumptions in theory construction. Since realistic assumptions lead to theories that show the strengths but also the myriad dangers and failures of unregulated capitalism revealed in the historical record, they had to be replaced by the large number of absurd assumptions required to sustain support for economists' inherent belief that unregulated or lightly regulated markets create the best of all possible worlds, maximising both economic efficiency and individual liberty. Positivism is the magic that makes it possible to construct a 'scientific' defence of the proposition that free-market capitalism has no serious flaws and dangers.

The objective of the ideological project of the economics profession in the current era is to provide a theoretical foundation for unregulated financial markets and unregulated capitalism. The fact that the project has succeeded in the face of logic and history is admittedly a fantastic conjurers' trick, but it is ridiculous to award Nobel Prizes to the conjurers. We should not give prizes to people for the creation and propagation of an ideologically based theory that strengthened the drive for radical financial deregulation and thus helped create a global depression. ◆

James R Crotty is a Professor Emeritus of Economics and Sheridan Scholar at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in the US. His writings have appeared in such diverse journals as the American Economic Review, *the* Quarterly Journal of Economics, *the* Cambridge Journal of Economics, *the* Review of Radical Economics, Monthly Review, *the* Journal of Post Keynesian Economics *and the* Journal of Economic Issues.

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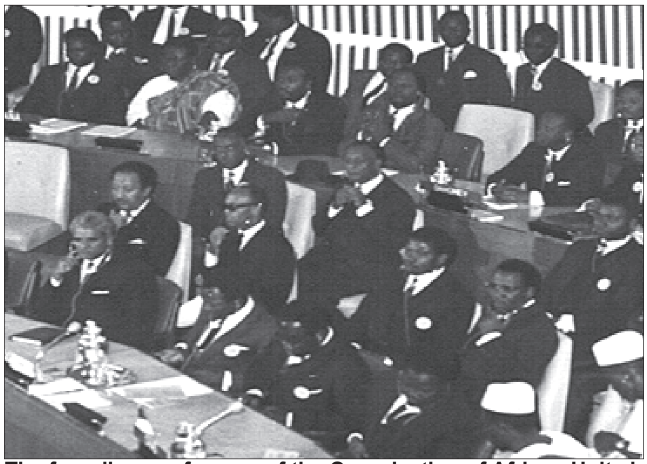
Africa 50 years on, from unity to union

As the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) transformed itself to become the African Union, the challenges that dogged the Pan-African attempt at unity at its birth 50 years ago this year have lingered, writes *Cornelius Adedze*.



The founding conference of the Organisation of African Unity in Addis Ababa in May 1963. Fifty years on, Africa remains far away from political and economic union.

THE desire for a united Africa, just after the independence of some African countries in the 1950s, resulted in the formation of various groupings. The two dominant groups were the Casablanca Group and the Monrovia Group. The Casablanca Group was in favour of a politically united federation of African states immediately whereas the Monrovia Group wanted a looser alliance based on gradual economic cooperation. In the end, on 25 May 1963, in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, 32 independent African countries brought into being the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), a compromised institution.

Fifty years on, the OAU, now transformed into the African Union (AU), has not got any closer to achieving an economic union, nor has it blossomed into a loose federation of African states. The fundamental challenges of whether total political unity or an economic union would best suit the interests of Africa still persist. At the AU Summit in 2007 in Accra, Ghana to commemorate Ghana's 50th independence anniversary, the subject was touted as the Grand Debate that was to finally settle the issue between the 'gradualists' and the 'instantists'. Unfortunately, the debate was not to be. So union government of Africa once more slipped by, and as then Prime Minister of Lesotho, Pakalitha Mosisii, put it, 'Integration should be gradual rather than precipitous. It must be evolutionary rather than revolutionary.'

True political and individual differences may have prevented the OAU from reaching its goal of unity but the decolonisation of the continent is one of the major achievements that the organisation can boast of. By the close of the 1970s most of Africa was independent save for Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. South Africa, the last colonial bastion, was freed from the clutches of apartheid rule in 1994. Beyond decolonisation, however, various attempts at unification, not just as a United States of Africa but through cooperation in various ways, have not been fully achieved.

Faultlines

Specialised agencies like the Pan African News Agency, Pan-African Telecommunications Union, Pan-African Postal Union and Union of African National Television and Radio Organisations have become dormant if not moribund. The OAU limped on as African countries struggled from one challenge to another for economic survival from the 1970s onwards, battered by both the effects of the Cold War and, later, structural adjustment. The initial differences on the way forward for African unity became more pronounced as each country and its leadership looked more toward their individual country's 'survival' rather than that of the collective African state.

Just like in the founding and early stages of the OAU, some African leaders stepped up to pursue the 'unity' agenda in diverse ways. Unfortunately, unlike in the founding years when one could count on the likes of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Nasser of Egypt and others to hold the fort for those calling for 'unity' as soon as possible, by the 1970s these 'progressive voices' had been silenced, through coups d'etat or death. The 'gradualists' like Houphouet-Boigny of Cote d'Ivoire, Senghor of Senegal and Haile Selassie of Ethiopia then held sway.

The 1970s thus saw a slowdown in the attempts at political unity of Africa and was punctuated by the effects of the Cold War as African countries got caught up in the West and East war of ideology and domination.

The faultlines of the OAU were made sharper in this period as members were divided along the ideological lines of Capitalism and Communism, no longer along lines of immediate and gradual political unity of Africa.

Africa's efforts at integration have thus been largely influenced and dictated by individual leaders who called the shots due to their economic or political hold over others. With the worsening economic situation in most African countries, the solution to it as suggested by some was the strengthening of regional economic blocs that would be the building blocks of a future united Africa. They took a leaf from the book of the blossoming European Union. Thus the era of regional economic communities (RECs) began. On the heels of these came such seminal efforts as the Lagos Plan of Action and eventually the Abuja Treaty that called for the establishment of institutions like the African Central Bank, the African Monetary Fund, the African Court of Justice and in particular, the Pan-African Parliament. The Abuja Treaty reiterated the strengthening and consolidation of the RECs as the pillars for achieving the objectives of an African Economic Community and finally a union of African states.

In pursuit of these objectives the OAU from 1999 initiated a series of extraordinary sessions aimed at achieving economic and political integration of the continent. Four OAU summits were critical in this. These were:

- The Sirte Extraordinary Session (1999) (decision to establish an African Union taken)
- The Lome Summit (2000) (adoption of the Constitutive Act of the Union)
- The Lusaka Summit (2001) (the roadmap for the implementation of the AU drawn)
- The Durban Summit (2002) (launch of the AU and convening of the 1st Assembly of the Heads of State of the African Union).

The Sirte Summit was spearheaded by the late Libyan leader Muammar Gadhafi, who thought that the time was due for the realisation of the United States of Africa, a dream of some of the founding fathers of the OAU. His radical ideas for an immediate implementation, however, as usual met with resistance from the 'gradualists' and sceptics who doubted his intentions and saw in him an ambition to become leader of a united Africa, just like others before him saw Nkrumah as an overambitious leader seeking to become President of a united Africa.

Gadhafi's plan of actualising the initial dreams of a united Africa with a single army, a common currency and trade and travel freedom was thus shot down. Indeed this proposal led rather to further divisions within the OAU as once again a watered-down version resulted in the formation of the African Union. For some the objectives of the African Union are more comprehensive and attuned to the current needs of the continent than those of its predecessor, the OAU. The transformation of the OAU into the AU also coincided with the introduction of NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, sponsored by the likes of Thabo Mbeki (then President of South Africa) and Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria. This new development paradigm, a neoliberal, Western-sponsored effort, was diametrically opposed to Gadhafi's proposals that relied more on Africa's own homegrown efforts at development.

Challenges

The NEPAD agenda which 'killed' Gadhafi's ideas could also not survive, thus throwing Africa back into finding another approach to unity and development. The regional economic communities are themselves at varied levels of integration. Some have made some progress whereas others are still a long way off from achieving their objectives. In the meantime, Africa continues to be riddled with social, economic and political challenges that the African Union, given its current status, is unable to resolve. Top on the list are the civil strife in Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, among others that the African Union is at pains to deal with. In Mali, the regional economic community, ECOWAS, could not deal with the situation until France bulldozed its way through. In Somalia, where civil war has raged on since the 1990s, the AU has found it an intractable situation though it has some forces there. Would the much-talked-about African Standby Force have stood up to these situations?

A new deadline of 2015 has just been issued the five regions – East, West, Central, North and Southern Africa – to develop their own standby brigades with military, police and civilian components. For a force which was mooted 50 years ago at the founding of the OAU, the new deadline speaks volumes of Africa's preparedness to confront its challenges. This is the third time that a new deadline has had to be issued.

The African Standby Force's operationalisation had been planned for 2008, pushed to 2010, then 2013 and now to 2015. There are doubts among experts as to whether the force will be operational even by then.

Economic cooperation has not fared better either. Free movement of people and goods thereby facilitating trade among African countries is also a big challenge. Apart from infrastructural challenges (which NEPAD was to address), policy harmonisation and implementation remain major obstacles, although to varying degrees in the various regional economic communities. Trade among African countries, though on the increase, remains small as compared with trade with the rest of the world. Only about 10% of Africa's imports are from Africa, with close to 90% from outside Africa. Should Africa sign the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union, it is likely that trade among African countries will further dwindle as Africa would be swamped with European goods and services.

Africa's quest to work together to confront the threat that globalisation poses is also at risk as foreign 'partners' seem to have taken over the policy direction of the African Union. Some of these foreign partners have become more or less consultants to the AU directing its policy whilst others underwrite its expenditure.

Fifty years of the OAU/AU may have chalked up some successes from decolonisation to efforts at uniting the continent, but unless the teething problems that were pushed aside in the organisation's founding years are dealt with, the ghosts of that period would continue to haunt and dog the continent's attempts at unity. ◆

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Africa at 50: Five major tasks ahead

A special summit of African heads of state and government was held on 25-27 May 2013 in Addis Ababa to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Organisation of African Unity and the African Union. The following extract from the opening address by *Hailemariam Dessalegn*, Prime Minister of Ethiopia and Chairperson of the African Union, identifies five major tasks ahead for the continent's leadership.

PREVIOUS generations paid enormous sacrifices to liberate our continent from all forms of subjugation and restore the freedom and dignity of the African people. The major responsibility of the current and future generations of Africans is, therefore, to create a continent free from poverty and conflict and an Africa whose citizens would enjoy middle-income status. I believe this is the new spirit of Pan-Africanism that should inspire current and future generations to fulfil the dreams of our Founders for a peaceful, prosperous and united Africa.

Africa has to invest in the development of the agricultural sector, 'to transform our economies from the bottom up and lift millions of our people from abject poverty'.

Africa's Renaissance cannot be realised without bringing about a paradigm shift in our political and socioeconomic governance. We all recognise by now that the policy orthodoxy imposed on us from outside to simply 'get the prices right' did not help us to break the vicious cycle of poverty and achieve sustainable economic growth. Therefore, we have to do more than 'getting the prices right' and play a proactive role in pushing forward our transformation agenda taking due cognisance of the nature of our respective political economies and development potentials.

In my view, there are five important measures that we need to take. First, we have to invest in the development of the agricultural sector, to transform our economies from the bottom up and lift millions of our people from abject poverty.

Second is the need to build human and technological capability. We cannot simply compete on the basis of our factor endowments. Hence, we need to assimilate technology developed elsewhere and move up the technology ladder.

Thirdly, we need to build infrastructure, a sector neglected over the past decades. Lack of adequate infrastructure is a difficult bottleneck, which arrests growth. We need, therefore, to undertake massive investment in infrastructure, establishing national and regional networks of roads, railway, telecommunication, electricity and other infrastructures.

Fourthly, when we say the state should play a proactive role, it does not mean that we need to stifle the private sector. On the contrary, we should get rid of the political economy of rent seeking and create a dynamic and vibrant private sector.

Last but not least, we need to nurture democratic governance and popular participation in order to create a favourable condition for the realisation of our vision. We can ensure neither peace nor development in the absence of democracy and popular participation and inclusive growth.

Of course, we need the continued support of our friends and partners in our development endeavours. First and foremost, we seek their understanding on the need for us to have the policy space to design and implement our own development strategies based on the objective realities of our countries and drawing valuable lessons from other successful development experiences. We need the support and solidarity of our partners in all these endeavours, which means fulfilling commitments already made in various international fora. It cannot be over-emphasised that we also need a favourable global environment, particularly a fair trading regime, which is critical for boosting our economic growth.

I trust that this special occasion will afford us the opportunity to rededicate our efforts towards the socioeconomic emancipation of Africa and renew our partnership with the rest of the world. It is my earnest hope that by the time Africa celebrates the centenary of the OAU/ AU by the year 2063, we will have achieved the dreams of our Founders for a peaceful, prosperous and united Africa. ◆

This extract was earlier published in the South Bulletin *(Issue 74, 5 July 2013).*

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale

Continental unity was only possible with national liberation. A major landmark in this struggle was the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, which marked the beginning of the end of minority rule in Southern Africa, the dismantling of the apartheid system and the total liberation of Africa from European occupation. On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of this crucial battle, *Dennis Laumann* explains its significance.

In the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola, the army of apartheid South Africa was defeated in 1988 by a Pan-Africanist alliance that included tens of thousands of Cuban volunteers. Picture shows a South African tank captured by Cuban forces.

THIS year marks the 25th anniversary of a key event in the struggle for African liberation from European colonial rule: the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. In that remote town in southern Angola in March 1988, the army of apartheid South Africa was defeated by a Pan-Africanist alliance that included tens of thousands of Cuban volunteers. Their victory forced South Africa's racist rulers to enter into negotiations that led to the unbanning of anti-apartheid organisations, the release of Nelson Mandela, the independence of Namibia, and ultimately freedom for South Africa. Although prevailing historical narratives about the end of apartheid ignore the significance of this epic battle, its central role has been emphasised by Mandela himself.

The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale marked the culmination of more than a decade of South Africa's war against Angola. In the months leading up to Angola's independence from Portugal on 11 November 1975, the South African Defence Forces (SADF), with covert assistance from the United States, invaded Angola to prevent the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) from assuming power. The apartheid regime was threatened by the prospect of another free African nation, espousing socialism no less, on its borders since South Africa occupied neighbouring South-West Africa (present-day Namibia).

At the time, the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) waged an armed struggle for independence in Namibia while in South Africa the mass anti-apartheid movement kept the regime on the defensive. Clearly, South Africa's white minority rulers felt under siege, though somewhat emboldened by support from the United States.

Closely observing events from across the Atlantic, the Cuban government unilaterally (in other words, without the knowledge of the Soviet Union) decided to defend Angola's sovereignty after the MPLA leadership requested help from Havana. As the SADF pushed through the Angolan interior towards the capital of Luanda, Cuba launched Operation Carlota, named in honour of an African woman who led a slave rebellion in 19th-century Cuba. Thousands of Cuban soldiers along with vital military equipment were transported on improvised merchant vessels and passenger planes from the Caribbean to Central Africa, a reversal of the voyages of the ships that carried Angolans to slavery in Cuba in prior centuries. By late March 1976, the allied MPLA and Cuban fighters successfully drove the SADF out of Angola into South-West Africa, a shocking defeat for the apartheid regime and an inspiration to South African youth who led the historic Soweto Uprising in June that same year.

Over the next decade, South Africa's racist rulers sought to destabilise Angola mainly through support of its proxy UNITA (the Portuguese acronym for the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola). Together with the United States through its Central Intelligence Agency, the SADF trained and armed UNITA and coordinated its campaign of terror against the Angolan people. Whenever the Angolan military, assisted by Soviet and Cuban advisers, struck against UNITA, the SADF carried out air strikes and ground invasions to protect its Angolan mercenaries. As a result, two southern Angolan provinces were effectively occupied by the SADF, thus extending the apartheid system from South Africa through South-West Africa into Angola.

In July 1987, the Angolan army advanced on UNITA's camps in southeastern Angola. On the verge of being crushed, UNITA was rescued by the South Africans, who attacked from their bases in South-West Africa that October. The situation quickly turned dire for the Angolan military, which retreated into a defensive position at Cuito Cuanavale. Once again, Cuba quickly answered the call for aid

Cuban soldiers in Angola during the war against South African forces. According to Nelson Mandela, 'The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa.'

and resumed direct combat operations in Angola, dispatching tens of thousands of volunteer troops and its most critical and advanced arms to southern Angola. The ensuing battle grouped together all the main protagonists in the Angolan war: the armies of liberation – Angola, Cuba, and SWAPO (with members of the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa serving in intelligence capacities) – against the forces of imperialism, South Africa and UNITA, backed by the United States.

The SADF repeatedly tried to capture Cuito Cuanavale in early 1988 but were successfully repelled. While the battle raged, the allied Cuban, Angolan, and Namibian forces, their MiG 23s assuring air superiority, launched a counter-offensive towards the west, advancing on Namibia, liberating the South African-occupied provinces of Angola, and forcing the SADF to retreat from their positions. After failing to take Cuito Cuanavale, losing the territory it occupied, suffering heavy losses, and facing growing resistance to the war amongst its base of white minority supporters at home, the SADF announced its withdrawal from Angola in April 1988. The following month, the apartheid regime agreed to negotiations which took place throughout the year with Angola and Cuba on one side of the table and South Africa and the United States on the other. The rest, as they say, is history: the ANC along with its main ally the South African Communist Party (SACP) were unbanned on 2 February 1990; Mandela was released from prison on 9 February; and Namibia regained its independence on 21 March.

While the apartheid regime tried to spin its defeat in Angola as a tactical retreat – and even a win – newspapers in South Africa and the United States depicted the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale as a victory for the Angolan/Cuban/Namibian alliance. More recently, former SADF commanders have acknowledged they were humiliatingly defeated and outwitted by their opponents, signalling out the brilliance of Fidel Castro, who directed his troops in a command room across the ocean in Cuba. To those who fought against the apartheid regime, there never was any doubt who won the battle. As ANC/SACP leader Ronnie Kasrils recently argued in a 25th anniversary assessment, '. . . the acid test [of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale] is the outcome – which was the end of apartheid'.

Significance

It is imperative that scholars and activists reassert the importance of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale not only for the sake of historical accuracy but also to honour the memory of those who fought and died for the liberation of southern Africa. Cuito Cuanavale was the largest military confrontation on African soil since the Second World War Allies-Axis battles in North Africa. It marked the beginning of the end of white minority domination in southern Africa, the dismantling of the apartheid system, and the total liberation of Africa from European occupation. It shattered the myth of white supremacy that was the ideological foundation of the apartheid regime and the entire European colonial project. It was a profound demonstration of Pan-Africanism, what scholars lately call 'reverse diaspora', as over 50,000 Cubans returned to the land of their ancestry to rid the continent of racist rule. Finally, it was a testament to internationalist solidarity as revolutionary Cuba, always cognizant of the historic debt it owes Africa, sent its best forces and materials to fight against apartheid, leaving itself vulnerable to attack by the United States while expecting and receiving absolutely nothing in return for its sacrifices.

In a speech to tens of thousands in the Cuban city of Matanzas in July 1991, Mandela praised the contributions of Cuba to African liberation, declaring:

'We have long wanted to visit your country and express the many feelings that we have about the Cuban revolution, about the role of Cuba in Africa, southern Africa, and the world.

'The Cuban people hold a special place in the hearts of the people of Africa. The Cuban internationalists have made a contribution to African independence, freedom, and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character . . .

'Your crushing defeat of the racist army at Cuito Cuanavale was a victory for the whole of Africa!'

Today, visitors to Freedom Park in Pretoria will see included on the list of anti-apartheid martyrs the names of the over 2,000 Cubans who lost their lives in Angola. There is no greater authority than those who suffered under apartheid, including Mandela himself, on the question of the significance of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale. ◆

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How Africa is scrambling for Africa

Some 130 years after the Berlin Conference which triggered off the scramble for Africa, a new scramble has begun – this time by African leaders intent on breaking down colonial-era boundaries and reassembling the continent around common economic interests. *Daniel K Kalinaki* explains.

In October President Joseph Kabila *(right)* hosted President Jacob Zuma during the latter's state visit, the first ever by a South African leader to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

TWO meetings of African leaders that took place in the last week of October in towns 1,000 miles apart point to a reshaping of the continent and the emergence of a new scramble for regional political and economic influence.

In Kigali, Rwanda, President Paul Kagame hosted Yoweri Museveni of Uganda and Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta to sign off on a Single Customs Territory for the three countries. President Salva Kiir of South Sudan was also in attendance and his country is expected to eventually join the East African Community and the regional infrastructure projects at the heart of the new 'coalition of the willing' within the EAC.

Around the same time President Joseph Kabila was hosting President Jacob Zuma on a state visit to Kinshasa – the first ever by a South African leader to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Both meetings offer a glimpse into the changing alliances across Africa informed by economic and political interests, and cemented by cross-border infrastructure projects. In Kigali the three presidents tied their countries into an SCT that, in theory, flattens borders, reduces cargo transit time by 75% and cuts the cost by half.

In Kinshasa President Zuma and President Kabila signed a treaty to jointly develop the $80 billion Grand Inga hydropower project. When complete the dam will generate 40,000 megawatts, which is more than two times the amount of power produced by China's Three Gorges Dam.

DR Congo currently has an installed capacity of 2,400MW but only produces about half of that due to ageing and poorly maintained infrastructure; only about one in 10 of the 70 million Congolese has access to electricity.

Most of the power produced out of Inga will, however, be exported – to South Africa, to other countries in the region, and possibly as far north as Europe.

Long courted

South Africa has had a partnership framework with DR Congo in the form of the General Cooperation Agreement signed in 2004 and has long courted the country but Pretoria's newly aggressive foreign policy stance is likely to have wider implications on geopolitical configurations.

The projection of force under the Zuma administration began with the successful installation of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as chairperson of the African Union and, more recently, with Pretoria's deployment of a brigade to the United Nations Intervention Brigade in eastern DR Congo.

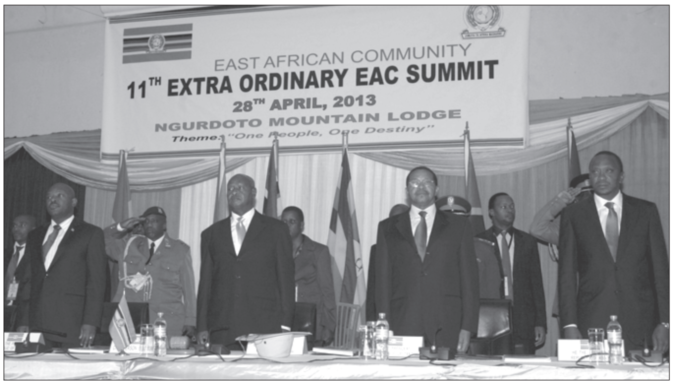
South Africa's deployment and emergence as guarantor of peace and investment partner has turned eastern DR Congo into a theatre of contest between the Southern African Development Community and the East African Community.

Tanzania, which has a leg in SADC, has also contributed troops to the brigade which recently dislodged M23 rebels who retain sympathies and, according to a UN panel of experts' report, support from Rwanda and Uganda.

In a speech before the DRC Parliament President Zuma acknowledged the need for the faltering peace talks in Kampala and the need for a political settlement in eastern Congo but he also fired a veiled warning shot towards the external actors in the conflict.

'South Africa remains deeply concerned by the enduring conflict in eastern Congo, perpetrated by local and externally supported armed groups on innocent Congolese civilians,' he said.

'Enough is enough, the time for peace is now and to those who would challenge this for their own self-interests, we stand firm in the message



A summit meeting of the East African Community. The EAC is expected to admit South Sudan as its newest member state, creating a bloc with a GDP of just over $100 billion.

that your time is now up, lay down your arms, as no longer will the misery you inflict be tolerated.'

Tanzania's deployment in eastern DR Congo alongside South Africa gives the Intervention Brigade a distinctly SADC hue. In addition, Tanzania's recent announcement that it intends to seek new political and economic alliances with Burundi and DR Congo can be seen as a potential re-alignment of Dodoma's loyalties away from the EAC to SADC.

[On 7 November, in addressing the country's parliament, Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete said Tanzania would not leave the EAC, declaring, 'We are loyal to the Community and committed to its growth.' – Editor]

This is a significant development for at least two major reasons. First it tears up the rulebook of regional alliances, which have hitherto been built around shared colonial history and geography (the EAC Treaty, for instance, requires member states to have 'geographical proximity' and 'interdependence').

Secondly, it gives added momentum to the expansion and deepening of regional economic blocs. An alliance between Tanzania, Burundi and DR Congo would lead to a bloc of 124 million people. If this were to align itself with SADC (population 277 million; GDP $650 billion according to World Bank figures) it would create the largest economic bloc on the continent and an economy that would, on paper, be the 20th biggest in the world.

The EAC is expected to admit South Sudan as early as late November when the heads of state summit takes place in Kampala, creating a bloc with a GDP of just over $100 billion with Tanzania and Burundi ($73.5 billion if the two were to leave).

This is likely to be followed by further expansion northwards. Sudan, which applied to join the EAC before Juba, would be a strong candidate depending on its relations with South Sudan, while Somalia has also expressed interest but is unlikely to be admitted until the transitional government attains reasonable control over the country and its own affairs.

The bigger play, however, would then be for Ethiopia, which is already involved in the Lamu-South Sudan-Ethiopia Trade Corridor. A united EAC with South Sudan (population 156 million; GDP $104 billion) is a large market which Ethiopia (population 92 million; GDP $43 billion) can be expected to join as a partner.

Without Tanzania and Burundi the EAC's position becomes weaker (population drops to 98 million; GDP to $74 billion) and Ethiopia can then be expected to try and leverage its size, position, geo-strategic importance as the home of the African Union, and its large military to enter as a first among equals.

Ethiopia could press its advantages further by proposing to join the expanded bloc through an alliance of the EAC and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought and Disease, which also includes Djibouti, Somalia and Sudan alongside Kenya and Uganda.

This would expand the new bloc even further but it would also give Ethiopia a strong negotiating arm and a dominant position within the bloc.

Powerful houses

From a wider perspective, these alignments across the continent could leave Africa with four distinctive regional blocs: a South African-led bloc running from Cape Town to the jungles of DR Congo and the beaches of Dar es Salaam; an Ethiopian-led East African bloc that rises from the hills of Rwanda to the deserts of Sudan; an Egyptian-led Maghreb bloc that stretches across the top of the continent; and a Nigerian-led West African bloc that straddles the belt south of the Sahara and the forests of Central Africa.

This could lead to at least two developments. First is a deepening of integration within each bloc with barriers to trade and the movement of goods and people eliminated, as is happening in the Single Customs Territory in East Africa.

Secondly, this could then provide a geographical base from which cross-border and cross-bloc capital, from the likes of South Africa's MTN and Stanbic to Nigeria's Dangote Group, flows across Africa in pursuit of profit.

With the emergence of powerful continental capital houses and investments as well as fewer but larger and deeply integrated blocs across Africa, the next step would then be the integration of the blocs themselves.

This would not necessarily turn the continent into a country or a federal political entity – naysayers say the continent is too diverse, too varied for that. However, it would turn Africa into a more close-knit continent of a few mega regional blocs brought together by common economic interest and welded together by cross-border highways, oil pipelines, power grids and railway lines.

Some 130 years after Europeans met in Berlin to carve up Africa, a new scramble is underway on the continent, only this time it is by Africans seeking to break down the colonial-era boundaries, redraw the map, and reassemble the continent around common interests, not the interests of colonial masters or their legacy. Africans are about to colonise Africa. ◆

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COVER

Africa has entered a new season of planning and long-term development thinking

After a long hiatus, many African countries which had abandoned such practices under the pressure and advice of the Bretton Woods institutions have now reverted to development planning and long-term development thinking. *Adebayo Olukoshi* explains the revival.

THE interest in, or the revamping of, development planning is increasing on the African continent. There are a lot of opportunities and challenges connected to the rebirth of long-term development visions and planning in Africa. For an appropriate development planning, African countries must have a look back to their experiences of development planning and update their strategies in the light of the lessons learnt. In doing so, it is important to recall the history of the practice of development planning in Africa from the independence era in the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

IDEP

The 50th anniversary conference of the UN African Institute for Economic Development and Planning held in Dakar in January 2013. Interest in development planning is increasing on the African continent.

At the time African countries began to attain their independence, development planning was widely practised by governments around the world. Among the countries of Western Europe fresh from the experience of the Great Depression and the crises of the inter-war years, there was a generalised recognition of the fact that major investments had to be made in reinventing public policy and the role of the public sector in the development process. Much of this thinking was eventually encapsulated in Keynesian economics and it translated into the allocation of a central role to planning in the theory and practice of economic management.

In Eastern Europe, especially among the countries that made up the old Soviet bloc, centralised systems of planning were put in place as a socialist counter to the widespread market failures – and the social dislocations associated with them – that contributed in part to the spread of revolution.

The practices of development planning such as they existed after the Second World War were refracted in their different varieties into policy design and the economic management approaches of the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as colonial rule ended. India stood out as a prime example among the former colonies where the institutions and processes of planning were strongly embedded but China was also to embrace planning following its Maoist revolution of 1949. African countries mostly joined the train in the period from the 1950s onwards even if in countries like Ghana, known as the Gold Coast at the time, the planning experience predated this period.

The arguments in support of development planning were numerous and were also at the heart of ideological arguments among economists about how best to govern an economy and manage the development process. These arguments need not be repeated here; suffice it to note that African countries adopted the planning approach to their development efforts in the conviction that it offered them a much better chance not only to master their nascent post-colonial economies but also to speedily turn the table of underdevelopment.

Development planning remained in vogue across the continent until the end of the 1970s. Following the onset of economic crisis on the continent in the early 1980s, development planning was to come under a severe and sustained attack from the Bretton Woods institutions (i.e., the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) which, guided by the structural adjustment programmes that they designed, launched a determined effort to roll back the state and all semblance of state interventionism in preference for the 'free' market. As part of this ideological and political onslaught, planning institutions were dismantled or downgraded, and in their place, policies designed to 'free' the market and roll back the frontiers of the state were promoted.

If the period from 1960 to 1980

could be described as the era of the growth and consolidation of development planning in Africa following its introduction in the post-war late colonial period, the period from the 1980s to the middle of the new millennium saw its decline and decimation. In place of the five-yearly plans, and with the overarching objective of achieving and sustaining macroeconomic balance that was integral to the neoliberal reform agenda on the continent, governments were, at best, encouraged to embrace Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and in the worst cases, compelled to adopt cash budgeting.

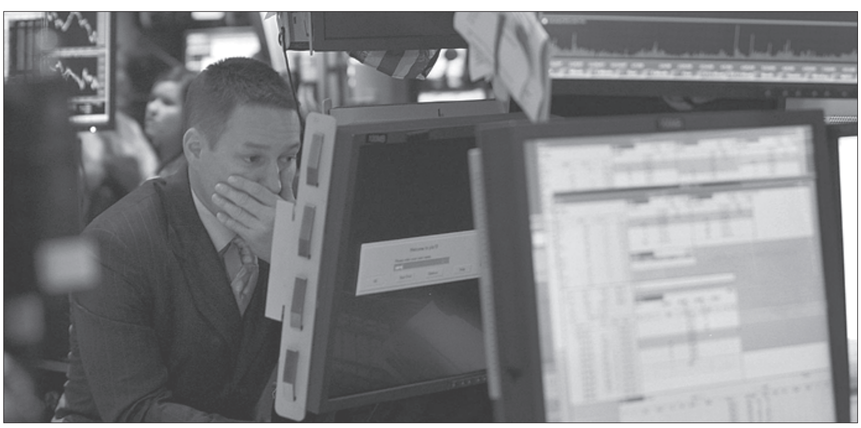
In the 1980s, development planning came under severe and sustained attack from the Bretton Woods institutions, viz. the International Monetary Fund *(pic)* and the World Bank.

In this policy climate, planning became taboo, treated almost as an unwanted relic of an equally unhappy past when the state not only held sway in the shaping and implementation of economic policy but also assumed an important regulatory role and dominated the commanding heights of the economy.

Although episodes of crises in Africa, Latin America and Asia occurred with varying intensity and a worrying frequency between the 1980s and the dawn of the new millennium as to caution against the untrammelled and unidirectional market liberalisation policies which the Bretton Woods institutions were promoting with vigour and speed, helped by an array of conditionalities, these warnings were not seriously heeded until the financial and economic crisis that struck in the United States in 2007-08 and quickly spread to Europe.

Occurring as it did in the heart of global capitalism and shaking the economic foundations of the United States and Europe, the crisis has had the effect of forcing a rethinking of development, the regulation and governance of the market, the developmental role of the state, the place of public policy, and the necessity of planning.

The context of global financial and economic crisis, the relative weakening of the grip of the doctrine of neoliberalism that it generated, the major increase in the economic performance and influence of countries like China, India, Brazil and Russia, and the resumption of noticeable levels of growth in many African countries after years of stagnation and decline all added up to create a new environment within which African policy officials could begin, once again, to develop long-term visions and adopt plans for realising them.



The 2007-08 financial and economic crisis *(pic)* has forced a rethinking of the developmental role of the state and the necessity of planning.

Over the last five years, not less than 30 African countries have adopted new long-term visions and three-to-five-year plans for their realisation. Institutions of development planning which had been dismantled or downgraded under the injunctions of the Bretton Woods institutions are being rebuilt and imbued with responsibilities for economic coordination.

Africa, it would seem, has entered a new season of planning and long-term development thinking. It is a season that has been boosted by the revival of efforts at regional cooperation and integration, efforts which have witnessed the design and implementation of multi-country economic projects that span various sectors and demand equally varying degrees of cross-border coordination.

It bears pointing out, however, that between the late 1950s and today, the world has undergone dramatic changes that mean that the contemporary context of planning is radically different from the earlier one. Rising to the challenges of the changes in context represents one of the historic tasks confronting today's development planner in Africa.

Meeting this challenge will require a careful attention not just to the generation and sustenance of growth but also its nature and quality, the distribution of its benefits, and the tapping of opportunities for structural transformation. An opportunity for development practitioners, senior policy officials, senior policy researchers, and other African leaders to strictly look back at past experiences and prospect future directions of development planning is more than timely. ◆

Adebayo Olukoshi is Director of the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP). This article was originally a background note for the 50th anniversary conference of IDEP held in Dakar in January 2013.

Industrialisation is an imperative for Africa

More and more African leaders are agreed that Africa must go beyond being an exporter of commodities and raw materials and embark on industrialisation. The only debate is on how to make this transition.

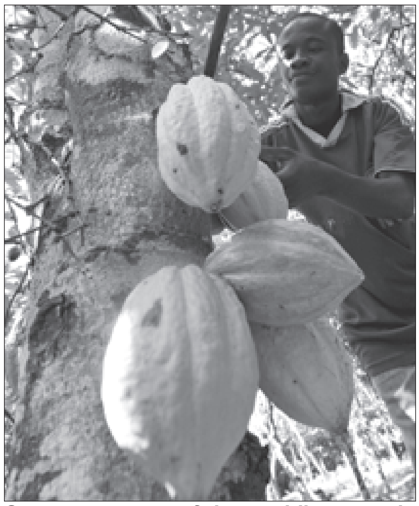
Kingsley Ighobor

CARLOS Lopes, the executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), often talks about Toblerone, the famous chocolate bar manufactured in Switzerland by Kraft Foods, an $18 billion company. Cocoa for Toblerone bars is imported, probably from Africa, where 70% of the world's cocoa is harvested. Lopes once pointed this out to Côte d'Ivoire's president, Alassane Ouattara, and lamented the fact that only about 10% of the money from chocolates goes to cocoa producers, while the rest remains in the rich chocolate-producing countries.

Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana produce 53% of the world's cocoa. But oddly, chocolates on supermarket shelves in the leading cocoa-producing countries come from countries that don't produce cocoa.

Time is now

It's the same story with coffee, cotton, groundnuts, crude oil and so on. 'Up to 90% of income from coffee goes to rich consuming countries,' states the *2013 Economic Report on Africa* published by the ECA and the African Union Commission (AUC). Ethiopian coffee farmers may toil day and night, but they reap comparatively very little. With 12% of the world's oil reserves, 40% of its gold, about 90% of its chromium and platinum, 60% of its arable land and more, Africa should do better at tackling poverty, says the report. Instead, it concentrates on exporting raw materials and importing consumer goods, hindering the ripple effect that value addition to commodities should have in the economy.



Seventy percent of the world's cocoa is harvested in Africa (pic) but only about 10% of the money from chocolates goes to cocoa producers.

This has to stop, Lopes argued with combative fervour at a conference of Africa's ministers of finance, economic planning and development in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, last March. He would like to see chocolate-manufacturing and coffee-producing industries in villages in Côte d'Ivoire and Ethiopia. Nigeria, the world's sixth-largest producer of crude oil, should refine enough for local consumption rather than spending $8 billion a year subsidising fuel imports.

Advocates of commodity-driven industrialisation have a compelling case. It will rev local manufacturing engines and create millions of jobs in Africa. More jobs will reduce poverty and expand the middle class, which will in turn demand more goods and services.

According to the report, adding value to agricultural produce will unleash new opportunities for farmers, who, assured that excess produce will fetch income, could then actively participate in the marketplace. Companies will sprout with new technology, while local industry players, armed with modern skills, could insert themselves into the global trade and exert influence. Value addition could also boost intra-African trade, which is currently low at 12%.

Industrialisation drumbeat

The industrialisation drumbeat is sounding louder each passing day. 'Industrialisation cannot be considered a luxury but a necessity for the continent's development,' says Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, head of the AUC. More urbanisation, a rising middle class, an improved macroeconomic environment, a rising gross domestic product – all are low-hanging fruits that can nourish industrialisation.

Indeed, the stars are aligned in Africa's favour. But some fear that impressive economic growth may mask the reality of poverty and breed complacency. Although Africa's economic growth is currently at 4.8% and could be nearly 6% by 2014, according to the ECA, economists also talk about a 'jobless growth'. Such growth does not stimulate labour-intensive manufacturing to dent unemployment. Africa's global share of manufacturing is just 11%, compared to 31% for East Asia, for instance. Its production of manufactured goods should increase from the current level of 11% to at least 20% of GDP to make any meaningful impact, Lopes told *Africa Renewal* in an interview.

'Today on average manufacturing in Africa's low-income countries is smaller as a percentage of GDP than it was in 1985,' reinforces John Page, in a paper for the Brookings Institution, a Washington think-tank. Page adds that the continent's economic growth and resilience during the 2008-09 global financial crisis were largely due to 'new mineral discoveries, rising commodity prices and the recovery of domestic demand'. This growth trajectory is not sustainable because commodities are mostly exhaustible, and Africa has little control over disruptions in world demand and prices.

Page notes that sustainable growth will depend on structural changes – as in Chile, which has expanded its agro-industry, and India, which has expanded its exports of services. Lopes agrees and calls for 'structural transformation', which is 'a shift from agriculture into industrial and service sectors'. Commodity-based industrialisation, he says, is the bridge from economic growth to jobs creation and social development.

Devil in the details

As Lopes and others made the industrialisation case at the Abidjan conference, the audience, which included many African policy-makers, nodded enthusiastically. However, as to how that goal is to be achieved, the devil appears to be in the details. Even the ECA report acknowledges that not all countries have commodities to export, while others are landlocked and face high transport costs. And most African markets are small and fragmented, which cancels out any competitive advantage smaller countries may have.

To create bigger markets, African countries should integrate their economies. Just imagine the following, said Lopes: 'Togo [six million people] wants to survive on its toothpaste produced in Togo, and Benin [nine million people] also wants to produce its own.' The right recipe for regional integration is that countries concentrate on commodities in which they have a competitive advantage. For example, Benin and Egypt could concentrate on cotton, Togo on cocoa, Zambia on sugar – each country operating in bigger regional markets.

Problems with regional integration, such as weak political commitment and a lack of policy harmonisation, are familiar. Yet the 2013 ECA/AU report is optimistic about the outcome of commodity-based industrialisation, which it insists 'must be grounded in the reality of each country'.

Investing in infrastructure

Poor and obsolete infrastructure hinders industrialisation efforts. On last year's Africa Industrialisation Day, 20 November, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that 'to facilitate trade in goods and services, it is essential to reduce distribution costs', which is only possible through investments in roads, railways and energy infrastructure.

With nearly 600 million people without electricity, Africa is the world's most energy-poor region, said Kandeh Yumkella, the former director-general of the UN Industrial Development Organisation, at a November 2012 lecture at the London Business School. The continent loses '2% to 3% of its GDP because of the lack of reliable energy'.

He noted that Nigeria needs 10,000 megawatts of electricity but generates only 4,500. Yet the country has been flaring gas for 40 years. 'We estimate that the gas flared in Africa can supply half of the continent's electricity needs, but we burn it with no value addition.'

In general, concurs the ECA, entrepreneurs in Africa 'face high transaction costs, protracted and cumbersome administrative procedures and bureaucratic bottlenecks, and poor physical and financial infrastructure'.

Many African governments are investing heavily in infrastructure – railways in South Africa, energy in Ethiopia and Nigeria, road construction in Rwanda and so on. But workers are ringing the alarm bells, worried that industrialisation's promise also has its perils. Imani Countess, the African regional programme director at the Solidarity Center, an international labour rights organisation, said that industrialisation in South Africa – Africa's most industrialised nation – is lowering wages and causing poorer working conditions. Manufacturing companies put pressure on the government to allow individual companies to determine their own labour standards, rather than having to adhere to the national standards.

There was frequent labour unrest in Liberia's Firestone rubber plantation until the company accepted some of the workers' demands for salary increases and a ban on child labour. Workers who constantly agitate against a company's practices can disrupt its operations. Anthony Caroll, a researcher at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington think-tank, wants companies in Africa to be able to hire and fire staff if necessary. On the other hand, Michael Clark, adviser with the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), said at a conference in New York last year that liberalisation policies of the past that softened governments' grip on national economies have hurt Africa as massive profits were repatriated by foreign investors. What Africa needs now is 'strategic policies targeted at specific sectors'. Lopes calls that 'sophisticated protectionism', which allows the government to strategically intervene in the market in a way that benefits national economies.

Any attempt to reset the liberalisation button through policies that appear to go against the free-market principle is bound to be controversial. Lopes argues that 'sophisticated protectionism' policies do not conflict with the World Trade Organisation regulations, as some economists claim. 'Everybody agrees now that there is a role for the state and there is a role for the market,' he says. However, *The Economist*, a London-based magazine, ascribed China's recent huge economic leap to its allowing private enterprise to thrive with little interference, and suggested that India's current economic slowdown and Africa's high poverty rate may be the results of 'monopolies and restrictive practices'.

While the debate continues on the best ways to achieve industrialisation, Yumkella foresees disaster should Africa continue to rely only on commodity exports. The good news is that Africa can aggressively pursue industrialisation; he adds quickly, 'We can do it.' ◆

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Africa strives to move from neo-colonial mining mode

The Africa Mining Vision is an example of the 'breakout' from the mining enclave, a neo-colonial enterprise, to transformative industry through the struggle to control Africa's resources, writes *Alhassan Atta-Quayson*.

AS the African Union marks 50 years since its establishment, one question that lingers on the minds of its people is the extent to which the continent has 'broken out' of the colonial approaches used to extract its natural resources, especially mineral resources. A related question is the extent to which these vast resources have contributed to structural transformation or otherwise on the continent.

The vastness of the continent's mineral resources – though declining since they are finite – is not in question, after luring European colonialists into Africa some centuries ago. Thanks to new discoveries – Africans have not been adequately informed of the types, quantities and qualities of the various minerals in their land – the continent continues to retain its global position as a major producer and exporter of mineral resources in addition to hosting a relatively bigger chunk of proven reserves of various mineral resources (see Table 1).

Colonial mining model

The modus operandi for the exploitation/extraction of mineral resources on the continent has however largely not changed after European colonialists were 'politically' returned over five decades ago. This is in spite of recent (from 2008 onwards) moves by African governments to break out of the mining 'enclaves' operative in various countries with the adoption of the Africa Mining Vision (AMV) by AU heads of state and government in February 2009.

The search for and control of raw materials, including mineral resources, is probably the most important incentive for European penetration and eventual partitioning of the once-vibrant continent of Africa. With this motive, mining activities were undertaken with the overarching aim of extracting raw materials to power foreign economies in diverse ways. Consequently, as countries politically fell under European control, so did their rich and vast mineral resources. The approach to extracting mineral resources under these circumstances is not difficult to describe: high capital intensity, dominance of imported inputs, payments of scanty rent to traditional authorities, little or no attention to environmental management, disregard for human rights, no consideration for local enterprise development and development of linkages, and exportation of minerals produced in their raw form.

This model stands in contrast to the approach in Africa on the eve of the colonial period. The cases of gold, iron and copper illustrate this point. Prior to the arrival of European colonialists, west and southern Africa were major exporters of gold to the rest of the world. Modern-day Ghana, previously referred to as the Gold Coast, was for several years the leading producer of gold in the world.

The case of iron and its related products is even more telling. Yatenga in modern-day Burkina Faso, where there existed about 1,500 smelting furnaces in production, epitomises how vibrant pre-colonial mining in Africa was and its strong linkages with the rest of the local economy. The quality of iron ore and related products made in Yatenga and several other places across the length and breadth of the continent meant that even in the face of European imports, local iron ore production survived into the early 20th century. Finally copper production in Africa, from ancient Egypt through parts of Niger, Mauritania and central and southern Africa, also highlights the continent's mining credentials prior to the current colonial model that dominates African mining. In all these pre-colonial min-

Table 1: Some leading African mineral resources (2005)

Mineral Resources	African % of World	African Rank in World	African % of World Reserve	African Rank in World
Platinum group of metals	54	1	60+	1
Phosphate	27	1	66	1
Gold	20	1	42	1
Chromium	40	1	44	1
Manganese	28	2	82	1
Vanadium	51	1	95	1
Cobalt	18	1	55+	1
Diamonds	78	1	88	1
Aluminium	4	7	45	1
Also Ti (20%), U (20%), Fe (17%), Cu (13%) etc				

Source: The Africa Mining Vision (2009)

ing activities, production processes that were strongly associated with other economic activities covered prospecting, mining, smelting and forging in indigenous ways.

The colonial model of mining has largely remained, although there have been some minute cosmetic changes over time. In the aftermath of the ouster of European colonialists, African governments decided to take control of their mines as well, noting its relevance – jobs, income and foreign exchange – but failed. While that failure is not in much dispute, the causes of the failure continue to be the subject of debate.

Critical voices in Africa point fingers at the nature, design and performance of the global metals market and the US' pegging of her currency against gold value (price) thereby fixing the gold price for some time. These circumstances determined the amount of revenues earned by African governments and the proportion that could be re-invested in mining activities. Those revenues were highly volatile and often at the low ends of the range. This had obvious implications on re-investment, recruiting and keeping expertise and skills, and research – key factors of success in mining. Yet others are quick to point to corruption, inefficiency and lack of foresight in the sector after African governments began taking control of the mines.

The Lagos Plan of Action

By the early 1980s, mining in most countries in Africa had nearly collapsed amid the dire challenges that many African economies were facing around that time. These circumstances forced African leaders to draw up a policy whose implementation had a lot of promise for industrialisation and economic transformation. This policy was the Lagos Plan of Action (LPA). The LPA had some thought on how Africa's vast natural resources (including minerals) could contribute to structural transformation. Its implementation would have clearly improved Africa's economic standing and more importantly broken the widespread colonial mining enclaves on the continent. Unfortunately the policy did not see the light of day.

Instead, international financial institutions (particularly the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), having emerged as lenders to African economies around that time, reconstituted themselves into economic planning agencies and in the mid-1980s prescribed policies for African governments. These policies were contained in the Economic Reform Programmes (ERP) and Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) that challenged the LPA and more importantly deliberately opened up African markets to the detriment of local production. With regard to mining, governments were asked to divest and concentrate instead on providing an 'enabling environment' to attract foreign investors. Besides onerous incentive packages (largely fiscal) offered, mines owned and controlled by governments were 'handed over' on a silver platter to foreign miners.

The ERP and SAP succeeded in attracting investment to the mining sector but failed in addressing the key issue of transforming the sector into a vehicle for sustainable and all-inclusive development. Consequently Africa's mineral resources have not contributed positively to structural transformation. Regrettably, some conflicts on the continent have been linked to extraction of mineral resources.

In many parts of Africa, destruction of livelihoods to pave the way for large-scale mines has been a major source of conflicts as companies hardly pay 'adequate' and 'prompt' compensation to affected farmers and landowners, as required by many statutes on the continent. Various forms of pollution, especially water pollution, and destruction of properties (due to blasting) have also emerged as major contributory factors to mining-related conflicts on the continent.

In the past few years, the failure of the mining regime to produce fair returns to various stakeholders (especially governments) has also become a major source of contention, resulting in what has been described as 'resource nationalism'. These weaknesses are illustrated by how the recent mining boom lifted mining profits through the roof but left African governments with a disappointing share. As communities go through various challenges in containing capital-intensive large-scale mines and the general public fail to benefit from mining because of continued utilisation of the colonial mining model, African governments now feel the brunt from the receipt of inadequate financial benefits.

The Africa Mining Vision

These circumstances have persuaded African governments to rethink the operative mining model. A key development in this rethinking process was the adoption of the AMV and the processes initiated since then towards the realisation of the vision. The vision rightly acknowledges that 'Africa's efforts to transform the mining sector away from its colonially-created enclave features have so far met with very limited success'.

The AMV thus set out its primary purpose as offering 'a framework for integrating the sector more coherently and firmly into the continent's economy and society'. Whereas the AMV is viewed as a breakthrough as far as the goal of harnessing mineral resources for sustainable and all-inclusive development is concerned, challenges and hurdles still remain in the way of realising the vision. While emerging parallel initiatives such as the Natural Resources Charter and the European Union's Raw Materials Initiative could challenge the realisation of the AMV, of more importance is how African governments can 'walk the talk'. The regulatory framework must change to be AMV-compliant following required changes in national mining policies, mining contracts must be renegotiated, and Africans, particularly those with responsibilities, must change their ways. ◆

Alhassan Atta-Quayson is Programme Officer with TWN Africa. This article is reproduced from African Agenda *(Vol. 16, No. 2).*

Emerging trends in political violence in Africa

Political violence tied to electoral competition is on the rise across countries in Africa south of the Sahara, along with a contest over livelihood resources. These pose major threats to the well-being of the continent's population and its young democracies, writes *Kwesi W Obeng*.

THIS year, 2013, marks the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), predecessor to the African Union, to promote the unity and solidarity of African states to accelerate their efforts at achieving a better life for Africans.

Attempts at unifying Africa remain a work in progress at best but African leaders have declared 2013 as the 'Year of Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance' to promote 'an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in global arena'.

Year-long activities are planned to facilitate and celebrate African narratives of past, present and future to energise Africa's one-billion-strong population to use their 'constructive energy to accelerate a forward looking agenda of Pan-Africanism and renaissance in the 21st century'.

Over the last half-century, a number of issues and events have pulled together to define Africa (rightly or wrongly); how Africans see themselves; and how the rest of the world perceives the continent. Two of such issues are poverty and political violence perpetrated especially on Africans by fellow Africans and of course by external powers.

The global perception of Africa is also changing somewhat. Not too long ago, Africa was described as 'the dark continent', 'the hopeless continent' and similar disparaging terms. Today, the same people are describing the continent in superlative terms. The African continent is now talked about in the global media and global centres of power and commerce as the 'world's next economic powerhouse'. Perhaps the phrase that has caught the public imagination around the world the most is 'Africa rising'. The 'Africa rising' narrative is woven around the extraordinary expansion of economies on the continent, particularly the mineral, oil and gas-endowed states, since the year 2000.

While the focus of this article is the emerging trends in political violence in Africa, it is worth stating that with both China and India rapidly pulling ahead in the economic transformation of their societies, especially in the last two decades, poverty is now regarded essentially as an African problem, nevermind that there are many more poor people in India alone than in the whole of Africa.

The causes and motivation for political violence are immense. Central to any analysis of violence in politics is the question of power. The deeply entrenched patrimonial and rent-seeking politics practised across Africa, in which political leaders essentially retain their grip on political power by distributing public resources, contracts and jobs to cronies without recourse to laid-down rules, if they exist, has been noted as a major source of tension in African politics.

Again, the general lack of distinction between the personal and public and between individual and the state compounds the opaqueness of African politics and its linkage to political violence and crime. In too many cases, power holders have treated state resources as personal properties as many office holders perceive public office not so much as a privilege to serve the people but as an avenue to extract and accumulate personal wealth. In essence, the elite are mostly unaccountable to the people in many African polities.

Political violence is perpetrated by both state (including the army, police and parastatals) and non-state actors. Warfare and even mass massacres – as in Rwanda in 1994 and Sierra Leone and Liberia in the 1990s – have not been peripheral to Africa's post-independence experience. About two-thirds of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have experienced an armed conflict since independence but political violence is by no means exceptional to Africa. According to the United Nations, more than 90% of all Africans live in neither war nor crisis areas.

Leading political violence datasets such as the Armed Conflict Database from the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme, the Peace Research Institute of Oslo and the Social Conflict in Africa Database show that in comparison to other regions of the world, Africa is the leader in neither the frequency nor duration of such major forms of political violence. Asia is a leader in both frequency and duration of major forms of political violence.

Historically, there have been shifts in political violence in Africa. Over the last half-century, there has been a shift from anti-colonial wars, to proxy wars of the Cold War era, to what some academics describe as 'reform' (representing the NRM regime of Uganda's Yoweri Museveni) to warlordism as exemplified by warlords in both the Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars of the 1990s.

The struggle for independence

and the Cold War gave rise to different kinds of violence. The superpower rivalry of the Cold War era, for example, triggered and funded the bitter civil wars in Angola and Mozambique. In Angola, the United States along with its Western allies and then apartheid South Africa armed Jonas Savimbi's UNITA against the Marxist MPLA regime. In Mozambique too, the United States and other Western powers and the racist South African regime engineered and armed RENAMO to fight another Marxist administration, FRELIMO. Although they have ended, these wars remain some of Africa's longest and most bitter conflicts.

Presently there are about a dozen low-level insurgencies on the continent. These include the separatist movement in the Caprivi Strip in Namibia, the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda, Boko Haram in Nigeria, the Casamance insurgency in Senegal, Cabinda separatists in Angola, Tuareg and Al Qaeda affiliates in northern Mali and the Sahel, the Ogaden insurrection in Ethiopia, several armed groups in Chad, Central African Republic and Congo DR, Darfur region in Sudan and insurgencies in Africa's newest state, South Sudan.

Electoral competition

While there has been a consistent decline in warfare and large-scale mass killing of civilians including genocide over the last decade, other forms and patterns of political violence are emerging or are re-emerging in Africa. Of the two most important emerging forms of political violence, one is closely tied to electoral competition and the other linked to livelihood resources.

From Kenya to Nigeria, Malawi to Madagascar, Ghana to Uganda, Cameroon to Ethiopia, Cote d'Ivoire to Guinea and from Senegal to Zimbabwe, election-related violence has claimed thousands of lives, homes and businesses. These conflicts have the tendency of setting back the economic recovery process as they seem to reoccur with each election cycle in the various countries.

In many countries on the continent, electoral competition is generally pursued as a zero-sum game and political opponents are subjected to intimidation, harassment, violent displacement and even death. That the winner of an election gets to control nearly every aspect of the state system raises the spectre of violent contestation of electoral outcomes.

Elections may be the *sine qua non* of democracy but they remain significantly inadequate, even ineffectual, in addressing social grievances, particularly grievances linked to growing land and water scarcity, environmental destruction, food insecurity, socio-economic inequity and population growth in the region.

A number of factors may account for the high levels of political violence associated with the electoral process in Africa, including not least the deeply entrenched informal patronage systems, politics of exclusion, mal-governance and socio-economic uncertainties of losing political power, especially as most African constitutions concentrate power at the centre – the presidency. Weak electoral institutions, election fraud and the general opaqueness of elections and rules governing the electoral process in some countries could also be attributed to the levels of violence associated with electoral contests in Africa's young democracies.

The massive 'third wave of democratisation' that swept across the continent in the 1980s and 1990s was expected to end the cycle of senseless violence and introduce a more transparent and predictable election of leaders and development of rule-based governance institutions on the continent. However, the promise of a peace dividend has truly been shortlived. In some countries, it never materialised. A case in point is Congo DR.

The brutal killing of about 1,500 people following the disputed presidential elections in 2007 in Kenya perhaps marked a watershed in this new trend of political violence connected to electoral contests in Africa.

Assassinations of high-ranking political figures and their supporters have characterised Nigerian and Guinea Bissau elections in recent years. The April 2011 polls that elected Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan to office touched off ethno-sectarian riots, resulting in about 500 deaths. In South Africa, clashes between the ruling African National Congress and the Inkatha Freedom Party claimed over 2,000 lives between 1990 and 1994.

In Ghana, a razor-thin victory by one of the two major political parties nearly turned violent in 2008. Results of the country's 2012 presidential polls were contested at the country's Supreme Court. The opposition New Patriotic Party contested the declaration of the ruling National Democratic Congress candidate and former vice president John Mahama as president of the republic. After eight months of hearing the case, the Supreme Court upheld (by a 5-4 majority decision) that Mahama was duly elected. The Court also called for reforms of the country's electoral system.

Prior to the Court's ruling on 29 August, civil society groups and policy research think-tanks had warned of the likelihood of pockets of violence breaking out especially in the Great Accra Region, Ashanti Region and the Northern Region whichever way the verdict went. However, no violent incidents were recorded after the Court's verdict, a poignant testament to the country's strengthening democracy.

Raila Odinga, former Prime Minister and the defeated candidate of the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) in the 4 March 2013 Kenyan presidential election, challenged the results at the courts. Kenya's Supreme Court treated with dispatch and upheld the verdict of the Electoral Commission which declared Uhuru Kenyatta and his Jubilee alliance as winner of the polls. No violence linked to the Court's verdict was recorded but Kenyatta and his vice president William Ruto are facing charges of genocide at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. The charges are linked to their alleged involvement in the bloody 2007 post-election violence.

Kenya and Ghana, historical trendsetters in Africa, may yet be setting a precedent on the issue of contestation of disputed election results through clearly laid-down procedures, the courts, rather than the resort to violence on the streets with guns, machetes and sticks. However, the payoffs from electoral violence in Africa are huge, including access to juicy and high-profile public jobs and contracts, and so it remains to be seen if other countries will follow this precedent.

But of course other forms of political violence also matter, not least those linked to livelihood resources. Indeed, the widely reported electoral violence cases in Cote d'Ivoire, Kenya and Zimbabwe all had access to land (or the lack of it) at the core.

As climate change takes its toll on Africa's vulnerable landscape – leaving its watersheds and rivers dry – and the extractive industry renders its most arable lands uncultivable and displaces rural communities, even as reinvestment of even the minimal revenue from mining into industries that can outlive the mines is lacking, contestation over livelihood resources such as land and water is set to intensify.

Already the science shows that given Africa's geo-physical characteristics and lack of depth and poor quality of infrastructure, the continent will suffer the worst consequences of global climate change, unlike any other region of the world.

Linked to these is a growing wealth gap as African economies expand. The growing inequity in the distribution of this new wealth is feeding anger in many parts of Africa. Put bluntly, the economic growth of the last decade has yet to trickle down.

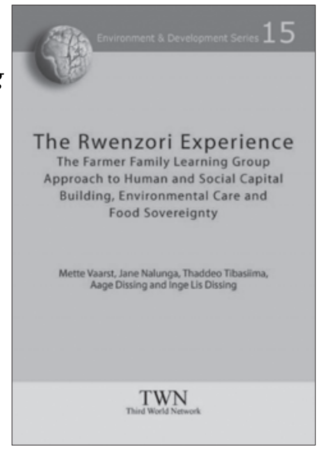
Africa cannot afford to slip up on tackling both political violence associated with elections and threats posed to livelihood resources from various sources. ◆

Kwesi W Obeng is Assistant Editor of African Agenda. *This is a revised version of an article which originally appeared in* African Agenda *(Vol. 16, No. 2).*

The Rwenzori Experience

The Farmer Family Learning Group Approach to Human and Social Capital Building, Environmental Care and Food Sovereignty

Mette Vaarst, Jane Nalunga, Thaddeo Tibasiima, Aage Dissing and Inge Lis Dissing



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This booklet is a portrait of a unique participatory learning project involving farming communities in the Rwenzori region of Western Uganda. The project brought rural households together in 'Farmer Family Learning Groups' (FFLGs) with the aim of enhancing community food security.

Guided by a facilitator, the families in each group supported one another in their farming activities, working together, sharing knowledge and learning from each other's experiences. Through such collaboration and the use of organic and agro-ecological farming methods, the FFLGs have brought about increased yields and improved livelihoods for member families. In cooperating on the farm, members also came to enjoy closer relationships off it, within and among their families as well as in the broader local community.

This booklet, written by the coordinators of the FFLG project, looks at the guiding principles behind the project, how it has worked in practice, the successes achieved and challenges faced. As the authors explain, the Rwenzori Experience is one which highlights the value of a collaborative approach to food security and sustainable development. It is an 'approach which is owned by everybody who uses it, and cannot be patented'.

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Asking the wrong questions: Did the Arab revolutions fail?

Since 2011, Arab countries of Northern Africa such as Tunisia and Egypt have witnessed popular revolts against autocratic rulers. The vicissitudes of these upheavals have provoked some hasty judgments and comments as to their outcome. *Ramzy Baroud* comments.

CHALLENGING the falsehoods and simplifications that surrounded the so-called Arab Spring from the very start doesn't necessarily mean that one is in doubt of the very notion that genuine revolutions have indeed gripped various Arab countries for nearly three years.

In fact, the revolutionary influx is still underway, and it will take many years before the achievements of these popular mobilisations can be truly felt.

One can understand the frustration and deep sense of disappointment resulting from the state of chaos in Libya, the political wrangling in Yemen and Tunisia, the brutal civil war in Syria, and of course, the collective heartbreak felt throughout the Arab world following the bloody events in Egypt. But to assign the term 'failure' to the Arab revolutions is also a mistake equal to the many miscalculations that accompanied the nascent revolutions and uprisings from the start.

Flawed discourse

Many lapses of judgment were made early on, starting with the lumping together of all Arab countries into one category – discussed as single news or academic topics. It was most convenient for a newspaper to ask such a question as 'who's next?' when Libya's Muammar al-Gaddafi was so pitilessly murdered by NATO-supported rebels. It is equally convenient for academicians to keep contending with why the Egyptian army initially took the side of the 25 January revolution, the Syrian army sided with the ruling party, while the Yemeni army descended into deep divisions.

Newspaper coverage of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's ouster in 2011. Since their outbreak, the revolutions in Arab countries have headed in sharply different ways.

In the rush to emphasise one's intellectual authority, if not ownership over the narrative and for political reasons as well, the Arabs were dissected in every possible way, stretched in every possible direction, and reduced in such useful, yet flawed, ways that quick answers could be obtained.

While answers were readily available as to why the Arabs revolted, time has proven much of the early discourses inane and misleading. The revolutions have headed in sharply different ways. This is a testament to the uniqueness of circumstances, historical and otherwise, which surround each country – as opposed to the wholesale representation offered by the media. It is an argument I made soon after Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled the country.

My argument was a response to the euphoria of expectations made by media 'experts' and journalists who clearly had little understanding or, dare I say, respect of history or knowledge about the complex realities in which each Arab country is situated. Many went on to write books, while others inspired audiences around the world with fiery speeches about collective Arab Islamic awakenings even before we conjured up basic ideas of what was truly manifesting before our own eyes. These manifestations were at times very violent and involved many players, from Qatar to China, and groups that varied in roots, ideology and sources of funds.

But as the plot thickened, much of the distorted accounts of 'Twitter revolutions' and such, grew less relevant and eventually faded away. Take the case of Libya as an example. Those with simple answers, reflecting a truly modest understanding of Arab societies, could hardly understand the complex nature of Libya's tribal society, the socioeconomics governing relations between East and West, urban areas with desert towns, and Libya's African context and relationships.

When NATO used the Libyan uprising, mostly in the eastern parts of the country, to achieve its own political objectives, it converted a regional uprising into an all-out war that left the country in a status comparable to that of a failed state. Almost immediately after NATO declared the Libyan revolution victorious, the excitement over the Libyan component of the 'Arab Spring' became less visible, and eventually completely dis-

A February 2011 protest in Cairo's Tahrir Square against the Mubarak regime. The mass mobilisations in Arab countries 'sent the entire region into disarray, but it is the price one would expect when powerful regimes and foreign powers are challenged by long-disempowered, disorganised and oppressed people.'

sipated. Since then Libya has hardly followed a path of democracy and reforms. In fact, the harms that resulted from the Libyan crisis, such as the massive influx of weapons and refugees to other African countries, destabilised the entire country of Mali.

As a result, Mali too went through its own upheaval, military coup, civil war and finally a French-led war in the course of two years. Unfortunately, these issues are hardly discussed within the Libyan context since Mali is not Arab, thus such inconvenient stories do no service to the simplified 'Arab Spring' discourse.

People gathering around a burning car after a fatal explosion in the Libyan city of Benghazi, August 2013. 'When NATO used the Libyan uprising, mostly in the eastern parts of the country, to achieve its own political objectives, it converted a regional uprising into an all-out war that left the country in a status comparable to that of a failed state.'

The consequences of the Libyan fiasco will continue to reverberate for many years to come. But since simple arguments cannot cope with intricate narratives, media 'experts' and other intellectual peddlers have moved elsewhere, selling the same tired arguments about other Arab countries by insisting on the same failed, expedient logic.

While some parties continue to ascribe the same language they used in the early months of 2011 to these revolutions, the shortcomings of these revolutions eventually gave credence to those who insist that the 'Arab Spring' was entirely farce – incepted, controlled and manipulated by US hands, and funds of rich Arab countries. These critics either have no faith in Arab masses as a possible factor of change in their own countries, or have become accustomed to judging the world and all of its happenings as a colossal conspiracy where the US and its friends are the only wheelers and dealers. As vigilant as one must remain to drivel promoted as news in the mass media, one must not fall into the trap of seeing the world through the prism of an American plot in which we are co-conspirators, hapless fools or unwilling participants.

Challenging the status quo

The Arab revolutions have not failed, at least not yet. It will take us years, or maybe even an entire generation, to assess their failures or successes. They have 'failed' according to our hyped expectations and erroneous understanding of history. What popular revolutions do is introduce new factors that challenge the way countries are ruled. In the post-colonial Middle East, Arab countries were ruled through dictators – and their local associates – and foreign powers. The harmony and clashes between the dictator and the foreigner determined the course of events in most Arab countries – in fact in most post-colonial experiences around the world.

This is where the real significance of the mass mobilisations in Arab countries becomes very important, for the 'people' – a factor that is still far from being fully defined – challenged the rules of the game and mixed up the cards. True, they sent the entire region into disarray, but it is the price one would expect when powerful regimes and foreign powers are challenged by long-disempowered, disorganised and oppressed people.

The Arab revolutions have not failed, but they have not succeeded either. They have simply challenged the status quo like never before. The outcome of the new conflicts will define the politics of the region, its future, and the relationships between governments and the upcoming generations of Arabs. ◆

Ramzy Baroud (www.ramzybaroud.net) is a media consultant, an internationally syndicated columnist and the editor of PalestineChronicle.com, from which this article is reproduced. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story *(Pluto Press).*

The Maputo Protocol: Its potential for a revolution in women's rights

It is now 10 years since the African Union, meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. *Moreen Majiwa* assesses the significance of this important document in advancing the cause of gender equality in the continent.

'The speed with which the Protocol came into force on 25 November 2005 sets a new record for the ratification of pan-African rights standards for the continent. A key lesson is that the challenges of working with countries across the continent can be overcome by collaboration between governments, the AU Commission and national and regional women's associations.' – HE Alpha Konare, Founding Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission (2000-08), 2006, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The July 2003 summit of the African Union which adopted the Maputo Protocol. The Protocol is the first international instrument to speak specifically to the rights of women in the African context.

GENDER plays a significant part in defining and determining the access that women have and the role that they play in governance, economic development, and in society as a whole. Traditional gender roles have confined women to the private sphere. Lobbying from women's rights activists and mounting evidence of the correlation between gender equality and positive economic development and democratic reform have led to efforts at global, continental, regional and national levels to mainstream gender equality. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the African Women's Protocol) is a manifestation of these efforts.

Grounded in the belief that instruments, protocols, laws and policies are powerless to change the lives of African women in the absence of an organised public demand for their implementation and enforcement, Oxfam's Pan Africa Programme through its Gender Justice Pillar works with partners including the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition to build and mobilise a critical mass of active citizens to advocate for effective realisation of women's rights contained in the African Women's Protocol. Oxfam Pan Africa Programme also supports accelerated ratification, domestication and implementation of the African Women's Protocol through the State of the Union, a coalition of civil society organisations that tracks the compliance of AU State Parties on 14 key policies and frameworks adopted by the African Union, one of which is the African Women's Protocol.

Adopted by the African Union in July 2003, the African Women's Protocol is a revolutionary legal instrument on women's rights and is the first international instrument to speak specifically to the rights of women in the African context. Countries that ratify the Protocol agree not only to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women but also to end all forms of violence against women, abolish harmful cultural practices that affect women including child marriage and female genital mutilation, and protect women's reproductive health rights, including the right to abortion in cases of rape, incest or to protect the life of the mother. The Protocol also binds State Parties to the provision of political and economic rights on an equal footing with men, obligating State Parties to ensure equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making, maintenance of peace and security, and provide for affirmative action.

In the 10 years since its adoption, 36 of the 54 African states have ratified the African Women's Protocol. In line with ratification, significant strides have been made at national level to ensure legislative recognition of women's rights. For instance in 2004, Ethiopia passed the most progressive abortion laws in Africa. At least 22 African countries prohibit discrimination based on sex. Malawi and South Africa prohibit discrimination based on sex and marital status.

In the last decade Africa has seen the election of two female heads of state (Joyce Banda and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf); three female Nobel Peace Prize winners (Wangari Maathai, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah

Efforts to mainstream gender equality are yet to deliver transformation in gender relations and ensure equal rights for women.

Gbowee); and the first female head of the African Union (Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma). Four African countries (Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, and South Africa) are ranked amongst the top 10 in women's representation in parliament.

Despite encouraging trends and an increasingly enabling women's rights legislative and policy environment, gender gaps still exist in every sector – access to justice, healthcare, education, economic opportunities and political participation. Women in most parts of Africa continue to face cultural, social and economic barriers because of disparate access to education, healthcare, and political and economic opportunities. Gender roles continue to influence crucial societal and individual decisions on educating women, women's political and economic participation, and on fertility.

Creating a consensus on the integration of the African Women's Protocol at national level has been difficult. Though a majority of African countries have ratified the Protocol, several of these countries have placed reservations on the articles considered controversial. The decision of State Parties to ratify the Protocol with reservations particularly in the areas of early marriage, property rights and reproductive rights directly impacts women's equality.

Efforts to integrate women's rights and mainstream gender equality through the African Women's Protocol are commendable but they are yet to deliver transformation in gender relations and ensure equal rights for women. This is because gender/women's rights reforms have been piecemeal and have traditionally involved the 'adding on' of gender equality or women's rights legislation to already-existing flawed and patriarchal institutions, structures and laws. In addition, a narrow interpretation of gender equality as simply the 'addition' of women, has led to the application of several gender reform initiatives that do not deal with the root causes of gender inequalities in society and in some instances reinforce them.

In order to ensure gender equality and transformation in gender relations between women and men, a 'comprehensive change that radically alters the status quo of the power relations', rather than ad hoc or piecemeal reforms that simply attach the concepts of gender onto already-existing structures, is needed. A robust gendered analysis of the continent's gender equality and women's rights framework could provide the tool for transformation through:

• Interrogating existing women's rights/gender equality frameworks and mechanisms at both continental and national levels

• Examining why the existing women's rights/gender equality frameworks and mechanisms fail to close existing gender gaps

• Challenging the mainstream paradigm that allows implementers to pay lip service to gender equality and women's rights

• Holding the AU and member states accountable for normative frameworks and policies to which they have assented.

The African Women's Protocol and the AU's gender architecture (Article 4L of the Constitutive Act of the African Union; the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality; the AU Gender Policy; and the AU Women's Decades) provide significant opportunities for the creation of continental standards on gender equality and women's rights. Mapping of policies and laws that relate to or affect gender and women at the national level is critical to ensuring informed policy advocacy that would be targeted at national and continental institutions.

The African Union oversight mechanisms such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights provide an avenue to monitor implementation as well as create standards on implementation of the Protocol through eliciting general comments from the African Commission. Capacity development for targeting oversight institutions at the national level, i.e. national assemblies, judiciaries, relevant ministries and law enforcement agencies, is crucial for the progressive domestication and implementation of the Protocol.

The progress in gender equality and the efforts of women's organisations, feminist activists and academics in the advancement of women's rights across the continent cannot be discounted. Existing continental, regional and national legislative and policy frameworks on women's rights are a crucial foundation and provide a starting point as far as setting continental norms on women's rights and transformation of gender relations are concerned. The experiences of countries where there have been efforts at domestication and implementation and practical application of the African Women's Protocol provide several lessons with regard to the (in)ability of current gender mainstreaming frameworks to deliver on the gender transformation agenda. The African Women's Protocol provides an essential entry point for civil society groups and women's rights organisations to engage with continental and national policy makers and push for the adoption of a more transformative agenda in national-level domestication and implementation of the Protocol. ◆

Moreen Majiwa is legal officer, Gender Justice, at Oxfam GB's HECA (Horn, East and Central Africa) Office. This article is reproduced from Pambazuka News *(No. 647, 26 September 2013, pambazuka.org).*

COVER

Reversing the downward spiral in Africa's rural sector

Roger Leakey argues that multifunctional agriculture that simultaneously rehabilitates degraded farmlands and diversifies poor smallholder farming systems with indigenous species of trees may hold the key to boosting the incomes and livelihoods of Africa's rural poor.

cc Trees for the Future

Trees being readied for planting for the restoration of degraded land in Cameroon. Farmers in Cameroon had called for the reintroduction and cultivation of indigenous trees that provide fruits, nuts, leaves and medicinal products.

Redefining problems without solutions[1]

IN *Global Development Goals – Leaving No-one Behind*,[2] the United Nations Association of the United Kingdom (UNA-UK) presents a collection of articles by eminent people in important positions around the globe. Although this report identifies progress towards some Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), it recognises that success has been uneven. The principal achievement of the MDGs has been 'shaping the international discourse and driving the allocation of resources towards key global development goals ... with unprecedented political commitment and a strong consensus for tackling poverty and other development problems'.

The report itself, however, makes rather depressing reading as it seems we are not really making huge progress in our efforts to address the big issues facing the world, especially with regard to the gap between rich and poor. Instead of identifying solutions, this booklet redefines the problems and we go from eight Millennium Development Goals to 12 Post-2015 Development Goals. It seems we still haven't learnt that hunger, malnutrition, poverty and many of the other things on our 'to-do wish list' are part of a bigger and inter-related complex of issues. Why?

Maybe the problem is the size and complexity of all the interacting factors impacting on the lives of people scattered across numerous sectors and strata of society. The 'development' agenda is very multi-disciplinary and is partitioned between rural and urban situations. Furthermore, it requires some detailed understanding of biophysical and socioeconomic issues best addressed within holistic integrated rural development programmes. Unfortunately, we live in a world where problems and solutions are confined to disconnected silos. How to proceed is also influenced by the very different perspectives of people depending on whether they are looking from industrial or the least developed countries.

The poverty trap

Many of the problems arising from poverty in urban areas of least developed countries arise from inward migration from the countryside. Thus, central to making progress across all the development targets is tackling the root causes of land degradation and rural poverty.

The biggest issue in the rural tropics is that actual crop yields are well below the yield potential of modern varieties (this difference is called the yield gap). The reasons are complex. First, there is the crippling decline of soil fertility and a loss of agroecological functions. This results in land degradation and the loss of biodiversity above and below ground. This is exacerbated by persistent high levels of poverty, which deny farmers access to modern technologies such as fertilisers and other agricultural inputs. Consequently we have billions of marginalised people, many of them farming households, trapped in poverty and suffering from malnutrition, hunger and poor health. They also lack access to clean water, medical and other social services, and opportunities for education and employment – indeed all the things highlighted by the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Reversing the downward spiral and closing the yield gap

To try to get a better understanding of the issues in rural Africa, the staff of the World Agroforestry Centre asked farmers in Cameroon what they would like to see from agriculture. That was 20 years ago. Their illuminating and unexpected request was for the chance to reintroduce and cultivate the indigenous trees that used to provide fruits, nuts, leaves, medicinal products etc. when they were hunter-gatherers before the destruction of forests and woodlands.

Responding to this request has led to a multi-disciplinary innovation to address the complex set of issues driving the downward spiral to social deprivation in which land degradation drives poverty and poverty drives land degradation. This is the cause of the yield gap. To close this yield gap it is necessary to reverse the downward spiral by rehabilitating the land and creating a source of income.

In simple terms, this involves a three-step approach that can be easily adapted to the needs of different sets of biophysical and socioeconomic situations found in different locations. Rehabilitation involves restoring the ecological health of the farming system to address declining yields and to promote food security by ensuring the proper functioning of the agroecosystem (step 1); enriching these farming systems with the 'Trees of Life' that produce highly nutritious and marketable products that are also traditionally and culturally important (step 2); and finally promoting local cottage industries to create business and employment opportunities in value-adding that lift communities out of poverty (step 3).[3]

The second step mentioned above is in response to the request of the farmers. The World Agroforestry Centre, together with other research teams around the world, have developed a participatory approach engaging local communities to domesticate these 'Trees of Life' using appropriate village-based technologies that can be implemented by poor farmers in remote villages in the tropics. This process and how it addresses big global issues is the subject of my book *Living with the Trees of Life – Towards the Transformation of Tropical Agriculture*.[4] The trees are also of course long-lived perennial plants that sequester carbon in their biomass, in the soil and in other vegetation.

Albeit on a small scale (about 10,000 farmers in 500 villages), the results of this initiative in Cameroon have been spectacular and the integration of these trees in local farming systems has acted as a catalyst for the stimulation of social, economic and environmental benefits – a list too long to present here, except to say that lives are improving and the average income from community nurseries has risen from essentially nothing to \$145, \$16,000 and \$28,350 after two, five and 10 years, respectively. One consequence is that some youths have decided to stay in the community rather than seek urban employment because they can see a future in their villages. The benefits address many of the constraints arising from the failure of modern agriculture – malnutrition, poverty and environmental degradation, including climate change. These are the same constraints responsible for the loss of productivity, the global food crisis and hunger in nearly half the world population.

The most innovative thing about this approach is that it is multi-disciplinary and based on the ideas and innovations implemented by poor African farmers. Now, 20 years after the start of the World Agroforestry Centre's study, it is becoming clear that these African farmers actually identified the key which unlocks the Rural Development Syndrome (relief from hunger, malnutrition, poverty, social injustice, environmental degradation and loss of ecological services).

I have presented '12 Principles for Better Food and More Food from Mature Perennial Agroecosystems'[5] based on lessons drawn from the study. It involves the delivery of multifunctional agriculture to simultaneously rehabilitate degraded farmland and diversify poor smallholder farming systems with indigenous species that the farmers in Cameroon wanted. These principles point the way to integrated rural development through the sustainable intensification of tropical agriculture, rural business development for economic growth and enhanced well-being for billions of marginalised people.

Hopefully, 'a new Eden is around the corner' if we put our minds to it and put our money where our mouths are. This could be the 'kick-off' to a match where we start scoring many of the Post-2015 Development Goals. ◆

Prof Roger Leakey is Vice Chairman of the International Tree Foundation and author of Living with the Trees of Life – Towards the Transformation of Tropical Agriculture. *This article is reproduced from the website of the Institute of Science in Society (www.i-sis.org.uk).*

Endnotes

1. This article describes one of many case studies and solutions to poverty presented recently in United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *Trade and Environment Review 2013: Wake Up Before It Is Too Late – Make Agriculture Truly Sustainable Now for Food Security in a Changing Climate*, Geneva, 2013, http://unctad.org/en/pages/PublicationWebflyer.aspx?publicationid=666. See Ho MW, 'Paradigm shift urgently needed in agriculture', *Science in Society*, 60.
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VIEWPOINT

The wisdom we have lost in knowledge

Jeremy Seabrook contends that, while the harvest of information reaped by its spy agency, the National Security Agency, may prove invaluable to the US in individual cases, its sheer volume may defy analysis.

Headquarters of the US National Security Agency in Fort Meade, Maryland. 'However much the US [intelligence] authorities have "gleaned" [from their surveillance activities], they appear incapable of making much sense of it.'

THE 'harvesting' of information – in the bucolic phrase used by what is called 'the intelligence community' – has increased by a factor of thousands in the past few years. The data, the intercepts, the triage of communications by US and British knowledge-gatherers are no doubt as threatening to our freedoms as the recent revelations by Edward Snowden have shown. (It is significant that his status shifted from 'whistleblower' to 'fugitive' shortly after the extent of his disclosures became known.) But, despite the British government's efforts to intimidate the press, accusing the *Guardian* of having endangered lives and given succour to 'terrorists', the implications of the endeavours of custodians of 'the national interest' should perhaps not be exaggerated, serious though they are.

The trawl of global intelligence by the US National Security Agency (NSA) and its sub-contractor GCHQ in Britain (to which millions of dollars were paid, since British oversight of intelligence-gathering is significantly more lax than in the US) was indeed comprehensive; it included the monitoring of calls by at least 35 world leaders, including those of the redoubtable Angela Merkel. The capturing of her communications was particularly sensitive, since she grew up in the Democratic Republic of Germany, where monitoring by the Stasi (secret police) was routine: the last thing she expected was for the intrusive apparatus of the US equivalent to target her as a person of interest. The US stressed it is not currently and will not in the future monitor Merkel's communications; a tacit acknowledgement that it had done so in the past. Germany is particularly sensitive to its exclusion from the privileged 'Five Eyes' group of Anglophone countries (the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) which routinely share intelligence.

If close allies can be subject to such scrutiny, the potential damage to leaders neutral or hostile to the US is considerable. The WikiLeaks revelations showed that doubts had been cast upon the mental and emotional stability of Cristina Kirchner of Argentina, when in a secret diplomatic cable, Hillary Clinton asked US diplomats to discover whether she was in fact taking medication to calm her state of nervous anxiety. Although this information was not obtained by intercepts, it suggests a possibility that even elected leaders may be open to manipulation or blackmail by a power unconstrained by the 'values' it theoretically embraces.

If there is any comfort to be taken from the mammoth intercept, it is that however much the US authorities have 'gleaned', they appear incapable of making much sense of it. The global sweep of the power of surveillance is a dispersant, since its political and military masters have little understanding of what it all adds up to. What they gain in information they lose in insight, coherence and imagination; qualities indispensable to any effective use to which their efforts might be put. Perhaps this is why the US is so angry at the disclosures of Assange, Manning and Snowden, and why the UK is intent on showing it has greater powers to suppress information than its ally, since Britain is unencumbered by the First Amendment (on free speech) to the US Constitution.

It is perhaps the fate of all imperial entities – and their supporters – to lack comprehension of those on whom they spy and into whose lives they pry, whether enemies or allies. Power has never needed to understand. All it requires is that it express itself – like the 'shock and awe' visited upon Iraq – to cow people into silence or compliance.

Nowhere are these failings more apparent than in recent Western elective wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It was not only faultiness of information (the lies that authority told the public, and even itself, are another matter) that led to the destruction in Iraq, but a failure to imagine the consequences of ousting the Sunni mi-

US drone strikes generate widespread resentment among the people of Muslim countries. Picture shows a demonstrator holding up a burning US flag during a protest against drone strikes in Pakistan.

nority in favour of a majority which would inevitably align itself with an Iran which is supposedly the principal adversary of the US in the region. In Afghanistan, the idea of 'Taliban' became indistinguishable to the clouded eye of power from al-Qaeda, to which the Taliban had offered hospitality.

This is sometimes acknowledged by the mighty, when they insist that the 'hearts and minds' of the people should be their objective; but it is to the 'conquest', and not to an understanding of those hearts and minds that it devotes its energies, usually with promises of the same goods and articles with which the peoples of the West have shown themselves broadly contented. They have little sense of the strength and tenacity of other cultures and traditions, and absolutely no insight into those people they wish to attach to themselves.

It is one thing to be observed by the unwinking Argos eyes of drones which can 'take out' individuals involved in terror and, at the same time, unnumbered innocents, since this universal watchfulness is highly fallible. As well as 'surgical strikes' on putative enemies, it also generates widespread resentments among the people of Muslim countries, and serves to recruit more individuals filled with murderous rage to replace those killed. In this way the cycle of mutual dependence between the US military, its victims and their savage and indiscriminate retaliations is preserved; that unstable stasis which seems indispensable to great powers and the enemies they require. Meanwhile, the US appears obsessed with obscure internal cultural wars, and scarcely able to engage significantly – even in its own interests – with a world over which its spies have established their sombre electronic panopticon.

TS Eliot, in his poem 'The Rock' (1934), asked, 'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge, Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?' This ought perhaps to be inscribed over the doorway of the NSA in Maryland and GCHQ in Cheltenham. The questions posed by TS Eliot now go further – where is the information lost in data, where are the data lost in the glut of gathered facts?

Every refinement of technology takes the world of 'intelligence' further from the point it is intended to reach. It is significant that among those employed at GCHQ, according to Edward Snowden, those who understand advanced mathematics are welcome, but there is no place for classicists. Perhaps, in the restoration, if not of wisdom, then at least of common sense, it might be considered that those who know something of the 'lessons of history' – constantly invoked, but seldom heeded – might have an 'input' of some utility to the purposes of those who wish to gain entry into the mindset of potential adversaries, enemies or traitors.

The West must have an enemy against which it can define itself as the sole bringer of light and liberty to the world. Without the permanent presence of an external embodiment of evil, the ills of capitalism might become, once more, only too apparent. Perhaps this is why, with the death of Socialism, the Islamo-fascist enemy had to be created, just as the alien creed of Communism emerged without transition from the vanquished aberration of Nazism.

And as if these were not sufficient, our 'economic well-being' must now be safeguarded by the same mechanisms that oversee the avowed enemy: the covetous malevolence of China, Russia or other competitors for the secrets of the West's miraculous wealth is an additional reason for the extension of our 'umbrella' of security over the mysteries that have made us rich. This is a particularly ironic development, since we have been at pains to spread globally the rules of the game by which countries are supposed to create wealth. The point apparently is that when those rules threaten our supremacy, new forms of surveillance must be devised, in order to make sure that control of the game remains with its originators, who have merely franchised their brand to countries that now threaten their dominance in the world.

The bloated inutility of many of these endeavours undermines them, and may, perhaps, lessen some of the anxieties of citizens that their most private communications are the object of unacknowledged scrutiny, since it is inconceivable that enough personnel could ever be employed to 'join up the dots', in the playful image of those set to watch, spy and inform on us.

Spies have always been deployed to manage the enemy within, as well as potential external aggressors. Because the technology exists, it must be used, no matter to what effect, and even if the technological refinements far outrun the capacity of democratic entities to supervise them. But since interpreting the sheer quantity of surveillance and eavesdropping now established exceeds the ability of those to whom our 'security' is entrusted, their ability to penetrate the secrets of their own citizens is surely limited, since who, among the disaffected and alienated of their homeland – should any such exist – would now dream of exposing their subversive thoughts to the grim patrol of the overseers of global communications systems? ◆

Jeremy Seabrook's latest book is Pauperland: Poverty and the Poor in Britain *(Hurst, 2013).*

WORLD AFFAIRS

In bed with the bully: Consensual US surveillance in Mexico

While the relevations by the whistleblower Edward Snowden of US surveillance of national leaders and officials drew a furious response in some affected countries, it required only a bare assurance of an 'investigation' by President Obama to assuage his Mexican counterpart. *Peter Watt* explains why.

THE revelations leaked by Edward Snowden that the US National Security Agency (NSA) committed acts of espionage against top Mexican officials and the president himself have so far provoked only mild indignation from the Mexican political class. Secretary of Foreign Affairs José Antonio Meade appeared to be reassured by President Obama's 'word' that he would launch an investigation into the workings of the US government. Notwithstanding the incongruity that any government investigating its own internal wrongdoing would have any interest in publicising conclusive evidence of its own criminal activity, President Enrique Peña Nieto has been reluctant to push the Obama administration further on the issue, presumably for fear of undermining Mexico's position as a staunch US economic and political ally.

Ex-president Vicente Fox, meanwhile, enthusiastically endorsed US spying on Mexican politicians, claiming he knew the US spied on him while he was president. Indeed, Fox took comfort in the fact that the world's superpower monitored his every move and his phone calls, evoking the ominous adage reminiscent of all authoritarian political institutions: one has nothing to be concerned about so long as one has nothing to hide and done nothing wrong. 'Everyone will do better if they think they're being spied on,' he noted, at once reinforcing the dubious entitlement of the US government to act as the world's police force while simultaneously apologising for the illegal activities of the NSA.

Fox seems unable to comprehend the basic moral and legal truism that merely because many are involved in

Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto *(pic)* **has been reluctant to push the Obama administration further on the issue of NSA spying.**

committing criminal activities, the moral and legal implications do not simply vanish into thin air. A reasonable observer might instead conclude that the greater the number of international government institutions that are involved in criminal activity, the more serious the problem, not the reverse. 'It's nothing new that there's espionage in every government in the world, including Mexico's,' Fox observed. Flummoxed as to why Snowden's revelations have provoked outrage among the Mexican populace and investigative journalists (if not in government itself), he declared, 'I don't understand the scandal.'

One document obtained by the National Security Archive at George Washington University details Janet Napolitano's (then Secretary of the US Department of Homeland Security) official meeting with President Peña Nieto in July 2013. According to Napolitano's briefing, avoiding discussion of NSA spying on the upper echelons appears to be a Mexican, not solely US, initiative. The Mexicans, the document claims, wanted to 'put to bed' the issue of NSA intrusions. Indeed, nowhere in the summary of their meeting does the issue arise. Instead, discussions focus on maintaining and increasing border security in order to protect commercial interests and on reducing the number of undocumented migrants entering the United States.

The listless and at times surreal reaction to NSA surveillance by Mexico's political class demonstrates their level of craven subordination to their US counterparts. One can only begin to imagine the response of the US political class and media pundits were they to discover that Mexican intelligence had repeatedly intercepted the electronic communications and tapped the phones of the Commander in Chief himself.

The Mexican reaction to NSA snooping on the inner circle of government stands in stark contrast to that of Brazil. Snowden's leaks provoked fury within the government of President Dilma Rousseff. She blasted the NSA tapping of her phone and interception of government communications in a fiery speech clearly aimed at President Obama at the UN General Assembly. She lambasted the NSA for spying on millions of Brazilian citizens, tapping the phones of Brazilian embassies, and spying on the country's partly state-owned petroleum giant, Petrobras. Interestingly, she remarked that the bulk of NSA spying in Brazil was not designed to thwart potential terrorists or to undermine the activities of transnational criminal organisations, but instead, to further US business interests through both international economic and commercial spying.

As a result, Rousseff cancelled her planned diplomatic visit to Washington, called for an international conference on data security, began setting up a protected governmental electronic communications system, and proposed changing underwater cables so that international Brazilian Internet traffic would no longer pass through US territory.

Brazil's position, of course, is a reflection of the changing nature of US-Latin American relations more generally. Brazil, the emerging regional power and now less of a fixture of Uncle Sam's backyard, can afford to take an increasingly independent stance from Washington. Several countries in the region are integrating with each other politically and economically and establishing firm trade links with China, India, and South Africa – an unprecedented dynamic which has had the effect of undermining US hegemony in the region.

Mexico, however, dependent on the US market for 80% of its exports, is much less able to stand up to the superpower. Indeed, Mexico's traditional position as a subordinate and reliable ally of its northern neighbour is becoming all the more crucial in maintaining the waning US empire, increasingly defensive and militaristic as it reasserts its influence over the region. With a myriad of uncertainties lying ahead for US power in a region that has witnessed the birth of new left-wing social movements that have had considerable success at the ballot box, it is becoming imperative for the United States to uphold and preserve its political, economic, and military alliances as per Mexico and Colombia. In Mexico, US funding for the so-called 'War on Drugs' has provided a convenient pretext for heavy militarisation throughout the country and a clamping down on political dissent and organised popular movements. Spying and surveillance programmes are key to achieving the US objective of continuing and reinforcing a status quo that now sees well over half the population in Mexico living in poverty and unparalleled levels of economic inequality.

'Spying and surveillance programmes are key to achieving the US objective of continuing and reinforcing a status quo that now sees well over half the population in Mexico living in poverty and unparalleled levels of economic inequality.'

As in Brazil, US spying in Mexico seems less to do with the 'War on Terror' and the 'War on Drugs' – two key rhetorical tenets of US interventionism – and more to do with the realpolitik of ensuring that a pliant and subservient political class, personified by Fox, Calderón and Peña Nieto, guard the current transnational dynamics – a socioeconomic system that rewards the powerful moneyed neoliberal elites on both sides of the border and keeps the poor and marginalised in their place.

There is a further aspect to the Mexican response to NSA spying which warrants scrutiny. Throughout the Cold War, the CIA and its Mexican counterpart, the DFS, shared all manner of material and intelligence on dissidents (Marxists, communists, students, guerrillas, trade unionists, peasant activists, feminists, etc.) who were often incarcerated or liquidated because, as the authoritarian and paternalistic President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz claimed, they were a threat to 'national security'.

The current partnership between the US and Mexican governments allows for a level of surveillance of which Mexico's Cold Warriors could only dream. In collaboration with telecommunications giants, the US and Mexican governments provide the wherewithal and funding for large-scale spying on the Mexican citizenry. Indeed, Mexico's Federal Ministerial Police (PFM) has recently designed a system of total surveillance and increased storage of electronic communications. In a climate in which there exist widening socioeconomic disparities, a grave security crisis and a growing disillusionment with the status quo, both the US and Mexican governments have a shared interest in forestalling the development of a widespread popular political revolt and a potential 'Mexican Spring'.

Were there any mystery as to why the Mexican response to Snowden's revelations was so moderate, one would only need to recall Vicente Fox's unintentionally shrewd observation that all governments have an interest in spying on one another and on their own citizens. The lacklustre reaction from Los Pinos to the NSA revelations is reflective of the extent to which Mexican elite politicians acquiesce in the intrusions, largely because they themselves use domestic spying to further their own sectional interests in a country in which, little more than a decade after the 'transition to democracy', the majority of the population are excluded from meaningful political participation. ◆

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Poverty and racism inextricably linked, says UN expert

In a report to the UN General Assembly, a UN rights expert has emphasised that poverty is closely associated with racism and contributes to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty.

Kanaga Raja

In the United States in 2009, 25.8% of persons of African descent were living in poverty, compared to only 9.4% of non-Hispanic whites.

RACIAL or ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by poverty; and the lack of education, adequate housing and health care transmits poverty from generation to generation, a United Nations rights expert has said.

In his report to the UN General Assembly in the week of 4 November, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere, was of the opinion that the issues of poverty and racism are inextricably linked.

As has been emphasised in the Durban Declaration, he said, 'poverty... [is] closely associated with racism... and contribute[s] to the persistence of racist attitudes and practices which in turn generate more poverty' (paragraph 18).

Ruteere said that as the previous Special Rapporteur on racism underlined in his report to the General Assembly in 2009, 'racial or ethnic minorities are disproportionately affected by poverty, and the lack of education, adequate housing and health care transmits poverty from generation to generation and perpetuates racial prejudices and stereotypes in their regard'.

In his report, the Special Rapporteur welcomed the efforts and initiatives undertaken by various states to prohibit discrimination and segregation and to ensure full enjoyment of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for all individuals and groups.

He noted that certain groups and individuals, including people of African descent, indigenous peoples, minorities, Roma, Dalits and migrants, are still confronted with poverty and discrimination, especially in the enjoyment of their economic and social rights.

'The persistence of discrimination against those groups and individuals remains a challenge to the construction of a tolerant and inclusive society, and only the guarantee of equality and non-discrimination policies can redress that imbalance and prevent those groups that are discriminated against from falling into or being trapped in poverty,' Ruteere emphasised.

Poverty and discrimination

In his report, the Special Rapporteur discusses the manifestations of poverty and racism in the areas of economic and social rights such as education, adequate housing and health care, and other rights affected in the link between racism and poverty, including the right to work in just conditions, social security, food and water.

According to Ruteere, poverty does not result only from an unequal sharing of resources. 'Discrimination against groups and persons based on their ethnicity, race, religion or other characteristics or factors has been known to encourage exclusion and impoverish certain groups of the population who suffer from unequal access to basic needs and services.'

Groups that are discriminated against, such as Afro-descendants, minorities, indigenous peoples, migrants and refugees, are disproportionately affected by poverty in all regions of the world.

'The complex relationship between racism and discrimination suggests that only the guarantee of equality and non-discrimination can redress that imbalance and protect such groups from falling into or being trapped in poverty,' the Special Rapporteur stressed.

According to the report, a history of discrimination has left a large number of racial and ethnic groups in various parts of the world trapped in conditions of 'chronic deprivation of resources' with limited choices and vulnerable to multiple violations of their rights.

In many parts of the world, race and ethnicity continue to be persistent predictors of poverty. The multi-generational nature of poverty, with successive generations inheriting the disadvantages of their predecessors, means that over the years poverty and deprivation have become part of the characterisation of particular racial and ethnic groups trapped in poverty.

This in turn fuels prejudice against those members of poor racial and ethnic groups, exacerbating the problems of racial discrimination.

For most racial and ethnic groups living in poverty, said the rights expert, the formal provisions for non-discrimination are not sufficient to address the challenges they confront in the realisation of those rights that would lift them out of their conditions of poverty.

'Their situation is that of multi-dimensional discrimination – as they are discriminated against for being poor and also on account of their race and ethnicity. The nature of this challenge requires much more than formal protections and calls for special measures.'

Discrimination based on racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic and also socioeconomic factors exacerbates the vulnerability of those persons and groups. This situation and furthermore the lack of participation of groups that are discriminated against in decision-making processes is often the result of historical legacies rooted in traditions.

The report said: 'Their situation is primarily the consequence of historical systems of inherited status, and of the formalised exclusion of certain traditional populations in modern societies, sometimes encouraged by authorities. Thus, even in countries where resources are sufficient to ensure to the whole population adequate standards of living, those groups and individuals do not fully benefit from those resources.'

The Special Rapporteur believes that it is the obligation of governments to prevent marginalisation and to ensure protection as well as to guarantee the enjoyment of human rights for all, including the right to education, the right to adequate housing, the right to health or the right to food and safe water.

A woman standing outside a shack in a Roma camp outside Paris. An unacceptably large percentage of Roma live in poverty and suffer discrimination in virtually all aspects of life.

The right to education

He noted that one of the reasons why groups that are discriminated against remain trapped in poverty is 'the perpetual marginalisation they suffer in terms of access to education', despite the obligation of states to realise this right for all without discrimination.

'Realising the right to education for all children should be the cornerstone of strategies directed at reducing poverty and discouraging discrimination,' he underlined.

He cited Minority Rights Group International as noting in 2009 that, of the 101 million children out of school and the 776 million illiterate adults, the majority are part of racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities.

In many countries, the low enrolment rate of minority children is the result of official policies that fail to recognise the existence of minorities as part of the whole population and to take measures to ensure that they enjoy the rights guaranteed to every citizen.

The Special Rapporteur noted that, as a result of such discrimination, there is a lack of trust in the national educational system and some children tend to remain within their community rather than attend school and acquire skills that could eventually enable them to break the cycle of poverty.

He was also of the view that if discrimination in education reinforces poverty, poverty also fosters discrimination. Poverty is one of the causes of the low enrolment rates in schools of children from groups that are discriminated against.

The Special Rapporteur is convinced that the full enjoyment of the right to education is the prerequisite for the full enjoyment of other rights, such as the right to work, freedom of expression, or even the right to health.

'For groups that are discriminated against, education is crucial for preparing and equipping them with the skills to achieve economic and social mobility and consequently to break the cycles of multidimensional poverty and discrimination.'

Ruteere noted that poverty and discrimination are often reflected in poor health status. Vulnerable and marginalised groups disproportionately face obstacles in accessing health care. Many inequalities in accessing adequate health care are related to social disparities and exclusion, themselves often the result of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance.

First, from a geographical point of view, access to health care is often limited for those living in rural or economically remote areas and disparities sometimes result from laws, policies or programmes which intentionally or not concentrate services in urban areas. This can lead to decreased life expectancy and poor health conditions for minorities living in marginalised areas.

There is also a risk of mistrust in the official health services, due to stereotyping, but also due to the health service providers' lack of cultural knowledge of a particular cultural minority.

'Owing to their economic and social conditions, groups that are discriminated against are more exposed to health risks and diseases. They are more likely than others to live in polluted and environmentally degraded areas where the risk of exposure to substance abuse, violence and infectious diseases is higher.'

The Special Rapporteur also noted that racism and discrimination negatively affect the realisation of the right to adequate housing for the marginalised groups.

'Legal insecurity of tenure for poor and marginalised ethnic and racial minorities in some cases forces some of the members of those communities to move to urban areas, where the only affordable housing is in informal and slum settlements with substandard housing conditions and the daily risks of eviction.'

Adequate housing is also linked to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation, he said, adding that poor sanitation and unhygienic practices are the indirect results of discrimination and the marginalisation suffered by racial minorities.

'Groups that are discriminated against, especially those living in rural or remote areas, experience disparities in terms of access to sanitation and drinking water. These further contribute to poor health outcomes for the poor racial and ethnic minorities.'

The Special Rapporteur observed that the problem of disproportionate poverty among some racial and ethnic groups is prevalent in all regions of the world, and highlighted the situation of just some of those groups.

Dalit villagers in India. Dalits face discrimination and exclusion at social, economic and political levels.

Highlighting that more than 200 million persons identify themselves as being of African descent, the Special Rapporteur noted that many of them 'continue to face pernicious discrimination as part of the legacy of slavery and colonialism that still hinders them from fully participating in the decision-making process'.

In North and South America, two regions characterised by great disparities, a disproportionate number of persons of African descent are affected by a lack of income, health services, quality of education and opportunities to attain well-being.

In the United States, in 2009, 25.8% of persons of African descent were living in poverty, whereas only 9.4% of non-Hispanic whites were living in poverty. In a similar trend, in Brazil, in 2006, 47% of people of African descent were living below the poverty line, as opposed to 22% of those classified as white.

Ruteere also noted that people of African descent continue to suffer from discriminatory and consequently inadequate access to housing at various stages of the rental or sale process.

In the United States, one in five individuals of an ethnic or racial minority experiences discrimination during a preliminary search for housing. Moreover, 46% of African Americans were owners in 2011, against 74% of whites.

For many persons of African descent, because of their low-income situation, the issue of food insecurity remains a significant challenge. In many countries, the situation is the result of unequal treatment but also of the economic situation. It is the case in Latin American countries where disparities of income and resources are high.

Indigenous peoples

The Special Rapporteur further noted that, 'as a result of historical and contemporary factors', indigenous peoples are part of a worldwide disadvantaged minority as they continue to face discriminatory practices deeply rooted in cultural structures and reinforced by industrial development.

While they constitute approximately 5% of the world's population – 370 million – indigenous peoples represent around one-third of the world's 900 million extremely poor rural people.

'This situation of marginalisation is prevalent in all types of countries regardless of their level of development, as indigenous people consistently lag behind the non-indigenous population in terms of standards of living and development.'

In this regard, he highlighted, for instance, that, as a result of geographical isolation and marginalisation, indigenous children are less likely to access education in comparison to non-indigenous populations.

For instance, in small indigenous communities in Southern Arnhem Land (Australia), up to 93% of the population is illiterate. In Ecuador, the illiteracy rate of indigenous peoples was 28% in 2001, compared to the national rate of 13%, while in Venezuela, the indigenous illiteracy rate (32%) was five times higher than the non-indigenous illiteracy rate (6.4%).

He asserted that the increasing expropriation of indigenous peoples' lands for economic purposes also reinforces their vulnerability in terms of their right to adequate housing by affecting their ancestral culture, which is based on communal land and resources.

The Special Rapporteur cited the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as noting that there has been an upsurge in infrastructure development, particularly of large hydroelectric dams, oil and gas pipelines, and roads in indigenous territories; there has been a constant failure to consult the populations concerned first.

As a result of those development-driven displacements, many indigenous persons migrate to urban areas where they frequently live in poverty and face discrimination.

Ruteere also said that many indigenous people have inadequate food access and are exposed to high levels of malnutrition. For instance, in Latin America, malnutrition among indigenous children is twice as high as among non-indigenous children.

In Ecuador, chronic malnutrition is more than twice as high in indigenous as compared to non-indigenous communities. In El Salvador, an estimated 40% of indigenous children under five are malnourished, compared to the national average of 23%.

Poor nutrition, discrimination and limited access to quality health care, and contamination of resources, also contribute to poor health conditions among indigenous peoples. Overall, the life expectancy of indigenous people is up to 20 years lower than that of non-indigenous people, and they also experience higher levels of maternal and infant mortality.

Turning to the Roma, the Special Rapporteur said that with an estimated population of 10 to 12 million, they represent one of the most important minority groups in Europe.

He observed that, in spite of efforts at both regional and national levels to improve the situation of the Roma, an unacceptably large percentage continue to live in poverty and suffer discrimination in virtually all aspects of life, including employment, health care, education and adequate housing.

On average, in 2011 in Europe, only one out of two Roma children attended pre-school or kindergarten and only 15% of young adults surveyed completed upper-secondary general or vocational education.

With regard to health, the Roma may be one of the most vulnerable groups in Europe and their life expectancy is shorter than the rest of the European population. In 2011, one-third of Roma respondents aged 35 to 54 reported health problems limiting their daily activities and about 20% of respondents had no medical coverage.

The caste system continues to be the source of discrimination against the Dalits, who have a low hierarchical status according to tradition and beliefs, said the rights expert, adding that a disproportionate percentage of the Dalits live in abject poverty and face discrimination and exclusion at social, economic and political levels.

Most of the Dalits live in rural areas, and are often excluded from services only available in urban areas. It is estimated that less than 10% of Dalit households can afford safe drinking water, electricity and toilets, and approximately 75% are engaged in agricultural work, although many do not have their own land.

The Special Rapporteur also observed that the situation of migrants remains precarious and called for closer attention, particularly as many host countries continue to experience economic difficulties.

'In spite of measures taken by some States to integrate migrants and provide them with the opportunities to live a dignified life, many migrants continue to live in poverty and to experience discrimination in many areas of everyday life.'

Good practices

The Special Rapporteur however noted that states around the world have developed and implemented many good practices which can alleviate problems associated with the intersecting problems of racism and poverty.

These include collection of disaggregated data, programmes aimed at increasing education and educational opportunities, laws which protect disadvantaged groups generally and in labour markets, poverty alleviation initiatives, and special measures aimed at enhancing equality between all groups.

Amongst his recommendations, the Special Rapporteur invited member states to adopt comprehensive approaches for tackling the intersection of poverty and discrimination which is prevalent around the world.

In particular, he recommended that member states review and redesign policies and programmes which may have a disproportionate effect on racial or ethnic minorities in view of their socioeconomic vulnerability and implement effective measures to improve the access of such groups to civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

The Special Rapporteur further encouraged the stakeholders of the post-2015 agenda to continue focusing on reducing socioeconomic inequalities while taking into account issues surrounding discrimination.

While the Millennium Development Goals have addressed the reduction of extreme poverty, he suggested that in the post-2015 agenda specific goals and targets be developed to ensure that everyone, regardless of socioeconomic status or ethnicity, has universal access to health care, education, water, food and security. ◆

Kanaga Raja is Editor of the South-North Development Monitor *(*SUNS*), from which this article is reproduced (No. 7692, 8 November 2013).* SUNS *is published by the Third World Network.*

Trading women for profit

Trafficking is the extreme inevitability of a distorted economic system which fuels inequality and encourages profiteering, greed and the exploitation of the most vulnerable members of society, says *Graham Peebles*.

THE act of buying and selling sits at the very heart of the global economy. In a commercially motivated system that P Sainath rightly describes as 'market fundamentalism', competition and conservative uniformity are central elements. Creative independent thinking and originality are anathema to this relentless homogenous machine, which breeds conformity, crushes individuality and, 'Borg-like', assimilates all into 'The Collective'. The aim of all traders is to buy cheap and sell for the highest price possible; keep costs (including workers' wages) low and maximise profits for stockholders, directors and senior management. This methodology is applied no matter the commodity: cars, mobile phones, tomatoes, lipstick, fridges, land or human beings.

Trading in people – historically known as slavery – is now called trafficking. It is a term which the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) says 'can be misleading: it places emphasis on the transaction aspects of a crime that is more accurately described as enslavement'. The worldwide spread of market fundamentalism (or globalisation), Victor Malerek in *The Natashas: Inside the Global Sex Trade* states, 'has created people who are vulnerable and easily enslaved', giving rise to 'more human slaves in the world today than ever before in history'. And apparently they are cheaper than they have ever been.

Modern-day slavery or trafficking of persons is the second most profitable, organised and destructive global criminal activity after drugs, and within the next five years is expected to ascend to the number one spot. It is a huge, highly profitable worldwide business that is destroying the lives of millions of vulnerable people. Men and women who have the misfortune to be born into poverty, are poorly educated, desperate and therefore easily manipulated by 'recruitment agents', who paint a false picture of decent, well-paid, legitimate work in one or other of the major cities of the world.

Trafficking is the exploitation of people, day after day, for years on end. Men (often supported by women ex-victims) drive human trafficking, specifically trafficking for sex, which is a major cause of the spread of HIV/AIDS – fuelled by arrogant men who refuse to wear condoms.

Millions of victims, innocent and vulnerable, are trafficked into a life of extreme exploitation, violent abuse and slavery. At the heart of this 21st-century epidemic are women.

Millions of victims, innocent and vulnerable, are trafficked into a life of extreme exploitation, violent abuse and slavery. At the heart of this 21st-century epidemic are women, mainly young – most are under 24, some are as young as six – always poor, desperate, and frightened. They make up 80% of an unknown total number of people trafficked every year. Although the US State Department says it's around one million, the figure could just as easily be double that.

What is known is that the majority of women are forced into prostitution of some kind or another and sex slavery; constituent parts of the burgeoning global commercial sex industry (CSI). The language of market fundamentalism facilitating a subtle acceptance of the criminal and inhumane; for what is *commercial* is good and *industry* must be encouraged at any cost; it feeds the economy, which must be constantly stoked in order to fuel economic growth, which as we know is the source of lasting happiness. So goes the dishonest, corporate political propaganda, rooted as it is in self-interest and thoroughly intoxicated by profit.

The CSI has been given a major boost by the Internet, providing as it (currently) does an unregulated platform for pornography. The pornographic material freely floating around cyberspace is beyond shocking, the statistics startling: over 12% of all Internet sites deal in pornography of one kind or another – totalling 420 million pages. Every month there are 72 million worldwide (primarily male) visitors to these websites packed with explicit pornographic images, many showing abusive practices, which feed into and strengthen a conditioned view that defines women in a purely sexual manner and promotes the idea of women as sexual objects, commodities to be used for pleasure, exploited fully and totally.

The proliferation of online pornography is a major factor in the ever-growing commodification and sexualisation of women and young girls. Whilst this is not necessarily new, the level of accessibility is. Extreme sexual behaviour like paedophilia, bestiality and rape, which saturates the Internet, encourages obsessive behaviour and is a crippling poisonous ingredient in the lives not only of girls and women, but also of men, young and not so young.

Debt, abuse and exploitation

'Forced' or 'bonded' labour is a major factor in the trafficking of persons. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) says as many as '21 million people are victims of forced labour – 11.4 million women and girls and 9.5 million men and boys' – the totals may be and probably are much higher.

'The most widely used method of enslaving people around the world', according to Anti-Slavery International, is through bonded labour. A person becomes entrapped, they report, 'when their labour is demanded as a means of repayment for a loan'. It has been a method of control and exploitation of the poor for centuries and is today highly prevalent in South Asia, particularly India – the hub for trafficking of women in the region. Rooted in the unjust caste system, it primarily affects the Dalits (or untouchables) and Adivasi (indigenous) people, who make up 9% or more of India's 1.3 billion population.

The ILO estimates almost 12 million people in the Asia-Pacific area are trapped in bonded labour, due overwhelmingly to debt. Bonded labour occurs because 'of poverty and the existence of people who are prepared to exploit the desperation of others'. India boasts of a decade of 9% growth, and yet because all wealth is concentrated in the hands of the elite and the aspiring, India has the highest percentage of malnourished children: the poor are growing in number, levels of inequality are greater than ever, desperate parents are selling their daughters and young women are being forced to take loans from unscrupulous 'recruitment agents', men with neither conscience nor morality living off the misfortune of others, who sell the girls on up the criminal chain into sex slavery and years upon years of sexual violence and exploitation. The lives lost are countless.

Loans are taken either to meet the requirements of daily living, or in order to pay traffickers/agents fees for services, which include providing (forged) documentation and travel expenses. Women in their quest to find employment become victims of trafficking at this stage; some are aware that they are entering the CSI – most are not. Others are recruited when pregnant, the commodity the newborn baby – sold on the black market: 'the profit is divided between the traffickers, doctors, lawyers, border officials, and others'. The mother, if she is lucky, may 'receive a few hundred US$', records Louise Shelley in *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective*. Brokers are the initial criminal contact; they charge extortionate fees for their 'services' and load interest charges of up to 40% onto loans, trapping women and their families into a never-ending cycle of debt and perpetual enslavement.

The only way of paying the loan back is through working for nothing. Banjit from Thailand was trafficked into Britain in 2005 and incurred a debt of £27,000, the *Guardian* reported. On arrival in London her passport was confiscated by a Thai brothel keeper who told her 'she would be able to pay off the debt within two to three months by providing "services" to buyers such as anal sex and sex without a condom'. She was forced to work seven days a week in brothels all over the city and give all her earnings to the Thai 'madam'. Realising 'she would never be able to repay the debt, Banjit eventually ran away without her passport and turned to the police for help'.

A report published in 2012 by Foundation Scelle estimated there to be around 42 million prostitutes worldwide: how many, one wonders, are imprisoned through debt bondage?

Returnees or 'broken-in girls', as well as taking on the role of 'guardians' or 'jailers' in destination countries, are used to persuade young girls to become commercial sex workers. 'Sex traffickers often train girls themselves, raping them and teaching them how to behave with clients,' reports Victor Malerek. The only way some women can escape their own enslavement is to return home and recruit young girls. An Albanian woman told the *Guardian* how she returned to her hometown and told ex-school friends 'that there were great opportunities in the UK for them, you know, as waitresses and even as dancers.... I felt like I had stuck a knife in my own stomach, knowing what I was taking them to, but I could not stand one more day [in the brothel]'.

Traffickers scour the planet looking for potential victims. They find them in at least 127 countries, UNODC reports, and put them to work in over 137. New opportunities for the ever-watchful criminal predators are created by natural disasters (many caused by global warming) that have left millions homeless, impoverished and vulnerable, as well as major global events such as the end of the Cold War, the integration of China into the global economy, and the break-up of the former Soviet Union. Repressive regimes, from which people are seeking escape, also provide fertile ground for traffickers. The majority of citizens (90%) fleeing the repression and poverty in North Korea, for example, are women. Almost all who find their way into China are herded into the CSI. Protesting victims are deported by their criminal handlers back to North Korea, where 'they are thrown into gulags or are executed. 30,000 victims of sex trafficking die each year', relates Dana Liebelson in 'Nine out of Ten Women Escaping North Korea are Trafficked'. In all cases women's vulnerability is the common thread, leading to violent exploitation, humiliation and extreme suffering.

Imagine a just and fair system

Measures are urgently needed to prevent the trafficking of women: awareness programmes to deter girls from migrating and improved access to schooling and higher education; stringent enforcement of national trafficking laws and the observation and implementation of international covenants, plus the eradication of official/police corruption. All such commonsense measures would be helpful. Added to this, a change in destructive gender attitudes is essential, together with a reassessment of the current economic model that encourages the commodification and commercialisation of everything, including people, specifically women.

Trafficking is the extreme inevitability of a distorted economic system which fuels inequality and encourages profiteering, greed, and the exploitation of the most vulnerable members of society. A fundamental shift away from such a divisive system, which has failed the vast majority of people and caused environmental mayhem throughout the world, to a model based on the creation of social justice and equality is needed. The current model, Arundhati Roy in the *Guardian* states, has 'reduced the idea of justice to mean just human rights' (and let us add, retribution), and 'the idea of dreaming of equality became blasphemous. We are not fighting to tinker with reforming a system that needs to be replaced'. We need, she rightly asserts, to 'redefine the meaning of modernity', to alter the way life is organised and to create the possibility of looking 'at something without thinking of it as a resource to feed the kind of capitalism that is leading the planet to a crisis', and causing immense suffering to millions of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Whilst economic prosperity for nation states is important, we should ask what the nature of prosperity is and question, as P Sainath does, 'who is this growth for': the corporations and multinationals is the immediate collective reply. The proceeds of growth must and should be shared amongst the people and not collected into the already overflowing coffers of the wealthy and aspiring. Such a move would be a giant step towards establishing greater levels of equality and social justice and would make many disadvantaged people – particularly women – a great deal less vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation. ◆

Graham Peebles is Director of The Create Trust in the UK (www.thecreatetrust.org). This article is reproduced from the NationofChange website (www.nationofchange.org).

Gamani Corea (1925-2013) – A tribute

Gamani Corea, world-renowned Sri Lankan economist, Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (1974-84), and former chairman of the Board of the South Centre, passed away after a brief illness in Colombo on 3 November, a day before his 88th birthday. *Chakravarthi Raghavan* pays tribute to this 'champion of the global South'.

THIS writer came to know Gamani Corea well from about 1978. At that time, when the Geneva-based UNCTAD was at the centre of various negotiations, with long group meetings and negotiating sessions running into the early hours of the morning, Corea would be at his desk in the secretariat or in the lounge around the meeting room, and spent time with the writer, not only discussing UNCTAD matters but also touching on his own life and background, and discussing a range of wider issues of international political economy.

Early on, he took on hand the task of guiding this writer in some detailed reading of economics literature – classical, neo-classical and development economics, and trade, money and finance – an almost one-to-one economics crash course (without having to do term papers!).

Corea was closely associated with the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) based in Nyon, Switzerland, and encouraged the founding and publication by IFDA in 1980 of the *Special United Nations Service – SUNS* (subsequently *South-North Development Monitor – SUNS*).

Deshamanya Gamani Corea ('Deshamanya' was the title, one of the highest civilian honours of the country, conferred on him by the Sri Lankan government), as he himself narrated to this writer, was born into a well-renowned and affluent political family of Sri Lanka. His mother's brother, Sir John Kotlewala, was a Prime Minister of Ceylon, while his grandfather, Victor Corea, was a freedom fighter.

Gamani once told this writer that he was an only child and the family on his mother's side was so affluent that no one in the family thought of guiding him into any particular educational discipline or a professional career, and he was thought too shy and reserved for political life.

However, by himself, he began taking an interest in the national politics of Ceylon (but not to plunge into politics), and was very much influenced by the national movement and freedom struggle under Gandhi and Nehru in neighbouring colonial India.

'I would get hold as a young man of every writing of Jawaharlal Nehru and read him avidly,' he once said to the writer in 1979 (at a time ironically when India was going through a phase of denigration of Nehru by his successors).

'It gave me a perspective and impelled me to take interest in politics and development, that carried over into my post-university career in the Central Bank, and then the United Nations and the development aspects there,' Corea said to the writer, explaining his journey from being a conservative economist and central banker to the UN Committee on Development Planning, involvement in the panel of experts preparing for the UNCTAD-I conference under Raul Prebisch, and the work of UNCTAD itself where during the Prebisch era, he chaired a commodity conference on cocoa.

After an educational career in Colombo and then Oxford and Cambridge (1945-52) for a doctorate, he came back to Colombo to enter government service in the economic departments of planning, as research director in the Central Bank, and in the government as Secretary of the Department of Planning, Governor of the Central Bank, and then in diplomatic service, as Ceylon's ambassador to the European Economic Community in Brussels, and several UN positions, including as member of the UN Committee on Development Planning.

He was appointed in 1973 as Secretary-General of UNCTAD for an initial three-year term, when the second SG, Manuel Perez-Guerrero, resigned to become a minister in Venezuela.

Corea assumed the post in April 1974, and was reappointed thrice, his last term ending in December 1984. He continued in the post at the request of then UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, and then was told (indirectly) that he would not be continued (the writer was with him at his house when the call came from the SG's office in New York to give him the information, not by the SG himself but by one of his senior staff).

The rich OECD countries were by then dead set against Corea for his role in giving intellectual support for the developing-country Group of 77 efforts at restructuring the world economy and international economic system (monetary, finance and trade) for a more equitable and just order. He relinquished his post at the end of February 1985.

Sometime later, when he was on the South Commission, he told another friend, Branislav Gosovic in the Commission secretariat, that the main reason for annulling his third term in UNCTAD and giving him only one year was the fear among the US and the OECD group of countries that Corea 'would spoil' their attempts to launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations with new issues at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) forum.

In 1985 and in early 1986, the developing countries were united under the leadership of Brazil and India, and the informal group was insisting that the unfinished business of the previous negotiating round, the Tokyo Round, should first be taken up and accords reached at the GATT, before any new issues like intellectual property, services or investment could be considered as issues for negotiation.

After Corea was sent home, UNCTAD was left headless, with a senior official, Alistair McIntyre, acting as officer-in-charge. The situation was used to break up the unity of developing countries, with then GATT Director-General Arthur Dunkel acting from behind the scenes to create a group – the 'cafe olé group' as it was dubbed, led by Colombia and Switzerland – to support the launch of a new round with new issues.

The new trade round, the Uruguay Round, was ultimately launched at Punta del Este in Uruguay in September 1986.

Developmentalist vision

Prebisch, as head of UNCTAD, had shaped international thinking on development economics and raised awareness within the UN system of the problems of development in the newly independent ex-colonies, and the special needs and problems of developing countries for development, and their need for special treatment and assistance such as official development aid, trade preferences and the like.

Corea carried forward the Prebisch outlook, providing intellectual weight and economic arguments to the UNCTAD secretariat documents and proposals, with calls for restructuring the global economy and international economic relations and governance, and addressing problems of development and money, finance and trade in an interdependent manner.

Having an inner conviction and strength, he was a visionary and developmentalist, egalitarian despite his affluent personal background.

Having an inner conviction and strength, he was a visionary and developmentalist, egalitarian despite his affluent personal background. Within UNCTAD he developed several programmes to help development, and remained firm in his view that UNCTAD should remain a part of the UN, an organ of the UN General Assembly devoted to Trade and Development.

While not confrontational or using harsh language, he stood up throughout his tenure to pressures and bullying tactics of the United States or European Communities and their attempts to influence senior staff appointments by planting their own men.

He also stood up to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, whose leadership attempted sometimes, as an observer at UNCTAD board meetings, to scoff at UNCTAD views and any alternative thinking differing from the IMF/World Bank ideology and rulebook.

From the South Commission to the South Centre

After retirement from UNCTAD, Corea continued in international public life, especially in the economic arena, and was a member of the South Commission.

After the Commission wound up and the South Centre was set up in 1991, he played an important role in its work. He had the trust of South Centre Chair Julius Nyerere, and Corea acted as the final authority and filter approving policies, documents and publications of the Centre.

According to then officials of the Centre, he was consulted on a daily basis, both while he was in Geneva (a lot of the time) and when he was in Colombo, and was one of the key persons to help put the Centre on its feet.

He became chairman of the Board of the South Centre, assuming the post about three years after Nyerere died.

He resigned his chairmanship after a mild stroke which impacted on his writing abilities.

Living almost in seclusion in Colombo from the late 1990s, caught up in legal tangles created by some relatives with an eye on his property, he found himself physically unable to travel, and mentally and socially isolated, for a while even prevented from meeting any visitors and friends.

As he had indicated to several of his friends (including the writer) while he was in Geneva at the South Centre, he had in Colombo created a foundation to which he willed his properties, a testament he had executed when in full possession of his abilities, a disposition that would now need to be sorted out in Colombo.

As an important member of the South Centre, he participated in some of the civil society meetings in the run-up to the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. At the time of the 1991 second preparatory committee meeting in Geneva for the Summit, it was fashionable for officials of the secretariat, including the Secretary-General of the Summit, Maurice Strong, to advise developing countries not to adopt or follow a consumerist Northern style of development.

Speaking at the civil society meeting at that time, Corea scoffed at such efforts of the North to constrain the development of the South to maintain the North's own consumption and lifestyles.

He told the NGO forum and the Group of 77 that if such an effort was made, and even if governments of the South accepted at Rio such instruments to curb their development, 'long before global warming, the world will be engulfed in global disorder' – an assessment that perhaps governments of the North and South now engaged in UN climate change negotiations might usefully bear in mind.

Corea was also present at Rio, as a member of the Sri Lankan delegation. At that time, he told Gosovic (who was there as a staff member of the South Centre with a Centre delegation led by Nyerere) that the Sri Lankan delegation had been told by the US 'not to rock the boat' and to bear in mind that Sri Lanka's loan rescheduling application was before the IMF (where the US could block it).

At the end of that Rio Earth Summit, in an interview with Thalif Deen for the conference newspaper *Terra Viva*, Corea famously summed up the outcome as: 'We negotiated the size of the zero.' ◆

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ANNIVERSARY

The silenced voices of history: Asian workers on the Death Railway

October marks the 70th anniversary of the completion of the notorious 'Death Railway' linking Thailand and Burma which the Japanese army constructed with forced labour during the Second World War. While the privations of the Allied soldiers used for the construction have been highlighted in Western historiography, the unspeakable plight of the numberless Asian workers who were involved has generally been ignored. *David Boggett* focuses on this neglected dimension.

THIS year marks the 70th anniversary of the completion of the notorious 'Death Railway', constructed by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. Over 400 kilometres in length, the Death Railway was built to link the existing railway systems of Thailand and Burma, in order to supply the Japanese armies in Burma. Post-war images of the Death Railway were based on the successful – and largely fictional – movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, and on the memoirs and diaries published by Westerners who survived the ordeal of the Railway's construction.

Hundreds of thousands of Asian workers were drafted by the Japanese to work on the construction of the Death Railway in appalling conditions.

Some 60,000 Allied soldiers, prisoners of war captured after the fall of Singapore, were mobilised as construction workers. Of these, around 13,000 died – due to ill-treatment by the Japanese soldiers and Korean guards; lack of adequate food, clothing and medical supplies; and diseases such as malaria, dysentery, tropical ulcers and – in the monsoon seasons – cholera. The graves of the deceased Allied soldiers are carefully preserved in two war cemeteries in Kanchanaburi in Thailand and one near Thanbyuzayat in Burma.

The understandable preoccupation with the Allied prisoners' accounts has tended to overshadow, and even conceal, a perhaps even greater tragedy – the plight of the enormous numbers of Asian workers mobilised by the Japanese from their new colonies. There are no Asian workers in the movie either, and the story of the Death Railway is usually seen through the accounts of the Western prisoners.

At the end of the war, the returning Allies estimated that around 270,000 Asian workers had been drafted, a figure that is continually repeated in books, articles and museums today. It is unlikely that the Allies in 1945 or early 1946 could have ascertained with any degree of accuracy the number of Asian workers involved. Unlike the Allied prisoners who remained concentrated in camps run by their own military, the Asian workers, disorganised and distressed, were straggled along the entire course of the Railway. Although the British and Dutch did make some efforts to repatriate Asian workers to Malaya, Singapore and Indonesia, many Asian workers later claimed that in the post-war confusion they had never heard of any such repatriation attempts. The scattered testimonies of Asian survivors suggest that a far greater number of workers were involved – possibly more than half a million, of whom probably more than 100,000 perished.

The Japanese had two weeks in which to burn documents related to the Railway's construction before the Allied forces occupied Thailand. General MacArthur expressly forbade any movement of Mountbatten's forces from Ceylon to South-East Asia until he had staged his dramatic surrender ceremony aboard a ship in Tokyo Bay. During the intervening two weeks, Thai witnesses state, smoke from the burning of documents could be seen all along the Railway camps. The Japanese openly admitted to the Allied soldiers that they had destroyed all documents related to the Asian workers. They claimed that, although the Japanese government had signed (though not ratified) the Geneva Conventions regarding treatment of military personnel captured during war, it had never been signatory to any treaties regarding civilian labour. The matter of civilian labour was, therefore, an internal matter of the then Japanese Empire, and Japan was not bound by any international treaties or agreements.

Plight of the Asian workers

For all these Asian workers, the situation was arguably even worse than that of the Allied prisoners. Many Asian workers were barely literate and unable to speak English or Japanese. They could not record their experiences. The Allied prisoners were able to maintain their own military structure in the camps – they were not separated from their friends. This structure provided camp discipline and hygiene and, of course, they had their own military doctors. This military camp structure of the prisoners enabled their leaders to record the circumstances of nearly every single prisoner's death and place of burial. It was based on these records that the bodies of the Allied dead were retrieved after the war. However, there are no graves for the deceased Asian workers; they were just buried where they died and forgotten.

The Asian workers had no support system on which they could fall back. They had no doctors, no medicines, no sense of how to organise their living quarters in the inhospitable jungles then lying beyond Kanchanaburi; they were separated from their fellow villagers and often mixed together with people whose languages they could not understand; and they had no means of recourse when the Japanese soldiers mistreated them. As they were unfamiliar with the foreign Thai countryside, it was difficult for them to escape. Thai villagers were given financial rewards if they reported any escaped workers to the Japanese. Besides the natural deaths from disease, ill-treatment and overwork, it is believed that the Asian workers faced such appalling conditions that suicides were not uncommon.

Not only are there no graves but – with a single exception – there are no monuments to the Asian workers in the Kanchanaburi area either. The exception, paradoxically, is the monument erected by the Japanese military itself on completion of the Railway in March 1944. It is located near the bridge made famous by the movie. It is not particularly attractive in design, being made out of rough concrete, but it is an important memorial, as the Japanese did at least admit that deaths had occurred. This is unusual and may be the only Japanese wartime military monument to make such an admission.

The central pillar of the monument is surrounded at the four corners of the outer wall with smaller structures, each bearing an inscription in a different language: English, Thai, Chinese, Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia, Tamil and Vietnamese. (One plaque destroyed by Allied bombing has never been replaced and was probably in either Burmese or Javanese.) These inscriptions are a clear indication that labourers from the language groups represented worked and died on the construction of the Railway. The Vietnamese inscription is something of a puzzle, as nowhere have any records of Vietnamese workers on the Railway yet been found, but this inscription is evidence that labour from the former French Indochina was also involved.

Even in Thailand, few people realise that Thai workers were involved. Thais were first used by the Japanese to construct the initial stages of the Railway bed around Nong Pladuk and Ban Pong. Today, Ban Pong has a large temple, situated on the site of the Railway workers' camp. This was an important camp, because all workers, both prisoners and Asian labourers, had to pass through Ban Pong on their way up to the Railway work camps.

On 18 December 1942, in the very early days of Railway construction, Thai workers attacked the Japanese quarters in Ban Pong, killing four Japanese military officials and severely wounding two others. Besides their severe treatment by the Japanese, the Thais had become enraged when they heard that a Japanese soldier had slapped a Thai Buddhist monk in the face. Some accounts say that it had all started because the Thai monk had given some cigarettes to Allied prisoners. Needless to say, the Japanese authorities were furious at these deaths and wanted the ringleaders rounded up and executed and financial reparations paid. They also called for the execution of the Thai monk (which is not permissible under Thai law – you cannot execute a monk!).

Known as the Ban Pong Incident, this event had serious political repercussions. To avoid having to deal with the Japanese Army's demands, Thai Prime Minister Field Marshal Plaek Phibunsongkhram removed himself from Bangkok for several days. The matter went as far as Tokyo where it was decided to appoint a personal friend of Prime Minister Tojo Hideki (and an outstanding diplomat), General Nakamura Aketo, as new head of the Bangkok Garrison Command to deal with the difficult situation. After the Ban Pong Incident, the Japanese military became reluctant to recruit Thais, probably increasing their demand for other Asian workers.

It is unclear how much Thai labour was involved in the Railway. The Thai Chinese Chamber of Commerce recruited 16,000 Chinese for the Japanese Army. These people had been forcibly relocated to Bangkok from the Northern Thai provinces which were thought to have been sensitive military areas. Around 6,000 other Thai workers were registered in Kanchanaburi as working directly under the Japanese Army. Most Thai workers, however, were not directly under the supervision of the Japanese military – rather they were employed by Sino-Thai companies and business concerns which had been sub-contracted to do the Railway work by the

Japanese. It is not known how many Thais were involved through these private sector arrangements. Interviews in villages around the Sangkhlaburi area disclosed that Thai villagers had still been employed in Railway construction further up the line and suggest that perhaps a further 5,000-10,000 Thais (perhaps chiefly ethnic Mons) were drafted. Possibly, if civilian contractors are included, as many as 30,000 Thais may have been involved.

'Widespread barbarities'

In 1990, a mass grave of Asian labourers was discovered in a sugarcane field in Kanchanaburi. By the time I visited the site, the skeletons of some 400 workers had already been removed. This was not the first such excavation of 'Asian workers' bones', nor was it the last. The most recent was in 2008, probably on land near to the 1990 excavations. The exposure of this latter grave was, however, of great importance. Many Thai residents in the area came forward to recount what they had seen. They described how camp workers would come to bury between five and 10 workers every day; how bodies of women and children were also interred; and even how some, probably afflicted with cholera, had been thrown into the grave while still alive. One skeleton was that of a child less than 10 years of age. The child must have been Tamil and still had bangles on its lower legs. Not only Tamils were involved – Thais remember other Malayans, Javanese and even Burmese also being thrown into the graves.

Some of the Allied prisoners were aware that the Asian labourers were suffering even more dreadfully than themselves. We can find many descriptions in the prisoners' diaries, such as the following by British doctor Robert Hardie:

'A lot of Tamil, Chinese and Malay labourers from Malaya have been brought up forcibly to work on the railway. They were told that they were going to Alor Star in northern Malaya; that conditions would be good – light work, good food and good quarters. Once on the train, however, they were kept under guard and brought right up to Siam and marched in droves up to the camps on the river. There must be many thousands of these unfortunates all along the railway course. There is a big camp a few kilometres below here, and another 2 or 3 kilometres up. We hear of the frightful casualties from cholera and other diseases among these people and of the brutality with which they are treated by the Japanese. People who have been near the camps speak with bated breath of the state of affairs – corpses rotting unburied in the jungle, almost complete lack of sanitation, frightful stench, overcrowding, swarms of flies. There is no medical attention in these camps, and the wretched natives are of course unable to organise any communal sanitation.'

Dr Hardie also adds: 'When one hears of these widespread barbarities, one can only feel that we prisoners of war, in spite of all the deaths and permanent disabilities which result, are being treated with comparative consideration.'

The abbot of Ban Pong Temple, who was a young novice at the time, related that he often saw the workers passing through Ban Pong and he remembered clearly that there were women and children in the ranks of the Indian workers. It seems that many Tamils thought that Railway work would be similar to the plantation work for which the British Imperial authorities had brought them to Malaya in the first place. Many Tamil women were used in the camp kitchens as cooks and cleaners.

Most published works estimate the number of Tamil workers at between 80,000 and 100,000. Historian Michael Stenson estimates that the population of the Indian community in Malaya during the war period actually decreased by around 100,000 or nearly 7%. This indicates the seriousness of the Indian labour mobilisation. After the war the Indian Congress Party sent a delegation to Ma-

The Kra Isthmus Railway

THE Death Railway was not the only railway built in Thailand by the Japanese military. The first such railway to try to link Thailand with Burma was the Kra Isthmus Railway. Construction began in June 1943 and it was completed by November of the same year.

It was a short line of roughly 90 kilometres, starting from Chumphon, an important station on the Southern Thailand Railway, to the small village of Ban Khao Fa Chi near the Burmese border. From Ban Khao Fa Chi goods were transferred to boats and shipped down the River La-Un and the Kra River to Victoria Point in Burma. It was abandoned in 1944 due to Allied bombing as the railway course ran through a very exposed area.

The importance of this Railway is that it was built only by Malayan labour – from all the communities in Malaya, Malay, Indian and Chinese. When I visited Ban Khao Fa Chi around 2004, the son of the wartime village headman, Sabiang Chuchat, told me that one Tamil worker had stayed behind after the war. He recounted in an interview:

'Among the Malayan workers, there were many Indians. Many were very dark-skinned. I used to know one Indian who stayed behind after the war…. He had been affected mentally by his experiences and had nowhere to go. He was called Ladam.'

Sir Andrew Gilchrist had been a member of the staff of the pre-war British Embassy in Bangkok. He was returned to the UK early in the war by the Japanese as part of an exchange of diplomatic personnel and was secretly parachuted into Thailand, near Chumphon, before the war's end. He must have been the first British official to visit the camps in the area. He vividly describes the terrible conditions in the camps in his book *Bangkok, Top Secret*. One of his photographs bears the caption, 'When I removed the blanket to take the photograph the man was alive; when I bent down to put it back he was dead.'

Published accounts suggest that between 60,000 and 120,000 Malayans were involved in the construction of the Kra Isthmus Railway. After the work was completed, many Malayans remained to operate the Railway, as engine drivers, maintenance workers, station staff and clerks.

laya and Thailand, headed by VS Srinivasa Sastri, to investigate the conditions experienced by the Tamils on the Railway. In a letter to Nehru, Sastri mentions 'a lakh' (100,000) of Tamil workers.

'Lung' (Uncle) Yu Chalawankumphi, one of the Malays sent to the Death Railway, remained in the Tarsao (Nam Tok) area after the war's end. Probably the last surviving Malay worker left in Thailand, he recalls:

'I was brought here from Kota Baru in [the Malayan state of] Kelantan when I was 15 years old. I was picked out at random by the Japanese. It wasn't voluntary; they simply took one out of three males. Perhaps out of every five or six young men, three would be picked out. It was all arbitrary – at random. Many of my friends from Kota Baru were selected too, and we travelled up together…. After we arrived, I was split up from the friends who'd been rounded up together with me. I was never able to meet them; we were all split up. I never knew where they were. The Japanese military never made any lists of the names of us labourers.

'I was put to work immediately. I started at Nong Pladuk and worked right up to the Burmese border. The area was virgin jungle then, very wild…I was working more than two years. We had been promised pay at the rate of 600 a month. I can't recall the currency unit but it was certainly 600 a month! The unit doesn't matter because we never actually received anything at all; no pay at all for all those months' labour...

'We couldn't understand what the Japanese guards were saying. There were no Japanese who spoke Malay. I couldn't understand anything at all! They would beat or prod us to show us how they wanted us to work. Most of the guards were terrible….We had to work every day, regardless of the weather; in the monsoon rains or the fierce sunlight. There was no medicine available in those days. Even when sick, we were forced to work. So many people died, especially of dysentery and cholera. Many also died of malaria. The dead bodies were just thrown into huge holes. That was all! The guards could be very fierce. Even if you just wanted to piss, you had to ask permission first. If you didn't, they would tie your hands behind your back and beat you with sticks teeming with live red ants. You would get bitten all over your body. The bites from these red ants were unbearably painful….

'After the war, I didn't go back. Indeed, many never returned; they remained scattered here and there along the course of the railway… I was very depressed at that time and so sad. I'd wanted to return… The British soldiers who came after the war never helped me; they never asked or tried to find out about us workers at all. They never offered any assistance. I was so miserable!'

Total figures of the drafting of Malayans for work on railways in Thailand are difficult to ascertain, due to the Japanese Army's destruction of records. A policy of minimising the number of Asian workers they had drafted was probably made known to the higher-ranking Japanese officers on the Railway. However, Major R Campbell, commanding officer of 'K' Force, records in his report to the British military that a Japanese corporal involved in logistics, whom he interviewed at Appuron in Burma immediately after the war in 1945, stated that 250,000 Malayans had been brought to work on the Railway. It is possible that the lowly-ranking corporal had not been informed of official army policy to minimise or remain silent about the extent of Asian labour utilisation. As this figure presumably includes the workers on the Kra Isthmus Railway (see box) and the 100,000 Tamil labourers already mentioned, the Japanese corporal's estimate is highly credible and probably accurate. The remainder of the figure must have comprised workers from Malaya's Chinese and Malay communities.

The Japanese mobilisation on Java was of staggering proportions. So great was the recruitment of labour on Java that the Japanese word for a worker, *romusha*, has become part of Bahasa Indonesia and can be found in all Indonesian language dictionaries today. Labour was also recruited in large numbers from other Indonesian islands, notably Sumatra. MC Ricklefs, a historian of Indonesia, states that between 200,000 and 500,000 Javanese were drafted for labour work. Japanese historian Sato Shigeru claims that, if 'temporary' workers are included, the total number of people affected at some time by this labour mobilisation may have been as many as 10,000,000. A smaller number of the Javanese labourers were sent to work on the Death Railway, and some survivors have been interviewed by Japanese television in the Jogjakarta area. The Japanese corporal at Appuron told Major Campbell that 100,000 workers had been brought from Java.

Burma was another source of large labour recruitment. Lin Yone Thit Lwin was a volunteer labour organiser for the Japanese. Even though his situation would have been a little better than that of the compulsorily drafted workers, he and his friend, Then Tha Sin, escaped from the horrors of the Railway, eventually returning to their homes. After the war, Lin Yone Thit Lwin became a well-known writer recording his escape from the Railway and the terrible conditions faced by the other Burmese workers in a diary entitled *The Thai-Myanmar Railway: A Personal Memoir*, published in Rangoon in 1968. In his book, Lin Yone Thit Lwin states that 170,000 Burmese workers were originally recruited. But as many Burmese, being familiar with their own countryside, frequently escaped (despite the serious penalties if caught), the Japanese were continually finding fresh recruits to fill the place of missing workers. The wartime Prime Minister of Burma, Ba Maw – who was generally sympathetic to the aims of the Japanese military – in his book, *Breakthrough in Burma*, calls the drafting of Burmese labourers 'an appalling mass crime'. ◆

David Boggett is an Emeritus Professor of Kyoto Seika University in Japan, where he worked for 37 years. He has led several groups of Japanese students on field study trips to the Kanchanaburi area. He is presently retired, living in Chiangrai, North Thailand.

Kofi Awoonor (1935-2013) was a Ghanaian poet and author whose work combined indigenous African traditions with modern literary forms. He was tragically killed in the September 2013 attack at Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya.

THE FIRST CIRCLE

Kofi Awoonor

1

the flat end of sorrow here
two crows fighting over New Year's Party
leftovers. From my cell, I see a cold
hard world.

2

So this is the abscess that
hurts the nation –
jails, torture, blood
and hunger.
One day it will burst;
it must burst.

3

When I heard you were taken
we speculated, those of us at large
where you would be
in what nightmare will you star?
That night I heard the moans
wondering whose child could now
be lost in the cellars of oppression.
Then you emerged, tall, and bloody-eyed.

It was the first time
I wept.

4

The long nights I dread most
the voices from behind the bars
the early glow of dawn before
the guard's steps wake me up,
the desire to leap and stretch
and yawn in anticipation
of another dark home-coming day
only to find that
I cannot.
riding the car into town,
hemmed in between them
their guns poking me in the ribs,
I never had known that my people
wore such sad faces, so sad
they were, on New Year's Eve,
so very sad.