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Editorial

Over the last couple of issues, we have been telling you of the changes in the e-magazine structure, a new name, a new website, a new format. In the structure of the parent body, too, there have been rapid changes. People like Willem van Schendel, who as Chair of the Sephis Steering Committee had done so much to help the e-magazine at critical times, including at its very inception, remains in an advisory capacity. The new chairs of the committee are Shamil Jeppie (who remains an editor of the e-magazine) and Michiel Baud (who will be known to regular readers of the magazine for some fine contributions). There have been changes at the Secretariat. All those who have been part of the Sephis family in whatever a manner, will remember Ingrid Goedhart (the Assistant) and Ulbe Bosma (the Co-ordinator). They have been a constant friend of the e-magazine and will be sorely missed.

Looking at the question in another way: The infusion of new blood also allows us to think boldly of the future, and make plans for them. We welcome the new team members, like Marina de Regt, who has taken over from Ulbe as the Coordinator. Assisting her will be Jacqueline Rutte, taking over from Ingrid. We will soon post the details of the changes on the website itself, and we would appreciate if our readers took some time off then to see them, as that would give them a much better understanding as to where the Sephis family, of which this ezine is an integral part, stands today.

This issue is possibly the heaviest, at least in recent times, in terms of articles. It contains four articles, each interesting in its own right. The second part of the work on capital flight by Edsel L. Beja, Jr. is published in this issue, taking this story further. Jeremiah Oluwasegun Arowosegbe's work on Nigeria deals with the question of identity politics in Nigeria, and adds to the growing corpus of knowledge suggesting that such identities were not pre-colonial but colonial. Iman Mitra, in his inimical style has sought to identify the times and contexts of the change from the old favourite, 'the whodunit', to the new rage, the spy thriller. Antara Mitra shows how the need for environmental security is very different in Southern contexts, and any universalist notion cannot possibly work.

Next, we have two travelogues of sorts. On the one hand, Kingsley Awang Ollong uses his journey on a beer truck as his entrapoint into understanding the problems of the Nigerian transportation system, and indeed the economy at large. On the other, Claudio Costa Pinheiro explores the possibilities of South-South exchange through research activities that takes the scholar across such contexts. In the reviews section, we present a varied offering. A. O. Omobowale's review of Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz's work shows how, even now, Western/Northern notions continue to inform academic work on the South. Suhit Sen takes on Ramchandra Guha's recent 'comprehensive' history of post-1947 India to show the inadequacies of the work. Paramita Dasgupta tackles Judith Brown's latest work on a topic that is much under the scanner today, the diaspora (in this case, the South Asian one). Finally, Sayantan Dasgupta reviews Suparna Gooptu's new book on a pioneering Indian woman lawyer and talks about what led to her marginalisation in feminist/nationalistic annals.

We have talked of the changes in the Sephis structure and indeed of the e-magazine at length. The world too has been in the throes of change. As the tortuous processes of the Primaries goes on in the United States, the world at large, and the South in particular, watches the debates, wondering what changes these debates might lead to, if anything at all, in the global scenario.

But the South has not been merely watching. The recent UN General Assembly has seen a variety of issues and debates thrown up, and battles rejoined. Venezuela, Bolivia, Mexico, North Korea, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Bangladesh: The list of countries going through rapid changes, either in their internal situations, or in global positional terms, is ever-growing. Meanwhile, at least a part of the world remembers the fortieth anniversary of the passing of one of the most controversial and romantic character of the twentieth century, Ernesto Che Guevara.

All in all, new and exciting times ahead. And the end of history remains forever slipping away...

Articles

Capital Flight, Part II: Concepts¹



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Abstract

The starting point for an inquiry on a research topic is the conceptual building blocs. This is important so there is a clear understanding on what is being communicated to the readers when referring to the object of the study. This essay focuses on two things: What "capital flight" means, and how to measure it.

Meanings of Capital Flight

Capital flight is a complex phenomenon. Much of it, or even how it goes on, is still not understood. Because of this problem, scholars have employed some approaches to analyse capital flight: Volume of flows, motivation of the flows, direction of capital flows, or accounting concept of the flows.

Capital Flight in Terms of Volume

The defining feature in this approach is whether the volume of capital outflows is normal or abnormal. If it is normal, the flows are typical to what happens when investment portfolios diversification is pursued, thus characterised by steady outflows. If the latter, there are sudden or discrete flows, often set off by adverse domestic or external conditions. In short, if the basis for defining capital flight is volume, therefore, it is the magnitude of the outflow that is the key indicator.

It is typical to find the volume approach applied when analysing hot or speculative money. To Cuddington, capital flight means any speculative capital outflows responding to crises, higher risks, or changes in domestic policies and social conditions.² The converse also applies: Surges in speculative capital inflows mean reverse capital flight, albeit hot money, and suspicions of changes in the domestic scenario. In fact, it is possible to broaden this interpretation given advances in international financial markets. For example, financial instruments like bonds can be included in a broader interpretation of hot money since they can be traded with relatively little trouble in secondary bond markets. Bond holders dispose-off their holdings and transfer the capital abroad in the same manner as equity holders dispose-off their

stocks when there is an increase in, say, political risk that makes the domestic economy unattractive to capital.

Capital Flight with Motivation

In terms of motive, capital outflows occur because domestic residents want to exploit favourable returns to capital elsewhere or they want to circumvent government regulations, such as capital controls, taxation or some related reason. The first motive—secure favourable returns to capital abroad—characterises normal outflows, while the second motive—avoiding regulations—characterises abnormal outflows, regardless of the volume. The latter type of capital outflow is capital flight. The motivation to flee can be other reasons, such as discriminatory treatment of wealth or fear of a significant loss in the value of capital because of crises or higher risks. For instance, when capital holders perceive that policies have become unfavourable to them, they withdraw funds quickly, and so there is an upsurge in capital flight. Similarly, when capital pulls out following herd behaviour, it is also capital flight. Notice that in these two latter cases, there need not be intent to circumvent regulations. Moreover, there is no presumption that the flight is motivated by some irregular or illegal activities. In short, it is the nature of the response to the situation that defines what capital flight is. The difficulty, of course, is to uncover the intent because, in general, the motivation is manifested after the fact.

The defining feature of the second approach is whether the capital outflow was done to evade domestic regulations on capital or perceived discriminatory policies. In contrast to the

volume-based definition, the motive-based definition suggests that discrete capital outflows can be normal if they are accounted for or reported to the domestic authorities or done for economic reasons. Even if the volume is small but it goes unreported, there is a presumption that the capital outflow is capital flight. Moreover, there is capital flight as long as the earnings on foreign assets are not reported to the domestic authorities. So when earnings on foreign capital are actually reported but not repatriated to the domestic economy, they are considered normal outflows.

Alternatively, it is possible to classify capital outflows either as legal or illegal. When the capital outflow is sanctioned by law and/or reported, it is not capital flight. If it is neither sanctioned nor reported, or it is reported but the information is inaccurately recorded or even manipulated, the outflow is capital flight.

One type of illegal transactions relevant to capital flight is trade misinvoicing. Exporters can underinvoice, while the importers can overinvoice, to circumvent foreign exchange controls and regulations. Through such actions, capital is transferred abroad undetected by the domestic authorities, and indeed, both are capital flights. There may be underinvoicing of imports, done to avoid customs taxes and trade quotas, or export overinvoicing, done to obtain export subsidies or concessions from the government when meeting performance-based criteria like export revenues. In these cases, there are undetected capital inflows or there is a reverse transfer of capital into the domestic economy. Whether or not such transactions happen in collaboration with trade partners or counter-

¹ This essay is culled from Beja, "Capital Flight: Meanings and Measurements" in Gerald Epstein (ed), *Capital Flight and Capital Controls in Developing Countries*, Northampton, MA, 2005, pp. 58-82. It is also a continuation of "Capital Flight Part I" in *Global South*, Volume 3, Issue 3.

² John Cuddington, *Capital Flight: Estimates, Issues and Explanation*, Princeton Studies in International Finance No. 58, Princeton University, 1986.

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parts is not an issue. What trade misinvoicing highlights is that capital flight can occur through the systematic manipulation of trade information.

Direction of Capital Flows

The third approach distinguishes capital flows in terms of their general direction. When the nature of the capital flows is dual-directional (i.e., inflow or outflow), there is no presumption of capital flight. Such is to be expected when capital is mobile and economies are open and integrated. And so, large capital inflows are normal, especially when the economy is growing, and should be encouraged, while large outflows are also normal when capital seeks better returns elsewhere. However, when capital flows are predominantly outflows, there is a presumption of abnormality, and defined as capital flight.

Another way to apply this directional approach is to use the point of origin of capital. The convention is not to define capital outflows from developed countries as capital flight. Only those from developing countries are capital flight.

Capital Flight as an Accounting Concept

In contrast to the above definitions, a fourth approach looks at capital flight as the net unrecorded capital outflow, sometimes called as the residual or broad definition of capital flight. The defining feature of this approach is to apply an accounting technique to tally all the officially reported capital inflows and outflows. The residual definition thus means that what cannot be accounted is capital flight. Notice that the definition encompasses all reported flows, that is, short-term (hot money) and long-term (cool money) capital. Moreover, the approach does not include properties that suggest volume or motive, though some motivational attributes may be inferred when some transactions are accounted after carefully tallying the information.

Measures of Capital Flight

Because there are different definitions of capital flight, there are different measurement techniques, and hence there are different estimates of capital flight. Briefly, capital flight can be estimated using either the direct method or indirect method. The latter has two variants: Derived method, and residual method. The direct method means that capital flight is the outcome after performing first-round

measurements and adjustments using an imputed aggregate of domestic residents' foreign assets. The indirect method means that capital flight is obtained after accounting for all capital flows.

Before proceeding to explain the procedures, some concepts need to be defined. First, variables used in the calculations follow the fifth edition of the balance of payments (BOP) system.³ Accordingly, the current account deficits (CAD) refer to the balance of the transactions dealing with trade, services, other incomes, and current transfers. Net foreign investments (NFI) are sums of net direct foreign investments (FDI) and net portfolio equities (PORT). SK is short-term capital. The accumulation of international reserves (CRES) refers to the reserve assets, covering holdings in gold, special drawing rights (SDR), foreign exchange assets, reserve position with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other claims on non-residents. Total external debts (DEBT) follow the World Bank reporting system, thus comprising long-term external debts (LTDEBT), short-term external debts (STDEBT), and use of IMF credits. CDET is annual additions to DEBT. External debt flows (ED) can be obtained from the BOP tables.

Second, to facilitate presentation, the BOP notational convention is followed. As such, positive figure is an inflow and a negative is an outflow. When CA is positive, there is a surplus. It means there is an inflow of capital. A negative CA is a deficit, so there is an outflow of capital. When NFI is positive, there is an inflow of capital as well; when negative, there is an outflow of capital. If CDET is positive, there is an increase in external indebtedness, which means there is an inflow of capital. When negative, it means a decrease in the indebtedness, hence an outflow of capital.

For CRES and errors and omissions (EO), the reverse notation convention is followed. That is, a negative CRES means an accumulation of international reserves. In a way, there is an outflow into the reserves account. Positive CRES means a reduction of international reserves or an inflow of capital obtained by drawing down the reserves. Negative EO refers to the unaccounted capital or foreign exchange outflows, and vice versa. Lastly, the convention to represent capital flight with a positive notation is followed. If the estimated capital flight

is negative, it means reverse capital flight; that is, there was net unrecorded inflow of capital.

Direct Measure

Hot Money Measure

The basic direct measure of capital flight follows the hot money definition, which uses SK estimates only as it does not include long-term capital flows. Cuddington measures capital flight as the sum of SK and EO.⁴ Hence the hot money capital flight is obtained using the formula $KF_H = -SK - EO$. There are alternative formulas as well: $KF_H = -SK_1 - EO$ or $KF_H = -SK - PORT - EO$, where SK_1 refers to other short-term capital assets only and PORT refers to net portfolio investments but comprising of other bonds and corporate equities only. Among these three formulae, the second is called the narrowest measure because it considers only a subset of SK, while first gives the middle measure and the last the broadest measure of hot money.

Indirect Measure: Derived Measure

Dooley Measure

Dooley presents one type of indirect measure of capital flight.⁵ First, he obtains the stock of capital outflows (TKO) and adjusting it using the difference between external debt data reported by the World Bank and by the IMF. That is, $TKO = RCNR$ (not FDI) + $Diff_WBIMF$, where $Diff_WBIMF = WDT$ figure - IMF figure. $RCNR$ (not FDI) is the cumulative recorded non-FDI claims of non-residents. When $Diff_WBIMF$ is positive, the IMF data underestimate the total external indebtedness with respect to the World Bank data, and vice versa. So the difference is added to TKO to get a more accurate figure for capital flows. The next step is to impute total recorded external assets (EA), using the interest earnings (INTEARN) on foreign assets reported in the BOP and utilising an interest rate, r , thus $EA = INTEARN / r$, where r can be the ninety-day United States Treasury Bill interest rate. CEA gives the annual flow of EA. The last step is to subtract EA from TKO, then obtain the annual flow as the Dooley measure: $KF_D = CTKO_{ADJ} - CEA$.

An alternative to the Dooley measure is presented by Khan and UI Haque, who use the flow version of the Dooley method but define CTKO as only SK rather than CTKO.⁶ The rest of their procedures are the same as

³ The current BOP is the fifth edition published in 1993, and there are some structural differences from the earlier edition published in 1974. Concepts consistent to both editions are used in the formulas.

⁴ Cuddington, *Capital Flight*.

⁵ Michael Dooley, *Country Specific Risk Premiums, Capital Flight and Net Investment Income Payments in Selected Developing Countries*, Mimeo, International Monetary Fund, 1986.

⁶ Mohsin Khan and Nadeem UI Haque, "Foreign Borrowing and Capital Flight: A Formal Analysis," *IMF Staff Papers*, 32(4), 1987, pp. 606-628.

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Dooley's: $CTKO = SK$, so $KF_{KH} = SK - CEA$.

Trade Misinvoicing

Another indirect measure of capital flight is trade misinvoicing, which is obtained by comparing trade data among trading partners. As explained, export underinvoicing and import overinvoicing are channels for capital flight, while import underinvoicing and export overinvoicing are forms of reverse capital flight. Some smuggling (in which imported goods are not taxed or recorded at all) may be captured when comparing data.

There are three steps to compute trade misinvoicing. First, obtain export and import discrepancies for a country in its trade with industrialised-country trade partners, using data from the IMF Direction of Trade Statistics: $DX = PX - CIF \times X$ and $DM = M - CIF \times PM$, where DX and DM are total discrepancies in exports and imports, respectively; PX is the value of trade partner's imports from the country and PM are the value of the same trade partner's exports to the country; X and M are the country's own recorded exports to and imports from trade partners, respectively; and CIF , the cif/fob factor, is an adjustment for the cost of freight and insurance.⁷

Next, obtain the global export (MISX) and import discrepancies (MISM) by multiplying each of DX and DM with the inverse of the shares of the industrialised-country trade partners in the country's total exports (X_INDUS) and imports (M_INDUS), respectively: $MISX = DX / X_INDUS$, and $MISM = DM / M_INDUS$. The last step is to add the trade discrepancies to obtain the net trade misinvoicing (MIS) of the country, $MIS = MISX + MISM$. Thus trade misinvoicing is capital flight, $KF_{MIS} = MIS$.

Indirect Approach: Residual Measure

In the residual measure, the officially recorded capital inflows and capital outflows are considered, which basi-

cally comprise official sources and uses of funds. Sources of funds are CDET and NFI, while uses of funds are CAD and CRES. What thus comes out, as the residual is a measure of capital flight.

The basic residual measure is the World Bank method. In the World Bank's formulation, capital flight is obtained as $KF_{WB} = CDET + NFI - CAD - CRES$.⁸ There are other versions to this measure, indicating differences in opinion on what items to be excluded in the equation. Conesa, for example, subtracts the changes in the public sector assets ($CASSETS_{PUBLIC}$); that is, $KF_E = KF_{WB} - CASSETS_{PUBLIC}$. Here, he argues that the public sector cannot be involved in capital flight. As such, the activities of the public sector that involve foreign exchange transactions are official uses of funds and do not constitute capital flight. In a related approach, Eggerstedt et al. subtract the changes in public institutions assets (CPUBLIC) like government owned and controlled corporations (GOCC) held abroad are subtracted from KF_{WB} ; that is, $KF_E = KF_{WB} - CPUBLIC$. The contention is that KF_{WB} is overstated when investments of the GOCCs are considered official uses of funds. For them, PUBLIC is similar to CRES. Put another way, CPUBLIC, unlike private accumulation of foreign assets is within the control of the government and should not be considered capital flight.⁹ In the case of Zedillo, the changes in the imputed interest earnings of identified residents with deposits abroad ($CEA_{DEPOSIT}$) is subtracted from KF_{WB} ; that is, $KF_Z = KF_{WB} - CEA_{DEPOSIT}$, where $EA_{DEPOSIT} = EA_{DEPOSIT} / r$, and r is the United States Treasury Bill interest rate.¹⁰ Actually, Zedillo's system is similar to that of Dooley. But the biggest challenge in estimating the Zedillo measure is how to obtain the needed information for $EA_{DEPOSIT}$ because the procedure assumes that the domestic residents who hold foreign deposits actually declare their nationality or that the foreign banks indicate the nationality of their clients. In addition, the

procedure assumes that domestic residents who hold foreign assets are in deposit accounts only, ignoring other forms of foreign assets. $EA_{DEPOSIT}$ is particularly difficult because in it identified individuals who hold accounts abroad are considered. One way to address the problem is to use the flow version of the Dooley method: $KF_D = KF_{WB} - CEA$.

In the case of the Morgan Guaranty measure, the change in the banking sector's foreign assets (CBANKS) is subtracted from KF_{WB} ; that is, $KF_{MG} = CDET + NFI - CAD - CRES - CBANKS$. By excluding CBANKS, Morgan Guaranty is arguing that the banking sector's accumulation of foreign assets does not constitute capital flight.¹⁰ Cline takes a step further by making some adjustments on the current accounts. In particular, Cline excludes travel expenditures like tourism and border transactions (TRAVEL), FDI incomes (FDIINC) and other investment income (OINC), thus $KF_C = KF_{MG} - (TRAVEL + FDIINC + OINC)$, arguing, for instance, that TRAVEL are transactions that domestic authorities cannot control, while FDIINC and OINC are official transactions. In short, these items do not constitute capital flight.¹² Lastly, Pastor takes KF_{MG} and adjusts it by including implied earnings on SK (as in Cuddington) net of reported investment income (as in Dooley). Pastor does not include the change in reported earnings on capital held abroad as capital flight, thus $KF_P = KF_{MG} + \ddot{A}[(1 + r) * SK - EA]$.¹³

Adjusting Baseline Measures

The baseline measures obtain good estimates of capital flight if the data are unproblematic. However, the data contain errors because of collection or reporting problems. These errors affect the current or capital accounts, so corrections have to be made when the errors are identified.

On the current accounts, one adjustment is for trade misinvoicing. Following the procedure above, MIS is added to the baseline measure.

⁷ The reason for using industrialised-country trade partners for the discrepancy calculations is that their export and import data are assumed to be relatively accurate than those of non-industrialised countries. If this distinction is not helpful, it would be useful to focus on the major trade partners.

⁸ World Bank, *World Development Report*, World Bank, Washington DC, 1985.

⁹ It is difficult to sustain the contentions of Conesa and Eggerstedt et al. considering that in many developing countries the public institutions and/or governments are exploited for capital flight. See Eduardo Conesa, *The Flight of Capital from Latin America: Causes and Cures*, Mimeo, Inter-American Development Bank, 1987; and Susan Eggerstedt, Rebecca Hall and Sweder van Wijnbergen, "Measuring Capital Flight: A Case Study of Mexico," *World Development*, 23 (2), 1995, pp. 211-232.

¹⁰ Ernesto Zedillo, "Case Study: Mexico" in Donald Lessard and John Williamson (ed), *Capital Flight and Third World Debt*, Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC, 1987.

¹¹ Similarly, it is difficult to sustain the contention of Morgan Guaranty because banks can be used as conduits of capital flight. See Morgan Guaranty Trust Company [Morgan Guaranty], "LDC Capital Flight," *World Financial Markets*, March, 1986, pp. 13-15.

¹² The explanation for taking out TRAVEL, FDIINC and OINC from KF_{MG} seem arbitrary. See William Cline, "Discussion" in Donald Lessard and John Williamson (ed), *Capital Flight*.

¹³ Manuel Pastor, *Capital Flight and the Latin American Debt Crisis*, Economic Policy Institute, Washington DC, 1990.

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Another adjustment concerns overseas remittances (REMIT). If there is a large number of overseas workers and informal remittances are also significant, estimates of the unrecorded remittances (UNREMIT) have to be added to the baseline measure. There are different ways to estimate it, among of which is to use an index of the size of unrecorded remittances: $UNREMIT = Index * REMIT$.

Thus, MIS and UNREMIT are added to the baseline measure. Thus, if the World Bank measure is followed, the current account adjusted capital flight becomes $KF_{WB, ADJ} = CDET + NFI - CAD_{ADJ} - CRES$, where $CAD_{ADJ} = CAD + MIS + UNREMIT$.

On the financial accounts, an adjustment is needed when external debts data are misrecorded and/or when corrections on the indebtedness have yet to be reported. This procedure is done by comparing the data taken from, say, the World Bank and the country's central bank. Furthermore, an adjustment is also needed to account for the impact of foreign exchange fluctuations on long-term external debts (LTDEBT). Because LTDEBT are denominated in a mix of hard currencies (e.g., European Euro, British pound, Japanese yen, United States dollar), currency fluctuations affect their dollar values across periods. To compute for the adjustment, the foreign exchange adjusted external debt (ATTD) is obtained following the formula presented in Boyce and Ndikumana; that is, $ATTD_{t-1} = \hat{O}[(\hat{a}_{i,t-1} LTDEBT_{t-1}) (FX_i / FX_{i,t-1})] + \hat{O}(\hat{a}_{i,t-1})$

$LTDEBT_{t-1}) + IMF_{t-1}(SDR/SDR_{t-1}) + STDEBT_{t-1}$, where i refers to euro, mark, yen, etc.; and $\hat{a}_i$ is the proportion of LTDEBT in hard currencies; $\hat{a}_i$ is the proportion of LTDEBT in United States dollar (USD), and multiple (MULT) and other currencies (OTHER); FX is the exchange rate between a hard currency and USD, and FX/FX_{t-1} is a ratio representing the exchange rate fluctuation between two periods; IMF is the Use of IMF credits; SDR/SDR_{t-1} represents SDR fluctuation between two periods; and $STDEBT$ means short-term external debt.¹⁴ Thus, all things remaining constant, an appreciation in a hard currency relative to USD reduces FX / FX_{t-1} and reduces $ATTD_{t-1}$ as well. In other words, the dollar value of long-term external debt will be lower as a result of an appreciation of the other hard currencies relative to reported DEBT.

The adjustment on external debt (ADEBT) is obtained as $ADEBT = ATTD_{t-1} - DEBT_{t-1}$, which obtains an estimate on how $DEBT_{t-1}$ was overstated or understated because of exchange rate fluctuation. Subtracting it from CDET gives the adjusted change in external debt ($CDET_{ADJ}$), $CDET_{ADJ} = CDET - ADEBT$, and using $CDET = DEBT - DEBT_{t-1}$, it can be shown that $CDET_{ADJ} = DEBT - ATTD_{t-1}$.

Foreign direct investments (FDI) and portfolio investments (PORT) have errors and likewise adjustments for them need to be computed. For instance, some FDI may be unrecorded or recorded incorrectly, say,

because of differences in accounting procedures. There can be foreign exchange fluctuation effects as well since FDI come in hard currencies but often reported in USD. Hence, an adjustment is needed to correct for such errors. If data are available on the country-origin of FDI, a procedure similar to the above can be used to obtain an adjusted FDI (FDI_{ADJ}). The same procedures are followed for PORT, obtaining adjusted PORT ($PORT_{ADJ}$). Adding FDI_{ADJ} and $PORT_{ADJ}$ to FDI gives FDI_{ADJ} .¹⁵ Thus, if the World Bank measure is used, the financial accounts adjusted capital flight measure is $KF_{WB} = CDET_{ADJ} + NFI_{ADJ} - CAD - CRES$.

Incorporating all the adjustments presented in this section obtains an adjusted capital flight measure; that is, $KF_{WB, ADJ} = CDET_{ADJ} + NFI_{ADJ} - CAD - CRES + MIS + UNREMIT$.

Final Thoughts

This essay reviewed the literature on meanings and measures of capital flight. As the discussion showed, the concept of "capital flight" is complex, with different definitions and different ways of estimations. The debate on the appropriate definition and how to measure capital flight continues, especially today when there are many developments in international finance and changes in the economies ushered financial liberalisation and deregulation. No one definition of capital flight is sufficient in the case of developing countries.

¹⁴ James K. Boyce and Leonce Ndikumana, "Is Africa a Net Creditor? New Estimates of Capital Flight from Severely Indebted Sub-Saharan African Countries, 1970-98," *Journal of Development Studies*, 38(2), 2001, pp. 27-56.

¹⁵ CRES includes exchange rate adjustments, which the country's central bank calculates. If it does not, then adjustment must be calculated as well.

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Minorities, the National Question and the Discourse on Colonialism: Reflections on Nigeria.¹



Jeremiah Oluwasegun Arowosegbe

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Abstract

This paper reflects on the discourse on *minorities and the national question* in the context of *decolonisation* in Nigeria. It examines the question of how colonialism, through its policies and programmes, as well as the various political and administrative structures put in place by the colonial state, introduced new dimensions and complications to the minorities and nationalities questions, mainly through the creation and development of contradictions in colonial and later, postcolonial Nigeria. The argument that is advanced in this work suggests that: In the precolonial period, there were indeed *majorities and minorities* as well as *historically dominant minorities* in Nigerian history and politics. However, their determination in relation to other groups and political systems was not externally determined as it was later the case, under colonialism. Relatedly, the factors, which informed the formulation of the national question during this period were also different from what later constituted the national question in the colonial and later, postcolonial period.

Introduction

In the precolonial period, far from being externally imposed, the impetus for change, development and historical transition from one stage of civilisation to the other was the product of struggles against constraints and contradictions within the prevailing modes of production, or stage of history. However, under colonialism, alien systems and structures were introduced, which not only changed the material circumstances of the colonised Africans by forcefully integrating them into the colonial and later, world capitalist system, through compelling them to participate in colonial economic activities, which were largely dominated by profit motive, but also negated the autonomous development of the state. Hence Nnoli's assertion that colonial and postcolonial societies in Africa are characterised by struggles, which do not have their origins in locally induced changes in the system of production and class relations.²

Conceptual Clarifications

This section is divided into two parts. The first is conceptual and examines the etymological origins of the concept of minorities, while the second sub-

section provides a theoretical assessment of the national question discourse, beginning first with Lenin's celebrated contributions on Africa, with illustrations from Nigeria. Generally, minorities have been defined as culturally and relatively cohesive groups, which occupy a position of numerical inferiority, actual or potential socio-political subordination vis-à-vis other cultural sections in a political community. Elsewhere, based on objective socio-economic conditions as well as their political aspirations, Gurr and Suberu classified and cross-classified minorities into ethno-nationalists, indigenous peoples, ethno-classes, militant or politicised sects as well as communal contenders.³

Historically, the term minority is neither unique nor exclusive to any group in Africa, Asia or Latin America. Rather, in terms of its origin within the social sciences including history, it is associated with the events, which led to the First and Second World Wars, in which concern for the fate of national minorities was considered crucial in the relations between the European great powers.⁴ During this period, the extent of barbarism and violation of human rights in the Second World War

were measured in terms of repressive and other punitive actions taken against such minorities. However, from the post Second World War period, the term has acquired widespread international usage well beyond Europe and featured prominently even in the politics and discourses of decolonisation in the colonies in Asia and Africa, so much so that the interpretation of the term now varies widely from one region of the modern world to another according to traditions of historical scholarship and political sociology; especially since its scholarly uses sometimes convey deep differences in meaning. Hence, Ekeh's insightful clarification:

... (T)he so called ruling elite theorists of classical political sociology deal with ideological constructions and social processes that enable a minority to dominate the majority (see Michels 1915; Mosca 1939), whereas considerations of this subject in modern sociology particularly in the United States, deal principally with the ways in which majority groups relate to powerless racial minorities.⁵

As such, one perspective towards defining the term emphasises the disadvantages that minorities suffer in

¹ Paper submitted for publication in the Newsletter of the South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development (SEPHIS), International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam. I am very grateful to Dr. Rosinka Chaudhuri, Dr. Uday Kumar, Professor Pradip K. Dutta and Professor Sibaji Bandyopadhyay all at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta in India for their insightful comments on the first draft of this paper.

² O. Nnoli, *Introduction to Politics*, Longman Nigeria Limited, Ibadan and Zaria, 1986, p. 129.

³ T. R. Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethno Political Conflicts*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington DC, 1993, pp. 15-23; R. T. Suberu, "Ethnic Minorities and the Crisis of Democratic Governance in Nigeria", cited in D. Olowu, et al., (eds.), *Governance and Democratization in West Africa*, CODESRIA: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, Dakar, Senegal, 1999, p. 118.

⁴ P. P. Ekeh, "Political Minorities and Historically-Dominant Minorities in Nigerian History and Politics", cited in O. Oyediran, (ed.), *Governance and Development in Nigeria: Essays in Honour of Professor Billy J. Dudley*, Oyediran Consult International, Ibadan, 1996, p. 33. Ekeh here cites Macartney in defending his argument.

⁵ Ibid.

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the hands of a majority group that controls the instrument of power, enabled by the political process through which both majority and minority groups are governed. The other underlines the monopoly of power by a dominant minority, which it achieves either by subverting democratic processes or more usually by cultivating aristocratic principles of governance. Clearly, Nigerian history has been confronted by both these types of relationships between majority and minority groups in the exercise of power. However, as Ekeh suggests, it should be noted that while dominance by majority ethnic groups over minority groups has had special resonance since about 1951-54, which marked the onset of the democratic processes that accompanied decolonisation, the prior history of Nigeria across several centuries was also distinguished by instances of dominant minorities that ruled and exploited majorities over whom they exercised substantial power. Such dominance by minorities over majorities has usually left behind its reign a bitter residue for modern politics and has besmirched the relations between the former dominant minorities and the groups that they had exploited in the past. In other words, there is an active relationship between the two forms of the distribution of power among the minority and majority groups in Nigerian history and politics.⁶

Also, Osaghae argues that: "... (I)t should be stressed that emergent Nigerian realities transformed powerful pre-colonial groups such as the Bini and Ijaw (who infact lorded it over several Ibo sub-groups under King Jaja) into minority groups. Such transformations changed the complexion of the national question in important ways."⁷

Although I do not intend in this conceptual section, to document and analyse instances of political dominance, control and exploitation by minorities over majority ethnic groups in Nigerian history, nevertheless, it is my contention, following Ekeh and Osaghae that the eventual emergence, determination and description of such ethnic groups as minorities in the present times is a creation of the retreating British colonial hegemony. By locating the argument within this significant historical context, one is

able to adequately establish how modern political exigencies in terms of power relations were shaped and influenced by colonialism-imperialism. For example, in Nigeria, the term 'minorities' was used for the first time in the 1950s to refer to newly disadvantaged entities that emerged from the country's constitutional reforms. It emerged from the political processes that prepared Nigeria for independence from British imperial rule in the tense years between 1952 and 1960. During the constitutional changes that began between 1951 and 1954, the existing political culture was challenged by the regrouping of Nigeria's twenty-four provinces into three political regions of the North, East and West, each with central powers over the provinces placed under it. This centralisation of political power impacted significantly on the ensuing political participation.⁸ The most serious impacts were the emergence of ethnic power blocs based exclusively on the dominance of the three major ethnic groups, namely, the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the East and the Yoruba in the West; allegations of majority domination by members of the various minority groups within each region; and the differentiation of ethnic groups based on their access to power. Quoting in extenso, Ekeh confirms this: "In the Western Region, the Yoruba consolidated their primordial forces and revived their rather illustrious, if factious, history of governance to wrench power from threatened outside control, becoming the majority power holder at the expense of non-Yoruba ethnic groups. In the Eastern Region, the Igbo, historically exploited by neighboring ethnic Ijo and Efik, especially during the evil era of the slave trade, took advantage of the new democratic opportunities and their greater population to emerge as the new majority power holders in this zone, to the chagrin of the other ethnic groups in the region. In the North, the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate and its Islamic traditions bore handsome fruits for the Fulani aristocracy as the great grandson and direct descendant of the conqueror of the Hausa, Nupe and Ilorin- Yoruba states walked back into supreme and expanded power in northern Nigeria."⁹

Consequently, given their demographic advantage, the Yoruba and

Igbo became formidable political power holders in southern Nigeria while other ethnic groups including the historically dominant Benin, became minority ethnic groups. In the North, these developments coincided with the astutely firm determination of Dan Fodio's descendants to expand the boundaries of Fulani aristocratic control beyond the territories of the conquered Hausa, Nupe, and Yoruba-Ilorin to the Tiv and other ethnic groups, whom the Fulani did not conquer, but had potentially attacked and harassed before the British colonial adventure. Inevitably, the resulting resentments from the disadvantaged political minorities and the abrasive dominance of the newly empowered ethnic groups fuelled and endangered the turbulence of southern politics and also led to considerable turmoil in the North. In essence, this is the context of emergence of ethnic minorities in Nigerian politics.¹⁰

Having provided the foregoing accounts, I now situate recent minority upheavals in Africa within existing theoretical explanations. This helps to establish the link between the past and present. One, recent trends in world politics contribute directly to the primacy and contagion effects of minorities and ethnic nationalities conflicts. Two, the centralising project of nation-building and state-consolidation in most plural societies has almost universally involved the cultural devaluation, political repression and economic expropriation of the more vulnerable geo-ethnic segments of the political community. Three, in culturally fragmented communities, group identity exerts a powerful and autonomous influence. This usually has an emotive and often consummatory role, which becomes almost immediately conflictual especially when either challenged or antagonised. Four, minority grievances are often ignited and exacerbated by competition for, and by real or perceived discrimination in the allocation of such valued but increasingly scarce benefits of modernity as roads, clinics, schools, jobs and related distributive opportunities.

In Africa, minority conflicts are often animated by resource competition because ethno-territorial constituencies are usually the key beneficiaries of state allocational decisions, since such section based local or regional administrations constitute an

⁶ Ibid., p.34.

⁷ E. E. Osaghae "The Federal Solution and the National Question in Nigeria", cited in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumbi, (eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria: Comparative Perspectives*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Aldershot, Hampshire and Belington, 2002, p. 223.

⁸ O. B. Osadolor, 'The National Question in Historical Perspective', cited in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumbi, (eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria*, pp. 31-45.

⁹ P. P. Ekeh, "Political Minorities and Historically", p. 36.

¹⁰ See O. B. Osadolor, "The National Question in Historical Perspective", pp. 31-45; K. Ezera, *Constitutional Developments in Nigeria, 1944-1956: An Analytical Study of Nigeria's Constitution - Making Developments and the Historical and Political Factors that Affected Constitutional Change*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Oxford University, 1957; Y. Sen, "The Minority Question in Northern Nigeria", cited in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumbi, (eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria*, pp. 119-131.

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important agency for the distribution of economic benefits, and also because rival sectional elites find it expedient to mobilise ethnic solidarities in their competition for power and privileges. Also, expanded socio-economic mobility as well as educational opportunities facilitate the rise of new minority elites who are adeptly astute at giving corresponding expressions to communal grievances, and mobilising their communities in response to changing political opportunities. It has since been established that group consciousness about their minority status acquires political salience mainly when it is politicised, popularised and instrumentally manipulated by sagacious entrepreneurs to advance selfish and acquisitive interests. Finally, such minority tensions are sometimes inflamed by the sheer incapacity of political institutions either to adjust to peculiar historical factors, which shaped the evolution of such political systems, or, device appropriate mechanisms for accommodating such combustible potentials. Without doubt, Africa's chequered history significantly confirms the reality of these postulations.

I will now examine the national question discourse in Africa. According to Ekeh, as a concept, the national question is derived mainly from the intellectual tradition in the former Soviet Union in which minorities were historically referred to as nationalities, a term used and understood then as standing in contradistinction to the dominant Russians.¹¹ This is the sense in which Lenin raised his famous national question, which has now been parodied as the national question in Nigerian, and, in fact, African political science. Given this ontological background, there is therefore the need to recapitulate the major issues in the discourse as developed by Lenin. First and foremost, he sees the national question as a matter of freedom and hence a political question. Lenin states that: "The right of nations to self-

determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free political secession from the oppressing nation. Concretely, this political democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on agitation in favour of secession and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede."¹²

There are three vital points that need to be made here. One, Lenin believes that a nation could be oppressed by another nation. Here, he does not deny the reality of class oppression even within the oppressed nations. Even though he does not show which is more important or pernicious between class and a nation's oppression, he does not however deny the fact that both class struggle and national struggle can be waged together, all at once. This indeed, as inferred by Momoh is the basis and secret behind the universal appeal of Lenin's view.¹³ Second, his further exposition on the First World War and the issue of the Defence of the fatherland in the context of imperialist wars, and particularly his notion of just and unjust wars clarifies the linkage between national liberation struggles and socialism. Three, the concept of secession or self-determination is not to be automatically activated. It has to be tested among those seeking secession through a democratic means in the form of a referendum. In Leninism therefore, self-determination is not mechanical or a sterile cliché to be foisted on the people through warfare or militarism. It is clearly a conscious political decision of an oppressed nation to be taken in a democratic form. In this sense, warfare becomes only an instrument of accompanying such a popular wish of the nation. Clearly, these core elements of Lenin's contribution have informed the attempt both to localise and relate the national question discourse to Africa and other non-European societies, as attempted

by Issa Shivji, Samir Amin, Dani Wadada Nabudere, Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba, Nzongola-Ntalaja, Partha Chatterjee and Abubakar Momoh among others.

Applied to Africa, a core aspect of the discourse is on the possibility or, otherwise of real nation-states emerging from colonies and neo-colonies in the continent.¹⁴ This is so because, following the Stalinist fashion, nation-states are to rise mainly with capitalism and since there are no core-capitalist economies in the colonial or neo-colonial countries, there can therefore be no nation-states in Africa.¹⁵ However, given Africa's peculiar history, especially the implications of the Berlin conferences,¹⁶ it is not always that nation-states arise from internal cohesion and freely enter into covenant as the experiences of some European states suggest. Therefore, to insist without reservations on the Stalinist position is to consciously deny and disregard the complex historical forces, which shaped the evolution of various African states under various historical stages, a clear flaw of the typically Eurocentric bias.¹⁷ Thus, for Africa, the national question discourse becomes better illuminated if we consider Nzongola-Ntalaja's submissions: "... (T)hat nationhood develops according to the level of development of productive forces and the role of the state in material organisation... that in precolonial Africa some nations existed that corresponded to varying social formations made up of people and all kinds of groups. And through myths of origin and ideologies, a national identity was forged amongst them.... That indeed colonialism disrupted the process of developing viable nations in Africa.... That colonialism had a contradictory impact on the national question. On one level (sic) it led pre-colonial nations to fade or disintegrate. On another level, it united various African nationalities...."¹⁸

In effect, these realities shape and

¹¹ P. P. Ekeh, "Political Minorities and Historically", p. 59.

¹² V. I. Lenin, *On the National and Colonial Questions: Three Articles*, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1975. Cited in A. Momoh, "The Philosophy and Theory of the National Question", in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumo, (eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria*, p. 5.

¹³ Momoh, *ibid.* p. 6.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 6; G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Africa*, Zed Books, London and New Jersey, 1987, pp. 44-45.

¹⁵ Joseph Stalin defines the nation thus: "A nation is a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture... none of the above characteristics taken separately is sufficient to define a nation. More than that, it is sufficient for a single one of these characteristics to be lacking and the nation ceases to be a nation." See J. S. Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question", *Works*, Volume 2, Gana-Sahitya Prakash, Calcutta, 1974, pp. 194-215, quoted in P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi, 1986, p. 34.

¹⁶ The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 was a major watershed in the European scramble for Africa. Raufu Mustapha refers to this Conference as a vital historical reference point in explaining the emergence and development of the state system in post-colonial Africa. Describing its major features as also its greatest deficiencies, Mustapha argues that: "There was no bargaining mechanism between the African political agencies/agents and the participants of the Berlin Conference in 1884/85 in terms of how the states were carved. This state was set up with three major missions: (1) to disorganize the existing African political economy, social systems, and their values; (2) to create an agency of the international capitalism; and (3) to create an internal police agency for the European institutions and political elites." See A. R. Mustapha, "Intra-state challenges to the nation-state project in Africa: Report of the 2002 CODESRIA Governance Institute", in *CODESRIA bulletin. Special Issue*, CODESRIA: 1973-2003, Volume 2, 3 and 4, CODESRIA, Dakar, 2003, p. 27.

¹⁷ See, S. Amin, *The Arab Nation: Nationalism and Class Struggle*, Zed Press Limited, London and New Jersey, 1978, in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumo, (eds.), *The National Question in Nigeria*, p. 81; G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Nation-Building and State Building in Africa*, SAPES Trust, Harare, 1993, p. 12.

¹⁸ G. Nzongola-Ntalaja, *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Africa*, p. 48.

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inform the nexus of nation-building and state-consolidation vis-à-vis how a nation is built from several nationalities. Further, he advanced three typologies of the national question in Africa, viz: "The ethnic nation that corresponded to pre-colonial functions destroyed by colonialism. The colonially-created territorial nation, and The pan-African nation."¹⁹

As averred by Momoh, while the first two categories actually impact on current trends of the national question in Africa, it is rather difficult establishing the actual impact of the last category beyond what is merely stated. To this end, therefore, the most serious aspect of the national question discourse in Africa is the unresolved crises of nation-building, a process, which has severely questioned the security and integrity of colonially created territorial units. This is particularly, so as evident by the post-colonial decades of unresolved boundary disputes as well as the persistence of mutually antagonistic differences among co-ethnics.²⁰ To sum up, I submit that, although it is essentially about the rights and obligations which different peoples share on account of their membership of the same political system, there is however no sacrosanct sense towards problematising or explaining whatever constitutes the national question either universally or even within any given political system.

The National Question in Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

Osaghae argues that: "The origins of the national question lie, ... in the forced lumping together of the diverse groups by the British colonialists and the subsequent attempts, after independence, to force so-called national unity while keeping intact or in fact accentuating the, extant inequalities and contradictions that have historically militated against peaceful co-existence."²¹

The clamour for restructuring existing imbalances in Nigeria is to be traced to the mode of evolution of Nigerian federalism. Historically, this

federal arrangement is not a result of local initiatives inherent in the calculations of advantages, which each unit would gain while retaining its local autonomy. Also, it was not explicitly introduced as a mechanism for local development and self-rule. Rather, it came into being as a product of colonial contradictions and developed from the status of a British administrative expediency that was designed to cope with the problems of Nigeria's ethnic pluralism. Its present structure evolved from the 1914 political amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria. Between 1914 and 1945, the governmental structure was implemented through separate political and departmental administrations, which were only tenuously co-ordinated at the centre.²²

In 1946, Nigeria became a federation with a three regional structure. However, this adoption of federalism was built upon a process of devolution or fissiparous tendencies, not accretion or aggregation as was typical of older federations— Canada, Australia and the United States of America.²³ As such, from its early years, Nigeria's adoption of federalism could not meet its anticipated political ends. Rather, the system was structurally flawed and problematic from its beginning. As chronicled by Ngemutu, these flaws include: "The correspondence of regional administrative units with the geography of the three major ethnic groups— Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo— which effectively regionalised the ruling class.

Imbalance in the composition of the regions with the Northern Region dominating the rest both in geographical size (75 percent of Nigeria's landmass) and population (60 percent) and the majority-minority ethnic structure within each region which underlined a 'permanent state of tension and instability'.²⁴

These imbalances have been a source of controversy and a crucial determinant of the structure of federal power especially in determining the amount of power that goes to the centre and the regions. All these, with the weaknesses of the federal centre,

which made the regions the repository of original sovereignty and ethnicity as the basis for political support, resulted in a tripartite conflict structure. This was aggravated by the challenges, which it posed to minority ethnic groups in their bid to assert themselves as equal partners within the same state system. Above all, it created fears as well as threatened the legitimacy of the centre and its ability to give leadership appropriate to the demands of nation-building.²⁵ This fear was later confirmed and furthered by the Northern demand in 1953 for fifty percent chances of representation of the seats in the central legislature under the Macpherson constitution of 1951. It was thus concluded that Nigeria's political history was tactfully manipulated to favour the North.²⁶ Secondly, each of the three regions was based on the dominance of one of the three ethnically dominant groups. Given this arrangement, other ethnic groups found themselves being treated as minorities and therefore expressed the fear of perpetual domination after independence. Consequently, such minority groups began to agitate for reforms, such as the creation of more administrative units in the forms of states or regions.²⁷ Prominent among these minority disaffections were those of the Middle-Belt, the Mid-West and the Calabar-Ogoja Rivers. With time, especially, given the repressive nature of responses by the colonial state, these disaffections engendered so volatile and disturbing demands that the British Government had no choice but to appoint a Royal Commission headed by Sir Henry Willink in September 1957, to look into the agitations and the possibilities of allaying such fears within appropriate constitutional frameworks. As noted by the Commission: "The fears of the minorities arose from two circumstances. First, the division of the whole territory into three powerful regions, in each of which one group is numerically preponderant and secondly, the approach of independence and, the removal of the restraints which have operated so far."²⁸

The peculiarities of these minority

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ See A. Momoh, "The Philosophy and Theory of the National Question", p. 8; A. Momoh, "Does Pan-Africanism Have a Future in Africa? In Search of the Ideational Basis of Afro-Pessimism", cited in *African Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 8, No. 1, June 2003, pp. 31-55.

²¹ E. E. Osaghae, "The Federal Solution and the National Question in Nigeria", cited in A. Momoh, and S. Adejumo, *The National Question in Nigeria*, p. 220.

²² J. F. Ajayi, "Danger Signposts in the Evolution of the Nigerian State", cited in R. A. Akindele, "The Nigerian Social Scientist", *Newsletter of the Social Sciences Academy of Nigeria*, Volume 5, Number 1, March 2002, pp. 54-56; R. T. Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, Spectrum Books Limited and I F R A, Ibadan and Lagos, 1996, pp. 1-4.

²³ F. O. R. Ngemutu, "Federalism, Minorities and Political Contestations in Nigeria: From Henry Willink to the M O S O P Phenomenon", paper presented at the Twentieth Annual National Conference of the Nigerian Political Science Association (N P S A), Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University, 28 February-2 March, 1994, p. 9.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁶ D. Ejoor, cited in J. O. Arowosegbe, *The Political Economy of State Creation in Nigeria: A Case Study of Ekiti State*, Unpublished M. Sc. Thesis, Department of Political science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, 2002, p. 5.

²⁷ E. Ekeke, *Class and State in Nigeria*, Longman Group Limited, Lagos and Ibadan, 1986, p. 127.

²⁸ Colonial Office, *Nigeria, Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1958, pp. 2-3.

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fears were widespread and were distributed across all the three regions. For instance, in the Western Region, the Willink Commission reported established fears in the areas of Yoruba domination of, especially, the Mid-West minorities; victimisation in the process of maintaining law and order by officially sponsored thugs, hooligans and strong-arm parties; discrimination in the economic field and in the provision of services; gerrymandering and its effects on the distribution of parliamentary seats; conflicts between ethnic irredentists, chauvinists and partisan loyalists in the intergovernmental context; and outright displays of potentials for the partiality of legislation. These were added to the trite fears expressed by religious minorities within the region.²⁹ Also, as captured by Faruk: "This domination was alleged in all facets of human endeavours, which could be compressed under the political, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of life. For example in the Western Region, the fear mostly expressed by the people of the Mid-West was that they would always be dominated perpetually by the Yoruba majority who then numbered 4,302,000 out of a total population of 6,085,000 in the region. Also, that the Action Group government was based on a secured Yoruba majority and there was therefore no prospect for change. The Mid-Westerners also argued strongly that there was a deliberate attempt by the Action Group government to obliterate their cultural heritage as a distinct group. They also alleged that public boards in the region were all Yoruba in composition and discriminatory in operation. Discrimination was also expressed in the economic field, in the provision of public services, allocation of parliamentary seats, maintenance of public order etc. The minorities in the provinces of Benin and Delta therefore strongly demanded for the creation of a Mid-Western region."³⁰

In the Northern Region, minorities were worried about the role of traditional rulers (Emirs), who appointed district heads to rule over non-Muslims. There were also social fears and grievances concerning the use of quite contemptuous expressions as well as socially discriminatory practices; fears

of political influence regarding the impartiality of the Native Authority Police and the Alkali (the legal aspect of Muslim law); religious intolerance and fears that the political regime in the region was adopting a foreign policy posture that was allied to and sympathetic with the Arab World or Middle East, especially given their historic allegiance to Islam.³¹ Again according to Faruk: "The only demand in the northern region was for the creation of a Middle Belt State, which was expected to comprise the 5 provinces of Benue, Plateau, Adamawa, Niger... (less the Ilorin and Kabba Divisions), together with Southern parts of Bauchi and Zaria. The principal fears of the minorities in these areas were that all affairs of government after independence would be completely dominated by the Hausa-Fulani majority and that there would be intolerance of non-Muslims. They complained of being neglected in the matter of schools, hospitals, roads and other public services."³²

Finally, in the Eastern Region, the minorities feared that they might be over-run, commercially and politically, by the demographically dominant and socially mobile Igbo. There were also fears of an autocratic government premised on the perceived dictatorial conduct of the Igbo-dominated National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC); fear of public posts and services which included the deliberate agenda of the Igbo majority to fill all posts with Igbos; fears of local government and chiefs relating to insufficient devolution of power which predisposed ethnic minorities to limited powers to discuss and debate issues as well as little power to initiate action. Within the Rivers Province, ethnic groups, predominantly of the Ogoni Division, nursed long-standing grievances to the effect that the geography of their deltaic landscape and its associated difficulties for development were not understood at an inland headquarters. They were consequently united against a government, which did not clearly understand their needs and which placed the needs and interests of the interior first.³³ Once more, Faruk confirms this: "The minorities expressed a fear of domination by the Igbo majority, which they

identified with the NCNC party. They suggested that there was never any hope of anything but a solid Igbo majority behind the NCNC. They argued that it was the deliberate objective of the Igbo majority to fill every post with Igbos. The legislature and executive council, parliamentary committees were cited as cases in view. In view of these facts, the minorities called for the creation of four (4) new states in the Eastern region. The states demanded in this region were the Ogoja State, Cross River State and Rivers State."³⁴

Clearly, these fears informed the dimensions from which each of these minority groups perceived and defined the struggle for independence. Also, whether such historically expressed fears were real or still exist today is up to the observer of Nigerian and African government and politics to determine.

Conclusion

This study has tried to capture the connections between colonialism and the emergent political minorities, which were imagined and created as products of the policies and programmes of the colonial state in Nigeria, as elsewhere in the continent. It has also noted the failure of the postcolonial state in resolving the problems of ethnic and cultural pluralism; the oil-centric political economy and other fiscal challenges associated with this state. In particular, following Momoh's illustrations, the study has drawn attention to an objective approach towards theorising the minorities' interests and the national question in the country, namely: "To theorise about the national question... we do not need to be reductionist or particularistic by basing our analysis on one moment or trajectory but the entire span of Nigeria and the period both pre-dating and ante-dating the emergence of Nigeria as a nation state, there is need for a methodological fashion of historical sociology. We need to simultaneously historicise (not historicism) our theory and theorise our history in the process of problematising the national question as a lived essentialism. Accordingly, the discourse is people driven and all the attendant normative variables such as

²⁹ Ibid., p. 37. See also F. O. R. Ngemutu, "Federalism, Minorities and Political Contestations in Nigeria", p. 11.

³⁰ U. Faruk, *The Struggle of the National Association for the Creation of More States*, Northern Publishing Company Limited, Zaria, 1992, p. 9.

³¹ See Colonial Office, Nigeria, Report of the Commission, pp. 37-50 and F. O. R. Ngemutu, "Federalism, Minorities and Political Contestations", p. 12.

³² U. Faruk, *The Struggle of the National Association*, p. 10.

³³ See Federal Republic of Nigeria, *Report of the Political Bureau*, MAMSER, Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abuja, N. D., p. 12; Colonial Office, Nigeria, *Report of the Commission*, pp. 37-50.

³⁴ U. Faruk, *The Struggle of the National Association*, p. 10.

³⁵ A. Momoh, "The Philosophy and Theory of the National Question", pp. 2-3.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 25.

³⁷ C. Ake, "Plausible Transition", in *The Tell News Magazine*, 25 September 1995. p. 34.

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equality, oppression, injustices, rights, etc. become useful in the process of analysis.”³⁵

This, according to Momoh is because: “Moments may throw up contradictions that could make primary determinants assume the form of secondary determinants and vice versa. It is theoretically and politically incorrect for people to use moments and specific manifestations of the national question to generalise about the national question. The form and content of those manifestations should be analysed and explained in a spatio-temporal way. The analysis should focus on the entire historical conjuncture.”³⁶

Thus, given past years of injustices, there is the compelling need to reverse the currently inequitable

distribution of resources, especially, as they affect the minorities. To erase the feelings of exclusion by members of these communities, the peculiarly punitive plights of the underprivileged segments of these communities should be assuaged. As suggested by Ake, the state should resort to dialogue and compromise in the face of conflicts.³⁷ It should also endeavour to avoid pronounced conflicts by being routinely sensitive to the rights and interests of others, especially those who seem weak. These should be done through: (i) The considerable decentralisation of power and all resources away from the central state apparatus to the constituent governments, including minority segments; (ii) Greater recognition of the peculiar needs of members of the

various groups in the implementation of federal territorial reforms; (iii) The rigorous elaboration, constitutionalisation and implementation of consociational or power sharing mechanisms in the political process; (iv) Due empowerment of the judiciary and related mediatory political and societal institutions; (v) The rapid and radical demilitarisation and democratisation of the Nigerian polity; as well as (vi) The encouragement of well sustained civil society initiatives.³⁸ All these are attainable mainly through the effective democratisation of existing fiscal arrangements with appropriate emphasis placed on productive and other materially credible criteria for the distribution of all revenues.

³⁸ R. T. Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria*, p. vii.

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The Death of the Detective



Iman Mitra

He is what in his native Calcutta is known as an archetypal College Street Intellectual. He has an abiding interest in politics, both in theory and in practice, particularly of the Marxist variety. He combines this with reading and discussing myriad branches of theories, often of 'post' varieties. Within this, he has a particular affinity for Cultural Studies and is reputed to think of Film Studies as his personal fief.

Iman also studied Economics, but, disgusted with this 'numbers game', he has shifted base and is currently doing a Research Training Programme at the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, on the much vilified sect, the *Santan Dal*.

I am not concerned with nations, Monsieur. I am concerned with the lives of private individuals who have the right not to have their lives taken from them.

Hercule Poirot¹

Hercule Poirot, the shrewd little Belgian detective with an egg-shaped head and a delicately waxed black moustache, has a passion for order, rational thinking and perfection. Quite unlike his pompous predecessor Sherlock Holmes, he has never been recognised as a 'man of science', though inwardly he is said to have a great respect for Holmes' specialist knowledge of modern science. Poirot himself is a great individualist and his interest in 'criminal psychology' (a discourse that presupposes certain natural distinctions between a 'criminal' and a 'normal' human being, and their respective psyches) instigates him to probe into private matters of private individuals affected by private crimes.

Poirot, along with that illustrious resident of 221b Baker Street, London, epitomises the protagonist of the most intricate form of detective fiction: Whodunit. He is the detective, the sleuth, the private investigator who casually sails in the stream of violent murders, poisonings, kidnappings, and thefts. Often appointed by an individual to look into things that disturb, nonchalantly he employs his methods, finds out the villain, but keeps it a secret. Everybody is asked to assemble in a room. He, standing at the centre, light falling on his precious head, nods like an expert conjurer and starts unmasking the 'rogue'—the devil trying to put his criminal feet in normal shoes. We, the audience clap, bewildered, at those tricks, and try to imagine how he did that, but fail. With a confident chuckle, he explains everything. A huge pipe dangles from the southeast corner of his mouth. We discover Science emerging as Magic. Here lies the beauty of deduction, his tool of interrogation.

But don't we believe in a different version of Science today, opposed to this celebration of personal charisma and individual expertise and considered to be (and recognised as) a subject of the public domain? The detective quite visibly assumes a different stance. And that begets his death.

The Detective, the State, and a Conflict

Ashis Nandy can provide us an interesting backdrop for the story we intend to narrate in a slightly dismantled fashion. Nandy argues, "First...Victorian crime fiction reflects the modern faith in three interrelated values: individualism, science-and technology, and professionalism."² He includes the best stories written by two legends of this genre, Arthur Conan Doyle and Agatha Christie in this category, as, according to him, they "define what could be called the classical format of the Victorian detective story".³ This particular type of literature earned its exclusive popularity during the late Victorian period and thus it is usually called 'Victorian detective fiction'.

Nandy's argument tells us something quite engaging. A slender, solitary figure comes close. The professionally emotionless voice is heard. It speaks of something incredibly important such as 'the length of the index finger of the left hand of the second cousin of the victim's brother-in-law'. Does it sound queer? It may, but one must not overlook what is implicit in this, perhaps cynically exaggerated, description of our hero. It elucidates a vital point: The detective's readiness to deviate from the mainstream of scientific knowledge.

How does he do that? The answer is known to all who love to read detective fiction. The method is called 'deduction'. And actually, it reminds us of another method, the "method of induction preached by Francis Bacon (1561-1626)".⁴ It explains everything. What is 'induction' to us is 'deduction' to him. This difference indicates deviation from the mainstream.

This point, however, is missing in Nandy. His argument concentrates on structuralising conventions of a battle between the detective and the criminal. This battle, as he says, symbolises a conflict between 'good' science and 'bad' science. In this context, he fails to notice the difference in the process of conceptualising Science by the protagonist of this so-called Victorian detective fiction. The idea of Science he celebrates represents individual heroism. And that makes it different from what we understand as Science today, the Science of collective endeavour.

Certainly, Nandy has an idea regarding the exclusiveness of the methods the detective employs. At least he is sure of the specialty of his conception of 'crime and punishment': "Secondly, there is the special emphasis which the Victorian detective story puts on individual responsibility.... In such a story, crime is the personal responsibility of the criminal and the removal of the crime is personal responsibility of the expert."⁵ The modernist notion of 'crime' as a result of "faulty socialization and social structures"⁶ is refuted through acknowledgment of a set of pre-modern signifiers (such as 'personal sin' and 'reparation') emphasising the presence of an exclusive system of reason in the making of the text itself.

Hence, we find a justification of

¹ Agatha Christie, *One, Two, Buckle My Shoe*, Fontana/Collins, London, 1976, p. 186.

² Ashis Nandy, *The Tao of Cricket: On Games of Destiny and the Destiny of Games*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2000, p. 32.

³ Nandy, *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁴ Nandy, *Ibid*, p. 36.

⁵ Nandy, *Ibid*, p. 33.

⁶ Nandy, *Ibid*, p. 34.

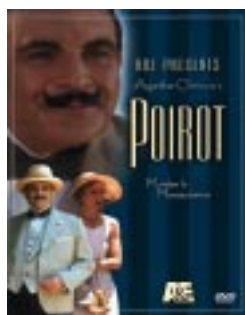
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Poirot's remark cited at the very beginning. Being a lone crusader against crime and injustice, he even chooses to confront the modern nation-state, the most severe and persuasive collective enterprise of our time. Often the police (as a metonymic representation of the state) engage in some kind of confrontation with him. They laugh at his methods, and more importantly at his exclusive system of reason. But he remains steady in his goal. If the state does not approve his reason, he does away with the state.

According to Nandy, "The true antagonist of the detective is... his own less rational or less scientific self."⁷ This view, though partially acceptable, tends to capture a moment of vulnerability in the becoming of the detective. When Nandy says this, he refers to an inner-conflict, which results from a typical presumption of singularity of Scientific Reason. Confusions over the authenticity of his brand of 'reason' (which is not approved by the state) induce him to expose his Freudian Double, the criminal before the gaze of the state. "One does not have to be a psychologist to recognize that Moriarty is a double of Sherlock Holmes.... Certainly Moriarty's physical description, as given by Holmes himself, is very nearly a self-description and his life parallels that of Holmes in many respects."⁸ Here one should consider Moriarty's idea of advancement of Science through 'criminalization of the society'⁹ with additional interest. Moriarty, the Freudian double of Sherlock Holmes does not symbolise his 'less rational or less scientific self'; instead he appears to be a more non-compromising advocate of institutionalisation of science, who demands progress at any cost. (Surprisingly, this demand perfectly matches with that of the omnipresent modern nation-state!) Hence, we contest Nandy's imagination of a conflict between the detective and his less scientific self by inverting that with our conception of the criminal as a more serious campaigner of modern Science and its institutional objectivism. Therefore, the true antagonist of the detective is his own 'more rational or more scientific' self.

Again, Nandy's rendition of the detective's associate as 'an imperfect man of science, deficient in scientific rationality'¹⁰ is not agreeable. The

popular perception of the detective's assistant is that he is extraordinarily stupid and, by all his means, tries not to have a single clue about what is going on. Sometimes his opinions about a person or on the course of the incidents seem particularly banal and commonplace, and hence, disapproved by the detective. Accepting the fact that the assistant does act and look like an idiot of exceptional calibre, (Agatha Christie's *The Mysterious Affairs at Styles* is a classic example, where the buffoonery of Capt. Hastings, Poirot's associate, brings tears in our eyes out of laughter and compassion) we still are not ready to accept him as 'an imperfect man of science'. It is not his fault that he is a fool; it is something else, which the detective detests from within: The mainstream of scientific discourses.



Let us take the example of Dr. Watson, the famous associate (or the assistant) of Sherlock Holmes. Dr. Watson epitomises the associate of the Victorian detective. He is the chronicler of most of Holmes' adventures. Apart from being a good friend (rather the only friend) of an eccentric genius, he is a busy medical practitioner. Here we encounter a strange fact. Watson may not have a 'trained mind in detection'¹¹, but he has definitely received a rigorous training in the field of medical sciences. This man is trapped within the edifice of the mainstream. It is obvious that he would stumble over the 'logical' conclusions of the detective. Rather, he is not ready to accept them as logical. At first, he approaches a parallel line of thinking. He tries to draw conclusions following his own instinct, informed by textbook understandings of the reality. Soon he loses his track and submits to the detective. The detective smilingly pats on his shoulder and lets the cat out of his closet. The simple fact that the

criminal is detected by the detective, not by the assistant, suggests the unambiguous superiority of the detective's science, posited in a binary against that of the associate.

Here we end this segment. The uniqueness of the science of the Victorian detective was celebrated until the Second World War took place. During the war, a new genre of detective fiction emerged as the more influential one. We will discuss that in length, but before that, we will seek support for our argument in the writings of an author of detective fiction himself.

What an Author Says

A not-so-famous author of detective fiction S. S. Van Dine (1888-1939) has described twenty rules "to which any self-respecting author of detective fiction must conform".¹² Distinguished literary theorist Tzvetan Todorov summarises these conventions of a successful detective fiction (usually applicable to 'whodunit') in eight highly concentrated points. They are as follows:

1. The novel must have at most one detective and one criminal, and at least one victim (a corpse).
2. The culprit must not be a professional criminal, must not be the detective, must kill for personal reason.
3. Love has no place in detective fiction.
4. The culprit must have a certain importance:
 - (a) in life: Not be a butler or a chambermaid
 - (b) in the book: Must be one of the main characters.
5. Everything must be explained rationally; the fantastic is not admitted.
6. There is no place for descriptions nor for psychological analyses.
7. With regard to information about the story, the following homology must be observed: 'author: reader = criminal: detective.'
8. Banal situations and solutions must be avoided.¹³

We will discuss these points. First point first. Interesting but not surprising, this convention constitutes the very basis of the argument, which we have put forward in the previous segment. What is implicit in this point does not escape attention of any serious reader of detective fiction: The

⁷ Nandy, Ibid, p. 34.

⁸ Nandy, Ibid, p. 35.

⁹ Nandy, Ibid, p. 35.

¹⁰ Nandy, Ibid, p. 34.

¹¹ Nandy, Ibid, p. 34.

¹² Tsvetan Todorov, "The Typology of Detective Fiction", *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, Pearson Education, 2003, p. 142.

¹³ Todorov, Ibid, p. 142.

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celebration of personal prowess. It subscribes to our imagination of the exclusivity of Science of Individual Heroism conceptualised by the detective. The second point re-affirms this realisation. The private investigator employs private methods to unmask a private criminal. The third point seems convincing at a first glance, but a close observation of the facts will reveal a different story. We believe what Van Dine wants to clarify in this point is that the detective cannot engage himself in any kind of emotional bondage with anybody. All characters (including his stupid associate) but him can fall in love, marry and have a family. Why the detective is barred from romance is not difficult to assume. He represents scientific reason and objectivity. The connotation of love, on the other hand, refers to him as an exposure to subjective (or personal) rendition of the reality. Hence, love has no place in the detective's life.

As according to the first point, the criminal's being the only criminal suggests the detective's conception of crime as a personal mistake, a slip, which does not (or can not) inspire the rest to commit another mischief of that sort. The fourth point being a supplement to this realisation re-emphasises the criminal's ineffectiveness to bring about a massive criminalisation of the society. Moriarty antagonises Sherlock Holmes on this issue. He emerges before the detective as the most dangerous culprit, since he challenges the very idea of personal commitment and removal of the crime. Holmes has to cope up with this challenge, for he is an old vanguard deputed to preserve old school values that are facing distortion and annihilation. Here he has to confront the state once again. The state, very much like the detective's more rational or more scientific Freudian double, believes in institutionalisation of crime. The personal criminal, who is important in life and in the book, subverts this belief by being important, important though ineffective. And this is a rational story. Fantastic is not admitted, as both the detective and the state speak the same language—same, but not quite.

The sixth point seems inaccurate. Both Holmes and Poirot have shown admirable (and exceptional) proficiency in analysing human psychology. And the authors of popular detective fictions (especially 'whodunits') are exclusively fond of describing elements (the characters, the interior, and the exterior) that play a considerable role in the narrative in an uncanny detail. But they do it with a difference. The detective is interested in Criminal

Psychology only. And the author describes things as an excuse for passing clues to the reader who is busy playing a puzzle game with him. The seventh point makes it explicit. Every information flows from the author to the reader, from the criminal to the detective. The criminal has to commit a mistake while doing the crime. The detective chases the criminal, and the reader chases the author (until both of them are dead).

The eighth point indicates a compulsion on the author to make the text as much complex as possible. The complexity on part of the content (not in form) registers a victory of the alternative. Often the police arrest somebody who has the strongest evidences against him. The detective seems dissatisfied. He looks for alternatives. And we know from the very beginning that he is always right. The last (but not the least) point makes it very clear that in the battle between the state and the detective (or in the battle between 'banal' and 'interesting' conclusions) the latter wins all the time.

Happily we observe that most of the 'rules' mentioned by the author himself strengthens our argument regarding the uniqueness of the science of the detective. And now comes the time. We prepare for our next segment where we have to take up a tragic task: Announcing somebody's death.

The Legend of James Bond

The rules/conventions mentioned in the above segment are exclusively applicable to 'whodunits'. Another particular genre of detective fiction became very popular worldwide since the Second World War. This genre, popularly known as suspense thrillers, seeks its originality in being diametrically opposite to its individualistic counterpart. The protagonist of this version of the story puts his complete faith in Science of collective endeavour. Instead of contradicting the state on the issues that we have mentioned earlier, he is appointed by it to eliminate its enemies. He is no longer a private investigator. He pays no attention to the private matters of private individuals affected by private crimes. He believes in collective enterprises since he is designated to interrogate collective crimes. We are tempted to call him a 'modern detective', in every sense of the term.

This genre belongs to James Bond, an 'agent' of British Intelligence, code name: 007, 'licensed to kill', a handsome and daring spy who specialises in removal of crimes that result from 'faulty socialisation and social structures'. And it makes him different

from the other detectives of earlier times.

Ian Fleming, the creator of James Bond, himself was a spy. During the Second World War, he was an employee of the British Intelligence. He was engaged in various dangerous missions and considered "the right hand man to one of Britain's top spymasters, Admiral John Godfrey".¹⁴ In 1952, he wrote the first draft of a novel, which was phenomenally successful by the time it was published. This novel, *Casino Royale* (1953), featured a British spy, a ruthless eliminator of the enemies of the state. It was Bond, James Bond. Eleven novels and two collections of short stories followed. Fleming died in 1964, but the flow did not stop. John Gardner, Raymond Benson and Kingsley Amis continued writing Bond-stories. Eventually James Bond became a public hero. The British and American readers went mad on him. Several films were made. Sean Connery, Roger Moore, Pierce Brosnan and few others climbed the ladder of success by playing the part.

In this segment, we intend to discuss James Bond: His similarities and dissimilarities with Sherlock Holmes. We will see how this new genre of detective fiction stands out in an ideological antagonism with the earlier one. As we have said before, the protagonist of 'thriller' believes in idea of collective crimes and criminals. A criminal is not born; he is made into one. The crime is no longer a 'personal responsibility' of the criminal. He represents a collective. This collective (its structure, structurality, structuralisation and everything) gives birth to him. The crime takes place. And the saviour comes to rescue. But the 'removal of the crime' again is not his personal responsibility. He is appointed by another collective, the collective we identify with, the collective we belong to, or the collective we believe in. Ian Fleming wrote twelve novels featuring James Bond. Four of them have 'SMERSH' (the Russian counter-intelligence organisation) as the employer of the villains (generally professional criminals), one has 'Syndicate' (a group formed by dangerous criminals funded by enemy nations, to be more precise Soviet Russia), two contain 'SPECTRE' (another group of professional criminals) and three of the novels claim USSR (along with Fidel Castro in one instance) to be the chief enemy of humanity.¹⁵ Bond saves us by killing the villains, though he cannot engage in direct conflicts with their employers. (Quite diplomatic, isn't it?)

Much predictably, the detectives of whodunits do not kill anybody. They

¹⁴ John Cork, "The Life of Ian Fleming (1908-1964)", <http://www.klast.net/bond/fleming/html>

¹⁵ Raymond Benson, "The James Bond Novels and Stories", <http://www.klast.net/bond/ramond/html>

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are not empowered to punish the criminals. They make them surrender to the state. Then the state hangs them all right. The protagonist of the thriller does just the opposite. He has every authority to take any sort of action against anybody ('licensed to kill'). But this 'authority' does not refer to a parallel empowerment. James Bond cannot escape the gaze of the state. It is the state, which empowers him to eliminate its enemies. He is a mere instrument used for imposing its order of discipline and punishment. He has no control over whom to kill, and for what reasons. He is even kept oblivious of the methods he is expected to employ. That too is decided by the state.

Bond's exquisite car stops before a nicely decorated office. This is the Research and Development department of British Intelligence, where the best brains of the country team up to combat the enemies of the nation. In popular spy literature, this place is called 'lab'. A lab in many ways is different from the laboratory owned

by Sherlock Holmes. The lab is not a private property. It is completely owned, controlled, designed and invested upon by the state. The scientists working in the lab are government employees. On the other hand, Holmes never allows any of his police inspector friends (and/or the state) to enter his laboratory. There he carries on complex experiments, not to fight the enemy nations, but to save "lives of private individuals who have the right not to have their lives taken from them". Here he invents his own methods of detection and removal of crime. On the contrary, in the 'lab' the chief scientist (sometimes referred to as the 'doc') does the job for the spy. James Bond enters the lab; the doc holds his hand, takes him to the room where the 'gadgets' are kept (under high security provided by the state). Bond is amazed at what he sees. He is amazed by the Science. Since he is not endowed with his own Science, his amazement is justified. The doc offers him few of these

gadgets. He needs them to kill the villains. He cannot choose his method himself. The state-appointed scientists are there to direct him. And they do that with such authority! Hence, the detective is no longer a campaigner of private science. He is no longer a private detective. Or to put it in a different way, the detective is no more. He is dead.

We have reached the end of this journey, or is it just the beginning? What does happen when we incorporate the 'Corporate' in this story? Our time is changing fast. States are being replaced by Corporations. They have their own ideology and discourse. They have their own Science too. And finally, they have their own James Bonds. This story does not end here; it only approaches a slightly different trajectory. But we cannot move further. With tired legs trembling, we would rather sit by the grave of the detective, and mourn, for a minute. (What else can one do in such situations?) Amen!

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Securitising the Environment: Environment, Sustainable Development and Human Security in South Asia



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Abstract

Environmental issues have become serious security concerns in the post-Cold War era. However, such concerns are qualitatively different in core western countries and in the backward and developing countries in South Asia. While in Western developed countries, environmentalist lobbies have made the long-term global environmental issues like green house effects and global warming highly salient, and economic development rendering ecologically sustainable environmental and developmental policies feasible, the developmental crises in South Asia render eco-friendly policies difficult to formulate. This article illustrates that concerns about environmental issues should not be generalised according to western reality, and that how the pressing issues of sustainable development and developmental crises are inextricably linked up with environment in South Asia to constitute a threat to human security in this region.

Defining the 'un-definable': Whose Security? What Security?

The construction of the security discourse using the Cold War as a landmark, despite the fact that the entire concept of security is theoretically deeply embedded in the western political thought that traces back to antiquity, underscores an inescapable reality: In the international world order, the entire concept of security is being constructed and hijacked, for decades, by American strategic considerations against the global backdrop of Cold War geopolitical reality. The traditional, realist, militarised notion of security has been more of a calculative ideological weaponisation of America's geopolitical interests in a bi-polar world, rather than strictly an academic venture.¹ Hence, the deconstruction of the traditional militarised security since the late 1980s and the eventual broadening of the parameters of the notion of security, making it a diffusive, inclusive and expanding notion is corroborated by a shift in the American policy formulations and regional security priorities in a changed global security environment. With no identifiable external military threat to the democratic world order, successful survival and continuity of the Western economy and, high-consumerist, casino-capitalist 'Atlantic culture' became eventually incumbent on the

unrestrained resource supply to the West mostly from developing, as well as from Third World countries. The 1970 oil crisis that brought the West almost to the brink of crises and decadence, had already confirmed it. Thus, while during Cold War, threats were military and political in nature; post Cold War era began threats of a very different nature: Especially economic and environmental threats, with relative deprivation, environmental hazards and global warming, and a substantial part of the world population living below the absolute poverty line.

The outcome of this strategic-academic realisation has been a serious venture tantamount to an increasing shift of emphasis away from state-centric to people- or *homo-centric* notion of security making individual rather than states the referent of security and insecurity. The inversion of this security priority or hierarchy [from the state at the top and individual at the bottom to individual at the top] is the late recognition of the reality that in the global environment of diffused security threats and increased vulnerability, security of the physical borders of the states from external military aggression does not necessarily entail the security of the citizens of the state. The increasing inter-state civil strife since late 1970s underscored that many of the security crises are

internal rather than external in nature, due to breaks and fissures in the state-building processes in the newly liberated, developing and underdeveloped countries where the states often miserably failed in the deliverance of developmental imperatives.

Such a reconsideration of the notion of security made the concept of 'sustainable development', coined by the Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources [IUCN], highly salient in the 1980s. This concept is defined as: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their needs".² The publication of United Nations Development Programme's³ Human Development Report in 1994 stressing 'freedom from want' rather than 'freedom from fear' [of external aggression] represented a watershed in the internationalisation of this paradigm shift of human security which proclaimed:

*"For most people, security symbolises protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental hazards.... For most people, a feeling of security arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event.... Human security is not a concern with weapons- it is a concern with human life and dignity."*⁴

¹ Gabriel Kolko's works bring out the fact in sharpest illustration as to how defence of America's strong national interests of easy, unrestrained access to raw materials all over the world was incumbent on her ideological justification of her pre-emptive interventionism through a demonisation of the Soviet Union. Hence, the guise of being the deliverer of the world. For further details, see Kolko, *The Roots of American Foreign Policy: An Analysis of Power and Purpose*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1969; also see, Gabriel Kolko; *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy 1945-1954*, Harper and Row, New York, 1972.

² WCED Report, *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, p. 43.

³ The United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] is the UN's largest development assistance programme to the developing and underdeveloped countries geared to assist them in eradication of poverty and alleviate developmental crises. The ultimate goal of the Programme is to induce the local developmental capacity of these states.

⁴ *Human Development Report*, United Nations Development Programme, 1994, p. 22.

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Thus, security as a concept came to encompass issues of environment, food, health, societal and resource distribution within its fold which in turn ensure human security: Security of life of the individuals from existential threats to physical survival. This article aims at explication of the structural linkage between environmental issue and human security in the context of South Asia, in the light of this new paradigm of human security and sustainable development, illustrating how resource scarcity and ensuing poverty constitute the immediate and more pressing concerns about environment in this region.

Securitisating the Environment or Environmental Security?

The ecological dimension of sustainable development underscores the fact that global production system has reached the utmost limits of economic system likely to exhaust the carrying or assimilative capacity of the environment and would thwart off prospects of long-term qualitative improvements and quantitative growth of the world economic system.

The South Asian context serves to debunk many existent notions about security. The dominant paradigm of security has been, for long, a generalised notion, standardising the western experience. Even the post-Cold War re-modification of the notion does not always allow enough flexibility to accommodate all the region-specific security issues and concerns into the notion. Thus, securitisation of the issue of environment⁵ in the western, core societies does not necessarily entail a simultaneous

securitisation of the environment in South Asian countries where poverty, developmental crises, inequitable distribution of resources, along with the imperative of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation render ecologically sustainable policy formulations difficult. Economic development essentially provides for the necessary structural preconditions and distributive requirements for the state to adhere to eco-friendly policies and environmental protection. Thus, the concerns over the environmental security are radically different in developing regions like South Asia, and that in West: While in West, economic development allows for the serious addressing of long-term environmental concerns like that of global-warming, pollution, green-house effect etc. feasible, in South Asia, poverty gives credence predominantly to one environmental concern—resource scarcity due to demographic growth and environmental degradation. Thus, here, economic and developmental concerns—concerns for human security—become inextricably interlinked with environmental degradation and ensuing resource scarcity.

This article also seeks to counter the standardised argument reflecting the western reality that there exists a direct correlation between democracy and environmental security by citing the South Asian case. It is not merely democratic political order, but more importantly, economic advancement that makes the core democracies meet the developmental and distribution prerequisites of ecologically sustainable developmental policies. Whereas, though in South Asia, depicting a grim

reality of poverty, abject misery and developmental crises, environmental security is highly salient, the issue is not securitised by the states: The environmental issue still continues to be confined within the arena of 'low politics', precisely because poverty and developmental crises preclude successful lobbying of the environmentalists in favour of 'green politics' when eco-friendly sustainable developmental policies often stand in direct contrast with the immediate goal of poverty alleviation and structural development.

Contextualising Security against the South Asian regional backdrop

Home to about one fourth of the entire world population, the existential developmental and economic conditions in the region depict a rather bleak and grim picture— the 1997 Human Development in South Asia Report designates the region as 'the most deprived region' in the world, with a per capita GNP less than even that of the most deprived regions of the sub-Saharan Africa. No less that thirty five to forty per cent of the population in this region live below absolute poverty line: Basic sanitation and hygiene are not available to as many as 830 million people, 400 million remaining hungry everyday, and 260 million with no access to basic health facilities. Coupled with this, regular environmental hazards like flood, draught, Tsunami, earthquake etc. and more importantly, general environmental degradation together contribute to resource scarcity, and ensuing livelihood insecurity and poverty. The following table serves to illustrate the general scenario of environmental degradation in South Asia.

Environmental degradation in South Asia⁶

	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Water erosion	X	-	XX	XX	XX	XX
Wind erosion	-	-	XX	-	XX	-
Soil fertility decline	-	-	XX	XX	XX	-
Water logging	-	-	XX	-	X	-
Salinisation	-	-	XX	-	XX	-
Lowering of water table	-	-	X	-	-	-
Deforestation	XX	X	X	XX	XX	X
Rangeland degradation	-	-	XX	-	XX	-

X = moderately severe
XX = extremely severe

⁵ Securitisation of any issue entails ascendancy of that particular issue from the realm of 'low' to 'high politics', when a state of alertness is being created regarding the issue and necessary policies being formulated.

⁶ Source of data: *Land Degradation in South Asia: its Severity, Causes and Effects upon the People*, Report by FAO Corporate Document Repository, available on <http://www.fao.org/docrep/V4360E/V4360E00.htm>

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Hence, poverty is often described by the scholars as the key variable in explaining the structural linkage between environment and human security. As the study conducted by Najam reaches the conclusion, "Poverty, not scarcity, is driving environmental insecurity" in South Asia.⁷ This is because, as Najam argues, poverty leads to 'livelihood insecurity' that leads to mal-appropriation of and over-pressure on natural resources : Bio-diversity in Sri Lanka, land in India, forests in Pakistan and fish-stock in Bangladesh. Thus, in South Asia, broader global environmental issues like global-warming, rise of sea-level and green-house effects, are being subsumed and overshadowed by the immediate pressing concerns of poverty, resource scarcity and environmental degradation along with demographic pressure.

However, Najam's argument should be modified in that it is the population growth that causally links poverty with environmental degradation: Demographic growth is the explanatory variable that fills up the missing link in the causal nexus between poverty and environmental degradation and resource scarcity. It is the demographic pressure and growth that leads to the eventual intensified pressure on scarce resources and this will lead to poverty due to unavailability of bare minimum resources to the poor. Theory of demographic growth proves that poverty further accentuates the population problem, especially as a replacement attempt of the dead population, which will be discussed later in this article. Thus, it is a much more vicious circle than has been envisaged by Najam: Demographic boom-poverty-resource scarcity-poverty-demographic growth.

Demographic boom and absence of adequate resources like land and ensuing poverty thus lead people to settle in areas highly vulnerable to land-slide, seismic frequency, flood, and other environmental disaster, thereby compounding threats to physical security of the individual citizens.

Linking Poverty and Resource Scarcity with Demographic Pressure

The environmental degradation and resource scarcity in South Asia is predominantly demographically induced, though serious debates also revolve around the question as to whether zero growth would indeed be

economically desirable. The immediate outcome of this would be poverty and developmental crises leading to resource scarcity and immense lateral pressure on environment. Thomas Malthus' pioneering work enshrines the concept that while natural resources grow and regenerate in arithmetic fashion, demographic spurt occurs geometrically exhausting the 'carrying capacity' of the nature faster than it can regenerate its renewable resources.

India's population, now calculated to be 1.08 billion, is envisaged to be overtaking even China by 2050. Pakistan's population now reaching 159 million, is reckoned to be reaching 295 million by 2050, while Bangladesh is expected to be witnessing a population boom by 2050, when her current population [141 million] is expected to be doubled.⁸ Though the linkage between demographic growth and intense use of natural resources leading to resource scarcity and poverty, has been officially acknowledged by most of the South Asian states, tangible, concrete policies functionally efficacious in the short run are not yet being implemented. In India, one of the first nations to attempt at containment of the 'demographic time bomb', nothing much concrete has been done except the official and policy prioritisation of sustainable development as instrumental in population control. Illiteracy, religious taboos [that contraceptive measures are against God's will and nature], minimal sex education and high ignorance about birth control together contribute to the unabated population growth especially in the Hindi-belt – the central and northern predominantly Hindi-speaking states.

The Hunger Project Briefing Programme in South Asia came up with the conclusion that poverty and hunger are instrumental in demographic growth. Hunger is characterised by high infant mortality rate. And it has been evinced that hungry people give birth to higher number of children than those with food security, especially as a viable way to replace their children who died of some diseases or malnutrition or hunger. Surveys prove that 'If parents have some assurance that their children will live, they are more likely to have fewer children'.⁹

Demographic boom is being explicitly linked up by a causal nexus with land degradation in South Asia.

Population growth exerts increasing pressure on the available, usable land, leading to shortage of usable, productive land. This in turn implies immense demographic pressure on available land accentuating prospects of landlessness. Thus, poverty is generated by landlessness. This poverty and land-shortage together then lead to extremely non-sustainable land management practices – deforestation for settlement, cultivation of the steep slopes without eco-friendly conservation measures, overgrazing of the rangelands etc., intensive use of fertilisers to increase productivity and output.

This degradation adversely affects production of crop, forest and livestock production. It might also lead to total abandonment of land if the degradation is extreme. In such cases, often rangelands which were formerly productive are abandoned. Such occurrences can be illustrated by the salinisation patches in western India and Pakistan where large tracts of previously productive land has been abandoned.

As a report says, "A lack of control over resources, population growth, a lack of alternative avenues of livelihood, and inequality are all contributory to the degradation of the region's [South Asia] resources. In turn, environmental degradation perpetuates poverty, as the poorest attempt to survive on a diminished resource base".¹⁰

The empirical case study of South Asia is thus in accordance with the central thesis of the Toronto School,¹¹ and illustrates three basic structural causal factors contributing together to the environmental degradation and resource scarcity: Demand-induced scarcity that implies, following the central Malthusian principle, natural resources in this region being depleted faster in a geometric fashion than the renewal of these resources; demand-induced scarcity that demographic pressure leading to over-consumption and, hence, environmental degradation; and, structural scarcity that implies the distribution of national resources following a highly inequitable pattern when it results in an unequal society.

Simon's argument that technological improvement will lead to greater productivity and alleviate resource scarcity¹² is also based on the generalisation of the western reality. Technological development usually incurs heavy investment by

⁷ Adil Najam, "The Human Dimensions of Environmental Insecurity: Some Insights from South Asia", *ECSP Report*, Issue 9, 2003, p. 64.

⁸ Population Reference Bureau, 2004 *World Population Data Sheet* available on http://www.prb.org/pdf04/0WorldDataSheet_Eng.pdf

⁹ *The Persistence of Hunger in South Asia*, The Hunger Project Briefing Programme in South Asia, 2003, p. 23.

¹⁰ FAO Corporate Document Repository, *Land Degradation in South Asia: Its severity, causes and effects upon the people*. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/V4360E/V4360E08.htm>

¹¹ The entire literature on the notion of environmental security is generally bifurcated into the Toronto Group, led by Thomas Homer-Dixon, and the Swiss Environment and Conflict Project [ENCOP], led by Günther Bächler and Kurt Spillmann, which generally links environmental scarcity and violence with the concepts of consumption, under- and over-development and thin- and thick globalisation.

¹² Simon Dalby, "Security, Modernity, Ecology: The Dilemmas of Post-Cold War Security Discourse", *Alternatives*, Vol 17, 1992, pp. 95-134.

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the state, which developing countries might not be able to afford. For instance, the technologies for food production are capital-intensive are available only to the core countries. Moreover, immense demographic growth in developing and under-developed countries is not always simultaneously escorted by technological advancement and there is usually a veritable time lag between these two variables—population growth and technological development.¹³

Democracy and sustainable environment: Debunking the direct linkage theory

Democracy has been almost universally appraised as to have been exerting pacifying influence on the international balance-of-power, structurally averting outbreak of conflict and thereby sustaining security. Most importantly, democratic regimes are appraised especially by theorists like Homer-Dixon to be positively and constructively responsive towards environmental issues: It averts and minimises soil degradation through adoption of sustainable land management, fouling of fresh-water supply and other modes of mal-utilisation of natural resources that could not only lead to environmental degradation, but also could precipitate the outbreak of civil conflict over scarce natural resources. Moreover, democratic regimes are generalised to be more equitable in distribution of natural resources— an imperative for economic growth and subsequent environmental protection. Central to this is the assumption of Dahl that democratic pluralism arms every citizen with a modicum of power over decision-making and access to economic resources, ensuring equity and social justice. This in turn averts abject poverty that in turn accentuates environmental degradation.

Apart from economic distributive imperatives, politically, a positive correlation between democracy and environment underscores the respect for individual rights in the democracy which allow the environmentalists and the greens to lobby and freely market their pro-environment ideals and policies leading to environment legislations. The transparency and openness which characterise the democratic regimes and societies, and the concomitant free flow of informations aids in 'political learning' by the population from the environmental lobbies as well as from scientists and academicians, unlike in authoritarian regimes [the case of Chernobyl is

often being cited by the theorists as a veritable illustration]. Moreover, the imperative of election also induces a governmental accountability to its citizens and a responsible and positive response to environment and redistribution of economic and natural resources. The free-market economy in democracies and the power of environmentalist lobbies also put an imperative of environment-friendly business activities of the business groups and corporates, as, in case of violation of environmental acts, sanctions can be put on their business activities.



Landlessness in South Asia often leads to highly overcrowded slum settlements that comply little with hygiene and contribute to environmental contamination

This emblazoning of democracy's response to the environmental concerns essentially is a supreme manifestation of a profoundly Euro-centric, westernised notion which standardise the western democratic response to environment so as to establish a structural linkage between democracy and sustainable environment. The South Asian case illustrates some severe technical difficulties in this linkage theory. If a democracy is not accompanied by sustained high economic growth, then the immediate, sole policy priority of the governments is to ensure economic sustenance of the majority of the voting population. Vote bank politics, a central political instrument of democratic regimes, thus will be successfully precluding ascendancy of environmental concerns in the arena of 'high politics'. Moreover, in such cases of poor sustainable economic growth, industrialisation and urbanisation, the prior concerns to make the economy 'take off', might militate against the long-term environmental goals. And in such instances, while the western theorists ascertain the power of environmentalists, in South Asian developing democracies like in Sri Lanka and India, it mostly entails the power of industrialists, where the industrial lobby often harms the pro-environmental concerns. In the West also, democracy without

being coupled with economic development, cannot lead to sustainable environmental policies. As has been ascertained by the study of Ringquist and Khator, GDP is in direct concomitance with containment of environmental especially air pollution in capitalist, industrialised core countries.¹⁴ This is precisely because higher GDP and economic development meet the distributive requirements for environmental protection.

The massive problem faced by the South Asian countries to achieve the monumental task of alleviating developmental problems owes much to the peculiar geopolitical matrix of this region, along with other causal factors: This region, unlike the EU, is vulnerable both to inter- and intra-state conflicts and strife. Owing to this peculiar, region-specific security matrix, the countries have to devote a substantial part of the GNP to maintenance of long-standing military resources at the same time facing developmental and economic crises. While India and Pakistan, despite their developmental challenges have to continue their militarization due to their border disputes and arms race, the Sri Lankan state requires military expenditure to thwart off civil strife by the separatist LTTE anti-regime insurgents. The same applies to the state of Nepal due to Maoist resurgence assailing the legitimacy of the regime. Moreover, trans-national terrorism also requires military credibility of the South Asian countries. Hence, budget constraint being a perennial problem of the state, along with developmental problems like poverty, and illiteracy, environmental protection cannot be the prime concern of the policy-making of these states

India is the largest democracy in the world. But even here, environmental green lobbies cannot have a headway precisely due to developmental crises and resource deprivation of a substantial part of the population. That poverty is the key factor and economic developmental crises, further handicap the state's ability to conserve the environment is beyond doubts and substantiated by South Asian cases. The Narmada Valley Project in Indian and the wrangle over the issue manifesting the tug-of-war between the state and the environmentalist lobby illustrates this fact boldly. The Narmada Valley Development Plan, a major economically indispensable developmental project of the Indian state to harness the production of hydro-electric power that would catalyse other developmental plans of

¹³ Jaroslav Tir and Paul F Diehl, "Demographic Pressure and Interstate Conflict: Linking Population Growth and Density to Militarised Disputes and Wars: 1930-89", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35 [3], 1998, pp. 319-339.

¹⁴ Manus Midlarsky, "Democracy and Environment: An Empirical Assessment", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.35 [3], 1998, pp. 341-61.

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the state and is claimed to be a plan of 'national interest'. However, this proposed construction plan would eventually result in the dispossession and displacement of the livelihood and settlement of the inhabitants of the valley, most of whom are dalits and tribal, resulting in the gross violation of not only environmental issues, but also the fundamental human rights of these people, when no proper rehabilitation measures have yet been formulated by the state.¹⁵ Though the government plan has been vociferously condemned by the environmentalists and crusaders of the 'Narmada Bachao' or Save Narmada Movement¹⁶ as a 'subterfuge of the vested interests' [of the dam constructors and industrialists], the state is handicapped by the absence of adequate resources and usable rangeland for the resettlement of the oustees, at the same time when the developmental project is an imperative.

Also important is the Sri Lankan phenomenon of 'human-elephant' conflict. The state sought to protect the elephant habitat which entailed a pressure on human habitat at a time of increasing demographic pressure. The forest conservation in India, North Pakistan and Bangladesh had precipitated similar conflicts between state and local people over several issues that are contradictory to the principle of conservation. Against the backdrop of immense demographic growth and subsequent pressure on the available land and natural resources, forests provide for the high demand for timber for house construction, proper supply of fuel wood, supply of fodder trees [many of which are of endangered species] for cattle and livestock, especially in winter when grasses do not grow profusely.

Developmental crisis and restricted budgets also entail the failure of building up of adequate monitoring and alert systems and emergency rescue operations to alert and save people from sudden environmental hazards. The Tsunami crisis in December 2004, illustrates this, when absence of sea-wave monitoring system unlike in western countries explains the fact that the gigantic waves took two full hours to strike the shores of Andaman and Nicobar islands of India, after wreaking havoc in Indonesia—time adequate enough to alert the population in Andaman and Nicobar islands about the impending hazards so that

they could move to a safer shelter. However, technological gaps due to economic backwardness render such safety measures difficult to build up. Hence, no direct correlation between democracy and eco-friendly policy-making can be established or generalised.

Conflict and Environmental Security

Since the 1970s, environmental issues figured prominently on the international agenda of peace-keeping, illustrating the fact that environmental degradation in developing countries and the ensuing relative deprivation, negative impact of globalisation, failed resource management of the state to alleviate these structural crises can be veritable threats to human security, as also conflict causations— the fight and struggle over natural renewable resources like water, land, forest, fish-stocks etc. can be conflict causation in both inter- and intra-state conflicts. Every conflict is a prolonged process with its backward and forward linkages, and environmental issues, especially resource scarcity due to environmental degradation and demographic boom, is a key explanatory variable. Environmental degradation, and resultant resource depletion and scarcity accentuating poverty, might in the long-run act as a necessary, if not sufficient condition for precipitating armed inter-state conflict ensuing from the struggle and stiff competition over scarce resources. Structural scarcity that entails a highly inequitable distribution of resources among the population in South Asia might catalyse ethnic tension, and civil conflict, when the substantially deprived majority of the population might rise in arms questioning the legitimacy of the state when the state conspicuously fails to fulfil its distribution and developmental tasks. In South Asia, human security is not democratised: It is not a common security ensuring equal security of all of the citizens regardless of their economic class, thus potentially strengthening class antagonism. The poverty-stricken class is most likely than the affluent and middle-class to be vulnerable to human security threats: The poor survive on minimal resources inadequate to ensure their livelihood security, live in highly unhygienic overcrowded slums with little access to fresh water supply, and also sometime

are forced to settle in lands and areas vulnerable to land degradation and soil erosion, in absence of usable, habitable land due to state failure in alleviating developmental crises, inefficient market and resource management.

The resurgence of Maoism in Nepal brings out the causal linkage between distribution injustice, resource scarcity and domestic conflict into sharp relief. The shelved development plans, a conspicuous failure of land reforms, and a highly inequitable pattern of distribution of resources have together resulted in the mal-appropriation of national resources by the entrenched minority. This has strengthened the existing feudal structure of the social order especially in the Rapti Zone in the Middlewestern hilly region directly linked with the plight of the rural population. The Maoist 'People's War' anti-regime movement that began in 1996, aimed at establishment of an alternative socio-political order in Nepal, to deliver resource equality and social justice has destabilised the entire state and continues to affect the political order strongly even after the drafting of the Constitution. Moreover, the uprising is claimed to have exerted a deep impact on '...bio-diversity and wild-life conservation efforts in Nepal.... Reports indicate that since the insurgency, local villagers, caught in the cross fire between army personnel and Maoist rebels, have been smuggling timber across to Tibet and India for their Sustenance'.¹⁷ In Pakistan, also, mounting tensions can be attributed to social injustice and water and energy crisis against the backdrop of demographic boom. Such insecurity of the substantial part of the population reinforces the steady erosion of the state's legitimacy in face of mounting vociferous criticism of the state by the extremist groups enhancing prospects of civil war.

'Nations have often fought to assert or resist control over war materials, energy supplies, land, river basins, sea passages and other key environmental resources'.¹⁸ Malthusians and post-Malthusians try to establish a direct linkage between resource scarcity, and interstate armed conflict, amidst a prevalent condition of demographic spurt. It is the standard theoretical understanding that democratic pressure escalates international, and most importantly, regional conflict precisely because it leads to missions of aggrandisement to secure easy access

¹⁵ The Supreme Court of India had already delivered its judgement on the Sardar Sarovar Project [the biggest proposed dam on the river Narmada], on 18 October, 2000, that the government should make land available to the destitutes for their resettlement. However, the governmental agencies have conspicuously failed to adhere to the Supreme Court judgement.

¹⁶ This movement, led by environment and human activist Medha Patkar, has often been designated as an 'anti-development' movement that condemns the World Bank development paradigm.

¹⁷ Uttma Kumar Sinha, "Environmental Stresses and their Security Implications for South Asia". *Security Analysis*, vol. 30 (3), 2006, pp. 607-608.

¹⁸ World Commission on Environment and Development.

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to resources. The politicised and distorted use of Friedrich Ratzel's concept of *Lebensraum* by the Nazis or Japan's justification of invasion of Manchuria and Korea are illustrations of such inter-state resource wars.

The geopolitical matrix of South Asia being characterised by acrimonious inter-state political mistrust, border disputes and contrasting political, and socio-economic interests, regional cooperation on 'soft' issues like environment and eco-friendly sustainable development to combat poverty is not highly feasible. The functional inefficacy of SAARC bears testimony to the failure of South Asian regional 'soft' multilateralism. Such a diplomatic environment precluding virtual ascendancy of environmental cooperation on 'high politics', induces a general academic apprehension that '...environmental factors could become a major cause of instability and a threat to the regional security'¹⁹ due to prospects of intra-state resource wars, like war over oil in Persian Gulf and Middle East, dispute over water like Ataturk dam project worsening Turkish-Syrian relation.

Some believe that pragmatic realpolitik considerations would induce the nations eventually to closely cooperate in ensuring peaceful collective access to resources. The Indo-Bangladesh water treaties, and Indus Water Agreement between India and Pakistan have been cited as such examples. Water diplomacy should

not be generalised precisely because water crisis in the region of South Asia is not yet as acute as Middle East. Against the backdrop of historical political discordance, if natural renewable resources are alarmingly depleted, securing access to the bare minimum available of such resources might, in the long run, lead to inter-state armed rivalry.

Nor can anti-Malthusian optimism that regional economic cooperation will remove all the incentives for resource wars be accepted. Though certain factors such as food or oil can be transferred, the skill and efficiency to utilise and access these factors cannot be transferred. Moreover, such transfers need a stable national income so that the receptive country might pay for the costs of transfer and products as well. Some under-developed states might not have anything to trade for these resources or pay for these transfers. Most importantly, the failure of SAARC in regional economic collaboration testifies that political disagreement can preclude such prospects.

Conclusion

The region of South Asia illustrates that concerns around environmental issues revolve not only around general climatic deterioration and pollution, but also around the issue of poverty ensuing from resources scarcity and environmental degradation. The region as a whole evinces the fact that

economic, developmental and environmental concerns, especially the concern of resource scarcity are all inextricably associated. Poverty and developmental crises in the region not only render ecologically sustainable resource management policies by the states difficult to formulate, but also subsume long term environmental concerns like climatic change and pollution. Thus, imperative of rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and rapid technological advancement to achieve urgent developmental goals obfuscate the securitisation of environment in South Asia. The South Asian regional study also boldly debunks the World Bank paradigm that links international trade and regional economic arrangements and cooperation with development and the viable mode of alleviating resource scarcity and poverty. The SAARC evinces beyond scepticism that unlike EU and NAFTA, regional economic cooperation is not-feasible in an atmosphere of high socio-religious heterogeneity, political acrimony, and contradictory national interests. And against the backdrop of such political acrimony, in the long run, we cannot totally rule out violence as a consequent variable in upsetting regional security equilibrium: Inter-state armed conflict as resource war, directly challenging state legitimacy in case of state failure to alleviate poverty, being exacerbated by other factors where environmental factors might act as necessary, if not sufficient factor.

¹⁹ Uttam Kumar Sinha, "Environmental Stresses", p. 601.

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Transportation Problems in Contemporary Cameroon



Kingsley Awang Ollong

Kingsley was born on 26 July 1977. After completing his secondary education in 1997, he enrolled as an undergraduate student in the Department of History, University of Yaoundé I. Three years after he graduated by obtaining a B.A with flying colours. In 2000, he went for a Master's programme in economic history in the same university, which he completed in December 2002. In January 2003, he enrolled for an M.Phil in Economic History and in 2006 he started a PhD programme which he looks forward to complete by 2009.

A researcher's rides on a beer truck– and this helps gain knowledge in development economics

With thirty thousand bottles lashed firmly to the back, the beer truck pulled out of the factory yard. Or rather, it tried to. The lunchtime traffic in Douala, Cameroon's muggy commercial capital was grid locked, as usual, and no one wanted to let a sixty-tonne lorry pull out in front of them.

Fortunately the driver, Martin, had been trucking for nineteen years, and could manoeuvre the eighteen-wheeled beast with skill and calculated aggression. After several minutes of inching threateningly forward, he managed to barge out into the fast lane, where the truck immediately had to stop. As far as the eye could see, stationary cars and buses blocked the way.

Considering that Douala is one of Africa's busiest ports, handling ninety five percent of Cameroon's exports and also serving two landlocked neighbours, Chad and the Central African Republic, the poverty of the city's infrastructure is a bit of a problem.

The roads are resurfaced from time to time, but the soil is soft and the foundations typically too shallow. Small cracks yawn quickly into wide potholes. Street boys fill them with sand or rubble, and then beg for tips from motorists. But their amateur repair work rarely survives the first rainstorm.

Besides the potholes, motorists must dodge the wrecks of cars that have crashed. Under Cameroonian law, these may not be moved until the police, who are in no hurry, have arrived. It took our truck half an hour to reach the first petrol station, and another half an hour to fill up, owing to arguments about paperwork. Another hour and two police road-blocks later, we finally left the city. That was the end of the easy part of the journey.

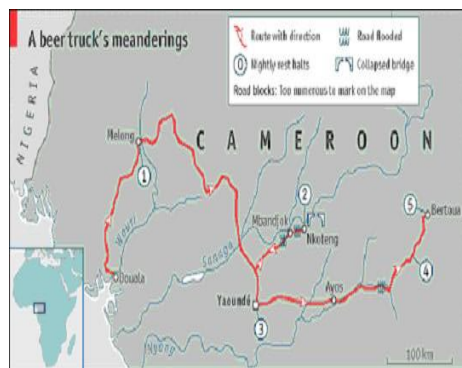
Hard trucking

Visitors from rich countries rarely experience the true ghastliness of third-world infrastructure. They use the relatively smooth roads from airports to hotels, and fly any distance longer than a hike to the curio market.

But the people who actually live and work in countries with rotten infrastructure have to cope with the consequences every day. These are as profound as they are malign. So to

investigate how bad roads make life harder, I hitched a ride on a beer truck in Cameroon, a pleasant, peaceful and humid country in the corner of the Gulf of Guinea.

The truck belonged to a haulage firm that makes deliveries for Guinness Cameroon, a local subsidiary of the multinational that makes the eponymous velvety black beer, which is popular in Ireland, Britain and West Africa.



The plan was to carry 1,600 crates of Guinness and other drinks from the factory in Douala where they were brewed to Bertoua, a small town in Cameroon's southeastern rainforest. As the crow flies, this is less than five hundred kilometres (three hundred and thirteen miles)– about as far as from New York to Pittsburgh, or London to Edinburgh. According to a rather optimistic schedule, it should have taken twenty hours, including an overnight rest. It took four days. When the truck arrived, it was carrying only two-thirds of its original load.

The scenery was staggering: Thickly forested hills, stretching into the distance like an undulating green ocean, with red and yellow blossoms floating on the waves. Beside the road were piles of cocoa beans, laid out to dry in the sun, and hawkers selling engine oil, tangerines, and succulent four-metre pythons for the pot. We were able to soak up these sights at our leisure: We were stopped at roadblocks forty seven times.

These usually consisted of a pile of tyres or a couple of oil drums in the middle of the road, plus a plank with upturned nails sticking out, which could be pulled aside when the policemen on duty were satisfied that the truck had broken no laws and should be allowed to pass.

Sometimes, they merely gawped into the cab or glanced at the driver's papers for a few seconds before waving him on. But the more aggres-

sive ones detained us somewhat longer. Some asked for beer. Some complained that they were hungry, often patting their huge stomachs to emphasise the point. One asked for pills, lamenting that he had indigestion. But most wanted hard cash, and figured that the best way to get it was to harass motorists until bribed to lay off.

At every other roadblock, the policemen checked to see whether the truck was carrying a fire extinguisher. The driver's mate, Hippolyte, would have to climb down and show the device to a policeman reclining in the shade of a palm tree, who would inspect it minutely and pore over the instructions on the side. Similar scrutiny was lavished on taillights, axles, wing-mirrors and tyres, all in the name of road safety. Oddly, no one asked about seat belts, which Cameroonians wear about as often as fur coats.

At some roadblocks, the police went through our papers word by word, in the hope of finding an error. The silliest quibble came from a frowning thug who declared that my national identity card was not clear. The longest delay came in the town of Mbandjok, where the police decided that Martin did not have enough permits, and offered to sell him another for twice the usual price. When he asked for a receipt, they kept us waiting for three-and-a-half hours.

A gaggle of policemen joined the argument, which grew heated. The total number of man-hours wasted (assuming an average of seven policemen involved, plus three people in the truck), was thirty-five– call it one French working week. And all for a requested bribe of eight thousand CFA francs (\$ 20).

The pithiest explanation of why Cameroonians have to put up with all this came from the gendarme at roadblock number thirty-one. He had invented a new law about carrying passengers in trucks, found the driver guilty of breaking it, and confiscated his driving licence. When it was put to him that the law he was citing did not, in fact, exist, he patted his holster and replied: "Do you have a gun? No. I have a gun, so I know the rules."

Mud, inglorious mud

Even without the unwelcome attentions of the robber-cops, the journey would have been a slog. Most Cameroonian roads are unpaved: Long stretches of rutty red laterite soil with sheer ditches on either side. Dirt roads are fine so long as it does not rain, but Cameroon

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is largely rainforest, where it rains often and hard.

Our road was rendered impassable by rain three times, causing delays of up to four hours. The Cameroonian government has tried to grapple with the problem of rain eroding roads by erecting a series of barriers, with small gaps in the middle, that allow light vehicles to pass but stop heavy trucks from passing while it is pouring. This is fair. Big trucks tend to mangle wet roads.

The barriers, which are locked to prevent truckers from lifting them when no one is looking, are supposed to be unlocked when the road has had a chance to dry. Unfortunately, the officials whose job it is to unlock them are not wholly reliable. Early on the second evening, not long after our standoff with the police in Mbandjok, we met a rain barrier in the middle of the forest. It was dark, and the man with the key was not there. Asking around nearby villages yielded no clue as to his whereabouts. We curled up in the hot, mosquito-filled cab and waited for him to return, which he did shortly before midnight.

The hold-up was irritating, but in the end made no difference. Early the next morning, a driver coming from the opposite direction told us that the bridge ahead had collapsed, so we had to turn back.

Six hours, eleven more roadblocks and three sardine sandwiches later, we arrived in Yaoundé, the capital, where Guinness has a depot. The alternative route we had to take to get to Bertoua meant passing a weighing station, where vehicles over fifty tonnes face steep tolls. Since we were ten tonnes overweight, Martin needed permission to offload six thousand crates. But it was a Saturday, the man in charge was reportedly at lunch, and we did not get permission until the next morning. It then took all morning to unload the extra crates, despite the fact that the depot was equipped with excellent forklifts. After twenty-five hours without moving, we hit the road again, and met no roadblocks for a whole fifteen minutes.

For much of the rest of the journey, which took another seventeen hours, I was struck by how terrifying Cameroonian roads are. Piles of rusting wrecks clogged the grassy verges on the way out of Yaoundé. We saw several freshly crashed cars and a couple of lorries and buses languishing in ditches. None of the bridges we crossed seemed well maintained. And when we arrived in Bertoua, we heard that two people had been crushed to death on a nearby road the previous day, when a logging truck lost its load on to their heads.

Coping with chaos

Cameroonian roads have wasted away. In 1980, there were 7.2 kilometres of roads per one thousand people; by 1995, the figure had shrunk to only 2.6 kilometres per thousand. By one estimate, less than a tenth are

paved, and most of these are in a foul condition.

In recent years, however, aided by a splurge of World Bank money, things have improved a bit. Douala, once considered one of the worst ports on earth, has been substantially rehabilitated since 2000. A lot has been done to improve the roads around Douala in the last two years, says Brian Johnson, the then Managing Director of Guinness Cameroon. The Cameroonian government no longer takes three years to approve plans for roadworks.

But there is much work still to be done, and firms still have to find ways to cope with horrible highways. Guinness used to buy second-hand army trucks, which was a false economy, because they kept breaking down. Now, it buys new lorries from Toyota, with which it has a long-term agreement to ensure that it will always be able to get hold of mechanics and genuine spare parts (as opposed to fake or stolen ones, which are popular in Cameroon, but of variable quality). The firm is also making more use of owner-drivers, who have a greater incentive to drive carefully.

"Just-in-time" delivery is, for obvious reasons, impossible. Whereas its factories in Europe can turn some raw materials into beer within hours of delivery, Guinness Cameroon has to keep forty days of inventory in the factory: Crates and drums of malt, hops and bottle tops. Wholesellers out in the bush have to carry as much as five months' stock at the start of the rainy season, when roads are at their swampiest. Since they tend to have shallow pockets, Guinness often gives them exceptionally easy credit terms.

Out in the forest, the firm does whatever it takes to get beer into bars and bottle stores. It is an exercise in creative management. At the depot in Bertoua, crates are unloaded from big lorries and packed into pick-up trucks, which rush them to wholesalers in small towns. The wholesalers then sell to retailers and to small distributors, who ferry crates to villages in hand-pushed carts, on heads and even by canoe.

No matter how hard Guinness tries, however, the bars that sell its brew sometimes run dry. Jean Mière, a young bar-owner in a village called Kuelle, complained that he had nothing to sell to his thirsty customers because the local wholesaler's driver was in jail. Yves Ngassa, the local Guinness depot chief, was incensed. He had arrived in an empty pick-up truck, having been given directions by the wholeseller who normally supplied Mière, but the wholeseller had not mentioned that Mière had no beer, nor asked if he could load some into Ngassa's empty pick-up.

In all, bad infrastructure adds about fifteen percent to costs, reckoned Johnson. But labour costs are low, Cameroonians drink a lot of beer, and Guinness's main competitor, Société Anonyme des Brasseries de

Cameroon, faces similar hurdles. Despite the unusual management challenges, Guinness runs a healthy business in Cameroon, its fifth-biggest market by volume after Britain, Ireland, Nigeria and America. Its return on capital in Cameroon is around sixteen per cent and sales of its main brands have grown by fourteen per cent a year over the past five years. The big losers from the lousy infrastructure are ordinary Cameroonians.

How bad roads hurt the poor

Roads in rainforests are a bad thing, argue many environmentalists. They facilitate illegal logging and destroy indigenous cultures by bringing them into contact with aggressive, disease-carrying, rum-swilling outsiders. But the absence of roads probably hurts the poor far more.

The simplest way to measure the harm caused by bad infrastructure is to look at how prices change as you move away from big cities. A bottle of Coca-Cola, for example, costs 300 CFA in Yaoundé, where it is bottled. A mere 125 kilometres down the road, in the small town of Ayos, it is 315 CFA, and at a smaller village 100 kilometres further on, it is 350 CFA. Once you leave the main road, prices rise sharply. A Guinness that costs 350 CFA in Douala will set you back by 450 CFA in an eastern village that can be reached only on foot.



What is true of bottled drinks is also true of more or less any other manufactured good. Soap, axe-heads and kerosene are all much more expensive in remote hamlets than in the big cities. Even lighter goods, which do not cost so much to transport, such as matches and malaria pills, are significantly expensive.

At the same time, the stuff that the poor have to sell—yams, cassava, mangoes—fetch less in the villages than they do in the towns. Yet, thanks to poor roads, it is hard and costly to get such perishable, heavy items to the market. So peasant farmers are doubly squeezed by bad roads. They pay more for what they buy, and receive less for what they sell. This explains why the African Development Bank finds "a strong link between poverty and remoteness".

The UNs International Fund for Agricultural Development estimates that African villages with better physical infrastructure produce one-third more crops per hectare than those with poor infrastructure, enjoy wages twelve percent higher, and pay fourteen percent less for fertiliser.

Across the South

And no country with good roads has ever suffered from famines.

Where roads improve, incomes tend to rise in parallel. One study estimated that each dollar put into road maintenance in Africa would lower vehicle maintenance costs by \$ 2-3 a year. In Cameroon, where the soil is wondrously fertile, farmers start growing cash crops as soon as nearby roads are repaired. Big commercial farmers benefit too. Along the highway to Douala lie great plantations of sugar cane, and banana trees whose fruit is wrapped in blue plastic bags, to keep at bay the birds and bugs that might mar the visual perfection demanded by European consumers.

Where roads are left to deteriorate, women bear the heaviest burden. According to the World Bank, a typical Ugandan woman carries the equivalent of a ten-litre (twenty one-pint) jug of water for ten kilometres every day, while her husband humps only a fifth as much. With better roads, both men and women can, if nothing else, hitch rides on lorries, thereby sparing their feet and getting their goods more swiftly to market.

The famished road

Sometimes, people find ingenious ways around infrastructure bottlenecks in Africa. Buses designed for European roads do not last long in Cameroon, so Cameroonians import the chassis of heavy European lorries and mount locally manufactured bus bodies on top. This is much cheaper than importing a whole lorry, and more durable than an imported bus. Locals also simply adapt. In parts of Cameroon where there is no electricity to power a refrigerator, people drink their beer— and indeed any other liquid— warm.

But there is no substitute for building and maintaining better infrastructure. In some areas, such as telecoms, private firms will do the work if allowed to. Thanks to private investment, mobile telephones have spread throughout Africa with the pace and annoying chirrup of a swarm of locusts. In Cameroon, Guinness now finds it much easier to contact employees than it did a couple of years ago, although the firm also frets that mobile telephones are gobbling up scarce

disposable income that might otherwise be spent on beer.

The private sector does not, however, spontaneously provide roads, because the beneficiaries cannot easily be charged. Tolls can meet some of the cost of maintaining highways, but it is hard to squeeze money out of peasants on feeder roads.

The World Bank estimates that at least \$ 18 billion needs to be pumped each year into African infrastructure if the continent is to attain the sort of growth that might lift large numbers out of poverty. Investment currently runs at less than a third of this. In the current economic downturn, private companies in the West are in no mood to rush into risky investment, least of all in Africa. The gap can only be filled, the Bank reckons, by governments and foreign donors.

In short, the governments of poor countries ought to pay more attention to their roads. A good first step in Cameroon would be to lift those road-blocks and put the police to work repairing potholes.

Archives and Field Notes

Soy loco por tí, India!

Reflections, Expressions and Experiences of a Brazilian Living and Researching in India



Cláudio C. Pinheiro

Claudio is for a long time dealing with the boundaries between history and anthropology. Currently he is starting a Pos-PhD enrolment with the Department of Anthropology (Campinas State University, São Paulo, Brazil), where plans include opening a centre of Indian studies. For the last years he's been investing in South-South connections and comparisons both on academics and arts, especially linking India and Brazil. Together with a Brazilian film maker friend he shot and is editing a joint-venture movie, involving southern West Bengal Patua painting artists, on colonial translation dilemmas. Actually he is planning a second movie on Indian soccer supporters for the 2010 World Cup. After staying in India for a while he has got irremediably addicted to the cuisine, music, cinema and; above all, to its people.

His hobbies are singing Brazilian music and jazz and furniture designing with his father. His heart is shared between his beloved Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and India.

Getting out for a beer at your favourite bar is the local pastime in my hometown, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. We call our closest friends practically every single Friday (everyday I must confess). Curiously enough I noticed that in recent times my friends rather email me every Friday asking if I am "in India or at home?" Initially, I took it as a joke, but then I realised that I have spent nine of the last fourteen months, in Gandhi's land (including Christmas, New Year and my last two birthdays)!



India is not, I can tell you, the most tourist-friendly and easiest place in the world to be in, but after residing there and counting so many Indians among my dearest friends, as I do now, I started to love the country's complexities passionately and to get used to its imperfections as the defects of an old friend. While living there I was reminded several times of a 1967 Gilberto Gil's song (a famous Brazilian singer, and currently the Minister of Culture) celebrating his love for Latin America, its beauties, difficulties and people: *Soy loco por ti, America* (I am crazy for you, America- <http://www.gilbertogil.com.br/index.php?language=en>). I couldn't find a better way to express my fascination with the strength and densities of the country.

At this point, it is curious to look back on how this approximation started. I still remember how weird it sounded to me at first to imagine reshaping my PhD project on Brazilian urban slavery so as to include a comparison with the slavery in colonial Goa- a former Portuguese possession on India's Western coast. It was the spring of 2000 and I was in Dakar (Senegal), together with other fourteen colleagues participating at the

first edition of Sephis' "Workshop for Young Students", under the stewardship of Dr. Samita Sen. Ultimately, I took that comparative perspective seriously and two years later I reshaped my project with a Sephis PhD grant.

The original proposal did not include any overseas investigation, except in Lisbon (Portugal)- where I expected to find all the primary sources I needed. It was Ulbe Bosma and Willem van Schendel who convinced me of the importance of flying to India and enriching the research with local sources and bibliography. They were quite right- *bedankt, kerels!* I went to India with the expectation of staying for no more than two months- exclusively at Panjim's (Goa) libraries and archives. In the end, that first trip lasted for almost seven months (from November 2005 to May 2006).

Once Sephis devoted so much energy and financial resources on South-South dialogues and was sponsoring such an expensive trip to India, I thought it could be interesting to make that money worth all I could make out of it. For that I prepared and presented some seminars on themes related to my ongoing research, a small course on Brazilian studies, brought and shared several texts on Brazilian sociological and historiographical issues and tried to establish as many connections and dialogues I could, all over the subcontinent. The result was that I spent these seven months, not exclusively in Panjim, but travelling the country from north to south meeting and trying to emulate people with the idea of creating more permanent base for intellectual dialogues between the two countries.



As intellectuals we should be aware that researching Southern contexts (the old Third World) is not as easy and simple as it could be on Northern ones, as it imposes especial proceedings and cares. To complain or gossip about these difficulties wouldn't get us as far as serious reflections on the conditions of knowledge production in the South would do- even if they do drive us crazy sometimes. Being an anthropologist of History or an anthropological historian ("An Anthropologist among Historians", as Bernard Cohn would say) for some years, I had become used to ethnograph my research experiences, as it is extremely useful for reflecting on the sociology of knowledge production. My Brazilian identity, for example, was something surprisingly helpful for my journeys, both as an academic and a tourist through the country. If, on one hand, I faced the same difficulty as my Indian friends while working at every single document-holding institution, on the other, I felt that coming from such a distant place really got me an extra dose of sympathy from librarians and archivists- my sincere acknowledgments to all of them. "Where did you say you're coming from, boy?" was certainly the sentence I have heard the most- and, together with the Indian receptiveness, really opened doors and minds to dialogues. This is something that made me reconsider Gananath Obeyesekere's assertion that intellectuals from South contexts should claim a mutual (post-colonised?) identity as a way of reflecting about common scripts of dependency and exploitation. As a matter of fact, together with Dr. Yasmeen Arif (CSDS, Delhi) we started planning a meeting on inter-connected research experiences- being Southern researchers reflecting about Southern contexts different from our own.

Ethnographic examination of research experiences, I am convinced, can definitely offer us reflective keys to so many questions regarding knowledge production- together with some interesting and funny stories. My first day at the National Library (Kolkata) is virtually unforgettable. Asking if it was possible to get into the reading room with my laptop, the response came with a rather 'Matrix like' answer: "Well Sir... you can get in,

Archives and Field Notes

but never get out with it". It was only after a long debate that I discovered that I could get the computer in (and out), if an appropriate authorisation had been requested. Disorganisation and inappropriate storage conditions of libraries and archival collections is something common to Southern contexts, and we should be prepared to hear that this or that document is no longer there as no one could find it anymore or that worms had done their job eating it– or even "sorry Sir, as no one came to look for these seventeenth century book collection for ages, we decided to sell it as second hand books", as I was told. Again during my first trip to the country, while looking for some sources on Portuguese colonial strategies in sixteenth to eighteenth century India, I came across some vivid reactions of Indian intellectuals. It was curious to watch a fervent reply of a lady complaining about the bloodiness characteristic of Portuguese colonisers killing nearly every single Indian they came in contact with especially at the Bengal region. This reaction only attenuated when she found out that I wasn't Portuguese myself: "Then as a Brazilian you must know what I'm talking about. The Portuguese certainly did the same bloody job in South America." Circumstances like this made me focus an interest on India's historical memories of European colonisation.



Again, considering that we are living and working in and about 'developing countries', we have to bear in mind that it's not certain that our efforts will not succeed every time. Every now and then initiatives are just drained by the bureaucracy or by the structural shortage of financial resources. We should also consider that investigating and writing is just

one part of our business. At the moment I am interested in promoting theoretical dialogues between India and Brazil. Being a Brazilian interested in themes from Asia in general, and India in particular, made it difficult for me to establish intellectual dialogues back home. In order to discover possible partners I produced the first catalogue of Brazilian researchers dealing with India (recently expanded to include South Africa, at the demand of the Brazilian Ministry of Education), which is underway, but waiting for financial support. At the same time, I could never imagine that six months after my first visiting India, I would meet its Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, in Brasilia (Brazil's D.C.) attending to an invitation for suggestions to improve the intellectual dialogues between the countries. From this meeting important ideas emerged: The aperture of a lecture position (for an Indian fellow) on themes related to India on human sciences, and the discussions started to open the first Centre for Research on India (probably at Campinas State University), that is to be partially financed by the Indian Government.



During last March and April I was back in India. In spite of the fact that I had to do many small errands– like rechecking my research notes, photographing some documents that were wrongly copied one year before and reinforcing and updating contacts with the progresses made on dialogues– the main reason for this trip was shooting a movie. This experience was motivated by the felt need of a wide diversion (a non-academic one) from my PhD work. Together with José Inácio Parente, an experienced senior Brazilian filmmaker, photographer and a close friend, we made

approximately twenty-five hours of film and took nearly 1,500 photographs. The film, provisionally called *Kali, (Ink)* intends to be a non-orthodox register of a joint-venture between me and some *Patua* painting artists– the *Chitrakars* – from the small village of Naya in Medinipur district (Southern West Bengal). The story is regarding the process of confectioning a collection of paintings telling about the first contacts between Portuguese and Indian people and the efforts on interpreting and translating ideas– especially the ones tropologically associated with forms of labour in early colonial India. The experience has been enriched with the help and suggestions of many people– my acknowledgments to Lakshmi Subramanian, Frank Korom, Hena Basu and Rahul Roy– and presupposed days of discussions and mutual suggestions between the artists and me and had been executed with attention and respect to the painters' cognitive structure and semantic vocabulary, informed by my own background. At present I am struggling to find financial resources that will allow us to finish the movie and prepare an itinerant exhibition (and workshop) of the paintings, the film and the artists during the next year.

Although I have to agree with my Brazilian fellows that make fun of me whether I am in India or at home, overall I try to emulate friends and academic colleagues with the idea that looking through different glasses while analysing our peripheral academic condition can perhaps provide us different food for thought. What I say to them is that "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em", and many friends are now interested in getting to know Indian academics' intellectual investments and in trying some *Kingfisher* beers.



Reviews

Instrumentalising Disorder: Another Western Take on Power Politics in Africa

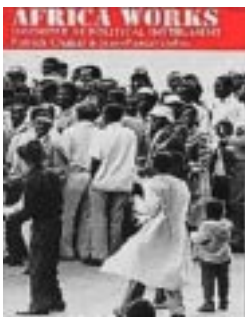


A. O. Omobowale

Omobowale teaches Sociology at the University of Lagos. His Ph.D. thesis was on Political Clientelism and Rural Development in Selected Communities in Ibadan, Nigeria. His areas of research include development, political, rural and medical sociology. At present, Dr. Omobowale is researching into the instrumentalisation of patronage and violence in Nigeria's Political/Democratic Process.

Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument*, The International African Institute in Association with James Currey, Oxford and Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1999, pp. 170, ISBN: 0 85255 819 8, £ 9.95.

Though this ten chapter, 170-page book was released almost a decade ago, it remains relevant to the understanding of political relations in Africa. Its emphasis is on viewing the (ir)rationality of African politics from a context bound perspective. Hence, according to the authors, though African "...informal, uncodified and unpolicied..." (p. xix) political system, state and bureaucracy may not fulfill Western values especially "...in terms of Weberian ideal-type..." (p. 1) construct, it is all the same rational within the context of the actors embedded in it, and it seems to attempt the same result, the Western system aims to achieve.



Chabal and Daloz believe the situation in Africa is borne out of non-distinction between the state and society. Thus, by and large, the state structure inherited from colonial masters has failed to be fully emanci-

pated from society. The resultant effect of this is the emergence of a system predicated on "...overriding political power of localized and personalized political..." (p. 1) arrangements, which fail to "...conceal the patrimonial and particularistic nature of power" (p. 1). And since Africa is overburdened by a system of overwhelming poverty and unequal access to resources, the personalisation of power and provision of access to productive resources through patronage system become pivotal to survival. This is therefore achieved through what the authors have termed the "...The Political Instrumentalization of Disorder" (p. 141). The authors presented their thesis i.e. 'the political instrumentalization of disorder' as a paradigm through which the seemingly irrational civil society, recycled elites, identity constructs, witchcraft, crime and corruption could be explained as rational among actors in the political system and those who benefit from disorder in Africa.

Of course, the authors tried to rationalise the seeming irrationality of African political structure as a consequence of 'a different' rationality, based on the prevalent culture and situation in Africa. However, just like others have done, it also achieved, presenting Africa as a backward and crude society, which has failed to adopt modernising values. And so

Africa would remain as it is, since the political elite understands the use and instrumentalisation of disorder to maintain the status quo, sustain patronage and remain in power. Against its claim however, the work has only achieved presenting what others have said about crudity in Africa, albeit innovatively seeing it as a somewhat usable instrument in the hands of actors for personal benefits.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to note that, the situation in Africa should not be construed merely from a paradigm of political instrumentalisation of disorder. The disorder Chabal and Daloz see is actually a result of the experience Africans have been subjected to during and after colonisation. The continent has therefore been subjected to the whims and caprices of the capitalist-political class, whom the colonial powers handed power over to and who have therefore been able to utilise political disorder to remain in power and sustain the World Capitalist System. Conclusively, against the submission of the authors about the peculiarity of political instrumentalisation in Africa as a result of indigenous culture, I submit it is rather a consequence of a capitalist-dependency chain, which has been put in place since colonisation to sustain the predominance of Western capitalism.

Reviews

Chronicle of a State Foretold



Suhit Sen

Suhit Sen is at present Deputy Editor in charge of the copy desk at Down To Earth, a Delhi-based fortnightly focussing on issues relating to environment/development and science. He has previously worked in a number of mainstream newspapers in Calcutta and Delhi, as well as publishing houses in both these cities. He has also taught history at the University of North Bengal and been a research associate for *Towards Freedom*, a documentation project spanning the last decade of colonial rule in India. In the midst of these, he completed a doctoral dissertation on the transition from colonial to Congress rule in India from the University of London in 1998.

Ramchandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, Picador India, New Delhi, 2007, ISBN: 0330396102, pp. 688, Rs. 695.00.

Ramachandra Guha's panoptic 'history' of contemporary India— *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*— invites other adjectives as well, compendious is one of them, but magisterial is not.

At the outset, Guha makes the point, in some ways justified, that the arbitrary way history has been categorised as an academic discipline in the Indian context has given rise to an equally arbitrary chronological construct of what the subject matter of the discipline must be. Thus, 1947—the year of the transfer of power from a British colonial to an Indian nationalist regime— remains the arbitrary watershed: The arena of history predates that year, after which sociology, political science and other disciplines take over. The point is well taken, especially with the caveat that some studies do exist in the area even if they can be "counted on the fingers of one hand— or, if one is more open-minded, two". But it is not a particularly original point that the gaps in the historiography of Indian democracy after the transfer of power are awesome. The point, however, is how far Guha succeeds in filling them.

My sense is it does not go very far in explanatory terms, though the breadth of the story Guha recounts is often breathtaking— not just because of the story itself, but the way in which Guha unfolds it, though even as to that there are some reservations. We shall return to this point after talking about the gaps of the post-1947 story in the first place. While Guha's point about historians having abdicated (or having been constrained to abdicate) the terrain of contemporary history is one that I too have complained about, one would do well to bear in mind that the arbitrariness with which the discipline of history is forced to suffer a kind of arrested development is matched in no small measure by the arbitrariness with which Guha and other historians (including this reviewer) are tempted to carve out disciplinary domains— Especially in an academy that has undergone tectonic interdisciplinary shifts generations ago. This is an important point and has a crucial bearing on the way Guha marshals his material and his arguments.

A lot of the gaps in post-1947

Indian history, which Guha bemoans, have actually been filled by political scientists, political anthropologists, sociologists, economists, et al. Not all of these meet what we may designate as the mandate of history or the historian's craft as understood, however vaguely, by practicing historians— but many do. Just to pick a few names out of the hat, we could usefully refer to, in no particular order of importance, Partha Chatterjee, Francine Frankel, Stanley Kochanek, Paul Brass, Atul Kohli and the Rudolphs. Ayesha Jalal and Sugato Bose are, of course, practicing historians. There are many more names that grace the shelves of the contemporary history stacks of standard libraries, while not readily available unpublished work in the form of lectures, mimeographs and dissertations also exist— whether authored by historians or others.

There is also a genre— especially emanating from departments of political science— that in its eagerness to build theoretical models pay so little attention to historical narration and context to be less than useful as any kind of 'history' of contemporary India, apart, of course, from the fact that it only too often rides roughshod over comprehensible, experiential 'realities' that archival materials enrich through thicker descriptions.

But this charge cannot be levelled against, say, the Rudolphs (*The Pursuit of Lakshmi*). It is possible to find fault with the argument advanced, which bends over backwards to elide the salience of class as a form of social stratification and the characterisation of the state and the state-society dialectic. But no case can be made out against them for not fleshing out a narrative— a story, if you will— within a strong explanatory and analytical framework. And they, like Guha, take the story right up to their almost exactly contemporaneous times. Similar points can be made of Brass's panoptic foray into the politics of contemporary India— about the way he locates state and society, their dialectic and so on. But as with the Rudolphs, there is a strong explanatory frame and a narrative that is historically coherent.

Stuart Corbridge and John Harriss's

Reinventing India similarly locates the post-1947 nation-building and state-building within a very strong explanatory and theoretical framework and does no mean job of establishing a coherent historical narrative that encompasses the fullness of a political economy context and colonial genealogies.

Ayesha Jalal— in her classical comparative as well as contemporary study of democracy and authoritarianism— not only has a pellucid explanatory frame, underlined with equal clarity by theoretical presumption, but has done more than most scholars to look at the continuum between democracy and authoritarianism in South Asia against the background of the Emergency particularly and generally the strains of authoritarianism and the repressive capacity of the state in the cacophony of India's democracy. The point, again, for my purposes, is not how 'right' or 'wrong' she was in the mid-1990s either in the context of those times, or through the retrospective lenses of 2007, framed by Pakistan and Bangladesh's overtly authoritarian regimes and the repressions carried out in India by the state or dominant classes backed by the power of the state, within the context of some form of functional democracy. Context and explanatory power are also pervasive in Jalal and Bose's brief treatment of contemporary history.

The foregoing is a random, rather than cherry-picked, list. One could substantively talk in greater or lesser detail about Granville Austin's masterful works on constitutional history, Frankel and Bardhan's separate work on the political economy of post-1947 India and so on. All of them share the same characteristics: Clear narratives embedded in strong explanatory and spelt out theoretical frames, which now brings me to Guha's offering.

Let me begin, in a manner of speaking, in rewind mode. The fundamental weakness of Guha's book is that it hardly has an analytical or explanatory framework— which is not to say that it has no flashes of analytical and explanatory insights. It reads more like a straightforward chronicle, albeit written in the compelling style that one has come to expect from

Reviews

Guha. A lot of research has, as is abundantly clear from the endnotes, gone into the construction of the career of Indian democracy from 1947 to pretty much the here and now. The problem is that a lot of the story has already been told, at least abundantly till the turn of the century, which means that, in the absence of an explanatory framework, Guha has done little by way of filling a presumed gap, panoptic though his scope may be. The strength of Guha's narrative—which makes for good entertainment, which, in turn, is fair enough—derives from the anecdotal feel to it and the attention to detail. To anticipate more detailed attention, Guha's book, at best, fills one need—a need to provide an entertaining and detailed chronicle for, if I may say so, what in current journalese has been designated 'generation next'. This includes those involved in various forms of engagement with the public domain that require a knowledge of the basics Guha provides—say journalists—as also the interested, curious non-specialist, whose personal, quotidian life is otherwise not spectacularly emptied of content by blissful ignorance of either proximate or distant history. That blissfully ignorant citizens make for an impoverished public life devoid of engaged debate is, of course, a completely different matter.

The absence of a framework that makes Guha's story incomprehensible as a coherent narrative is palpable and embracing, except, as I shall elaborate later, in the last section of the book. This assertion needs evidence to become a critique, an end to which I shall now turn without a needless multiplication of instances. One could start with the point that Guha's narrative is heavily state-centric (except for the last chapter on popular entertainment), one that I have not yet encountered in print, but which, nevertheless, has been made. I discountenance this critique because statist histories are needed as much as any other kind, and if that is Guha's objective I encounter no problem on this score. The problem, however, is that nowhere, except perhaps by elision, does Guha explicitly offer a notion of what constitutes a state or state-ness, just as he refuses to engage with the

dialectic of society and state or nation and state. Given that this history is largely about the construction of the state and the political processes that surround and feed into it, this surely must be a fundamental flaw. By the time I reached the end of the book, expecting, as it were, some formulation, somewhere round the corner, I thought I had got it wrong and some kind of explanatory framework or theory was actually embedded in the thickness of the description: It was not. I shall make two points by way of illustration. Take planning and land reforms—surely two projects of the Nehruvian era in which the state-society dialectic comes directly into play and which also brings into focus the social/class character of the Congress, till the nineteen sixties obviously, holding a monopoly of the apparatuses of state. But other than a few stray comments there is no illumination on how the land reform—be it the abolition of zamindari or the implementation of land ceilings—was by and large stalled. What were the social forces at play that prevented Nehru, whose integrity, commitment to the project and predominance in both the organisation and the government cannot be gainsaid, from making a decisive push? The Green Revolution gets similarly summary treatment. Much is known about this in existing literature, but from Guha we get no substantial, forget fresh, insights.

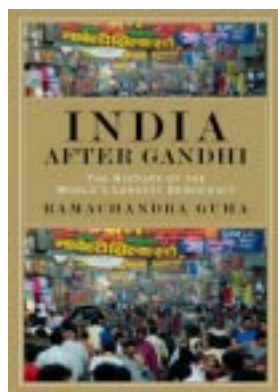
The same is true for the planning process: There is almost no analysis of its political economy, connections between its ideological dimensions and the political forces at play. Nothing other than what is well known: That in the nineteen fifties planning was all the

rage, not just in the Soviet Union, but on a larger, international scale. I could multiply instances: For example, there is no analytical structure to probe the dynamics of federalism, central unitarianism, the politics of linguistic identity, seen in the context of the state-building project. What we do get are descriptions of what happened. To be fair the narratives on all these issues are constructed in detail, often with an urgency that make them come alive, but that's it.

All this is part of an unwillingness to interrogate processes and categories: For instance, that of secularism—admitted as one of the founding principles in the code of the state. And there are areas in which the structure of the narrative does seem to be arbitrary and whimsical. I could go on. But to redress the balance, I must iterate that there are bits that cohere as analysis, especially the chapter that deals with the coming to power of the Janata government, in which the social configurations and reconfigurations that presaged and quickened under non-Congress regimes get some cogent treatment.

Guha's book actually comes into its own in the last section—after the fall of the Rajiv Gandhi government—which deals with the most immediately contemporary of times. Guha marks the shift in standpoint with the caveat that at this point "the book moves from 'history' to what may be called 'historically informed journalism'". The shift in gears is welcome. The treatment of agrarian social change and its manifestation in the political, social and state sphere is refreshingly insightful while dealing with both the rise of the other backward castes and dalit assertiveness; the political logic of coalition government; and the proximate causes and immediate triggers of the liberalisation regime and its implications. Narrative, context and analysis finally come together.

At the cost of sounding uncharitable, a final word would be pertinent. If the last section is lucid, extremely readable "historically inspired journalism", most of what precedes it is historiographically and analytically uninformed history. But then, perhaps Guha was aiming somewhere in the region of the lowest common denominator.



Reviews

South Asian Diaspora: Continuity and Change



Paromita Das Gupta

Paromita completed her Masters in History from the University of Calcutta. She is interested in the history of the Jews, who formed a small but significant diasporic community of Kolkata. While interacting with the Jews, the *jewishstorian* gets the privilege of enjoying cakes and cookies at Nahoum's confectionery in New Market! A passionate lover of music, she delves deep into Tagore's compositions. Her talent in Indian classical music has been honoured with the title of *Sangeet Visharad*.

Judith M. Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora*, Cambridge University Press, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 214, ISBN-10: 81-7596-383-2, Price: Rs. 295.

The book under review is a laudable attempt to create an integrated perspective on South Asian 'diaspora'. Judith Brown contextualises the transformations in South Asian overseas experience from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, within the globalised conditions in which people, displaced or otherwise, exist. *Global South Asians* contributes distinctively to the growing body of literature on 'modern' diasporas.

Brown aptly validates the title of her book in the prologue, in which she 'conveniently' refers to India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as South Asia on the basis of geographical location. She reflects on the South Asian migrants as "players in a global world, moved by global forces which reached down to the villages from which they came" (p. 3). Forsaking the archetypal notions of 'compulsion and victimisation' (p. 4) she "recognises the many reasons and contexts for migration, and emphasises the transnational nature of diasporic groups" (p. 4). She reads/writes of migration as a positive experience.

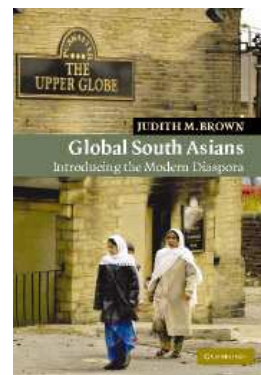
The opening chapter sets up the context for later discussions. It gives an overview of the long traditions, causes and conditions of migration, the background of emigrants, and the changing pattern of migration in terms of domestic and international changes.

The next chapter amplifies the different waves of migration beginning around 1830s, creating a diverse South Asian diaspora. The first was the movement of South Asians during the British Raj to several far-flung colonies such as Fiji, Trinidad (among whom were Naipaul's ancestors), and Natal in South Africa as indentured labour. Some also went to Malaya; others, seeking better economic opportunities, decided to emigrate to Singapore, Hong Kong, Uganda and Kenya. Thirdly, there was an 'unusual strand' of emigrants from India— the Sikhs, who as retired servicemen of the British Indian army, "found their way to the Pacific coast of America and Canada" (p. 38). The fourth wave constitutes the large scale migration of unskilled and skilled workers in the post World War period to different parts of the globe which "made the

South Asian diaspora truly global" (p. 39). Britain has a sizeable South Asian migrant community. Over two million people of South Asian descent live in Britain, forming four percent of the population. The last wave of migration occurred more recently, involving highly skilled professionals seeking white-collar jobs in places such as the Silicon Valley, earning fame and fortune in IT sector and in the field of medicine. In examining each wave of migration, Brown makes some pertinent observations about the 'twice-migrants'. Some communities— like the Gujaratis— moved within Gujarat, then to Africa, and finally to Britain and other parts of the world including the US, Canada and Australia. She makes the study more captivating by portraying the diversity in South Asian diaspora, echoing Fredrik Barth's observation, "Group categories— i.e. ethnic labels— will most often endure even when individual members move across boundaries or share an identity with people in more than one group." However, an interesting twist in the study is brought about by probing into the factors that hold the South Asians as a unit. Brown identifies a strong bond, among the emigrants, with their old homeland as well as a sense of belonging to their new homeland. Moreover, they are "conscious of being global people in a way that was impossible for indentured labourers in the nineteenth century" (p. 58).

The crux of Brown's work lies in the third chapter which sees South Asian diaspora as a consequence of economic risks and opportunities. Among the multifarious tasks that had to be undertaken by the emigrants was the search for a means of livelihood, in which the host economies played a crucial role. Among the South Asians, the Indian migrants have prospered the most, particularly those who came from East Africa. Pakistanis live in the industrially declining areas and have a large majority of skilled, manual workers while the Bangladeshis are mainly semi-skilled and unskilled workers. South Asians regularly feature on the lists of millionaires, but there are high levels of unemployment among the Pakistanis and the

Bangladeshis. The marked differences in the economic experiences of the three main groups of South Asians, the author concludes, are due to the different skills they brought with them. The early Indian migrants were generally from a relatively better-off rural background than Pakistani and the Bangladeshi migrants. Latter-day Indian migrants were educated professionals and the East African migrants who came from urban areas brought with them some capital or at least some trading and commercial skills.



Apart from the search for livelihood, the other major task facing a migrant is that of "constructing social networks [for a] comfortable individual and family life" (p. 74) and sustaining the "religious heritage" (p. 111) which often became a decisive factor in uniting or dividing the South Asian diaspora. In the last two chapters Brown discusses these issues. She addresses a variety of questions relating to the twin processes of acculturation to and assimilation with the new homeland as well as the migrants' orientation to their ancestral lands. The process of adaptation to the countries of destination involves ethnic and religious conflicts, hostilities in the public arena and the dilemma of 'national' identity vis a vis formal citizenship. "Ambiguity and tension" (p. 148) characterises the South Asian community residing abroad. However, countries like United States, which have a long historical experience of ethnic conflict between the blacks and the whites, offers wider scope of acceptability and upward mobility in

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contrast to United Kingdom which holds a "restrictive view of national identity" (p. 118). Changes in understanding of nationality are nonetheless visible in both the countries where '9/11' has instigated discrimination against the Sikh and Pakistani population. South Asians who are groomed in English culture and education, however, take pride in flaunting the Union Jack.

In defining the earlier cultural space as a homeland that has been left and in a continued, and often, re-awakened loyalty and attachment to them, the role of time is also of extreme importance. Myths of returning serve to strengthen ethnic solidarity particularly for first generation of migrants, but in many cases have little practical implications. Their descendants nurture the concept of their native land as a "myth of origin rather than a lived reality" (p. 150) and often look down upon their

original homeland. Most descendants of indentured labourers relate to the sub-continent with contempt and horror. Brown has established that South Asian diaspora has nevertheless been a positive experience with "an explosion in modern technologies of communication" (p. 169). Thus, for recent South Asian migrants the sub-continent remains a living reality. They maintain contact with their kin through electronic mail, their attachment to their culture is sustained by DVDs, print media (mostly in English), local Asian radio stations, thereby forming a 'pan-diaspora'. Of late the NRIs have taken keen interest in sending money back home, investing in different kinds of business activities and charities. Thus, the South Asians "have become 'global' in quite new ways..." (p. 170).

Brown has shown commendable effort in setting out the facts enriched with a plethora of anecdotal evidence.

Global South Asians is a well grounded work with detailed evidence culled from census reports and other primary sources.

However, the omission of Sri Lanka from the geographical unit of South Asia is puzzling, given the interesting issues relating to Tamil migration from India and Sri Lanka. Although Brown dealt with South Asian diaspora's reawakened interests in their original homelands, the question remains as to whether the migrants' new identity as 'South Asian' is relevant in their lands of origin, or do ethnic/national identities prevail. Thus *Global South Asians* is a view from the centre rather than the periphery.

Nevertheless, the book provides a comprehensive introductory account to a wide spectrum of students and scholars concerned with modern diaspora, sociology, social demography and anthropology.

¹ Kearney, 199

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On the Wrong Side of History



Sayantan Dasgupta

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Suparna Gooptu, *Cornelia Sorabji: India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer, A Biography*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 241, Rs. 495.

"Rule you now, you outsider, do justice among us. That you are brave and honest, we acknowledge. Fit are you to rule. We give you our loyalty—only, respect our religion, our prejudices." Thus did Cornelia Sorabji (1866-1954), the first woman to study law at Oxford and only the second Indian woman barrister, sum up her stance vis-à-vis British colonial rule over India in "English and Indian: A Study", published in *The Monthly Review*, in November, 1902. The article posits the author as a docile subject, accepting the notion of the White Man's Burden unquestioningly and taking at face value the claims of colonialism as an altruistic exercise undertaken by the coloniser as part of its attempts to discharge its moral obligation of civilising and enlightening its colonial subjects.

To a great extent, it was this stance of Cornelia Sorabji as an apologist for imperialism that led to her being banished to the margins by post-independence Indian historiography, argues Suparna Gooptu. It led almost instinctively to a summary dismissal of Sorabji as an 'imperial surrogate' without taking into account the contradictions that constituted her life and the contributions she made to the emancipation of Indian women. That is what Gooptu, who teaches History at the University of Calcutta, sets out to correct in her biography of Cornelia Sorabji.

The book examines the factors that led Sorabji to internalise the logic of colonialism, reconstructs her struggle to carve out her own professional space in a world that was not quite willing to accommodate women within its folds, narrates her campaign to secure the rights of the *pardanashins* (women who were supposed to live out their lives behind the veil) and highlights the contradictions in her character that led her, for instance, to unceasingly question the racial and gender discrimination she was subjected to by the British colonial machinery while at the same time continuing to be a vocal supporter of British rule over India and a staunch critic of Indian nationalist politics.

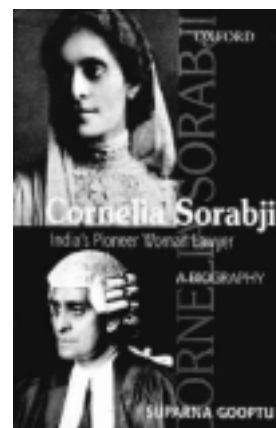
Cornelia Sorabji's father, Sorabji Kharsedji, was a Parsee who had

converted to Christianity, and her mother, a tribal Toda girl, who had been adopted by a Colonel Sir Francis and Lady Ford. The persecution Kharsedji faced from his community on his conversion to Christianity pushed the family further towards embracing British cultural mores. Cornelia thus grew up with an admiration for the British Raj. The family's ostracisation also meant that she was dependent on and had to actively cultivate a network of British friends and acquaintances who would later support her in her struggle.

Cornelia was born in Nasik and graduated from Poona in 1887 with a first class; her results qualified her for a scholarship to an English university, but she was denied that opportunity because she was a woman. It was finally at the initiative of Lord and Lady Hobhouse that a fund was mobilised to enable Sorabji to study in England, Gooptu explains. She started studying literature at Somerville College, but soon moved on to study for a Bachelor of Civil Law. This was a time when Oxford was yet to allow women to be admitted to formal degrees; her right to practice, too, was uncertain as the legal profession was still a male preserve. But Sorabji refused to be discouraged by any of these factors; she became the first woman to study for a BCL at Oxford, "which constitutes a major landmark in the history of women's entry into higher education."

Her stint at Oxford, in spite of the fact that it was not without its share of discrimination and disappointment, provided Sorabji with invaluable social and cultural exposure and helped her form a network that she would bank upon for many years. Yet there was another side to this exposure, Gooptu warns us— "the patronage that Cornelia received at Oxford was largely because of Oxford's many-sided involvement with the sustenance of the Empire... in fact, Cornelia was groomed to serve the Empire." It was this grooming, this dependence and this sense of debt that perhaps explains her failure to develop a critique of the empire in spite of experiencing gender and racial discrimination herself during her

career in the colonial bureaucracy, the author suggests. Thus, she remained, right till the end, "astonishingly blind to the economic critique of colonialism that was developing in India by the end of the nineteenth century"; she could only approve of moderate politics as long as it did not question the legitimacy of the Raj. Thus, she ended up justifying the repressive Vernacular Press Act, attacking Gandhi, arguing for a depoliticised and sanitised version of social reform, and speaking out in favour of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, a book full of racist undertones.



Cornelia Sorabji's story, as presented here, is the story of a lonely woman condemned to oblivion by her misguided political convictions. It is the rootlessness of this character that comes out again and again in this narrative— she struggles for acceptance all through her life, yet faces a lonely death, still belonging on neither side. The second section of this book is particularly poignant and offers a telling testimony to the difficulties pioneering professional women had to face as they tried to forge their way into territory previously untrod. This section, "In Colonial Professions", details how Sorabji had to fight every inch of her way to get the right to practice, to secure the rights of the *pardanashins* who were her wards, to earn for herself the financial and official privileges that should have been hers by right, and even to simply use the Bar library. Every time she moves into a new area, she has to start from scratch— when she returns

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to India from Oxford, she has to lobby hard for the creation of a post of lady legal advisor to the court of wards, one which finally allows her to work with the *purdanashins* and help them attain a modicum of independence. Again, when she finally manages to enter the Calcutta High Court after retiring from service, she has to first

wage a war for enrolment, then accept a set of humiliating restrictions, and face substantial professional bias as a pioneering woman in a traditionally male profession.

Cornelia Sorabji: India's Pioneer Woman Lawyer is supplemented by several useful appendices and makes extensive use of manuscripts from the

India Office Records, London, as well as of the Richard Sorabji Collection, including letters, diaries and articles of Cornelia Sorabji. It is one of those rather rare specimens of painstaking primary research written out in clear and attractive language and steering clear of unwarranted jargon and 'academese'.