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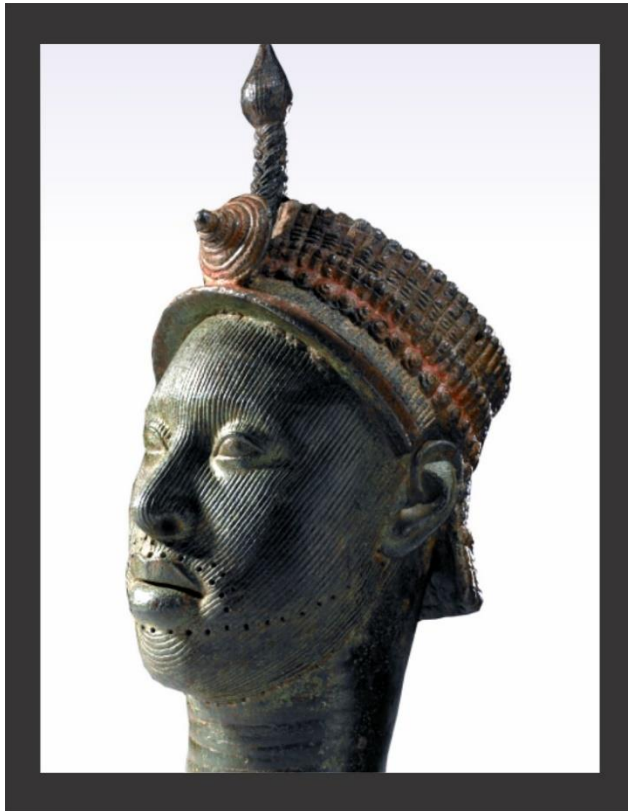
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## Contributions

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The Editor invites scholarly articles from researchers in Africa and beyond. Articles should represent original contributions to knowledge and have a bias for the application of historical methodology. The principal regional focus is Africa, but the Editor welcomes contributions on other areas, especially those based on comparative third world experiences.

Manuscripts should be typed double-spaced and submitted in duplicate, with notes and references consistent with the Chicago Manual of styles (14th Edition). Recommended maximum length of each article is 6,000 words including notes and references. All articles and book reviews should be addressed to:

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## **European Butter on African Bread: Post-Second World War Industrialisation Process in Western Nigeria, 1945–1965**

*Olusegun Olakunle Olaniyi and Oladunni Owolabi*

### **Abstract**

The end of the Second World War reshaped agitations for self-determination and industrialisation in most British dependencies. Calls for the industrialisation of these colonies which had begun since the advent of the Second World War reached its peak after the War. This, consequently, led to efforts towards industrial development by both the state and non-state actors in Western Nigeria. This study, therefore, examined the efforts geared towards the industrialisation of the Region immediately after the Second World War. Using both primary and secondary data, the study argued that due to various factors, such as the lack of technology and technical know-how, and inadequate capital, among others, the manufacturing industries established from that period up to 1965 still remained largely dominated by foreign companies while the indigenous companies were mostly predominant in trade and other ancillary services including serving as agents for these foreign-owned manufacturing concerns. This is in spite of efforts at the Nigerianisation of industrialisation by the government of Western Nigeria.

**Keywords:** European, African, butter, bread, post-Second World War, industrialisation

### **Introduction**

After the Second World War, the various agitations in most British dependencies, Nigeria inclusive, made it clear and imperative that the issue of industrialisation in the country and Western Nigeria, in particular, could no longer be ignored. It became an issue of “how and not when”. Furthermore, the agitations for a federal system that would ensure that each region developed at its own pace had reached a crescendo. Hence, the events of the Second World War with its attendant agitations made industrialisation in Western Nigeria a

major issue. Also, the introduction of the Macpherson Constitution which prepared the ground for each region becoming internally self-governing and the subsequent Lyttleton Constitution which introduced federalism ensured that each region enacted its own development plans.

Therefore, it came as no surprise that, immediately after the Second World War, the government of Western Nigeria began to take steps towards ensuring the development of the manufacturing sector. This was done with the provision of an enabling environment and infrastructural facilities that would complement the efforts of the non-state actors and ensure that industrialisation thrived. The period under consideration was one of active collaborations between the state and non-state actors in the area of industrial development in Western Nigeria. The level of participation by various actors in the industrial development of Western Nigeria immediately after the Second World War forms the fulcrum of this paper.

### **Industrialisation in the Immediate Post-Second World War Period**

In 1946, immediately after the Second World War, the Ten-Year Development Plan was launched in Nigeria with the aim of kick-starting the colony's developmental agenda by the colonial government. However, the plan as put forward lacked basic indices that would engender full industrialisation and development. The plan was a mere statement of what was expected to happen and not a concise plan of how to go about the development.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the considerable reduction of metropolitan control in the plan, strictly speaking, it was still a centralised plan as its formulation was handled by a Central Development Board which comprised senior colonial government officials.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, the plan made it clear that there were no intentions for industrial development of the region in spite of various rhetorics on development contained in the ten-year plan. It was stated specifically in the plan thus:

It is not assumed, however, that Nigeria will become an industrial country as with its large population and area, a great deal of its future must rest on agricultural development in its widest sense and the improvement of village industries.<sup>3</sup>

This position was further dictated by the global circumstances, especially the blockage of the high seas by Germany during the Second World War, which prevented the importation of European manufactures: hence, the need to promote import substitution industrialisation in colonies rather than promoting real industrialisation. It became obvious, therefore, that the plan was drawn up to concentrate on agricultural production and the development of the agricultural sector as well as provision of welfare services without any plan for large-scale industrialisation of the country.

Also, the duration of the plan was another bone of contention as it was seen as a plan whose lifespan of ten years made its implementation unrealistic. For one, the duration of ten years to most observers was too long to plan. Data upon which such planning was based kept changing all the time and it was impossible to foresee exactly the requirement of a territory like Nigeria over a period so long.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the ten-year plan which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1946 and which was expected to last till 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1956 could not continue further as it was later revised and cut into two. The first part was to run between 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1946 and 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1951, while the second part was to run from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 1951 to 31<sup>st</sup> March, 1956.

By 1949, agitations had reached a high point for industrialisation which climaxed by 1951. Hence, it had become obvious that there was no alternative to industrialisation as a tool for development in Western Nigeria and every other parts of Nigeria. Starting from 1949, the Western Nigerian Government had started showing interest in industrialising the region, and this became more conspicuous with the ascendancy of Chief Awolowo as the Premier of the Western Region in 1954. Several boards, corporations, and agencies were created to drive the industrial agenda of the region. These included the Western Region Finance Corporation, Western Nigeria Development Corporation, and the Western Region Marketing Board, among many other agencies. The Western Nigerian Government's efforts through these corporations and boards as well as the cooperation of other indigenous participants and non-state actors helped the region attain anything that had a semblance of industrialisation and modernisation in the 1950s. Agitations towards indigenous investment by a faction of Nigerian politicians notwithstanding, some of whom had started taking active part in the governance of the country as a result of the introduction of responsible government in 1951, there was still reluctance on the part of the indigenous entrepreneurs to forsake trade for industries.<sup>5</sup> This was as a result of

the belief that the rewards were less certain and smaller due to low turnover rates.

Sklar opined that the colonial government had earlier attempted to institutionalise Nigeria in the economy and industrial sectors with the establishment of marketing boards to ensure the transfer and marketing of Nigerian export crops to indigenous Nigerians.<sup>6</sup> According to him, the first to be established was the Cocoa marketing board in 1947, closely followed in 1949 by three other marketing boards for oil palm produce, groundnuts and cotton.<sup>7</sup> However, the idea of marketing boards was not meant to institutionalise Nigeria, rather to ensure colonial exploitation of Nigerian agricultural produce as the European companies continued to determine the prices to be paid on the agricultural produce.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, this effort failed to achieve the desired results of transferring the control of the export trade to Nigerians with its highest impact being “increasing the number of Nigerian licensed buying agents of the produce board or middlemen in the distributive trade of the board’s products.”<sup>9</sup> The implication was that rather than engender proper industrialisation, the efforts succeeded in increasing the number of Nigerians who were engaged in the export trade business and serving as distributive agents to the foreign-owned companies.

It should also be noted that in order to engender rapid industrialisation of the country, there had been agitations for the establishment of industrial estates similar to what was in existence in the greatest industrialised cities of the world in the United States and Great Britain. This agitation was led by the educated elites who had studied abroad and had returned to the country and the ex-servicemen who had served in the Second World War.<sup>10</sup> These set of people had seen the importance of industrial estates as major drivers of industrialisation, hence, their agitations from the early 1950s for the creation of industrial estates.

Consequent upon these agitations, the Lagos Executive Development Board (LEDB) which had been established by the Federal Government since 1928 to set up and manage municipal areas of Lagos was then mandated to ensure that the hundreds of hectares of lands that were reserved in Ijora and Apapa areas of Lagos were utilised for the purpose of establishing industrial estates.<sup>11</sup> Hence, on these lands, the first sets of industrial estates were built in 1951.<sup>12</sup> The Federal Government, in furtherance of its ambition to see to the rapid industrialisation of the country, implemented other policies to ensure that the urban centres of

the country were properly industrialised. One of such policies was the creation of the Ministry of Land and Housing which, upon creation, was saddled with the responsibility of appropriating land to accommodate industrial estate expansion.<sup>13</sup> Thus, by 1953 the Ministry had succeeded in securing other lands in Yaba area of Lagos upon which the second set of industrial estates were built in 1958.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, in Western Nigeria, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had become the leader of Government Business in 1951. The Western Nigeria industrial policy and strategy from around 1951 was informed by the outlook and thoughts of Chief Obafemi Awolowo. His idea and outlook as far as industrialisation was concerned was based on the two notions of “rationalisation and Nigerianisation”.<sup>15</sup> To him, rationalisation involved studying and identifying efficient, less efficient, inefficient and sub-marginal firms in each industry enterprise from which the higher optimum size required for a firm in each industrial enterprise will be determined and endorsed to enable such firm enjoy advantages of economies of scale, while the less efficient, the inefficient and the sub-marginal firms will have to be shut down and their interest transferred to the most efficient ones.<sup>16</sup>

Nigerianisation, on the other hand, involves economic self-reliance, self-sufficiency, or voluntary interdependence, not only in material goods supply but also in the provision of qualified, competent, and disciplined manpower at all levels and in all spheres of human endeavours.<sup>17</sup> The belief was that immediate rationalisation of some categories of industries would eliminate waste which may arise as a result of unnecessary duplication of efforts as well as selfish and cut-throat competition among the productive agents in certain industries and enterprises, while Nigerianisation will give Nigerians more opportunities in the management and control of all productive activities in the country. These ideas and ideals were well espoused in the manifestoes of *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, a Yoruba socio-cultural organisation that metamorphosed into Action Group (AG), the party that eventually formed the government in Western Region after the attainment of self-government on October 1, 1954.<sup>18</sup>

In order to encourage foreign investment in the economy, the Central Government, from 1952, began to implement some incentives to encourage the participation of foreign businessmen. One of these was the Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance No. 10 of 1952 which sought to declare as pioneer industry any public limited company registered in Nigeria and which satisfied



the provision of the Ordinance. Such a pioneer industry would be granted certificate which entitled such a company to certain reliefs from income tax subject to observance of conditions contained in the certificate.<sup>19</sup> For instance, in September 1955, a Nigerian public company was formed under the name of Kaduna Textiles Limited and was immediately granted the benefits of pioneer status under the Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance.<sup>20</sup> The ordinance was enacted to encourage the rise and development of companies that were considered as being important to Nigeria and which were in Nigeria's interest to assist.<sup>21</sup>

In 1957, new inducements aimed at achieving rapid industrialisation were embarked upon through the enactment of the Industrial Development Ordinance (Import Duties Relief) which authorised the payment of part or all of any duty paid on imported raw, semi-processed or processed materials used in manufacturing or processing goods.<sup>22</sup> This ensured that the Federal Government bore the whole cost of the concession.<sup>23</sup> With this concession, many industrial enterprises in Nigeria imported raw materials at low costs and maximised profits which increased industrial production. There was also the income tax amendment ordinance of 1958 which gave tax reliefs and tax holidays to both private and public companies so they could maximise profits for further re-investment in industry.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile, upon becoming the leader of Government Business in Western Region in 1951, Chief Obafemi Awolowo had opposed the 1952 Aid to Pioneer Industry Ordinance on the condition that it would be more beneficial to foreign investors. According to him, the ordinance was an open invitation to foreigners to come into the country to exploit the country's resources which, of course, was not in the country's best interest.<sup>25</sup> It was obvious that this arrangement favoured the already existing multinational companies over the indigenous people and it was a way of relegating and undermining the capabilities of the Nigerian entrepreneurs.

Chief Awolowo, in his argument, believed that the ordinance had the potential of leading to dire consequences for the indigenous entrepreneurs.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, he believed it would encourage rural-urban migration which in the end would have consequences on agricultural production. Also, it would encourage exploitation of the illiterates both by the bourgeoisie class and dubious trade union leaders who were likely to emerge due to issues that may arise around these factories. In addition, it would lead to an influx of Europeans into the country on the excuse that they came to supply skilled workmanship that was not available in the country and, finally, after making as much profit

as they could, perhaps, within five years, the foreign companies may start misbehaving in as much as they have converted their assets to fluid assets.<sup>27</sup>

However, with the granting of internal self-rule in 1954, the onus fell on the regional governments to continue with the developmental agenda begun by the Federal Government. This was because the ten-year plan of development, which had earlier been cut into two (1946–1951 and 1951–1956) due to its unrealistic nature, would no longer be needed because of the new Lyttleton Constitution of 1954 which introduced Federalism and gave each region autonomy in its affairs. Hence, the Western Nigerian Government embarked on its own developmental agenda by drawing up the first Western Region Development Plan which was to run from 1955 to 1960. This particularly arose from the suggestion by the Secretary of State for the colonies and agreed upon by all concerned that the next planning period should be from 1st April, 1955 to 1st March, 1960, meaning that there would be an overlap of one year between the old ten-year plan and the new Western Region plan in order to avoid confusion that may arise from the concurrent operation of two plans.<sup>28</sup>

The agreement did not, however, imply the termination of the programmes and schemes under the old plan but rather that their implementation should continue without a break; hence, these uncompleted schemes would form part of the development programmes for 1955 to 1960.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, it became clear that what actually occurred was the transfer of projects and programmes from the old plan and not a total abandonment of the old plan. With this continuity, the programmes and schemes in the ten-year plan were achieved. In formulating the economic programmes contained in the plan, the Western Nigerian Government received valuable advice from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's mission, as well as Professor W. Arthur Lewis of Manchester University and the Economic Planning Committee of the Government which was established as a result of the International Bank Mission's recommendation. The committee was responsible for analysing the proposal put forward by the Ministries and collating them into a coherent plan for the Council's consideration.<sup>30</sup>

The above shows the Region's level of dependence on foreign assistance in drawing up the plan which was made possible as a result of the modernisation and opening up of the economy. This became more evident even in the execution of the plan as the Region depended on foreign capital, foreign advice, and even implemented the foreign recommendation of the International Bank

for Reconstruction and Development for the setting up of the Economic Planning Committee to analyse the proposals presented by the various Ministries. However, this dependence on international advice and direction against the principles of the Leader of the Government and against the manifestoes of the party in power is understandable if one considers the need of the Region with regard to manpower development. Hence, by the time the development plan was formulated, the core basis of the plan was manpower development. However, this over-reliance on foreign assistance in drawing up and implementing the development plan contradicts Odey's theory which stated that for an economy to attain development, the core strategy should be based on Autochthonous Development of Industries (AD) which emphasises the use of indigenous technology, capital, raw materials, and managerial or entrepreneurial skills.<sup>31</sup> Nonetheless, the stage at which the economy of Western Nigeria was operating at the time would make it impossible for autochthonous development as advocated by Odey to be realistic.

Therefore, with this in mind and given the neglect of the previous decade, it came as no surprise that the new Western Region Development Plan, 1955–1960, from its avowed four principles focused more on manpower development. The four principles of the plan were: expansion of the education and health services, strengthening the productive capacity of the Region, ensuring that the level of government's recurrent expenditure is kept to the barest minimum, and increase in the use of community development spirit as a medium of fostering economic progress.<sup>32</sup>

### **Indigenous and Foreign Private Enterprises in Western Nigeria, 1955–1965**

Prior to the passing of the Aid to Pioneer Industries Ordinance in 1952, there were conflicting reports about the number of manufacturing industries operating in Nigeria. This is understandable because prior to this period, there were no reliable statistics or register of manufacturing plants operating in Nigeria. While Dr J. Mars opined that in 1936, there were seven small plants operating and producing miscellaneous items such as aerated waters and timber,<sup>33</sup> Dr P. N. C. Okigbo, then Economic adviser to the Federal Government, posited that there existed only five industrial establishments in Nigeria.<sup>34</sup> However, by end of 1965, before the collapse of the First Republic, statistics showed that 1,016 manufacturing industries existed in Nigeria and out of these, 598, representing 60 per cent of the total industries, were stationed in

the old Western Nigeria including the Federal Territory before the separation of the Mid-West from the Region in 1963.<sup>35</sup> See Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Regional Distribution of Industries in Nigeria as at 1965**

Region	Number of Industries	Percentage of Industries (%)
Federal Territory	352	35
Western Region	170	17
Mid-West	76	8
Eastern Region	256	25
Northern Region	162	15
Total	1,016	100

*Source: Collated From the Industrial Directory, 1965, Federal Ministry of Information (Lagos: Government Printers, 1965) Cited in O.N. Green, Foreign Private Investment in Nigerian Manufacturing, Ph.D Thesis, University of London, 1967, p.110*

Out of these manufacturing plants in Western Nigeria, a substantial number of them were foreign-owned industries; however, due to the dearth of information and data at the time, it is difficult to ascertain the actual number of foreign or indigenous manufacturing plants existing in the Region up to 1965. However, if the paid-up capital and reserve injected into the industrial sector are considered, it can be safely concluded that the foreign companies were predominant in the industrial sector of the Region. This is explained with the aid of Table 2.

**Table 2: Paid-Up Capital and Reserves of Some Manufacturing Plants in Western Nigeria, 1963**

ISIC	Industrial Sector	Number of Establishment	Total	Foreign	% of Total	Indigenous		Total	% of Total
						Public	Private		
201-220	Food, Beverages & Tobacco	11	6865	6284	91.5	546	35	581	8.5
231-244	Textile & Wearing Apparel & Footwear	9	661	498	75.3	131	33	164	24.7
251-280	Timber, Wood & Paper Products	15	1867	357	19.1	372	1138	1510	80.9

	Printing & Furniture								
291-300	Leather & Leather Products, Rubber & Rubber Products except Footwear	4	1527	1075	70.4	375	77	452	29.6
311-321	Chemicals, Oils, Paints and Petroleum Products	4	504	474	94.0	30	-	30	6.0
331-339	Clay, Glass & Cement Products	5	2299	961	41.8	658	680	1338	58.2
341-350	Metal Products Except Transport & Machinery Equipment	10	1059	939	88.7	85	35	120	11.3
360-385	Machinery and Transport Equipment	4	1645	385	23.4	1260	-	1260	76.6
386-391	Miscellaneous Products	3	71	36	50.7	33	3	36	50.0
	TOTAL	65	16498	11009	66.7	3490	2001	5491	33.3

**Source:** Western Nigeria Ministry of Economic Planning, *Reports on the Survey of Industries in Western Nigeria*, (Ibadan: Government Printers, 1965), p.10. Data Supplied by the Development Agenda for Western Nigeria (DAWN) Commission, Cocoa House, Ibadan

Apparently, the foreign companies had the highest paid-up capital and reserves within the industries in Nigeria in the period under discussion. From the table above, it can be seen that the industrial sector was dominated by foreign firms during this period with the foreign firms having the highest paid-up capital in the period under discussion. These include industries such as Food, Beverages and Tobacco (91.5%), Textile and Wearing Apparels and Footwear (75.3%), Leather and Leather Products, Rubber and Rubber Products except footwear (70.4%), Chemicals, Oils, Paints and Petroleum Products (94.0%) as against 8.5%, 24.7%, 29.6%, 6.0%, respectively, for both public and private indigenous firms combined. The only areas where the indigenous companies made good showing were Machinery and Transport Equipment (76.6%) as against 23.4% for foreign companies and Timber, Wood and Paper Products Printing and Furniture (80.9%) as against 19.1% for foreign companies. The margin was slightly tilted in favour of indigenous companies in Clay, Glass and Cement

Products where the indigenous firms recorded 58.2% participation as against 41.9% for foreign companies.

Also, with the exception of Chief Timothy Adeola Odutola, the *Ogbeni Oja* of Ijebu-Ode who established a factory manufacturing bicycle tyres and tubes and this was even after 1965 (precisely in 1967),<sup>36</sup> other prominent businessmen in the Region were majorly involved in the trading business and serving as agents of foreign-owned companies such as John Holt, the United African Company (UAC), among many others. For instance, Chief Henry Oloyede Fajemirokun who established the Henry-Stephens company in 1955 after quitting his position at the Post and Telegraph Department as a Clerk the same year started his business by exporting cattle bones, then hides and skin, cocoa, rubber, coffee and shea nuts while at the same time importing cement.<sup>37</sup> It was not until 1962 that he started a maritime services firm and by 1960, his company had become the largest importer of cement from Egypt and Poland.<sup>38</sup> Sir, Mobolaji Bank Anthony, a.k.a. "The Black Englishman", started by importing cuckoo clocks and marble statues but later, diversified into airline and transportation businesses.<sup>39</sup> Chief S.L. Edu operated a fleet of tankers used in transporting crude oil, while Bayo Braithwaite founded the African Alliance Insurance Company which specialised in writing life insurance for Nigerians which the British underwriters at the time avoided like a plague.<sup>40</sup> Chief Saliu Bolaji Bakare operated the largest stevedore business in Nigeria in the 1960s which specialised in providing staffing services to Nigerian Railways, he later diversified into the shipping business by acquiring some of the assets of William Hamilton Biney.<sup>41</sup>

The story was not limited to Western Nigeria, the situation was the same throughout Nigeria in that earlier period of development as many Nigerian businessmen were not so much interested in the manufacturing industry but engaged more in trading and other ancillary services. Businessmen such as Sir Louis Odumegwu Ojukwu started off by importing dried fish for resale to the non-fishing Nigerians before deciding to ship the fish inland himself rather than leave the job to others. He later went into the transport business by amassing Nigeria's largest fleet trucks known as mammy wagon that carried Nigerians, market women inclusive, from place to place. Alhaji Sanusi Dantata specialised in buying and shipping much of the rich Kano region's peanut crop to the extent that Dantata's agent by 1964 bought 84,000 tons of peanuts from small farmers and paid with traditional handfuls of coins counted out in village squares.<sup>42</sup> Few of these businessmen who were into production in this early period were

involved in producing majorly edible products. For instance, Ade Tuoyo established a bakery under the name De Facto Works through which he owned four shops and made 115 products.<sup>43</sup>

Whereas the indigenous business concerns dominated the trading, import-export, and services sectors of the economy in Western Nigeria, the manufacturing sector was dominated by the foreign companies and the transnational corporations (TNCs). In 1951, Leventis Group, a company which had been in existence in Nigeria earlier, acquired the franchise to begin the bottling of Coca-Cola in Nigeria, and in 1953, it began production at the basement facility of the Leventis Group.<sup>44</sup> Other products produced by the company included Fanta, Sprite, Schweppes, Ginger Ale, Limca, Krest, Parle Soda, and Five Alive.<sup>45</sup> The Nigerian Breweries, manufacturer of Star Lager Beer, Gulder, and other beer products whose establishment had earlier been proposed by Frank Samuel of U.A.C before the Second World War, eventually took off in 1949 following its incorporation on 16<sup>th</sup> November, 1946 after entering into a technical agreement with Heineken with headquarters at Iganmu in Lagos.<sup>46</sup> At inception, Heineken Brouwerijen B.V., due to his experience in beer brewing, acquired 37.73 per cent equity share in the company, Distilled Trading International BV got 16.36 per cent, Stanbic Nominees Nigeria Limited acquired 15.53 per cent, while the remaining 30.38 per cent equity shares in the company was acquired by other companies such as John Holt, GBO, SCOA, CFAO, UTC, and other individuals brought into the project.<sup>47</sup> In all these acquisitions, none of the indigenous companies operating in Nigeria at the time participated; the foreign companies among themselves acquired the shares of the new company which happened at the time to be the first beer brewing industry in Nigeria. Same goes for other manufacturing concerns in the country at the time and in Western Nigeria in particular.

A lot of reasons have been adduced for this lack of interest in manufacturing industries by the indigenous businessmen in Western Nigeria. One of them is the dearth of investment species or capital. Majority of these businessmen started their businesses with minimal capital and mostly from personal savings, meagre loans from family members, or loan from individuals, with no form of loan facilities from banks operating in Nigeria or in London at the time given that many of these banks were controlled by foreigners who preferred to give loans to foreign businessmen. For instance, the *Ogbeni Oja*, Chief Adeola Odutola, started his business of buying and selling stock fish and damask from

the little savings he had after resigning from his position as a court clerk in the colonial service in 1932 at a young age of 30 years.<sup>48</sup> However, from this little beginning, he succeeded in creating a multi-million dollar conglomerate which included a 5,000 acre plantation, a cattle ranch, a sawmill and an exporting business before the end of colonial rule in 1960.<sup>49</sup> He also remained one of the few indigenous entrepreneurs as at then who delved into manufacturing when he established a business to produce bicycle tyres and before 1960, he had added a 1.7 million dollar plan to harvest his own rubber from his 5,000 acre plantation.<sup>50</sup> By this singular effort, he became the first president of the Manufacturers Association of Nigeria (MAN).<sup>51</sup>

Chief S. B. Bakare started his business with just £41 after quitting the army which he had joined in 1940 during the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>52</sup> Chief Henry Oloyede Fajemirokun started his business in 1955 from a loan he received from a maternal relative after resigning from his position at the Post and Telegraph Department which he had joined after quitting the army at the end of the Second World War.<sup>53</sup> Hence, it came as no surprise that many of these businessmen with minimal capital at their disposal were reluctant to go into the manufacturing industry which would tie down their capital but rather preferred to engage in trading which yielded a higher turnover and which eventually ensured that they recouped their capital investments early enough, including the profits.<sup>54</sup>

The indigenous businessmen at the time under consideration, from the end of the Second World War up to 1960 when the country gained independence and the first development plan of the Region was to end its course, were few and far in between. However, one thing common to these indigenous businessmen was that they all started very small and with those meagre amounts of capital, it would have been unwise to delve into manufacturing which would tie down capital. Rather, it was advisable and more profitable to go into businesses such as trading, import-export, and transportation among others that would yield higher turnover quickly. Furthermore, there was also the belief by these indigenous entrepreneurs just like their predecessors of the pre-colonial era that they could be involved in the import-export business of the era without clashing with the foreign business concerns that were already entrenched in these businesses. They held the belief that they and their one-time colonial masters need never clash. In the words of Adeola Odutola, "The time is coming when we will produce more than we can consume and we will have to look outside Nigeria for market."<sup>55</sup> Consequently, the indigenous entrepreneurs preferred to



seek joint ventures in Europe and the U.S. rather than promote the growth and development of the indigenous manufacturing concerns in the country.

There was also the lack of technology and technical know-how on the part of the indigenous businessmen in running and operating many of these manufacturing concerns. In fact, many of the businesses also had to partner with businesses that had expertise in a particular manufacturing space at the time to be successful in manufacturing such products. For instance, the United African Company (UAC), a foreign company that did not have history of beer making, had to enter into a technical agreement with Heineken which was a major producer of beer in Europe before the Nigerian Brewery was established.<sup>56</sup> Before then, market leaders in the brewing industry in Nigeria were mainly imported brands with the absence of locally manufactured beer. The implication was that many of the manufacturing companies at the time had to go into partnership with leading manufacturing companies, majorly foreign-based companies, in order to be successful in that field. Therefore, the inability to surmount these problems imposed by the overdependence of the economy on Western and European capital, technology, and technical know-how, including entrepreneurial dependence, ensured that majority of the indigenous non-state actor businesses were involved in import and export businesses and served as agents to the foreign-owned manufacturing companies while the foreign-owned companies were involved in the manufacturing sector.

The cumulative effect of all these was that between 1955 when the Region commenced its development agenda up to the period of independence in 1960, there was preponderance of foreign non-state actors in the manufacturing sector while the indigenous non-state actors were mostly found in the trading, import-export, transportation industries, and other ancillary services as can be seen in the table below which shows few of the companies in Nigeria up to the period of independence in 1960. The table shows from the few firms analysed that the manufacturing sector during this period was dominated by foreign business concerns while the indigenous businesses were more predominant in the trading, import-export business and services such as transportation, shipping, haulage, and insurance, among others.

**Table 3: List of Some Companies in Western Nigeria Up to 1960**

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Promoter</b>	<b>Name of Company</b>	<b>Year of Est.</b>	<b>Nature of Business</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>1</b>	Lever Brothers	West African Soap Company	1924	Soap making	Apapa
<b>2</b>	Adeola Odutola	Odutola Bros.	1932	Trading	Ijebu-Ode
<b>3</b>	J.B. Duke	British America Tobacco Company	1936	.Cigarette	Ibadan
<b>4</b>	UAC & J. Holt	Tanneries	1949	Leather Shoe	Lagos
<b>5</b>	UAC	Nigerian Breweries	1949	Beer Brewing	Iganmu
<b>6</b>	UAC	African Timber & Plywood Company	1949	Furniture making	Lagos
<b>7</b>	H. Fajemirokun	Henry Stephens	1955	Import-Export	Lagos
<b>8</b>	B. Braithwaite	African Alliance Insurance Company	1955	Insurance	Lagos
<b>9</b>	Ade Tuyo	De Facto Works	1955	Bakery	Lagos
<b>10</b>	S.B. Bakare	William Hamilton Biney	1960	Stevedore & Shipping	Apapa
<b>11</b>	M. Bank-Anthony	M.de Banks Brothers	1960	Import, Export	Lagos

**Source:** Information Collated from Various Primary and Secondary Sources

Table 3 shows that the companies established during this period by indigenous businessmen were majorly into trading, import-export, and other ancillary businesses indicating the preponderance of these indigenous business concerns in businesses apart from the manufacturing sector, thereby leaving the manufacturing sectors to be dominated by foreign businesses.

## **Conclusion**

Although the Second World War was a major determinant of industrial drive in most British dependencies, the nature of industries established by the colonial government during this period was what could be referred to as cottage industries, generally known as peasant proprietors. However, the end of the War reshaped greatly industrial drives in many of these dependencies, Nigeria inclusive, most importantly with the enactment of the ten-year development plan in Nigeria and the granting of internal self-rule to the regions. This engendered industrial drive in most British dependencies, most precisely in Western Nigeria. However, in spite of these developmental efforts by the Western Regional government, the manufacturing sector still remained largely in the hands of foreigners, with indigenous entrepreneurs dominating only the trade and the ancillary sectors.

## **Endnotes**

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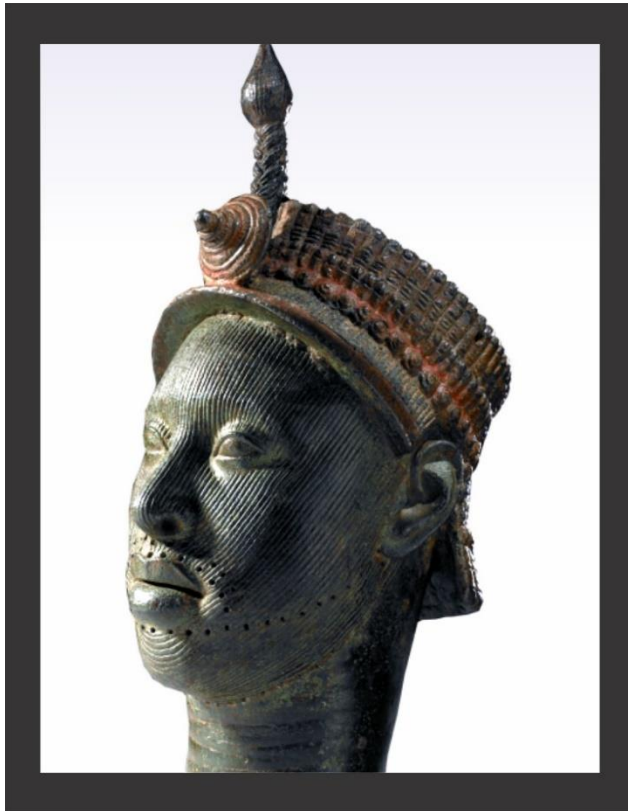
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## **Historicising the Colonial Transport System and Grain Crop Production in Ondo Province of Southwestern Nigeria, 1920-1960**

**R. Olusola Adu-Peters**

### **Abstract**

Transportation remains the lifeline of any economy and the earliest means of transportation in Ondo Province was human portage. Porters bore transportable items on heads or hands to any purposed destinations. Human portage was the primordial means from which the agrarian communities of Ondo Province transformed to the subsequent stages of innovative and productive development. Colonial transport system in Nigeria was purported at prompt evacuation of cash crops from the various farmsteads of Ondo Province to Lagos sea-ports for shipment to Europe. Traditional agriculture which was primarily based on food crop production gave way to increased production of cash crops that served as raw materials for Europeans' manufacturing industries. Thus, there was high increase in capital acquisition and sustenance of infrastructure. The few available wheel transporters diverted the limited available services to feeding the cash crop producing farmers to the neglect of food crop production. Good roads were constructed and networked to connect the cash crop farms while food crop farms were abandoned by the colonial agricultural managers and the wheel transporters. Consequently, there was a permanent disorientation of food crop farmers within the colonial Ondo Province as capital economy replaced communal practice of food crop production. This study relied on archival data and oral interview with purposively selected 100 indigenous farmers in the study area from age 50 and above. Data collected were interpreted from historical perspective. The study, therefore, concluded that the colonial transport system in the agrarian Ondo Province of Southwestern Nigeria was a great threat to the production and sustenance of food crops production. In order to salvage the failing pattern of indigenous food production, the traditional knowledge and practice of farming are required. Thus, individuals and government should begin to adjust to the use of traditional method of agriculture. This is borne out of the fact that infrastructural development such as good roads and railway lines were



orchestrated to enhance exotic farming and crops at the expense of food crop production.

**Keywords:** Historicising, colonial transport system, cash crops, food-crops, Ondo Province.

## **Introduction**

Ondo Province was created in 1915 by Sir Lord Lugard.<sup>1</sup> The Province was initially made up of four major Divisions known as Ondo Division, Owo Division, Okitipupa Division, Ekiti Division and later, Akoko Division in 1919 when it officially became a District under Owo Division.<sup>2</sup> Means of transportation in colonial agriculture Ondo Province sidetracked the development of grain crops to the promotion of cash crops. Transportation was inevitable to any economy and human portage was the earliest means of transportation in traditional societies, including precolonial Ondo Province. Transportable items were moved from one location to the other by individuals for a particular purpose or the other.<sup>3</sup> Human portage was the primordial means from which the farming communities of Ondo Province transformed to the subsequent stages of innovative and productive developments, up to colonial and postcolonial periods.<sup>4</sup> However, transportation as a factor in this study has been extensively discussed by various scholars, ranging from Olukoju, Mallon, Olanrewaju, Falola, Olubomeshin to Oloidi. Vital issues relating to precolonial, colonial and postcolonial transport system in Western Nigeria were given maximum attention. The position of the authors substantiated the fact that roads and railway transport systems were directed at economic innovations in support of government policies to sidetrack rural development.<sup>5</sup> In the light of the above, this study focused on Ondo Province and grain crop production. This study was able to identify unaddressed wide gap between colonial transport system and grain crop production in the Ondo Province of southwestern Nigeria. Hence, attempts were made to establish the trend and consequence of the colonial transport system on the production of the indigenous grain crops in Ondo Province between 1920 and 1960.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, construction of transport system was identified as a pre-condition for the effective participation of colonial regime in the open economy of communities in Ondo Province. The argument of Mallon, that transportation has an important role to play, not only in serving the productive sectors such as

agriculture and industry but also in bringing about economic growth was considered as the focal point for this discussion.<sup>7</sup>

### **Indigenous Grains and Agricultural Practices**

Cereals and legumes were the two grain crops cultivated by the indigenous people of Ondo Province prior to colonial interference. Grains were cultivated by the generality of the indigenous farmers, the crops served as staple food crops, and as such, formed the second chief food crops of the indigenous population apart from tuberous crops. The degree of relevance of grain crops to the indigenous people of Ondo Province reflected in the density of the involvement of labour migrants from among the Ebira, and Tiv groups of modern Kogi and Benue states in the cultivation. Grain crops were commonly cultivated across the whole of Southwestern Nigeria in precolonial times because they were the commonest species of food crops, traced to the local environment. Such grains as pigeon peas, African Yam Beans and Lima beans (legumes), fonio (paddy rice), white maize, guinea corn and millets (cereals), were planted, harvested and sold to communities outside Ondo Province. However, there is no gainsaying that indigenous farmers of Ondo Province delighted in grain crop cultivation premised on their natural benefits to the soil and plants in general. On this note, Kimani, Buruchara, Ampofo, Pyndji, Chirwa and Kirkby write that grain crops, especially legumes (beans) had the capability to boost farmers' production especially when planted as a sole crop.<sup>8</sup> Woolley, Ildefonso, Portes, Castro and Voss describe six major classes of cropping system, involving derivation of benefits from food legumes.<sup>9</sup> This study discussed the relevance of leguminous crops on the farmland.<sup>10</sup> Leguminous crops creep on farmland and often times, prevented the scorch of harsh sunlight and prevented crop rots.<sup>11</sup> They usually produced what the Scientists termed nitrogen fixation, which was a situation, whereby, the root of the crops produced bacteria that assisted the growth and development of other crops, especially, tuberous crops on the farms. In addition, indigenous legume and cereal crops usually produced good yields without any form of laborious activity. In other words, production of grains was low-labour intensive. In examining the relevance of agriculture to the development of the economy, Kolawale and Ojo have argued that agriculture revolved round a healthy economy and involved starting from small scale farming.<sup>12</sup> Cultivable land was scattered over wide expanse of land space, whereby, small scale farmers

cultivated as low as 3.0 hectare per farmland. Babatunde and Oyatode buttress that agriculture was characterized by rudimentary farm systems of low capitalization and low yield per hectare.<sup>13</sup> The relevance of farming remained significant to any economy despite the inevitability of technological innovations and advancements.<sup>14</sup> Onwueme and Sinha also corroborate that agriculture provided primary source of feeding and employment and accounted for over sixty percent of total Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Agricultural sector remained the mainstay of most nations' economy for many decades of existence.<sup>15</sup> The description above typified the pre-colonial agricultural practice in Ondo Province, in a way that every household subsisted on proceeds from farming, being the primordial occupation, despite the scattered nature of farmland and there was no any form of restrictions to cultivation of food crops prior to colonial influence.

### **Shift from Indigenous Food crop to Cash Crop Farming and Vehicular Transportation**

The year 1920 was significant for shift from subsistence to capital or commodity economy, it was also significant for vehicular transportation in Ondo Province and other communities of Southwestern Nigeria, especially for the movement of cash crops from strategic locations to the other. Vehicular transportation was essentially orchestrated to evacuate raw resources from the entire African continent by the British Imperial powers was succinctly put by Lugard thus "the material development of Africa is summed up in one word; transportation."<sup>16</sup> Coining from the above properly seated the idea of automobile transport in colonial Ondo Province as the "big wheel on which Ondo Province was impoverished for colonial economic improvement."<sup>17</sup> Different innovative mechanisms of production and evacuation of raw resources were mounted at strategic places and transporting them to the nearest evacuation points became inevitable. The system therefore required modern transportation system through the automobiles and railway lines.

Between 1920 and 1930, motorable roads under the name "trunk and feeder" roads emerged.<sup>18</sup> Trunks roads were tagged A and B, the trunk A roads were the road networks connecting the state capitals by the state roads, otherwise known as the trunk B roads while the feeder roads were strategically constructed to connect the areas where cash crops were majorly produced. Such among other roads traversed between Aponmu to Idanre through Owena, Ita-Oniyan,

Ala Elefosan, connecting Akure District, Ago Paanu and Malege connecting Owo District, Farm settlements in Okitipupa, Orin Ekiti and Ile-Oluji to connect the closest railway station in Osogbo through Akure loading point.

Colonial administrators as well as the missionaries, through the Native Authorities constructed new roads rather than building on the existing ones, the motive was to side-track the transportation of food crops which were regarded as non-profitable to the economic plan of the colonial regime, which at this point had propagated the flow of cash crops, using the native farmers.<sup>19</sup> In other words, it was a clear truth that infrastructures were put in place by the colonial powers but a bitter truth, that the idea was borne out of parochial interests, geared towards resource expropriation.<sup>20</sup> For instance, the report of the Native Administration of Public Works in 1923 revealed that transport services were charged at £16 to £18. A price which was affordable by the cash crop farmers but which was too high for the food crop farmers.<sup>21</sup> More strangulating was the fact that most of these transport workers were non indigenes of Ondo Province, they were from neighbouring towns of Ilesa, Osogbo, Abeokuta and Ibadan. They plied routes in Ondo Province on hire by the wealthy farmers and expatriate companies.<sup>22</sup> Among others were Messrs Dawodu, S. O. Ojo, Maiyegun, Howells and Longe. The only indigenously owned lorry emerged in 1935, known as Adewale Motors in Ado Ekiti. The lorry later stopped functioning due to the development of serious mechanical faults.<sup>23</sup>

The cost of servicing private transportation of crops from Ekiti, Akoko, Owo and Akure was too cumbersome for the colonial masters who later decided to purchase a lorry known as REO motor at the cost of £450 to ease the burden of transportation within the Province.<sup>24</sup> Between 1923 and 1951, many lorries were facilitating movement of goods and passengers dealing in colonial economy within and outside Ondo Province. Challenges of loading and shipping of the graded crops to the seaport of Agbabu down to Lagos for final shipment to Europe was addressed by the colonial regime, while food crops suffered a great deal of negligence and high cost of transportation across the feeder roads.<sup>25</sup>

Timber plantation in the 1930s posed another threat to food crop production and transportation. Most of the native farmers found lumbering business more lucrative, and were expending their capitals on lumbering rather than servicing food and cash crop businesses. Thus, many food crop producers abandoned farm work on the assumption that lumbering business would be more profitable

and less labour intensive as cocoa.<sup>26</sup> At this time, logs were produced to build vehicle known as *agbegilodo* for conveying timbers from farm to milling spots. At the sawmills, timbers were felled into logs for construction of different lorries and shelters.<sup>27</sup> Transport business became a business of average age men in the Ondo Province, and many of the relieved world war veterans who could no longer adjust to farm work found solace in lumbering business.

Between 1930 and 1950, trucks were conveying crops from Ondo-Ekiti communities to Ibadan and Lagos loading centres through Osogbo. Wealthy farmers used trucks in transporting cash crops such as tins of palm oil, bags of cocoa and palm kernels. Such were carried out by the expatriate firms, especially United African Company and Flionis Brothers. Food crop farmers were unable to afford the labour demand of transportation, they resorted to using their family members to move farm products to selling points.<sup>28</sup>

The nature of farmland distribution determined accessibility of farmers to motorable roads and motor transportation. The Native farmers (cash crop farmers) were allotted portions of land that were in close distance to the trunk roads. Poor farmers (the food crop producers) were pushed to farther areas known as “difficult terrain.”<sup>29</sup> During harvest season, Motor transporters fixed days of the week to transport farm products to the town markets. Usually, requests of the cash crop farmers were considered while food crop farmers often peddled their crops in the load of the cash crop farmers or waited till next available opportunity.<sup>30</sup> For instance, cash crop farmers along Aponmu/Akure road had accessible roads, ably fed by existing feeder roads, through which the trucks or lorries accessed cash crop farms to transport harvest to the nearest loading points.<sup>31</sup> In some situations, food crop farmers added money to the cash crop farmer to evacuate harvested food crops to the markets. Such markets were located in the metropolitan towns of Owo (Oja Oba), Ikare (Osele), Ondo (Ugele), Akure (Oja Oba) and Agbabu in Okitipupa area. Messrs MacIver Limited and ManNeil Limited were on regular touch with the markets.<sup>32</sup>

Periodic transport system was inimical to grain crop production in the sense that, crops such as maize and beans remained on farmland for several days while waiting for vehicles to transport them to points of distribution. Freshly harvested maize began to perish due to inaccessibility to them by long distance buyers who were expected to make their crops available to consumers sooner than they were harvested.<sup>33</sup> Consequently, it exacerbated expansion of capital market with the external communities of southwestern Nigeria.

## **Expansion of Capital Market Economy**

The Ondo-Oke-Igbo road's operation began from 1890s, when Lagos decided to sidetrack the Egba and Ijebu trade connections, as a result of protracted warfare. The road served as a strong pedestal for strong trade connections with the communities of Ondo Province through Oke-Igbo and Ondo, Lagos was able to connect Mahin groups to Ijebu-waterside.<sup>34</sup> Between 1939 and 1945, cash crops were rapidly evacuated from Ondo Province faster than the period before the use of road transport network.<sup>35</sup> Trade along Ondo-Oke-Igbo route facilitated transportation of cash crops to Ilesa and Osogbo with Lorries. Weekes Transport was regular along Ondo, Ife, Osogbo, Ijebu-Ode, Ibadan and Abeokuta routes.<sup>36</sup> The various cash crop producing farms were accessed by Weekes Transport at exorbitant charges." Ondo Province was catalogued as one of the centres for colonial market expansion, as it witnessed diverse mercantile activities of expatriate companies in transport businesses.<sup>37</sup> Some of the expatriates were the Syrians and the Lebanese who bought and transported cocoa seeds, cashew nuts and kernels along Ilesa-Osogbo routes to Lagos sea-ports for shipment. Colonial market centres sprang up in the various districts of Ondo Province as Hodder observes that as from the 1920s when motor transport system became more widespread in Western Nigeria, "application for opening of new markets increased."<sup>38</sup> Typical instance of the above was in Ikare, Arigidi and Ikaram Akoko, where different market schemes for the export of cash crops and import of confectioneries were drawn to take effect from 1951.<sup>39</sup> Fifteen (15) sheds were erected in Ikare, ten (10) sheds in Arigidi and twelve (12) sheds in Ikaram with proposed take-off loan of £9768. From the 1950s, cash crop production had totally overrun food crop production as shown in the table below.

### **Loss of Grain crops to Cash Crop Production**

<b>Crops</b>	<b>No of Farmers</b>	<b>Total hectare of land %</b>
<b>Cash crops</b>		
Cocoa 127,015	99,494	0.78
Oil Palm 3,933	2,473	0.63
Kolanut 866	639	0.74
Coffee 736	328	0.45
Rubber 1,348	453	0.34

*Source: Ondo State Statistical Abstract 1978/79 (Akure, 1980)*

In the 1930s and 1940s, cocoa provided cash income and became the most important locally produced cash crop for export. The crop also accounted for between 23% and 47% of the regional government's revenue and up to 61% of total finances in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>40</sup> Also, the Agricultural Extension Officers (AEO) between 1945 and 1952 encouraged farmers to improve the palm produce for export. In 1946, 2,333 tons were exported and increased to 2,743 by 1947, 3,466 by 1949 and 3933 by 1951.<sup>41</sup>

Kola-nuts and coffee were also produced by some farmers in Ekiti, Akure, Ondo and Ijare.<sup>42</sup> These items also facilitated local trade with the northern people of Nigeria especially, during the Second World War, when their demands were high.<sup>43</sup> During the World War II, rubber production was encouraged and Araromi Obu land was signed out to produce rubber for war exigency.<sup>44</sup> Raw rubber was needed for the production of tyres for war vans. Natural rubber was a lucrative business that many people earned significant dividends from, with which they procured more of European food items and luxuries. The United African Company (U.A.C) was particularly involved in the shipment of natural rubber from all the Southwestern Provinces. In Ondo Province, road infrastructure traversed Nupe, through Arigidi-Akoko to connect trunk A road of Ado Ekiti through Ita-Ogbolu to Akure (trunk A) along Ondo road to the loading point at Agbabu in Okitipupa District.<sup>45</sup> This road network facilitated movement of rubber from Ekiti and Akoko areas to the seaport at Agbabu where it was shipped to Lagos.<sup>46</sup>

The rail lines were orchestrated to connect major collating centres, sooner than the sector became functional in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Ondo Province, which produced a significant percentage of cash and food crops under the imperial influence was totally sidelined. Hence, railway transport system was not orchestrated at developing food or grain crop production.<sup>47</sup> The connection of rails was to ease the process of moving large bulk of commodities from the producing points to Lagos. It was orchestrated as such that Osogbo was the nearest loading point for commodities transported by road from Ondo Province.<sup>48</sup> The final catchment depot for Ondo Province was Ibadan as Abeokuta facilitated grading of commodities from Egba, Ijebu and Agege areas. Scholars including Ofonagoro argue that the infrastructural arrangement mounted by Britain was hypocritical in that, it was originally orchestrated to ease resources out of its "spheres of interests" across the continent of Africa<sup>49</sup> including Ondo Province.

Indigenous farmers paid high fares in transporting their commodities from different farmsteads within Ondo Province to Osogbo which was the closest station to the Province. Sometimes they met disappointments when vehicles left the loading station before they arrived. In a nutshell, colonial infrastructure did not encourage indigenous grain crop production. The quantity produced between 1920 and 1949 was for meeting the demand of feeding the recruits of wars enlisted from Ondo Province. Hence, colonial influence and traces of their infrastructures further undermined the already waned indigenous grains. Indigenous farmers abandoned food production for new labour located in road transport and railway works.

## **Conclusion**

History in itself naturally posits to unveil scenarios surrounding its bewilderment, it is an end to the means of the society. As such, history cannot be counterproductive towards reconstructing the societal deeds. On this note would this study be pointing to the errors committed in the past by the lobbyists (British) and the owners (indigenous farmers) of the resources, who wilfully gang-refuted the indigenous economic advancement, to pursuing the draconic foreign specifications imbued with commodity economy. An increasingly uncontrolled trend of economic disfiguration was loss of food identity and surplus. Disorientation of human resources by capital economy remained a major challenge in most African societies including Ondo Province. Looking inward for a re- adjustment tends to suggest a way out of the worrisome entanglement of food paucity in view of the increasing population of Ondo Province. Hence, the abandoned old colonial farmland are suffice to filling the gap between food surplus and hunger in the modern Ondo Province of southwestern Nigeria.

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<sup>28</sup> D. Agbedana, *Introduction to Colonial Agriculture in Ado Ekiti* (Ado-Ekiti, Abiye Press, 1970) p 23-29

<sup>29</sup> Oladipupo Olusola Olubomehin Road transportation in Western Nigeria, 1900 –1960...

<sup>30</sup> Interview with Boje Adebambo, (Mr) (83 yrs), food crop and cocoa farmer, Odo farm, Ado Ekiti, 10/07/17. He reported that his father was always waking up at 4 am to meet up with the vehicles transporting cocoa to Osogbo for loading. Once he missed the chance of joining the lorry for the day, he had to reschedule for another opportunity which occurred at interval of five to seven days.

<sup>31</sup> Ondo/Aponmu road was a major road to Lagos, the farm land was a vast coverage that extended from Aponmu village to Owena and Lipakala farm before Ondo town. This was a major trunk road that facilitated cash crop transportation better than the interior roads in Ekiti, Owo and Akoko. For detailed information, see Akintoye S.A, *the Ondo Road Eastward of Lagos* (Lagos, University Press 1969) p. 587

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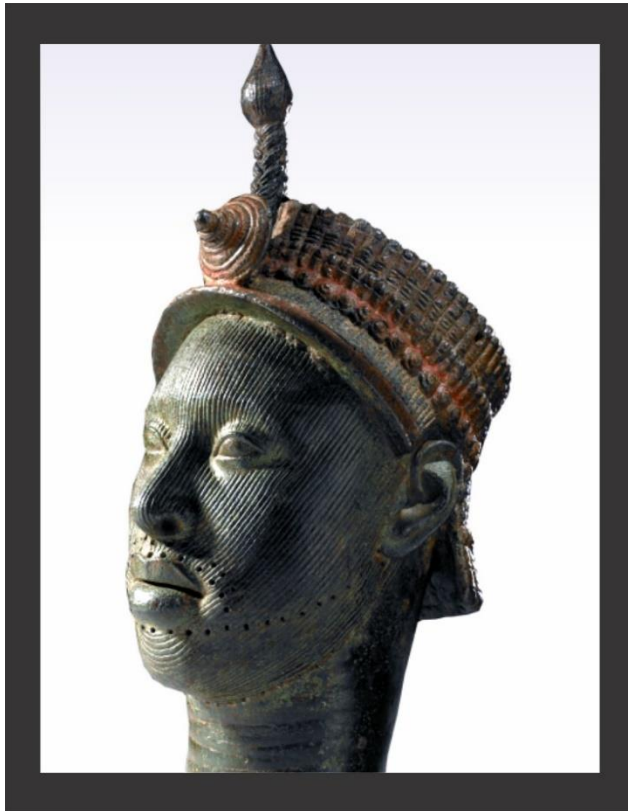
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## **Hegemon in Retreat? Nigeria's Interventions and the Search for Stability in West Africa**

*Sunday Omotuyi and Bola W. Siyanbade*

### **Abstract**

Nigeria's regional hegemonic leadership in Africa has been the subject of heated debate in various diplomatic and scholarly engagements for years. Even though ascribing hegemony to Nigeria within the ECOWAS region especially has some validity in the context of the realist understanding of hegemony and its diplomatic activism particularly between the 1970s and 1990s, the return to democratic governance in 1999 has, however, heralded a downward trend in Nigeria's regional hegemonic leadership. In this study, it is argued that a plethora of factors, which include mass-based opposition to Nigeria's African leadership by Nigerians, economic doldrums, and security challenges, have had dire implications on Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy, resulting in the prioritisation of domestic issues in foreign relations. This citizen-focused foreign policy also finds its best expression in the restrictive border policy, which has further eroded Abuja's putative regional hegemony in West Africa. Given this context, the paper examines the effects of Nigeria's declining regional leadership on stability in West Africa and increased foreign intervention in ECOWAS region, arguing that the dearth of capable regional hegemons portends more insecurity and instability in West Africa.

**Keywords:** hegemony, terrorism, West Africa, foreign policy, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Since Nigeria's independence in 1960, messianic allusions to its leadership in African affairs have been deeply embedded in the operationalisation of its foreign policies. Indeed, Africa is frequently referred to as the focal point of Nigeria's external relations. The Afrocentric nature of Nigeria's external relations was shaped by the Nigerian foremost nationalists. For instance, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who would eventually become the first indigenous president of independent Nigeria, characterised Nigeria's role in African politics as "Manifest Destiny" to champion the African Race.<sup>1</sup> In essence, more than any

other nation on the continent, Nigeria has shown dedication to Africa's hopes and aspirations in various ways by upholding its Afrocentric foreign policy. Since 1960, more than 200,000 of its soldiers have participated in peacekeeping operations across the continent as part of its foreign policy thrust.<sup>2</sup>

These admirable endeavours have given Nigeria names like Giant of Africa, Frontline State, and African Superpower.<sup>3</sup> Nigeria's hegemonic leadership is based on a realist conception of hegemony that is centred on its enormous demography, relative military strength, economic clout, and political will, in addition to its commitment to regional security and stability as the cornerstone of its international role.<sup>4</sup> However, since the return to democracy in 1999, particularly when the government of President Musa Yar'Adua made "Citizenship Diplomacy" rather than African-focused diplomacy the cornerstone of Nigerian foreign policy, commitment to the hopes and yearnings of African people has been conspicuously dwindling. Tragically, the avalanche of security-related crises precipitated by terrorist groups as well as economic challenges that necessitated the imposition of hostile border diplomacy are weakening Nigeria's position as a regional leader. The study, which relies on the survey conducted on the Nigerian interactive online platform, Nairaland Forum, and other secondary data sourced from library materials, think tanks and other policy institutes, assesses the impacts of Nigeria's declining hegemonic leadership on sub-regional affairs. It contends that the unexpected re-emergence of the military takeovers and expansion of the Russian-linked Wagner mercenary company in the Sahel represent the African leadership gap in the region. The paper is organised into six sections. Sections one and two focus on the introduction and the conceptual analysis of the hegemonic stability theory while section three unpacks the paradigm shift in Nigerian foreign policy due to internal dynamics. Section four examines the Nigerian nationalistic border diplomacy. Finally, sections five and six interrogate the unintended consequences of the dearth of regional hegemonic leadership in Africa, leading to the rise of Russia's influence in the continent.

### **Nigeria and Hegemonic Stability Theory: A Conceptual Analysis**

According to Keohane, the projection of hegemony basically happens when a state aspirant at the global or regional level exhibits some of the empirical characteristics typical of a hegemon based on the realist perspective.<sup>5</sup> Such features mostly include military might, economic power, and demographic

advantage. In the same way, Warner argues that at a regional level, hegemony occurs when middle-level nations in the international system—those that are strong regionally but not as much globally—play a crucial leadership role within the affected regions.<sup>6</sup> A realist perspective, which is mostly recognised for analysing patterns of relations among states, is crucial to studying Nigeria's African hegemonic leadership. The theory, frequently classified as hegemonic stability theory, suggests that a single state with a disproportionate amount of power could aid in promoting peace and stability within the global community. A state is considered a hegemon if it has a strong political will to assume greater responsibilities along with strong economic and military dominance. International relations analysts agree that hegemony can exist below the systemic level as well, even though it is typically associated with a preponderance of power at the global level of analysis.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, hegemony can occur at different levels of the international system in addition to the global level, particularly at the regional level. Lemke's excellent argument captures the strength of local or regional hegemony. He argues that:

In a similar structure to the overall international power hierarchy, each of these local (regional) hierarchies has a dominant local state supervising local relations, by establishing and striving to preserve a local status quo. Just as with the global system and the overall dominant state, local dominant states bother to create and defend the local status quo because they anticipate gains from doing so.<sup>8</sup>

Since it would be extremely difficult for a world level hegemon to properly oversee local or regional issues, especially if it is not a member of the regional states, this responsibility falls on the regional state that exhibits some characteristics of a regional hegemon.

Nigeria's claim to be a regional leader has been debated over the years, particularly in the context of the hegemonic stability theory.<sup>9</sup> Is Nigeria capable of holding a legitimate position as a regional powerhouse? According to Adebajo<sup>10</sup> and Bach,<sup>11</sup> Nigeria is often regarded as a significant player in West Africa with significant influence within the sub-region. There is no denying that Nigeria has gained an enormous reputation not just among the regional governments but also in the larger international community as a result of its



numerous regional engagements, particularly in peacekeeping deployments. Nigeria is frequently viewed on the global scene as Africa's "giant" or "big brother" capable of handling regional challenges.<sup>12</sup> Only Nigeria and South Africa are seen to have the capacity to be considered regional hegemon within the African continent as a whole.<sup>13</sup> South Africa is often regarded as a leader in the Southern African sub-region.<sup>14</sup> According to Dokken<sup>15</sup> and Adebajo,<sup>16</sup> Nigeria is also commonly referred to as a sub-regional superpower in West Africa.

Structural realist scholars often contend that hegemony, at all levels (global, regional, and sub-regional), essentially depends on a combination of a strong military, a powerful economy, and demographic superiority. Kenneth Waltz, an American realist analyst, observes that states have two types of power: latent and military. He defines latent as the state's economic prosperity and population density. According to Waltz (cited in Warner), military power mainly refers to a nation's military readiness in comparison to other regional powers.<sup>17</sup> Military might and economic strength are inextricably linked. A strong economy can lead to increased military capabilities, as China's recent example has demonstrated. According to Keohane, the core of the realist understanding of hegemony is a mix of economic and military dominance.<sup>18</sup> Given Kindleberger's analysis of hegemonic stability, the significance of these key national powers resides in the hegemon's capacity to foster a modicum of peace and stability within the relevant (sub)region.<sup>19</sup>

Evidently, when compared to other states in the region, Nigeria displays all the characteristics of a hegemon, according to realist analysts of international relations. Nigeria has always had strong military capabilities, notably following its Civil War (1967–1970). The Nigerian Armed Forces are, in fact, the biggest in West Africa. Having a sizable army was never intended to encourage Nigeria to pursue any kind of regional expansionism or irredentism. It was only intended to be used domestically to combat security issues and promote stability through peacekeeping operations.

The foundation of Afrocentric Nigerian international relations was its possession of several crucial qualities, including strategic location, ethnic and cultural diversities, human resources, natural endowments, and the Pan-Africanist worldview of its founding fathers. According to Azikiwe, we have a "Historic Mission" and "Manifest Destiny" to provide continental leadership for Africa due to Nigeria's distinctive characteristics among its peers in Africa.<sup>20</sup>

Nigeria's claim to be a regional hegemon is supported by its post-colonial past. The defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU) was founded with major hegemonic input from Nigeria. In order to stop the internationalisation of the African crisis and free the continent entirely from the shackles of colonialism and discrimination, Nigeria was one of the players who used the OAU platform to articulate Africa's needs and aspirations to the world community.<sup>21</sup> Nigerian efforts were primarily responsible for the creation of ECOWAS and its peacekeeping arm, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).<sup>22</sup> Through the use of the ECOMOG security framework, Nigeria is widely considered to have shown leadership in the numerous peacekeeping operations in the West African region.<sup>23</sup> In wider Africa, Nigeria advocated for the overthrow of White Supremacist regimes in Southern Africa using diplomatic and coercive means, earning the title of "Frontline State" in the process.<sup>24</sup> The country is well recognised for its unwavering dedication to the end of the Apartheid system in South Africa by organising a global boycott of the racist regime in athletic events and international trade, among other significant diplomatic initiatives.<sup>25</sup> It would not seem overstated to say that Nigeria is a major actor in continental politics given its leadership within Africa.

### **Internal Imperatives: A Paradigm Shift in Nigerian Foreign Policy?**

While the hegemonic credential of Nigeria is widely recognised, some analysts have forewarned that exercising real hegemonic leadership in Africa may be hampered by a coterie of factors.<sup>26</sup> Samuel Huntington, in his ground-breaking study, *The Clash of Civilizations*, emphasises that Nigeria's inter-civilisational disunity, massive corruption, and political instability, among other things, have relentlessly undermined its ability to perform a leadership role on the continent.<sup>27</sup> The country does, indeed, meet the basic requirements in the realist tradition for regional hegemony and has been acting in this capacity until recent times. The need to pay more attention to internal dynamics has continued to have consequences for its African-centred external relations. A national outcry over the prioritisation of African issues, particularly the style and manner in which successive presidents had intervened in various troubled spots in ECOWAS without any significant practical gain for the country, led to advocacy for the rethinking of Nigeria's external relations. Due in part to this uproar, Nigeria declined to provide troops to the ECOMOG mission in Guinea-

Bissau in 1998, making the effort largely unsuccessful.<sup>28</sup> Afrocentric commitment overwhelmingly eclipsed domestic reality. According to Kia et al., the few benefits from Nigeria's African diplomacy fall solidly within the area of regional prestige and have no bearing on the country's economic prosperity or national security.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the majority of Nigerians in recent times have disapproved of the country's adventurism on the continent and its bid for the UN Security Council.<sup>30</sup> Although the Nigerian neo-patrimonial elites find Afrocentrism appealing, "most Nigerians today are stridently opposed to Nigeria's continued African leadership, especially in the area of peacekeeping responsibility."<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, since the start of this fledgling democracy in 1999, several experts have vociferously called for a re-organisation of Nigeria's external relations and questioned the necessity of maintaining Afrocentrism in the country's foreign policy. They contend that reciprocity in diplomatic interactions, a standard criterion, is missing from Nigeria's Afrocentric diplomacy.<sup>32</sup> Akinboye laments the lack of measurable benefits from Nigeria's diplomatic efforts in Africa in more detail. The professor of Nigeria's foreign policy expresses his disgust in these words:

Unfortunately, and disappointingly, many countries that have benefited tremendously from Nigeria's largess have often turned around to show ingratitude to both its citizens living in that country and the government itself... South Africa exhibited xenophobic attacks against Nigerian citizens living in that country... Besides, the countries it has supported financially, diplomatically and strategically have become the butt of derision and envy among them [sic]. Some of these countries equally harbour or even offer training facilities for terrorists, while others campaign openly against Nigeria's bid to occupy one of the permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council. From these instances, it has become clear that the age-long philosophical notion of Africa as the centrepiece of the country's foreign policy has become moribund, mundane and anachronistic.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Nigeria's adherence to an Afrocentric foreign policy that requires it to assume leadership positions, particularly in the security sector, repulsed President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007). The former military Head of State

(1977–1979), while speaking at the United Nations General Assembly in 1999, stated:

For too long, the burden of preserving international peace and security in West Africa has been left almost entirely to a few states in the sub-region. Nigeria's continued burden in Sierra Leone is unacceptably draining Nigeria financially. For our economy to take off, this bleeding has to stop. Nigeria spent on the ECOMOG operation about one million US dollars daily.<sup>34</sup>

Given Nigerians' widespread dissatisfaction with Afrocentrism, the Yar'Adua administration (2007–2010) publicly adopted what it labelled "Citizen Diplomacy". Although *citizenship diplomacy* does not necessarily imply a complete abandonment of African issues, as Chief Ojo Maduekwe, ex-Foreign Affairs Minister, seems to have suggested, it does show that domestic issues are prioritised in Nigeria's foreign policy. Although the idea can seem self-explanatory, it still has to be explained. Osita Eze has characterised citizen diplomacy as being "people-oriented, in which Nigeria seeks to promote the welfare and security of its citizens in its foreign relations."<sup>35</sup> From an operational perspective, particularly concerning the Nigerian practice, citizen diplomacy and Afrocentrism are fundamentally differed from one another since the former is inward-looking while the latter is outward-looking, prioritising African issues.

To put it another way, citizen diplomacy aims to put Nigerian aspirations and desires ahead of any other sub-regional or continental issues in Nigeria's international relations. Maduekwe, Musa Yar'Adua's top diplomat, highlights that "citizen diplomacy is... about people.... Thus, citizen diplomacy is a foreign policy initiative that will be citizen-oriented in its approach, objective and outcome."<sup>36</sup> He stressed that it is vital that these foreign policy initiatives take into account the overall well-being of the people whose core interests they were formed to serve. He claims that citizen diplomacy is the remodelling of Nigeria's foreign policy so that the results will be advantageous to Nigerians in various ways. The architect of citizen diplomacy further emphasises that:

Our foreign policy has come of age and the age of innocence is over. We remain proud of our track record from Tafawa Balewa up till now. ... We should ask ourselves some hard

questions: to what extent has our foreign policy benefited Nigerians? To what extent has our foreign policy put food on our tables? In other words, where is the citizen in our foreign policy?<sup>37</sup>

In his contribution, Ambassador Alaba Ogunsanwo asserts that Nigeria's entire diplomatic apparatus ought to be refocused on defending the interests of its citizens, both inside and outside the nation (the diaspora).<sup>38</sup> The former Nigerian High Commissioner to Botswana adds that any diplomatic interaction, whether bilateral or multilateral, that ignores this will be at odds with the fundamental principles of diplomacy.

Since the new concept entered Nigeria's diplomatic relations in 2007, which seems to be a validation of the paradigm shift from the Afrocentric foreign policy, Nigeria has shown a noticeably ambivalent attitude towards its self-assigned responsibilities on the continent. We cannot say that Nigeria is currently significantly contributing to the conflict resolution on its borders with Chad and Cameroon. In Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea, where military power seizures have taken place, Abuja has left these states to foreign interests as the anomalous trend continues to spread in the Sahel. Failure by Nigeria specifically and ECOWAS broadly to take a firm position against these putschists emboldened the Nigerian military to topple the civilian government in the country. The dwindling economic fortune has also undercut Nigeria's regional leadership.

The response of the former US Ambassador to Nigeria, Princeton Lyman, aptly captures Nigeria's current lukewarm attitude towards regional politics. When asked by journalists why President Obama chose to visit Ghana rather than Nigeria (the regional leader) in 2009, he responded saying: "What would he gain from going... Would he obtain new commitments on Darfur or Somalia or strengthen the AU, Niger or elsewhere? No, he would not, so he did not go."<sup>39</sup> In terms of current African events, Abuja has had no appreciable effect on its region or on the continent's major issues that it was handling before.<sup>40</sup> For instance, Nigeria promised in 2007 to contribute military forces to the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) to combat al-Shabbab extremists in Somalia. Abuja has never fulfilled the pledge!<sup>41</sup> Despite the above, Nigeria continues to verbally describe itself as an African Superpower.

More significantly, the ongoing terrorist activities of the Islamist Boko Haram sect and a mosaic of other terrorist organisations in the country have further damaged Nigeria's already fragile international reputation and deflated its rhetorical claim of being an African Superpower. In other words, Boko Haram's brutalities and the failed counterterrorism operation, especially between 2010 and 2021, exposed the growing hollowness of the nation's claim to be a regional hegemon. The Abubakar Shekau faction of Boko Haram group and its splinter group, the Abu Musab al-Barnawi-inspired Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), have caused severe threats to human security in Nigeria since 2010 and 2014 respectively. Despite the deaths of the leaders of the groups, they are still actively operating in the country's Northeast.

Regardless of the escalating Boko Haram uprising and the botched counterterrorism operations of more than a decade which exposed the chasm between Nigeria's claim of hegemonic status and the reality on the ground, the government continues to project the image of a regional "big brother". Nigeria's refusal to accept outside help to degrade the murderous groups speaks volumes of its rhetorical hegemony. For example, when the neighbouring Francophone republics of Chad and Cameroon offered their military support to combat the terrorists, the Nigerian government rejected the offers for years. As Warner pointed out, Nigeria's acceptance of such foreign military assistance would have demonstrated its incapacity to address its domestic issue as a regional hegemon.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, after the jihadists abducted a large number of Chibok schoolgirls in April 2014, the Abuja authorities at first outright rejected American assistance.<sup>43</sup> The authorities agreed to accept the help after widespread public uproar and condemnation of the apparent official inactivity, which the #BringBackOurGirls hashtag campaign served to spotlight.<sup>44</sup> The rejection seemed to have been motivated by the apprehension that accepting such foreign military help would reveal a regional superpower's inability to adequately manage its domestic affairs.

The glaring failure of the government-sanctioned counterterrorism strategy as well as its readiness to still sustain its rhetorical regional hegemony have compelled the government to use fabrications to cover up or explain away the obvious shortcomings in its response to the Boko Haram vicious attacks. This type of policy of a "troubled hegemon" is what Warner describes as an "illusory hegemon". According to him:

Illusory hegemon is the process whereby regional powers within the Global South that generally meet the realist requirements of hegemon (military and economic power, and large population) but lack the... (authority for rightful rule), undertake a culture of foreign policy prevarication to downplay their failures and continue to assert their rightful rule over their regions.<sup>45</sup>

Since 2010, Nigeria's counter-Boko Haram strategies have been marked by outright prevarications to project the image of a strong, powerful nation as the dominant force in its neighbourhood. Shortly after the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls, the first official government response was given by military spokesperson Chris Olukolade. The image-maker of the military claimed that the Nigerian military had released 100 girls,<sup>46</sup> but this claim was later disproved.<sup>47</sup> In a May 2014 interview, Air Chief Marshall Alex Badeh asserted that the Nigerian military had discovered the kidnapped girls and would release them.<sup>48</sup> This statement suggested the effectiveness of the Nigerian military. However, it was mostly through negotiations, which involved ransom payments, that some of the girls were released by their captors more than a year after their abduction.<sup>49</sup> Since 2014, close to 100 of the Chibok schoolgirls are still being held captive by the group as of writing. The government's propensity for making excuses to hide its failure has only helped to reveal its deflated hegemony rather than enhance Abuja's reputation as a capable regional leader since all the regional states are aware of the falsehood that characterises Nigeria's counterterrorism.

Nigeria's credibility deficit in the war against terrorism has made the country a laughing stock in the international community. The Nigerian military has declined precariously so much that before his death, Boko Haram's leader, Shekau, once mocked the Nigerian military, saying: "Is it not amazing that we who started with sticks and machetes are today the biggest headache to the almighty Nigerian soldiers? What a shame?"<sup>50</sup> Similarly, the former Nigerian Defense Minister, Mahamadou Karidjo, mocked the Nigerian military over its counterterrorism failure. According to him, "Our soldiers are not like Nigerians, they don't run."<sup>51</sup> The mockery was a sequel to several reports that Nigerian soldiers fighting Boko Haram ran away from the battlefields.<sup>52</sup> As Adebajo has asserted that wielding hegemony requires both leadership and military capability, Nigeria's hegemonic role in Africa is being undermined by

insecurity challenges, diminishing national political will, and a lack of influence.<sup>53</sup>

### **Border Closure and Nigeria's African Diplomacy**

Another crucial area where Nigeria has demonstrated a lack of commitment to African-focused foreign relations is its unilateral border closure of August 20th, 2019, which is still ongoing as of this writing. As a putative regional leader, Nigeria's traditional liberal border diplomacy was a key element of Afrocentrism. This generous border policy was deliberately designed to facilitate not only integrative initiative through the open border policy but also give practical expression to Abuja's good neighbourliness policy. It was also formulated to maintain a "sphere of influence" for Nigeria in West Africa by limiting foreign powers' meddling unduly in the region's political, economic, and security affairs.<sup>54</sup> More importantly, since transborder contacts by border communities cannot be readily prohibited because of the colonial experiment, which split the continent into several domains of influence for European powers without proper consideration for ethnic, religious, and cultural configurations,<sup>55</sup> policies meant to ease cross-border mobility had to be made. African people typically view historical cross-border mobility among ethnic groups that have been arbitrarily divided as a component of their internal movement rather than as crossing international borders.<sup>56</sup>

Given the aforementioned situation, Nigeria's benign pro-African diplomacy, as well as its interest in regionalism as a springboard for its power projection, purposefully conducted what amounted to a liberal border strategy to accelerate the West African integration project. To project its soft power within Africa, Nigeria had, up until recently, used its borders to advance Afrocentrism and Pan-Africanism. For instance, it actively promoted ECOWAS and its Protocol on the freedom of movement and the right of residence within the sub-region.<sup>57</sup> However, the so-called Nigerian government's policy of open borders and good neighbourliness has come at a very high price. Afrocentric diplomacy has failed to benefit Nigeria's internal and external interests.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, other ECOWAS members, particularly those who had benefited from Nigeria's generosity, have frequently questioned its leadership in West Africa, according to Adebajo,<sup>59</sup> they "only grudgingly accepted its leadership."<sup>60</sup>



The Nigerian government's "open border" policy has generally been held responsible for the cross-border character of insecurity problems in Northeastern and Northwestern Nigeria.<sup>61</sup> For instance, for most of its existence, the extremist jihadist group, Boko Haram/ISWAP, has demonstrated a preference for border regions. The border regions between Nigeria and the other Lake Chad riparian nations of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad are where the Islamist Terrorists have been most active. This perception has prompted researchers like Scot MacEachern to identify the Boko Haram Islamist group as a "borderland phenomenon."<sup>62</sup> The porous border allowed these terrorists and bandits to enter several border areas in Nigeria.<sup>63</sup>

In light of the aforementioned and without recourse to the protocol of free mobility of the ECOWAS and the pan-Africanist content of Afrocentrism, the Nigerian government revised its idealistic border policy in August 2019 and mandated the immediate closure of all of Nigeria's land borders. Unsurprisingly, the confrontational border policy sparked a flurry of protests because the adjacent governments saw it as antagonistic to their well-being in addition to being at odds with African brotherhood and the continent's integrative effort. Beyond the security issues that idealistic border diplomacy exacerbates, Nigeria's economy suffers as a result of its porous borders due to the daily smuggling of contraband items from its neighbours and illicit sales of commodities to these proximate states from Nigeria. The removal of the contentious subsidy regime on petroleum products, which had for years, kept the prices of these products affordable for citizens, was due mostly to cross-border smuggling.

Smuggling across Nigeria's borderlines has defied all solutions, mostly due to the lack of professionalism of the state security agents and massive corruption in the country. Aliko Dangote, Forbes' richest African businessman, claimed in 2019 that smuggling is killing Nigeria<sup>64</sup> due to the seemingly unstoppable smuggling across Nigerian borders. Nigeria's initial reluctance to join the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was partially due to the country's smuggling activities. Nigeria was apprehensive that signing "the agreement would undermine its 'citizens first (citizen diplomacy) policy' and hinder efforts to revamp its economy."<sup>65</sup>

In light of the aforementioned, blocking all of Nigeria's land borders became imperative. The restrictive border diplomacy, which violates the essence of AfCFTA and undermines much-desired regionalism in the ECOWAS region,

further raises doubts about Nigeria's continued commitment to Afrocentrism. The implementation of a pro-citizen foreign policy in opposition to the traditional Afrocentric diplomacy reduces Abuja's claims of the integration project and "African solutions to African challenges" to empty platitudes. The border closure undoubtedly prompts crucial queries regarding Nigeria's readiness to continue carrying out (sub)regional duties in line with its intentions to exercise continental hegemonic leadership. In essence, the closure was a continuation of pro-citizen diplomacy, which aimed at protecting the nation from insecurity issues and economic problems that were encouraged by porous borders while also advancing the immediate interests of Nigerian nationals.

### **The Dearth of Regional Hegemonic Leadership and the Rise of Russia's Influence in Africa**

The abdication of Nigeria's responsibility as a regional powerhouse and its dwindling influence on the continent have continued to have dire implications for regional peace and stability specifically. For instance, Nigeria had led the continent in troop contributions to peacekeeping efforts over the years, as a backbone of the ECOWAS-led crisis management in West Africa. Today, however, commitment has receded in this area. The Malian crisis, precipitated by the Tuareg secessionist movement and later hijacked by jihadist elements in the country, provided more evidence of the erosion of Nigeria's failing regional leadership and influence. The failure of the AU-engineered African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA) to combat the jihadi uprising in Mali was largely due to a leadership deficit in the management of the regional crisis. Nigeria, which had supported the AFISMA framework to restore stability to Mali with troop deployment, suddenly and without providing any justification, withdrew its military contingents, leaving AFISMA in limbo. Senator David Mark, the former Senate President, claimed that terrorism was to blame for the pullout, maintaining that the activities of Boko Haram insurgents had forced the government to withdraw its peacekeeping troops from Mali.<sup>66</sup> Immediately after Nigeria pulled out its troops from Mali, other regional states started developing cold feet and ambivalent feelings towards AFISMA.

The African solutions to African problems ideology that had not only gained currency in African conflict management sector but was also supported by France was discarded as some ECOWAS member states in the region started canvassing for French intervention in Mali. Mahamadou Issoufou, the former

President of Niger, criticised AFISMA for its lack of capacity to resolve the Mali problem, and therefore, urged France to take action.<sup>67</sup> The same position was canvassed for by Senegal, Guinea, and a few other former French colonies.<sup>68</sup> Based upon these urgings from within and outside Africa, France had to unilaterally launch a military assault to flush out the terrorists who were a few kilometres away from Bamako. The military action, code-named "*Operation Serval*" in Mali was applauded by the Benin Republic, remarking that "we should have done this a long time ago to defend a member country."<sup>69</sup> The abandonment of African-led conflict resolution in Africa (Africanisation of conflict management), which had become a key component of France's African policy, was mainly due to the dearth of a capable regional leader, a role Nigeria had been playing over the years. In the context of the deterioration of Nigeria's regional politics, the intervention of extra-African countries in West Africa is expected to increase dramatically as the only powerful voice in Tropical Africa is forced by internal dynamics and erosion of soft power to informally relinquish its Pan-African leadership.

This has already started with the growing intervention of Russia in the political and economic affairs of Africa in its geopolitical struggle with the West. In the absence of a strong and determined African power to enforce African solutions to African security challenges, Russia, through Wagner's private military company, is forging an international illiberal alliance in Africa, ostensibly on invitations to combat jihadist groups and restore peace in the troubled Sahel. While Russia is targeting African nations with weak governments but rich in vital raw minerals like gold, diamonds, and uranium to establish dependency on Russia, according to Fasanotti, Russian President Vladimir Putin is being hailed as an anti-imperialism and terrorist leader by citizens and governments where Wagner forces are active.<sup>70</sup> In Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, among others, Russia has presented itself as a more credible alternative to France, their colonial master. In Niger, Russian flags are being waved by citizens in the wake of the ouster of the Western-supported democratic government of President Mohamed Bazoum, on the perception that Putin will be a reliable ally. The unchallenged but increasing Russian maligning involvement in (West) Africa undermines democratic governance and portends severe risks for security and stability in the (sub)region in the long run.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, we contend that while Nigeria's regional hegemonic influence is undeniable given the realist understanding of hegemony and its regional engagements in the 1970s and 1990s, its leadership today has been severely undermined by both internal and external causes. The seemingly intractable security challenges and increasing economic problems have had dire consequences on Nigeria's international reputation and its Afrocentric foreign policy. The study demonstrates, among other things, that the pursuit of a citizen-focused foreign policy over traditional Afrocentric diplomacy and the obvious loss of capacity to play a crucial leadership role have expedited the erosion of Nigeria's claim to be a continental superpower in general and a subregional hegemon in particular. The upsurge in instability ignited by jihadi gangs, the rise in military takeovers, and the growing intervention of the Russian-linked Wagner mercenary force in the Sahel are all indications of the failure of the much-desired "African solutions to African problems".

If what is happening in Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso today is cast against the backdrop of Nigeria's very noble interventions in West Africa decades ago, it would be obvious how deflated Nigeria has become. Through ECOMOG, Nigeria restored order in Liberia. In Sierra Leone, it helped to put an end to a military coup and reinstate the Tejan Kabbar government. President Obasanjo's bold engagement with the coup plotters who overthrew the government of Sao Tome and Principe while the country's leader, Fradique de Menezes, was visiting Nigeria, is what is lacking today in the leadership of the country. Obasanjo even added a dramatic twist to the political situation in Sao Tome in 2003, when he accompanied Menezes back to his country to resume duties as president! However, the question remains whether Nigeria is currently in a position to embark on any of these types of foreign policy ventures today. The obvious answer is in the negative. As long as capable and willing hegemonic leaders are lacking in (West) Africa, attaining the much-desired African Solutions to African Problems will be a pipe dream. Nigeria's abdication of this role will continue to have disastrous effects on regional peace and stability in West Africa.

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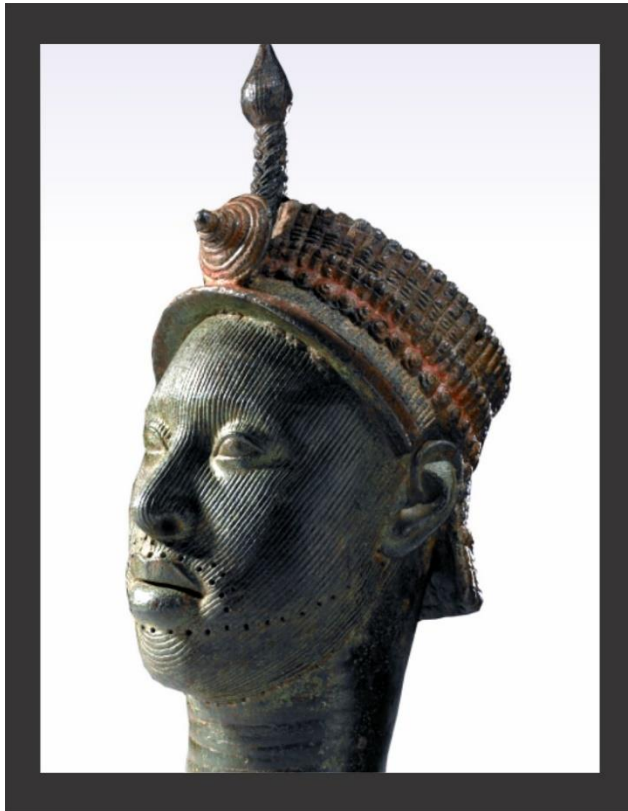
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## **Understanding the Switchback and Fallback to Interference in Other States' Internal Affairs**

***Temitope Peter Ola and Tosin Akinjobi-Babatunde***

### **Abstract**

This study critiques the doctrine and practices of interference as a tool of international politics. In the process, it highlights how the historically inevitable pursuit of adverse national interest by states constitutes an unending challenge to absolute sovereignty. The study found continuity and change in the capabilities, methods, and the motives of state interference in the internal affairs of others despite pretences to the contrary. It also found that the political nature of the role of consent in international law observance is a weakness of the state system which lies at the roots of the practical ineffectiveness of non-interference provisions of the United Nations Charter. The study concludes that, in addition to states' reluctance, the continuing fusion of the internal and external environments through a complication of states' interdependence makes non-interference in the "domestic" affairs of states an unserviceable doctrine of contemporary international politics.

**Keywords:** interdependence, national interest, law, rational actors

### **Introduction**

The international environment (not yet organised enough to call it a system) has an extraordinary array of problems: some physical and emotional, some more menacing than others, some closer in time, and many of them falling quite unequally upon different states, regions, and genders. Such problems include: a world dominated by nuclear weapons and delivery systems capable of previously inconceivable destruction, transnational actors putatively supplanting the state, rising pollution of the global "common", endemic shortages of food and other resources, persistent underdevelopment in much of the world, the globalisation of capitalist production, the rise of globalised information and communication, or the decline of great-power hegemony. In

the short run, one of other problems seems overwhelmingly critical, and though we focus on it here, it is not to suggest that all others are insignificant. Simply put, this is the interference problem. A significant number of interstate relations are done via official negotiating, coaxing, or rewards. Nonetheless, resorting to interference has always been a significant feature of the international environment. The legality of choosing to use interference as a foreign policy instrument even though this is not encouraged by philosophers, historians, and reformers has often not encountered objections from foreign policy decision makers. This may be due to beliefs that decision on the appropriate means to defend or attain a nation's vital interest (however defined) is traditionally considered an inherent and legitimate attribute of sovereignty.

Because the primary purpose of interstate relations is to influence the behaviour of potential allies and adversaries, our discussion will focus on interference as an instrument of influence. We will be less concerned with the problems of political victory—the ultimate form of success—than with the possible consequences of various clandestine activities on others' behaviour. Due to the international environment having a range of states with diverse characteristics, it will be challenging to make conclusive generalisations regarding what foreign policy business entails. It is worthy of note that states often do not share similar goals, allegiances, and policy inclinations.

Non-interference is a "general" obligation (that is, rule in principle binding upon all states, as contrasted with specific rules binding on a few states) of customary international law corresponding to Article 38 of the Statute of the International Court of Justice. A tension exists between this notion of non-interference and the consensual basis of customary international law. We know no systematic research on the empirical efficacy of non-interference to date. Interference may exist outside the law but given that state practice is a pivotal source of that law, the prevalence among states means it is not outlawed. At any level, interference is a violation of sovereignty, one inviolable principle of international relations, but sovereignty also confers on each and every state the freedom to follow or breach international law, to apply or ignore sanctions, and even to make wars. Given the contradictions, scholars<sup>1</sup> are increasingly recognising the futility of aspects of state sovereignty. The decline in the number of major wars, and the increase in violent national, ethnic, and civil conflicts which has characterised the post-Cold War era is partly responsible for the spike in interference. If interference has become a fact of international politics, how can we best account for it and understand where it fits within traditional international

relations; or does it? Following this introduction, the next section which is on methodology is followed by a critique of the place of interference in international law, as well as an analysis of the old and new ways interference in others' internal affairs is done. The penultimate section examines the future of interference, which is followed by the conclusion.

## **Methodological Framework**

Given that no single theoretical approach can explain all the vagaries of ethical and political dimensions of interference in international politics, there is a need to adopt a dynamic methodology which brings together different theoretical models. For example, the realists put *power* at the centre of all the behaviour of states: thus, states act as they do to maximise their power so that they can better achieve their own goals.<sup>2</sup> Unlike realism, where the main signpost is interest defined in terms of power, liberalism premised that the individual, as the critical actor, is basically moral and good, and wars are the products of corrupt institutions and misperceptions among leaders.<sup>3</sup> To fully understand any specific interference, we can start with the individual policymaker (influenced by the discipline of psychology) who themselves are products of society and the culture of their state. Next is to focus on the government which makes decisions for the state and is accountable to society and culture. Altogether, the states (influenced by the discipline of sociology) make up the international system.

That way, research questions can be directed at why President XYZ of State A made the decision to interfere in the domestic affairs of State B. Taken this way, the searchlight is at the individual level; and the processes the president followed, what they were thinking, and whom they turned to for advice can be assessed. That becomes necessary because much of foreign policy decision-making is accidental, *ad hoc*, and fortuitous. The national leader has the penultimate word on foreign policy decisions, though the ultimate word is determined by the process through which the policymaker can be replaced if their judgements have been faulty. At the individual level, research is conducted into how the individual leader conceives and interprets national interests. Foreign policy decision makers have been suggested to be more concerned with bureaucratic and individual interests rather than the interests of the state. In that case, achieving national objectives and goals is impossible because decision makers are unable to detach themselves from the tunnel visions of faction, bureaucracy, and self. Enquiries at the individual level enable an appreciation

of the individual decision maker's cognitive biases, affective biases and possible traps.<sup>4</sup> We do this while holding the other levels constant. Key decision-making individuals are sometimes conflated with the government, and that explains why for some, the nation remains and the individual—whatever their role and how great their contributions to the causes of their country—is only a tool of the popular will, and not its creator.

At the next level, questions can be asked about how the people of State A reacted to what was going on in State B. To answer the question is to look at society and culture. Were the people's representatives involved in the decision-making, and if so, in what ways? Or were the decisions made by a tiny group of presidential advisers, and what does that tell us about the role of the government in and how crisis decisions are made? Furthermore, research questions can be aimed at how the interference impacted the relationship between States A and B at that point in time. At that level, we are examining the two states as actors in the international system. For instance, the presence of immigrant populations of the other state, who have a strong sense of identity with it and who are willing to lobby on its behalf, certainly affects the culture, if not the foreign policy, of the interfering state. All that is necessary because except for the most autocratic societies, governments cannot for long centralise, manage a poor economy, be unaccountable to the public, and conscript their citizens for interference, unless there is<sup>5</sup> a consensus amongst the public regarding their deprivations.

In the last stage, questions about how the interference affects the global power balance were asked. The paper examined the behaviour of states and what happens on regional or global platforms like the United Nations (UN) and others. That is important because what happens at one level directly shapes the actions of the state. The study draws on Singer,<sup>6</sup> who himself drew on Waltz,<sup>7</sup> to give us the level of analysis framework as a starting point to arriving at the ultimate links among the individual, sub-national, and extra-national actors in international politics.

### **Status of Interference in *Jus Gentium***

Although no precise date can be adduced for its entry into the lexicon of international politics, interference predates the emergence of the contemporary international system. Its usage is connected with political entities which are

resentful of unfair intrusions of "outsiders" into issues within their political precincts, suspicious of "overseas" penetration, and desirous of protecting their perpetuity. This distinction is necessary, particularly because the conventional international law allows interference under mutual agreements by a superpower in a protected state and for humanitarian purposes. That makes non-interference acceptable as one of the basics of international law and norms that guide governments in their foreign relations. Article 15 of the Charter of Bogota (1948) provides that,

[N]o state or group of states has the right to intervene directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state. The foregoing principle prohibits not only armed attack but also any other form of interference or attempted threat against the personality of the state or against the political, economic, and cultural elements.

In Article 16, the Charter provides that, "No state may use or encourage the use of coercive measures of an economic or political character to force the sovereign will of another state or obtain from it advantages of any kind." More importantly, however, Article 2(4) of the Charter of the UN specifically prohibits members of the world body from interfering in each other's domestic problems. It says,

[A]ll members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations. (UN, 1945)<sup>8</sup>

The UN, in the Declaration on the Inadmissibility of Intervention in the Domestic Affairs of States and the Protection of their Independence and Sovereignty (General Assembly Resolution 213(XX) of 1965) in paragraph 1, affirmed Article 2(4) of the UN Charter. Following up, the Declaration on Principles of International Law Concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation Among States per the Charter of the United Nations 1970 elaborated the prohibition by adding,

[T]he use of propaganda, terror or finance, whether by military, political, economic or other form to coerce a State or against its political independence or territory.

Clarifying the prohibition, the Declaration on the Enhancement of the Effectiveness of the Principle of Refraining from the Threat or Use of Force in International Relations of 1987 says,

[S]tates must refrain from “organising, instigating or assisting or participating in para-military, terrorist or subversive acts including acts of mercenaries in other states” and from threats against their economic elements or measures calculated to coerce them in order to secure advantages.

Thus, the UN Charter conceived non-interference as not only an objective of the global environment, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful world. The influence of the Charter on interference is, however, complex and not readily demonstrable. With the mentorship of the Charter, states must be both pleased and dismayed. States must be pleased indeed with the contributions the Charter has made to redress what had been, from certain perspectives, imperialistic domination on self-determination blanket (Articles 1 and 55 of the UN Charter).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, states are aware that with the Charter, their seemingly secured freedom of choice has real and growing weaknesses, both in legal and practical senses; it limits the political correctness of their ability and willingness to pursue certain interests outside their territories. States would indeed wish to escape being implicated in this complicated set of rules of their devising. Interestingly, during the September 2005 UN World Summit, the “responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity” was unanimously adopted by the assembly of heads of states.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) which also contravenes Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, sanctions interference on humanitarian grounds. But, a major weakness of the resolution, like those of other UN decisions, is its non-binding nature. As such, enforcement is at the discretion of concerned state(s). Yet, the question remains whether any state actually has a mandate to make other states in its own image. Indeed, can any state really expect (should it have the right to expect) to do more than influence the foreign policy behaviour of another state when the



latter impinges on its interests? Is foreign policy also to concern itself with reforming another state domestically and to make virtuous a lay criteria for its foreign policy?

While states generally support the diplomatic propriety concept of non-interference in the internal affairs of all states, in principle, they are also eager to maintain that extra measure of freedom" to decide—not the international environment—the tools for the attainment of their adverse national interests. Virtually all states are sceptical about deterministic laws on the limits of the appropriate norm of what, when, or how they were supposed to pursue their interests because such rules might not always be consistent with their interests. Meanwhile, implicit in Article 2(4) is the glorification of the UN as an instrument for the transformation of international politics. The writers of this portion of the Charter must have been swayed by emotions and prejudices to attempt a restructuring of international politics, through legislation, by going against what appears an immanent characteristic of statecraft. The shift of norm constitutes a greater displacement of assumptions about relations between states than any that has taken place in history. It is based on the assumption that "good" men would create good regimes. But "good" and "bad" men alike seized power in large collective states. Even then, events that the "good" men prophesied were impossible to sustain such as depression, totalitarianism, and civil wars followed one another in quick successions. That made it easier for states to exploit the loopholes of the Charter by claiming that they were aiding legitimate governments against rebellion or helping rebels to advance an indubitably moral cause.

Even though it is a Charter provision, non-interference is virtually impossible to implement; neither individual states nor the international environment is equipped with the means or the inclinations to deal with the problem of interference.<sup>11</sup> Although there is no way of proving it, one may assert that the existence of the provisions of international law tends to discourage some of the grosser and more insidious interference. As members of the UN, states accept the legal doctrine of the UN Charter. At the same time, however, they re-interpret the non-interference provisions of the Charter in light of the needs and demands of post-World War II sovereign states and the international situations of the era. Thus, despite a general doctrinaire acceptance of non-interference, states' attitudes towards it remain ambivalent. For certain purposes, it is useful; for others, it presents a continued challenge to national interest. The law against interference is obeyed by nations at particular times and not by others. In other

words, the omnipresent principle of non-interference is filtered through circumstances of time and through national concepts, practices, and places determining its application. We must not forget, however, the differences between rules and the law of thermodynamics. You do not make a rule to the effect that water must not flow uphill; but man-made law would not be law (indeed, it would not be made) unless it could be broken or bent. Immanuel Kant caught on to what was happening well before most political pundits when he identified 'the law evading bellicose propensities of man.'

Not even the existence of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has proved a major deterrence against interference as states have not been prepared to submit to its jurisdiction or even to invoke it where the other side had accepted jurisdiction. The reasons for this are numerous, including reluctance by state officials to let their interests in a disagreement escalate beyond their own diplomatic control and being at the mercy of others; a global preference for flexibility and compromise rather than the all-or-nothing of lawsuits; fears that the Court might extend its authority into "strictly internal" matters; and the feelings that the loss of a case would be a blow to national prestige. As an organ of the UN, the ICJ itself is so politicised that it has become less acceptable as an impartial supreme court on international laws.<sup>12</sup>

Complete non-interference was envisaged at a time when it was possible for governments, likewise international organisations, to be indifferent to socio-economic and political developments in foreign lands. Exclusive domestic jurisdiction would shield gross incompetence in governance from the glare of the outside world. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other states was used not only to protect sovereignty in Europe but also to preserve the European state system. Defining sovereignty too narrowly constitutes states into towers of indifference. Such a definition underestimates the interdependence of states which have so many cross-cutting interests. The almost exclusive concentration upon the treatment of interference as a problem of misunderstanding or mental pathology is scientifically pretentious. Despite the questioning of the fairness and impartiality of this and other aspects of Eurocentric international law, they are advocated to date because they are useful as a tool of power to keep the weak weak<sup>13</sup> and make the strong stronger.<sup>14</sup>

State practice shows that the freedom from external interference as a reward which sovereignty confers is more theoretical than actual in nature. Universally, states make declaratory (promissory) commitments to non-

interference such as pledging to respect the territorial integrity of one another as happened at the July 1964 Conference of Heads of States of the Organisation of African Unity, but they have habitually refused to turn their pledges of commitments into legally binding pacts even though the existence of law in and of itself is not enough to ensure compliance. There is a willingness to accept non-interference as a fact without accepting it as a norm. While virtually all states put value on non-interference in their affairs, they are historically unwilling to accord the same character to those of other states. Rather, states wish to make the doctrine of non-interference personal and not territorial on the premise that territorial limitation is irrelevant to the concept of national interest. Non-interference appears an over-interpretation of the doctrine of sovereignty. There is, in fact, a pervasive influence and presence of states in each other's affairs. Perhaps, the thinness of the lines between foreign policy and domestic affairs accounts for this. Yet, the cases of interference in the internal affairs of other states raise germane questions about the differences between having the comity of nations accept norms and the realities of implementing them. It is a fascinating case study of applied international relations. The pathway from theory to practice is long and embedded with barriers in all aspects of epistemological concerns.

While many rules receive universal approval, others are controversial. Included in the latter category is the legitimacy or otherwise of material support for national liberation movements—an example of interference. Precipitate recognition of a revolutionary government is treated as an unfriendly act by legitimate governments. For instance, Britain protested to France against its recognition of the U.S. claiming that a breakaway state could not possess sovereignty without the consent of the mother state. The search for accommodation at the UN reverts interference from the domain of law to that of politics and power, thus, inhibiting and corrupting the categorisation of support for national liberation movements as interference. For instance, the UN has since 1972 given more and more favourable treatment to national liberation movements like the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and granted them observer status. The PLO does not only have a permanent observer status in the UN General Assembly with the right to participate on all issues, the right was extended to participation in the Security Council in 1989. While there is no assurance that non-recognition of the PLO by the UN could have depopularised the Palestinian question, it is clear that by its calculated acquiescence, if not active participation, the UN betrays uncertainty and slippage, for good and sufficient reasons, in the doctrine of interference, and

confirms that what constitutes interference is judged by no standard but on the basis of political sympathies. It sounds the death knell for the meaningfulness of interference. This reveals the limits of the UN as the legislator as well as the judge and the executive, and whose judgements are political,<sup>15</sup> not juridical. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that interference is extremely hard to define. Interference, therefore, can only be properly identified in the context of a theory of social stability and change.

Yet, interference raises important questions on the consent theory of international law which *positivism*, led by Cornelius van Bynkershoek,<sup>16</sup> advances. Though states would always attempt to rationalise their actions in terms of international legal standards, international law holds moral suasion. States observe International Law when it serves their interests. States do pursue what they believe is in their national interests even when such pursuits defy the norms of the international environment.<sup>17</sup> It is a matter of experience that when a state sees a conflict between what is in its national interest and the provisions of international norms, it typically (not always) protects its interest through any means, even if that threatens the observance of international law. However, international law, like countervailing power, international public opinion, and international morality, generally has a restraining influence on the actions of states. Yet, constraints rarely provide predictable limits for the exercise of power. Fortunately, constraints do limit the international use of power. Otherwise, interference would be a daily occurrence in international life.

The norms and laws relating to subversion, guerrilla warfare, and interference are vague, inconsistent, and occasionally obsolete. Besides that, there is the usual problem of differing interpretations of an existing law, and disagreement as to what the law should be. This is not to suggest that the behaviour of states changes due to modernisation in norms. Rather, since international politics involve the problem of modifying war and peace, no matter the clarity of law, it is not bound to be observed in all cases.

### **Interference Pragmatism: Old and New**

Generally speaking, the principle of non-interference in other states' internal affairs is observed with considerable regularity. However, the norm does not operate, of course, in most interstate transactions. Interference in other states' internal affairs is no new norm of statecraft. It is not entirely a product of the

modern state system. it has been since the time of the Chou Dynasty in China, in ancient Greece and 15<sup>th</sup> century Italy. Louis XIV occasionally conspired to interfere in British constitutional issues and royal family affairs. Dynasts concluded military alliances, like the Triple Alliance of 1717, and indulged in all manners of intrigues to place certain candidates on foreign thrones. During the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries Republic of Venice, an official poisoner was employed and his successes was measured via the disposition of the leaders of rival states. Prussia had political locksmiths to pick and open doors and physicians to dispose of difficult people on the way. Using profits from the sale of arms to Iran, the U.S. government of Ronald Reagan used bases in Honduras and a pincer arm in Costa Rica to support "the Contras" and put 12,000 men into the field in an effort to overthrow the ruling Sandinista government of Nicaragua starting from 1979. Though the U.S. rejected the jurisdiction of the ICJ when Nicaragua brought charges of U.S. aggression before it, the Court, however, censured the U.S. in 1984 and ruled unanimously for the U.S. to halt such actions. Also, in 1983, U.S. forces invaded Grenada following a coup in that Caribbean island state. The actions of the U.S. in Grenada were condemned by the Commonwealth as an illegal and politically unnecessary act. Throughout the middle and late 1980s the U.S. provided military assistance to Jonas Savimbi's Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in its efforts to overthrow the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government in Angola.<sup>18</sup> Whether the identified interferences flow from national interests to gain political head start, from ideological commitments, or from a combination of both is uncertain. For instance, it would be recalled that American neoconservatives (such as Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton, and Douglas Feith) were a vocal pressure group insisting for years that Saddam Hussein of Iraq was an evil leader who should have been removed from power during the Persian Gulf War. If his regime was replaced by a democratic government, they predicted that democracy would spread throughout the region.<sup>19</sup> When weapons of mass destruction (WMD) were not found after Saddam Hussein was ousted, the most common argument was that the war was "largely about oil".<sup>20</sup>

Another of many examples is the contractual roles of France in its former colonies in Africa (*La Francafrrique*). From Cote D'Ivoire to Central African Republic, Niger Republic to Mali, Senegal to Gabon, all form parts of the series of intricate, but often one-sided and unequal, political, economic and military-defense bilateral and multilateral agreements that the ex-colonies continue to have with the erstwhile imperial overlord (a post-coloniser?). Undeterred by the

contents or wordings of such agreements the central strategic objective of France and its Western allies, most especially the U.S., is clearly spelt out in the original rationale for the establishment of AFRICOM in 2007 by Peter J. Pham as consisting of "protecting access to hydrocarbons and other strategic resources."<sup>21</sup> And of course, the French intelligence service, the SDECE (External Documentation and Counter-Espionage Service), has been implicated in several *coups d'etats*, mercenary operations, assassinations, and other meddling in domestic affairs across Africa. Indeed, if one looks at the various interferences, it is clear that pragmatism predominates; states look for special interests or connections before they champion the course of others.

Comparisons between centuries or other time divisions are difficult to make, in part, because the number of politically independent units in an international system fluctuates. However, the possibility of obtaining non-official access to foreign societies has grown with the advancement of mass media of communication, jet-speed transportation, and a complex and interdependent international economy. States now have fewer means of preventing outside infiltration, or the movement of funds, and propaganda from abroad which itself is a result of many people failing to accept the authority of where they live. In some 200 revolutions which happened prior to 1945, some form of foreign interference occurred in about one-half; and in about 50 of these revolutions, more than one foreign power interfered. Soviet Russia (Comintern), Nazi Germany (Abwehr), Fascist Italy, and the United States (Central Intelligence Agency) interfered in their neighbours' domestic affairs with unprecedented regularity. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have used propaganda against foreign audiences in order to undermine support for Middle Eastern regimes, financed and organised assassination plots, bribed government officials in neighbouring states, and sent their military troops into the Yemen Civil War of the 1960s. Egyptian and Syrian governments in the late 1950s directed propaganda campaigns urging dissident elements in Jordan to overthrow King Hussein and lead their nations to membership in the United Arab Republic.

Historically, the vast majority of interference has been interest-inspired; indeed, interferers often claimed they were carrying out the interests of their political entities. What is obvious is that interference may be sometimes politically embarrassing but never senseless, and it is usually a premeditated political tool. Interference offers alternative diplomacy for the attainment of national interest.<sup>22</sup> The rhetoric of *raison d'etat* includes national survival or self-preservation, territorial integrity, political independence, maintenance of

fundamental governmental institutions, self-sufficiency, prestige, liberty, and aggrandisement, among others. It would become obvious that the concept of national interest is too broad, too general, too vague, too all-inclusive, and allows for the crudest of casuistic justification of all contradictions in the service of the state which itself is the highest value since it makes possible all other values. Decision-making functionaries usually appeal to their access to top-secret information, and "national interest", yet, those interests may often contradict the interests of the people that make up the state. National interest, it has been argued, represents a higher morality, demanding leaders to be accountable and modest.

Despite legal and ethical prohibitions against the use of indiscreet interference, conduct of hostile propaganda and exploitation of ethnic, religious, or social cleavages of each other's societies are very common instruments in the relationships between hostile states that are largely unresponsive to each other's needs and values. In examining the materials on clandestine interference, Doyle<sup>23</sup> finds an extension of democratic peace in that liberal democracies do not interfere in one another's internal affairs. Is that because the interactions between them are fairly altruistic, farsighted and humane? However, most interference policy decisions and actions have to be understood as responses to more immediate evidence and conditions abroad. At such moments, any consideration of international public opinion, traditional policies, roles, orientations, and objectives may be, at best, intermittent.

The development of the techniques of mass persuasion or guerrilla warfare makes it easier to subvert foreign societies in the name of all sorts of reasons, to support or change the *status quo*. The techniques have been used to keep unrepresentative and unresponsive regimes in power (through, for example, the training of police in riot control techniques) against political change. They are directed at determining internal character. For instance, only a few states around the world are guiltless of the support for the "war of national liberation". The utility of the tools confirms the intertwining of domestic and foreign policies. These tools allow governments to simultaneously wear a mask of political respectability by entering into formal interactions with targeted states and governments. They have been used by state actors on both wings of the power spectrum (the strong and weak states), but all resort to the same sorts of tactics in order to achieve their goals.

The operational details of subversion may be locally planned and executed, while the main strategy might be formulated abroad. The problem is that the difference between genuine revolutionary movements, private armies of dissidents domestic factions, and foreign guerrilla forces is often blurred; and clandestine aid across frontiers is difficult to identify and even harder to prevent. For instance, in Africa, examples abound of opposition parties, driven underground, which established headquarters in neighbouring states where they got not only sanctuary, but were frequently funded, trained, and armed. Each government that uses this instrument of policy has their own particular "style" of subversive activity. Some governments have used ruling groups or dissident factions whose activities seldom affected the mass society directly. Others, on the other hand, have attempted to influence the attitudes and behaviour of a portion of each stratum and organisation in society in order to give the appearance of popular support.

Whereas, for some, the objective of subversion is to create a "new order" involving social revolutions and the establishment of client regimes, others aimed at maintaining or placing in power a government of almost any political complexion as long as it is sufficiently friendly. While some are bothered about sabotaging and infiltrating in the municipal, others are interested in protracted rural guerrilla warfare. The latter is particularly useful in areas that offer attractive conditions, including the slums where troops can hide, with a predominantly local people lacking access to the government at the centre, characterised by undeveloped communication facilities between local and municipal centres, and long unprotected borders which would be easily penetrated.

As an instrument of national interest, interference shares one important characteristic with all other techniques: its purpose is to achieve or defend the goals of the nation by influencing the orientations, roles, objectives, and actions of other states. As such, interference is ethically neutral, and we must distinguish between the goals sought through clandestine activities and the instruments themselves. It is the goals for which interference is to be used rather than the interference itself that can properly be judged by ethical standards. Except for students of ethics (narrowly defined), the role of interference must be considered in a political rather than in a purely moral context. The decision to use interference may well confirm the absence of a trigger-happy paranoid leader, or one seeking personal or national self-destruction or martyrdom, or by decision makers willing to play a form of Russia roulette with modern weapons,



or by leaders whose information about and communication with an adversary is so incomplete that their decisions processes are largely guided by guesswork, or by those who regard the loss of most of their nation's population and resources as a "reasonable" cost for the achievement of foreign policy goals.

National values play a large role in each of these. For example, for the policymakers in Western societies, actions by other states which oppose the values of individual freedom, civil liberties, national self-determination, independence, and economic progress are to be resisted everywhere. For those in socialist societies, the value of the working-class solidarity, the struggle against "imperialism", and those of "national liberation movements" are to be supported wherever possible.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the Additional Protocol I of 1977 to the Geneva Red Cross Conventions of 1949 applies the full requirements of humanitarian law of wars to national liberation movements. In Resolution 2105(XX) of 1965, Resolutions 3328(XXIX), 2160(XXI), 2189(XXXI), 2225(XX) and 2403(XXIII), the General Assembly invites all states to provide material and moral assistance to national liberation movements in colonial territories. In many underdeveloped states, the values of rapid economic development, national unity, freedom from foreign control, and national prestige are the main criteria against which to judge the policies of other states. In other words, and in any case, the characteristics of political systems in the world today vary, from primitive, patriarchal, or religious oligarchies to industrial democracies and totalitarian dictators, such that any proposition would have to be qualified, at best, in terms of the type of society being considered. The values establish for each society a vast region of admissible policies surrounded by a belt of inadmissible policies.

Though these values do not necessarily prescribe specific responses for particular situations, they establish the attitudes towards the situations and provide both the justifications for, and guides to, the policies designed to cope with them. This is not to say that states absolutely or persistently promote these values through their clandestine interferences, but are tempered by such other objectives and needs as defending security and economic interests, and maintaining the solidarity of alliances. Perhaps, one reason why this is so is that most people are unknowledgeable and indifferent to most issues of world affairs because they are perceived as not to have much direct impact on the life of the individual citizen;<sup>25</sup> so, no public furore is expected. Moreover, crisis situation decision-makers in most societies usually shield themselves from public scrutiny and do their work mostly in secret.

It is often difficult to adopt non-interference as a realistic guide to action where a state's foreign policy goals and objectives, values and norms are threatened. Most of the problems that policymakers deal with do not appear to them as moral problems. They are practical problems that demand practical responses. It can be easy for a government in a critical situation to proclaim fidelity, unlike one in the middle of a conflict as vague principles such as those of the UN Charter may appear not to be helpful. Yet, states often use the rhetoric of high-sounding principles to justify interference. For instance, when they abandon treaty obligations or diplomatic proclamations to sponsor subversions, they appeal to the pursuit of principles beyond the state: democracy or communism, freedom or equality, order or justice, and historical inevitability. These appeals are mostly designed for public consumption. However, ethical norms are revealed in the reasoning behind and justification of these national roles and functions. The role conception of the "bastion of the revolution", for example, expresses the moral imperative that the nation should make sacrifices to promote and support revolutionary movements abroad even if doing so is not to its immediate advantage.

Interference has been an important technique for influencing other states and exploiting local crises in wobbly political systems. Any unstable political order typically (not always) offers opportunities for foreign interference. Given the nature of the emergence, composition, and development of challenges in many states, a high incidence of rivalry, conflict, and civil war is virtually foreordained. As long as states experience domestic instabilities, the possibilities of interference are extraordinary. At the point where "local" problems impact on foreign policy decisions, goals, and values, some sort of relationship between the external interests and domestic issues will be established. Interference may be a "punishment" for going ahead with a particular policy which the interferer feels threatens its own national interest. Does that mean the state would change its policies? Not really. But it does send a signal regarding that state's place within the international system. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that every interference is undesirable. As long as states are committed to expansive objectives, but struggle to achieve these objectives with standard military, consular bargaining, or economic demands, clandestine alongside manipulative techniques would always be deployed. However, just like other policy options, any state must note that its interference must be credible; that is, the state must have the resources and the will to follow through on it. To call attention to the ethical problems created by such actions is

appropriate and necessary, but they cannot be condemned on such grounds unless account is taken of the political dimensions as well.

Decisions on interference confirm the theoretical postulation of *constructivism*<sup>26</sup> that relationships between states are basically more fluid than realists and liberalists understand. A state, in fact, responds to the actions of other actors depending, in part, on how the state views itself, as well as the ways in which it views the other actor(s). In looking at the context of interference, it is important to understand the full extent of the relationship between the two states, their identities, and their interactions. Some states would assert that their responsibilities extend beyond their own states, identify them and prioritise them. Thus, explanations of interference which claim that all statesmen are immoral, concerned with their own power and prestige, and indifferent to the consequences of their actions are surely not warranted by facts. Explanations of state actions are inadequate if they characterise policy-making as a simple choice between good and evil. And of course, the best of motives may not guarantee that the consequences of policy will do "good". This certainly reinforces the uncertainties and complexities of understanding international relationships.

In an era when wars have become unwinnable due to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, which makes states more hesitant to fight each other, a mastery over clandestine techniques of statecraft may be as important as the capacity to carry out conventional military assaults. The minimalist version of hot diplomacy uses such tools as infiltration through foreign voluntary organisations, sponsor strikes and riots, create political scandals, attempt a *coup d'état*, or, on their own territories, organise, train, and arm a group of foreign dissidents and then send them home to conduct guerrilla warfare or subversion. Compared with outright war, these tools which cost minimal national resources and possessions, and with much lower hazards are being deployed by both the large and small states. Motives that are unrelated to the national security, that is, the goal of reducing the budgets of military spending, have only rarely proved to be a sufficient incentive to the pursuit of clandestine activities.<sup>27</sup> Neither the series of interferences nor the example of many underdeveloped states that spend a vast proportion of their meagre resources on clandestine activities suggests that purely economic motives are responsible for indirect confrontations.

Attempts to abolish war are nearly as old as the use of violence itself. Included in the former are the concepts of "just war" (force can only be used for legitimate ends), the Kellogg-Briand Pact (outlawing war), the Nuremberg War Crimes trials (doctrine of "crimes against humanity" used to punish Nazi leaders), and the United Nations Charter (renounces the use of force except in self-defence). More importantly, the use of clandestine activities in place of war is a form of self-imposed limit on violence. Whether deriving from fear of reprisal, military impracticality, or unwillingness to bear the onus for initiating its use, states adopt clandestine activities short of wars.

### **Going Forward**

In the end, non-interference becomes a tragic victim of the bludgeoning of international politics; indeed, it is difficult to change established ways of doing things. Interference in other states' affairs, and not coincidentally, the claims of national interest, may, therefore, be viewed as consistent and consistently just. Unintended and unforeseen consequences of reasonably legal provisions may outweigh the expected or intended results. Non-interference, as provided in the UN Charter, rests on an exaggerated confidence in the right of each sovereign state to security within its territory, but by strengthening absolutism menaced the attainment of human security. There is an inescapably tragic complexity in this as the need for non-interference clashes with the requirements of human security. While there is a universal code of non-interference, there are differing contexts in which it is applied. In responsive security systems, states operate within a system where interference is seldom necessary. Antagonistic relationships differ and the difference is one between conditions of civilisation and conditions of nature because of the half-anarchic character of international politics: "One state is to another as a wolf." In other words, interference which is an exception to the normal processes of responsive security systems is inevitable in conflict-ridden ones.

In the modern world, a state can only escape all outside interference in its isolation and remoteness from "world affairs". Communication satellites, for all practical purposes, make that impossible to achieve, to mention just one of the macro-propellers of contemporary interference. With real-time networking, everyone who will, can now participate in rule, power, and authority everywhere according to the relevance of their opinion using the latest information in the most creative ways (power has indeed leaked out of national

sovereignty). Durable though the nation-state has proved to be, interdependence has caught up with most of the issues, practices, and policies that used to be regarded as essentially "domestic". The content of international affairs is now mostly the internal affairs of still sovereign states. What we want from other countries—and what they mostly want from us—are changes in "domestic" preconceptions, priorities, policies, and practices. By this token, most major "domestic policy" actions we take are enormously important to nearly every other member of the international environment. And of course, a community based solely on the self-centred pursuit of goals by its members can give no assurance of stability, to say nothing of justice and equity, or peace. Therefore, the most frightening human security nightmare of the 21<sup>st</sup> century may not be the familiar mushroom cloud but the unfamiliar and unsettling problem of how to moderate the dangers, enhance the efficiencies and rectify the injustices of a state system that is too interconnected to separate. The achievement of a harmonious society in which a community of cultures co-exist and within which every individual can find fulfilment is the purpose that should govern actions. We acknowledge that this suggestion will not reach beyond the page on which it is written without a massive amount of complex activities by men of affairs operating on the plane of their expertise.

## **Conclusion**

This study has explored developments in interference as a means used to affect events in other states and how the political and ethical dimensions of interference interpenetrate and work out their uneasy compromises. It identifies how state practice, in many cases, contradicts the UN Charter provision on non-interference. In place of power and the emphasis on non-interference, global politics should focus on maintenance of order. But, as we have shown, the world is not an orderly place. Trying to maintain order among the states of the world is the work of Sisyphus. State practice reveals the prevalence of interest; international law concludes that the pursuit of one state's interest via interference in another's domestic affairs is repugnant to state sovereignty. Contrary to the essentially utopian sermon of Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, human nature has not changed since the days of classical antiquity.<sup>28</sup> Human is good and evil; their virtues and vices persist no less in a technologically advanced than in a primitive society. Politics and diplomacy bring out the harshest side of human's nature, though sometimes also the best. The world of

national interest remains stubbornly autonomous; the suzerainty of law may be of quite Merovingian ineffectiveness. The case can, therefore, be made that abandoning some states to their fate<sup>29</sup> via abdication of responsibilities for shaping the course of affairs does not get rid of them, it merely postpones the time when the problems must be dealt with. This is so because national boundaries are not always able to permanently confine the tensions that can build up due to the disintegration of a nation. Moreover, to try to provide a solution at this point can cost more than if they had been dealt with earlier. While one can multiply examples endlessly, let us concentrate on one: Syria is a recent example of where costs grew greater, violence escalated, and destruction worsened.<sup>30</sup>

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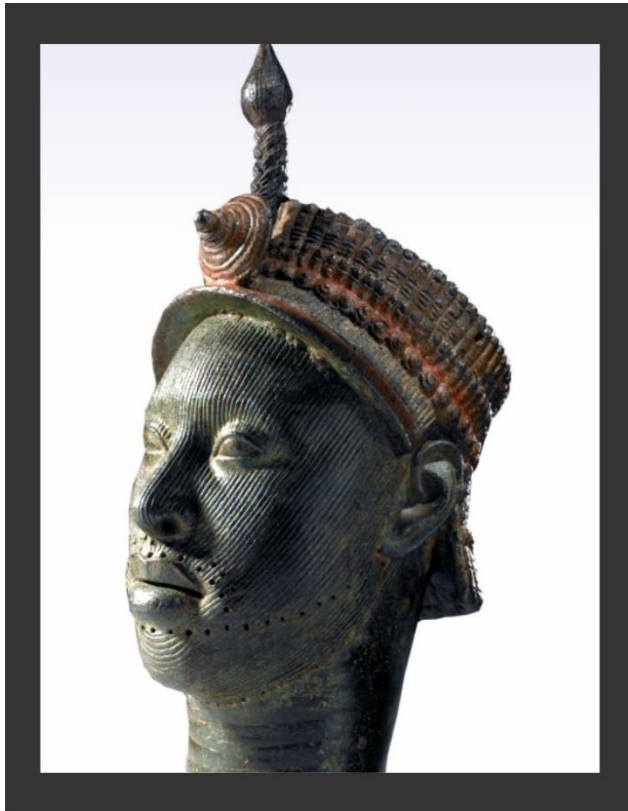
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## **Dramatisation of Indigenous Yoruba Public Administration System in Tunde Kelani's *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwọ***

**Babatunde Allen Bakare and Emmanuel Gbenga Adeboye**

### **Abstract**

Tunde Kelani's films *Saworoide* (1999) and its sequel *Agogo Èèwọ* (2002) significantly showcase the Nigerian Yoruba culture. Written by Akinwumi Isola and produced and directed by Tunde Kelani, these movies examine the indigenous Yoruba public administration system in Nigerian society. *Saworoide* (1999), translated as "Brass Bells", evaluates the political landscapes, societal norms, power structures and cultural ethos within the fictional town of Jogbo, touching on themes like politics, corruption, and power dynamics. Kelani weaves a rich narrative that integrates Yoruba culture's visual and traditional elements, including attire, rituals, and customs, enhancing the film's authenticity and impact. In *Agogo Èèwọ* (2002), Kelani continues the exploration of governance, leadership, and the consequences of authority without boundaries. Through Yoruba tradition and folklore, the film addresses questions of political legitimacy, community welfare, and ethical leadership. The focal point of both films is leadership and its implications on community welfare. Kelani goes into details to explore governance complexities, such as accountability, justice, and power dynamics within communities. This paper aims to analyse Kelani's cinematic approach in *Saworoide* (1999) and *Agogo Èèwọ* (2002), highlighting their significance in portraying indigenous Yoruba public administration. This paper aims to unravel the layers of meaning embedded in Kelani's storytelling, providing insights into the interplay of tradition, politics, and societal values in Yoruba society through cinema.

### **Introduction**

Tunde Kelani's films *Saworoide*<sup>1</sup> and *Agogo Èèwọ*<sup>2</sup> offer profound insights into traditional governance structures and leadership dynamics within Yoruba society. These movies, set in the fictional town of Jogbo, examine the intricacies of political hierarchy and the role of traditional rulers.

The Yoruba political structure, as accurately portrayed in the movies, revolves around various key figures, starting from the political head known as the Oba (king), addressed as 'Onijogbo' (the king of Jogbo) in the films, the council of chiefs (Ijoye which consists of Otun, Osi, Iyalode, Iyaloja, and Balogun among others), the kingmakers (Afobaje), the Baale and Youth leaders among others. Succession to the throne is depicted as hereditary, with the kingmakers and religious cults playing pivotal roles in the selection process. Thus, Isadola and Adeleye<sup>3</sup> assert that,

...the titles of some of these figures vary in each Yoruba kingdom; for example, the Oba is known as Alaafin in Oyo, while in Ife, he is referred to as Ooni. The kingmakers are also known as Oyomesi in Oyo, while the Ijebus call them Osugbo. It must also be noted that succession to the throne of the kingdoms in Yorubaland was hereditary.

Kelani's cinematic approach in *Saworoide* (brass bells) and *Agogo Èèwò* (taboo gong) goes beyond mere storytelling; it encapsulates the essence of communal governance, accountability, and the consequences of leadership failure. While the films do not directly mirror the country's economic challenges<sup>4</sup> they provide a lens through which broader societal issues can be examined.

*Saworoide*, "is the parable of the drum as the voice of the people"<sup>5</sup> the narrative focuses on leadership responsibilities, highlighting the importance of strong institutions over personalities. The character of the king (Onijogbo) and the communal resistance against self-serving leadership underscore traditional values of communal welfare and ethical governance. Similarly, *Agogo Èèwò* delves into the complexities of leadership crisis and the consequences of corruption, albeit in a fictional context. Through symbolic figures like Baba Opalanba and Iya, representing the griot tradition, the films convey messages of wisdom, cultural preservation, and the transfer of leadership ideals to the younger generation. To this end, Olaiya asserts that,

Kelani's *Saworoide* and *Agogo-Èèwò* extensively deployed the traditions of the griot to canvass for institutions of good governance [...] In *Saworoide* and *Agogo-Èèwò*, Baba Opalanba and Iya personified the griots, respectively. Throughout the epic plays, both personages remind the audience of the futility of arbitrary rule or corrupt practices by rulers without definitive consequences. With nostalgic vocal undulating and

native sensibilities that bespeak a typical griot, Baba Opalanba and Iya delivered the reminiscence of good governance as laid down in the mystics and old rules that are contingent upon a ruler of the Jogbo community.<sup>6</sup>

Kelani's use of Yoruba oral traditions, language, and cultural symbols adds depth to the film's portrayal of indigenous Yoruba public administration. The folk songs, riddles, and ritualistic practices incorporated into the films enrich the narrative, offering audiences a glimpse into the cultural heritage of Yoruba governance traditions.

This study explores the cinematic and literary values embedded in Kelani's films, focusing on how they are employed to depict the indigenous Yoruba system of public administration. By analysing narrative techniques, character portrayals, and cultural representations, this study seeks to unravel the thematic layers which facilitate a deep understanding of traditional governance and leadership dynamics in Yoruba society as depicted in *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwò*.

This study employs the qualitative method of analysis to explore Tunde Kelani's films *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwò*, focusing on the dramatisation of indigenous Yoruba public administration. It combines film analysis, cultural anthropology, and political science methods to provide a comprehensive examination. The paper takes on *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwò* with a view to identifying themes, dialogues, and visual symbols associated with Yoruba governance. This is complemented by a review of scholarly articles, books, and other relevant literature on Yoruba culture, traditional governance, and African cinema. Additionally, interviews are conducted with experts in cultural studies, film critics, and scholars specialising in Yoruba studies to obtain deeper insights. Archival research was also undertaken, exploring historical documents and records that contextualise the depicted traditional practices and political structures.

The analytical framework includes thematic analysis to identify and categorise themes related to governance, ethical leadership, cultural rituals, and societal norms as depicted in the films. Symbolic interpretation is employed to decipher cultural and spiritual symbols such as *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwò* for their significance in enforcing governance. Narrative analysis is also used to examine storytelling techniques, the use of proverbs, and oral traditions and the purpose of doing this is to understand their roles in conveying political messages.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts two primary theoretical frameworks: Postcolonial Theory and Cultural Performance Theory. Postcolonial Theory, pioneered by Edward Said in 1978,<sup>7</sup> provides a tool for critiquing the lingering effects of colonialism on contemporary African governance. It is deployed to explore how Kelani's films subvert colonial narratives and reassert indigenous cultural values, juxtaposing traditional Yoruba governance models with modern political systems and revealing how indigenous traditions offer viable alternatives to Western political structures.

Cultural Performance Theory, developed by Richard Schechner in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century is employed to examine how Yoruba public administration is performed and dramatised in films. It views culture as a dynamic and performative process where rituals, symbols, and narratives play crucial roles in social cohesion and governance. In the words of Schechner,

Every day, people perform dozens of rituals. These range from religious rituals to the rituals of everyday life, from the rituals of life roles to the rituals of each profession, from the rituals of politics and the judicial system to the rituals of business or home life. Even animals perform rituals.<sup>8</sup>

The theory is employed to analyse the performative aspects of the films, such as the rituals associated with installation of kings, the role of the griot (Baba Opalanba and Iya), and the use of songs and proverbs to convey moral and ethical lessons.

By integrating postcolonial and cultural performance theories, the research explores how Kelani's films depict, critique, and celebrate Yoruba governance. It underscores the resilience of indigenous systems amidst modern political challenges, highlighting their potentials to inform contemporary governance practices.

## **Films as Mediums of Cultural Preservation**

The dramatisation of indigenous Yoruba public administration provides a profound window into the rich cultural heritage and social organisational

systems of the Yoruba people. This endeavour not only contributes to preserving and promoting traditional governance structures but also educates and entertains contemporary audiences through the medium of theatre and film. The symbiotic relationship between theatre and society, as noted by Traore,<sup>9</sup> is particularly evident in these dramatisations, where unfolding social, economic, and political realities are mirrored and critiqued. In their corroboration, Aromona and Waters maintains that,

Unlike literature, film's audio-visual power makes it the most potent medium for documenting social realities for sensitisation and edification. Access to literature is still limited by the level of literacy, which justifies the adaptation of some literary works to film. The issues that literary writers may exploit and get away with, filmmakers have to handle with great subtlety and circumspect because of the long-lasting impressions.<sup>10</sup>

Film is one of the means of communicating cultural images and messages to the people of a community and is an agent of socialisation and information<sup>11</sup> Film, as a modern form of communication, is used by an individual to express feelings, thoughts and intentions that are based on portrayals of cultural images with symbolic meanings. Films are cultural artefacts created by specific cultures “in the trans-missive and ritualistic possesses of communication . . .”<sup>12</sup>

Indigenous Yoruba public administration is characterised by a complex and sophisticated system of governance that predates the advent of colonialism. The Yoruba society is organised into a hierarchical structure with the Oba (king) at the apex, supported by a council of chiefs and various other functionaries who manage different aspects of administration. This structure ensures a balance in the distribution of power and responsibilities, reflecting a well-organised polity.

Theatre and film have become potent mediums for documenting and re-enacting these traditional systems. By dramatising the roles and responsibilities within the Yoruba administrative framework, these art forms serve not only as means of cultural preservation but also as tools for educating both local and international audiences about the intricacies of Yoruba governance. The visual and narrative power of these dramatisations makes them effective in conveying the values, norms, and philosophies underpinning indigenous Yoruba administrative system. To this end, Adedina and Taiwo<sup>13</sup> assert that;

Portrayals of these cultural art-crafts in films are in consonance with the Yoruba means of communicating ideas and perceptions. Therefore, culture and cultural images are crucial visual ingredients in films and their importance in movie productions cannot be discounted.

One of the strengths of a film in this context lies in its ability to utilise the visual medium to bring historical periods to life. Epic video films, which often serve as period dramas, showcase the cultural heritage of Nigeria, emphasising the administrative and social systems of the precolonial era. These films are notable for their attention to details in setting, costume, and language varieties, which collectively evoke a sense of historical authenticity and cultural pride. There is, therefore, a tinge of African aesthetics in the way in which society and culture are represented in the epic videos.<sup>14</sup>

In dramatising Yoruba public administration, filmmakers and playwrights often highlight the roles of various officials and the processes of decision-making, conflict resolution, and community governance. The portrayal of the Oba and his council, market women (Iyalojas), warriors, and religious leaders offers a comprehensive view of how governance was traditionally conducted. This depiction not only serves to entertain but also educate audiences about the governance structures that have shaped Yoruba society.

Moreover, these dramatisations also serve as commentaries on contemporary issues. Drawing parallels between traditional and modern governance provides insights into how indigenous principles can inform present-day administrative practices. This dialogue between the past and the present enriches cultural narratives and provides valuable insight into leadership, accountability, and communal harmony.

The critical reception of these dramatisations varies, reflecting diverse perspectives on their accuracy, impact, and relevance. While some scholars and critics celebrate the educational and cultural values of these works, others call for a more nuanced approach that avoids romanticising the past. They argue for a balanced representation that acknowledges the complexities and challenges within traditional systems while highlighting their strengths.

The dramatisation of indigenous Yoruba public administration through theatre and film represents a means of preserving and promoting Yoruba cultural

heritage. It bridges the gap between the past and the present, providing audiences with rich historical narratives and contemporary reflections. These dramatisations not only entertain but also educate, offering profound insights into the governance systems that have sustained one of Africa's most influential ethnic groups. Thus, Adedina and Taiwo<sup>15</sup> opine that "Kelani's unique style stands as his works are embedded within the intrinsic part of the socio-political and economic life of the Yoruba people, of which he is one." The delicate balance established between historical authenticity and artistic creativity ensures that these portrayals resonate with different audiences, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Yoruba culture and administration.

### **Synopsis of *Saworoide* (Brass Bells)**

*Saworoide* is an allegorical tale that mirrors Nigeria's political and social dynamics and the broader African continent. This Yoruba film, translated as "Brass Bells," was originally penned as a literary work by Akinwumi Isola. It addresses themes of corruption, despotism, the cyclical nature of power struggles in a fictional Yoruba town named Jogbo, and the tension between tradition and modernity. Acknowledging prominent figures such as the current President of Nigeria and His Excellency President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, who was then the governor-elect of Lagos State, the film occupies a significant place in Nigerian cinematic history.

Set in the fictional town of Jogbo, *Saworoide* focuses on the story of a pact between the community and its kings, a tradition akin to a constitutional framework meant to guide leadership transitions. The plot centres on Lapite (played by Kola Oyewo), who, influenced by Balogun and Seriki, rejects the traditional rituals of kingship upon realising the significance of the rituals as disclosed by the court philosopher, Baba Opalanba. These rituals, which include incisions and oath-taking, are believed to bind the king to the well-being of his people but also threaten his ambitions for wealth and longevity. Lapite's refusal to adhere to these ancient customs portends dire consequences. The symbolic and sacred drum with brass bells, *Saworoide*, played by Ayangalu, signifies the community's connection to their ruler and traditions. Should Lapite hear the drum beating, he risks losing his crown and life. His reign, although marked by prosperity and wealth among the ruling elite due to a booming timber trade, is also characterised by corruption and environmental degradation. The film portrays the adverse effects of unchecked exploitation



and governance, as the timber merchants' greed leads to environmental pollution and depletion of Jogbo's natural resources. This reckless pursuit of profit brings Lapite into conflict with the town's youth, who demand transparency and a humane economic order. Their revolt against the oppressive regime symbolises a broader societal quest for justice and accountability. In a dramatic turn, Lagata (played by Kunle Bantefa), the timber merchants' security forces commander, seizes power amid the chaos. His authoritarian rule descends into tyranny, further exacerbating the community's woes. However, embodying resistance and hope, the youth eventually overthrow Lagata, paving the way for a new order. The film concludes with the initiation of traditional installation rites for the young prince Adebola Adebomi, signalling the restoration of rightful leadership and the community's return to its foundational values.

*Saworoide* stands out as a political parable, highlighting corruption, electoral fraud, and intolerance of criticisms. It is a poignant commentary on the cyclical nature of power struggles and a community's resilience bound by cultural heritage and quest for justice. Through its rich narrative and symbolic storytelling, the film underscores the importance of adhering to indigenous governance principles while navigating the complexities of modern political landscapes.

### **Synopsis of *Agogo Èèwọ* (Gong of Taboo)**

*Agogo Èèwọ*, produced and directed by Tunde Kelani in 2002 and written by Akinwumi Isola, is a powerful sequel to *Saworoide*. The film delves into themes of integrity, corruption, and the struggle for righteous leadership within the fictional town of Jogbo.

The narrative of *Agogo Èèwọ* centres around the tumultuous process of selecting a new king for Jogbo following the events in *Saworoide*. The town yearns for a leader to usher in an era of economic prosperity and political stability. The initial hope is reposed in Adebomi, who embodies the community's aspirations for a rejuvenated and principled leadership. However, the old council of chiefs, comprising Balogun, Seriki, and Bada, manipulates the selection process to install their preferred candidate, Adebosipo, a retired police boss and farmer. Initially reluctant, Adebosipo is through persistent pressure made to accept the position. Despite his initial reservations about entering the political arena of

Jogbo, he decides to take on the mantle of leadership, driven by a conviction to remain untainted by corruption and serve the land with integrity. Adebosipo undergoes the traditional initiation rituals, including the oath of office and the ritual incisions, symbolising his commitment to the role. Contrary to the expectations of the corrupt chiefs, Adebosipo emerges as a resolute and incorruptible leader. His firm stance against corruption and refusal to be manipulated by the self-serving chiefs makes it impossible for the chiefs to continue with their nefarious activities, particularly in the lucrative timber trade. Due to the king's resolute refusal to yield to the demands of the chiefs, Balogun, Seriki, Bada and Iyalaje begin to plot against the king. They start inciting unrest and using idle youths to commit acts of violence and discredit his government. As tensions escalate, the chiefs accuse Adebosipo falsely of looting the treasury and dealing dishonestly with the nation, leading to public outcry and demands for his impeachment. However, Adebosipo steadfastly denies these allegations. To uncover the truth and address the nation's persistent issues, Ifa priest asks that all cabinet members swear to an oath with the Agogo Èèwọ (gong of taboo). This sacred ritual, conducted in full view of the people, is designed to expose the guilty and vindicate the innocent. Anticipating exposure, the chiefs plot to assassinate the Ifa priest and steal the Agogo Èèwọ. But the priest, having foreseen their treachery, uses powerful incantations to thwart the assassins, rendering them powerless and ensuring their capture. The subsequent trial reveals the true culprits and the guilty chiefs come to a tragic and mysterious end. With the city purged of corrupt elements, Adebosipo and the remaining upright leaders are vindicated and allowed to continue to govern Jogbo with justice.

### **The Portrayal of Indigenous Yoruba Public Administration in the Cinematic Works**

*Saworoide* and *Agogo Èèwọ* both offer an illuminating exploration of Yoruba indigenous governance systems, demonstrating their enduring relevance to contemporary socio-political contexts. The films showcase the essence of Yoruba administrative practices, foregrounding its monarchical structures, cultural heritage, and traditional practices. Both films depict the political and social dynamics within the fictional town of Jogbo, a microcosm of Yoruba society, offering insights into the Yoruba order of governance, beliefs, and

rituals. They explore themes of corruption, integrity, justice, and accountability, showcasing the complexities of leadership and the constant negotiation between tradition and modernity. They critique issues of corruption and abuse of power while celebrating the enduring resilience and moral fortitude embedded within Yoruba cultural values. They also underscore the continuing relevance of traditional values, communal ethos, and spiritual guidance in navigating political challenges, and in attempts at fostering social cohesion, and upholding justice within Yoruba society. For Adeyanu,

The films, *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èṣẹ̀wò*, are a satire on corruption in the governance of Nigeria. Jogbo town represented Nigeria and its complexities, while Onijogbo (the king) represented the presidency, which is always an attraction of power for the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The intrigues, struggles and alignments for the Onijogbo throne, which culminates in bad government, reflect anti-democratic acts by politicians in Nigerian polity.<sup>16</sup>

Central to the Yoruba order of political administration is the belief in collective decision-making, consensus-building, and the recognition of hierarchy within the community. This is exemplified by the roles of the king, chiefs, elders, and ordinary citizens, each contributing to the governance process based on their social status and responsibilities. The king, known as the Onijogbo, stands at the pinnacle of the monarchical structure, symbolising the central figure of authority who is expected to govern with wisdom and fairness. The king's role is not only political but also deeply spiritual, as he is seen as the custodian of people's cultural and religious values.

The chiefs, represented as the council of elders, play crucial advisory roles to the king. However, their motivations and actions, as seen in both films, often reflect political intrigues, power struggles, and conflicting interests. These dynamics showcase the nuanced complexities within Yoruba political administration, where loyalty, ambition, and tradition intersect. The role of the chiefs, such as Balogun, Seriki, Bada, and Iyalaje, is crucial in the governance structure. These chiefs act as advisors and power brokers, often wielding significant influence over the king's decisions. In both *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èṣẹ̀wò*, these characters are portrayed as manipulative and self-serving, seeking to exploit their positions for personal gains. Their actions underscore the

challenges of maintaining integrity and good governance within a system that is susceptible to corruption.

The role of the Ifa priest is central to the spiritual and administrative order of Yoruba public administration. The Ifa priest mediates between the spiritual and temporal realms, using rituals and divination to guide the community's decisions. In *Agogo Èèwò*, the Ifa priest's insistence on the use of *Agogo Èèwò* (gong of taboo) to expose corruption reflects the deep-seated belief in the relevance of traditional rituals in the process of maintaining justice and morality.

**King Adebosipo:** Apa o si fẹ ka àwọn ijọye mi kan (Some of my chiefs are getting out of control). Se ko si oro to de àwọn ìjòyè bí Saworoidẹ se de àwọn ọba ni? (Isn't there a check for the chiefs as Saworoidẹ is for the kings?)

**Baba Amawomaro (Ifa Priest):** Nigbati Onijogbo àkókó tó fi ipilẹ̀sẹ̀ Ade Ide àti Saworoidẹ le ile fun àwọn oba, o sọ ti àwọn ìjòyè naa (While the first Onijogbo has placed the foundation of the correlation between the Brass Crown and the Brass bells for the king, he spoke about that of the chiefs.)

**King Adebosipo:** Looto! (Really!)

**Baba Amawomaro (Ifa Priest):** Oun ni oro agogo eewo (It is the 'Agogo Èèwò' oath (The Gong of Taboo))

(*Agogo Èèwò*, 2002) <sup>17</sup>

The roles played by Ifa priest in the films are illustrative of the inter-relationship existing between religion and governance in Yoruba society, where spiritual legitimacy is a cornerstone of political authority. The Ifa priest emerges as a key figure in mediating conflicts, offering spiritual guidance, and upholding the sacred rituals that underpin governance. Consulting Ifa in decision-making, as portrayed in both films, symbolises the reliance on ancestral wisdom and divine intervention in matters of governance, highlighting the spiritual dimensions of Yoruba political administration.

In *Saworoidẹ*, the narrative begins with the passing on of the old king and the subsequent search for his successor. The process of selection involves elaborate rituals, including oath-taking and ritual incisions, which are intended to bind the king to the land and its people. Lapite, the newly chosen king, refuses to undergo these rituals, driven by a desire to extend his reign and perpetuate his

corrupt activities. These rituals, including incisions and oath-taking, symbolise a sacred pact with the community and commitment to upholding its values and laws. This refusal sets off a chain of events, highlighting the tension between traditional values and the corrupt ambitions of those in power. The rituals of Saworoide (the drum with brass bells) serves as a divine mechanism to check the king's excesses, symbolising the accountability inherent in Yoruba public administration. Lapite's refusal to undergo these rituals is not merely a personal decision but a profound subversion of established norms and traditions. His actions set off a series of adverse events that underscore the significance of these rituals in maintaining the social and political fabric of Jogbo. Saworoide poignantly illustrates how abandoning cultural protocols can lead to instability and corruption, reflecting broader themes of accountability and legitimacy in governance.

The symbols in the films (the drum, Saworoide and gong, Agogo Èèwọ) represents the nexus between the cultural and the spiritual in indigenous Yoruba governance system. According to tradition, any king who has not undergone the sacred rituals risks losing his crown and life if the drum is played to his hearing. This element introduces a layer of tension and inevitability to Lapite's rule, emphasising the inextricable link between tradition and political authority. The drum and gong's role as enforcers of accountability symbolises the community's collective power to uphold justice and challenge despotism.

The films meticulously capture the essence of cultural preservation and identity among the Yoruba. The adoption of traditional costumes, language, and musical compositions further enhances the immersive experience, showcasing the intricate details of Yoruba heritage.

The storytellers, Baba Opanba and Iya add another layer to the theme of depiction of Yoruba public administration. These characters, often portrayed as elderly and wise, serve as memory keepers, interjecting with songs, aphorisms, and proverbs all of which stand as parables for the unfolding events. Their presence underscores the importance of oral tradition in preserving and transmitting cultural values and historical knowledge. Baba Opanba and Iya embody the roles of griots and custodians of oral tradition. Baba Opanba, the court philosopher and historian, serves as a repository of wisdom, guiding the king and the community with his profound insights and knowledge of ancestral lore. His presence underscores the importance of historical memory in indigenous Yoruba governance system. Similarly, Iya, the embodiment of

maternal wisdom and resilience, plays a significant role in shaping the moral fabric of Jogbo. Her character represents feminine leadership, offering, as it were, counsel and support to those in need. Through her interactions and actions, Iya exemplifies the vital role of women in Yoruba society, highlighting their contributions to governance, community cohesion, and ethical conduct.

Kelani's films are rich in idioms, proverbs, metaphors, chants, incantations, and poetry and are integral to Yoruba language and its expressive capacity. These linguistic elements enhance the films' authenticity and depth, allowing viewers to engage with the cultural and philosophical dimensions of Yoruba public administration. The Yoruba language, with its nuanced meanings and rhetorical power, serves as a vehicle for storytelling and cultural preservation.

The films examine the themes of resistance and communal resilience. In *Saworoide*, the youth of Jogbo, disillusioned by acts of corruption and environmental degradation perpetrated by the leadership, spearhead a revolt against Lapite's administration. Their actions reflect a broader yearning for transparency, justice, and a return to ethical governance. This revolt ultimately leads to Lapite's downfall and the usurpation of power by Lagata, the timber merchants' commander of security forces. Lagata's reign of tyranny further underscores the cyclical nature of power struggles and the constant need for vigilance and adherence to traditional values in governance. The head of the military, Lagata, holds this conversation with his close protégé, Kanjuko, in the army;

LAGATA: Mori pe o nife ilu yi lokan gan... (I know you truly love this community...) Bawo lose r'ilu wayi si? (Are things well with our society?)

KANJUKO: Oga, arun oju ni Awa laarin opo, anjowon... (Boss, it's there for all to see. We are in the midst of plenty, but we continue to suffer)

LAGATA: Se kowa ye kase nkankan si? (Don't you think it is time we intervened?)

KANJUKO: Osupa le, eni o gun (The moon is out, you complain that it is not round).

LAGATA: Owa rope owo enikan oto, Owo to (So you think no one can correct it?) daadaa! Ohun owo mio to ma fi gogo fa (What about the use of force?)

(*Saworoide*, 1999)<sup>18</sup>

The above conversation leaves no one in doubt about the factors leading to the overthrow of King Lapite, bearing striking similarity with Wang and Xu's (2018) submission that autocratic regimes are often susceptible to violent overthrow.

*Agogo Èwò* continues the exploration of these themes with the installation of Adebosipo as the new king. Unlike his predecessor, Adebosipo is portrayed as an upright and principled leader who is committed to combating corruption and restoring order. The chiefs, however, see Adebosipo as a pawn they could use to regain lost power. This dynamic illustrates the persistent struggle between ethical leadership and the entrenched interests of corrupt officials.

Settings and locations in the films, such as the palace and courtyard, reinforce the continuity of Yoruba traditions in modern times. These locations are depicted as centres of political and social life, where important decisions are taken and communal rituals performed. The juxtaposition of traditional and contemporary settings highlights the evolving nature of Yoruba society and its ability to adapt to current dynamics while retaining its cultural essence.

The use of protest songs and victory chants in both films reflects the people's collective voice and engagement with the political process. These musical elements and traditional instruments like *sekere* and *bata* contribute to the films' cultural authenticity and emotional resonance.

The film's visual and narrative elements enhance its portrayal of Yoruba public administration. Traditional symbols, costumes, and language are meticulously employed to create an authentic cultural backdrop, immersing the audience in the socio-political realities of *Jogbo*. Council deliberations, communal decision-making processes, and ritual performances provide a comprehensive view of the indigenous governance system, characterised by a balance of power, collectivism, and moral accountability.

Kelani's decision to produce the films in Yoruba with English subtitles is deliberate, representing acts of cultural affirmation. It underscores his commitment to preserving and promoting Yoruba language and culture, challenging the dominance of English and asserting the values of indigenous

expressions. The films serve as testaments to the richness of Yoruba heritage and the importance of understanding and respecting cultural diversity.

*Saworoide* and *Agogo Èwò* serve as cultural and fictional narratives and critical commentaries on contemporary political systems. By drawing parallels between traditional and modern governance, the films highlight the timeless relevance of Yoruba administrative principles. It underscores the importance of community participation, transparency, and environmental consciousness.

Together, the two films offer profound portrayals of indigenous Yoruba Public Administrative system. Through their allegorical narrative structure and rich cultural representations, they both provide insightful critiques of power dynamics, governance, and societal values. They also underscore the enduring significance of cultural traditions in shaping ethical leadership and sustainable administration, thus making them significant contributions to cinematic art and socio-political discourses.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, Tunde Kelani's *Saworoide* and *Agogo Èwò* offer profound insights into the indigenous Yoruba public administration system, blending traditional practices with modern governance systems. These films highlight the importance of ethical leadership and the role of cultural values in governance. Kelani's works indeed stand out as criticisms of corruption in contemporary political administration and underscore the necessity of spiritual accountability and communal integrity in leadership.

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