

# Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy

L. Adele Jinadu

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Phone (DPCR) +46 18 471 76 52; (NAI) +46 18 56 22 00

Fax (DPCR) +46 18 69 51 02; (NAI) +46 18 56 22 90

E-mail (DPCR) [info@pcr.uu.se](mailto:info@pcr.uu.se); (NAI) [nai@nai.uu.se](mailto:nai@nai.uu.se)

[www.pcr.uu.se](http://www.pcr.uu.se); [www.nai.uu.se](http://www.nai.uu.se)

# The Claude Ake Visiting Chair

A Claude Ake Visiting Chair was set up in 2003 at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research (DPCR), Uppsala University, in collaboration with the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI), also in Uppsala. Funding was provided from the Swedish Government, through the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Chair was established to honour the memory of Professor Claude Ake, distinguished scholar, philosopher, teacher, activist and humanist, tragically killed in a plane crash near Lagos, Nigeria, in 1996.

The holders of the Claude Ake Visiting Chair give, at the end of their stay in Uppsala, a public lecture, entitled the 'Claude Ake Memorial Lecture.' While the title, thematic and content of the lecture is up to the holder, the assumption is that the topic of the lecture shall, in a general sense, relate the work of the holder to the work of Claude Ake, for example in terms of themes or issues covered, or in terms of theoretical or normative points of departure. The lecture is based on a paper prepared and made available to seminar participants and lecture audience in advance of the lecture.

In 2006 the DPCR and NAI decided to publish the papers that constitute the basis for the Memorial Lectures. An occasional paper series was created, entitled the Claude Ake Memorial Paper Series (CAMP). The papers are edited at the DPCR and published jointly by the DPCR and the NAI. In the future, the CAMP series may be opened up to contributions also from other scholars than the holders of the Visiting Chair.

The Claude Ake Visiting Chair is open to prominent social scientists—established and internationally recognized senior scholars with professorial competence—working at African universities on problems related to war, peace, conflict resolution, security, state building and development on the African continent. The Visiting Chair is particularly intended for scholars who, like Claude Ake, combine a profound commitment to scholarship with a strong advocacy for social justice.

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The holder is offered a conducive environment to pursue own research for about half the duration, while the other half is spent on lecturing, holding seminars or contributing to ongoing research activities at the DPCR, NAI and elsewhere in Uppsala, Sweden and the Nordic countries.

Finally, it should be noted that the texts published in the Claude Ake Memorial Papers series are the responsibility of the author alone—their publication does not reflect any positioning on the issues at hand on the part of either the Department of Peace and Conflict Research or the Nordic Africa Institute.

*Uppsala*  
*December 2007*

*Carin Norberg*  
*Director*  
*Nordic Africa Institute*  
*Uppsala*

*Thomas Ohlson*  
*Professor*  
*Department of Peace and Conflict Research*  
*Uppsala University*

## Editor's Foreword

In this, the first issue of the CAMP series, we find it highly appropriate to publish the paper version of the Claude Ake Memorial Lecture offered by the first holder of the Visiting Chair, Professor L. Adele Jinadu. Professor Jinadu is currently the Executive Director of the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. CASS was founded and directed by Claude Ake up until his untimely death in a plane crash in November 1996.

In this issue, Professor Jinadu addresses a controversial academic debate and a difficult political issue: the question of whether, in Africa, other political-constitutional solutions than the prevailing centralist one may be suitable in terms of defusing the destabilizing political and social tendencies in ethnically divided societies; societies that seek to bring about stable post-conflict transitions, durable peace and systems of legitimate and transparent governance based on democratic values. The paper is written from, if not a straight-forward instrumentalist perspective, so at least a decidedly non-primordial one.

The challenge is, according to the author, that prevailing conditions of scarcity, together with other impeding factors in the historical and current context—such as the impact of the colonial heritage and the workings of the international system—block the process of forming a *de facto* strong and inclusive state based on the classic ideals of the Weberian model. The sought-after separation of the state from society—the de-personalization of politics—thus becomes difficult, if not impossible. Centralist forms of rule, therefore, tend to facilitate regime behaviour that fuels exclusivism, patronage and state pilfering, reinforce hierarchical structures and breed inequality, marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination in various forms.

In other words, there are not enough resources to include all groups and citizens in an overarching national social contract within the workings of a centralist state setup. Therefore, the author argues, consociational-type solutions to the basic constitutional questions hold, for some states and under certain conditions, more promise in terms of producing a political climate conducive to legitimate rule, political stability and durable peace.

The author discusses an inventory of relationships related to this vexing problem, including the relationship between ethnicity, on the one hand, and such things as state formation, democracy, citizenship and political architecture, on the other. He also goes through some of the basic tenants of power-sharing and consociational structures as exemplified by the cases of Nigeria and Ethiopia.

Having argued that the salience of ethnic conflict lies in the dual role of the state as a party to, and a source of, ethnic conflict, Jinadu hypothesizes that changing the nature of the state and making access to it more inclusive along consociational lines is likely to lessen, rather than deepen the prevalence of ethnic conflict in divided societies.

He notes and discusses the numerous problems and risks inherent in such arrangements. He acknowledges that there are countries in Africa, where the conflictual problems are mainly located in other societal cleavages than ethnic or identity-based ones. Nevertheless, he argues, identity is increasingly becoming a key factor in contentions over space, power and sovereignty, not only in Africa, but worldwide. These realities must also be reflected in the academic debate.

*Uppsala*  
*December 2007*

*Thomas Ohlson*  
*CAMP Series Editor*

# Explaining & Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards a Cultural Theory of Democracy

L. Adele Jinadu

## 1. Introduction

This paper explores the relationship between armed conflict and constitutional and political engineering in ethno-plural African societies. These societies are often characterized by persistent deep-rooted and identity-related conflicts. These are conflicts fuelled by “a combination of potent identity-based factors with wider perceptions of economic and social injustice,” regarding the distribution or means of sharing economic, social and political resources within the state (Harris and Reilly 1998: 9).

My concern is to hypothesize about conditions, primarily internal, autochthonous or homegrown governmental and political structures and institutional processes and practices likely to “...bring about stable post-conflict transitions, durable peace and systems of governance based on democratic norms.” (Ohlson and Söderberg 2002: 1). In this respect, there is some force to the observation of Hydén and Venter (2001: 2) that “[r]egime—the character of rules and norms guiding politics—is becoming a more interesting theoretical concept than the state.”

What this means is that I am more concerned here with the pragmatic *management* than with the *resolution* or *removal* of these deep-seated, ethnic related conflicts, emphasizing the positive as opposed to the negative dimensions of conflict. As Harris and Reilly (1998: 18) have put it, “Conflict management, then, is the positive and constructive handling of difference and divergence.”

My exploration is phrased around the following question: Are there constitutional and political arrangements, which are more likely than others to contain and defuse or attenuate the destabilizing political and social tendencies of ethnic pluralism in ethnically-split African societies, particularly in post-conflict ones, channeling their ethnic diversity to healthy political cooperation and competition, strengthening rather than weakening the nation-state, moving it away from the violent political conflicts and decimating civil strife, sometimes associated with the political mobilization of ethnicity?

The hypothesis is as follows: A federal or an analogous or functionally equivalent devolutionist constitutional and political arrangement, involving limited autonomy or self-rule at the local level, and shared power at the national level, for the various ethno-communal groups, provides more promising and potentially more enduring governmental structures and processes than a unitary or centralist one for managing the dynamics and contradictions of the political mobilization of ethnicity in the ethno-plural African state.

The current concern with the relationship between armed conflict, especially one arising from the political mobilization of ethnicity, and constitutional and political engineering is understandable, given the world-wide resurgence of what has been called “the ethnic question in the world crisis ... (t)he struggle of ethnic groups for recognition, equality or autonomy within the framework of an existing territorial state, or for independence from such a state” (Stavenhagen 1996: 1).

That ethnic conflict is now a pervasive and salient dimension of political and social conflict in several countries in the world seems obvious enough. For example, Gurr (1993) identifies about 80 raging ethnic conflicts, of which about 35 could be classified as or close to civil wars in different parts of the world. Gurr and Harff (1994: 4-7) have illustrated the global salience of “politically active national peoples and ethnic minorities,” and of “protracted communal conflicts,” by showing their global distribution across various regions in the world.

The Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) (Eriksson 2002: 45-52) reports that for the 13-year period, 1990-2002, there were 58 major armed conflicts in the world, of which, on close examination, ethnic related ones constituted a considerable number, with the following regional distribution: Africa (19), America (5), Asia (17), Europe (8) and Middle East (9). By 2003, the number of state-based conflicts in Africa had decline to 10 (Harbom 2004: 145).

In short, as Wimmer (2004: 1) has observed: “over the past decades, ethno-nationalist conflict has become the dominant form of mass political violence. The overwhelming majority of civil wars in the postwar era were fought in the name of ethno-national autonomy or independence. Since the 1950s, the number of ethnic conflicts continued to increase. The trend reached a peak 1993-1994.”

In Africa there have since the mid-1960s been prolonged and protracted ethnic-related violent political conflicts, including in some cases, civil wars in the following countries: Algeria, Burundi, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire), Cote d’Ivoire, Eritrea,

Ethiopia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger Republic, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, the Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe.

Little wonder, therefore, that there has been a renewed global policy-related and intellectual interest in ethnic conflict in recent years, because of the state building—including peace, development and security—problems they continue to pose for domestic and international politics. (Wimmer 2004: 3-13) This is particularly so in the case of post-conflict societies, emerging from divisive and usually decimating wars over the control of the state and its resources, where attention has increasingly been turned to constitutional and political engineering to avoid a relapse into armed conflict and to lay the foundations and conditions for lasting peace.

This renewed interest in ethnic conflict stands at the intersection of various disciplines, such as anthropology, history, geography, law, philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology, to name a few. This multidisciplinary interest has spawned various methodological and theoretical approaches to unscrambling, understanding and coming to terms with and explaining this resurgent ethnic phenomenon. What methodology and what data and data sources should one use in categorizing ethnic conflicts? How should one explain not only their roots and unique manifestations but also their complex trajectories? What are the various strategies that can be adopted or which have been adopted to manage and attenuate their usually deadly consequences for domestic and international politics? The more prominent of these methodological and theoretical approaches have ranged from a revised modernization approach to psycho-cultural and socio-biological and constructionist ones to philosophical ones (Farrelly 2004, Newman 1990/91, Pieterse 1997, Wimmer 2004, Yeros 1999, Yuval-Davis 2001).

Of particular relevance to my interest here are those philosophical-theoretical approaches which, by opposing the contradictions engendered by multiculturalism or ethnic pluralism to the centralizing and assimilationist assumptions of liberalism and Stalinist-type soviet Marxism, point to new directions in the philosophical and public policy debates about rights, citizenship, accountability, democratic governance and participation in the contemporary nation-state and the wider world system of nation-states. The debates have spawned a new interest in constitutionalism or constitutional governance and constitution-making in coming to terms with deep-seated and ethnic related conflicts in Africa, focusing as much on the substance of the constitutional documents as on the participatory and inclusive processes of negotiating and adopting them (Hydén and Venter 2001: 10-12, Harris and Reilly 1998: 59-113).

In what follows, I draw, in a generalized and simplified manner, on these complex philosophical and theoretical approaches and debates. I do this not only to illustrate some of the historical and sociological roots of ethnic conflict in Africa, but also with a view to draw on insights from some authors, particularly Cabral and Fanon, to hypothesize about a cultural theory of democracy for bringing about “stable post-conflict transitions, durable peace and systems of governance based on democratic norms and values” in Africa, to quote Ohlson and Söderberg (2002: 1) again.

## 2. Ethnic Conflict and State Formation

To understand the character and trajectories of ethnic conflict in Africa, we must situate it in the broader context of the democracy and development project on the continent. That project is primarily concerned and connected with the state-building or state-formation process, which characteristically involves or generates hegemonic-directed competition, cooperation and conflict, under conditions of scarcity, about who should control the state and direct its core functions of authoritative regulation, allocation, and distribution through its presumed monopoly of physical force and policy directives.

The inclusivist notion of common citizenship, based on individual rights, that has tended to underline this state-formation process, has been problematic in Africa not only because virtually all the countries on the continent are “ethnically split,” to borrow Balandier’s (1970: 38) expression, but also because the political economy of colonial rule, and the state formation processes that went *pari passu* with it encouraged and deepened intense ethnic conflict on the continent, differentiating citizens into stratified aggregations of first-class, second-class and third class citizens (Ake 1976: 4-9, Nnoli 1980).

Under such ethno-structured systems of stratification, where individuals define themselves and are defined in terms of the ethnic group to which they belong and of its place within this system of stratification, the neutrality or autonomy of the fledgling state—with its commanding control of the economy and the vast resources therefore at its disposal—from competing social forces and groups, like ethnic ones, cannot be taken for granted.

On the same ground, an inclusivist notion of common citizenship, by which is meant that all citizens *qua* citizen are equal before the state, cannot be taken for granted. This is because it begs the question of access to the state and the privileges deriving from it. In other words, it begs the question: To

whom (to which ethnic group) does the state belong? Whose or which ethnic group or ethno-regional interest does it promote or obstruct, protect or frustrate? At best, such an inclusivist notion of citizenship tries to resolve the ethnic question by dissolving it in the myth of common citizenship and individual rights. What it does in actual fact has generally been to heighten and deepen the consciousness of ethnic differences in public spaces. On this score, Wimmer (1994: 635) is right to observe, with respect to post-colonial societies, that, “ethnic conflicts arise during the process of state formation, when a fight erupts over “which people” the state should belong to.”

More often than not, and precisely because of its lack of autonomy or its limited autonomy from competing ethnic groups, the state becomes the core contested terrain, the deadly serious theatre of ethnic conflict over which ethnic groups or coalitions of ethnic groups should control it and its vast resources. The bureaucracy, what John Maynard Keynes once called ‘the engine of government,’ with its arsenal of patronage positions and public finances to disburse, and its superintendence of public educational institutions, which play a critical role in elite recruitment and reproduction for the bureaucracy and the political and business classes, are invariably prime targets in competitive ethnic relations for access to, and control of the state, becoming theatres of ethnic wars over control of state resources. The citizenship question is thus at the root of deep-rooted, ethnic related conflict, for it is at the core of the identity and resource distribution or control conundrum, to which reference has been made above.

In this way, the state and its institutions are ethnicized and immersed in clientelist ethnic networks and in ethnic-based struggle to implant and entrench ethnic ‘gatekeepers’ in critical, key positions in the bureaucracy and educational institutions, and in other public sector institutions and even in the private sector, which in many African countries relies heavily on the public sector.

It needs to be emphasized that the problem ethnic diversity poses for the inclusivist or undifferentiated notion of common citizenship in ethno-plural societies can be usefully viewed as reflecting the broader concern with the nature of the state and political community and of participatory democracy that fuelled the demands of marginalized groups like the women’s movement, and the gay and lesbian movements for public recognition. As Parekh has pointed out, this broader concern has given rise to philosophical and public policy questions about political obligation as well as about “the nature of national identity, the political role of education, the range of permissible cultural diversity, and the best way to combine the needs of national unity with those of cultural diversity” (Parekh 1996: 510).

### 3. Contextualizing Ethnicity: Other Identity Claims

Interrogating ethnicity and citizenship, and the consequential level or intensity of conflict they generate into the state-formation process in this manner, require various units and levels of structural and institutional analysis to disaggregate and contextualize ethnicity and the roots, genesis, dimensions, and patterns of particular ethnic conflicts. This should enable us to determine

1. the various factors that are involved in particular ethnic conflicts;
2. how they intersect with or crosscut other kinds of conflict and social formations or identities like class, linguistic and religious ones; and
3. what is required at the level of political structures and institutions, to manage ethno-political conflicts.

At the structural level, if ethnic conflict is related to, or is in fact embedded in domestic and global social relations of production, reflecting their contradictions, and cross-cutting other solidarity ties and antagonisms, then we need to move away from regarding ethnicity as simply a cultural symbol. This requires our going beyond its ascriptivist-essentialist and primordial-cultural symbolism to locate its political or conflict-generating salience as a function of various fields and networks of social relations, which dynamically confront ethnic individuals on a daily basis, expanding, in some situations, and constricting, in other situations, their choice options. In response to these fields and networks of social relations, ethnic individuals are strategically forced to assume multiple identities.

In short, focusing on the domestic and global social context within which to understand ethnicity and situate ethnic conflicts, we need to locate the salience of ethnicity as a dynamic, manipulable and mobilizable political resource in conflict situations, in the nexus connecting structure and process, and in the conundrum posed by the complex competing identity claims on individuals as they engage in the unavoidable competitive logic of social relations in the state-formation process.

One implication of this perspective is that accommodation, as well as compromise or cooperation, in the form of coalition building across the ethnic divide is compatible with the concept of an ethnic group and may, indeed, be a feature of ethnic conflict. For example, accommodation is sometimes a strategy in the arsenal of the leadership of ethnic groups, dictated by the rationality or logic of particular competitive or conflict situations in which they find themselves. On some critical occasions, this may impel ethnic leaders playing a brokerage or bridge-building role across the ethnic divide.

It is the historical-materialist context, therefore, and the complex configuration of social forces and issues that arise from it that more or less determine the trajectories of ethno-political conflicts, indicating why they assume deadly violent and armed dimensions or why they are contained and directed towards accommodation and cooperation. It is this latter, accommodating aspect that provides the basis and expectations for constitutional and political engineering to defuse the latent violence of ethno-political conflicts.

#### 4. Ethnic Conflict as a Spectrum

It is useful, from this perspective, to regard interethnic relations as a fluid, even malleable continuum or spectrum, with ethnic cooperation and accommodation at one end and violent or armed conflict at the other end of the spectrum. The intensity of cooperation and conflict, and the various forms they assume, depend on the ebb and flow of ethnic relations along the spectrum. Do they move closely to, or away from either end, away from an imaginary centre of the spectrum? What other social forces mediate this ebb and flow along the hypothetical spectrum? And what windows of opportunity, or 'hurting stalemate,' does movement towards the centre of the spectrum offer for negotiating an acceptable post-conflict constitutional and political structure or arrangement?

Another implication of this perspective on the nexus between structure and process in explaining and understanding ethno-political conflicts is that we need to probe more deeply into the dynamics of the manipulation and mobilization of ethnic identities for conflict purposes. What are the complementary or contradictory roles of ethnic leaders and their mass following in triggering ethnic conflict or influencing its course? Under what conditions do these roles appear, complement or contradict each other? What patrimonial structures and systems of reward and sanction link the ethnic leadership with their followership? What accounts for their durability or breakdown?

Moreover, too often, perhaps held captive by the allure of the 'clever elite/dumb mass' thesis, which Hodgkin (1961) once coined to characterize a weakness in the study of African nationalism, we need to focus on mass role in triggering and directing ethnic or ethno-national conflicts in Africa, especially in the form of ethnically-based popular mass movements against central authorities, in the hinterlands, far removed from national centres in colonial and post-colonial Africa. This focus can provide interesting illuminations of the intersection or disjunction of the trajectories of elite-driven and mass-driven manifestations of ethnic conflict, for example "in those regions, notably East and Central Africa and the Congo, where the roots of the mod-

ern-educated elite and modern-style politics are shallowest” (Stokes 1970: 100).

A third implication of this contextual perspective, often ignored in the analysis of the dynamics of ethnic conflict, is that ethnic groups are oftentimes polarized among themselves, over, for example, strategies to pursue in competitive situations with other ethnic groups, over leadership succession, leading to fractures and, in many cases, the emergence of sub-ethnic or even newly constructed ethnic groups within them. We, therefore, also need to study intra-ethnic conflict at a micro-level of analysis within the larger kaleidoscope of inter-ethnic relations and ethno-political conflicts, especially in view of the light it can throw on the timing and prospects of negotiating and concluding post-conflict constitutional and political settlements.

## 5. The Ethnicity/Citizenship Conundrum

Because ethnicity needs to be disaggregated and contextualized in this manner, it is instructive to problematize the notion of citizenship in liberal democratic theory, to show how it is relevant to understanding the roots and forms of ethno-political conflicts and of the prospects for negotiating post-conflict constitutional and political settlements in the ethno-plural African state. The problematization of the relationship of citizenship to ethno-political conflicts will help to illustrate why such conflicts in Africa, as elsewhere, are at the bottom of citizenship questions. Raising the basic question of access to the state, such conflicts pose a challenge to the myth of a common, undifferentiated citizenship, by juxtaposing to it its contraries of differentiated or fractured citizenship, along lines that exclude some ethnic groups from enjoying the benefits of common citizenship on an equal basis with more favoured ethnic groups. Moreover, the broader issue of citizenship, and with it of citizenship rights, is at the root of collective group rights, including right to self-determination, asserted by ethnic groups in various African countries, oftentimes assuming the force of a micro-nationalist ideology for whose realization and actualization ethno-political conflicts are waged.

The historical-materialist context is important in explaining and understanding the structural and institutional linkage between ethno-political conflicts, citizenship, the state and state-formation processes, and how it has shaped patterns of ethnic relations and ethnic perceptions of the role of the state as a partisan in ethno-political exchanges in the political and socio-economic marketplace. For example, colonial administration discriminated among citizens, creating a hierarchical and stratified system of unequal citizenship,

with white administrators and immigrants (businessmen, missionaries) from the metropolitan countries at the top followed in descending order by other white immigrants, Asian, Levantines (mainly Lebanese and Syrians), coloureds and the indigenous ethnic groups at the bottom.

The indigenous peoples were further sub-divided or differentiated by the colonial administration into ‘advantaged’ or ‘disadvantaged,’ ‘favoured’ or ‘unfavoured’ ethnic groups, based on the differential diffusion of westernization, on “colonial evaluations of imputed group character” among them (Horowitz 1985: 160). These ethnic groups were, moreover, and as a matter of administrative convenience or arbitrariness, sometimes invented—constructed or deconstructed—by colonial administrators, under the influence of colonial stereotypes of African ethnic groups (Atkinson 1999).

This asymmetrical stratification system fractured or differentiated citizenship in many colonial territories, in such a way that it facilitated (for privileged ethnic groups) or constricted (for underprivileged ethnic groups) access to the state and its resources, in the public services, in commerce, trade and industry, in the judicial system and in the administration of justice, in spite of the universalizing ideology and pretensions of colonial rule and its myth of common citizenship.

Although African nationalism under colonial rule was an attempt to claim or reclaim citizenship rights, the claim was asserted as a collective national patrimony, under a ‘rainbow’ coalition of the various ethnic groups and other social forces in each colony. But this nationalist coalition did not settle the national question and it broke down, fragmented into micro-nationalisms, even before independence for a number of reasons.

First, the asymmetrical ethno-racial stratified social structure of the colonial state, left its unwholesome, unhealed, simmering scars, recriminations, mutual antagonisms and mutual fears, all of which served to undermine the long-run emergence of a sense of nationhood and common citizenship. For the effect of the ethno-racial stratification was to diminish “existing intercultural linkages” while instead strengthening “the sense of internal cohesion within the component polities and language groups” (Ajayi 1984: 4-5).

Specifically focusing on what he characterized as Nigeria’s “Diversity and The Burden of History,” Mustapha, while contending that, “a central feature of Nigerian society is its fragmentation along ethno-regional lines,” argues that:

“...in many ways the ethnicization of power and politics is contrary to pre-colonial experience...[t]he potential for discord apparent in the pre-colonial system was more than realized under colonialism, which had the intended and unintended consequences of accentuating the division between different groups, and converting conflict from mere potential to a reality of everyday life. The long-run divisions along ethno-regional lines have not only been enduring they have become systemic; the divisions have been reproduced in the state giving a lie to the notion of a state standing above society” (Mustapha 2002: 153-4).

Secondly, the departure of the colonial powers, hasty in many places, left the ethnic question unresolved, although many ethnic groups, particularly minority ethnic groups, as was the case in Nigeria and Uganda, expressed troubling concerns and legitimate fears about their collective ethnic group and, therefore, of their collective citizenship rights in the post-colonial state.

Referring to the centrifugal forces so unleashed in the wake of the hasty departure of the colonial powers, as a result of the ‘mutual alienation’ among the ‘coalition partners’ in the rainbow coalition, Ake has observed quite rightly that:

“...as they pulled apart, they placed more value on capturing political power for themselves and grew increasingly fearful about what seemed to them to be the grave consequences of losing to their rivals in the competition for control of state power. Thus the premium on political power rose higher and higher and with it the intensity of political competition and its domination by efficiency norms” (Ake 2001: 5).

The departure of the colonial powers was, consequently, in several African countries accompanied by the internecine, armed ethno-political conflicts between majority, or ‘favoured’ ethnic groups, which wanted to maintain control of the inherited state, and ‘disadvantaged,’ usually but not always numerically minority ethnic groups, which wanted to capture or reconstitute the inherited state on more favorable terms, or, failing which, to secede from it. This much is clear from the post-colonial histories of Angola, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Thirdly, the inherited psychology of the mutual fear of ethnic domination, ‘mutual alienation,’ which the asymmetrical ethno-racial stratified citizenship gave rise to under colonial rule, remains a central aspect of ethno-political conflict in the post-colonial African state. This fear was reinforced, and in many cases strengthened by the further centralizing dimensions, which the state-formation processes assumed in the post-colonial state, in the form of the one-party ideology, the drift towards state repression and closure

of political spaces, and in the consolidation of authoritarian and personalized rule.

All of this was rationalized by the argument that the state formation process required strong rule, in order to eliminate ethno-parochial tendencies, which allegedly would only serve to divide, weaken and divert the state from the nation-building project. As it turned out, this was another but basically similar formulation in the post-colonial state of the colonizer's myth of common citizenship, this time advanced to promote and consolidate the grip of dominant ethnic groups on power.

In other words, as the following observation by Laakso and Olukoshi only too well points out, the strong pull of ethnicity was evident as a significant legitimizing political resource by civilian authoritarian and military regimes in Africa:

“Many African one-party and military regimes, in spite of their supposed aversion to ethnicity ...rested on distinctly ethnic political foundations and reproduced themselves on the basis of definable, and in most cases narrow ethnic alliances” (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996: 15).

There was, and still remains, among dominated or marginal ethnic groups a residual fear that independence had merely served to replace one alien rule with another, albeit indigenous one.

## 6. Ethnicity and Politico-Economic Marginalisation

The protracted intensity of some of ethno-political conflicts in Africa is, on one interpretation, due to opposition by marginalized ethnic groups against what Fanon (1968: 183) once aptly described as an “ethnic dictatorship.” These conflicts reflect the recourse of marginal and dominated ethnic groups to armed political struggle to underscore their demands for inclusion and meaningful participation in governmental processes. The violent response of the state to their demand for inclusion led them to resort to violence or armed resistance to counter the state-sponsored violence against them.

In this way, ethno-political conflicts have understandably been both the outcome and an indirect cause of the economic and political crisis of the state in Africa. But they have done so in a way that dramatized the character of the state- or nation-building process in Africa as a parochial ethno-hegemonizing one, designed to promote and advance the control of the state by dominant ethnic groups. This explains, by and large, why the political

mobilization and manipulation of ethnicity has been so crucial a dimension of ethno-political conflicts in Africa, assuming such forms as irredentism and revanchism, as illustrated below (Nzongola-Ntalaja 1987: 65-80).

The Somalia Question, involving the demand of the ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden and parts of Ethiopia, in Djibouti and in the Northern Frontier of Kenya for unification with Somalia has been one of the major irredentist demands in post-colonial Africa, as was the demand, albeit on a less protracted scale, of the Ewe-speaking people of Togo for reunion with their ethnic kith and kin in Ghana. The case of the ethnic Baganda in Uganda to recover lost territory and status was a revanchist attempt at developing a Baganda nation within Uganda, which fell foul of the central authority in Uganda.

Some revanchist element is also reflected in the Casamance Rebellion, involving demand of the Ethnic Diola-based Casamance movement in southern Senegal, in the 1980s, under the leadership of the *Mouvement des Forces Democratiques de la Casamance* (MFDC), for independence from Senegal. The separatist demand of the MFDC arose out of their sense of re-colonization by the ethnic Wolof-dominated Senegalese state. It escalated into military confrontations, short of civil wars, at various times in the 1990s, reflecting “conflicts of interest centered on the benefits of local resources in turn materialized politically around the unresolved question of state legitimacy.” (Douma 2003: 113). On the other hand, Biafra in Nigeria and the South Kasai in Zaire are examples of inter-ethnic conflicts, involving territorial, secessionist claims which degenerated into civil wars.

Chad, Ethiopia and Sudan, Niger, and Nigeria, to some extent also, provide examples of the demand of oppressed ethnic minorities for greater socio-economic and infrastructural development and for home rule or self-government in their ethnic heartlands, short of secession from the state. In the case of Chad, the ethno-political conflict has, as in the case of the Sudan, been on an ethno-racialized north/south division.

In Ethiopia, the three major ethnic minority groups, Oromo, Somali and Tigraya, asserted the right to self-determination against the dominant Amhara ethnic group, under the banner of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and the Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Force (TPLF). In Niger, the concentration of over 49% of all government investment between 1976 and 1990 in the capital and its adjoining region, Tillabery, inhabited by the dominant Songrai-Zarma, which has ruled the country during most of its post-colonial history, created a pattern of regional inequality, which has aggravated and fed ethno-linguistic rivalry and ethno-political conflicts (Douma 2003: 57).

In Nigeria, the demand of minority ethnic groups for self-determination and greater share of government investment and revenue, has, at various times, assumed violent and rebellious dimensions, as in the Tiv Riots in the 1960s and ethnic violent uprisings in the oil rich Niger Delta since the 1990s.

## 7. Ethnicity and the State: Some Theoretical and Policy Questions

The contradictions between the state and ethnicity illustrated in the various examples above are symptomatic of a deeper contradiction. This is the inappropriateness in deeply divided societies of the simple majoritarian, winner-takes-all model of parliamentary government, and the first-past-the post electoral system, both of which generally informed the transfer of power in British colonial Africa on the basis of the preparation of the emergent African political class for it (Schaffer 1966: 42-67), with the notable exception of white-dominated settler colonies in Central and Southern Africa.

This institutional version of liberal democracy is ill suited to address the problem posed for many African states by the historically deep-rooted mutual antagonisms and mutual fear of domination among the various ethnic groups. The simmering ethnic antagonisms reached boiling point even before independence, ignited by the activities of ethnicity-based political parties, more or less ensconced in, and deriving their electoral strength from, their ethno-regional heartlands, and giving expression to what Fanon (1962: 113-4) described as “autonomist tendencies” and demands.

The centralizing trend in post-colonial Africa, leading in several African states to the constriction of political spaces, hardened ethnic suspicions, deepened mutual ethnic antagonisms and, as a result of the simple majoritarian parliamentary system and the first-past-the-post electoral system, electoral politics reduced to a zero-sum game. This ruled out power-sharing options for those ethnic groups, which were assured of electoral victory, on the basis of their numerical superiority over other ethnic groups.

Thus, in several African countries, reduced to a perpetual electoral minority, treated by and large as second class citizens, underrepresented in central and local bureaucracies and in the public services generally, their heartlands neglected, denied of infrastructural development and social services, turned into blighted oasis of internal colonialism, and seeing no prospect through the ballot box for capturing state power, these other ethnic groups sought and used various voice and exit options, including extra-constitutional ones, to

challenge the hegemonic ethnic group(s) or coalition of ethnic groups in government. As Duchacek has observed:

“The problem for most ethnic minorities is that they are permanent minorities and the ruling group a permanent majority. In interethnic relations therefore, the convenient democratic game of numbers does not work since the unalterable power symmetry between permanent majority and permanent minorities impedes the formation of a consensual community” (Duchacek 1977: 23, quoted in Thomas-Wooley and Keller 1994: 413).

Attributing the institutional failures and weaknesses of the African state, and the vicious cycle of recurring political instability and lack of accountability they engender, to market distortions and imperfections in closed political systems, with their routinized denial or suppression of individual choices and options in the political market place, neo-liberal protagonists see the solution in the politics of individualism and self-interest, in other words, in political “exchanges among rational self-interested citizens” (March and Olsen 1995: 6, see also Apter 1998, Leys 1996).

Yet, this prescription has served to deepen and to ignite a tinderbox of ethno-political conflicts and ethnic-inspired political unrests, because it discounted the political salience and primacy of mobilized ethnicity in the market place. Let us look at economic liberalization.

In recent years, the adoption of structural adjustment policies, as prescribed by the new institutionalism, has heightened ethnic antagonisms and led to ethno-political conflicts in many African countries where they were adopted, and in situations where market assumptions of competition and possessive individualism do not exist, because of historically deep-rooted identity formations based on ethnicity and ethnic competition, which have produced obstacles to the capital needed to purchase shares in privatized companies by members of particular ethnic groups (Beckman 1992; Gibbon, Bangura and Ofstad 1992; Laakso and Olukoshi 1996). As Laakso and Olukoshi have observed, structural adjustment programmes, through

“the severe contraction of the state’s social expenditure [...] heightened the process of uneven development, which corresponds, in a lot of cases, to clear regional and ethnic divisions, thereby heightening political tension. Nowhere has this latter dimension been more evident than in the consequences which public enterprise privatization has had in some cases. An intensive competition for the assets that are to be privatized together with an unequal capacity to pay for shares often takes on clear regional and ethnic patterns, thus deepening the feeling of exclusion among some groups with adverse consequences for the task of nation-building” (Laakso and Olukoshi 1996: 21, see also Adekanye 1995; and Osaghae 1995).

If economic liberalization was problematic, because of ethno-structural-induced market distortions and imperfections, neo-liberal political liberalization has been as equally problematic in the political arena. I have elaborated on this problem elsewhere as follows:

“...Neoliberalism has conflated the problem of democracy in Africa with that of liberal democracy and its institutions. It has failed to address the design and political problem that ethnicity, in the form of the assertion of ethnic group rights in a situation of competitive electoral politics, poses for the simple majoritarian principle of “winners-take-all” in liberal democracy, a principle whose adoption in many African countries have tended to turn competitive electoral politics into virtual warfare in which the objective is to annihilate one’s political enemies” (Jinadu 2002: 10).

## 8. Ethnicity and Political Architecture

If the state is the problem, the central contested hegemonic terrain in Africa, where ethno-political conflicts take place and generally assume deadly dimensions, what modifications or alterations in the constitutional and political architecture of the state are likely to structure and channel such conflicts in a manner that will strengthen prospects for sustainable democratic development and peace, especially in the post-conflict or post-democratic transition state on the continent?

Are there grounds to believe that some other political and constitutional arrangements are more appropriate or better suited than those premised on centralist or neo-liberal individualistic assumptions to contain, structure and manage ethnic conflicts? Are there constitutional and political arrangements that are more likely to accommodate ethnic diversity better than others?

These questions have been formulated with emphasis on the management and not the dissolution of ethnic diversity and ethno-political conflicts, which are fundamental and irreducible components of the social demography and political tapestry of the typical or model African state, and, as Elbadawi (2001) once put it, “by far the most important aspect of social fractionalization in Africa.” What is required are political structures and institutional/governmental processes to hold at bay the push and pull of the desire for diversity and unity, in the form of the challenge of promoting common interests and institutions, while also respecting and accommodating diversity. The challenge is to channel ethno-political conflicts along the constructive and creative ends of strengthening and consolidating democracy and development, through the institutionalization of the politics of accommodation.

This will require moving away from the politics of exclusion, which tends to deepen ethnic antagonisms. It will require moving away from viewing ethnicity and ethno-political conflicts as wholly and inherently negative to emphasizing their positive, utilitarian or pragmatic crosscutting dimensions for democracy and sustainable development. It will require pursuing and practicing democratic politics as a bargaining process, leading to coalition- and consensus-building on the fundamental law of the land. This bargaining process must be anchored on a new political culture of mutuality and reciprocity between ethnic groups, based on trust, dialogue, tolerance and recognition of differences, moderation and cooperation, as critical engines of 'living together,' and commitment to the core values of limited government, accountability, transparency in government and the exercise of oversight on those who exercise the prerogative of ruling.

From the perspective of democratic politics as essentially the politics of bargaining/negotiating over, and accommodation of differences, it follows that constitutional and political engineering in post-conflict or post-transition societies must be based, not on authoritarian or similar centralist and closed political systems, like those of the one-party state, but on open political systems, which by definition make possible and are based on participatory and all-inclusive institutional processes and decision-making procedures that fragment and devolve power from national to sub-national levels of government, creating multiple layers and centers of political power. It is the flexibility of such open systems that allows conflicts, including ethno-political ones to be expressed, formulated, processed and managed "...in a sustainable way, via institutional outlets such as political parties and representative parliaments, rather than being suppressed or ignored" (Harris and Reilly 1998: 136).

To answer the question posed above, it seems that there are reasoned grounds to assume or expect that our typologized open political systems are more likely than the closed ones to accommodate and manage ethnic diversity and ethno-political conflicts in the post-conflict, post-transition African state.

But is there an empirical or historical basis for assuming that ethnic groupings will facilitate and not obstruct or retard bargaining process, so described? Drawing on empirical data from Collier and Biswanger (1999), Elbadawi has tried to show that ethnic diversity can make the possibility of a "bargaining equilibrium more, not less feasible"; that it "actually helps, rather than impedes, the formation of stable development-promoting coalition"; and that "formalization of ethnic affiliation into the political process might enhance the efficiency and credibility of political governance institutions in Africa" (Elbadawi 2001: 54-55).

## 9. Culture, Autochthony and Political Architecture

Two further observations are relevant at this juncture to provide cultural-historical compass for navigating the muddy and stormy waters of ethno-political bargaining, described above, in post-conflict, post-transition African societies.

The first one is with respect to Amilcar Cabral's famous injunction about the need for the African political class to 'return to the source,' and Fanon's (1968: 99) admonition that, "the underdeveloped countries ought to do their utmost to find their own particular values and methods and a style which shall be peculiar to them," in designing post-colonial governmental processes. Their preference was for participatory democratic politics, which closes the gap between town and country through accountability mechanisms and decentralized political arrangements, which establish "...a large number of well-informed nuclei at the bottom" (Fanon, 1968: 194).

What Cabral and Fanon's position points to is the relevance of culture and tradition to constitutional and political engineering. As I have argued in the case of Fanon (Jinadu 1968), his position is that the state-formation processes in Africa, particularly the constitutional and political architecture which frames the processes, must draw from authentic African cultural sources and tradition, which placed emphasis on the fragmentation or dispersal rather than the concentration of power in one centre or person, through institutional checks and balances.

Reconstructing a representative model of traditional African political systems, as Lloyd (1965: 99-106) has pointed out, is problematic. But his 'synthetically constructed' model of African kingdoms delineates three levels of political administration, the metropolitan area, the peripheral units and the sphere of influence, which are distinct from each other in such a manner as not only to disperse political power, but also to make citizens subject to multiple layers and levels of administration (Lloyd 1965: 71).

To take another example from the historical and political anthropology of Africa: the existence of a high degree of decentralization in a number of African traditional political systems led Eisenstadt (1959) to distinguish between the *centralized monarchy*, exemplified by the Zulu, Ngoni, Swazi and Tswana, and the *federative monarchy*, exemplified by the Bemba, Ashanti, Pondo and Khoisa. The difference between the two kinds of kingdoms lies, according to him in

“...the degree to which (a) the major groups regulate their own affairs in various spheres, and (b) the extent to which the major political offices are vested in various ascriptive groups or, conversely, the extent to which the political sphere is organized on a level different from that of local kin and economic sphere” (Eisenstadt 1959: 211).

The federative monarchy, with its emphasis on decentralization and power-sharing mechanisms or institutions provides a model from which constitutional and political engineering in the post-conflict, post-transition African state can draw.

My second observation is that using ethnic groups as the autonomous units for the territorial dispersal of political power from the central to local levels of government and for power-sharing, particularly at the national level, can arguably be seen as justifiable from a reading of *The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights*.

Article 20(1) of The African Charter recognizes and provides that:

All peoples shall have the right to existence. They shall have the unquestionable and inalienable right to self-determination. They shall freely determine their political status and shall pursue their economic and social development according to the policy they have freely chosen.

Article 22(1) stipulates that:

All peoples shall have the right to their economic, social and cultural development with due regard to their freedom and identity and in the equal enjoyment of the common heritage of mankind.

Let me now abstract from the foregoing discussion a number of basic principles for constitutional and political engineering in the post-conflict, post-transition and ethnically divided African state.

*Recognition and accommodation of ethnic rights:* In post-conflict, post-transition societies, where there is a high degree of ethnic diversity, providing the basis for equal power or a balance of terror, the constitutional recognition, accommodation and protection of collective ethnic rights will facilitate and not retard or obstruct democratic development, particularly if built on mutually agreed representative consultative and redressive mechanisms. Contrarily, denying or trying to suppress or annihilate them will likely lead to aggressive frustration and engender a vicious cycle of violent resistance and state repression to contain it.

*Home rule or self-government for ethnic groups:* The territorial structure of the state must be designed in such a way as to grant ethnic groups limited autonomy or home rule in their ethnic heartlands, with necessary constitutional protection, to prevent reversals, like recentralization, “to ensure security of (their) existence,” and fiscal empowerment or decentralization, in the sense of “sufficient resources and the possibility of using (them) autonomously” (Kalin 2004: 308). In view of the salience of ethnicity as a political force, the decentralization or devolution of political power in this way is a constructive way of dealing with it by giving ethnic groups local, sub-national spaces to run and control their own internal affairs. This political structure is problematic in that it may harden ethnic identity and antagonisms, aggravate separatist agitations and engender a new post-conflict cycle of violence, unrest and fragmentation (Hechter 2004: 294; Kalin 2004: 305-306). Yet, it is a better one than a centralized political structure, which gives no room for, indeed tends to stifle the expression of ethnic interests and demands and is, therefore, prone to even more violent forms of ethno-political conflict. The advantage of decentralization or devolution over centralization, in this respect, lies in its being combined in practice with the democratic principles of separation of powers, participation and accountability and the rule of law, reinforced by the consociational principle of power-sharing at national and sub-national levels. Moreover, it is even more likely to mute ethno-political conflict, if decentralization is not asymmetric, being limited to only a few or minority ethnic groups but is mainstreamed, so that it extends to ethnic groups *qua* ethnic groups, and is flexible to allow home rule being extended to ethnic groups or sub-ethnic groups demanding it.

*Power-sharing at the national level:* The consociational principle of power-sharing, e.g., mutual veto, proportionality and quota, including affirmative action-type quota, is an important lever of ethno-political accommodation, which can serve to mute ethno-political conflict. It involves the majoritarian principle of winners-take-all and is designed to achieve a grand coalition of ethnic groups in national government and, through its sometimes stated provision for the mutual veto, to protect ethnic group interests. The power-sharing notion also extends to the distribution of public goods and appointments and promotions in the bureaucracy and public political offices in addition to ministerial ones to ensure their representativeness. Thus, the power-sharing principle is critical to the political bargaining process, because as already pointed out, access to the state and to the public bureaucracy in particular, at the national level, is a major bone of contention in ethno-political conflicts. Adopting it as a principle of constitutional and political engineering is a confidence-building strategy to assuage and mute the mutual fear of domination among various ethnic groups. The same principle applies to sub-national levels, especially where boundaries of political decentralization or devolution do not coincide with ethnic ones, especially owing to migration

within the state. The principle is not unproblematic and may engender ethnic antagonisms, particularly when applied—as is the case with ethnic quotas—to redress historic disadvantages and inequalities in promotion and appointments in public bureaucracies, including the armed and police forces and in admission to educational institutions.

In addition to the above basic principles of constitutional and political engineering, political decentralization or devolution stands even better chances of managing ethno-political conflicts if attention is paid to the adoption of institutional processes and public policies like the electoral system, the administration of elections and related rules of political participation, language and ethno-cultural and other confidence-building public policies, like truth and reconciliation commissions to assuage mutual fear of domination and to create a fair playing ground for political competition and cooperation among various ethnic groups.

## 10. Example of Power Sharing Arrangements: Nigeria

Historically, Nigerian power-sharing arrangements have been based on ethnic, as opposed to geographical diversity. The roots of these arrangements lie deep in the administrative federalism, implied in the gradual division of the country into two administrative units, the Northern and Southern Protectorates, between 1900 and 1914, by the British colonial administration.

The dual administrative system created—over the years, and with the increasing intensity of nationalist agitation for independence—its own dynamic logic. This took the form of the regionalization or ethnicization of party politics, it is seen in the gradual emergence of the Nigerian federation through a series of constitutional developments between 1922 and 1960, and, to use Bates' (1983) expression in another context, it can also be observed in the 'different diffusion of modernity' among the various ethnic groups, which saw in federalism the strategic advantage of preserving some form of home-rule within their respective homelands in the Nigerian state, while remaining in the federation.

It was in the context of the dynamic logic of this administrative federalism that the emergent Nigerian political class, influenced by the Indian federal experiment, particularly the revision of its federal system along ethno-linguistic lines, under the States Reorganization Act of 1956, adumbrated a theory of Nigerian federalism, based on home rule for significant ethno-linguistic groups in the country.

With the emergent federal system based on ethnic diversity, with its initial tri-polar constituent units, East, North and West, reflecting the region in which each of the three major ethnic groups was dominant, (namely the Igbo in the East, the Hausa/Fulani in the North, and the Yoruba in the West), it was only a matter of time to advocate for home-rule within the Nigerian federation.

This is not the place to go into the turbulent, violent centrifugal trajectories of the numerous political movements demanding the creation of more states by minority ethnic groups and by sub-ethnic groups of fragmented ones in the country. What needs pointing out here is that the basic ethnic power-sharing structure of the country's federalism provided, and continues to provide, a constitutional and political framework, within which ethnic groups have articulated their demands; so much so that the constituent units of the federation have increased from the initial regions in 1960 to the present 36 states, and a federal capital city, making it the country with the third largest number of constituent units among contemporary federations, coming after the United States, with 50 units, and the Russian Federation with 86.

Yet sometimes, as during the events that led to the country's civil war between 1967 and 1970 (Jinadu 1994), and the current clamour for the restructuring or re-engineering of the federal system, to make it reflect 'true federalism,' various ethnic groups have raised compellingly understandable concerns about the price of federalism, arising out of their calculation and perception that the costs to them of staying in the federation is prohibitively high, and outweigh the benefits of their continued stay within it. The following are some central elements in the power-sharing arrangements in the Nigerian federal system.

*Federal system of government:* Under this arrangement, ethnic groups are given home-rule in their heartlands, under a polycentric system of government, which shares sovereignty between two levels of government, the central/national/federal government, and the unit-state governments, through specified legislative lists (namely, a federal exclusive list, a joint federal/state concurrent list, with the residue left to the states), which enable each level of government to impact directly on the citizen. The system guarantees rule of law, judicial review and a separation of powers between the branches of government.

*The federal character constitutional clauses:* These constitutional clauses guarantee representation in specified public political positions, in public service appointments, in public institutions generally, and in the allocation of national projects at the national/federal level to each of the constituent unit/state governments.

The federal character clauses of Section 14(3) of the 1979 Nigerian Constitution, repeated with appropriate modifications in the sections dealing with the executive and legislative functions of the unit/state governments, stipulate that:

The composition of the Government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of person from a few states or a few ethnic or other section groups in that government or any of its agencies.

Under Section 157(5), Section 197(2) and Section 197, the proportionality or quota principle, inherent in the federal character clauses, was extended to appointments and promotions in the public services, to the appointments of Chairperson and membership of the Boards of directors of parastatals, to appointments and promotions in the armed forces, to the allocation of public revenue and distribution of public projects, to the composition of a number of federal executive bodies and to admission to federal secondary schools and federal universities.

Section 153 of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution established the Federal Character Commission, as a federal executive body, empowered in Section 8(1) of the Third Schedule of the constitution to oversee and monitor the implementation of the federal clauses, as follows:

- Work out an equitable formula subject to the approval of the National Assembly for the distribution of all cadres of posts in the public service of the Federation and of the States, the armed forces of the government-owned companies and parastatals of the States;
- promote, monitor and enforce compliance with the principle of proportional sharing of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at all levels of government;
- take such legal measures, including prosecution of the head or staff of any Ministry or government body or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed by the Commission; and, as provided for in Section 8(3) of the Schedule.
- Notwithstanding any provisions in any other law or enactment, the Commission shall ensure that every public company or corporation reflects the federal character in the appointment of its directors, and senior management staff.

## 11. Example of Power Sharing Arrangements: Ethiopia

In Ethiopia the state-formation process, under Amhara hegemony, began with the unification of the Abyssinian Empire. It assumed the form of a centralized bureaucratic empire, which saw the expansion of the emergent, Amhara-dominated Ethiopian state southwards to incorporate other ethnic groups, Oromo, Gurage, Wollamo and Kefa.

However, the incorporation process involved the subjugation of the incorporated ethnic groups, who came under Amhara domination, with their languages, identities and cultures suppressed, and forced to identify with the Amhara ethnic group (Kefale 2003: 258-259; Mengisteab 2002: 179-180; Clapham 1994: 31).

But Amhara hegemony did not go unchallenged, as the history of violent uprisings and resistance against Amhara hegemony makes only too clear: the Raya-Azebo revolt in 1928, the Woyane rebellion of Tigray in 1943, the Eritrean Revolt in 1962, the Bale revolt of 1964 and the 1968 uprising in Gogjam: (Mengisteab 2002: 180)

The federal accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1952, brokered by the United Nations, was ineffectual and no sooner had it been signed that it was suspended by Emperor Haile Selassie. This was the background to the Eritrean revolt, which went on into the 1990s.

The military regime, the *Derg*, which came to power in 1974, after the overthrow of Emperor Haile Selassie, contrary to all expectations continued the policy of Amhara domination, through military offensives against other ethnic groups, fuelling and further aggravating unrest and disquiet in the country.

It was in this context that a number of ethnically-based resistance movements engaged the regime in various ethno-regions of the country: the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), the Eritrean Peoples' Liberation Front (EPLF), the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), the Afar Liberation Front (ALF) and the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF).

Contrary to Lustick's (1979, 1980) formulation of the control model of the management of ethnic conflict, the resort by the *Derg* to seeking a military solution to the ethnic problem in Ethiopia was counterproductive and contributed largely to its overthrow in July 1991 by a coalition of ethnic movements, made up of the TLF, the Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement

(EPDM), which later became the Amhara national democratic Movement (ANDM), and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), under the aegis of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

The EPRDF formed a transitional government, after earlier conceding Eritrea's right to secede, and endorsed a transitional charter, which affirmed the rights of nations, nationalities and peoples to self-determination. To this end, each nation, nationality and people is guaranteed the right to:

- preserve its identify and have it respected, promote its culture and history and use and develop it language;
- administer its own affairs within its own defined territory and effectively participate in the central government on the basis of freedom and fair and proper representation;
- exercise its right to self-determination of independence, when the concerned nation/nationality and people is convinced that the above rights are denied, abridged or abrogated.

A new federal constitution for the country was ratified in December 1994, with the following federal and power-sharing arrangements:

- The election of a 550-member Council of People's Representatives, from all electoral districts on the basis of population.
- Special representation on the Council of People's Representatives for minority nations, with 20 seats reserved for them.
- Creation of 10 ethnicity-based states, with provision for the creation of more states of the basis of ethnic group right.
- Creation of a Federal Council, made up of the constituent nations of the federation, with each nation represented by one member, and another member for each million of its population. The functions of the Federal Council are to: deliberate and decide on claims by nations for self-determination, arbitrate in disputes between states of the federation, and determine allocation of revenues derived from joint federal and state taxes and subsidies by the central government to the state.

## 12. Concluding Remarks

How well these power-sharing arrangements can accommodate and manage ethnic conflict in such a way as to attenuate or make less salient ethnic conflict is a difficult—perhaps even unanswerable—question. Neither is it my intention here to attempt to provide such an answer.

My concern is rather, given my situating the salience of ethnic conflict in the character of the state as a partisan in—and a major source of—ethnic conflict, to hypothesize that, if this is indeed the case, we may reasonably expect to lessen rather than deepen ethnic conflict by changing the character of the state and making access to it more inclusive. It seems to me that one strategic way of achieving this objective is through the type of power-sharing arrangements I have tried to sketch.

These arrangements divide and structure the sovereignty of the state, in such a way that significant ethnic groups have their own ‘sovereignty’ within their local spaces, while entrenching their participation within the national sovereign space, through provisions for mutual control of the state at that level. This shared participation within this national jurisdictional space or sphere seeks to prevent the domination of the particular space by an ethnic group or coalition or combination of ethnic groups.

I am aware that there are bound to be problems with the arrangements. For example, in the Nigerian case, there is a raging controversy over citizenship questions raised by the differentiated citizenship created by federal character clauses (Jinadu 2002; Momoh 2001; Touré 2003). In Ethiopia, there is talk of a new ethno-imperial domination by the ethnic group (Mengisteab 2002: 184).

If we shift our attention from national spaces to the global space, we find similar identity-based contention over spaces, over multiple sovereignties and over differentiated citizenships, which create mutual antagonisms, breed discriminatory policies, restrict access, and impair competition, which would irritate world federalists and functionalists.

This is to be expected. It poses the enduring problem of how to seek and build peace and development on a global scale. One solution leads to a new set of problems, requiring and giving rise to new solutions, which in their turn create new problems. And so the drama of human existence continues in a dialectical way. What else can one say?

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## About the Author

Professor L. Adele Jinadu is currently the Executive Director of the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, an institute founded and directed by Claude Ake until his death in 1996. Jinadu earlier served as Professor of Political Science and Dean of the Faculty of Social Science at Lagos State University in Ojo, Nigeria. Professor Jinadu is and has been a member of several professional organisations and boards. He served as a full-time member of the National Electoral Commission in Nigeria from 1987 to 1992. He is a former President of the Nigerian Political Science Association (NPSA) and, between 1997 and 1999, he served as the President of the African Association of Political Science (AAPS). During 2000-2003, Professor Jinadu served as Vice President of the International Political Science Association (IPSA). He previously served as a member of the International Committee for the Study of Political Science and of the Advisory Board for the International Political Science Review. He has also taught extensively abroad. On a more personal note, Professor Jinadu was a close friend of Claude Ake's. They also worked together to create and sustain the African social science network, primarily through AAPS and CODESRIA, during the 1980s and 1990s.

## Holders of The Claude Ake Visiting Chair

*2003:* Professor L. Adele Jinadu (Nigeria); a former President of the African Association of Political Science (AAPS), Jinadu is Executive Director of the Centre for Advanced Social Science (CASS), in Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

*2004:* Dr. Cyril I. Obi (Nigeria); Associate Research Professor at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs and Senior Research Fellow/Programme Coordinator at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala.

*2005:* Professor Amadu Sesay (Sierra Leone); Head of the Department of International Relations, Obafemi Awolowo University, Nigeria.

*2006:* Professor Kwame Boafo-Arthur (Ghana); Head of the Department of Political Science, University of Ghana, Legon.

*2007:* Professor Charles Villa-Vicencio (South Africa); Professor Emeritus at the University of Cape Town and Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), Cape Town.

## Abstract

Professor Adele L. Jinadu addresses herein a controversial academic debate and a difficult political issue: the question of whether, in Africa, other political-constitutional solutions than the prevailing centralist one may be suitable in terms of defusing the destabilizing political and social tendencies in ethnically divided societies, particularly after internal armed conflict. The analysis covers ethnically pluralist societies that seek to bring about stable post-conflict transitions, durable peace and systems of legitimate and transparent governance based on democratic values. The challenge is, according to the author, that prevailing conditions of scarcity, together with other impeding factors in the historical and current context—such as the impact of the colonial heritage and the workings of the international system—block the process of forming a *de facto* strong, inclusive state based on the classic ideals of the Weberian model. The sought-after separation of the state from society—the de-personalization of politics—thus becomes difficult and centralist forms of rule instead tend to facilitate regime behaviour that fuels exclusivism, patronage and elite pilfering, reinforces hierarchical structures and breeds inequality, marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination in various forms. Therefore, the author argues, consociational-type solutions to basic constitutional questions hold, for some states and under certain conditions, more promise in terms of producing a political climate conducive to legitimate rule, political stability and durable peace.