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Editorial

The world, we said in the last editorial, at the risk of stating the obvious, has not stopped changing. And of course, not all changes can be equally likable to anyone, let alone to concerns as varied as those of the South. Indeed, it would be difficult to find even individual issues that can be seen unequivocally with any single analytical lens. These changes have not been any different. As earlier, the Sephis e-Magazine aims to bring to its readers a multiplicity of interpretations of developments across the region. In keeping with the e-magazine's tradition, however, we cannot but highlight the forceful silencing of voices in South Asia, especially, in the last few months; as well as across the South, over time. This issue of the e-Magazine speaks of three such incidents.

The first, covered by Paromita Das Gupta, is the controversy surrounding the exiled Bangladeshi author, Tasleema Nasreen. The demands for her expulsion from the supposed cultural capital of India, Kolkata (nee Calcutta) has sent shock waves across the cultural space of the subcontinent. After all, this is the very city that was known for its spirited defence of the equally sacrilegious(?) art of M. F. Hussein. This event, mired as it is yet in so many unclear contexts and contours, has nonetheless come as a severe blow to the city's progressive self-image.

The other loss is more irredeemable and for which no amends can be made. While decades may go before the true reasons and killers of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto are uncovered, the fact of the matter is that a voice was silenced forever at the very time when Pakistan seems to be rocking uneasily between the twin attacks of militant fundamentalism and military dictatorship. Bhutto, the third of her family to die a violent death that can be directly related to politics, was an enigmatic figure, controversial and charismatic, heroine of the pro-democracy movement of the nineteen eighties and mired in allegations of corruption. The crisis that was initiated with the promulgation of the emergency in Pakistan continues to haunt the country unabated. This has been analysed by Jishnu Dasgupta and, keeping in mind its contemporary relevance, has been posted in the *Contemporary South* section of the ezine website itself- <http://sephisemagazine.org/contemporary-south.html>

Similar voices continue to attract us from other South countries too. The Guatemalan experience has been recorded through the voice of one of its daughter's, Eglá Martínez Salazar, who is concerned about the ongoing structural and everyday situations that countless Guatemalans face in the impoverished and unemployed sectors where impunity reigns. She has been working on human and citizenship rights and environmental justice among other issues, and the interview conducted by Samita Sen and Kashshaf Ghani reflects her ideas and activities.

A detailed account of the various activities of the research organisation Eglá Martínez Salazar, and many other young scholars, associates herself to is provided by Debarati Chakraborty. SYLFF (Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund) Asia Pacific Regional Forum was held in Kolkata late last year, and the report provides an interesting account of its agenda along with the enthusiastic responses from its participants.

In the *Articles* section we bring you a combination of theoretical analysis and regional studies. Beja's article on Capital Flight is the third and last in the series we have been bringing to you in the last couple of issues. In the first part he set an agenda by (re)introducing it in the public domain, so as to effect policy decisions, a matter that closely concerns developing nations, while in the second part he continued to talk of this problem, through conceptual details, that shows the northern dominance to be preponderant. He rounds off in this issue by estimating the ensuing effects of this outflow affecting the economies of many a South country.

Michael Kehinde's piece provides a fascinating account of how artificially drawn boundaries act as forceful impositions on indigenous cultures and societies. The ills we associate with colonialism and its apparent effects in the South countries are vividly portrayed in the African case of the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin. Ethnic and racial identities are sacrificed in the name of administrative efficiency and for the 'betterment' of the local inhabitants.

Jerome Teelucksingh dwells on a more patriotic concern regarding his motherland and the Caribbean countries at large. The article, by bringing forward the third world brain drain is a must read, especially for those who consider an escape to the West to be the ultimate road to financial freedom and emancipation from misery. It calls for a more unified approach among Caribbean countries, but also among Latin American countries, in order to fight the various ills of political and economic dominance by North countries.

Along with the sections you already know so well, we introduce this time a new section, *Book Notices*. Here, instead of a full-scale book reviews, we present short introductions to these books, trying to interest you further in these books, and hope to induce you to read these books....

Capital Flight, Part III: Estimates¹



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Abstract

This is the last part of the series on capital flight. Recall that capital flight is the large outflow of private funds especially from the developing countries. Individuals themselves, or through their agents, pull out capital for a range of reasons, including the avoidance of an unfavourable development that erodes the value of capital or social controls that restrict the command over capital. The gains basically accrue to those who carry out capital flight, while the costs, which are large and linger for a while, are imposed on society. It is for this reason that the issue of capital flight necessarily involves policy to guarantee the public welfare.

Capital flight is carried out in clandestine ways. But it can be carried out using the formal banking and payments systems, though they may not be aware that they are exploited as conduits. Sophistications in technology and processes have made transactions easier to conceal flight. With economic deregulation and liberalisation focuses largely on how to relax regulations on capital flows, there is limited consideration on the introduction of the compensating measures imperative to the changed environment. Opportunities for capital flight became plenty and have indeed been well exploited. The notion that market processes should be free is so powerful that attempts to manage capital flows are quickly branded as reversals of reforms.

One way to appreciate the seriousness of the problem is to measure capital flight. It needs to be stressed that because capital flight is clandestine, and known *ex post*, forensics is needed to quantify capital flight. But what is obtained is only indicative of the magnitude of the problem.

As pointed out in the earlier essays, there is an extensive literature on how to measure capital flight. The residual method is the preferred approach, which was employed by the World Bank in its *1985 World Development Report*.

The residual method takes into account all relevant capital flows. Capital flight is thus the net of the officially recorded sources and uses

of funds. Recorded sources of funds refer to net additions to external debt and net non-debt capital inflows, with the latter comprising net foreign direct investments and net portfolio investment equities and other investment assets. Recorded uses of funds refer to current account deficits and accumulation of international reserves plus other sanctioned uses of foreign exchange.

However, adjustments are needed to the basic method to incorporate data corrections, the first being the impact of exchange rate fluctuations on debt and non-debt capital inflows. Note that these flows are transacted in the hard currencies but are reported in dollar values, so exchange rate fluctuations can distort their dollar values. Since 1989, the World Bank has incorporated the stock-flow reconciliation for the cross-currency valuations effects on debt, but for completeness, reconciliations for the pre-1989 period are to be calculated. Similarly, non-debt capital inflows have to be reviewed, comparing source- and host-country information to make the corresponding adjustments plus the cross-currency valuation effects.

Additionally, the current accounts need to be reviewed and adjusted for trade misinvoicing. Unrecorded income remittances can be significant for countries that have large overseas workers. Presumably, the accumulated reserves include the necessary corrections; if not, they have to be incorporated to complete the adjustments. Anyone conducting a study on capital flight obviously

¹ This is the third and the concluding part of the essay. The previous two parts have been published in the preceding issues of *Global South*.

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needs to liaise with the central banks and the international organisations to ensure the integrity of information.

When a positive residual is obtained, there is prima facie evidence of capital flight. The positive notation is used (even though there is a net outflow of funds) following the convention because in a manner of speaking capital flight is a form of foreign asset accumulation. A negative residual implies reverse capital flight and thus a reduction in the unrecorded foreign asset. Illegal flows like money laundering are not yet included in this method, but they are easily incorporated when an appropriate measure is obtained.

Results for Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand show significant capital flight. Figure 1 shows the average capital flight from the four economies in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. Total capital flight from the four economies reached \$458 billion for 1980 to 1999. If the imputed interest earnings are added (assuming that the amounts were invested with fixed returns equal to United States Treasury Bill rates), the estimated stock of unrecorded assets is estimated at US\$ 660 billion as of 1999. Needless to say, these are large amounts of resources that could have been used to generate additional output and jobs.

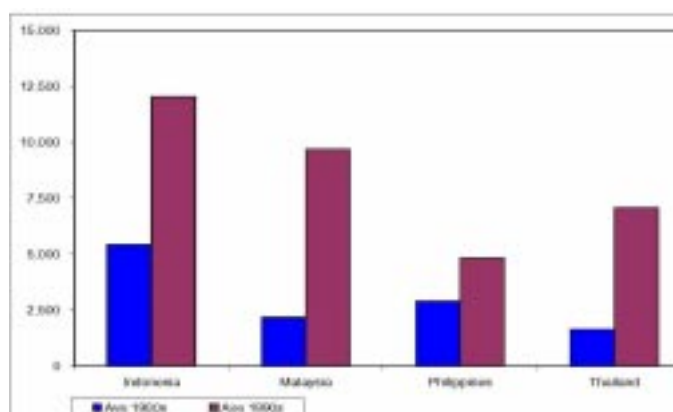


Figure 1: Average Capital Flight from Southeast Asia, 1980s and 1990s

There is no space to detail the political economy of capital flight from Southeast Asia. Suffice to say that capital flight occurred to avoid unfavorable domestic conditions, social controls and hide funds; but the flight of capital also contributed to promote those conditions, of course, in different degrees depending on the country context. Massive capital inflows in the 1990s also contributed to intensify capital flight as economies could not effectively absorb all the funds, partly because their domestic capacities

are limited and because reforms have weakened the ability of economies to absorb capital. Similar issues were also pointed out in Boyce and Ndikumana.²

Focusing on the Philippines, results show that the estimated elasticities of capital flight remained constant in the 1980s and 1990s even with the policy changes throughout these decades. The results of my calculations suggest that a one per cent increase in external debt during the first period of economic reforms resulted in a 0.67 per cent increase in capital flight, whereas during the second period, 0.64 per cent. While capital inflows may have contributed to an expansion of economic activities in the Philippines, the constant elasticities suggest that funds were in turn channeled out of the country as capital flights. In short, capital flight became a constant feature of Philippine political economy.

Furthermore, one long-term effect of capital flight in the Philippines is an economic environment that discouraged rapid economic growth, while poor economic conditions induced capital flight; thus, the feedback process generated an ever-worsening domestic condition. The case study on the Philippines finds that capital flight played a big role on why the country lost the opportunity to take-off at least until 1999. In the process, the country was pushed down on its ladder of economic progress and remained unable to pull itself up to a higher growth trajectory, with actual economic growth of the Philippines at about half its potential.

Dep. Variable	Period 1: From 1986		Period 2: From 1993	
	Coefficient	Elasticity	Coefficient	Elasticity
Capital Flight				
Debt Flow	0.33	0.35	0.47	0.49
Debt Stock	0.14	1.32	0.13	1.22
Lagged Reserves	-0.61	-0.96	-0.78	1.23
Lagged Growth	-0.63	-0.36	-0.50	-0.28
D_1 *Debt Flow	0.74	0.32		
D_2 *Debt Flow	0.72	0.15		

Table 1: Comparative Elasticities of Capital Flight of the Philippines

Note: $D_1 = 1$, 1986 onwards but 0 otherwise; $D_2 = 1$, 1993 onwards but 0 otherwise. D_1 covers the first stage of policy reforms in the post-

² See J. Boyce, "The Revolving Door? External Debt and Capital Flight: Philippine Case Study," *World Development*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1992; J. Boyce and L. Ndikumana, "Is Africa a net creditor? New estimates of capital flight from severely indebted sub-Saharan African countries, 1970-96," *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 2001; L. Ndikumana and J. Boyce, "Public debts and private assets: Explaining capital flight from sub-Saharan African countries," *World Development*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2003.

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Marcos period, while D_2 covers the Ramos period and after.³

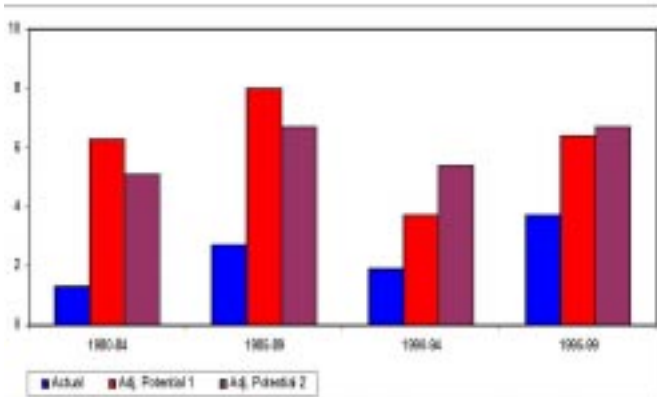


Figure 2: Actual Growth and Adjusted Potential Growth of the Philippines

Is it reasonable to discount the past to only consider the present prospects for economic growth? The short answer is no. As the experience of the Philippines show, there are long-term impacts of capital flight that cannot be ignored. More generally, developing countries continue to experience capital flight, and their economic growth is constrained as a result. There are serious implications especially to poor countries: Capital flight poses to, if not already, undermine the achievements achieved so far on the millennium development goals.

Decisive policy actions are needed to deal with the capital flight. Macroeconomic stability remains an important key to deal with the demand side of capital flight, while the management of capital flows is crucial for the supply side. Success in both aspects means that an economy is thus able to retain and in fact attracts capital to support economic growth. The institutional foundations to execute policies are clearly important, and that includes the government regaining its control over policy-making. Civil society enters this picture to make sure that the government pursues sensible policies toward improving public welfare. Obviously, the objective is not to return to economic repression, neither is it desirable; but what is being demanded is for the government to maintain the policy space to discipline these unproductive activities, allow productive engagements with other stakeholders, and steer the economy toward broad-based economic expansions.

If capital flows out as capital flight, economic fragilities are created that can increase the risks of crises and/or reduce the effectiveness of domestic policies to achieve economic goals. As it is, capital flight contributes to aggravate the capital scarcity problem in developing countries.

At the same time, it restricts capacity and ability to mobilise domestic resources and access foreign resources for economic growth. When capacity to absorb the large capital inflows is weak or has been weakened, economic fragilities are intensified that ultimately mean wasted resources, large capital outflows and crises. International policy cooperation is crucial so that capital flows do not cause economic havoc.

It also needs to be stressed that when capital flows (like external debt) are squandered into poorly thought or unnecessary projects, or inappropriately benefit those in power or the elites, or used to subjugate the people thus violating human rights and curtailing freedoms, or laundered into money havens abroad, and so on, society doubly suffers from the indebtedness and the lost capital. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure that capital flows benefit the public and not used to prosper a privileged few. As such, a government that misuses the funds is thus liable for problems that arise and must not impose the burden on its society. Investors and creditors must also take up some responsibility, so that investments, for instance, contribute to the generation of output and jobs and the expansion of public welfare. Moreover, prudence is expected during the cycle of the debt, from review stage until full payment is made. If at any stage an anomaly is found or mishandling of funds, prudence requires that the appropriate actions be taken to correct the situation. Such expectations are easy to realise if there are sound lending and investment policies.

In cases where proof cannot be presented to conclusively demonstrate that funds were used as intended or could not be traced, it can be presumed that funds were misused and have been diverted into private accounts or money havens. The government that is part of such misconduct, by commission or omission, is accountable for whatever unfavourable outcomes that emerges and should not impose the burden on the public. If the creditors and investors ignore or pretend not to see that funds were used, for instance, to benefit a privileged few, or they do not act to correct the problem when they are aware of it, they too are accountable for the troubles and they should not demand payment from the public but rather only from those privileged few who took advantage of their access or were irresponsible in the use of the funds.

From an economic justice point-of-view, these cases provide bases to question the

³ Source E. Beja, Jr., "Capital Flight and the Hollowing Out of the Philippine Economy in the Neoliberal Era," *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 2006.

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legitimacy of a country's indebtedness and the rationale for continuing to honour such debts that the public did not enjoy, as well as to put in doubt the purported benefits of the unregulated capital flows that bring unnecessary difficulties to the public.

Of course, if it can be demonstrated that governments, investors, and creditors exercised prudence, there is no need to question the legitimacy of capital flows. This requirement can go a long way in addressing concerns about possibilities of disguising government and creditor actions in order to sweep away any responsibility of the problem. Legitimate debts and investments have to be paid and honoured.

Finally it needs to be pointed out that in some cases agents are legitimately not aware that they are being utilised as the conduits of capital flight and other clandestine activities. If there is no hidden motive, there is also no need to engage in unrecorded flows. Strong actions are needed to arrest such manipulations. Concerted international action is needed to clamp down on agents or practices that facilitate capital flight. In information sharing in looking into questionable activities and bank accounts is crucial. Public policy needs both sound capacity building and international cooperation to police international transactions and curb capital flight.

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Comparative Impacts of Colonial Partition on the Yoruba of Nigeria and Benin



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Abstract

There is now a great interest in the how colonialism modified identities previously thought to be primordial. In this article, Kehinde explores the impact of the same on Yoruba identity in West Africa. In doing so, he also deals with the differential impacts among the residents of one pre-colonial state (the Oyo empire), who by the 'logic' of colonial conquest, found themselves under three European powers.

Introduction

It has become virtually axiomatic among commentators and scholars of the partition of Africa to note the 'artificial' character of the boundaries as drawn up by the colonial powers following the Scramble for its territories. Contemporary international boundaries in Africa are colonial creations. They are arbitrary and forcefully superimposed.¹ However, these do not make African boundaries peculiar, as boundaries everywhere else are artificial,² arbitrary and forcefully imposed.³ What is specifically peculiar to African boundaries is the magnitude and the duration taken for their determination which made its case more dramatic and problematic.⁴ Unlike in Europe where the evolution of boundaries was largely gradual and spread over three

centuries,⁵ the delimitation of African boundaries was completed in less than three decades. But this was not really the problem; it was that the boundaries were imposed with little or no consultation with Africans. Thus, the largely self-determined boundaries⁶ that predated colonial intervention were undermined. The emergent boundary regime partitioned several pre-existing homogenous ethnic groups into two or more nation-states.⁷ And once ethnic groups are divided by state boundaries, the fractions tend to grow along different paths, develop contrasting loyalties, languages, values and economies.⁸ Furthermore, some groups were divided between different colonial authorities, some of which were engaged in bitter and fierce competition for territories in each other's sphere

¹ See Anthony I. Asiwaju, (ed.) *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries 1884-1984*, St. Martin Press, New York, 1984; Iuean Griffiths, "Permeable Boundaries in Africa", and Simon Katzellenbogen, "It Didn't Happen at Berlin: Politics, Economics and Ignorance in the Setting of Africa's Boundaries", in P. Nugent and A.I. Asiwaju (eds.) *African Boundaries: Barriers, Conduits and Opportunities*, Pinter, London, 1996; and Griffiths, *The African Inheritance*, Routledge, London, 1995.

² Human factors are primarily responsible for the creation of international boundaries. There is no such thing as natural boundaries as nature itself abhors such compartmentalisation. Simply because a line is marked by nature does not necessarily imply that it is a 'natural' thing to utilise it for boundary purposes or that it may constitute a desirable or 'natural' line of separation between neighbouring peoples.

³ International boundaries are seldom a product of plebiscite or democratic consensus.

⁴ See J. C. Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria 1885-1960: the Framework of an Emergent African Nation*, Longman, London, 1970; and Asiwaju, cited in Malcolm Anderson, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996.

⁵ The gradual process of the evolution of boundaries in Europe allowed for their crystallisation 'naturally' under the impact of slow social, economic and political developments.

⁶ Pre-colonial boundaries in Africa were more of frontier zones; regions of interaction rather than of exclusion characterised by the finite lines of the European imposed boundaries of the present time.

⁷ See James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1958; John Hargreaves, *Prelude to the Partition of West Africa: the First Phase*, Macmillan, London, 1963; Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria*; Asiwaju, (ed.) *Partitioned Africans*, particularly S. H. Phiri, "National Integration, Rural Development and Frontier Communities: the case of the Chewa and Ngoni astride Zambian boundaries with Malawi and Mozambique" and Asiwaju, *West African Transformations: Comparative Impacts of French and British Colonialism*, Malthouse Press, Lagos, 2001.

⁸ Asiwaju, (ed.) *Partitioned Africans*.

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of influence.⁹ Each of the European colonialists pursued different administrative, judicial, educational and monetary policies, all of which have significant implications for the groups partitioned by international boundaries.

The focus of this paper is to highlight the impacts of partition on the Yoruba divided between Nigeria and Benin in West Africa. The choice is informed by the fact that the group is one of the most populous in Africa and had evolved a well-defined 'state' system organised loosely around the old Oyo Empire prior to colonisation. Therefore, the group would provide a veritable laboratory for studying colonial partition and its consequences on partitioned groups in the continent.

Following the Scramble for choice territories in the Gulf of Guinea, the Yoruba culture area was partitioned between Britain (Nigeria), France (Benin) and Germany (Togo, which later became a Trust territory after the defeat of Germany in the First World War). As with all boundary agreements in colonial Africa, the Yoruba were not represented at the negotiations leading to the delimitation of territory. Thus, the boundary disrupted age-old affinities and ties¹⁰ as the group was sliced through with abject disregard for prevailing social and territorial order of the day with crucial implications for the fractions of the group. The implications are not only limited to the duration of colonial rule, but as with almost every other effect of colonialism, outlasting actual colonisation.

The paper is divided into three sections, namely: The pre-colonial setting; impact of the partition on the Yoruba ethnic identity, traditional institutions and culture; and the responses of the native population.

Pre-Colonial Yorubaland

Prior to the colonial epoch there was no single group known as the Yoruba as the subgroups, which made up what is today called Yoruba existed as semi-autonomous groups. Indeed, the term Yoruba is European in origin as it came into the lexicon of the explorers, missionaries and traders in the mid-nineteenth century to describe the group of people found around and along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa.¹¹ The Yoruba nation was deliberately

'invented' to suit the demands and exigencies of the time. In spite of the semi-autonomy of the subgroups, the several subgroups subscribe to a myth of common origin, shared history, culture, religion and language, which made the 'imagination' of a Yoruba nation plausible.¹² One of the most significant of these linkages, apart from language and culture, is the dynastic origin of Yoruba kingdoms with the *ade ileke* (beaded crown with fringe over the face) as *the* symbol of political authority. The possession of *ade ileke* by an individual or group was related primarily to the association with Oduduwa, the legendary progenitor of the Yoruba, whose epoch is regarded as the source of dynastic kingship and of a Yoruba identity.¹³

The entire geographical area under consideration (spanning the whole of present-day Western Nigeria, through the southern-midland of Benin and specific enclaves in Togo) was loosely organised, politically around the old Oyo Empire.¹⁴ Consistent with the mode of organisation of power in pre-colonial Africa, power was concentrated around the capital and its core area, while it petered out towards the frontiers. Thus, the fringe regions of the Empire were little more than tributaries over which discernible military, political, economic and cultural influences of varying degrees were exercised. Other non-Yoruba speaking kingdoms, especially to the western part of the core area of the Empire were reduced to tributary status and ports for the exportation of Oyo slaves. All over the region, evidence of vital connections with the Oyo was substantial. Although the Empire collapsed in the third decade of the nineteenth century, with a myriad of consequences, prior to the Scramble that led to the partition of Africa, as a result of its spread and influence, the Empire succeeded in spawning some sense of community among the different subgroups such that at the onset of colonisation, it was possible to ascribe a common identity to these groups of people.

The particular area under consideration was a point of intensive competition and rivalry between Britain, France and Germany. Britain already had a foothold in the Gold Coast (Ghana) to the west and Lagos to the east of the Gulf of Guinea, and wanted to link these two

⁹ The famous race to Nikki by agents of Britain and France to establish imperial control at the close of the nineteenth century is a case in point. Nikki was a fabled prosperous town on the fringe of their respective spheres of influence, which was considered a prized possession by both colonial powers and each sought to include the town in its sphere of control.

¹⁰ Conflict and disruptions were rife in the period just prior to colonisation in West Africa however the nature of disruptions did not compartmentalise populations as the new boundary regime tended to do.

¹¹ James Johnson, *The History of the Yoruba*, CMS Press, Lagos, 1921.

¹² J. Ade-Ajayi, and S. Akintoye, "Yorubaland in the Nineteenth Century", in O. Ikime (ed.) *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Heinemann Book for Historical Society of Nigeria, Ibadan, 1980, pp. 280-281.

¹³ Biodun Adediran, *The Frontier States of Western Yorubaland 1600-1889*, IFRA, Ibadan, 1994, p. 55.

¹⁴ Between the seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries Oyo, emerged as an imperial empire, incorporating almost all the Yoruba subgroups, excluding those of the forest belts and those at the eastern fringes of the Yoruba territory.

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points with the acquisition of the entire stretch of territory in-between. The French needed to halt British supremacy along the Gulf of Guinea and wanted a share of the palm-oil trade emanating from there as well as the desire to obtain a stake for future territorial negotiations.¹⁵

Germany, being a late entrant into the fray, needed a foothold in the thick of the competition. Thus, the region was eventually partitioned using the principle of *effective occupation* with the western part going to Germany (Togo), the east allotted to Britain (Nigeria) and the territory in the midst of the region allocated to France (Benin). Given the principle employed in the division and the tensions involved, it is not surprising that local details were not put into consideration in the determination of the boundaries between these states. Thus, the boundaries disrupted ancient patterns of interactions (economic, political and cultural), community and livelihood, simultaneously spawning new identities, new nations, new patterns of interactions and livelihood.

Identity, Ethnicity and Colonial Administration

Given the fierce competition and ‘scramble’ that preceded the partition of Yorubaland, inter-colonial policies were expectedly protectionist and simultaneously ‘national’ integrative. There was a pressing need to foster the sense of ‘us versus them’ among the native populations across the boundary in order for each colonial power to consolidate its hold on its domain, keeping it distinct from the domain of the other colonial power.

In tune with the French policy of *assimilation* (aimed at making Frenchmen out of Africans) at the onset of colonisation, drawing largely from the *Russification* practice of *Czarist Russia*,¹⁶ the Yoruba in Benin became *Frenchified*, developing a distinct identity from the group across the boundary in the British territory. They (the Yoruba in Benin) looked to Paris for inspiration; school curricula were in French, French was the only language taught in schools, they spoke French and gradually became Frenchmen. The Yoruba identity in Nigeria, while being British remained comparatively intact. Yoruba remained the language of instruction in schools (at least at the primary level, and bilingual beyond this level); the Yoruba language was taught in schools, up to university level; Yoruba dress

culture was accepted in the public domain. As early as the 1900s, there was already a discernible difference in the identities of the two Yoruba groups on the two divides. The forces of integration in the two countries further drove a wedge between the groups as they were exposed to opposing centripetal forces of state building. The deliberate invention of the nation in the two colonies reflected the distinction in colonial administrative policies. French policies could be classified into two categories; the early stage characterised by Direct Rule and *assimilation* and the later stage characterised by Indirect Rule or *association*, each bearing distinct consequences for the colonies. Direct rule was the response to the problem of administering the colonies at the onset of colonisation. The colonies were ruled directly by on-the-ground French officials employing the civil law of France, as African customary law was considered primitive and repugnant to principles of the civilised world with the ultimate aim of making Frenchmen out of Africans. No native institutions would be recognised; although natives would have to conform to European laws, only those ‘civilised’ would have access to European rights.¹⁷

Given the strength of French paternalism, the nation that was projected in the French sphere was the French national identity. The Yoruba identity was deliberately undermined, and sought to be replaced with the French identity. Indeed, the French pattern of administration did not favour such labelling as its vast territory in West Africa was administered as a single entity (the French West Africa). Furthermore, as nationalism presents a rallying point for the advancement and projection of a people and civilisation, brooking such sentiments and movements would only negate the ideals of French paternalism. However, with the resistance of the natives to *assimilation* and growing inadequacies of French administrators to meet the demands of direct administration,¹⁸ the French were compelled to adopt the principle of *Association* similar to the indirect rule already in use by the British with considerable success.¹⁹

On the other hand, the British policy not only strengthened the Yoruba identity, it also encouraged it. The main pillar of Indirect Rule was customary law, and the bearer of custom was said to be the tribe. There was not one unified

¹⁵ France bartered some territories here for fishing rights in Newfoundland, British North America.

¹⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Norton & Co., New York, 2006.

¹⁷ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism and the Genocide in Rwanda*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002, p. 16.

¹⁸ There were only 3,660 French officials to a native population of 15 million in French West Africa.

¹⁹ Britain too had experimented with Direct Rule, especially in its settler colonies, but was also compelled by administrative and political exigencies to adopt Indirect Rule.

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customary law for the whole colony, but distinct customary law for each tribe. The more custom was enforced, the more the tribe was restructured and conserved as more or less self-contained community, autonomous but not independent, as never before. Encased by custom, frozen into many tribes, the subject population was containerised, heightening ethnic self-consciousness and identity.²⁰ Furthermore, it was in the early years of colonialism that the Yoruba language was evolved as a written form and newspapers and school texts were produced in Yoruba. This helped the ‘imagination’ of the Yoruba nation as local dialects gave way to the standardised form in general usage all over the territorial space occupied by the various Yoruba sub-groups. Print-capitalism aided the ‘imagination’ of the nation in Yorubaland just as it did earlier in Europe and Latin America by creating a universe of homogenised experiences, histories and destinies through the collective experience of homogeneous empty time.²¹ Indeed, beyond the immediate confines of Yorubaland, neighbouring ethnic groups began to associate with the Yoruba identity largely because the British colonial mapping included them in the same regional grouping as the Yoruba (where Yoruba was the spoken language and language of instruction in schools). Thus, while the Yoruba identity in Benin suffered due to stifling policies, the group across the border in Nigeria enjoyed a leeway and blossomed due to a more favourable colonial policy.

The Yoruba, both in Nigeria and Benin faced one common and important challenge, ethnicity. Yorubaland had been partitioned into two different colonial entities, both of which comprised of groups and peoples the Yoruba had had little or no contact with in pre-colonial days. In Nigeria, the Yoruba were grouped with the Hausa, Ibo, Ibibio, Kanuri while in Benin, they were grouped with the Aja, Fon, Ewe, Wese groups, whose destinies have become tied to theirs and with whom they had to contend for space, political and economic. In none of these two states do the Yoruba constitute the majority. Indeed, in Benin, they constitute an oppressed minority while their lot in Nigeria is better as they constitute the second most populous group. This has significant implication on their access to the

apparatuses of state in both countries, especially in the post-colonial era. As ethnic identity is a major determinant of access to state power in Africa,²² ethnic mobilisation becomes a powerful tool in this regard. In post independence Africa, where the state is the most important and biggest actor in the economy, access to the apparatuses of state and control of resources are important sources of ethnic competition as the group that captures the state has control of an enormous amount of resources and thus, can reward its supporters, provide for group members and proceed to install barriers to entry into political and economic markets.²³

The literature has identified four main consequences of ethnic competition for resources.²⁴ They are: ‘Increased ethnic identification and group formations, increased racism and prejudice, increased inter-ethnic conflicts, and ethnic mobilisation and activism’. This is a picture of what the Yoruba were (are) exposed to in both countries. The fraction in Benin, due to its small size could not muster adequate political clout to influence state policies in its favour. The fraction in Nigeria, though it does not constitute the majority, is well placed by reason of its size to negotiate concessions in public policy decision-making.

Impact on Indigenous Political Organisations

Indigenous political organisation was one segment of colonial Africa where the impact of colonialism was glaringly obvious. Power had changed hands and traditional political institutions were either discarded or promoted depending upon which policy was adopted by the colonial powers. In pre-colonial Yorubaland, the institution of the *obaship* was highly revered with the king regarded as the human representative of the gods. He held an exalted position in society; he was considered the father and protector of the community; his word was law (though, there were in-built checks and balances). However, with the introduction of colonial rule, this changed, albeit in varying degrees on either sides of the boundary. The difference in the status of the *Oba* was simply a function of the difference in colonial policies. During the era of Direct Rule in French Yorubaland, Yoruba *Obas* were relegated to the

²⁰ Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996, p. 51.

²¹ For a detailed analysis of the imagination of the nation, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

²² Owing to the crucial roles played by (tribal) ethnic groups during Indirect Rule, as well as their employment as the basis of regional federalism toward the twilight of colonialism, they emerged as the main platform for political participation in independent Nigeria. Indeed, political parties had to be ethnically based to be relevant.

²³ John Mbaku, ‘Ethnicity, Constitutionalism, and Governance in Africa’, in J. Mbaku, et al. (editors), *Ethnicity and Governance in the Third World*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2001.

²⁴ J. Nagel, ‘Resource Competition Theories’, in *American Behavioural Scientist*, 38(3), 1995.

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background. France governed its territories directly employing French nationals and very few privileged Africans who had been assimilated into the culture of France and had been granted full French citizenship. Traditional chiefs were relegated as primitive and relics of a pre-modern social order. French cultural values were espoused and used to replace African values, which were considered barbaric, retrogressive and primitive.²⁵ Indeed, the *Oba* was reduced to a mere agent of the central colonial administration with clearly defined delegated duties and powers.²⁶ The French were intolerant of a rival locus of power, and strove to 'crush and destroy' the traditional chieftaincy, especially in the early days of colonial rule.²⁷ The French were highhanded in replacing *Obas* in disregard of procedure laid down by tradition. Traditional customs of legitimacy were much less important than the ability to speak French or prior service to the colonial regime. The powers of the *Obas* were further reduced as French policy tended to carve out large dominions into smaller administrative districts.

However, with the shift in the pattern of administration from Direct to Indirect Rule in the early years of the twentieth century, the French were compelled to govern their vast territory through the institution of traditional authority. The native traditions and customs that were previously regarded as completely repugnant to civilised principles had to be adopted as the basis of indirect rule. However, the adoption of customary law did not simply mean a continuation of things as they had been; it had to conform to 'acceptable practices' all over the civilised world. Custom, in other words, was state ordained and state enforced. Even with the adoption of more liberal attitude to traditional rulers, the lot of Yoruba *Obas* did not change appreciably. The French may have been compelled by political exigency to depend on the *Obas* for administration, they never granted them the authority to initiate actions or change. In the words of Crowder: (T)he chief in French West Africa progressively lost his traditional authority while his new functions of taxation, recruiting of forced labour and troops and checking on anti-French movements within his area of supervision, together with the authori-

tarian way in which he was treated by the Commandant, transformed him from the embodiment of the collective will of the community into an agent of the most hated aspects of French colonial rule.²⁸

The *Oba* not only lost his traditional authority, status and territory, he was treated with disdain by the French and his people, respectively. While the French reduced him to a mere agent of the 'state', he was alienated from his people as he was seen as nothing more than an agent of the oppressor, who exploited his power of administration and taxation to better his lot, at the expense of the people.

In the British sphere, however, the situation was different. The British adopted the policy of Indirect Rule where though, Britain was ultimately sovereign in its colonies, it sought to rule through the institution of traditional rulership already in place.²⁹ The *obas* were to oversee and monitor the day-to-day activities of their subjects based on customary law on behalf of the colonial authorities who were to guide and 'advise' the native rulers. Unlike the situation across the boundary in the French possession, greater care was taken to avoid the wholesale disruption of native culture, tradition and legitimacy. As Crowder again explains:

Indirect Rule... implied the government of the African peoples through their traditional political institutions, shorn of those features that conflicted with British concept of civilised behaviour, the extraction of taxes and the establishment of regularised treasuries.³⁰

In many places in Yorubaland, British rule enhanced the authority and powers of the *Obas*. Indirect rule strengthened the power of the *Oba* in two ways that marked a departure from what obtained in the pre-colonial period. For the first time, the scope of the power of the traditional ruler became all embracing. Previously autonomous social domains such as the household, age groups, traditional councils, now fell under the power of the king.³¹ Secondly, he was backed by the armed might of the colonial state; any challenge to the power of the king was considered as an affront on the colonial authority. Furthermore, territories under the *Obas* control were often enlarged in conformity with British colonial mapping. Unlike the practice in French

²⁵ Isaac Wallerstein, *Africa: the Politics of Independence*, Random House, New York, 1961, p. 66.

²⁶ Michael Crowder, *West Africa under Colonial Rule*, Sage, Evanston, 1968, p. 199.

²⁷ F. S. Williams Miles, "Partitioned Royalties: the Evolution of Hausa Chiefs in Nigeria and Niger", in *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 25(2), 1987, p. 239.

²⁸ Michael Crowder, *West Africa*, p. 139.

²⁹ Where there existed no pre colonial traditional rulership, one was created to cater to the colonial need for native authority; what is referred to in the literature as 'warrant chiefs.'

³⁰ Michael Crowder, *West Africa*, p. 211.

³¹ Mahmood Mamdani, "African States, Citizenship and War: A Case Study", *International Affairs*, Volume 78, Issue 3, July 2002, pp. 493-506.

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Yorubaland, when appointing new *Obas*, the British took great pains to follow the tradition and culture of the people. The Indirect Rule policy was especially beneficial to British Yoruba *Obas*, as many of them had already lost credibility owing to the protracted internecine warfare prevalent in the period around the advent of colonial intervention. The policy reified the institution of the *obaship* and restored its lost esteem and values. However, in certain instances, uncompromising *obas* were deposed and sent into exile.

While the authority and power of the *Oba* in French Yorubaland were greatly diminished, the fortunes of the *Obas* in British Yorubaland were highly enhanced. In his study of Ketu and Imeko, two towns of the pre-colonial Ketu Kingdom whose territory was separated by the international boundary into Benin and Nigeria respectively, Asiwaju shows that Ketu, the capital of the kingdom turned out worse than Imeko, a former outpost town of the capital. Indeed, their fortunes were reversed with Imeko becoming more prominent and its *Baale* (junior chief) elevated to the position of *Oba*, while the *Oba* of Ketu was reduced to an elected representative, subject to periodic elections in conformity with French policy.³² Given the British policy of Indirect Rule, Imeko and the adjoining territories were constituted into a District presided over by the *Baale*³³ of Imeko under the appellation of district 'headchief' and functioned as a subordinate to the Divisional Native Authority. As native authorities exercised political and judicial functions, the powers and status of the *Baale of Imeko* grew considerably. He was in charge of maintaining law and order, and with the district officer, shared the prerogative of appointing every other chief within the territory.

Unlike the Alaketu (*Oba* of Ketu), who as the *chef de canton*, had to exercise deference to the *commandant*, the district officer in charge of Imeko had to respect the *Onimeko*. For instance, while the Alaketu had to go to the Commandant in order to discuss issues relating to the administration of the *Canton*, visiting British officials were under strict instructions to pay courtesy calls on the *Oba*, rather than asking him (*Oba*) to visit the official's rest house. Furthermore, unlike the *Onimeko*, the Alaketu possessed no judicial responsibilities. The *Onimeko* was the president of the newly constituted Native Court.³⁴

Following independence, the fortunes of the *Obas* were to continue on different planes. In Nigeria, traditional authority initially continued to

play major roles in the polity with the second chamber of the regional parliaments (House of Chiefs) made up of traditional rulers with the most senior traditional ruler in each region constituting the ceremonial head of government (Governor). However, following the coup d'etat of 1966 and subsequent coups, their influence was gradually eroded and their roles became increasingly advisory.

In Benin, the colonial policy of repression of the traditional institution continued and indeed became codified in the Republican constitution of 1958.³⁵ The *Obas* are no more than mere custodians of the culture and tradition of the people.

Cultural Impacts

Given the intensive inter-colonial competition for footholds in each other's territories, as well as the relatively high level of 'community' in Yorubaland, each colonial administration embarked on rigorous propaganda to build the sense of oneness and belongingness in their respective sphere. The fear of the pull of ethnic consciousness, making for irredentism compelled deliberate misinformation (propaganda) by both states as one major tool of state building, usually beneficial to the originating state which constitutes the 'in-group' (us) but to the detriment of the targeted neighbouring state—the 'out-group' (them). The school system was the most prominent setting for the socialisation direly needed to foster the imagination of the nation, one distinct from the other across the boundary. Education meant a certain separation, a contrasting process of differential socialisation into two distinct states.

The educational policies of both powers sought to deny full access to western education to Africans. However, the restrictions which French policy imposed were greater than the British. Consistent with French administrative policy, education was centrally controlled by the state; government owned most of the schools, and it exercised very strict supervision over the few privately run schools, chiefly by the Roman Catholic Mission. This was consistent with the Law of Separation of 1904, which separated the sphere of the state from that of the Church and secularised education both in France and all over its colonial possessions.

Quality of educational facilities was very poor in the Yoruba areas under French rule as was the case all over the entire French West African Federation. Furthermore, the French policy included a specification strictly limiting school

³² Anthony I. Asiwaju, *West African Transformations*, pp. 134-137.

³³ In conformity with the growing status of the *Baale* of Imeko, his status was elevated to that of an *Oba* by the colonial authorities.

³⁴ Anthony I. Asiwaju, *West African Transformations*, pp. 143-146.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 149.

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eligibility age to fifteen years. At this age, students had to withdraw from school irrespective of the level of education attained. The significance of all these was an extremely low rate of school attendance throughout the colonial period in French Yorubaland.

In the British territory, a contrasting situation prevailed where Christian missionaries were more involved in education than the government and had much leeway in terms of contents and curricula. Later on, in the course of colonial rule, local initiatives in education were also introduced in Nigeria with several community groups and associations becoming involved in the establishment of schools. As the country moved towards independence, federalism (regional) was introduced with each regional government (made up of the indigenous elite) responsible for education among other responsibilities. The Regional government in the West (Yorubaland) introduced free universal primary education, which witnessed unprecedented establishment of, and enrolment in schools. That formed the foundation of the educational pre-eminence of the region in independent Nigeria.

The distinction in educational policies had contrasting impact on the two Yoruba groups. First, the members of the two educated elites were mutually estranged as schooling in the traditions of the two distinct western civilisations had alienated members of the same African culture.³⁶ The Yoruba elite in Dahomey communicated in French and associated more freely with their counterparts from other parts of Francophone Africa than they did with their kinsmen just across the boundary in Nigeria.³⁷ The survival of Yoruba language as the mother tongue of the two elite groups has not broken the barrier imposed by the two different official languages.

Secondly, as the French educational system was geared towards making French-men out of Africans, school curricula were decidedly oriented towards this end. The implication of this for the products of the educational system was the creation of a docile elite group, at home with the French administrative system. French policy of assimilation permitted qualified Africans to become members of the French parliament, which was considered the height of *frenchification* and *assimilation*. For a while, the elite considered French policy as satisfactory as it allowed *assimilation*; however, with the shift from assimilation to association and the replacement of the elite by native authority, the elite perception of colonial rule changed dramatically

and they worked assiduously to end colonial rule. However, the relatively late shift of focus to nationalism by the elite in French West Africa affected the response of France to independence movements such that by the mid-1950s when France began preparations to hand over power to the native elite, Britain was already far gone in instituting reforms and processes for transfer of power.

Across the boundary in British Nigeria, the objective of the educational policy was chiefly to produce labour force for the administration of the colony, as it was in the French colonies, and nothing else. However, as British policy was non-assimilationist, foreclosing any opportunity for Nigerians to become Britons, as well as sidelining the elite from the colonial bureaucracy, the educated elite saw colonialism for what it was without the distracting idea of assimilation. Thus, the educated elite saw the exploitative tendencies of colonialism, which propelled huge nationalist sentiments earlier than in the French territories in West Africa.

Reactions of the Native Population to the Partition

Colonialism engendered various kinds of responses from the subject population across the boundary. There was congruence in certain responses as well as distinction in others. The congruence was basically owing to resentments to alien rule and domination (which would have been had the group not been partitioned but retained as a whole within a colonial territory), as well as the limitations placed on mobility by the new boundary. The dissonance was due to contrasting modes of administration and the regime of law in the two colonies.

In both territories the response of the native population to the introduction of colonial rule was of passive resistance initially, but with the despotism of native authorities and the novelty of taxation, local resistance to colonial domination became increasingly widespread. In certain places, the resistance was not limited to the subject peasantry alone; there were certain native authorities that would not pander to the whims of colonial authorities incurring the consequence of loss of the throne and banishment; though, this was the exception rather than the rule. Finally, there was the natural distrust between the native educated elite and the colonial administrators, which led to the exclusion of the former from the colonial bureaucracy until the reforms witnessed in the closing days of colonial rule.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ This factor was reinforced by the spatial configuration of the whole of French West Africa under a single central colonial administration. Thus there was cross-posting of nationals across the territory, with the obvious advantage of integrating these elite from all over French West Africa. The impact of this on the Yoruba group was the further pulling apart of the partitioned fractions.

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Peasant resistance to colonial rule took various forms, among which were armed resistance, protest migration, refusal to pay tax, refusal to be mobilised for forced labour and conscription. For many of the peasantry, foreign rule, whether of the Direct or Indirect Rule variant was an intolerable imposition. Direct Rule portrayed colonialism as the domination of an alien race while Indirect Rule with its reform of customary law granting unrestricted powers to the native authorities at the expense of the people leading to both being regarded as unacceptable. The added civic responsibilities (without civic rights) of taxation, forced labour and conscription further created deep-seated resentment against colonial rule. All over Yorubaland, resentments erupted against measures, which sought to regulate the people's affairs through alien platforms. The Adubi War in Abeokuta on the Nigerian side of the boundary was waged by the native peasantry against British policies of taxation, forced labour and conscription. On the Benin side, the Olori-Ije engaged in armed resistance against the French administration throughout the period of colonisation.

Besides armed resistance, the native peasantry resorted to forced migration as a reaction to foreign domination.³⁸ This form of resistance was common in the French possessions where the *indigenat* legal system gave magisterial power to French administrators to dispense instant justice on the natives without recourse to any regular court.³⁹ The range of offences was infinite (including such petty 'offences' as not saluting the colonial administrator when he passed by) and punishment ranged from corporal punishment to deportation. Take for example the following list of charges extracted from a colonial court book:

Four lashes for 'wasting time instead of buying food'

five to ten lashes for 'sitting around fire instead of working'

one man was fined for 'absenting himself from hospital while under treatment'

another man was fined for singing near the native church at 11.30 p.m.'

some were fined for 'being late to work'

others were fined for 'gross disrespect.'⁴⁰

The legal system was so harsh that faced with the choice of 'voice' or 'exit', the peasants

simply walked across the boundary into the warm embrace of kith and kin on the other side. However, the employment of structural violence and coercive measures was not restricted to the French in Africa. As the essence was to teach the recalcitrant a lesson, to ensure they learned to respect constituted authority, colonial policy all over the continent was based on a command and control system. In the words of Lord Lugard, the architect of Indirect rule in Nigeria, "... occasions may arise when the strictly legal aspect may give way to expediency." Comparatively though, the French institution of the *indigenat* as a state policy and its practice elevated structural violence in French colonies to the level of statecraft which made the practice in British colonies a child's play.

The educated elite also constituted a crucial social category of resistance to colonial rule, whether French or British. At the onset of colonisation, native educated elite made up mainly of repatriated freed slaves, considered themselves partners of the colonial authorities in the quest to civilise the native population.⁴¹ However, with the shift in administrative policies to Indirect Rule as a direct response to the growing influence and agitations of the educated elite, replacing them with traditional authorities, the native educated elite began to agitate, initially for increased participation in the colonial administration and ultimately for independent rule. The struggle for independence in Africa would not have been possible without the consistent agitation of the educated elite.

The reaction of the local population to partition and colonial rule was not limited to agitations, struggles and contestations. They also adapted, indigenised and exploited the situation to meet their needs. For instance, the imposition of the boundary demarcating the limits of colonial possessions was meant to constitute a barrier between the two territories, but as the boundary line was not demarcated and patrolled, it constituted a veritable land passage for contraband goods on both sides of the borderline. The French and the British had imposed prohibitive tariffs on goods originating from the other territory in their bid to control their respective territories. However, price differentials, needs and tastes across the boundary compelled illegal transactions, even in prohibited commodities. Some have argued that smuggling was in fact a reaction by the peasants to

³⁸ Many Yoruba in Benin migrated across the boundary into Nigeria at the heights of the *indigenat*. This was possible due to the fact that prior to the colonial partition, the people and territory belonged together in the same social, cultural and political organisation.

³⁹ Asiwaju, "Control Through Coercion: The *Indigenat* Regime in French West African Administration till 1946", *Bulletin de II. F. A. N.*, Vol. 44, Series, B, No. 1, 1979, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Mahmood Mamdani. *Citizen and Subject*.

⁴¹ Jeff Spinner, *The Boundaries of Citizenship: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism in the Liberal State*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1994, (Paperback edition, 1996), pp. 14-16.

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undermine colonial rule.

Boundaries could control movement of people and goods, but it could hardly control the flow of culture and ideas, especially when the culture is ingrained in age-long tradition and practice. This is true of the Nigeria-Benin boundary. Though the boundary partitioned the Yoruba, locating the fractions in separate states with contrasting worldviews, yet, certain crucial cultural practices continue to navigate the barrier of structural boundary. For instance, at the coronation of a new *Alaketu* of Ketu (in Benin), the rituals of coronation involve a pre-coronation pilgrimage to Imeko and Idofa in Nigeria. This pilgrimage is considered vital in the legitimacy of any *Alaketu*.⁴² Many such trans-border cultural ties continue to exist in spite of the boundary.

Conclusion

The partition of Yorubaland into two distinct colonial states following the European Scramble for African territories towards the end of the nineteenth century led to the disruption of age-old patterns of interaction, social organisation and the simultaneous development of new patterns. This has had significant consequences on the group partitioned, outlasting actual colonisation with implications for the group and the successor states. Over six decades of colonial rule and largely contrasting state building processes bestowed profound legacies on French and British Yorubaland. While official British policy tended to promote local culture and nationalism (unwittingly) through the institution of native authority based on customary law, the initial French policy of assimilation

characterised by ‘crush and destroy’ approach tended to undermine and replace local culture with French culture as the local culture was considered primitive and uncivilised. Even when French policy became more liberal, it really did not translate into much gain for the native population. In effect, the contrasting policies resulted in the making of two distinct national identities from a hitherto homogeneous African culture group.

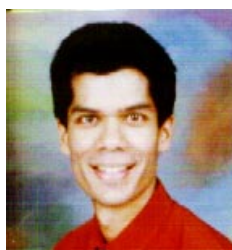
Colonialism is an epoch whose legacies are as far-reaching as they are deep-rooted. The political map of the continent was redrawn, largely without consideration for the people whose territories were not only being partitioned, but whose lives would never remain the same, throwing up crucial consequences that nationalities and states have continued to grapple with. The Yoruba is one of the several such partitioned groups whose culture areas were sliced through by arbitrary colonial mapping and re-mapping. The consequences of the partition of Yorubaland presented here are duplicated all over the continent contributing to the labelling of Africa as troubled and conflict-prone.

While the political map of the continent are a given, and can hardly be redrawn to reflect ethnic identities, boundaries as rigid, inalienable character of the state can be re-construed as windows of opportunities, bridges and sites of interactions. This would remove the tensions and barriers that have developed between members of the same group that had been partitioned and exposed to contrasting cultures and simultaneously aid regional integration.

⁴² Asiwaju, *West African Transformations*, p. 132.

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Forging a New Freedom: Caribbean and Latin American Economies in the Twenty-first Century



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Abstract

The article deals with the socio-economic and political challenges facing the majority of the Caribbean and Latin American economies. Social problems such as poverty, homelessness, and diseases like HIV/AIDS, pollution, corruption and political instability are common among these developing countries. Certain territories experience problems such as ethnic tension in Guyana, an absence of democracy in Cuba and political instability in Haiti and Venezuela. There is need to promote co-operation between Latin America and the Caribbean to curb ills plaguing the region such as drug trafficking. Differences in language have been the major obstacle in the development of sound relations between the West Indians and Latin Americans.

For centuries, imperialism and colonialism wreaked havoc on millions of persons in the Caribbean and Latin America. The results were irreversible psychological, social and economic damage due to invasions, slavery and indentureship.¹ These acts of conquest opened a Pandora's Box of racism, religious bigotry, mineral exploitation, poverty, disease, environmental degradation and oppressive ideologies. There was a continuous onslaught, initiated by 'discoverers' and 'explorers' against indigenous peoples. Burnt villages and stolen treasures were part of a sad encounter of two cultures involving greed and wanton destruction.

The remnants of colonialism remain disguised and the infamous divide and rule policies remain entrenched. This is a disturbing legacy that constantly disrupts the fabric of our fragile economies. The post-plantation economies and post-plural societies must be carefully analysed and the necessary adaptations made which can be beneficial to the majority, rather than a minority of the population. Indeed, developing economies have been victims but the Caribbean people cannot use this as a permanent excuse for mediocrity or inferiority but must learn from the past and look ahead.

In the twenty-first century and beyond, there is a dire need for the Caribbean diaspora to undertake a greater role in rebuilding the region's image and assisting in the alleviation of social and political problems. It is unfortunate that the region still suffers from such ills as economic instability and inept governance.

The future of the Western hemisphere depends on the progress and co-operation of Latin America and the Caribbean. The survival of the fittest is applicable to the West Indies.² In developing societies, the disadvantaged and voiceless are imbued with survival tactics, an extra level of tolerance and a keen sense of discovering the means of continuing the next generation.

Today, in Caribbean and Latin American countries, thousands of persons are trapped in vicious cycles of poverty, starvation, the AIDS epidemic, unemployment and oppressive political regimes. They face illiteracy, uncontrolled crime, a deplorable health care system and a lack of clean water and debt burdens.

Why must developing economies continue to suffer from some or all of these problems? Why must the Caribbean forever endure the ignominy of being in a state of uncontrolled flux? These crises are interrelated and interconnected. Additionally, these crises did not suddenly arise and unless the problems can be traced and properly dealt with, they will worsen.

The materialisation of our self-determination will ultimately result in the improvement of the global image and role of the developing countries. The Caribbean and Latin America must be truly independent and aware of its achievements. West Indians and Latin Americans have produced winners of Nobel Prizes and dominated such sports as cricket and football. The region's athletes have won a respectable share of Olympic medals. Caribbean literary minds,

¹ This was the system of importation of Indian labourers from India, during 1845-1917, to work on the sugar plantations in the British West Indies. Two colonies, Trinidad and Guyana received the most labourers.

² The terms 'West Indies', 'West Indian' and 'Caribbean' are used interchangeably to describe the region or the inhabitants.

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philosophers, political scientists and revolutionary leaders have shaped the world of knowledge. These include C. L. R James, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, Derek Walcott, and V. S. Naipaul, Aimee Cesaire, Arthur Lewis and Walter Rodney. The Latin American and Caribbean diaspora in developed countries have made immense contributions.³

However, a vicious cycle has been evolving. After West Indian and other developing countries have invested precious human and natural resources to train teachers, professionals, students and scientists, the developed countries unscrupulously enter these relatively poor countries to recruit their prized professionals to work abroad for a higher salary and presumably better conditions. Why must a poor, struggling country have its best minds siphoned off to developed countries? Developed countries should be training their own people and not adopt the lazy and apparently unethical approach of waiting for skilled and intelligent 'foreigners' to continue building their economies at the expense of weaker Caribbean countries. The brain drain must be curtailed. West Indian scholars, scientists, artistes, businessmen, artists, sporting heroes and professionals must be given sufficient recognition and credit in their homelands for sacrifices and achievements. In acknowledging their contributions this will serve the dual purpose of fostering nationalism and patriotism among citizens. Citizens of the Caribbean must be aware of the advantages of remaining rather than migrating and of contributing rather than criticising.

The recruiting countries have failed to realise that the West Indies, without their best minds and bodies, will suffer and be vulnerable to political, economic and social instability. And, then it will be the developed countries that will point a scolding finger, intervene or offer financial assistance to a crisis or problem that seems to be regularly associated with small, developing economies. Usually, if a developed country's investment is at stake or its people are at risk this would prove to be a factor prompting assistance to a country. The Caribbean does not have significant oil deposits as the Middle East but it possesses considerable resources such as natural gas reserves off the coast of Trinidad and bauxite in Guyana. Indeed, Caribbean countries must now take a greater initiative to intervene and volunteer services to other developing countries that are undergoing an upheaval

such as nearby Venezuela.

One of the obvious problems facing Caribbean citizens is an inadequate sense of their heritage and distorted identity. The concept of nationhood is often not properly constructed and fostered. Possessing and displaying a national dish, currency, animal, instrument, motto, flag and anthem is not sufficient. These are only external symbols and common throughout the world. Supporting a sporting team or participating in a festival is superficial patriotism. These acts are only part of the criteria essential for formulating a nation's identity. The leaders must be aware that the residents of a developing country, especially professionals and those with ambitions, must profess a greater loyalty than someone from the First World. Why? Because within a fragile economy, the grass on the other side always looks greener—the lure of financial rewards, political stability and efficient social services are some of the multitude of factors that serve as an impulse for migration. Thus, the people of developing economies must be aware and appreciate their history, culture and more importantly, their role in rebuilding the society.

It is probably one of the world's glaring paradoxes that the Caribbean countries receive aid from developed countries that initially became industrialised and wealthy as a result of centuries of exploitation of the region's labour under slavery and later indentureship. This aid would eventually be returned in the repayment of a debt to a developed country. Furthermore, the taxes paid by the West Indian immigrants residing in First World countries indirectly contribute to the international aid that returns to the homelands of these immigrants. The Caribbean diaspora in First World countries must pledge a greater commitment (be it intellectual or financial) to a stable and lasting path of progress in their former homelands.⁴ The monies from the repaid debt would be used to both improve the First World country and again used as aid to a developing nation. In effect—capital is being 'recycled' and little remains in the Caribbean.

Increasing the financial aid and material assistance to the developing countries is only part of the answer. Unfortunately, it seems that the Caribbean region has become a financial black hole, which forever needs and owes money. West Indians cannot continue to be

³ Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips, *Windrush—The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*, Caledonian Book Manufacturing Limited, Glasgow, 1998.

⁴ One of the success stories of the post World War Two era in the United States is the West Indian Blacks in New York City. In Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx they have attained higher income earning levels, greater home ownership and more education than Afro-Americans. See Kyle D. Crowder and Lucky M. Tedrow, "West Indians and the Residential Landscape of New York", in Nancy Foner (ed.) *Islands in the City: West Indian Migration to New York*, University of California Press, California, 2001, pp. 81-114.

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debtors, dependent nations and monetary parasites. They must stop accepting international charity and handouts, and become truly independent. A genuine independence must be reflected in all aspects of their lives.

Larger and wealthier countries such as Mexico and Trinidad and Tobago that have achieved a certain level of growth, cannot abandon the smaller countries such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The wealthier countries certainly need to share knowledge; resources, ideas and technology to ensure that more of the lesser-developed countries can be promoted into the more economically refined and respected status.

Likewise, in the basic and traditional class structure, the middle class cannot forsake their former class status and aspire for the life of the upper class. This is the unfortunate scenario existing in Haiti:

...Haiti is a highly stratified society on the basis of colour, class and race. This stratification has served to shape the political history of the country. While colour may serve as an appropriate political rallying cry, the ruling elite, regardless of race or colour has historically employed the state to meet, primarily, its class interests. Consequently, the needs of the powerless masses continue to be neglected.⁵

Now, more than ever, there is need to assist the less fortunate, inspire the depressed and those plagued with misfortunes, as it is those persons formerly in the lower class who are the most vulnerable.

Sanctions against a country such as Cuba should be condemned. However, Caribbean leaders need to consider the negative effect of trading or assisting Cuba, especially with the influential role of the United States in the region and internationally.⁶ Why should the folly of one leader be responsible for the fate of millions of innocent persons? Another effective and less debilitating, yet peaceful, strategy should be implemented. There should neither be insubordination nor alienation. Substantial international action is needed because ignoring or isolating the problem drastically reduces the chances for speedy cordial international relations. There is a need for mediators to act wisely and speedily in such conflict situations.

Caribbean people must awake to the reality of the present economic system— it thrives on inequalities. They need to seriously undertake the challenge to reduce inequalities instead of passively accepting the accompanying social

problems of a capitalistic society. They cannot keep accepting and believing that poverty will always exist. It seems that those in authority are afraid to disturb and dismantle certain aspects of the present economic system for fear of catastrophic repercussions. This is true but only because a viable alternative system has not been devised. Despite debt cancellation and debtor relief, there seems to be no end to the problem.

Marxism, communism, capitalism and socialism have all failed Caribbean economies; possibly because of the need for West Indians to have freedom and also the desire for an unequal share in resources. Also, it is human nature rather than the economic system, which perpetuates and intensifies many of today's social problems. Why must the Caribbean suffer as a result of the recession of a First World country or a global financial crisis that originated in a developed country?

Social service organisations such as the Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions coupled with religious leaders need to greatly increase their collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, religious groups, volunteers, international bodies and foreign donor countries to ensure that such objectives as the progress and peace among developing nations are achieved. The need for networking cannot be exhausted. Increase contacts, expand your interests and become a volunteer for a worthy cause.

Each citizen of the Caribbean, who is mentally and physically able, should be involved in some form of activism. No activity is too simple, too insignificant and unworthy if it involves easing the burdens of another living creature. Each drop of sweat, every cent, every second spent in a worthwhile activity will surely go a long way in saving souls and improving conditions in the West Indies. Many underestimate the power of one person to make a difference.

There is a need to develop new, more effective tactics, design better policies and monitor their implementation in an effort to eradicate and solve the crisis in all developing countries. This would demand high levels of creativity as we search for and experiment with different economic and political plans. Indeed, the Caribbean will be a better place if there was a majority, and not a minority, of humanitarians and philanthropists.

Religion is one of the barriers to West Indian unity with the main religions being Hinduism,

⁵ Ken Boodoo, "Haiti: the Role of Ethnicity in the Politics of Haiti," in Ralph Premdass (ed.) *The Enigma of Ethnicity: An Analysis of Race in the Caribbean and the World*, School of Continuing Studies, Trinidad, 1993, p. 97.

⁶ See Frank Wharton, "Is Friendship with Cuba Worth it?" in *Caribbean Affairs*, vol. 7 no. 6, 1997, pp. 47-54.

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Islam and Christianity. There is a need for peace among all religions, denominations and sects. For too long, many have been ostracised and scorned due to different religious beliefs. The tensions are further complicated with fundamentalists and radicals claiming their anti-social actions are justified because it is done in the name of God.

Another major challenge facing Caribbean countries is the curse of racism.⁷ There is a definite need for more racial and ethnic tolerance.⁸ One of the common traits of humans is the tendency to hate, alienate, condemn and kill fellow humans due to physical differences. Belonging to a particular ethnic group is further complicated as this often means adhering to certain religious doctrines and cultural practices. Opposition and discrimination based on inherent physical characteristics must stop. The wounds of racial bigotry and ethnic strife are deep and far-reaching and are responsible for untold suffering, sadness and loss of lives. The Caribbean region needs more positive voices and minds as a medium to transmit messages of understanding and peace among the various ethnic groups. If there is to be positive change, then an entire generation must be radically transformed in its mode of thinking and lifestyle. Families and adults need to effectively use the media (radio, internet, television, newspaper and cinema) to promote the positive aspects of peaceful co-existence in ethnically and religiously diverse societies. A simple act of being more tolerant in the workplace, community and home will not only positively influence others but teach children, the next generation, to love and not discriminate.

West Indians need to embark on a social and moral revolution to reverse and curb the continuation of destructive and exploitative systems that have eroded traditional family values resulting in single-parent homes, physical and emotional abuse, homicides, gambling, alcoholism and a spate of ever increasing vices. Obviously, democracy is being abused and a nation will suffer when we allow a steady flow of unchecked information to enter the homes, media and lives of our citizens. It is vital that we monitor and regularly assess the impact and content of concerts, movies and music. If we are to change, then our psyche, our philosophy and our ethos, must reflect a new vision. Indeed, our self-determination and goals must not be derailed or distracted by the trivial, harmful and useless cultural and social garbage that is

regularly dumped into our nations and obscures the dreams and morality of our youths. Our manner of defying the intruders, marauders and of maintaining our identity should not be violent.

Undoubtedly, there is a dire need to formulate a realistic and thorough agenda, based on moral, spiritual and ethical principles to serve as a blueprint for the continued growth. There cannot be compromises, temporary or limited unity of the Caribbean— we need to be united at all levels in the society. This should be a high priority for all countries before the Caribbean can take the first step towards comprehensive and substantial unity.

West Indians are painfully aware that unity does not necessarily mean residing in the same geographical region. This is only one of the prerequisites. In tackling obstacles there is a dire need for cooperation and collective work at the local, national and regional levels. Caribbean citizens need to remove their blinders and adopt an open-minded, pro-active approach to transform their family, neighbourhood, city, country and the entire region. It is a step-by-step process and unless the neighbourhood is transformed then it is useless to attempt to change the nation, be it rural or urban areas, poor or rich, Black or White.

It is vital to empower the poor with skills and initiate schemes to combat rural and urban poverty. Promotion of more grassroots organisations and the development of domestic and sub-regional markets will greatly improve the economic strength and exports of smaller Caribbean nations. There is now a growing need for foreign expertise to train and advise locals on strategies to boost private and public sector growth. Even more important is the urgency of our locals to be trained by indigenous expertise to better manage their resources. Usually sustainable growth and improvements occurring in the Caribbean countries are not truly reflective of the entire society. There is unequal progress as rural areas and the poor do not benefit. Indeed, unchecked industrialisation and expansion result in disproportional growth.

The encroachment on tribal and prime agricultural lands must not be allowed. The knowledge and oral histories of indigenous people must be preserved. These are priceless, invaluable aspects, which should not be foolishly sacrificed or overlooked, in the headlong rush to become industrialised, modernised and 'progressive.' It is unfortunate that a great deal of the wisdom, philosophy and experience of the few

⁷ The East Indians in Trinidad and Guyana are in constant conflict with Blacks for political power.

⁸ The term 'race' is meant a group of people who comprise a distinctive entity or consider themselves of equal importance.

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tribes and their descendants still remain undocumented. This valuable history and experiences has the solutions to some of the region's problems. Tribal groups need protection and assistance in sustaining their communities and regaining the balance between humanity and the environment.

The Caribbean needs to 'declare war' on pollution and recognise the need for drastic environmental measures. It is unfortunate that every year, the earth is burdened by an increasing human population. There is an urgent need for West Indians to become more environmentally conscious. Furthermore, improper disposal of hazardous substances, the release of toxic fumes into the atmosphere and creation of slums have a burdensome effect on the sustainable development of the planet. There must be an enforcement of environmental laws and stiffer penalties to discourage abusers of the environment.

Environmental issues such as endangered species, deforestation, global warming, climatic change, and protection of the marine environment, need to be discussed in the classrooms on a daily basis. Governments, the private sector, regional and international organisations must increase environmental awareness programmes. The public needs to be constantly aware of the uses and availability of environmental-friendly alternatives and the destruction of our global home.

The destiny of the Caribbean lies within each citizen. One of the main reasons for the present condition of the region is that everyone is busy fighting among themselves and has ignored attempts to seek solutions for problems. People in the region argue and debate over trivial differences such as language or land ownership and the superiority of ethnicity, religion, gender, class and caste. The result being that nobody is empowered. Undoubtedly at the regional level there is need for greater political, economic and social harmony in the Caribbean region. Apart from a few conferences and occasional meetings, Caribbean unity is strictly limited.

The role of international bodies and agencies in outlining development plans for the Caribbean should not be condemned. These include the United Nations organisations, International Labour Organization (ILO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Their very existence and intentions are usually sincere and the discontented must carefully weigh the options and

possible repercussions of decisions, treaties and policies. If we are dissatisfied—then peacefully offer alternatives and highlight shortcomings for future discussion and implementation. Associations such as the African Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and Group 8 (G-8) need to be aware of the importance of efficiency and effectiveness in devising policies, entering into agreements and overseeing the development of the West Indian economy. Membership of Caribbean countries in the Organization of American States (OAS) has an obvious benefit as it has

...broadened the configuration of democracy throughout the hemisphere and brought about a decided impact upon the process of democratic change in the region. The consolidation of the democratic process might conceivably be one of the major contributions of Latin America and the Caribbean as an organisation to the wider world.⁹

The main role of these international organisations is to guide and nurture until we can be sufficiently independent. They must operate on more humanistic terms because their critical decisions often have a negative impact and serious long-term repercussions, which determine the quality of life or extent of suffering of thousands. The reality is that Caribbean is no longer protected by preferential trade agreements:

What is different today is the increased international vulnerability of the Caribbean's political economy. The post-colonial era of "special relationships" is coming to an end, and the development policies of the former colonial powers are now based on their assessments of the real need of developing countries rather than on geographical, emotional, or traditional ties.¹⁰

Also, such questions must be asked—is debt reduction or cancellation the solution? In attempting to solve problems—are we providing short-term or long-term solutions? Are policies in need of restructuring, and if not, what are the alternatives for producing tangible benefits for the grassroots population? Are these policies creating havoc or disrupting the tribal, city and village life? Is there an underlying attempt to maintain the status quo and unbalanced nature of development?

The Caribbean is part of the global village and it should not remain marginalised. Despite

⁹ Christopher Thomas, "Diplomacy Within the Organization of American States", Caribbean Affairs, vol. 7 no.6, 1997, p. 29.

¹⁰ Anthony Bryan, "Towards 2000: The Caribbean confronts changing trends in international trade", Caribbean Affairs, Vol. 8 no. 1, 1998, p. 18.

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differences in language, political rule and ideology, Cuba and Haiti are part of the Caribbean family. Likewise, the Dutch, French and United States territories such as Martinique, Aruba, Curacao and Puerto Rico must not feel alienated. Furthermore, "...because of differences in size, sociological configurations and colonial experiences, each one of the territories has particular attributes."¹¹ Latin America is also part of the extended West Indian family. The Caribbean's interaction with Latin America must not only be limited to trading agreements, sports and attempts at curbing drug trafficking. The elusive quest for regional unity means that the region's network must include such countries as Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Honduras. It is this regional unity, which holds the key and provides the forum for addressing and alleviating the crippling socio-economic problems.

Why is there an absence of a West Indian basketball, hockey or football team? Similarly, the West Indian cricket team must be truly reflective of unity and representative of the region. Excellence in sport and the beauty of the West Indian culture cannot be selfishly seen as a product of one country or individual. On a similar note, there is need for implementing the ideas and appeals of economists for a single currency in the region. The Caribbean's enterprising minds must now take the initiative in mobilising the efforts and revitalising the spirit of togetherness.

Local leaders must be aware that the wealth of these small economies is temporarily entrusted in their care. They are directly liable to the people who they govern. A leader without foresight and poor sense of governance only serves to perpetuate the stigma and stereotype of developing countries as being backward and incapable of proper self-rule. Thus decisions must be weighed carefully and cautiously. Democracy and voting must not be made a sham by dictatorial leadership as this only serves to hasten the intervention of a developed country to restore basic and fundamental rights. Regional leaders must be aware of the current geopolitics; "There has been a shift from the military concerns that were informed by the ideological divide of the Cold War, to the preoccupation with the policing of the region in order to control drug trafficking and illegal migration."¹²

There is need for a new breed of politicians whose performance will not merely be winning elections based on charisma or organisational abilities. He or she must be capable of adjusting, assessing and adapting models from other

countries to ensure effective implementation. The leaders in the Caribbean must have a working knowledge of all sectors of society.

A leader must carefully choose persons who will oversee responsible positions. If not, such a leader of a developing country will undoubtedly feel the wrath of his people. Often corrupt politicians and officials have access to millions or even billions of dollars in aid and contributions of food and equipment, which never reach the needy and desperate citizens. Laws must be strictly enforced to discourage such practices and punish the guilty. It is essential for Caribbean countries to have dedicated, trustworthy personnel to prevent bribes and nepotism. They must constantly monitor financial and material donations or loans. Transparency and accountability are needed in the private and public spheres. This should be ingrained in the hearts and minds of all politicians, managers and employees.

As much needy persons as possible should benefit from humanitarian efforts. Effective, not elaborate, checks and balances are crucial in monitoring and identifying unscrupulous persons. Caribbean politicians, such as those in the former oppressive Haitian regime of the Duvaliers and corrupt government of Eric Gairy of Grenada should be banned from holding foreign bank accounts beyond a stipulated limit. If there are to be any visible benefits resulting in improved living, there must be measures to prevent a misuse of funds by politicians for personal use. Persons guilty of these crimes must be prosecuted.

West Indians must guard against the exploitation of its natural resources and disruption of its socio-political systems by devious individuals and organisations. Some of the locals, devoid of patriotism and nationalism, are willing to sell the riches of their country to already wealthy foreigners.

The role of the opposition in the political life of a country is usually more of a hindrance than a facilitator. The opposition and ruling parties are intent on gaining and maintaining power at all costs, even at the risk of dividing the population and destroying lives. The never-ending desire for control of the political levers of power, at the expense of peace and stability, must be stopped. Often the opposition exists merely as a token that democracy exists because the opposing politicians disagree with bills and refuse to approve legislation that is beneficial to the citizenry.

The hosting of an expensive event or erection of a costly monument, by a country with a

¹¹ Aaron G. Ramos and Angel I. Riviera (eds.), *Islands at the Crossroads: Politics in the Non-Independent Caribbean*, Ian Randle Publishers, Jamaica, 2001, p. xv.

¹² *Ibid.* p. xiv.

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huge debt burden, is a financial disaster and must be discouraged. Being host of an international event brings brief popularity, limited financial returns and little or no benefit to the less fortunate citizens. It is a logical, sane and rational decision to spend money for the provision of efficient social services, funding hospitals, institutions for the physically and mentally challenged, homes for elderly persons or assisting medical projects dealing with beneficial research. A political leader of a West Indian country cannot have the mentality of a First World leader (with ample resources) and extravagantly invest millions of dollars on an international event which lasts a few days or a piece of concrete. Obviously, in the end—the lives of needy citizens remain unchanged. On any government's agenda, profits must never be placed above the needs of the people.

The problems of the twenty-first century are diverse and there is an urgent need to embark on a campaign to promote complete unity in the Caribbean. Indeed, regional leaders need to realise the urgency in putting aside their differences and divisiveness and unite to combat the problems facing the Caribbean. West Indians must permanently remove the stigma of being small, underdeveloped nations.

The people of the region need to act quickly and promote a positive Caribbean consciousness among the Caribbean diaspora residing in First World or developed countries. The Caribbean diaspora residing in developed nations, who have become wealthy, famous and successful, must undertake a pivotal role in assisting the unfortunate, oppressed, poor and abused in this uphill task of rebuilding the West Indies. It is the wealth of these immigrants that returns (directly or indirectly) to their Caribbean homeland to assist the human development and infrastructure. The children of the West Indian immigrants must not be forgotten. It is time for adult West Indians to ensure that the younger generation be aware of the rich heritage and culture of their parents. They must also be encouraged to constructively contribute to the region.

In this era of globalisation, rapid technological advances and space exploration, the poor and downtrodden of the world must not be forgotten. Caribbean people need to join minds, and effectively utilise our human resources to develop an international network to alleviate and eventually restore the Caribbean to her majestic beauty and fame. Each one has a role to play, be it policy-maker, politician, researcher, activist, student, religious leader, office worker, unemployed, vendor, insurance agent and academic. Each must decide on his/her role because there is too much useless talk and wasted

hours at conferences, in documentaries, committees, seminars and workshops. West Indians need direct action and visible results.

New terminology, speeches, commissions, grandiose ideas of an alternative economic system and books filled with ideas and projects on alleviating West Indian distress have failed to materialise into possible and useful remedies and are therefore useless in alleviating the suffering of the real world. For too long, international and local efforts have had a limited impact, narrow scope and often remained theoretical. West Indians need to educate and increase public awareness and solve the multifarious problems. Ideas and plans need to be properly assessed, enforced and monitored.

Caribbean History has continuously proven that revolutions, coups, revolts, violent protests—bring temporary relief but enduring remorse, unnecessary loss of lives and wanton destruction. Often the change resulting from violence is fleeting with an inevitable return to the original scenario or a worsened situation.

West Indians need to take action to ensure that their ideas, slogans and dreams become a reality. Obviously, when they stop paying lip service and offering token assistance, only then can West Indians seriously embark on the mission to unite the region. Caribbean people must begin a silent revolution, bloodless and without expectation of glory and honours. Their one goal must be to preserve, glorify and restore the Caribbean.

They have manifold differences but one common bond—a Caribbean heritage. It is unchangeable and the region's inhabitants must be proud to be West Indian. Their public and religious festival and celebrations are unique and our nationals have earned the respect and admiration of millions around the world. The Caribbean diaspora are unofficial ambassadors of our culture as evident in annual celebrations such as Caribana in Toronto, Labor Day in New York, Notting Hill in England and Carnival festivities in Miami and Australia.

The ultimate challenge of the West Indians is to effectively utilise their severely limited but valuable natural and human resources to alleviate the depressing situation that faces more than half of the Caribbean's population. West Indians must join hands across seas and over continents to overcome geographical, ethnic, religious and class barriers. The Caribbean has proven to be the workshop of the world with its abundance of talent and innovation. Thus, let them continue to aspire for the materialisation of Pan-Caribbean efforts of harmony and unity. The movement for a unified region must be ongoing and able to reach the mass of the Caribbean people.

'City of Joy' Ashamed



Paromita Das Gupta

Paromita completed her Masters in History from the University of Calcutta. She is interested in the history of the Jews, who formed a small but significant diasporic community of Kolkata. While interacting with the Jews, the *jewishtorian* gets the privilege of enjoying cakes and cookies at Nahoum's confectionery in New Market!

A passionate lover of music, she delves deep into Tagore's compositions. Her talent in Indian classical music has been honoured with the title of *Sangeet Visharad*.

Breaking the traditions of communal harmony, the 'cultural capital' of India witnessed one of the most appalling events in its political history. A protest over a visa extension for the Bangladeshi writer-in-exile, Taslima Nasreen coalesced with agitation against the killing of peasants in Nandigram (West Bengal) to set Kolkata ablaze on 21 November 2007. A demonstration led to a road blockade in some of the busiest sections of the city, and then culminated in unprecedented acts of vandalism that engulfed eastern and central Kolkata. It was a riot-like situation, given a communal tinge. A rebellious mob reportedly swelled up from a hundred to twelve thousand during the agitation, constituted by large numbers of youth, armed with bricks and soda bottles. They burnt vehicles and hurled stones at the advancing body of three hundred and fifty policemen. The violence petrified panic-stricken school students and did not even spare the ambulances carrying patients to hospitals. The police, condemned by the High Court for its allegedly "unconstitutional" action in Nandigram on 14 March, confined itself to only firing tear gas shells. The state government of West Bengal called in the army, for the first time since riots following the demolition of Babri Masjid in 1992. An eight-hour curfew was imposed in the disturbed areas of the city. The very alacrity with which the government acted raised question of whether the situation warranted such drastic steps.

The disturbances purportedly began when *The All India Minority Forum* and the *Furfura Sharif Muzadeedia Anath Foundation*, demanded the expulsion of Taslima from the city after the expiry of her visa in February 2008. Another minority organisation, the *Jamait-Ulema-i-Hind* denied any involvement. The celebrity writer has authored several distinguished works: *Lajja* (1993), *Aamar Meyebela* (1999) and *Dwikhandito* (2003) being the most popular. The publication of Nasreen's first book *Lajja* (Shame) forced her to flee from Bangladesh, charged with blasphemy. Since 1994 Taslima has lived a life in exile, in India and other countries of the world. The author holds UN refugee status, which entitles her to seek political asylum in any country under normal circumstances. India has amicably welcomed thou-

sands of such political refugees from neighbouring countries, of whom the Dalai Lama from Tibet is the most well-known. The events of 21 November had turned Kolkata into a war zone centered on Nasreen's autobiography *Dwikhandito* (Split in Two). The book was already banned by the West Bengal Government, led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), on charges of unethical references to Prophet Mohammad and Islam hurting Muslim religious sentiments.

Sociologists view the discontent among the minority community as a succession of seemingly unconnected incidents that saw its outcome in street protests and ultimately snowballed into urban violence. "The riot was not communal in nature in the sense it was not between two communities. The anger was mainly against the police, that is the administrative system. The Taslima issue added fuel to the fire", opined a Calcutta based sociologist Prasanto Roy. Social scientists said perceptions that drive such violence are deep-rooted and emerge from structural inequalities in society. On the other side, members of the minority community see themselves as politically targeted because of events either in their own neighbourhood, or elsewhere in India, or the world. Many in the minority community, and otherwise, were alarmed by the association of the secular issue of the Nandigram killings with the demand for Taslima Nasreen's expulsion and saw it as an opportunistic attempt to give the former issue a communal hue. Forward Bloc leader and former minister Hafiz Alam Sairani said, "The clubbing of issues reflects the lack of confidence of these (minority) community leaders who want space both in the mainstream and community politics." The CPI(M) leader Mohammad Salim said, "With the creation of Muslim space in the national and global polity and hardliners dominating the scenario, former moderate voices are trying to match the extremist voices while contesting for community space." A section of Kolkata's intelligentsia including theatre personalities, filmmakers, and authors strongly condemned the act of lifting "swords against the pen" in the "cultural capital" of India. Faced with sharp criticism both within the state and outside, CPI (M) state secretary Biman Bose

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retracted his initial comment that Taslima should leave and suggested, "It is the prerogative of the Centre (the Central Government) alone to decide on the demand for cancellation of her visa." In a similar tone politburo member Sitaram Yechury repeated that the decision was the Union government's "sole prerogative" and "wherever she goes", it "was incumbent" upon the state government to provide security.

The street disturbances called for the exigency to provide Nasreen a safe shelter. She was made to move from one location to another for 'security reasons' until she was diplomatically housed in Delhi on the night of 23 November as a guest of the Rajasthan government awaiting Kolkata's atmosphere to improve. However pressure mounted on the CPI (M) with the Hindu Right Wing BJP, attacking the "secular" Communists for compelling Nasreen to leave Kolkata. The CPI(M) found itself in further embarrassment with the writer's confession of her wish to return. "All I want to say is that I miss my home, I miss my Kolkata. I want to go back. I'm confident I'll be home soon." The party, strategically denied its role in the hasty exit of the writer from the city and justified its position in implementing her decision to leave "on her own".

While Chief Minister of the State Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, condemned the whole incident as a disgrace for the city. On the other hand, Sports and Transport Minister of the state Subhas Chakraborty said he would try to arrange accommodation for Nasreen in Kolkata, "if the Centre wants her to be in the city and if the state can manage law and order." Breaking his "customary silence" on Taslima controversy Prime-minister Dr. Manmohan Singh conveyed to his colleagues that the government should not succumb to the "blackmail tactics" of fundamentalist elements from any religion. The Prime-minister's intervention was soon followed by significant statements from minister for external affairs, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee who stated that Taslima can stay on as India's guest but, "she would have to refrain from activities and expressions that might harm India's relations with friendly countries and hurt the sentiments of our people." In this connection it is worth mentioning that the Centre has two main considerations related to asylum seeker. First, a grant of visa would not impair Delhi's relation with the exile's country of origin. Second, the exile would not involve oneself in actions that might disturb peace in India.

An interesting twist was brought about on 1 December with the author's attempt to buy peace in which she was partially successful. In a sharp reversal on her decision to remain firm on her "freedom of expression" announced on 30 November, Taslima Nasreen said it was never her intention to hurt the sentiments of any section of people or community. Thereafter she showed strong inclination to enter into a deal with her non-supporters by deleting certain sections (from pp. 49-52) of her work *Dwikhandito*. However Nasreen's willingness to compromise with the situation has been vehemently criticised by her contemporary writers from Bangladesh as well as by *Jamait Ulema-i-Hind*. The Jamait leaders stated: "Even if these few pages are removed, her stance in the book remains unchanged." On the other hand, Salam Azad, another Bangladeshi writer in exile remarked: "She [Taslima] has compromised with fundamentalist forces. What she has done will encourage these elements. If she had written from a commitment she should not have backtracked and withdrawn the portions from her book."

Members of the ruling party alleged that the state of lawlessness created by the Taslima dispute was the outcome of a conspiracy hatched against the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee administration to sustain the pressure built on the government after the devastating episode in Nandigram. Social activists like Medha Patkar criticised the state government for its failure to provide adequate security to the writer-in-exile due to its unscrupulous indulgence in the "vote bank politics." Many pointed out that it was an attempt to win back the minority votebank of the CPI(M) that has suffered severe setbacks in the aftermath of the Rizwanur scandal, the Nandigram massacre and the damning Sachar Committee report, highlighting the plight of the minorities in this 'Left' ruled state. It has also been alleged that this was done to shift attention away from the Nandigram killings.

The situation is indeed grave, as the sentiments of a community seemed to be deliberately pitted against an author's right to self expression. The deep-rooted causes of disaffection of the minorities are being channeled into this quagmire to serve the selfish and indeed dangerous interests of some leaders, who have no proven base. The feisty spirit of Nasreen, though, has not been dampned altogether. While she continues to be barred from returning to Kolkata, Taslima Nasreen is zealously trying to write the sixth volume of her autobiography. The writer boldly said: "I haven't stopped writing."

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Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF)– Encouraging Young Minds



Debarati Chakraborty

Debarati, who is twenty-three now, completed her graduation and post-graduation from the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University. At present she is pursuing her M. Phil. from the above-mentioned department. She is also involved as a Field Investigator in a SEPHIS funded project on 'Remembering the Native Land: A Nucleus of Social Memory among the People Displaced by the Partition of India- 1947'.

Reading, listening to music, meeting new people and making friends are some of her pastime interests.

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The Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund is a fellowship programme of the Nippon Foundation, a Japanese non-profit organisation administered by the Tokyo Foundation, which provides financial support and opportunities to the bright students who intend to pursue higher education in humanities and social sciences and who exhibit leadership potential.

The SYLFF Asia Pacific Regional Forum, 2007 was held at Jadavpur University, Kolkata from 20 to 22 November. More than fifty participants from various countries were present, each having separate social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds– the only similarity between them being the fact that all were SYLFF fellows sharing the same SYLFF vision of Ryoichi Sasakawa "The world is one family and all mankind are brothers and sisters".



Experts at a Progress Report Workshop of the SYLFF Fellows

After the welcome speech of SYLFF project director in Jadavpur University, Dr. Joyashree Roy and Vice-Chancellor Professor P. N. Ghosh, who incidentally is also the chairman of JU-SYLFF programme, Ellen Mashiko, the executive Director of the Scholarship Division at Tokyo Foundation read out the message from Dr. Yohei Sasakawa. It emphasised on promoting collaboration among diverse cultures, geo-political and ethnic political background and aiming that the people should become self-sufficient. Mashiko urged the participants to transcend their national borders and their discipline in order to expand their horizons– "If you limit your studies to your discipline you will be unable to get the essence of it" said Mashiko.

The SYLFF prize winner of 2005, Dr. Eglá Martínez-Salazar who is from York University,

Canada, delivered a short talk on human rights and emphasised the fact that human rights, nowadays, is the greatest irony of our times– it is the language of social reforms as well as empire building. She showed a short documentary film on the eviction of the indigenous people in Guatemala by a Canadian nickel company and the people speaking up for restoring not only their human rights but also fighting for global justice. Dr. Martínez-Salazar urged the audience to rethink about human rights, which is a part of the neo-colonial project and said, "... we have to decolonise our minds, heart and spirits".

The sessions that followed were a learning process, with the participants sharing their experiences, via performances. These performances were interesting, funny, innovative and sometimes outright hilarious. Different ideas poured out an extremely interactive session that followed. Each shared his or her own experiences and found commonalities irrespective of their cultural diversity. The fellows were asked to present a paper on 'Human Rights and creative leadership' and the papers that followed abided by it. Hiroko Oji, a fellow from Waseda University, Japan, discussed the empowerment of Chinese Migrant Women, followed by Duke Ghosh from Jadavpur University who spoke on SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprise) and the creative leaders of India. The interesting point worthy of observation was that despite coming from different socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the fellows shared the same feeling that the SYLFF network is not only an opportunity for them, but is also a network where each and every fellow has their own contribution to make for a better world. "SYLFF network is a key to lot of opportunities," Says Hiroko Oji. "The success of SYLFF network depends on active participation and contribution of each fellow," she further adds.

The second day, 21 November, was a day devoted to fieldwork where the participants went for community service. The participants were divided into three groups and went to three different places– The Child-Mother Empowerment Programme by a local NGO, the

Across the South

Leprosy Mission near Maniktala and the Antara village, an alternative empowerment programme for mentally challenged near Baruipur. It was during these fieldworks and poster presentations that the fellows really came to know each other's viewpoints and opinions about the trips, each other's work and the programme itself. The community service feedback on day three helped to enhance this discussion to a great extent.



JU-SYLFF Fellows with Ms. Mami Ino

Let us come to Citra Wardhani from the University of Indonesia. Her area of work is on the self-sufficiency of the urban housewives with low assets in Jakarta city, Indonesia. She went to the fieldtrip at the Child-Mother Empowerment Programme and found the trip immensely valuable for her area of work. The urban housewives with low assets in Jakarta had started small cottage industries like making baskets and handicrafts. She said "I will be very glad if this happens in Kolkata... it will be helpful for both the women and the economy. ... Both the cities are so similar." If Citra stressed on the similarities, Marisa Hamamota from Keio University, Japan, had a different viewpoint on this. "It is the first time I am in an underdeveloped country. I am culture shocked. I feel very uneasy", said Marisa, a remark that sparked an immediate response from the participants who corrected Marisa on the fact that 'developing' and 'underdeveloped' are not the same in any account. Kardison Lumban Batu from Godjah Mada University, Indonesia, confessed later that he would like to have a good row with Marisa on her notions of 'underdevelopment'.

Nguyen Thi Thu Ngan from Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam did a poster on ethnic minority group and their respective lifestyle and it was interesting to note similarities with their Indian counterparts. Citra from Indonesia was a bit taken aback to learn that the houses they live in do not have any partition- that no division of rooms are there. She queried, "Don't they have any privacy?" and received a smile from Nguyen in return.

Coming from the University of South Pacific, Fiji was Viliame Gabriel who was equally interested in the proceedings of the forum as well as the city of Kolkata. A great admirer of cricket and Indian films, Kolkata, to Viliame is "fascinating". Surprised to learn that Eden Gardens has the highest capacity to hold people of all the cricket stadiums in the world, Viliame expressed

a keen desire to visit the place but lamented the shortage of time. The underground railway system was the most interesting thing Viliam found about Kolkata and queried wherever he went, "Is the underground railway here too?" On the other hand, Pierre Jules Richard, a fellow from the University of New South Wales, Australia was both surprised and amused by the antics of the cricket fans in India. An admirer of cricket himself, Pierre confessed that few Australians have the same level of enthusiasm than most of the Indian Cricket fans possess. "Bret Lee seems to be immensely popular among the Indians.... I am seeing his picture in the newspapers even since I came here."

Sherilyn Tan Siy of Ateneo de Manila University was one of the most outspoken and enthusiastic in the group. Whether presiding an interesting interactive session among the fellows or teaching origami to the leprosy affected women in the Leprosy Mission near Maniktala (during which, she forgot the process how to make the paper birds and ended up in making something which cannot be deciphered) she was always vivacious and sometimes downright funny. Surprised to hear that two of the patients in the Leprosy Mission were married and had babies by seventeen, she was in turn asked by one of the older woman about her marital status. On learning that she is single the woman ventured on a lecture on not to marry before she is financially independent, a remark which was immediately accepted by the widely grinning girl. She also presented two wall hangings done by herself to the patients and even wore bindis while visiting them.



JU-SYLFF Project Director at SPAM, Manila

It was during an interactive session by the fellows on the feedback of their observations and experiences that one comes to know more about the participants' viewpoints. Noted below is a part of the discussion.

Sherilyn Tan Siy of Ateneo de Manila University, who is also a part of the SYLFF fellows council, opened the forum for a group (the participants were divided into two groups and the discussions were held simultaneously in two rooms), asking the participants about their observation so that these trips can be made more useful in the future, the participant's own experience and some unforgettable moments. The discussion went like this:

Across the South

Xavier Forde

(Massey University, New Zealand)

Often people do community service and forget about them later. We Should do something about it. And if possible, there should be a small number of visitors.

Desiree Anna, Elisabeth Nilsson

(Uppsala University, Sweden)

If they know who I am, and if I know what they are expecting from me and how I should act, what I should do and not do, it will be better.

Shariat Taheri Moqhaddam

(University of Malaya, Iran)

I think we should gather more information about the people, their activities, the places.

Ritajyoti Bandopadhyay

(Jadavpur University, India)

What we can do is that we can pick information from the participants and prepare a module. But we, again, are to do what they permit.

Cecille Langreo Mejia

(Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines)

We are to treat them as human beings. The interaction is the main part of the communication. We should show them that they are not alone.

Dhiraj Kumar Nite (Jawaharlal Nehru University, India)

The interaction with the children on their experiences in street it was painful. I think substantial labour is needed to make substantial change. Government should take care of the children.

Xavier

What we could do is to enrich each others life from the joyful Experiences.

Viliame Gabriel

(The University of South Pacific, Fiji)

I was thinking whether we are there for the sake of the programme or we wanted to.

Li Zhinong

(Yunnan University, China)

But I felt that I was enriched.

Ali Akbar

(University of Indonesia, Indonesia)

This conference is different from the conferences I attended before. So far we were only enriching our knowledge and did not do anything. It is important for us to do something.

Viliame

One of the most unforgettable moments was the hope I saw in one of the patient's eye in the leprosy mission.

Dhiraj

One Chinese friend wanted to take a photograph with me saying that we are neighbours... brought forward the symbols of the elephants and the dragon also. I saw the Chinese friends calling a Vietnamese student "younger sister".

Ritajyoti

When we met there were real affection in our eyes- those few fellows who were in the last forum. Shirlyn immediately recognised me at the airport and shouted. I was so surprised and happy. (Shirlyn in the meantime, was seen dabbing her tears).

Gao Xiaoyan from Central China University was nostalgic about his childhood and his misadventures in the Yellow River, where he realised the importance of human bondage. He further added "I believe we can learn a lot from each other by exchanging ideas and discussing issues....I believe if we try together we can do a lot of improvement."

The SYLFF mission is to nurture future leaders who will transcend geopolitical, religious, ethnic, cultural and other boundaries and will contribute to peace and well being of human kind. The Asia Pacific Regional Forum 2007, is an experience in itself where the future leaders gathered and shared their experiences. Old friendships were renewed, new friends were formed- an experience which would otherwise have been impossible for the fellows if not for the SYLFF Regional Forum. The Project Director, along with all the people concerned, deserve kudos for this wonderful Programme. One could end by quoting Shirlyn from Philippines, "We have shared each memorable moment, everybody had seen your (the fellows) responses. I see that this regional forum is highly successful." It is!



Experts Discuss during a Progress Report Workshop

Embracing Contradictions

*Eglá Martínez-Salazar**Interviewed by Samita Sen and Kashshaf Ghani*

Eglá Martínez-Salazar was born in Guatemala to a poor working-class family. She is a Mestiza from the XINCA-PIPIL-Spanish speaking peoples. Her father, Manuel de Jesús Martínez and her grandmother Amalia González first taught Eglá the importance of education and that as a woman she had the right to use her brain and her spirit to dream and contribute to the building of a better world. From a young age, Eglá was involved in social advocacy projects and organised a 'vacation secondary school' to help her peers struggling with academics. At thirteen, she created a school during the fall for students who had to repeat failed subjects. She also organised social activities for the small town's children. Later, she worked with peasants, Indigenous Peoples and women in social justice and human rights-oriented activities.

Eglá Martínez-Salazar alongside her parents and three siblings was forced to work in cotton plantations in the south coast of Guatemala. Countless other Maya Indigenous and Mestizo impoverished families did the same work. Eglá describes conditions in these plantations: Few latrines if any, dirty water, little space for cooking and living, dangerous shelters or none at all, no electricity, and an environment that breeds disease without recourse to health care. Wages are low and hours long and while in the fields, workers and their families are exposed to another danger: Pesticides. Children as young as nine years old work in these fields and those too young to work accompany their mothers. Eglá herself lost a sister to pesticide poisoning. Indigenous women workers in Guatemala as many others in the world are women whose "priority is to put food on the table."

Influenced by her childhood in Guatemala, a period during which she witnessed first-hand the government-sponsored oppression of the country's indigenous peoples, Martínez-Salazar became an advocate for education and interlocking human-rights initiatives at any early age while simultaneously learning and respecting the complex relationship between good theorising and practice, which is for her one of the most important principles of active critical thinking.

The success of the community youth projects proved a catalyst leading Martínez-Salazar to

her forced migration first to Mexico, where she became involved in the Guatemalan and Central American human-rights-social justice movement, and later to Canada.

Eglá studied law for two years in Guatemala she had to stop right after the brutal assassination of her father by the militarised state, supported by international powers such as the United States. Her story of exclusion and state murdering is only one amongst more than 200,000 people who were killed, eighty three per cent of which were Maya women and men. This has been documented by the Commission for Historical Clarification, CEH in 1999. Later in exile, Eglá studied sociology in the National University of Mexico. She and her direct family had to move again, this time to Canada. Surviving under poverty and in a new society has not been easy, to say the least. Against all odds, Eglá determined to continue her university education and after endless bureaucratic and economic obstacles she had to repeat her undergraduate studies at York University. Then, she did a Masters in Environmental Studies and then a doctoral degree in sociology. At York University, located in Toronto, Eglá found unforgettable peers and mentors. As a student in the Graduate Programme in Sociology, she was nominated by the Faculty and won a leadership prize awarded by the Tokyo Foundation, the sponsor of the Graduate Development Fund for Academic Distinction. The prize included a two-week trip to Japan including a tour, and U.S. \$ 5,000. In 2001, Martínez-Salazar organised the "Perspectives on Social Inequalities: Issues of Race, Gender and Class Worldwide" conference at York on behalf of the Tokyo Foundation. In Canada, she continued her university studies. In 2005, right after finishing her studies but before defending her doctoral thesis, Martínez-Salazar got a teaching position in the Women's Studies program at McMaster University, located in Hamilton, Ontario. In July of 2006, Eglá joined the Pauline Jewett Institute of Women's Studies and the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies, human rights programme, as an assistant professor.

Long before she began an examination of human rights from the remove of the academe,

Encounters

Egla Martinez-Salazar witnessed the human, social and environmental impact of state-sanctioned violence. Her research focuses on three areas: Critical, post-colonial and feminist sociological analyses of human and citizenship rights praxis; environmental justice, gender and development and, the production and reproduction of knowledge(s), in particular Indigenous, feminist and anti-racist epistemologies. This research is guided and characterised by critical, theoretical engagement and institutional ethnographic and genealogical research. Egla has direct experiences in various countries like Guatemala, Mexico, and Canada. She has published on

colonialism, racism and Freire in the North, state terror, development and Indigenous Peoples; Maya Women and Citizenship from Below and Indigenous Women, Migration and Toxic Globalization and Peace as Discourse in Guatemala. Currently she is doing research on the Maya Cosmovision and Indigenous Peoples Rights; both how Indigenous women and men are recuperating and reconfiguring it as well as how it may operate as a site of resistance. She is also doing research on Deconstructing and Rethinking the Human in Human Rights Discourses. Email: marsal@connect.carleton.ca

Interview

1. Tell us something about your current project.

I am currently doing research on how Indigenous Knowledge such as the Maya Cosmovision (cosmology) has been a site of resistance for social justice but also a sense of hope about another world possible in which those who have been invented as inferiorised others or as Frantz Fanon called them the *damnés* of the earth are creators of knowledge and active agents of progressive social change. The purpose is to test and apply complex transdisciplinary theorising and methodological strategies (decolonial studies, political economy, feminism and political ecology) to examine complex histories, contexts and subjects.

I have also submitted a proposal to research the intricacies of gendered and racialised violence at the institutional level and how it interconnects with the everyday world, in particular how is it possible to link the structural, the everyday and the intimate worlds through the study of violence.

2. How did your interest in this particular field develop?

I would say fields of inquiry instead of singling one out. It is difficult to pinpoint one origin or cause; what I am sure about is that early teachings by my grandmother Amalia, my father, my grandfather Juan de Dios Martínez on practical social justice and the fact that all human beings must be treated as fully human, had a great impact on my entire self. Later, my curiosity sparkled when I learned how to read and when my father gave me my first book of poetry, that of Cuban thinker and activist Jose Martí. My father, is perhaps my best mentor for he inspired me to love and respect knowledge, especially what he called good knowledge. Of course, later in life, I was just blown away when I realised how amazing was that Indigenous Peoples and African slaves and their descendants survived terrible hardships. Survival when one as a group and as an individual is expected to die is the

inspirations for critical thinking and engaged scholarship in any field, I believe.

3. Why do you think the gender question has been of such relevance recently?

What do you mean by recently? Where, exactly? My best approximate answer would be that gender as a social relation of power and inequality but also as a possible source for social identification has been present for centuries but only through the collective struggle of many women from different backgrounds it has become somewhat salient in some contexts. Interestingly enough I have found through my research that many women in the global south and from working class and peasant backgrounds who become active in social and community movements are the ones who first interconnect gender with economic and colonial issues, especially racism. Much later, other thinkers put the theorising together.

4. Tell us about the university and the department you are attached to.

As I included in the body of the interview text, I am a cross appointed assistant professor in the Institutes of Women's and Gender Studies and Interdisciplinary Studies/Human Rights programme at Carleton University, Ottawa Canada.

5. You were born in Guatemala. How did your country react to your work and interests?

I truly believe that it is difficult to measure how one's work will be taken if ever known by one's homeland. I can honestly say that I try to keep some close contacts wherever I do research, and I know that my Masters' thesis that I translated into Spanish alongside other works on Guatemala was submitted to an international court dealing with demands of justice in the case of genocide against Maya peoples in Guatemala as well as other state crimes. I wish I

Encounters

could have more time and resources to travel more often to Latin America.

6. How often do you go back to your homeland? Are you able to work and research there?

Most of my fieldwork is in Latin America. I also combine methodologies and include in my research various types of documents, visuals and the Internet.

7. For how long are you attached to the SYLFF project? How useful do you find it?

I started my relation with SYLFF at the end of 1999. I think the most important part of my work with SYLFF is done but this does not mean I will be detached from this excellent project. I will collaborate and in the future it may be possible to develop some research projects.

8. What made you come to Kolkata?

The opportunity to be in India, especially in a place I knew about through the work of Mother Teresa to be honest. I never thought I would be able to be here and I am now glad that I came. Contrary to others who may want to go to "developed" places, for me it is almost the opposite: I want to go to places where the best is yet to come but where many wonderful things are created on everyday basis even when many know little about this creation.

9. Your opinions about the city, its people....

I always think that it is important to embrace paradoxes and contradictions to the best of our abilities. In this sense, Kolkata and the little I was able to know and the people I met are wonderful, challenging, and gladly overwhelming. What I sincerely thank and admire is the degree of hospitality and human solidarity I received from all the SYLFF members from Kolkata and from New Delhi. I would promise many of them, especially those who shared with me their emails that I will soon contact you.

It was very refreshing to be able to meet the excellent women and men involved with the Women's Studies programme at Jadavpur. It is simply amazing to witness the existence of networks. I am using this term as it is used by many Indigenous Peoples in Guatemala and by many others in Latin America where networking means building chains of social, political, cultural and spiritual solidarity. The commitment from those involved with the Women's Studies programme is simply remarkable.

10. Lastly, few words on your future plans....

To do my best to remain alive, see my mother and siblings soon and to be able to concretise my research projects. I also hope to find energy to do the rest of my work well. I hope to keep in touch with those I met in Kolkata.

My deep thanks to you.

Book Notices

Majlis was founded in 1990 in Mumbai as a centre for multi-cultural initiatives framed within the rights discourse. Concerned increasingly with questions of pedagogy, Majlis inaugurated a series of workshops on *Ways of Seeing*. The series of annual workshops ran between 1996 and 2001.

The idea for these workshops was conceived in the immediate aftermath of the demolition of the Babri masjid and in the context of growing right-wing fundamentalist politics in Mumbai. Engaging with these issues, the workshops aimed at opening small windows of resistance. The organisers sought to encourage plurality in formal ways, with the representation of multiple disciplines and in informal ways in encouraging points of views from the margin as well as the mainstream.

This book is a compilation of selected sections of the workshop proceedings.

Many of the contributions include rich visual material, though some site-specific contributions may have lost some of their richness through the processes of transcription, editing and production.

The editors have aimed at a pedagogic resource rather than an academic text.

The book contains contributions from Arun Khopkar, Anuradha Kapur, Neera Adarkar, Habib Tanvir, K. N. Panikkar, Flavia Agnes, Rimli Bhattacharya, Vandana Shiva, and others. This book is for private circulation only and may be obtained by writing to Majlis, Bldg 4-A/2 Golden Valley, Kalina, Mumbai, 400 098, INDIA, or see www.majlisbombay.org



Madhusree Dutta and Smriti Nevatia, *Sites and Practices. An Exercise in Cultural Pedagogy*, Majlis, Mumbai, 2006. pp. 270.



Goenawan Mohamad, *On the Idea of "Indonesia"*, SEPHIS, Amsterdam, 2003, pp. 38.

Mohamad, of the *Tempo* magazine, a journal prosecuted by the dictatorial Suharto regime of Indonesia presented the three lectures collected in this book during a lecture tour of Argentina and Brazil in May 2003.

Here, he marks out certain complex issues in Indonesia's recent history and politics without attempting to provide any easy answers. Thus, he deals with the question of the nationalities question, the search for a 'Liberal Islam', and the legacy of the Left in sympathetic, and yet critical manner.

Using this approach allows him to pose, within the constrictions of the limits of time of public lectures to pose the complexities of the dark record of the regime in curbing minority nationalities movements without ignoring the fallacies and similarities with the regime that the nationalities themselves exhibit. Similarly, he points to the impossibility of unequivocally supporting one side or the other in Indonesia's politics regarding Islam. In fact, he eloquently shows that there are not just two sides to this story. But perhaps, the most deeply involved of the pieces is the one dealing with the Left, as the admiration for suffering is never allowed to cloud his judgement and analysis

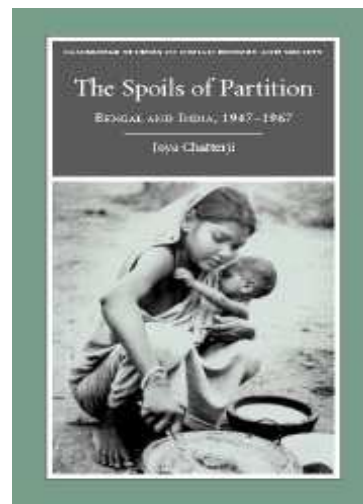
Book Notices

Joya Chatterji was recently Reader in International History at the London School of Economics and is now Lecturer in the History of Modern South Asia at Cambridge University, Fellow of Trinity College, and Visiting Fellow at the LSE. In 1994, she published a controversial book entitled *Bengal Divided: Hindu Communalism and Partition*.

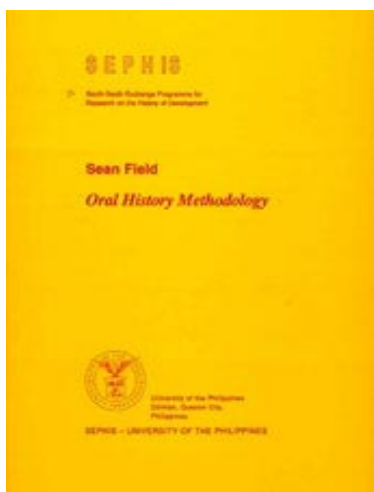
In this work, she extends her interest on partition of Bengal (1947) to examine the way in which this seminal event shaped politics and society in that region. She uses very new sources to explore questions not as yet connected to the partition question. Her focus is on how and why the borders between West Bengal (India) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were redrawn. The arbitrary separation of a region with a common economic and cultural identity led to unprecedented upheavals and the drawing of national boundaries resulted in massive waves of migrations up to the nineteen seventies.

The 'spoils' of partition, as expected by the Congress government, the motive force behind the demand, as Chatterji had shown in her first book, were squandered in the next twenty years. Working through an enormous corpus of primary sources, Chatterji shows how the government, both in Bengal and in Delhi, failed to carry through their initial project. This is a finely crafted book, challenging many of the assumptions that have so far informed our understanding of the history of the early years of Independent India.

This book will not only have to be entered into reading lists in departments of history, political science and sociology, but will also attract readers with a general interest in the various trajectories of the Indian sub-continent.



Joya Chatterji, *The Spoils of Partition: Bengal and India, 1947-1967*, Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007, pp. 342.



Sean Field, *Oral History Methodology*, SEPHIS, Amsterdam, 2007, pp. 35.

Dr. Sean Field teaches at the Centre for Popular Memory, Historical Studies Department, University of Cape Town.

This publication from our mother organisation is a very useful guide-book for people venturing for research, and wishing to use the new tool of oral history. It deals with, in its short space with the subject in some detail. This is a published form of a lecture given during a lecture tour of Vietnam and Phillipines organised by SEPHIS and the University of Phillipines.

Field sets out a basic guideline for young students, for the tools, skills, equipment, planning, selection of interviewees, labelling, transcription, interpretation etc. It also deals with certain unconventional, yet necessary topics, like dealing with emotions. A particularly interesting section is titled 'What can I do when I feel like crying in the interview?' Thus, Field presents an interesting admixture of dealing with technical and other issues involved for practitioners of this difficult methodology.

The book is a wonderful tool for students who were not there at the lecture tour.

Book Notices

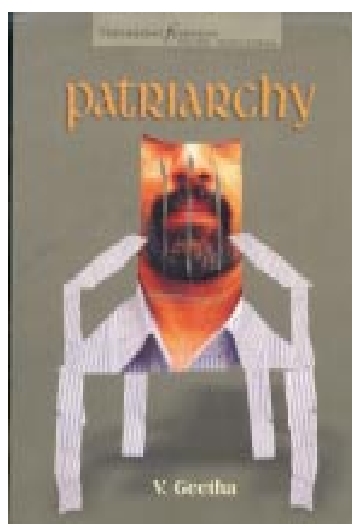
This is a literary excursion into the usual domain of social scientists. Dasgupta and Lal are both from departments of English Literature (Calcutta and Delhi Universities). This book is important for many reasons. Social scientists, expected to study the family, have in fact done very little in that direction in the Indian context. We have very little understanding of the Indian family and its changing dynamics beyond the superficial shibboleths of commonsense: Acknowledgements of the importance of the family in Indian life.

And yet, clearly the family structures almost all aspects of Indian lives, where familial inheritance inflects the workings of democracy, including the political leadership of major political parties. Family and joint property holding has been the key to business and entrepreneurial structures. The home and domestic relations are also characterized by both endemic and spectacular violence.

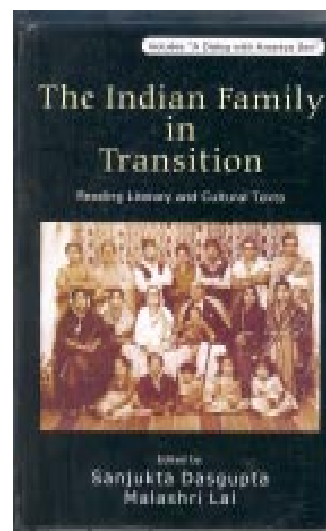
In recent years, the audio-visual media has latched on to the family- or rather The Great Indian Family- as the primary site for producing entertainment.

This book views the family from a variety of perspectives and critically examines the many representations of it. It examines literature, theatre and films- in both English and the vernacular- to show how the structures of the family are in transition.

Contributors to the volume include such well-known names in the field as Judith Walsh, Mukul Mukherjee, Shashi Deshpande, Shoma Chatterji as well as new authors such as Jayita Sengupta, Esha Dey, Naina Dey, Sutapa Chaudhuri and others.



V. Geetha, *Patriarchy, Theorizing Feminism*, Stree Publications, Calcutta, 2007, pp. 212, Rs. 240.



Sanjukta Dasgupta and Malashri Lal, (eds) *The Indian Family in Transition. Reading Literary and Cultural Texts*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2007, pp. 380, Rs. 650.

This book is part of the series entitled *Theorizing Feminism* conceived by Stree Publications with Maithreyi Krishnaraj as its general editor. The series has so far three books. V. Geetha writes this second book in this series, the first being *Gender*. The purpose of the series is to bring together resources for teaching and learning of women's studies for beginners, without diluting or over-simplifying the complex issues involved. This book, *Patriarchy*, is a stupendous effort to define the undefinable, in the broadest possible net and embedded in the immediate Indian context, to help students recognise and understand.

The author traces the history of patriarchy and its connection with the Indian women's movement. She weaves together feminist concerns with public debates and contemporary issues.

The author has tried to move away from conventional stereotypes of patriarchy and eschewed the 'victim' centred approach. Instead she has consistently 'tried to show that neither are all men the agents of patriarchy, nor do all women resist its workings equally.' (p. 2) Instead, she examines the complex interplay of class, caste, religion, sexual identities and preferences in the framing of the patriarchal context.

This book will be of enormous help to teachers and students of women's or gender studies, especially those dealing with South Asian contexts, and at all levels.

Book Notices

Xiang Biao is Academic Fellow at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology and the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford. He is the author of *Transcending Boundaries*.

In this new book, *Global "Body Shopping"*, he explores how flexibility and uncertainty in the IT labour market are constructed and sustained. In the case of America, for instance, information technology (IT) industry predicts serious labour shortages while it retrenches tens of thousands of employees every year. The explanation lies in 'flexibility', which is the current watchword of labour studies and especially of management gurus across the globe.

Xiang Biao provides very new insights into these processes through a comparative study of IT workers. Conducting field research in southern India and in Australia, he is able to use the methods and strengths of ethnography to analyse the political economy of the IT industry. As such, this book is an exemplar of an anthropological approach to questions of globalisation.

Xiang Biao offers a richly detailed analysis of the India-based global labour management practice known as "body shopping." In this practice, a group of consultants— body shops— in different countries works together to recruit IT workers. Body shops then farm out workers to clients as project-based labour; and upon a project's completion they either place the workers with a different client or "bench" them to await the next placement. Thus, labour is managed globally to serve volatile movement of capital in this sector.

This practice is sustained by unequal socio-economic relations— across and within nations and economic sectors. While wealth in the New Economy is created in an increasingly abstract manner, everyday realities— stock markets in New York, benched IT workers in Sydney, dowries in Hyderabad, and women and children in Indian villages— are linked in an intricate system, which sustains the flexibility so crucial to global capital. In his analysis, Xiang Biao is able to link such disparate notions as Indian kinship and mobile professionals, Indian body shops and Western corporations, and Asian outsourcing and the rise of new entrepreneurs.

This book is a significant contribution to the literature on globalisation and transnationalism. It is a very new way to look at issues of labour and globalisation. It is also the first really extensive study of body shopping. The book is included in a series called *In-formation*, of which Paul Rabinow is the Series Editor.



Xiang Biao, *Global "Body Shopping": An Indian Labor System in the Information Technology Industry*, Princeton University Press, Paper | 2006 | \$19.95 / £11.95, Cloth | 2006 | \$55.00 / £32.95, pp. 208

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