The African Press, Civic Cynicism, and Democracy

MINABERE IBELEMA

THE AFRICAN PRESS, CIVIC CYNICISM, AND DEMOCRACY

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The African Press, Civic Cynicism, and Democracy
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To the Nuhu Ribadus and John Githongos of Africa,
including the ordinary people who in their little
spheres take a stand against civic cynicism.

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Contents

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Tables

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Foreword

In retrospect, the optimism with respect to development that characterized the 1950s and 1960s appears incredibly naïve. In the early 1960s, when I started my career in development assistance, the experts were convinced that tyranny, poverty, and social injustice could be successfully and rapidly combated—the time frame for John F. Kennedy's Alliance for Progress in Latin America was 10 years—by a combination of decolonization, good policies, and the financial, technical, and moral support of the advanced democracies. Democracy and capitalism, many thought, were rooted in human nature, and all that was necessary was to remove the "artificial" obstacles to progress created by colonial powers, irresponsible and greedy oligarchies, and incompetent politicians, economists, and administrators.

But with a few conspicuous exceptions, mostly in East Asia, almost a half-century later the optimistic scenario has evaporated. As Cuba, Venezuela, and Bolivia, among others, demonstrate, democracy is far from consolidated in Latin America, and sustained, transforming economic growth has eluded all but Chile. The Islamic world, a millennium ago a leader of human progress, lags far behind the West and East Asia, a condition underscored by female illiteracy rates in excess of 50 percent in Egypt, Morocco, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Africa's postcolonial hopes were largely replaced by despair in the wake of ir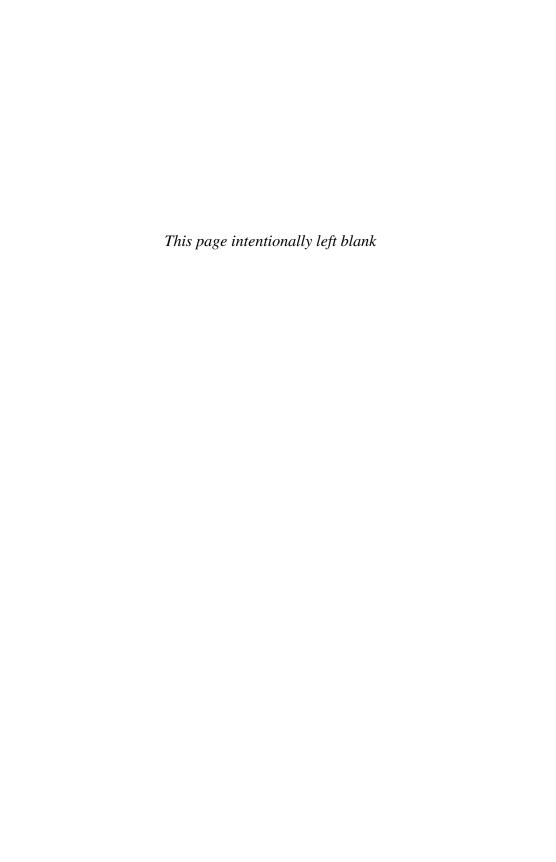responsible, often tyrannical leadership, rampant corruption, and frequent civil wars. Botswana has probably come closer to the optimistic scenario than any other African country, yet life expectancy there has plunged in the past two decades from 65 years to below 40 years with one-quarter of the population suffering from HIV/AIDS.

As disappointment and then frustration set in with the passing decades, the experts tried new approaches, with limited success. Among the development magic wands: infrastructure, community development, focus on the poorest of the poor, appropriate technology, macroeconomic orthodoxy, private enterprise, promotion of democracy and the rule of law, anticorruption campaigns. None of them proved to be magical.

During my 20 years (1962–1982) with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), I directed USAID missions in four Latin American countries and one country of people of African descent, Haiti. My early optimism was gradually displaced by a growing sense of the complexity and intractability of many of Latin America's problems. The longer I tried to help find solutions, the more I encountered a pattern of obstacles that were confounding because, as it became increasingly clear to me, behind them lay deeply rooted values, beliefs, and attitudes—culture—inimical to democracy, social justice, and prosperity.

With respect to economic development, I was learning something that was articulated by Alan Greenspan many years later, in the wake of the collapse of the Russian economy in the late 1990s: "I used to think that capitalism was human nature. But it isn't at all. It's culture." This, of course, evokes Max Weber's thesis in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*

With respect to democratization, I was learning how on the mark Alexis de Tocqueville was in *Democracy in America*: "I am convinced that the most advantageous situation and the best possible laws cannot maintain a constitution in despite of mores; while the latter may turn the most unfavorable positions and the worst laws to some advantage. The importance of mores is a common truth to which study and experience incessantly direct our attention. I find it occupies the central position in my thoughts; all my ideas come back to it in the end" (Tocqueville 1994, 322–323).

Culture influences the behavior of individuals, and collectively, those individual behaviors influence the way societies evolve. Culture conditions attitudes toward use of time, the value of education, tolerance of risk, and trust; it elevates certain activities and denigrates others; it provides codes of behavior and delineates what is proper and what is to be shunned. This is not to argue that "culture is destiny"— that it alone determines whether a country can modernize. As Jared Diamond has argued, geography, including climate, topography, and resource endowment, clearly plays a key role as do the vagaries of history—for example, wars, colonial experiences, geopolitical forces, economic models chosen or imposed. The level of prosperity powerfully influences performance. Leadership matters: that Singapore is among the most affluent and least corrupt countries in the world surely reflects the vision and influence of Lee Kuan Yew.

But culture also matters, and, since it is not rooted in the genes but is acquired from earliest childhood in the home, the church, the

school, and on the streets and through the media, *it changes*. Highly relevant are Daniel Patrick Moynihan's words: "The central conservative truth is that it is culture, not politics, that determines the success of a society. The central liberal truth is that politics can change a culture and save it from itself."

Moynihan's aphorism evokes Minabere Ibelema's message in his important new book, *The African Press, Civic Cynicism, and Democracy*. It is a courageous book, in the tradition of Daniel Etounga Manguelle's *Does Africa Need a Cultural Adjustment Program*? It confronts the role of values, beliefs, and attitudes in Africa's disappointing progress toward the goals of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights: democratic governance, social justice, prosperity. That takes courage because it is so much easier and less provocative of emotional reaction to see Africa as a victim of outsiders: colonialists, missionaries, foreign corporations, imperialistic and hegemonic governments. I am reminded of the reaction of a senior World Bank official to a presentation I made a few years ago at a Bank conference on poverty: "I thought that we had stopped blaming the victim long ago!"

Very correctly, Ibelema sees the need to continue with the institutional/structural reforms of recent years, for example, Nigeria's anticorruption institution, the EFCC. In a comment evocative of Moynihan, he captures the essence of his book: "...political structures and civic values are co-derived and mutually reinforcing." He goes on to observe, astutely, that the problems of corruption and lack of civic consciousness are not peculiar to the elites. They permeate the entire society, as many anthropologists have noted more generally.

Ibelema's analysis of the role of the press in shoring up civic virtues is comprehensive and penetrating. But it may overburden newspapers and magazines, even if one adds television and radio. The media played a key role in Spain's transition to democracy, but so did several other instruments and institutions of cultural change, including the Catholic Church and the military. Other key influences on national values, beliefs, and attitudes have to be mobilized in Africa and elsewhere in the Third World, several of which Ibelema addresses: religion, a highly influential source of values and one which currently is not a very positive force; the education system; and political leadership, a crucial factor in Botswana's success.

But the media have played an influential role in Africa's halting steps toward democracy, including rule of law, and good governance, and the continent will be well served by heeding Ibelema's emphasis on that role. But for me, the overriding message of this book is 1) that culture matters, 2) that culture changes, and 3) that a brighter

future for Africa—more democracy, more social justice, more prosperity—depends on cultural change. I hope that this book is studied carefully not only by political, academic, religious, media, and other leaders throughout the African continent but also by the development assistance institutions, which share with the African people the sense of frustration with the agonizingly slow pace of progress.

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Acknowledgments

The intense phase of the research for this book began in January 2003. As to the actual beginning of the project, I am not so sure. The year 2000 seems logical, because that was when I first traveled to Nigeria for a study that was not intended for this book. But in reality, work on the book began long before 2000. The idea developed imprecisely, with the focus sharpening with each stage of the research. Over those years, the book benefited directly or indirectly from different institutions and individuals.

To begin with, the research was facilitated by grants from the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), through the Office of Equity and Diversity. The major grant defrayed research expenses, including for travels to Nigeria in 2000 and 2003 (during a sabbatical). Another grant funded a three-week sojourn at Northwestern University, where I used the extensive library holdings on Africa, especially newspapers dating to the early years of independence.

I am grateful for the assistance of the staffs of the Mervyn H. Sterne Library at UAB, the Northwestern University Library in Evanston, Illinois, the Newspaper Reading Library in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, and the Newspaper Library in London. I am especially thankful to the staff of Northwestern University Library's Periodicals Desk for guiding me through the use of their microfilm machines for transferring research information to disks. In Port Harcourt, after initial hesitation, the library's staff allowed me into their storage area to search through piles of newspapers. It was a helpful gesture.

My research also involved interviewing several journalists and non-media personnel, most of whom are cited throughout the book. Though they are not listed here, I appreciate their willingness to talk with me in person and over the phone, sometimes on short notice.

I must acknowledge the roles of two of my colleagues and friends, Professors Eduardo Neiva of UAB and Ebere Onwudiwe of Central State University (Ohio). Professor Neiva is a walking bibliographic source, with annotations and all. On a number of occasions, I turned to him for suggestions on theoretical matters, and he never failed. Professor Onwudiwe helped to broaden my perspectives on African

affairs, especially Nigerian politics, in ways that he probably did not realize. Our frequent telephone debates on these matters often sound like the fare on PBS's "Firing Line." It is not that we disagree on a lot of issues. Quite the contrary. But the points of disagreement often yield strident arguments that I find enlightening even when I remain unpersuaded. They certainly contributed to what I hope is a balanced analysis of African politics.

Above all, I am most appreciative of the role of my family in the completion of this book. My wife, Ere, came into my life during the intense phase of the research. Though we were apart through much of the research and writing, her love and encouragement provided the tonic that kept me sanguine and on course. My children—Boma, Ibim, and Sofiri—also did the same. Besides inspiring me just by being, they encouraged this work in rather direct ways. At the early stages of the writing, Boma, a student at the University of Georgia, glanced through the content pages and nodded. "Are you writing this by yourself?" she asked, and, on getting the answer, nodded again. (The context of her question was that my last book is a coedited volume.) Ibim, a super-active fourth grader, often sought my attention while I was writing. I would usually remind him that he had to wait unless he had a pressing need. One day, he came to me at the study table and said: "Daddy, you've been writing this book for a long time. How long does it take to write a book?"

"A long time," I responded.

"Okay," he said and left somewhat in resignation. I got the message.

Sofiri was under two years old when the manuscript was completed, and he was in Nigeria, as he and the mother waited for immigration visas to join me. So, he did not get to express his views. But his frequent "Dada" over the phone was sufficient encouragement.

Then there was an undesired inspiration. My mother died while I was midway through completing the manuscript. Her funeral provided the opportunity for her seven surviving children, the extended family, and the throng who attended the ceremonies to reflect on the selflessness and non-materialistic values that defined her. In many ways, she was an embodiment of the civic values that this book prescribes.

Minabere Ibelema
April 2007

Uncertain Prospects for Democracy

In a sense, democracy has taken hold in Africa; in another sense, it has not. The global political liberalization that began in the late 1980s did not bypass Africa, as has—so far—the corresponding economic globalization. But despite the spurt of democratization in Africa, the prognosis for stable democratic governance and economic advancement remains uninspiring.

By the early 1980s, the African political landscape was littered with dictatorships. But by the 1990s, internal pressures and the global political climate engendered by the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe gave impetus to elections in country after country in Africa. Since then, many African countries have experienced what they had never witnessed before: the peaceful transfer of power on the basis of general elections. Still, democracy remains a tenuous undertaking.

A group of specialists on Africa, convened by the U.S. National Intelligence Council, forecast in January 2005 that by the year 2020: "Most countries in Africa will continue to hold multiparty elections on a regular basis, although these elections will continue to vary considerably in quality . . . . However, commitment to democracy in Africa will remain a 'mile wide and inch thick'" (National Intelligence Commission 2005).

Indeed, with a few exceptions such as South Africa and Botswana, the foundations of democracy remain shaky in Africa, as in many newly democratizing countries elsewhere. In countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia, problems of electoral irregularity, ethnoreligious tension and violence and economic pressures continue to bedevil the polity and generate general dissatisfaction. Moreover corruption and related irregularities in public service remains endemic, resulting in a loss of faith in the polities and an attendant civic decadence.

Nigeria could readily be a poster case for the surreal drama of African politics. Its consolidating elections of 2003 and 2007 were conducted amid a spate of assassinations, including those of an attorney general and a regional political leader. The fear of bloody chaos was so palpable that after the first of two separate elections in 2003 the *Sunday Punch*—the weekly edition of one of Nigeria's most popular dailies—ran the curious cover headlines: "Peaceful poll, large turnout. Eight die in pockets of violence" (April 13, 2003). After the elections, a state governor was abducted by a police contingent acting on behalf of the governor's electoral financial backer. The governor said he would have been killed if the abduction had not received intense coverage once he alerted the press of his whereabouts. In 2005, another state governor was arrested in Britain for money laundering. He escaped to Nigeria, reportedly disguised as a woman and using a fake passport. He received a hero's welcome in his state capital before he was subsequently arrested and imprisoned. Meanwhile, various armed militias have formed around the country, especially in the restive Niger delta region. Some of the militias were established by political leaders, who armed them for self-protection during elections or to attack opponents. Meanwhile, ethno-religious conflicts continue to flare up with intermittent regularity.

Elsewhere, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire are struggling to maintain any semblance of governance. After about 16 years of civil war, UN-supervised elections in Liberia in November 2005 saw for the first time the election of a woman to head a government in Africa. However, her closest rival alleged that the runoff elections were rigged and his supporters reverted to the rhetoric of civil war. Eventually, some accommodation was reached. Still, the Liberian government remains mired in the culture of corruption and political tension.

Even Kenya, which has had more experience with some form of democracy than most African countries, is still emerging from the cult-of-personality politics that has characterized the country since independence in 1963. The election of an opposition leader, Mwai Kibaki, in 2004 ended its status as a de facto one-party state. However, Kibaki's image deteriorated quickly enough that a referendum he proposed in 2005 to reform Kenyan politics was rejected, despite its goals of liberalizing the polity, decentralizing governance, and creating greater transparency.

In many countries, the social and political tension—though not necessarily material well-being—is worse than what prevailed in the 1960s and scuttled Africa's first wave of democratization following independence from European colonial powers. The postindependence

democratization gave way rather quickly to a series of coups-d'etat in much of Africa. "Between 1963 and February 1966 there were 14 significant cases of military intervention in government. By 1968 there had been 64 attempted and successful interventions across Africa" (Ayittey 1992, 137). In countries such as Chad, Ghana, and Nigeria, coups and military rebellions became a routine way to change government, and the coup makers were typically instant heroes, albeit for a brief period. In Chad, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Congo the often bloody means of changing government led to even bloodier civil wars. Yet, as Young (1999, 17) notes, "There was little public resistance to the elimination of the fragile constitutional structures of the decolonization settlement or, a little later, to the epidemic of military coups."

The wave of democratization in the 1990s was more sweeping in scope and would seem to reflect what Mazrui (2003) calls "the will to democratize." But that will is not necessarily translating into democratic consolidation in many countries. Even by the end of the decade, "the euphoria of the early 1990s had ebbed" (Joseph 1999, 3). Scholars have since been pondering the factors of this reality. What would it take to consolidate democracy in Africa, and what role should the press play?

These questions are especially germane in the context of the recent growth of the independent press in Africa. The independent press is both a contributor to and a beneficiary of Africa's nascent democratization (Ibelema, Land, Eko, and Steyn 2004). An independent press is a catalyst for democratization just as democracy guarantees the independence of the press. But given Africa's checkered history of democracy, the symbiotic relationship raises the question of what role the press played in the past recession of democracy and what role it can play in consolidating the present democratization. The ease with which military rules were imposed and sustained in African countries reflects various political, social, and economic realities. One of these realities has to be the performance of the African press.

Several works have examined the performance of the African press in this regard; however, the foci have been on structural and leadership reforms (Thompson 1997; Campbell 1998; Hyden, Leslie, and Ogundimu 2000; M'Bayo, Onwumechili, and Nwanko 2000; Ibelema 2003; Uko 2004). Some of the works, especially Thompson's and Uko's, take a dim or skeptical view of the role of the press. The departing point of this book is its emphasis on the press and civic values. It explores civic cynicism as a debilitating factor of Africa's democratization, with Nigeria providing a considerable portion of the analytical

data. The book also charts the progression of press performance in general with the goal of presenting a more balanced perspective on the intersection of press, civic values, and democratization in Africa.

Nigeria is stressed in this book for a number of reasons. First, it has had one of the most vibrant press systems in Africa. Second, it has had a checkered history of democracy, exemplifying both the potentials and failures of democracy in Africa. As Joseph (1999, 9) writes, for instance, "There are few countries that have engaged in as much constitutional engineering to promote the inclusion of diverse peoples as Nigeria since the mid-1970s." Third, as Africa's most populous and one of the most influential countries, events in Nigeria have enormous consequences far beyond its borders. For instance, the experts convened by the U.S. National Intelligence Council to forecast Africa's prospects cited the possibility of a total collapse of Nigeria as the worst-case scenario for the subcontinent. "If Nigeria were to become a failed state, it could drag down a large part of the West African region," the conference report warned (National Intelligence Council 2005). Still, this book is about Africa—especially sub-Saharan Africa—and it draws from a wide range of experiences from across the continent.

Four clusters of arguments will be advanced. The first is that military interventions in Africa, the African press's general embrace of the resulting regimes, and especially the regimes' ready descent into the very morass about which they claimed to be redeemers all contributed not just to the stunting of Africa's democratization, but also accelerated the descent into civic cynicism. In Nigeria, for instance, though civic cynicism had been a factor of politics since before independence from Britain in 1960, the military coup of January 1966—especially the prejudicial manner of its execution—established it most publicly and decidedly as a modus operandi. Yet, despite the bloody civil war that soon followed Nigeria's first coup and countercoup, the press only belatedly recognized military governance as inimical to Nigeria's political maturity. This belated realization resulted—until recently—in the press's romance with the gun, as Uko (2004) aptly put it. More important, however, is that the current realization seems promising as an instrument of democratic consolidation. Several other African countries, especially Benin and Ghana, went through similar experiences, though with deviations in matters of civic values that have had significant impacts on the quality of their democratization.

The second cluster of arguments is that the press in Africa can be more effective in educating the populace on the requisites of democracy and, especially, what may be reasonably expected of it. Also examined in this regard is the dubious use to which government-owned

broadcasting is still put in Africa. Rather than facilitate the development of democracy, especially through the detached enlightenment of the populace, most of such stations subvert democracy by continuing to be unabashed propagandists for whoever is in power.

The third—and most important—cluster of arguments is that civic values at the level of the populace should no longer be ignored, or thought of as a dependent variable, in the strategies of democratic and economic reforms. They have to be addressed in tandem with reforms in governance structures, processes, and accountability. Related to this point is that the African mass media have been more valuable as watchdogs on government—despite their shortfalls even in this regard—than as critics of the civic values of the governed. Though the press's role as watchdog of government is paramount, it might have to do more to facilitate citizen introspection, especially with regard to the civic values that checkmate governance reforms, democratization, and economic development.

This argument bears some similarity to Curran's (2000) contention that the government-watchdog rationale of press policies in the West should be modified to reflect the growing power of business relative to the government. The corresponding argument with regard to civic cynicism and democracy in Africa is that though the general cynicism resulted from factors of governance and the related failings of the state, it has now become a problem in itself that undercuts every other reform. The press has to direct more critical attention to it as a constituent element of political reform. Indeed, the press needs to generate a value-reorientation movement. As Smelser (1962, 313) defines it:

> A value-oriented movement is a collective attempt to restore, protect, modify, or create values in the name of a generalized belief. Such a belief necessarily involves all the components of action; that is, it envisions a reconstitution of values, a redefinition of norms, a reorganization of the motivation of individuals, and a redefinition of situational facilities.

The fourth and concluding cluster of arguments is that the African press may have to spearhead a wider discourse on African values—including cherished and valuable traditions—with the goal of assessing their opportunity costs in the contexts of modernization and globalization. Such a discourse could lead to some consensus—within individual polities or collectively—on modifications of some values or the informed acceptance of their repercussions.

The analysis in this book owes much to the ideas of several scholars, as should be evident from the citations. But of particular inspiration is Michael Schudson's *The Good Citizen: A History of American Civic Life*. The purpose or approach of this book is not the same as Schudson's. The goals might even be at odds. Schudson's book is a rebuttal to critics who bemoan the current state of American civic life, and this book calls for African polities the kind of prescribed renewal that Schudson critiques. Moreover, in approach, I have not attempted Schudson's historical sweep. Still, *The Good Citizen* is an inspiration for this work because of its thesis on the evolution of American democracy and the character of citizenship. Its point that the American democracy had qualitatively low beginnings and that citizen orientation and expectations have evolved over the years are reasons to argue that, with the appropriate catalysts, Africa's democracy will deepen. Though structural theorists give short shrift to the role of values, there is ample evidence that "a given culture of politics may be altered over time through a process of political learning" (Robinson 1994, 40). This book attempts to show why and how such civic education is crucial for Africa.

Data for the analysis were obtained through a combination of research methods, including perusal of news stories and commentary in leading Nigerian and other African newspapers and magazines from the early 1960s through April 2007. Different publications were closely examined for different periods in the study depending on their status at that time and their representativeness of, or relative neutrality in, the political alignment of the period. For Nigeria, the *Daily Times*, the *West African Pilot*, and the *New Nigerian* were examined for analysis of events during the 1960s; the *Daily Times*, the *National Concord* and the *Tribune* were examined for the 1970s and 1980s; and various newspapers and magazines have been monitored since the 1990s, including the dailies such as the *Guardian* and the *Vanguard* and the weeklies *Newswatch* and *Tell*. A supplementary method of data gathering was the interviews of a number of leading Nigerian journalists, beginning in 1995. For other African countries, online versions of major newspapers and secondary sources of information were relied upon.

An important component of this book is the performance of the Nigerian press during the elections of 2003. The author was on sabbatical in Nigeria during the months before and after the consolidating elections. They were Nigeria's first election after the transfer of governance from the military to an elected government in 1999. Such elections have had a bad record of ending rather than sustaining

democracy in Nigeria. The election of 1964, Nigeria's first after independence, set off a series of crises that led to a military coup in 1966 and culminated in a civil war from 1967–1970. Another election in 1983, which was supposed to consolidate Nigeria's return to civilian rule in 1979, was aborted by a military coup a few months after the government was reelected. The annulment of the next election in 1993 precipitated a protracted crisis that brought the country to the brink of another civil war (Omoruyi 1999; Ibelema 2003).

An examination of the Nigerian press performance during the elections of 2003 will be compared with its performance during these other democratic moments. A critique of that performance and the press's ongoing coverage and commentary will also constitute the basis for advancing a set of propositions regarding the press's role in Africa's democratization. Of particular importance are the propositions for combating civic cynicism. As Dahlgren (2000, 322) writes, "While a civic culture rests upon citizens' ways of doing and thinking in everyday life, the media can foster or hinder this circuit."

Underlying the methodology and analyses in this work is my own experience as a Nigerian. As a primary school pupil in Eastern Nigeria in the early- to mid-1960s, I was a youthful witness to the turbulent politics that in 1966 triggered a military coup, which led to the civil war. I came of age—biologically and psychologically—during the war.

The village I lived in during the war, a part of the Bonny archipelago in the Niger delta, changed hands three times during the war. As home to one of Nigeria's largest oil-exporting terminals, Bonny was a prized territory. Accordingly, the battle for it was fierce and prolonged. Following the declaration of session in 1967 by Eastern Nigeria (which was named Biafra), Bonny was occupied by Biafran troops. The island was taken over by federal forces in an amphibious assault early in the war. But Biafran forces soon counterattacked and reoccupied most of the villages surrounding Bonny town. From there, and for several months, they mounted repeated and determined attacks to push federal forces out of Bonny town itself. These were harrowing months for everyone. After a particularly close call for the federal forces, they decided they could no longer be content with defending the town. They mounted a sweeping assault on the villages and effectively ended the ground battles in the area for good.

Before it was all over, my nuclear family had sustained several casualties. My immediate younger sister was one of the half a million or so Nigerians killed during the war. Two brothers and another sister sustained serious injuries, some life threatening. Another two brothers were severely beaten on suspicion that they were soldiers in the

opposing army, and my surviving teenage sister escaped rape only because of the courage of women who put their safety at risk to hide her from charged soldiers. Though I sustained no physical injuries myself, the war left indelible impressions.

The Biafran war, as it came to be known in the West, lasted for about 30 months. For a young person, that seemed like a lifetime. I could not foresee an end to it, as war conditions had begun to seem like the norm. I began my secondary education while the war was still raging. An antiaircraft battery was mounted at the entrance of my school, and on several occasions we had to shed our white uniform shirts to take cover as newly acquired Biafran jets streaked in the sky.

Mercifully, the war ended in January 1970, but the degeneration of civic values was only gathering momentum. I witnessed it until I left for college in the United States in 1976. I still get a refresher course on the civic values every time I go back home or read about others' experience. There is no better illustration of the erosion of social capital in Africa than an experience I had in 2003 in Port Harcourt, a southern Nigerian metropolis.

My then wife, five-year-old son, and I had boarded a transit bus in the early hours of the night en route to our residence in the outskirts of the city. As the crowded bus began to pull off, the police arrived in their open-back patrol Jeep and ordered the driver to stop. Rather than obey, the driver sped off. Though the police had the disadvantage of having to retreat to their Jeep before giving chase, the driver's action—whatever the reasons—seemed foolhardy. Yet, there he was steering the bus with nearly 40 passengers through traffic that ranged from moderate to heavy. So determined was he to elude the police that he drove over curbs and elevations, causing the bus to lurch and veer erratically. It was a harrowing ride. One would expect the passengers to scream spontaneously at the driver as they normally would for much less recklessness; yet all through the ordeal, a large number cheered him on. "Go, driver, go," they said repeatedly, sometimes approximating an irregular chant. The rest of the passengers sat in stoic silence, though, like me, probably petrified.

I do not know how the adventure ended. My family and I disembarked at the first opportunity, which was several bus stops past our drop point. As I left the bus, still clutching my son, I could only wonder why a bus driver would so brazenly put us all at such risk and especially why so many of those whose lives were so endangered supported him. I probably will never know all that conditioned the driver's reaction to the police order. As for the passengers, their reason for cheering was simple enough: People have grown to see the police not

as protectors but as a menace. They cheered the driver in much the same way they might cheer a vigilante group that is roughing up a robber.

Incidentally, the police asked the driver to stop because he had violated a law that everyone should support. He had parked the bus alongside a busy thoroughfare, rather than at the designated bus stop or motor park close by. Such indiscipline by Nigerian motorists contribute in no little measure to the problem of traffic congestion that is one of the banes of urban life there. Accordingly, the police in major Nigerian cities have been strictly enforcing regulations against obstructive parking. One would expect whole-hearted support for such a regulation from the public. However, the enforcement of the law, as with most laws in Nigeria, is riddled with corruption. When, therefore, the bus driver was asked to stop, the passengers did not see the police as officers out to ensure law and order; they saw them as predators using the law as a pretext to extract payoff for themselves. Their solidarity was with a driver who violated a necessary law and compounded it by defying law enforcement.

This incident alone impressed upon me the extent to which civic values have deteriorated in Nigeria and the challenge of establishing a democratic order in that context. The incident is a microcosm of the tendency in Africa for people to engage in behaviors, which, though a reaction to an unacceptable situation, further undermines or even jeopardizes the polity. In this case, the bus driver's reaction not only put him and others in grave danger, it did little to discourage police corruption. If anything, it gave the police the justification for sterner action against him in the future. Similarly, the passengers who cheered on the driver were condoning a behavior that is problematic to the public—parking in a way that causes traffic congestion. Worse still— again—the passengers' solidarity with the driver was more of a fatalistic reaction than a deterrent action against corruption. Of even greater importance is that the passengers did not know whether the particular policemen were honest persons who would treat the driver fairly. They presumed the worst and acted on it. This latter point is especially important because it illustrates the extent of the depletion of social capital, the element of trust and goodwill that enhances social, civic, and economic relations.

These experiences with civic cynicism, political turbulence, war, and its aftermath inform both the methodology and the theoretical perspective of this book. They have made me keenly aware of the enormous impact of individual actors on the collective fate. Still, I hope that the substance of this work inheres in the scholarship. One

of my first scholarly publications is a chapter on the Nigerian civil war (Ibelema 1992). Research for the chapter, which was published in the book *Africa's Media Image*, impressed upon me the value of scholarship in explicating even one's own personal experience. What appears in the chapters that follow then is an attempt to rely upon scholarship to grapple with issues that are of intense personal concern.

Some of the contentions in this book, perhaps its very premise, will inevitably evoke objections. Matters of values and change typically raise questions of cultural chauvinism and relativity. For Africans and blacks in general—who have been disparaged over the years out of prejudice, reductionist interpretations, or sheer ignorance—the discussion of cultural impediments is understandably touchy. As Patterson (2000) notes, there is orthodoxy about treating cultural variables in descriptive terms and as outcomes but not as causes. But to not grapple with the consequences of values for fear of reinforcing prejudicial contentions would be to do a disservice to the very recipients of the benevolence.

Thankfully, some African and Africanist scholars such as Daniel Etounga-Manguelle and Jean-Francois Bayart have broached the issue of values and Africa's economic and political development (see, Etounga-Manguelle 2000 and Bayart 1993). This book is a contribution along that line. As in the other works, values are discussed here not as *the* factor of development, but as a significant one.

Furthermore, the analyses here are predicated on the contention that some values are advantageous to society's development while others are inimical to it. Beyond that, it is my view that no values are inherent in any group of people. As Fukuyama (1999, 158) writes, "In contrast to the thoroughly relativistic assumptions of cultural anthropology, much of the new biology suggests that human cultural variability is not as great as it might seem on the surface." Values evolve in response to circumstances, and sometimes they are cultivated or developed. An ideal society is one that seeks to optimize the most beneficial and humane values.

The Emergent Independent Press

The growth of the independent press in Africa is an important context for this analysis of the role of the press in the consolidation of democracy in Africa. In its report on global developments in 2002, the World Bank (2003) concluded that: "Countries with more prevalent state-ownership of print and broadcast news outlets tended to have fewer political rights, higher corruption, inferior economic governance, less developed financial markets and worse education and health." This is a major factor of the checkered record of the African press as a facilitator of democracy. Beyond government ownership was the problem of partisanship. Until recently, much of the African press was subservient to political interests and, as such, could neither be a credible watchdog of the government nor an effective champion of social reform. For, with regard to coverage of government, such a press is usually a fawning mouthpiece or a polemical agent. As to social reform, a teetered press is unlikely to command the trust of the general public to be an effective crusader. And its editorial stance usually sways with the political wind.

That abuse of power and fraud in the political process are at the heart of civic cynicism in Africa makes the independence of the press even more crucial. Moreover, African politics have tended to be contentious along ethnic divisions, with the contentiousness sometimes engendered and exploited for political reasons. When partisanship in the press mirrors such divisions, the press losses its potential to bridge social gulfs and inspire reforms. A promising feature of Africa's current democratization is that the press is decidedly shedding its baggage in this regard. This chapter will discuss the general trend in sub-Saharan Africa and then delve more in-depth on the evolution of the independent press in Nigeria.

Politics and Nonindependence of the Press

Until the mid-1990s, much of the press in Africa was affiliated to governments and political parties, and those that were not so affiliated were severely muzzled. A Ghanaian Minister of Information articulated the prevailing attitude of African governments when he said in 1990 that: "What we need in Ghana today is a journalist who sees himself as a contributor to national development. This country does not need watchdogs" (Eribo and Jong-Ebot 1997, x). The minister's suggestion that press scrutiny of public officials and government policies is not conducive to national development is obviously at odds with the principles of democratic governance, but it is also firmly rooted in the genesis of the African press and the prevailing postindependence ideology of governance.

Africa's first significant newspapers were typically of two types: those established by colonial publishers, sometimes in collaboration with local entrepreneurs, and those established to agitate against colonial rule. As would be expected, the subsidiary papers were typically pro-establishment. They supported the colonial order at least tacitly and, in return, obtained the support and cooperation of the government. In contrast, the anticolonial papers were more likely to be victims of censorship laws. When African countries became independent, there was a sense among political leaders that antigovernment press activism whould be a matter of history. Independence had been won, and press activism—or even political opposition—was no longer necessary. Moreover, the papers established by publishers headquartered in the colonizing countries became susceptible to charges that they still harbored colonial sentiments. Accordingly, government officials routinely flung such charges at them whenever they carried critical reporting and commentary.

Among the countries that exemplified this pattern were Ghana, Kenya, Congo (Kinshasa), and Zimbabwe. In Ghana, the highly successful *Daily Graphic* and its sister paper the *Sunday Mirror* were established in 1950 as subsidiaries of London's Daily Mirror Group. Though part of a British commercial enterprise, "they were established for political as well as economic reasons. They were set up to promote British colonial policy in Ghana and to earn foreign exchange for the British owners" (Anokwa 1997, 10). Accordingly the papers received considerable patronage from the colonial government as well as the infusion of capital by British investors. In contrast, publishers and editors of the anticolonial papers such as the *Gold Coast Methodist* and the *African Morning Post* were prosecuted. When Ghana became

independent of Britain in 1957, the *Graphic* and *Mirror* became targets of Kwame Nkrumah's government, which accused them of being colonial relics (Anokwa 1997). Nkrumah quickly established the *Ghanaian Times* in 1958, and his government passed laws that severely curtailed the independence of the *Graphic* and the *Mirror*, culminating in the nationalization of those and other papers.

In Kenya, the dominant newspapers at independence were also of colonial origin and orientation. The weak economic base for the newspaper business aside, the "colonial governments in East Africa…discouraged indigenous newspaper production" (Bourgault 1995, 164). Accordingly, Kenyan papers were funded primarily with foreign capital and their editorial orientation was geared toward profitability rather than political activism. The *East African Standard* (established as the *African Standard* in 1902) typified this pattern, and, in fact, was the dominant newspaper in colonial Kenya and one of the most dominant after independence. The task of crusading against colonial rule and policies fell on smaller papers. In part, because of its association with British interests, the *Standard* was subsequently overtaken in circulation by the *Nation*, a daily newspaper founded by the Ismali Muslim spiritual leader, Aga Khan, about two years before Kenya's independence in 1962. But despite their popularity, even the Nation group of papers "were considered foreign by East African governments" (Bourgault 1995, 164). Kenya's long-ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), established its own papers, the Kenya Times group in 1983.

The notion that the postcolonial press should serve as a partner of the government was starkly illustrated in Kenya in 1964 when the Kenyan government nationalized broadcasting operations in the country and established the Kenyan Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). This action was a countermeasure to the colonial government's establishment in 1962 of a consortium of foreign and local interests to run broadcasting as a private enterprise. Heath (1997, p. 31) surmises that the colonial government's action—taken just before it handed over power to Kenyans—was intended "to assure continuity of British influence by economic and cultural as opposed to political means." Ironically, KANU subsequently established its own broadcasting operation, Kenya Times Television Network, in collaboration with a British private enterprise, Maxwell Communications, and it soon gained a reputation for being more independent than KBC.

The colonial press in Congo was decidedly even more pro-establishment than their counterparts in Ghana, Kenya, and many other African countries. In fact, unlike colonial rulers in other

African countries, the authorities in Congo banned the Congolese from owning newspapers until 1959 (Bokonga 1980). Rather, Belgian-owned papers such as *Le Journal du Katanga* and *L'Essor du Congo* "catered for colonial society and defended their interests" (Bokonga 1980, 310). The government itself published some newspapers, including *La Voix du Congolais*, which purportedly gave voice to the natives. Despite the restrictions, the profession of journalism attracted a substantial number of the Congolese and the press grew especially after World War II. The end of the war engendered governance reforms in Europe, which filtered down to the colonies. The ensuing reforms and internal pressure, including riots, in the 1950s forced the Belgian colonial office to open up the press and to rapidly grant independence to Congo in 1960 (Bokonga 1980).

Given its lopsided pro-establishment history, the postcolonial Congolese press was highly prepped to be a mouthpiece of the government. That Congo descended into civil war soon after independence and subsequently was ruled despotically for about 32 years by Mobutu Sese Seko further delayed the emergence of an independent press. "Given that press freedom can only exist in the context of broader human rights and political freedom, Mobutu's blanket control of Zairian life precluded any meaningful form of press freedom" (Ibelema and Onwudiwe 1997, 313).

Zimbabwe's experience was quite similar to these cases, except that the press went through a two-step decolonization process. When a white-minority government of what was then Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence from Britain in 1965, it, in effect, established a different type of colonialism and colonial press. This lasted effectively until 1980, when an incremental series of agreements led to general elections in which all contending parties participated. The Zimbabwean press underwent considerable change following the election of the socialist Robert Mugabe as prime minister. The government acquired Zimbabwe's two leading newspapers, both privately owned and with colonial orgins: the *Herald* (based in the capital city of Harare) and the *Chronicle* (based in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe's second largest city). Given its control of radio and TV broadcasting at that time, the Mugabe government effectively took over the press in Zimbabwe.

Nigeria's experience was somewhat different from this pattern. The colonial press was not as strong in Nigeria as it was in other countries. The *Daily Times*, for long Nigeria's most successful newspaper, was established by colonial and local businesses, but it charted a remarkably independent course and therefore maintained its credibility and

growth after Nigeria's independence in 1960. Still, as will be more fully developed later, the political tenor of early Nigerian press limited its independence until recently. For long, the major newspapers were owned either by political parties or governments. As with most other African countries, the pattern began to change markedly in Nigeria by the 1990s in tandem with the movements toward democratization.

Trend Toward Press Independence

The West African nation of Benin is credited with leading Africa's second wave of democratization (van der Veen 2004), and the growth of Benin's independent press is illustrative of that trend as well. With an impoverished population of about 6 million people, Benin was one of the most media-poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa up to the 1980s and the press was also among the most repressed. The country experienced six military coups in its first 12 years of independence between 1960 and 1972, before the last military leader, General Matthew Kérékou, formally declared it a Marxist state in 1974. When nearly 18 years of Marxist rule resulted in a bankrupt economy and a plan to accept toxic waste in exchange for money triggered outrage, Kérékou's regime became vulnerable to pressures for reform. A national conference was convened in 1990 to discuss the country's future, and the delegates rejected Kérékou's guidelines, declared the conference sovereign, and subsequently deposed Kérékou. "Benin thus became the first African country in which the civilian population managed to overthrow a military regime and remove a sitting president by means of elections" (van der Veen 2004, 81).

The transition gave rise to and was facilitated by the quantum growth of the independent press. By 2002, Benin had 18 independent newspapers, 40 magazines, 12 privately sponsored radio stations, as well as the government-owned two television stations (Committee to Protect Journalists 2002). It is a measure of the transformation of the press landscape that in a ranking of world press systems on indices of press freedom in 2002, Benin vaulted from being among the bottom countries to being among the top. Reporters Without Borders ranked it 21 out of 139 countries on the survey, the same ranking as Britain. This placed it ahead of every African country and even Western European countries Austria, Spain, and Italy. "Perhaps, nowhere else in sub-Saharan Africa has democratization had as profound an impact on the growth of the independent press as in Benin" (Ibelema, Land, Eko, and Steyn 2004, 311). To various degrees and in various ways, however, what *happened* in Benin was soon to happen in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

In Ethiopia, the government opened up newspaper ownership to private enterprises two years after the ouster in 1991 of Mengistu Haile Mariam's communist government. In September 1993, Ethiopian entrepreneur Ato Fitsum Zeab Asgedom established the country's first independently owned newspaper, the *Monitor*. It published thrice weekly until September 2000, when it became the *Daily Monitor*. Through its short history, the *Monitor/Daily Monitor* has struggled to maintain its independence in a polity that has had no experience with an independent press. Ethiopia maintained its ancient monarchy until September 1974, when Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed in a coup d'etat. A military junta then ruled the country, until Mengistu became head of state in 1977. Mengistu's long tenure was even more repressive than the monarchy. And so when a semblance of democracy was introduced in Ethiopia following an election in April 1993, it was to a polity whose only political experience was with despotism.

As a pioneering independent newspaper, therefore, the *Monitor* was to bear the brunt of the dearth of democratic ethos. Its founding publisher, Asgedom, has suffered prison sentences for everything from publishing supposedly false information to alleged unlawful acquisition of property being privatized by the government. These measures did not muzzle the *Monitor*. In 2001, the government froze the paper's accounts, leaving it unable to pay its staff and fund its operations. However, the government underestimated the extent to which survival of the *Monitor* mattered to Ethiopian civil society. Several individuals and organizations rallied to the aid of the *Monitor*, among them NGOs, businesses, diplomatic missions, and professionals in and out of Ethiopia. In an editorial marking its first anniversary as a daily, the *Monitor* (September 13, 2001) acknowledged the importance of such support to its survival: "Your support for the work that we do, as well as your trust in our integrity has encouraged us to stay afloat at these extremely trying times."

The *Monitor* has since been joined by several other privately owned newspapers, numbering up to 20 by the time of Ethiopia's elections in 2005 (Committee to Protect Journalists 2006). Most of the papers were published weekly in Amharic, the country's dominant native language. However, by April 2006, the number of newspapers had fallen to 10, mostly because of government repression. In response to protests against the conduct of the elections, the government clamped down more harshly on the press, shutting down eight newspapers. Still private newspapers remain a force in Ethiopian affairs.

Even in countries such as Nigeria and South Africa, which have always had a relatively robust press, political developments prodded

the press toward greater independence. In South Africa, the transition from apartheid government to majority rule also saw the lifting of laws that severely restricted political reporting. The ideological divide in press reporting also began to blur as government performance, more so than race, became the dominant issue in public affairs. As happened in Kenya after independence, the white-dominated South African press was sometimes accused of racism in its unfavorable reporting on the black-dominated government. But black newspapers, such as the *Sowetan*, have not spared the government either.

The growth of the independent press is especially manifest in the growing licensing of privately owned broadcasting. For long, African governments, along with political parties, in some cases, dominated broadcasting. This began to change from the early 1990s. Today, privately owned broadcast stations have sprout all across Africa, though there are more of radio than television stations. In some countries, nongovernment radio stations now dominate the market. However, as of 2006, there were still several countries in Africa where broadcasting is still an exclusive preserve of the governments. Notable among them were Ethiopia and Zimbabwe.

Press Independence and Decline of the Ethnic Factor

Indeed, one of the most significant developments in the rise of the independent press in Africa is the decline of the ethnic or regional factor in press ideology. Nigeria illustrates this trend particularly well. An examination of the ethnic factor of Nigerian politics shows a complex mix of political strategies, shifting alignments, and dynamic coalitions. In other words, ethnicity is increasingly becoming merely the most overt reference point for what is otherwise a complex mix of contending interests. An analysis of the ethnic factor that disregards this complexity would do injustice to the reality of African politics today, though to gloss over ethnicity is to downplay a factor that is consequential in its reality and overbearing in its perception.

Background to Nigerian Press Development

When Nigeria became independent from Britain in 1960, it had three political divisions: the Eastern Region and the Western Region (both of which constituted the South) and the Northern Region. A fourth region, the Midwest, was exercised from the West in 1963.

The division of the South into three regions even as the North remained one region reflected the South's more pronounced ethnic lines. Though each region was dominated by one ethnic group (the Hausa/Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East), each region is also populated by a large number of ethnic minorities. By some counts, there are up to 350 ethnic groups in all. The Islamization of the North—began at the turn of the nineteenth century as part of the Fulani jihad from North Africa—substantially homogenized Northern Nigeria and lessened the pressure for political divisions. The Islamization was further consolidated in the first half of the 1960s by the first postindependence premier of Northern Nigeria, Sir Ahmadu Bello, who used political pressure and incentives to convert various minority groups. Even then, the Middle Belt—a region populated by Tivs and other minorities—continued to seek a separate political identity. That a large component of people in this region were not Islamized contributed to their resilient assertion of a separate identity. Their agitation provided a Northern complement to pressures from southern minorities, which eventually led to the division of Nigeria into 12 states in 1967, just months before the outbreak of the civil war. Similar pressures led to further divisions. Nigeria was split into 19 states in 1976, 30 in 1991, and 36 in 1996.

Beyond the creation of political divisions, the ethnic factor was (and to a considerable degree remains) a major impetus in the formation of political parties. During the era of regions, the parties where typically associated with particular regions, specifically the dominant ethnic group in the respective regions. Thus, contests for leadership of the federal government often took the form of contests among the three dominant ethnic groups for control of the center.

The creation of states somewhat diluted this ethnic factor of Nigerian politics. It did not merely give minorities administrative control of their territories, it also allowed them greater voice at the center and facilitated political coalitions among them. In effect, the greater the number of ethnic groups that have clout at the center, the less rigid the ethnic factor, and so the less significant it is in the reality, though not the rhetoric, of Nigerian politics. Still, the ethnic factor has been the most visible factor of Nigerian politics, which, in turn, has driven the development of the press.

Nigeria's Four Press Eras

Nigerian press history has been divided into four periods: the nationalist, regionalist, statist, and independent press (Ibelema 2003).

These periods are characterized by the rapid growth of the press spurred respectively by the major political developments: nationalism and the crusade for independence, independence and the institution of regional rivalry, the creation of states, and the drive toward democratization (following years of military rule).

The first press era is referred to as the nationalist press, not because it lacked an ethnic dimension but because its central focus was the crusade for the rights of the natives and ultimately political independence. But the exact orientation even on this nationalist issue was often shaded by ethnic interests. For instance, the North wanted a later date for political independence to give it more time to prepare for the rivalry that would ensue with the other regions. Though the press in the nationalist era was largely privately owned, it was also strongly politically aligned. In fact, the first two indigenous newspaper chains in Nigeria, the Associated Newspapers of Nigeria and the Amalgamated Newspapers of Nigeria, were respectively owned or controlled by two of the foremost names of Nigerian politics, Nnamdi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo. Zik, as Azikiwe was popularly known, was the leader of the Eastern region–oriented political party, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, and served as Nigeria's first indigenous president; and Awo, as Awolowo was generally called, was the leader of the Western region–oriented political party, the Action Group (AG), the main opposition party in Nigeria's first republic. The *Daily Times* and sister publications, true to their founding principles, were the only major publications that pursued an independent editorial course during the nationalist press era.

Despite the respective regional alignment of Zik's and Awo's chains, they both owned newspapers around the country. But their fortunes ultimately depended on the political wind. With the intensification of regionalist politics after independence, the climate became even less favorable for cross-regional newspaper ownership. By the era of the statist press in the 1970s, most of the papers in Zik's and Awo's chains had ceased publication, as had most other papers of the nationalist era. Of Awo's group, only the *Tribune* is still published (Eribo 1997). Despite its strong ethno-political orientation, the first press era merits the nationalist label because of its overriding concern: the struggle against colonialism.

The next two eras of the Nigerian press, the regionalist and the statist eras, were marked by the growth of the press along regional and state lines. As independence approached and concerns shifted decidedly from colonial issues to internal rivalry, much of the nationalist press essentially transformed into a regionalist press. Not only

did the existing papers become more regionalist in their editorial viewpoint, but the regional governments themselves established newspapers. So the regionalist press era was marked by the dominance of papers owned by political parties/leaders and regional governments. Even the federal government joined the fray in 1961 with its establishment of the *Morning Post* and the *Sunday Post.*

Though the major regionalist papers continued to circulate nationally, their editorial orientation tended to be closely aligned with their region or the dominant political party/ethnic group in that region. In fact, so partisan and at times pungent were the regionalist papers that in 1965—at the height of Nigeria's postindependence political crisis and months before its first military coup and subsequent civil war—regional governments prohibited circulation of rival regional papers in their regions. Given the strong correspondence of regional politics and ethnic politics, the ban had the effect of limiting interethnic dialogue at a time there was a dare need for it.

Government ownership of newspapers experienced a rapid growth following the creation of states in 1967 as several states established their own newspapers, and so was born the statist press era. The federal government, whose own *Morning Post* and *Sunday Post* newspapers folded in 1973 acquired 100 parent ownership of the *New Nigerian* and 60 percent ownership of the Daily Times group in 1976. The statist press era was therefore characterized by the dominance of government-owned newspapers, for the first time in Nigerian history. There was also a marked shift toward provincialism in the character of newspaper distribution as readership loyalty shifted toward the newly established state newspapers.

Significantly, the acquisition of the Times group and the *New Nigerian* by the federal military government was ostensibly to blunt their regional/ethnic editorial bias. The *New Nigerian*, a successor of the *Nigerian Citizen*, was established as the voice of the North and had continued to play this role authoritatively, though its circulation remained quite small relative to Nigeria's other major papers. The Daily Times group, Nigeria's most successful newspapers then, started out as a commercial operation and was rightly regarded as editorially independent. Yet its base in the southern city of Lagos, then Nigeria's capital, gave its editorial orientation a southern coloration, at least as perceived by the North. When therefore the federal government acquired both publishing houses, it justified the action as necessary to promote national unity. There is little indication that the acquisitions had any such impact. What is certain is that both newspaper groups lost the very reasons they were successful: for the Daily Times group,

their independence and credibility; for the *New Nigerian*, its distinctive regional voice without the benefit of independence. The respective loss of credibility and editorial niche resulted in the papers' precipitous decline from which they never recovered.

The ultimate impact of the acquisitions then was the creation of a vacuum in the national press, which other papers would soon fill. The loss of the editorial independence of the Times group, especially, meant that for the first time since the 1920s, Nigeria had no nationally popular and truly independent newspaper or newsmagazine. The vacuum was subsequently filled with the founding of the dailies the *National Concord* (1980), the *Guardian* (1983), the *Punch* (1983), and the *Vanguard* (1985), and the weekly newsmagazines *Newswatch* (1987) and *Tell* (1991).

This new crop of publications began the fourth era of Nigerian journalism, the era of the independent press. It is an era when the major newspapers and magazines are aspiring toward a national character not just in circulation but also in editorial orientation, news coverage, and staffing. Though the ethnic/regional bias is still evident, most of the leading publications are no longer as overtly tethered to political groups as they used to be. The independent press grew especially during the ethnically tinged political crisis of the mid-to late-1990s, a crisis that is discussed more fully in later chapters. Among the notable publications that came into existence during this period are the daily *This Day* (1995) and the weekly newsmagazines the *News* (1993), and *Tempo* (1993).

The end of military rule in 1999 spurred further growth of the independent press. Among the notable entries are the *Daily Independent* (2002), *New Age* (2003), and the *Sun* (2003). But the period is also notable for the proliferation of thin-size weeklies and twice weeklies. Some of these seem to have been founded for partisan political causes, in some cases with manifest ethnic bias. Indeed, there appears to be two parallel developments in the current growth of Nigeria's independent press. On the one hand, there are newspapers and newsmagazines of increasingly national character; on the other hand, there is a mushrooming of overtly partisan though privately owned papers all over Nigeria.

Lingering Ethnocentricity and Regional Imbalance

The papers of national character tend to be more inclusive in their coverage and staffing, less partisan in the opinions they allow expression, robust yet usually fair in their news and editorials, and generally

more professional in their approach to journalism. The *Guardian*, though a tabloid, like most Nigerian newspapers, is readily the leader of this group—Nigeria's equivalent of the *New York Times*. The dailies the *Punch*, *Vanguard*, *This Day*, and the *Daily Independent* belong in this group, as do the major weeklies *Newswatch*, *Tell*, the *News*, and *PM Magazine*. These also happen to be Nigeria's leading newspapers and magazines in number of pages and circulation.

In contrast to the national editorial orientation, the partisan papers are usually polemical and even demagogic toward the people they oppose and adulatory toward those they support. They are typically thin-size tabloids, 16 pages or fewer in size, and they use non-newsprint paper and carry few ads. Such papers are sponsored by political interests with specific electoral objectives, usually within a state or region, and they rarely last beyond a few election cycles. Often they do not even pretend to make a distinction between objective reporting/analysis and editorial commentary. Though most of such papers do not engage in overt ethnic polemics, their bashing of politicians of particular ethnicity and glorification of others make the ethnic bias self-evident.

It is important to note that though the partisan papers have added to the diversity and vibrancy of the Nigerian press, the independent press era is still characterized by the qualities of the more professionalized and usually national-oriented papers. The latter's professional orientation has made their political sympathies less of a determining factor of their news coverage and analyses. Accordingly, the ethnic factor of journalism is more diminished than ever before.

An imbalance in the geographical distribution of the Nigerian press—the concentration of the major publishing houses in the Southwest—engendered a balance of sorts in the regional equation of political power. Northerners have headed Nigeria's federal government—both civilian and military—through much of the country's postindependence history. The concentration of the press in the South therefore provided a sort of regional balance of power. The significance of this balance was especially pronounced during military regimes—usually dominated by the North—when the independent press served as a virtual opposition. The balance disappeared in 1999, when a Southwesterner, Olusegun Obasanjo, was elected president. The North, along with virtually every other region in Nigeria, has since claimed to be marginalized (Ibelema 2000).

Early in the Obasanjo administration, some critics, especially Northerners, expressed the view that the Nigerian press muted its critical voice in covering the government for ethnic reasons (Ukiwo 2003; Uwugiaren 2003). However, as will be demonstrated in

subsequent chapters, the press's initially less combative coverage resulted more from a commitment to shepherding the nascent democracy than from ethnic loyalty. In fact, the contrary view is also expressed that some newspapers/magazines did not sufficiently adjust to the democratic dispensation by easing up on the adversarial orientation that was intended to end military rule (Ekpu 2002). Definitely, as the fear of another military intervention receded, the press intensified its critical reportage and commentary on the Obasanjo administration. By the time Obasanjo's tenure ended in May 2007, one was hard pressed to make the case that the Southwestern native got any less critical coverage from the Southwest-based press than his predecessors from the North.

Nonetheless, the perception of a Southern bias in press coverage has spurred the North to intensify its efforts at press ownership. In addition to Northern states' collaborative attempt to reinvigorate the *New Nigerian*, a number of newspapers and magazines have been established to augment the Northern voice in Nigerian journalism. Among them are the *Daily Trust* and *Millennium Weekly*, both of which were established in the late 1990s. Though published in Abuja, the national capital, their circulations are primarily in northern Nigeria (Ekpu 2002). This limits their impact as voices on the national scene.

So far, the ethnic dimension of the African press has been presented as a negative factor of press operations. However, though the negative factors are more detrimental for purposes of the thesis of this book, there are some positives as well. As suggested, the negative consequences are in the form of journalistic distortions resulting from ethnic biases and, on occasion, even chauvinism. In worst-case scenarios, the African press has contributed to the incitement of ethnic violence and civil war. The Nigerian case will be discussed in some depth later. Suffice to note here that ethnic bias and advocacy in the press has played significantly damaging roles in countries such as Congo, Kenya, and Rwanda, among others. So problematic was it in Kenya that the legislature sought to ban ethnic programming and even the use of native languages in radio programming.

However, the ethnic factor of the African press also contributed to ensuring a degree of robustness of the African press even under dictatorships. In Nigeria in particular, the ethnic factor has played an important role in maintaining diversity of press ownership and editorial viewpoints and facilitated resistance to dictatorship and censorship (Eribo 1997; Ibelema 2003).

Still, the decline of the ethnic factor with the growth of a more independent and less partisan press, has had the effect of intensifying

the robustness of the press, while giving several publications greater national credibility and cross-ethnic acceptance. That is the case with newspapers such as the *Guardian*, the *Vanguard*, and the *Punch* all of Nigeria, the *Guardian* and *Daily Mail* of Tanzania, the *Citizen* of Uganda, and *Les Echos du Jour* of Benin.

ADDITIONAL FACILITATING FACTORS

The independence and growing professionalism of the press is one factor—a crucial factor—that enables it to accomplish the mission that is proposed here. However, there are other factors that would facilitate or hinder this mission. Among the other facilitating factors are the phenomenal increase in literacy rates and access to radio and television.

Growth in Literacy Rates

As recently as the early 1980s, adult literacy in many African countries ranged between 20 and 40 percent, with a few exceptional countries such as Tanzania and the Republic of Congo. Much has changed since then. In fact, there is probably no greater area of progress in Africa in the past two decades than the increase in adult literacy rates. As table 2.1 shows, by 1990, several African countries had attained adult literacy rates close to 60 percent and higher, adults being defined as people aged 15 years and above (UNDP 2004). And the growth has continued. By 2002, several of the countries were close to or had surpassed the 80 percent rate. Some of the most significant increases during this period occurred in Nigeria (18 percent), the Republic of Congo (15.7 percent), Ghana (15.3 percent), Tanzania (14.2 percent), and Kenya (13.5 percent). Even in countries with very low literacy rates, such as Benin and Senegal, there were double-digit increases. Niger, which has the lowest rate, is one of the few exceptions in attaining a marginal increase of 6 percent.

Even more indicative of the trend is the literacy rate among the youth (defined as people aged 15–24). In several African countries, the literacy rate for this group was close to or above 90 percent by 2002. Again with the exception of Niger, the countries with the lowest youth literacy rates by the 1990s registered some of the most impressive increases by 2002. Benin and Senegal, for instance, gained 15.1 and 12.8 percent increases, respectively. Even countries with moderately high youth literacy rates still had double-digit gains during this period. Nigeria and Ghana, for instance, gained 15 and 10.4

Table 2.1 Literacy Rates and Media Reach in Selected African Countries

	Adult Literacy Rate (Age 15 and above)[a]			Youth Literacy Rate (Age 15–24)[a]			Newspaper Circulation Per 1,000 People[b]	TV Sets Per 1,000 People[b]
	1990	2002	% Change	1990	2002	% Change	2004	2004
South Africa	81.2	86.0	4.8	88.5	91.8	3.3	32	123
Botswana	68.1	78.9	10.8	83.3	89.1	5.8	27	19
Ghana	58.5	73.8	15.3	81.8	92.2	10.4	14	94
Congo (Kinshasa)	67.1	82.8	15.7	92.5	97.8	5.3	6.4 (1998)	41(1996)
Uganda	56.1	68.9	12.8	70.1	80.2	10.1	2	15
Zimbabwe	80.7	90.0	9.3	92.9	97.6	4.7	19	30
Kenya	70.8	84.3	13.5	89.8	95.8	6.0	9	25
Nigeria	48.7	66.8	18.1	73.6	88.6	15.0	24 (est.)	65
Senegal	28.4	39.3	10.9	40.1	52.9	12.8	5	NA
Benin	26.4	39.8	13.4	40.4	55.5	15.1	5.6 (1998)	73 (1996)
Tanzania	62.9	77.1	14.2	83.1	91.6	8.5	Not Available	Not Available
Zambia	68.2	79.9	11.7	81.2	89.2	8.0	22	28
Niger	11.4	17.4	6.0	17.0	24.5	7.5	<0.1	13

Source: [a]These figures are culled or calculated from the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index Report of 2004. [b]These figures are culled from the Lexis-Nexis Statistical Database.

percent, respectively, thus closing the gap with countries that had the highest youth literacy rate, such as the Republic of Congo (97.8 percent), Zimbabwe (97.6 percent), South Africa (91.8 percent), and Tanzania (91.6 percent).

This all portends well for media consumption, especially readership of newspapers and magazines. Unfortunately, as will be discussed below, the impressive gains in literacy in the past three decades has not necessarily translated into increased readership, certainly not increased circulation figures. Still, the correspondence between education and political awareness is beyond dispute. Such awareness is necessary for the civic reorientation that is suggested in this book.

Access to Radio and Television

Literacy rates aside, the increased availability of radio and television to the African populace is a factor in any analysis of the potential impact of the mass media. One does not need statistics to deduce the increase. A casual observer of Africa's urban centers and even some rural areas would readily notice the ubiquitous antennas that jot the sky from rooftops. In many African countries, television ownership is now a norm of life, except for residents of the most remote villages. Radio has long been widely available, being the first medium to surpass UNESCO'S recommended reach.

Impediments

If the independence of the press, phenomenal increase in literacy rates, and the wide access to radio and TV sets are facilitating factors in the press's role in the consolidation of democracy, financial problems, low circulations, and continued cynical use of government-owned broadcast operations remain major impediments. Discussion of this third—and very important—constraint will be deferred until later chapters, where it is most germane.

Financial Obstacles

The financial difficulties of Africa's independent news media is illustrated by an apocryphal story narrated on Africa Independent Television (AIT) in Nigeria in December 2003. The story goes like this: A man in Lagos brought out N500 (approximately $4) to purchase newspapers and magazines at a newsstand. An intruder snatched the money and took off. First though, the snatcher explained that no

one should spend that much money on newspapers when he could not afford breakfast. This anecdote evidently uses the improbable (a Robin Hood logic) to explain the probable (petty robbery). Yet it reflects the economic circumstances of the African press.

When the African press was sponsored primarily by governments and political parties, it lacked independence but had some financial security. In contrast, the growing independent press exercises considerable independence but faces financial insecurity. With a few exceptions, the economy of African countries is not sufficiently robust to provide a strong advertising base for a diverse press. The rapid growth of the independent press has put even greater competitive pressure on the revenue base, especially for the broadcast press. Independent broadcasting is more adversely affected by the weak advertising base. Unlike the print press, which earns a significant proportion of its revenue from circulations, the broadcast press is more dependent on advertising. Independent broadcasting in much of Africa is an infant industry, making it all the more vulnerable. Most of Africa's independent stations were licensed from the 1990s, when many African countries gave up government monopoly and opened up broadcasting to private enterprise. Though the audience of radio and television has grown as explained above, advertising revenue remains relatively small.

Even government-owned stations in some countries are being required to wean themselves off government subsidies, thus exacerbating the weakness of the advertising base for independent stations. In Nigeria, the Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) requires its stations to generate 80 percent of their revenue. Given the weak advertising base, the mandate has resulted in a glut of paid programs, almost all religious. Saturdays and Sundays are especially filled with such programming, with a smattering of public affairs, news, and soccer telecasts. There is jostling for paid-program airtime as fervent evangelists seek to enlarge their flocks and financial contributions. Evelyn Nwosu, the senior marketing officer for the NTA station in Port Harcourt, estimates that up to 75 percent of the station's commercial revenue is from religious paid programs. "It is not a matter of what the people want; it's a matter of who can pay" (Nwosu 2003).

Contributing to the revenue problems for the press is that advertising bills often go unpaid for extended periods. Sometimes they do not get paid at all. As will be further discussed, this not only complicates operational planning, it causes financial strains for journalists and compromises journalism ethics.

Low Circulations

For the print press, the financial problems are compounded by low circulations. Though circulation figures are hard to come by and are often unreliable, the indications are that they remain far below the rates even in other developing regions. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics estimates that daily newspaper circulation in sub-Saharan Africa in 1996 was 12 per 1,000 people (UNESCO 2001). As of 2004, a number of African countries have far exceeded this rate. Of the countries in table 2.1, South Africa leads with 32 copies per 1,000, followed closely by Botswana (27), Nigeria (24), and Zambia (22) (Lexis-Nexus). However, in comparison, UNESCO estimates that up to 50 countries around the world have circulation rates of at least 50 per 1,000 people.

In some African countries, newspaper circulations have fallen below the those of past decades. Even in Nigeria, the circulation figures may be below those of the 1970s, during Nigeria's period of rapid economic growth. Ray Ekpu, founding editor/publisher of *Newswatch* magazine and president of the Newspaper Publishers Association of Nigeria (NPAN), estimated that the combined circulation of several of Nigeria's leading dailies in 2002 fell short of that of the *Daily Times* at its peak by 1980 (Ekpu 2002). The *Daily Times*, Nigeria's most successful newspaper before its precipitous decline, had circulations in the range of 500,000, yet hardly any newspaper or magazine circulates up to 100,000 as of 2002. Of course, the *Daily Times* was for long a near monopoly as a national independent daily. Today, there are several national independent dailies competing for readers. UNESCO lists the number of Nigerian dailies at 25 in 1998 for a combined circulation of 2.76 million. This figure is probably off the mark because of inflated circulation figures that are usually not audited.

Newspapers and magazines compensate for the shortfalls in advertising and circulation revenues by increasing their prices, thus further depressing circulations. By 2003, for instance, some of Nigeria's leading dailies were charging as high as N100 (or about $0.77) per copy. In contrast, major metropolitan newspapers in the United States sell for $0.50 or less. The difference becomes staggering when one contrasts Nigeria's per capita GDP of $860 in 2002 with the United States' $35,750 (UNDP 2004).

However, though the cost of newspapers and magazines has to be a factor in the low readership, there is also an evident deterioration in the culture of reading per se. Jide Oyewusi, a Nigerian playwright and author, is quoted in the Nigerian *Guardian* (October 7, 2002) as

saying: "At the moment, the reading culture of Nigerians is at the zero level." Any observer of the Nigerian literary scene would readily corroborate the thrust of this claim, which apparently refers to reading for leisure or general awareness. And the pattern seems to hold in most other African countries.

The deterioration in the culture of reading could be attributed to preoccupation with bread-and-butter issues. However, given the growing number of the educated and the expansion of the middle class in Africa, economic constraints, per se, cannot fully explain the decline of readership at this time. Newspaper readership has also been falling in developed countries, and the explanations—alternative sources of information, such as TV and online technologies—could well apply to African countries. However, there are a number of reasons the same factors might not necessarily explain Africa's decline. To begin with, though newspaper readership has declined in developed countries, readership of magazines and books remains high. This is not the case in most African countries. More significant, while literacy rate has peaked in developed countries, it is growing in Africa and should more than offset the noted factors of readership decline. It seems plausible, therefore, that, along with the noted factors, the decline in reading as leisure or civic culture in Africa may be attributable to the intensification of materialism, the underlying factor of civic cynicism. It should be noted still that per-copy readership of newspapers in Africa remains relatively high, thus compensating somewhat for the low circulation figures.

Ethical Fallout

A major fallout of the financial pressures on Africa's news media is the financial well-being of African journalists. Even with increasing professionalization and professionalism, African journalists are compromised when they are forced to seek subsistence because of nonpayment of wages. Yet the reality of journalists in African countries, with the exception of South Africa, is that they often go for months with only partial remuneration or none at all. And their wages are low to begin with, even by the standards of other professionals in Africa. Tunde Oladunoye, the executive director of the Center for Media Education and Networking in Nigeria, estimated in December 2003 that as many as 60 percent of Nigerian journalists were owed arrears in salary and compensation (Oladunoye 2003). And Nigeria boasts a more robust economy than most other African countries. Shu'aibu Usman Lemam, the national secretary of the Nigeria Union of Journalists, considers the financial pressures on journalists to be the greatest challenge confronting journalism

professionalism in Nigeria (Leman 2003). Though the transition to democracy in 1999 substantially enhanced press freedom, Leman said the continuing economic hardship lessens the utility of the freedom. "When ethics are compromised this becomes dangerous to the democratic dispensation" (Leman 2003).

The resulting financial insecurity makes journalists susceptible to unethical practices such as being paid to write favorable or unfavorable stories as desired by the briber. It also makes journalists acquiescent to intrusive publishers who use their newspapers to attain personal or political goals. Oladunoye cites the example of publishers who order their editors to undertake elaborate coverage of funerals, when the editors would have rather directed their scarce resources to covering more newsworthy developments (Oladunoye 2003). Such practices, especially in their more pronounced manifestations, have the effect of compromising the credibility of the newspaper and aggravating its financial stress. In some cases, this results in the demise of the publication, as happened to the daily *Sunray* in Port Harcourt, Nigeria (Ukiwo 2003).

Financial constraints also have a negative impact on programming for civic education. Independent radio stations, for instance, are heavily music oriented—much like their counterparts in the developed world—and much of the music is of the American urban genres that appeal to the African youth. There is an evident presumption that, as in the West, this is the audience that advertisers want. In some cases, such programming leaves a vast majority of the people, especially those in rural areas, not catered to. For the same reason, many independent stations offer only token public affairs programming. This reduces the scope of a counterpoint to the largely sycophantic programs on government-owned stations.

Potency Nonetheless

Notwithstanding its difficulties and limitations, Africa's growing independent press remains quite powerful. There is hardly any political leader around the continent who cannot testify to the scorching heat that the press can generate. The print press in particular is much more powerful than its stunted circulation would suggest. Because of its greater independence—not having to rely on government for licensing and related considerations—the print press is much more likely to probe public affairs and serve as a gadfly. Its power also is more related to who reads it than how many and to the radius of influence. To be impressed by this power one only needs to observe

the recurrent buzz generated in African countries when a newspaper or magazine publishes an exposé of consequence.

For the same reason, though the vast majority of Africans do not regularly read newspapers and magazines, the print press can still steer civic values by framing political and social issues to stress individual and communal agency. Their credibility as outlets for independent thought gives them an advantage over the broadcast media in general and government-owned stations in particular. But even the broadcast outlets can play their roles. As independent stations and networks mature and become more economically stable, their potential impact on civic values will grow as well. In countries such as Benin and Ghana, radio stations are already having such an impact. The extent of Ghana's transformation in this regard is captured by John Abankwaah in an essay in the Ghanaian newspaper, the *Independent* (September 12, 2002):

> I returned from my United States base some five weeks ago and I must say I am really impressed about the progress of the Ghanaian democracy.
>
> As I flipped the dial on my radio, I realised that Accra alone has some thirteen FM stations. Kudos to who ever thought Ghana should embrace democracy….
>
> I am really impressed about the level of divergent opinions being expressed on our airwaves.

The proliferation of independent broadcasting has already had an impact on Ghana's democratization. "The transparency of Ghana's 2000 election results was helped by the efforts of the country's many private stations. The stations made it difficult to rig voting, bringing credibility to the announced results" (UNDP 2002, 6).

Significantly, the credibility of the 2000 elections placed Ghana ahead of many other African countries in terms of the deepening of democracy. Unfortunately, the comparable presence of independent radio stations in other African countries, notably Nigeria, has not quite elevated the conduct or credibility of elections there. The scope of civic cynicism could well be the deciding factor. Therefore, even in countries that are having greater success with democratization, there remains a need for value consolidation or reorientation of the populace. With all their difficulties, the independent press is best suited to articulate the necessary values effectively.

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Journalism Values and the African Press

One must not discuss the mission of the press without discussing the professional values that underlie journalism practice. Such a discussion is especially germane in the context of non-Western countries, given the recurrent question of whether the implicit values are alien or indigenous. Political leaders in developing countries who resent press attacks routinely accuse their journalists of exhibiting alien values that are inappropriate or untenable in the local contexts. And the journalists typically do, indeed, see the Western press as a model—often based on superficial knowledge of the workings of the press in Western countries. It is important therefore that an analysis of the press's role in Africa's democratization make explicit the basis for its value judgments, both stated and unstated.

This section of the chapter does this by analyzing an emerging consensus in journalism values from what used to be portrayed as irreconcilable philosophies. This consensus is what may be called purposive journalism, and it underlies this analysis of the role of the press in Africa's democratization.

During the debate over a New International Information Order in the 1970s–1980s, critics tended to characterize the differences as resulting from a conflict between the notion of news as an independent and detached operation and that of news as a purposive undertaking intended to accomplish particular goals (Righter 1978; Merrill 1981). The implicit dichotomy derives, on the one hand, from the libertarian philosophy of press freedom with its emphasis on the dissemination of information for its own sake without regard for its consequences, and, on the other hand, the advocacy and practice of development journalism. However, the differences in press orientation have never been as fundamental as the critics tend to suggest (Nerone 1995). The press, as a human undertaking, is inherently

ideological, and its value of objectivity is essentially the management of bias, rather than its absence (Tuchman 1972; Gans 1979).

Moreover, in every press system, there are tensions between press control and freedom, and actual press practices tend to be the net product of such tensions (Ibelema, Powell, and Self 2001). And there are questions of whether the net product is what the society needs. Just as in emerging democracies, the question is continuously raised in the West as to whether the press is adequately, perhaps maximally, fulfilling its function in a democracy.

Among others, Picard (1985), Herman and Chomsky (1988), and McChesney (1999) have written on the constraining impact of the capitalist economy on the mass media's capacity to provide a true marketplace of ideas. Lippmann (1995) Graber (1997) have similarly written on news values and practices that detract from the press's role in enhancing democracy. Therefore, just as the independence of the press from governments is a major issue in developing countries, the controlling impact of corporate and other advertisers has become a major concern in the context of the Western press. The parallel concerns have given rise to respective efforts to make the press truly independent in both developed and emerging democracies, to seek a balance between detachment and commitment, and to ensure that press freedom is accompanied by a commitment to social responsibility.

In the United States, such efforts are most manifest in the advocacy and practice of civic (or community) journalism, which at its core stresses the need for the press to be a part of solutions to social problems rather than a detached observer. The idea became especially salient among U.S. journalists in the mid-1990s after it was championed by one of their own, Buzz Merritt, then editor of the *Wichita Eagle*. His advocacy gave expression—within the journalism profession—of ideas that have been advanced by scholars such as Jay Rosen of New York University and Ted Glasser of Stanford University, who have since further elucidated on the journalism philosophy. Though its practice remains far from the ideals articulated, civic journalism has since become the guiding model if not the norm of U.S. journalism. If the consolidated democracies need a more purposive press, as a number of scholars have argued, the democratizing countries need no less.

Significantly, the essential concerns of civic journalism are the same as those of development journalism, which gained currency in developing countries during the 1970s and 1980s. As theorists and advocates of development journalism indicate, its goal is to deemphasize the scintillating and emphasize the consequential (Teheranian

1977; Aggarwala 1979; Machado 1982). By this conception, news-worthiness is to be determined primarily by the relevance of the issues and events to the people's advancement, whether in agriculture, business, health practices, child rearing, or civic commitment. Along with this focus, a development-news press is supposed to help provide critical feedback to the government regarding the prospects or effectiveness of programs planned or implemented, along with its role of a mass educator.

However, just as civic journalism falls short of its ideals because of preoccupation with efficiency and the commercial imperative, development journalism has often fallen short of its goals because of similar structural pressures, including the political and economic (Teheranian 1977; Sidel 1990; Shah 1996). Its practitioners in government-controlled press systems have often used it as a cover for serving as public relations outfits for the government. Even in emerging democracies, such as Nigeria, news on government-owned stations and networks still consists largely of the activities of the executive arm of the government, including the spouses of top officials. Critics of development journalism often cite this perversion as its definition. But this is no more valid than to equate Marxism with Stalinism.

The extent of the similarity between development journalism and civic journalism was the subject of a research panel that Ted Glasser moderated at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication in Phoenix in August 2000. Shelton Gunaratne of Moorehead State University and I made presentations on the similarities between civic and development journalism, while Jay Rosen of New York University presented on the differences. (Rosen was scheduled to pair with James W. Carey of Columbia University, but the latter could not attend the conference.) Among the similarities noted were the deficiencies in journalism traditions as practiced in the West and in developing countries, the remedies implicit in civic and development journalism, and the shortfalls in the actual practice of both journalism philosophies. The difference, Rosen argued, was that civic journalism developed in a different economic, political, and social context. The United States is economically advanced, has had a long tradition of democracy and press freedom, has an entrenched civil society as counterweight to the state, and has had a long tradition of private media ownership. These realities, he argued, make the goals and practice of civic journalism much different from those of development journalism.

But as Professor Gunaratne and I argued, though the contexts do, indeed, make a difference, what are of greater significance are the

similarities in the fundamental issues and characteristics of the movements. There is, perhaps, no better indication of the similarities than that the respective critics of both movements make the same argument: that they compromise journalism independence and libertarian ideals (Hachten 1999; Merrill 2002). These concerns led Western critics of development journalism to suggest that it manifests a lack of appreciation of the ideals of press freedom and, in fact, it was a cover for press control. Such criticism cannot, of course, be leveled against American academics and editors of major newspapers whose commitment to liberal democracy cannot be questioned. Still, Merrill (2002) describes public journalism as tending toward order and deindividualization of society, a description that is quite consistent with the tenets of development journalism.

Beyond this concern for the overarching philosophy of journalism, there are also questions as to how African is the practice of journalism in Africa. Specifically, is journalism professionalization in Africa essentially a European import? Are journalism standards such as objectivity and detachment inconsistent with African traditional communication?

On the question of journalism professionalization, it has been argued that much of the training and standards in Africa were imported and applied, often uncritically (Golding 1979; Ebo 1994; Bourgault 1995). It has been argued that there has not been adequate attempt to discriminate between what could or should be universal professional values and what should be context-dependent practices (see Ibelema 2002, for elaboration). This means that professional norms that emerged in the context of particular social regulatory processes are applied out of context, sometimes awkwardly.

Bourgault (1997) has noted, for instance, the odd mix of polemics and adulation in Nigerian journalism, with polemics masquerading as critical journalism and adulation reflecting the servility and sycophancy of the traditional praise singer. Thus journalists invoke press freedom to justify violations of social norms that may be unacceptable even in the societies the journalists see as models for the profession. Examples of such violations abound in Nigeria (Ekwelie 1986; Ibelema 2002, 2003), Zambia (Kasoma 2000), and other African countries.

Much of these concerns can be validly described as journalism malpractice, rather than the adoption of un-African values. Some aspects of the questions raised fail to acknowledge that journalism practice everywhere tends to deviate from traditional norms. In arguing that objectivity in journalism is alien to African culture, for instance,

Golding (1979) has noted that in traditional African societies information and opinion are offered in tandem. This critique is rather dubious given that there is hardly any traditional society in which this is not the case. Given that human beings are inherently subjective, objective presentation of information is rather unnatural. It is a technique acquired—typically imperfectly—through professional training, socialization, and practice. Even the most professionalized and independent journalists in the world today still fall short on the standard of objectivity.

Related to the matter of objectivity is whether there should be an African journalism ideology. Jimada (1992) has called for an Afrocentric perspective, for instance. Afrocentricism in general is an ideology that seeks to make all black people's African identity the guiding light in their values, choices as consumers, intellectual orientation, and lifestyles in general (Asante 1988). For journalists, this would mean seeing and interpreting events from the perspective of an African. One would think that African journalists would do this naturally; in fact, like other peoples, their professional training should check the natural inclination toward this bias. Yet, beyond the political sphere, one cannot say with any degree of confidence that African journalists ordinarily see things from an African perspective. Colonial and neocolonial distortions in social and cultural orientations of Africa's urban class (not just the elite) are reasons enough for uncertainty. And there are some manifestations.

In his study of Nigerian journalists working for the former Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation in the 1970s, for instance, Golding (1979) found that none of the few newspapers and magazines lying around the newsroom were African; they were all European, especially British. My observations during much more recent visits to Nigerian newsrooms and offices of the Nigerian Union of Journalists suggest that Golding's findings are now quite dated. Still, one cannot say that the colonial orientation that Golding noted is in the past.

One curiosity of Nigerian television programming, for instance, is the dominance of European soccer games on the airwaves. Though sports journalism is peripheral to the concerns of this book, this phenomenon is worth reflecting upon because of its implications. On any given weekend on any given station or network in Nigeria, one is more likely to see a European league soccer match than a Nigerian or African match. A number of explanations have been offered for this anomaly. One is that European league games are more readily available and affordable to subscribers than are Nigerian and other African games. A second is that many of the European teams feature

Nigerian stars who have large following in the country. And a third reason is that European league games are of much higher quality than African ones.

These reasons are very much the ones used to account for the general obsession with imported goods, from clothes to cars. It is an obsession that gave rise to postcolonial dependency and retarded industrial production at home. The reasons are essentially rooted in the people's mindset. So one cannot dismiss the call for an Afrocentric orientation in Africa's mass media. It is important, however, to guard against the temptation to use Afrocentricism as justification for overt propaganda in news coverage, especially if the ultimate effect is that the people receive patently skewed information. In a democracy, there is no alternative to a well-informed citizenry.
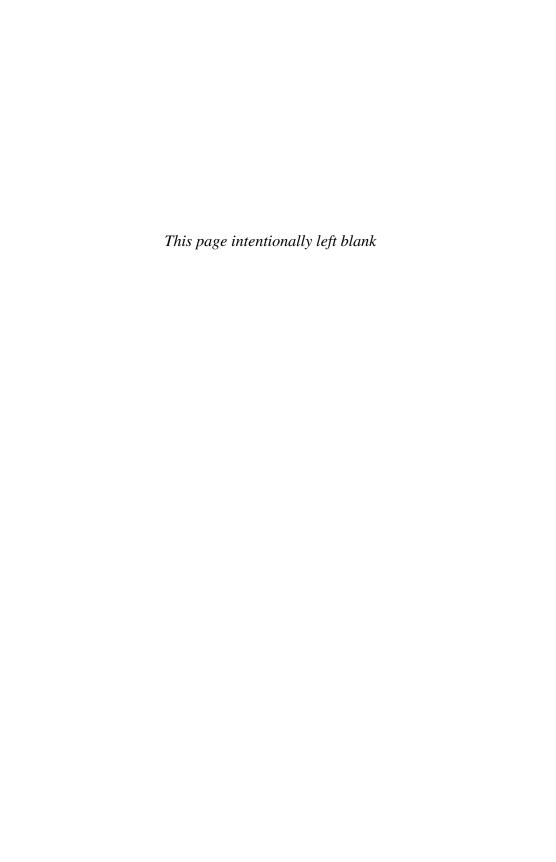
Regarding the separation of state and press, Nwanko (2000, 10) argues that: "This kind of duality of institutional structure has been and continues to be a major problem for the institutional organization of the contemporary African society." Nwankwo cites the "state" control of the talking drum, Africa's premier traditional instrument of mass communication, as evidence of the cultural incongruence. The Ghanaian philosopher Wiredu (1980) has cautioned against this type of reductionism, the elevation of a particular tradition to the level of a continental philosophical norm. By the same logic, Europe should have had (or should be having) problems with the separation of the state and the press, and, in fact, it did (and does). The tension between the government and the press is a universal one (Fish 1994; Fiss 1996; Ibelema, Powell, and Self 2000).

Even when a news organization is owned by the government there is still some tension. Tension is inherent in the respective roles of the government to govern and the press to inform and critique. Often the tension is muted for pragmatic reasons. For journalists, protecting careers may take precedence over professional principles; for the government, political realities may dictate accommodation of objectionable journalism. In communist regimes, such a tension is considerably reduced through overt indoctrination and the hiring process. Only those who have demonstrated ideological commitment or have been sufficiently indoctrinated through training are hired. Even then, there is still some tension. The independence of the human spirit everywhere guarantees that.

Of course, the state-press tension is more pronounced when the press is independently owned. The management of such tension is a major dimension of the political evolution of all advanced democracies. For instance, the legal landscape of government-press relations in

the United States today is significantly different from that of the 1960s. In some respects, the press has gained more liberties; in other respects, it has lost. Through passage of such statutes as the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and open-meeting laws, the press has been granted greater access to government information, records, and meetings. Still, what the press gained in access to information, it lost in other areas. For instance, the press is more heavily censored in its coverage of wars involving the United States than it was during the Vietnam War (Kellner 1992). It is all a part of managing the tension between the government and the press. If such tension still exists in one of the world's most rugged democracies, one should expect no less in African states. Certainly, it must not be attributed to some deviation from traditional African norms.

Even if the talking drum in traditional African polities had been independent of the states, there still would be problems in government-press relations in contemporary African states. Indeed, issues of information flow in every polity—what may be disseminated, how, and by whom?—have much in common around the world once one goes beyond the overt differences of political systems and levels of economic development (Ibelema, Powell, and Self 2000; Ibelema 2002).

The significance of all this is that there is greater convergence in the direction of Western and non-Western societies than is generally assumed. It also means that the basic mission of the press in every society is the same, though the journalism has to be adapted to the circumstances, challenges, and specific objectives. On the one hand, the press needs to be courageously independent to play its role in a democracy; at the same time it has to be responsible and purposive to be of maximum benefit to the society. These two imperatives are central to this analysis of the African press and the consolidation of democracy.

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Civic Cynicism

Any analysis of the role of the press in the consolidation of democracy has to be situated in the overall context of the society's advancement, especially economic development. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, democratization and economic development are said to correlate, though there are disagreements as to which spurs the other. From either perspective, the performance of the state is commonly held to be responsible for Africa's lagging development. Accordingly, recommendations for political and economic reforms typically focus on leadership and structural changes. The overarching point of this book is that while structural and governance reforms are essential, there has to be reorientation of civic values at the grassroots. Marie Curie, the physicist and Nobel laureate, is credited with saying that "you cannot build a better society without improving individuals" (Goldsmith 2004). With regard to African governance, one could say that democracy cannot be truly consolidated without changing individual civic values.

Civic Values and Structural Reforms

The view that Africa's political and economic problems are structural problems and problems of leadership has justifiably received considerable attention and has been cogently articulated (Ayittey 1992; Ake 1996; Diamond 2001; Abubakar 2004, Agbaje, Diamond, and Onwudiwe 2004; Gyimah-Boadi 2004). Ayittey (1992, 306) makes the ultimate claim in writing that "By 1990 it had become clear that the state was the problem and not the solution in Africa."

The critical view of state and governance gained popular currency in Nigeria following the publication in 1984 of Chinua Achebe's *The Problem with Nigeria*. A little more than a decade later, Wole Soyinka offered a similar analysis of Nigeria's political problems in *An Open Sore on a Continent*. This perspective also dominates the press in most

African countries with a modicum of press freedom. One gets the impression that if only African countries can find good leaders, all their problems—political, social, and economic—will be solved. The point of this book is not to discount the role of leadership in the failures of African states, but to suggest that the problems have become embedded in factors beyond leadership failures. One cannot offer a cogent analysis of Africa's problems without acknowledging that the behavior of African political leaders reflects—in a vicious cycle—the prevailing civic culture.

Among the insightful analyses of leadership problems in Africa is that of Matthew Hassan Kukah, a Nigerian Catholic priest and political analyst. In a book on the role of civil society in Nigeria's democratization, Kukah (1999, 109) writes: "It would seem that the fickleness of Nigerian politicians, their lack of principles, insatiable personal greed and their intolerance, more than any outsiders or the military, are largely responsible for our political failures." No one who has any familiarity with the Nigerian political scene would argue with this summation, and it would, in fact, apply to politicians in most African countries.

But then Kukah's summation raises a number of questions. Why are African politicians so lacking in civic virtues? Are there political forces that favor the vice-laden over the politically virtuous? Are African politicians drawn from segments of their societies that are more prone to civic vice, or do they merely reflect the larger civic values? To the extent that Africa has produced principled leaders, might their attempts at principled leadership have been compromised by forces beyond their control, including possibly the civic values of the societies? To some people, these may be unsettling questions. But the enduring pervasiveness of Africa's leadership problems begs for reflections on civic values at large. If repeated changes of leadership—military and civilian, elected and unelected—in dozens of countries across the continent yield the same results, then the problem may be beyond leadership and even governance structure.

Between 1960 and 2007, Nigeria, for instance, had 12 heads of government, both civilian and military, and only during two of the regimes was there the perception that corruption was seriously being tackled and was actually abetting. Significantly, both regimes—that of Murtala Mohammed from 1975 to 1976 and that of Muhammadu Buhari from 1984 to 1985—were short-lived. The verdict is mixed on the administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo, whose anticorruption campaign led to the sacking of several high-profile government officials. During Olusegun Obasanjo's

presidency—from 1999 to 2007—there was intense prosecution of corruption. Yet corruption remains a daunting feature of public life in Nigeria.

In African countries where one ethnic group or region dominates the politics because of numerical, economic, or traditional advantages, critics typically blame that ethnic group or region for leadership failures. That is certainly the case in Nigeria, where, for long, the Hausa-Fulani and (with their blessings) other Northerners headed the federal government and dominated the military. Some of Nigeria's most notable intellectuals have directly or implicitly pointed to this dominance as the bane of Nigerian political leadership.

Nwankwo (1991, 20) writes, for instance, that: "The feudalistic elite of this particular sector have always, in accordance with the logic of [their] mythical [numerical] superiority tried to dominate the heights of the national economy, bureaucracy and the armed forces." As a result: "What we have witnessed all these years is the emergence of many unworthy leaders whose purpose for being in government is to remain in power. Although these leaders possess high-ratings in patriotic rhetorics, their practical tendencies and private conversations reflect odious symptoms of the hegemony of mediocrity" (19). This widely held view in Southern Nigeria finds equally pointed expression in Soyinka's *Open Sore on a Contient* and is implicit in Achebe's *The Problem With Nigeria*.

The North indeed dominated top leadership in Nigeria, at least until the election of a Southerner, Olusegun Obasanjo, as president in 1999. And there is considerable evidence that what Nigerian critics refer to as the Kaduna mafia and Soyinka describes as the Northern cabal had designs of political hegemony. The questionable elections in Western Nigeria in 1964 and 1965, which gave victory to a political ally of the North and ultimately led to the Nigerian civil war, are examples. The elections of 1983 that yielded a Northern president were also massively rigged. Though all the parties engaged in rigging in their favor, the Northern-dominated party in power, the National Party of Nigeria, was able to "out-rig the other parties" (Osaghae 1998, 150). More blatant and hardly disputable is the annulment in 1993 of an election that would have yielded the first elected Southerner as head of government. But while Northern leaders' machinations to perpetuate political hegemony contributed in no small measure to the deterioration of Nigerian politics and civic life, it is mistaken to append an ethnic or regional tag to Nigeria's political travails. The evidence is clear-cut that if other ethnic groups or regions had had the same numerical advantage as the Hausa-Fulani or the North in

general, the political machinations probably would not have been different.

To begin with, the hegemonic machinations of the Hausa-Fulani was replicated in regions and states dominated by other ethnic groups. Before the creation of states, for instance, minorities in Eastern Nigeria complained bitterly of hegemony, corruption, and especially nepotism by the dominant regional ethnic group, the Igbo. As for ineptitude of leaders, that was a different matter. But then, it is hard to make the case that the Hausa-Fulani leaders are any more inept than anyone else.

The only Igbo/Eastern Nigerian to have headed the federal government, Major General Johnson T. Aguiyi-Ironsi (from January to July 1966), was judged incompetent both for policies he pursued (Garba 1982) and for what he failed to do to forestall the coup that took his life (Madiebo 1980). The election in 1999 of Obasanjo, a Yoruba from Western Nigeria, has lessened the ethnic/regional explanation of leadership failures. Remarkably, however, Obasanjo's leadership has received as much vitriolic attack for its failures as had the Northern "feudalistic elite." And a substantial dose of the attacks have come from the same quarters. Moreover, the failures of Nigeria's central government are replicated at the state and local government levels, irrespective of ethnicity or region. Evidently, Nigeria's leadership problems go beyond leaders or their regions of origin.

Therefore, Kukah (1999, 36) strikes closer to the heart of the problem when he writes that: "Even when a Moses emerges, the people will still have to be properly educated about democratic commandments, their duties, responsibilities and the nature of the challenges that lie ahead ...." This book goes further to suggest that a Moses might never emerge unless the people are reoriented from the cultivated civic values that are in a mutually reinforcing relationship with decadent leadership.

Civic Cynicism and the Need for Value Reorientation

I have derived the concept of civic cynicism from the ideas of civic culture and social capital (Coleman 1988; Almond and Verba 1989; Putman 1993; Fukuyama 1995, 1999, 2000; Harrison and Huntington 2000). Fukuyama (2000, 98) writes:

> Social capital can be defined simply as an instantiated set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits them to cooperate with one another. If members of the group come to

expect that others will behave reliably and honestly, then they will come to trust one another. Trust acts like a lubricant that makes any group or organization run more efficiently.

The corollary is civic cynicism, by which is meant the overarching belief that the society is so insidiously corrupt and nepotistic that one cannot succeed in particular undertakings or in general by being principled and compliant with due processes. This belief, which is widespread in the polity of most African countries, is debilitating in some, including Nigeria. So strong is it in Nigeria that the phrase "the Nigerian factor" has come to mean "the seemingly inescapable corruption in society" (Kew 2004, 105).

But it is more than a Nigerian factor. It is also Cameroonian, Ghanaian, Kenyan, and Zairean (see, for instance, Bayart 1993 and Kpundeh 2004). Not only does civic cynicism bedevil African politics, it permeates the gamut of public service, business, education, and even family relations.

In a book in which he prescribes "democracy in small doses," Akpanobong (1997, xiv), writes about Nigeria: "Our country is sick. It can well be described as an immoral society because it is permeated with corruption, dishonesty, fraud, selfishness…." Akpanobong, who is both a physician and politician, uses the medical metaphor with considerable authority. He elaborates that "the moral sickness of a society is the moral sickness of the individual members of the society, and the cure has to start from these individuals" (xiv). His "prescription…is that of moral regeneration" (xiv). To focus on matters of the public sphere, the sickness Akpanobong diagnoses and the cure he prescribes are, respectively, referred to here as civic cynicism and civic value reorientation.

In politics, civic cynicism is most manifest in vote rigging, violence against opponents, and purchase of votes. In public service and business there are endemic corruption and fraud. The educational establishment is faced with myriad challenges, from the menace of student cults to malfeasance related to admissions and grades. Even family relations, the bedrock of any society, but especially the African society, are increasingly being strained by the values that emanate from civic cynicism. Siblings are warring over inheritance, with some individuals often going for the grab at the expense of all others. Sometimes people forcibly take over the property of their absent relatives, in what can only be described as a subversion of Africa's extended family values. These are all tendencies that bear negatively on the viability and consolidation of democracy.

The grave challenge of civic cynicism is that it is retroviral and pandemic. It reinforces itself and spreads. For most people, it is a learned habit that continues to determine behavior even when the circumstances no longer justify it. Such is the lack of faith in orderliness and due process that Nigerians have a hard time queuing up even at the airport, as Kukah (1999) has recounted and anyone who has flown out of Nigeria may corroborate. Nigerians would typically shove their way to the ticket counter or boarding gate because previous experience had taught them that a confirmed ticket provided no assurance of a boarding pass, and a boarding pass provided no assurance of a seat on the plane. This lesson was ingrained when the government-owned airline was a monopoly in domestic routes. Then, passengers were routinely bumped to make room for a retinue of government officials or military officers, who usually have some urgent business to attend for which they apparently could not make reservations. But even when the domestic airline industry was privatized and the business became, more or less, a buyer's market, passengers continued routinely to rush. The resulting chaos, of course, engulfs everyone, including those who would rather be orderly.

Alas, the conditions that gave rise to civic cynicism in general have not ended. Most analysts properly blame it on the quality of governance (Ayittey 1992; Diamond 2001). In an incisive analysis, for instance, Diamond (2001, 363), blames such value systems on what he calls the "triple crisis of governance," that is, a lack of accountability and rule of law, failure to manage group conflicts satisfactorily, and failure to improve people's economic lives. "As they gather momentum," Diamond writes, "these pathologies of governance choke off the horizontal relations of trust, cooperation, honesty, reciprocity, and public-spiritedness that constitute the social capital of a vigorous, prosperous democratic society" (363).

The work in question examines a country, Pakistan, in another region of the world. Yet, Diamond's insight cannot be more applicable to Africa. In fact, there can be no better summation of civic cynicism than this:

> Lacking any faith in institutions or in one another, people fall into hierarchical chains of dependence, seeking short-term gain or protection. The civic engagement that could constrain the abuse of power and breed accountability and responsiveness wilts. In its place come unmediated conflict, opportunism, corruption, the ready resort to violence, populist mobilization of the masses, and the steady depletion of truly collective enterprise—the state, the nation, the legitimate economy. People are left feeling cheated, exploited, cynical, and

dependent, becoming all the more ready to engage in behavior—and reward the type of leadership—that undermines democracy and effective governance, which renders them still more cynical and bereft of social capital (Diamond 2001, 363–364).

To remedy this reality, Diamond and other structural analysts focus primarily on changes in governance structures and processes. I argue that a more holistic approach is necessary. In his monumental work on the historical role of values in the disparate patterns of development around the world, Landes (1998, 507) writes: "Better policies (structural adjustment) can/will put Africa back on the growth track. But there would still be lots to do. The continent's problems go much deeper than bad policies, and bad policies are not an accident." The vicious circle that Diamond so accurately describes cannot be effectively tackled merely by changing political leadership and structure, problematic as these have been. A civic cancer has metastasized and is widely and deeply embedded in the polity. Effective and enduring reform of governance therefore requires a simultaneous campaign to rehabilitate civic values in general. This is important not just because it tackles the problem with the necessary sweep but also because it imbues individuals with a sense of agency. Rather than blaming leaders alone, people may begin to reflect on their own roles and to take collective responsibility. This perspective reflects the distinction between political culture and the culture of politics, with the latter suggesting less hegemonic and more participatory—though asymmetrical— relations (Robinson 1994).

Richard Joseph's notion of prebendalism in Nigerian politics is consistent with this perspective, as it transverses the vertical and horizontal nature of the problems of civic cynicism in Africa. Joseph (1987, 8) writes:

As used in this study, the adjective "prebendal" will refer to patterns of political behavior which rest on the justifying principle that [public] offices should be competed for and then utilized for the personal benefit of office holders as well as of their reference or support group. The official public purpose of the office often becomes a secondary concern, however much that purpose might have been originally cited in its creation or during the periodic competition to fill it.

The prebendal style of governance is well illustrated by a summation of Kwame Nkurmah's government in Ghana before his overthrow in 1966. A.K. Ocran, who participated in that coup, quotes a member of Ghana's National Redemption Council as saying in 1974: "The State

Corporations had become a dumping ground of political favourites who run their establishments as their personal cassava farms. They uproot and plant as their whims and caprice dictate."

Joseph is careful to note that support for prebendalism "is generated at *all* levels of the hierarchy" (emphasis his).

> It is, therefore, necessary to correct the tendency to underemphasize the part played by non-elites in Africa in sustaining certain dominant patterns of socio-political behavior even though they seem to benefit so little from it. A different system might certainly be more to their advantage. The task of winning their support for such a change, however, requires the supplanting of attitudes and informal social networks which are *believed* to be as necessary to getting ahead in modern society as are the licenses, scholarships and contracts which represent the most visible milestones of success and survival (Joseph 1987, 7).

Jean-François Bayart, the noted Africanist scholar, explores a similar theme in his aptly subtitled book *The Politics of the Belly*. Referring to the insidious corruption and intergroup conflicts in African countries, Bayart (1993, 235) explains that "the social struggles which make up the quest for hegemony and the production of the State bear the hallmarks of the rush for spoils in which all actors—rich and poor—participate in the world of networks." Bayart cautions against those who regard the resulting politics "as no more than a symptom of corruption and the decadence of the state" (xvii). As do Diamond and Joseph, Bayart notes that the masses constitute the pillars of the political order though they benefit so little from it.

This, indeed, is the crux of the matter—how to supplant the prevailing attitude and to inculcate in the masses that a different set of civic values is in their medium- and long-term interest; that the immediate benefits of prebendal relationships and the politics of the belly are relatively miniscule and ultimately inimical to their own interest and the well-being of society at large. Such politics, after all, undermines democratic consolidation and economic development.

In a pessimistic though generally balanced and insightful analysis of Africa's contemporary history and lagging economic development, Veen (2004, 370) warns that: "All in all, the outlook for Africa is none too bright. There is no easy way out of the present situation." His one optimistic note is that: "Africans—including political leaders—are beginning to show the will to solve the huge problems Africa faces. And it is the strength of that will, more than anything else, that will determine whether or not there is an African renaissance." One must add that that will has to be reinforced and sustained

somehow. That the scope of civic cynicism described above still typifies the African polity clearly suggests that the will is not yet strong enough. The press, along with other institutions, has to play its roll in reinforcing it through civic education and the discrediting of behaviors and value systems that may seem profitable in the present but damaging to all in the long run.

In her study of the role of the church in Kenya, Gathuo (2004, 3) writes that: "If a strong and lasting democracy is to be achieved in Kenya, the general citizenry must understand, believe in, and embrace democratic practices—not just in the political arena, but also in other areas affecting their lives." That understanding has to be cultivated. Indeed, while many analysts blame the state for the problems of Africa, African leaders are themselves questioning the value system of the people they lead. T. Obiang Nguéma, the president of Equatorial Guinea, has contended, for instance, that African people's misunderstanding of democracy is at the heart of the continent's problem with democratization:

> To speak of democracy, one needs a well-informed, well-educated people able to face the problems that emerge with democracy.... Africans see democracy as a way to make money, to obtain important positions, to live like kings, forgetting that their responsibility is to craft the nation. A great majority are not yet aware of the true meaning of democracy (Monga 1996, 49).

Célestin Monga, a Cameroonian economist, dismisses such arguments. After all, African despots used such arguments for long to justify their dictatorship. But in contemporary terms, the need for the cultivation of democratic ethos—including especially the effective channeling of disillusionment to ensure fundamental reforms—can hardly be questioned. What has obtained instead is the routine resort to behaviors that constitute collective self-immolation. The consequence for democratic governance is what Ogundimu (2000, 234) has described as "the paradox in Africa that democratization is itself a threat to democracy, because it unleashes forces that tend to spur political instability."

A counterargument is that the general disorder and countercivic values that have characterized the modern African polity are a response to state intransigence and failure to respond to people's needs (Monga 1996; Chabal and Daloz 1999). Monga has first-hand experience with government intransigence. He was arrested in January 1991 for a newspaper article he published the previous month criticizing the policies of

the one-party state. His subsequent trial triggered a wave of protests that ultimately led to an opening up of the polity. Monga contends that the civic cynicism and civil disorder that are bemoaned as obstacles to democratization are actually manifestations of "the determination of people at the grassroots level to engage in the political arena, at any cost, in order to bring about some positive changes in the way they had been ruled for several centuries" (Monga 1996, viii).

An anecdote by Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah illustrates Monga's argument poignantly. In his reflections on the formation of contemporary African values, Appiah (1992, 8) narrates an incident in Takoradi, Ghana involving him and an English friend, who was driving. A truck backed into their car and shattered their windshield in full view of several witnesses. Yet none of the witnesses would testify as to this version of what happened. It was a case of group solidarity to protect one of their own, with the apparent rationale that the occupants of the car could more comfortably afford to replace their windshield without causing hardship for the driver who shattered it. Similarly, Bayart (1993, xvi) narrates the case of a Cameroonian textile worker who turned to fraud after his rent was doubled overnight. He successfully extracted the equivalent of 20,000 French francs from a local chief by representing himself as an emissary of the president of Cameroon.

If civic cynicism were merely of this Robin Hood kind, problematic as it is, its burden might not be as heavy on the African masses. But what Monga's and similar posits do not seem to reckon with is the extent to which civic cynicism has become a way of life. If it were purposive or, at least, tended toward some ultimate good, one would agree with Monga. But the reality is much more problematic. Civic cynicism has become so thoroughly engrained that in many African countries it has become self-perpetuating and self-fulfilling. It enthrones corrupt leadership and corrupts leaders who otherwise might have been ethical.

As Bayart (1993, 233) points out, "the ethos of munificence" is more commonly imposed by the societies themselves. If, for instance, a person who holds a prebendal position fails to spread the largesse, he would face "social disapproval and ostracism and, in extreme cases, a death sentence may in time be his reward" (Bayart 1993, 233). It has been a well-known fact that in Nigeria, for instance, a person who leaves public office without enriching himself is derided by his own people—in whispers, if not publicly—as an idiot. In contrast, public office holders who become rich overnight are adored. They often get chieftaincy titles as public acknowledgment of their success. Given such

normalization and canonization of civic vice, governance reforms can only attain modest success without changes in the public attitude.

In principle, the African populace support anticorruption campaigns, but when it snags their prebendal office holder, the attitude is different. Such ambivalence is bound to impede such campaigns. In 2005, for instance, when the governor of Bayelsa state in Nigeria, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, escaped from Britain where he was being held for siphoning state money and depositing it in British banks, he received a hero's welcome in his state and promptly returned to office. He was subsequently arrested and jailed, but his supporters have joined the armed insurrection in the Niger Delta that seeks redress of the impoverishment of the people in the area that produces much of Nigeria's oil wealth.

The governor's own people should have forced him out of office through other constitutional means, given the incontrovertible evidence of his corruption. Rather, as a columnist for the *Guardian* (November 23, 2005) put it, "Bayelsans…thronged the streets of the state capital, Yenogoa, to exult at his mysterious return." The columnist, a strident critic of the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, explained that the reaction resulted not from condoning of corruption but as a rebuke to the president for pressing the corruption campaign only against his political foes. But in Nigeria, there is always a reason to support one's own who is caught in an anticorruption net. Moreover, the money the governor siphoned away should have rightly gone toward helping the very people who were rallying in his support. His corruption and that of others in similar positions is part of the reason for the impoverishment that has inspired the armed uprising. Yet, he gets popular support. Incidentally, the governor's surname roughly translates from his Nembe language, "What the king does is never wrong."

In his analysis of the failures of anticorruption reforms in Africa, Kpundeh (2004) writes that, "[P]olitical will neither originates nor manifests in a vacuum. Rather, it is the reflection of complex circumstances that incorporate the aspirations of individual leaders, a calculation of the benefits that can be derived from changes in rules and behaviors, and a belief in the ability to muster adequate support to overcome resistance to reforms." Somehow or another, the inability to muster adequate support extends to the civic values of the society at large. Similarly, Joseph (1987, 7) writes that "It is…necessary to correct the tendency to underemphasize the part played by non-elites in Africa in sustaining certain dominant patterns of socio-political behavior even though they seem to benefit so little from it."

Indeed, corruption in Africa is not problematic only at the level of government; it permeates the civic, social, and business culture. Thus, though the lives of the average African is severely affected by state corruption, it is more directly and routinely affected by corruption at every other strata of society. Over the years, I have had a sampling of this reality.

In 1976, as I prepared to journey to the United States to begin my university education, I needed a document from the Federal Ministry of Education in Lagos to obtain travel papers. I arrived early in the morning, and by 11 a.m. all was set, except for the typist to type the document and submit it for a signature. He kept me waiting until the office was about to close, claiming to be busy with other things. Others came and left with their documents. Presuming that those people were somehow ahead of me on the cue, I remained patient. But with closing time approaching, I had to confront the clerk. The man who seemed to be in his mid-20s was quite miffed. "You siddon there like moo-moo," he snickered. "You don know what to do? Sidon naow." It is Nigerian pidgin English that translates: "You've been sitting there like an idiot. Don't you know what to do? Keep sitting there." I was taken aback by the caustic rebuke. The man might have been giving hints all along of what I needed to do, which I ignored out of naivety. It was my turn to be incensed. "You mean you have been keeping me waiting this long because you…" A supervisor walked in from her office before I completed the question. "Any problems?" she asked. "No, madam," the typist said, as he quickly began to fill in the document.

I faced a similar situation about a decade later at the international airport in Lagos. After being left off an overbooked flight to the United States, I needed to have my airport tax receipt validated for use the next time. That was the procedure. Yet I was kept waiting in an empty office for more than two hours, while an aid to the official who should sign the receipt kept explaining, in between naps on a bench, that "Oga is not here," or "Oga is not ready." When someone else wandered in later and whispered to me that Oga wanted "something" in return for signing the receipt, I protested stridently, my indignation heightened by the frustration of spending much of the day at the airport. My protest got the attention of the Oga, who came out of his office for the first time. Rather than feign ignorance of the demand for a bribe, he berated me for not understanding the situation in the country. In other words, my refusal to bribe him to do his job was an affront, a violation of a social contract. On another occasion several years later, a luggage handler at an airport must have felt the same

way when I snapped at his demand that I pay him to retrieve my luggage after the airline canceled the flight. The airline was operated by a private enterprise in a competitive environment, so he dared not press his demand.

As for corruption at the level of individual police constables, it is a commonplace reality that degrades the life of the populace. Once at a checkpoint, on the road from the airport, a policeman searched my luggage and the only "incriminating" item he could find was a phone. He demanded for the receipt and would not budge when told that the phone had been in use for quite sometime, as was evident from its somewhat frayed condition. The policeman threatened to seize it, audaciously expecting to be mollified with a bribe. When I dared him to do so, he actually began to walk away with the phone before a sergeant intervened and collegially asked him to return it. In all likelihood, the sergeant was not anymore conscientious. For one thing, he did not even reprimand the subordinate. Rather, he must have inferred—quite erroneously—that I had the connections that could be used to bring them to justice. (Incidentally, the Obasanjo administration in 2004 ordered the dismantling of most of the police checkpoints that had metamorphosed from deterrents of robbery into outposts of extortion.)

Most Nigerians would probably deride the foregoing examples of insidious corruption as unworthy of the space. Their own experiences make these examples pale in comparison. But it all illustrates the point that civic cynicism permeates all strata of society and is a burden on everyone. It is an impediment that has to be ameliorated if democracy is ever to be consolidated in Africa. This point was starkly illustrated in an exchange between two African scholars in summer 2004, as part of a listserv "Dialogue" moderated by Toyin Folala of the University of Texas. In urging caution regarding proposed aid to Africa, George Ayittey, the Ghanaian economist and strident critic of African governance, proposed that much of the aid should be channeled not to African governments but to civil society. In response, Ebe M. Ochonu, a Nigerian scholar, faulted Ayittey's proposal on various grounds, but stressed one point:

> More importantly, the idea that civil society organization or the informal sector is corruption-free and could thus serve as an accountable, efficient, and effective channel for aid distribution and implementation reveals a mindset that is hopelessly out of touch with African realities on the ground. My own knowledge, which is experientially rooted in Nigeria, reveals otherwise. Corruption is not only rampant

in the private and informal sectors of the Nigerian economy; the civil society organizations that Ayittey venerates are also very corrupt.

In noting that anticorruption campaigns in Africa have had only moderate success despite the proliferation of anticorruption agencies in both government and civil society, Gyimah-Boadi (2004, 9) writes that: "It may well be that the problem of corruption is too deep-rooted in African political cultures to be removed by popular pressure." But can there truly be popular pressure against corruption when it is generally accepted as a civic norm? Public outcry against corruption is often in the abstract. In practice people often justify graft as either a means of survival or as divvying of the national cake. The survival argument is routinely made with regard to civil servants and the police, for instance. Their salaries are too low to meet up family obligations, and sometimes they go for months without being paid at all. But the well off face no public shame, either, especially not among their people who see their graft as the mere sharing of public coffers or partaking in a civic norm.

In 2000, a little over one year after the transition to democracy in Nigeria, I asked a young Nigerian lawyer whether the civilian rule had made any difference. "Not much has changed," he said with a shrug. "They are still looting the national coffers; the only difference, the only good thing, is that they are sharing it with more people." There was a sense of inevitability about the answer, even a measure of civic fatalism. It was as though he was saying, "Given that we are going to wreck the country, the more of us who share in the spoils, the better."

Civic cynicism also makes the very foundation of democracy—elections—difficult to conduct credibly. It underlies electoral irregularities as well as the conviction that there were serious irregularities even when there were little. The rigging of elections has as much consequence on the democratic process as does the a priori conviction that there was rigging. In many African polities, it is virtually impossible to conduct an election that will not be perceived as rigged, granted that they often are. In Ghana, for instance, the election of Hilla Limann as president in 1979 was followed by claims of rigging. One particularly resilient rumor had it that Limann's party, the People's National Party (PNP), spread word that supporters of the opposing parties were scheduled to vote another day. International observers found no evidence of the rumor or any other irregularity, leading to the conclusion that "many of the rumors...may have arisen principally from a sense of despair among political opponents who had no answer to the widespread efficiency of the PNP (old

CPP [or Convention People's Party]) electoral machine" (Shillington 1992, 64).

It seems, therefore, that any institution that sets out to reform Africa's politics faces two related but distinct tasks: cleaning up the electoral process and getting the people to believe that it can be cleaned up, let alone that it has been cleaned up. Arduous as it will be, cleaning up the elections will be much easier than getting people to believe that they have been.

Civil Society and Civic Cynicism

In general, the task of reversing the culture of civic cynicism in Africa falls upon several institutions: all branches and agencies of government, business organizations, educational institutions, labor unions, student unions, civil society, religious bodies, and especially the press. The roles—actual and potential—of all of these institutions will be touched on throughout this work, but suffice here to offer brief comments.

Given that subversion of the political process, as well as malfeasance in government, is the most glaring example of civic cynicism, internally generated reform within government and political operatives would be the most direct solution to malfeasance in public life. However, just as no one hands over power unless he has to, political leaders are unlikely to heal themselves without pressure from the people. The same could be said of businesses. Honesty and probity are not absent in business. Still, the profit motive of enterprises typically predisposes businesses everywhere to fraud—at least the bending of the rules—perhaps more so than are other institutions of society. The business community cannot be in any better shape to reform itself than are government officials.

Civil society is used here in the broad sense that Orvis (2001, 20) defines it, as "a public sphere of formal or informal, collective activity autonomous from but recognizing the legitimate existence of the state." To make the idea more explicit, I would add that the defining activities are those directed at influencing the course of public affairs in general and state policy in particular. Significant insight has been provided with regard to the role of the collectivity of civil society (Kukah 1999; Ikelegbe 2001, Kew 2004) and that of specific groups such as labor unions (Ihonvbere 1997) and student unions (Olorunyomi 1998) in Africa's democratization. What emerges in these analyses is that helpful as these bodies have been in the democratization process, they too are compromised by the very forces that afflict society in general.

Kew, for instance, discusses how the politically inspired subversion of civil society gave rise to a new generation of organizations whose effectiveness is undermined by their nondemocratic organizational orientation, which was adopted to shield them from infiltration by the state. Furthermore, Ikelegbe (2001, 5) notes "the perverse side of civil society, and the probable undermining role it can play and does play in democratisation and national development." He notes especially the problems of ethnic rivalry, radicalization, dubious commitment, and malfeasance. Ihonvbere (1997) notes similar problems in the effort of labor unions to end military rule in Nigeria.

Of all units of civil society the task of civic education and value reorientation falls especially on the press and religious organizations, and so the latter's role and potential warrant closer examination here.

Africans, more so than people elsewhere, are turning increasingly to religion and tend to have high regard for religious leaders. "Three-quarters of those questioned in Africa identified religious leaders as the most trusted group, compared to only a third worldwide" (BBC World Service, September 14, 2005). As a premise of her study of the church and democratization in Kenya, Gathuo (2004, 212), writes that, "It is in church that many citizens learn about values such as equality, tolerance, justice and the importance of the common good—values that ultimately promote a democratic society."

Yet civic cynicism has risen in Africa even with the quantum growth of Christianity and Islam on the continent. Pentecostal churches in particular have not only proliferated but are teeming with membership. Islam is also undergoing resurgence, often with legislative impetus, as happened in Northern Nigeria where, in the late 1990s, several states instituted the sharia as a criminal code.

However, the value of religion in society depends on its collective or aggregated purpose. For Africans, the main impetus in the recent flock to Christianity and Islam seems to be the hardship and anxiety generated by modernization and Africa's difficulties (Grady 2002; Veen 2004). It is not often the search for salvation, per se, certainly not civic rectitude. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the growth of religion does not seem to have ameliorated the crisis of civic cynicism. As Bayart (1993, 188) writes, with regard to the prevalence of corruption in Africa, "religious groups do not offer, contrary to what one might believe, any stiffer resistance to the logic of cooption."

In fact, some aspects of the explosive growth of religion may have contributed to the cynicism. For one thing, there are the internecine violence between Christians and Muslims in several African countries.

Moreover, political leaders sometimes exploit religious differences to advance political goals. Olukoyun (2004, 74) notes, for instance, that under press pressure for accountability, "public officials battling for survival have mobilized ethnicity and religion to divert attention from public examinations of their conduct."

But of greater importance is the theological response to the needs of the flock. Pentecostal churches, for instance, and increasingly other Protestant denominations, emphasize a neo-Calvinist theology that promises material reward for religious pursuits, especially membership in the particular church (Grady 2002). According to Calvinist theology, salvation was already predetermined for a select few, and faith and deeds could not make a difference; however, success in the accumulation of capital could be evidence that one was among the chosen few (Weber 1958). As Landes (1998) argues, this theology could have led to hedonism and, one might add, caprice. However, there was the counteracting conviction that the chosen few had to be virtuous. Though widespread belief in Calvinism was short-lived, the ethic of virtue "eventually converted into a secular code of behavior: hard work, honesty, seriousness, the thrifty use of money and time (both lent to us by God)" (Landes 1998, 175).

The Protestant ethic, according to Weber, also consists in the Puritan aversion for worldly indulgence. The result was a frugal lifestyle that guaranteed capital accumulation. Though Weber has his critics, there is consensus that an ethic that leads to virtuous capital accumulation, not wealth per se, is essential for the orderly development of modern economies (Huntington 1991; Landes 1998; Harrison and Huntington 2000).

Africa's neo-Calvinism veers significantly from Weber's Protestant ethic. The thrust of Pentecostal theology in Africa today is that wealth and other material successes come to those who believe. It is theology that tends to encourage the acquisition and display of opulence as evidence that one is doctrinally faithful and has been rewarded accordingly from above. This is the thrust of many a Pentecostal sermon. The Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria, an association of Pentecostal churches, has reportedly issued a warning against such material emphasis in theology (*This Day*, April 13, 2003).

If so, few churches have heeded the warning. The typical sermon still stresses the material rewards of faith: becoming wealthy, getting a good job, being promoted, finding a spouse, conquering enemies, and becoming cured of afflictions. Bha Ktivendata Maharaja, a leader of the Hare Krishna Movement, is quoted in the Nigerian daily, the *Vanguard* (February 17, 2003), as saying of Pentecostal churches: "I

can assure you that 80% of the sermon is [on] prosperity—how to get rich quick . . . . Nobody cares about the soul anymore, the teaching is no longer on how to awaken the pure love of God." Virtue for its own sake, as a civic value, or for the sake of the hereafter seems passé.

In fact, in many cases Christianity is judged by what the individual does in or for the church, rather than the member's internalization of the ethos of charity, piety, and related traditional Christian virtues. Therefore, it is a common phenomenon that people who are "born again" do not see any contradiction in also engaging in fraudulent or predatory behavior and other unethical practices. Thus it was of little surprise when in 2003 an accountant at the Sheraton Hotel in Lagos confessed to embezzling N38 million—the equivalent of about $280,000—and donating about 58 percent of it to Christ Embassy, one of Nigeria's most successful Pentecostal churches. As reported in the *Glitterati*, the Sunday supplement of the daily *This Day* (April 13, 2003): "[The founding pastor of the church] would only admit to receiving the sum of N16 million from the man. This he insists was a blessing to the church and would never be refunded either to the hotel or the police."

The neo-Calvinist emphasis of African Pentecostalism has its political equivalent in Africans' expectations that democracy should deliver substantial material benefits instantaneously. Failure to attain this "democratic dividend," as it is widely referred to in the press, has contributed to what until recently has been Africans' ambivalence toward democracy. On the one hand, there is a support for democracy; on the other hand the military are welcome when democracy is not yielding the desired results. The problems arising from this expectation will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

For now, it should be noted that to the extent that Africa's neo-Calvinist theology encourages the display of opulence, it is consonant with Africa's cultural tendencies. In most African cultures, it is important not to be perceived as being poor. This is especially the case when one is undertaking public ceremonies such as initiation rituals and funerals. In traditional societies, the cost is typically borne through personal sacrifices. People would forgo meager meals, for instance, if that is necessary to save money to finance a ceremony with the prevailing level of opulence. In the context of modernizing polities, however, the pressures are met by less virtuous means. In this sense, there is consonance among civic cynicism, the African ethos of stature, and neo-Calvinist theology.

This brief analysis of civil society as an agent of value reorientation is intended to suggest the scope of the impediments, not to dismiss

their contributions and potentials. The critique of religion, for instance, is not intended to suggest that its phenomenal growth in Africa is bereft of civic benefit. One could argue that civic virtues might have been further compromised if so many Africans had not turned to religion. Still, there is little question that theology that focuses on temporal and material benefits can hardly inveigh against the materialism that underlies civic cynicism. For individuals who seek justification, for instance, the benefits of graft and other dubious means of material gain could be "the hand of God" in much the same way that capitalist profit was seen in Calvinist theology as evidence that one was among the anointed.

The press itself is not at all immune to these problems, as is illustrated by Kasoma (2000) with respect to Zambia and Uko (2004) with respect to Nigeria, among others. Such derogation of the impact of the press will be discussed later in this chapter and in subsequent chapters. Suffice to say here that the impediments do not neutralize the potential of these civic institutions to present a counterbalance to state powers and to pressure for civic reforms. In Kenya, for instance, a church/press alliance in the mid-1980s to early 1990s contributed ultimately to the deepening of democracy. After the KANU-dominated Kenyan parliament declared the country a one-party state, churches took up the mantra of expressing oppositional views. The Kenyan press, in turn, intensified its coverage of sermons and so extended the reach of the pulpit and ensued continued vibrancy of political discourse (Ole-Ronkei 1997). Such an alliance can be equally effective in generating a value-reorientation in the general populace.

Societies and Value Change

Although this book specifically addresses civic values, it is important to situate the arguments here in the wider context of value changes and the transformation of societies. Reduced to its essence, the history of mankind is the story of changing values. But for purposes of this analysis, it is most useful to reflect on the insights most directly relevant to political and economic transformation in contemporary societies.

Fukuyama (2000) identifies two primary sources of social capital: the hierarchically generated and the spontaneously generated. He further describes the basis of such order as rational and arational. By intersecting horizontal and vertical lines that respectively represent these sources and logic of societal order, Fukuyama developed four categories of forces of social capital. The top left quadrant of the

resulting figure represents the hierarchically generated, rational source of order. These are formal laws developed and enforced by the state, such as the constitution, legislations, and regulations. The bottom left quadrant represents hierarchically generated, arational sources of order, primarily "revealed religion." The bottom right quadrant represents spontaneously generated arational values that derive from tradition, folk religion, and "biologically grounded norms." The top right quadrant represents spontaneously generated rational values. These are the values that people develop tacitly or through negotiations to facilitate particular relations or transactions. Rules of economic activities and intergroup interactions exemplify this source of social capital. This is also the province of the games theory, which posits in essence that people's behavior reflects calculations of what others would do. The spontaneously generated, rational source of social capital (or lack thereof) is of particular interest in this study.

What is particularly significant about Fukuyama's model of value change is that it encompasses both the structural and nonstructural. Max Weber's theory on the impact of Protestantism on the capitalist development of the West, and its related impetus to democratization, is a pertinent and far-reaching example of the hierarchical-arational basis of value transformation. The economic dimension of Weber's theory has already been summarized. Regarding democratization, the Protestant movement's challenge to the orthodoxy of the Catholic Church discredited authoritarianism and gave theological impetus to the cultivation of democratic values (Siebert 1956). Martin Luther's long list of needed reforms included emphasis on individual agency in spiritual matters as well as transparency and accountability in the conduct of church affairs, values that are all central to democratic reform even today.

Ironically, the capitalist society that the Protestant ethic spurred ultimately engendered deterioration in value systems in the Western Europe and North America. The industrial revolution in particular caused a crisis of values as class structures began to break down and behavioral norms were abandoned. Concerted efforts were made to address this crisis, and they gave rise to what came to be called Victorian values, beginning in Britain and spreading to the United States in the 1830s and 1840s. "Many of the institutions that were responsible for its spread were overtly religious in nature, and the change they brought about occurred with remarkable speed" (Fukuyama 1999, 267).

The United States and Western Europe also experienced a crisis of democracy early in the twentieth century with serious questions raised

as to whether democracy as the will of the people could survive. As will be further discussed with regard to the United States, the response to this crisis was the concerted efforts of government and civil society to educate the public and propagate the cognate values (Schudson 1998).

Like the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, the information society that began in Western democracies in the 1970s has also generated a decline in social capital, as Putnam (1996) and others have argued. This decline, which Fukuyama (1999) calls "The Great Disruption," must also have some of its impetus in the cultural revolution of the 1960s. Its counterpoint is the conservative backlash that began in the 1980s, including especially the phenomenal rise of the Christian right.

Civic cynicism in Africa parallels, in a general sense, these disruptions in Europe and North America. There is at least one significant difference. Value disruptions in Europe and North America resulted from, or took place in the context of, quantum spurts in prosperity. In contrast, civic cynicism in Africa developed in the crucible of modernization but with only marginal economic development. This difference is consequential. It is so much easier to reform civic values in the context of prosperity. In the absence of countervailing forces, such as Puritan and Calvinist theology, people in economic distress naturally seek immediate relief, including engaging in behaviors that have long-term negative consequences.

It is improbable that theology, per se, will engender in Africa the kind of value change that Weber theorized about regarding the protestant ethic. As already argued, the neo-Calvinist thrust of Africa's growing religiosity runs counter to the phenomenon that Weber describes. In any case, Fukuyama (1999, 128) argues that "in many cases, people make different moral choices in the context of different economic incentives, and no amount of preaching and cultural argument will be sufficient to shift the overall direction of change more than marginally unless those incentives are changed." Unless, as in the case of Puritan and Calvinist ethics, the moralizing is compelling enough to suggest more potent incentives (say life in the hereafter) than temporal economic gains. But again, this is not the thrust of theology in Africa. However, economic incentives can be better articulated to bring about a more enlightened awareness and moral choices. And that is the province of the press. As Neiva (2007, 60) writes in critiquing Athenian democracy: "[M]ore important than common agreement would be the submission and coordination of personal and selfish interests to a system of values that should arise from a precise body of knowledge...." How precise the body of knowledge should be is a matter for debate.

Modernization and Value Change

The pertinent perspective regarding the diffusion of knowledge is Daniel Lerner's theory about the transformation of developing countries. In *The Passing of a Traditional Society*—a study of Middle Eastern societies in the 1950s—Lerner (1958) posits that modernization and development require a transition from traditional values to values that develop the "empathic personality" and enhance "psychic mobility." These characteristics of the modern person essentially enable people to escape the constraints of tradition and allow them to see different possibilities for their lives and society. Of particular relevance to the discussion here, Lerner proposes that the mass media should be a catalyst for inculcating the awareness that would engender modernizing values. For purposes of this discussion psychic mobility could mean the ability to imagine alternative modes of civic behaviors and their ultimate benefits to the individual.

A study of the impact of the press on India's caste system illustrates Lerner's thesis. In "News and the 'Self-Production of Society,'" Shah (1994) analyzes coverage by the *Times of India* of a conflict generated by opposition to a job reservation program aimed at redressing years of discrimination against the lower castes. In general, the coverage reinforced the status quo of superior and inferior castes. However, because of the paper's commitment to certain standards of reporting, it still carried information that undermined the thrust of its overall biased coverage. The result was that opponents of the policy were forced to grapple with the "disjunctions between cultural model and social practice" (23).

On their part, members of the lower caste were emboldened to seek positions that they otherwise might not have. Information, per se, is more efficacious than advocacy. Thus, individuals and society move forward even if the underlying tensions remain.

The implication that traditions have to be abandoned to ensure modernization and development has been the focal point of criticisms of Lerner's thesis (Schramm and Lerner 1976; Teheranian, Hakimzadeh, and Vidale 1977). It has been argued, for instance, that the breakdown of traditions does not necessarily result in development and may only have dislocative effects on the society (Eisenstadt 1976; Ngugi 1993). For instance, a global survey of the poor by the World Bank found that among Africans the breakdown of traditional support systems was the most distressful aspect of their lives (World Bank 2000). Moreover, there are states such as Japan and England that have modernized and developed even as they retain their basic

traditional forms. In the African context, it has been argued that certain traditional values may, in fact, serve to ameliorate the distress of modernization (Ibelema 2003). Still, Lerner's argument underlies the discussion here, but with some significant departures as will be noted after a review of related value-focused theories.

Lerner's theory of modernization has received considerable support in recent years, as structural theories of underdevelopment have lost a measure of explanatory potency. With the decline, for instance, of the dependency theory as a cogent explanation of underdevelopment, the critical emphasis has shifted considerably to societal values. Harrison and Huntington (2000) speak to this new thrust in their edited volume, *Culture Matters: How Values Shape Human Progress*, as does David Landes in a book that is a twenty-first century version of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations.* Landes (1998, 516) writes, for instance, that, "If we learn anything from the history of economic development, it is that culture makes all the difference." With few exceptions and some caveats, the contributors to *Culture Matters* concur.

In a corresponding essay in *The National Interest*, Harrison (2000, 56) cites the contrasting impact of the U.S. Marshall Plan that revitalized Europe after World War II, and President John F. Kennedy's similarly ambitious Alliance for Progress that fell far short of its goal of setting Latin America "on its way to prosperity and democracy within ten years." Harrison concedes that there are various other factors of development and that "there is a complex interplay of cause and effect between culture and progress" (62), but he places considerable primacy on the cultural. Accordingly, he identifies "ten values, attitudes or mindsets that distinguish progressive cultures—cultures that facilitate achievement of the goals of the UN Declaration—from static cultures, which impede their achievements" (61). Among the values Harrison lists are adherence to merit, societal ethical code, and justice and fair play. These and some of the other factors are constituents of the civic values addressed in this book and they will be more fully discussed in subsequent chapters, especially the concluding chapter. Suffice to say here that the approach of this book is significantly different from Harrison's and Lerner's conception of transformation.

A major criticism of Lerner's theory is that it is too sweeping in its call for the displacement of traditions (Eisenstadt 1976). Though Harrison's 10 factors do not seem to be as sweeping as Lerner's theory, they are still considerably broader than the thesis of this book and may have the same dislocative cultural impact noted above. The value transformation advocated here is more specific, though its

implications for Africa's advancement are still wide-ranging. This is not intended to question the validity of Harrison's listed values as factors of development. Rather the more focused conception of transformation here leaves open the possibility that societies may decide to keep cultural values that may indeed impede economic development if retention of those values serve humanistic purposes worth preserving. It may be wise—if at all possible in a globalized world—for a modern society to settle for a less than optimum level of economic development for purposes of preserving ways of life whose intrinsic values are deemed to surpass the benefits of economic gains. The problem of civic cynicism is especially important because it degrades the quality of life beyond what economic underdevelopment alone would cause.

There is an irony here that augurs well for the value reorientation being advocated in this book. Traditional African societies thrive on virtue, honor, and order (Ekeh 1975; Ayittey 1992). Sure, as in other societies, there have been practices that should offend anyone's sensibilities, irrespective of the origins and rationales of the traditions. But African societies have been societies of honor, where virtue, no less than wealth, constituted the basis of esteem. The civic cynicism of today is a learned attribute fermented in the crucible of modernization and its attendant materialism (Melson and Wolpe 1971; Ekeh 1975; Eker 1981). Eker writes, for instance, that: "Modern corruption is largely an urban phenomenon. It is stimulated and nurtured in centres of extensive commercial, industrial, and bureaucratic activity" (177). Eker especially correlates corruption with the rate of economic expansion.

Some aspects of African culture have been noted as facilitating corruption. Africa's family bonds and strong sense of obligations, for instance, are said to work against the ethic of neutral treatment of all (Eker 1981). Similarly, traditional forms of homage to leaders may readily transform into the practice of bribery in contemporary settings. "The separation of traditional forms of gratitude and respect from acceptable standards of behavior in modern bureaucracies is, at times, hard to achieve" (Eker 1981, 177). But even if corruption evolved from traditional practices, it is a much different phenomenon in kind and in scope from what it evolved from, and "its growth rate is alarming" (Eker 1981, 179). Moreover, as noted earlier, the problem of civic cynicism discussed here goes far beyond bribery and nepotism.

It should be stressed that there is nothing uniquely African about the civic culture that is discussed in this book. As already discussed, Western countries have experienced the same problems and still do.

The findings on corruption and culture that Eker applied to his analysis of Nigeria, for instance, are drawn from a study of a southern Italian village. Instances of corruption in public life are the staples of investigative journalism all over Europe, North America, and even Japan. The litany of extensive corruption that routinely bedevils the American government and corporations, including Enron, WorldCom, and Healthsouth, are well known. Even Germany—the prototypical society of the Protestant ethic—was engulfed in 2005 in a scandal involving referees who took payoffs to predetermine the outcome of soccer matches, and according to confessors to investigators, the practice was not isolated.

However, though these and similar realities in the more developed countries ultimately have consequences on ordinary people, the transgressions are not so insidious as to seriously compromise the overall well-being of the people. In contrast, civic cynicism in many African countries is especially problematic because it is so pervasive that it raises the people's level of distress beyond what the economic realities per se would engender (World Bank 2000). As Fukuyama (1995, 355) argues, much as social capital is important to economic development, "its more important consequences may not be felt in the economy so much as in social and political life."

Pessimism About the Role of the Press

Considerable pessimism has been expressed regarding the African press as an agent of democratization. There are two somewhat contradictory thrusts in the pessimism, one hypercritical and the other overcautious. The hypercritical stance is that the African press is substantially responsible for Africa's stunted democratization. Nwanko (2000) and Uko (2004) make this case quite strongly. In his theoretical summation of the role of the press in Africa's democratization, Nwanko (2000, 19) writes that: "African members of the press, as much as African political leaders, must share the blame for colluding in past and present ideological distortions that led to the mismanagement of major issues that have confronted contemporary Africa." Uko goes even further to assert that the Nigerian press scuttled democracy with its political hyperactivity, while, on the other hand, it prolonged military rule with its dalliance with military leaders.

The overcautious perspective is skeptical of the potency of the African press. Hyden and Okigbo (2002, 52) warn, for instance, that "expectations of the media must not be too high when it comes to

making a difference." Similarly, Ogundimu (2002, 208) asserts that, "They can make a difference, but it is not possible in just any circumstance." Even more circumspect is Leslie's prediction regarding the impact of the Internet. Noting that its use in Africa can only grow if only because of its relatively low use at this time, Leslie (2002, 126) writes: "It is for this reason that we are cautiously optimistic that as long [as] political circumstances continue to favor democratization in Africa, the Internet can play a reinforcing and facilitating role" (126).

The perspective advanced here is neither hypercritical nor overly cautious about the impact of the press. The view that the African press is as culpable as political leaders is quite harsh. Elements of the press have certainly been used as instruments of political machinations, and breaches in professionalism have not helped African polities, but these should not eclipse the press's heroics, achievements, and potential. As to the overcautious, scholars like to hedge their predictions—for good reasons—but the potential and record of the press, including the Internet, warrants a little more optimism. Certainly, expectations must not be too high, but the press can make a difference in any circumstance whether or not the political circumstances favor democratization. Certainly, the Internet will become a force irrespective of trends in democratization.

Scholarly restraint aside, the excessive hedging in the excerpts above probably reflects Africa's record of political failures as well as a teleological perspective on what constitutes "making a difference." If there is a presumed end point and an implicit time frame—a short time frame—then of course the press might not be able to make a significant difference. But one has to see the impact of the press in incremental measures, on a long-term basis, and in both its negative and positive potential (Picard, 1985). One tends to agree more with the Botswanan scholar, Francis B. Nyamnjoh, who projects a dynamic conception of the press and democratization:
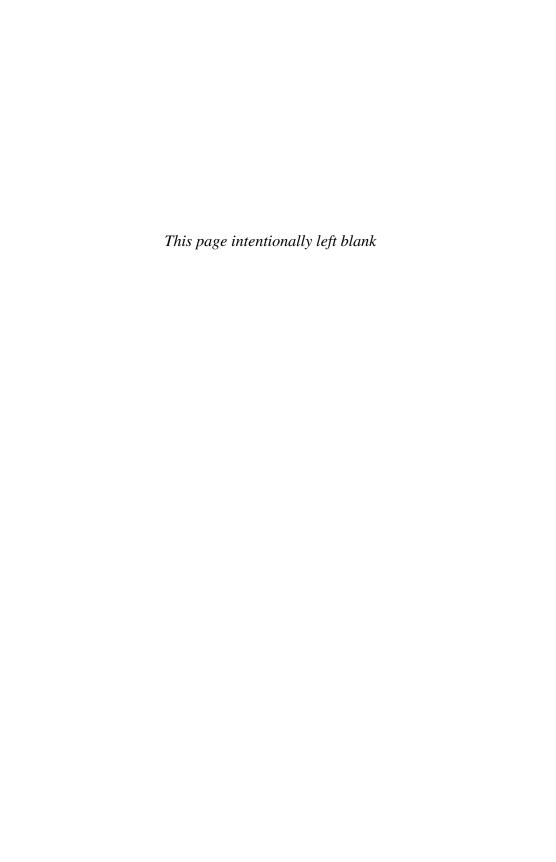
> In order to participate meaningfully in the discussion of public issues, people need both knowledge and education on how to use the knowledge at their disposal. The media have an enormous potential to provide such knowledge and education, but they can also be a vehicle for uncritical assumptions, beliefs, stereotypes, ideologies and orthodoxies that blunt critical awareness and make genuine democratisation and participation difficult (Nyamnjoh 2003).

Indeed, among physicians there is the saying that if you cannot help, at least do no harm. For the African press, the issue is not so much whether it can have an impact, but whether that impact would be in

the direction of consistently facilitating democracy rather than contributing to hindering it in any way. The press can facilitate democracy by propagating the cognate values or at least by not contributing to their subversion (Head 1963; Ibelema 1994; Lippmann 1995). With regard to Nigeria, Uko (2004) makes the case of the subversive impact in his startlingly titled book, *Romancing the Gun: The Press as a Promoter of Military Rule*. But the thrust of assessments of the African press is that it has on balance facilitated democratization.

Recent examples have been documented in various African countries, where the press has already made considerable difference especially in widening the public sphere and in crusading to hold leaders accountable. Thompson (1997), Ibelema (2003), and Olukoyun (2004) have shown this to be the case with regard to Nigeria; Campbell (1998) has discussed the case of Benin and Côte d'Ivoire; and Kasoma (2000) has discussed the case of Zambia. Regarding Nigeria, Olukoyun (2004, 71) writes that "although circulation of newspapers and magazines has dwindled considerably in the last decade, they continue to exercise considerable influence on policy making." Furthermore, "Nigeria's vigorous press community, which is the largest on the continent, has, in spite of vulnerabilities, in its capacity profile, constituted one of the most resilient and daring segments of Nigeria's civil society." With some modifications and exceptions, this has become the case in much of sub-Saharan Africa beginning in the 1990s.

Indeed, to various degrees and despite its considerable shortcomings, the African press has played a significant role in engendering democracy and serving as a watchdog on government. The questions are: can the press do more and if so how? A role that the press has not pursued with as much vigor is that of crusading against civic cynicism among the populace and educating the people about the requisites of democracy. The need for this mission and how it could be accomplished is the departing point of this book.

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Consolidating Democracy

Abraham Lincoln's poetic description of democracy remains its most lucid: "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Exactly what this means in reality has been at the center of politics long before Lincoln's battleground oration and it remains so long after it. Polities as disparate as Julius Caesar's republican Rome of 44 BC to Mao Tse-Tung's communist China in the mid-twentieth century to George W. Bush's U.S. government in the twenty-first century arguably are governments of the people, for the people, and by the people. In some ways or another, such governments are the choices of the people, are representative of the people, and they ostensibly govern to meet the needs of the people.

Julius Caesar did not inherit the leadership of Rome by royalty; he earned it by representing the people. He could only have become a successful general because of the backing of the people. When he crossed the Rubicon against the wishes of his political rivals, he did so because he commanded more loyalty from the people than did his rivals. After Caesar was assassinated, the lead assassin explained that the action was for the sake of the people. Caesar was assassinated, Brutus said, to ensure that Romans continued to live free in a republic, not under the tyranny of Caesar's ambition. Cassius, wary of Mark Antony's power of persuasion, warned Brutus against giving Antony a platform to address the crowd. But Brutus believed in the cogency of his own argument and in the right of the people to hear Antony's eulogy. The libertarian gesture proved to be a political disaster for Caesar's assassins. Antony effectively rebutted Brutus' claims by portraying Caesar instead as a man of the people whose military campaigns were for the benefit of all Romans and who even planned to give every Roman 75 drachmas. The masses rampaged against Caesar's assassins and effectively wrestled the leadership of Rome back to Caesars' loyalists. The people heard both sides and acted. It was in a sense a democratic choice.

In the same sense, Mao's government, like all communist regimes, could legitimately claim to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. Communist parties are open to all to join, each member has the opportunity to aspire to lead, and the decisions of the government are presumed to be on behalf of the people. The same as with governments in countries that are categorized as democracies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Belize, and Botswana. The question of what constitutes a "government of the people, by the people, and for the people" is therefore not as simple as it may seem.

The question has become more complicated since the 1990s, with the demise of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the resurgence of democratization in the developing world. In the years following World War II, countries were more easily categorized as democratic, authoritarian, and totalitarian. The democratic countries were characterized by multiparty politics and a capitalist economy; the authoritarian countries usually had a monolithic political structure and a capitalist economy, whereas the totalitarian countries (mostly communists) had both monolithic political systems and centrally planned economies. Thus, authoritarian countries share economic philosophy with the democratic countries but are similar to the totalitarian countries in political philosophy. With the global liberalization in political and economic policies, these distinctions have faded considerably. Still, the differences among the systems manifest in the current debate over what constitutes democratization and why it is valuable. The constituents of democracy are central especially to the debate on democratic consolidation, and its value is related to the challenges of economic underdevelopment and political instability.

Among the questions that arise regarding the constituents of democracy are: Do elections per se constitute democracy? What if the elections are flawed, or are conducted without agreement with major parties, as happened in Zambia and Kenya in the late 1990s (Harbeson 1999)? How about duly elected governments that run roughshod over the interest of their ethnic or religious minorities or otherwise trample on civil liberties? In effect, what are the markers of a consolidated democracy? How libertarian must a polity be to be judged a consolidated democracy? The challenge posed by these questions has yielded an inspired debate on what Carothers (2002) describes as the transition paradigm (see, also, Zakaria 1997, O'Donnell 2002, Nodia 2002). There appears to be a consensus that democratizing countries do not progress in a predictable trajectory. Some stagnate and some even regress. This makes for myriad qualifiers of democracy in any

given country, from liberal to illiberal and various categories in between.

Of even greater significance to developing countries are the questions: Is democracy a catalyst for economic advancement, or is economic development a prerequisite for democracy? If democracy accelerates economic advancement, how soon are the dividends to be expected? If economic development is a prerequisite for democracy, how much of it is necessary for transition to a viable democracy?

The significance of these questions may be gleaned from the outcomes of Brutus' and Antony's orations at Caesar's funeral. In justifying the assassination of Caesar, Brutus focused on the intrinsic value of protecting the polity from despotism. Antony defended Caesar against these charges, but went further to appeal to the people's material interests: Caesar planned to give 75 drachmas to every Roman, he told the masses. And that was enough to override Brutus' civic appeals. In perhaps less dramatic fashions, such arguments and choices have driven the polity of developing countries in the past half-century or so. Even now a major point of contention in democratizing polities is the dividends of democracy, or the lack thereof.

Whether democracy is consolidated in these countries depends then on how one conceptualizes consolidation and whether, indeed, the people see any tangible benefits. The rest of this chapter will examine the related theoretical and definitional arguments, the sometimes contradictory empirical evidence that drives them, and the implications for assessing press performance.

Constituents of Democracy

During the Cold War, countries were readily classified as democracies merely because they regularly held multiparty elections. Similarly, in regions of the world where military coups were frequent and imminent, the mere retention of a civilian government that conducts any form of elections was judged to be a triumph of democracy. By this standard, Kenya, for instance, has been a democracy since independence. Countries ranging from Ghana and Nigeria to Brazil and Argentina could not boast of such legacy, as their polities alternated between electoral and military (or other forms of despotic) rule. In most cases, the military or civilian dictatorship was the enduring form of government. Therefore, for long, a major concern about democracy was primarily about maintaining any kind of electoral rule. But there is an increasing appreciation that though elections are essential elements of democracy, they are a beginning rather than an end point.

The democratization of the late 1980s and early 1990s, what Huntington calls the "third wave" in the global context, spurred the transition literature, which describes a three-phase democratization process: "regime breakdown, democratic transition, and democratic consolidation" (Gill 2000, 8). Schedler (2001, 149) explains that: "Originally, the term 'democratic consolidation' was meant to describe the challenge of making new democracies secure, of extending their life expectancy beyond the short term, of making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression, of building dams against eventual 'reverse waves.' To this original mission of rendering democracy 'the only game in town,' countless other tasks have been added."

What have been added are dimensions or characteristics that would ensure what Diamond (1999) calls "democratic deepening." These are characteristics of democracy that are deemed to enhance its quality and significance to the people and in the process ensuring its consolidation. By the standards of democratic deepening, a democratic polity is one that enthrones citizen participation in all decision making and guarantees maximum liberties for individuals and groups. Among the prerequisites are the development of structural balances in the governance process, the institutionalization of due process and the rule of law, accountability and transparency in the conduct of public affairs, and the culture of respect for rights (Held 1987; Diamond 1999; Sartori 2001).

The establishment of formal structures of political decision making and oversight is of course crucial to democratic governance. The clear delineation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers usually through a constitution is the most basic necessity of democratic governance. But such a structure can easily be a façade for despotic cliental rule when there is a lack of independence or when participants in the process engage in self-serving perversion of their formal functions. Held (1987) refers to this reality in making a distinction between "legal democracy" and "participatory democracy." Legal democracy is democratic only in its structures, whereas participatory democracy entails citizen involvement, sustained interest, and a sense of agency in solving collective problems.

Diamond (1999, 74) writes that "there are three generic tasks that all new and fragile democracies must handle if they are to become consolidated: democratic deepening, political institutionalization, and regime performance." Deepening refers to cultivation of values such as respect for rights, due process, and constitutionalism. Institutionalization refers to clear definition of functions, and rules

of political competition, independence of the different branches of government, and transparency in the conduct of public affairs. Linz and Stepan (2001, 94) offer these specifics about the content of a consolidated democracy: "[N]o regime should be called democracy unless its rulers govern democratically. If freely elected executives (no matter what the magnitude of their majority) infringe the constitution, violate the rights of individuals and minorities, impinge upon the legitimate functions of the legislature, and thus fail to rule within the bounds of a state of law, their regimes are not democracies."

Actually, a duly elected government may abide by a properly instituted constitution and still fall short of the ideals of democracy. To the extent that democracy is governance according to the will of the majority, a significant number of people will always be disenfranchised. "Under the unmitigated principle of majority rule, the majority can rule or even tyrannize any way it pleases—and those in the minority can be damned" (Safford 2002, 60).

Along with the governance process then, a major dimension of what is now called liberal democracy is the emphasis on individual and group rights. These rights are extrapolated from the libertarian ideals of philosophers such as John Milton, John Stuart Mill, and John Locke. Mill in particular argues that it is not enough to have a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, which may yield a "tyranny of the majority." Rather, the government must allow individuals the utmost liberty in their personal lives and choices. Sartori (2001) sees this element of democracy as the more universally desirable and practicable, rather than the practice of elections per se. Sartori makes a distinction between liberalism and democracy. The first entails "freeing the people" and the second consists in "empowering the people" (Sartori 2001, 53). Sartori suggests that in a polity that is imbued with liberal principles, the process of choosing leaders is not as important. Sklar (1999, 165) seems to concur when he writes: "Since I do not value popular power as an end in itself, I attach no more than instrumental value to the elementary idea of democracy."

Probably because of the synchronization of political norms, there is some evidence that the conception of democracy as norms rather than procedure per se is becoming universal. In their comparative studies of communities in Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida, for instance, Marcus, Mease, and Ottemoeller (2001, 128) write: "We find that people are defining democracy in similar ways across countries, cultures, economic levels, sex, and age. We also find that these definitions are grounded in personal freedoms, which implies that liberal democratic notions prevail in the countries under study."

Whether, indeed, such rights are possible under certain economic policies and conditions is a concern for some analysts. R.H. Tawney, an English economist and critic of Adam Smith, has argued that the gross economic inequality that results from unbridled capitalism severely constrains the liberty of the underclass (Tawney 1965). Socialist scholars such as Robert Picard and Noam Chomsky have advanced this argument by making the case that there cannot be true democracy if its principles are not applied in the economic realm (Picard 1985; Herman and Chomsky 1988). "If there are limits to the areas in which democratic participation is permitted and the ways it may operate, and these limits are put in place and maintained by factors other than the general will of the greater mass of people, then the ideal of democracy has not been achieved. However, a form of democratic rule may exist" (Picard 1985, 10).

Picard is referring to control of the means of production by a wealthy few and the operation of industries primarily to their benefits. The argument is that the sheer concentration of wealth in the hands of a few ensures that political control is vested in these few. Not only are the impoverished limited in their ability to influence politics, their preoccupation with bread-and-butter issues keeps them from truly engaging in the political process, for instance, by being informed and making rational judgments (Herman and Chomsky 1988). The resulting government, it is argued, is more like oligarchy than democracy. Though such arguments are losing grounds in the climate of unprecedented globalization and the inroad of capitalist policies even in communist countries such as China and Cuba, they remain relevant for purposes of assessing the dividends of democratization (Gyimah-Boadi 2004).

In any case, as Sklar (1999, 166) asserts in urging the integration of traditional institutions in Africa's governance, "all political systems are evidently mixtures of democracy and oligarchy." And, in fact, "democracies have never been viable without substantial admixture of oligarchy, which functions to mitigate the less desirable effects of popular power" (Sklar 1999, 175). Accordingly, Sklar would deem as democratic those polities that incorporate some undemocratic schemes in order to protect the system or experiment itself. As an analogy, he notes that "Barricades always impair the beauty of a landscape for the sake of its protection" (175).

Dividends of Democracy

Democracy is valued intrinsically and instrumentally. Its intrinsic value lies in its capacity to bring about individual psychic fulfillment.

It enhances the sense of individual autonomy and agency. This intangible value, which is probably not amenable to objective measurement, is stressed in John Stuart Mill's libertarian philosophy. Mill (2003) argues that a good society is one in which the greatest number of people are happy and that the only way to ensure happiness is to grant individuals the utmost freedom. Sen (2001, 10) describes "three different ways in which democracy enriches the lives of the citizens": intrinsic value that political freedom provides in enhancing social lives; instrumental value, the opportunity to express one's needs, including the economic; and constructive value, the opportunity it provides for people to learn from one another. The Dalai Lama takes this postulate further in stating that, "While it is true that no system of government is perfect, democracy is the closest to our essential human nature and allows us the greatest opportunity to cultivate a sense of universal responsibility" (Dalai Lama 2001, 19).

Besides enriching the lives of individuals, democracy is also valued at the societal level as an instrumental or utilitarian means to an end. Three dividends are prominent in the societal utilitarian discourse: democracy engenders representative governance, it is a catalyst of economic advancement, and it provides the marketplace of ideas essential for informed, collective decision making. This third societal dividend is essentially epistemological in the Miltonian sense that truth emerges from open discussion. This utility is different from, though quite related to, the utility to individual fulfillment, which will be further discussed later. What is stressed below is the societal dimension.

Democracy as Representative Governance

Democracy as representative government—usually put in place by pluralist plebiscite—has had universal appeal long before the recent wave of democratization. Its prevalence among countries has been checkered, however, because of enduring forms of traditional governance, challenges to its utility in various contexts, and flawed execution. Therefore, Thomas Hobbes' philosophy that certain societies need authoritarian governments to rein in disintegrative forces, maintain order, ensure stable governance, and promote economic growth (Hobbes 1965) has prevailed in the governance of many developing countries. The contrary argument of philosophers such as John Locke and Alexander Meiklejohn that democracy facilitates order and stability in the long run (Locke 1988; Meiklejohn 1960) is only now being more determinedly embraced, but with the burden of history weighing quite heavily.

In much of Africa, Asia, and Latin America attempts at democracy yielded to internal strife, military coups, and civilian despotism (Huntington 1991; Adebanwi 2004; Agbaje 2004). Until relatively recently, the experience of Europe was the same, a fact that made U.S. democracy a matter of fascination for Europeans. As Safford (2002, vii) writes, "[Alexis de] Tocqueville studied American democracy because, in his day, it had done what few democracies had—it had lasted already for two generations, and it appeared to be stable into the future." But even the American democracy plunged into a bloody civil war about 26 years after Tocqueville (2004) published his complimentary observations—the war over which Lincoln expressed the hope that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." The war ended as Lincoln hoped, and the government of Lincoln's description endured in the United States and would soon begin to endure in Europe. For many countries, though, it remains a challenge.

Three factors are generally blamed for the failure of democracy to take root in such polities: governance problems, lagging economic advancement, and the lack of democratic values in the society at large. In the introduction to his edited volume that assesses the progress of democratic reforms in Africa since the 1990s, Gyimah-Boadi (2004, 3) sums up the first two factors: "The chapters in this volume highlight the persistence of weak governance in spite of reforms. They also underscore the real threat that the failure of economic reform and continued weaknesses in governance poses to the medium- and long-term prospects for democracy and development on the continent." For illustration, Gyimah-Boadi cites the chapter on Nigeria that "vividly captures the erosion of state capacity, confidence in state abilities, and perception of the value and viability of liberal democracy arising from persistent problems of economic mismanagement, bureaucratic ineptitude, institutional opacity, corruption, and social strife" (3).

The problems of corruption and fraud are especially disabling because even with a high level of competence and the appropriate policies, they impede development by siphoning off resources for wasteful use by individuals and by creating in the populace a corresponding cynical mindset that further undercuts governance and development. This consequence will be more closely examined forthwith. First, it should be noted that even the legitimacy of democratic governments is itself undercut by fraud, as elections are often rigged to ensure particular outcomes. When the rigging is blatant enough, it may trigger civil strife or at least reduce the government's legitimacy to a level not much higher than that of a government that came to

power by force. Accordingly, not much political tears are shed in such polities even when a duly elected government is overthrown by the military.

Regarding the factor of lagging economic development, there is a growing tendency to attribute it to governance problems, as indicated above, making for a blurred distinction. However, there are several other explanations, among them the structural, the cultural, as well as the climatic. Structural theorists point to the lingering effects of colonial exploitation and the inequitable trade relations between developing and developed nations, with the latter using their leverage to the perpetual disadvantage of the former. Cultural theorists point to the effects of values and beliefs on people's productivity (Weber 1958; Landes 1998; Harrison 2000; Harrison and Huntington 2000). Still others note the effects of the climate and soil fertility on development. Whatever the cause of underdevelopment and poverty, it is positively correlated with instability in democracy. This raises the question: If underdevelopment is an impediment to democracy and democracy is the panacea for underdevelopment, can democracy ever be consolidated in impoverished countries? The answer depends, of course, on the exact nature of the intersection of democracy and economic development, and whether, indeed, one (and if so which?) is a prerequisite for the other.

Democracy and Economic Development

The idea that democracy facilitates economic development is implicit in Adam Smith's capitalist economic theory. Smith's emphasis on the laissez faire movement of goods and services relates to commerce rather than politics, but its spirit is consonant with the values of democracy. The link between democracy and economic development seemed to have become especially apparent during the Cold War, when the capitalist world outdistanced its communist rivals in prosperity. Germany and Korea provided, perhaps, the most noticeable evidence. With each country split into two ideologically separate polities, the only difference between them was the ideology. In both cases, the capitalist and more democratic half far surpassed the other in economic development. Not surprisingly, with the collapse of the Communist bloc, there arose a dual push toward political and economic reform. The two are proffered so much in tandem that it is hard to separate their effects.

The same argument could be made regarding the different levels of economic development between North Korea and South Korea and

East Germany and West Germany before the latter pair's reunification. In the case of the Koreas, it was quite evident that economic ideology rather than democracy was the determining factor, as South Korea was only barely more democratic than North Korea. The same cannot be said of the Germanys. As a liberal democracy, West Germany was politically much different from the communist East Germany, but again their economic policies may have been the only factor in the considerable difference in their economic performance. Nonetheless, a major selling point for democratization and its consolidation in developing countries is the promise that it will galvanize economic development.

There are those who argue quite the contrary that economic development is not a dividend of democracy, it is its impetus. This argument got a major boost in the years after World War II as the wave of democratization at the time was experiencing some turbulence in parts of Europe and elsewhere. Seymour Martin Lipset's seminal work was among the foremost in demonstrating that economic development and related social factors were necessary for stable democracy (Lipset 1959). In their more recent historical exploration of the connection, Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens (1992) also demonstrate that democracy evolved in the West as the increasing prosperity spurred by the industrial revolution gave rise to the middle class. Referring to such evidence, Veen (2004, 103) writes that, "Africa's low level of socioeconomic development is a fourth obstacle to the development of modern democracy." On the same lines, scholars such as Kaplan (1997) and Sartori (2001) go further to argue that elections are counterproductive in societies that are economically and socially not ready for them.

A number of African scholars concur that democracy does not spur economic advancement. M.A. Mohamed Salih joins Lipsett and others in arguing that Western democracies industrialized before democratizing and "did not attain economic prosperity through democratic means" (Salih 2001, 41). Mohamed Decalo, a widely published scholar on politics and development in Africa, is also skeptical of the democracy-to-development argument. Noting the optimism of scholars such as Guillermo O'Donnell regarding Africa's democratization, Decalo (1998, 299) writes: "But the concrete experience of other regions in 'transition' from authoritarian rule suggests that countries not backsliding have not experienced a significant degree of economic advances; the inevitable disjunction between aspiration and concrete attainments, and concomitant disillusionments, are likely to be high in Africa."

A neutral perspective on the debate on democracy and economic advancement is that of the economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. Regarding the Hobbesian perspective, Sen (2001, 7)

writes that: "There is, in fact, no convincing evidence that authoritarian government and the suppression of political and civil rights are really beneficial to economic development." Indeed, the general statistical picture does not permit any such induction . . . . The directional linkage seems to depend on many other circumstances, and while some statistical investigations note a weakly negative relation, others find a strongly positive one." But he also finds no basis for concluding that democracy is a catalyst for economic development. "If all the comparative studies are viewed together, the hypothesis that there is no clear relation between economic growth and democracy in *either* direction remains extremely plausible" (Sen 2001, 7). Huntington (1991, 316) suggests the dynamics of democracy and economic development with the assertion that, "Economic development makes democracy possible; political leadership makes it real."

Democracy as Epistemology

An important value of democracy is that it allows for a marketplace of ideas. This libertarian notion, which is a compliment to Adam Smith's free flow of goods and services, derives from the tenet that truth emerges from open discussion, that knowledge is tentative and must be subjected to constant scrutiny. John Stuart Mill has argued in this regard that critics are important to the development of ideas and generation of knowledge in that without them the originator of an idea can never be sure that the idea is sound (Mill 2003). It is only when that idea has withstood the harshest scrutiny that even its originator can have any confidence in its validity. This contrast to the dictates of dogmas is the basis of science and the general advancement in knowledge since the Enlightenment.

In the political realm, this philosophy underlies the values of freedom of speech and of the press. It is also the basis of what Juergen Habermas calls the public sphere, or the formation of opinions among enlightened citizens who in their routine gatherings discuss issues of public importance and convey the emerging consensus to the state (Habermas 1989). The marketplace of ideas is also an effective and routine means for the government to keep its finger on the pulse of the public. The alternative is to wait for formal grievances, by which time the concerns may have become too aggravated for easy redress. That has been the bane of dictators from Emperor Nero of ancient Rome to Mobutu Sese Seko of modern day Congo.

Indeed, democracy as a facilitator of knowledge may be said to be a catalyst for all the other dividends. It is related to the intrinsic

satisfaction of democracy to individual citizens, it enhances the governance process, and it facilitates economic activities. The extent to which this value of democracy underlies all others is encapsulated by the assertion that "in the terrible history of famines in the world, no substantial famine has ever occurred in any independent and democratic country with a relatively free press" (Sen 2001, 7). The point is that an unfettered marketplace of ideas facilitates the early detection of threats to the society and the ascertainment of effective ways of preventing them. Yet, the matter of free flow of information is one of the most contentious in democratizing polities, as should be evident throughout this work. The contentions are, perhaps, at the heart of difficulties in consolidating democracy in many countries.

The contentions revolve essentially around the need to develop some consensus about means and ends. The marketplace of ideas is elegant in its pluralism, but it is not an efficient mechanism for decision making, nor is it always practical. In democracies, elected officials make decisions on behalf of the people, but the decisions do not always (nor should they necessarily) reflect the preferences of a majority of the people. Doing this would give rise to the tyranny of the majority, among other ramifications. So how should a democratic society make its choices and what is the role of press in this respect?

A matter of equal importance is whether decisions in a democracy should be made wholly rationalistically or whether it has to encompass nonrationalistic and emotional preferences. The rationalistic arguments tend to reflect what is good for the society in general and in the long run, but the people's preferences may merely reflect their emotions.

The public sphere, or specifically the people who constitute it, has been identified as the means for generating the semblance of a democratic consensus. In the conception of Habermas, such consensus used to be forged through discussion by the thinking elite who, through the press, conveyed the people's will to the state. "The public sphere as a functional element in the political realm was given the normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs" (Habermas 1989, 74). However, the function of the public sphere became compromised when technological, economic and organizational forces transformed the press into a primarily commercial enterprise, Habermas argues.

> Whereas formerly the press was able to limit itself to the transmission and amplification of the rational-critical debate of private people assembled into a public, now conversely this debate gets shaped by the mass media to begin with. In the course of the shift from a journalism

of private men of letters to the public services of the mass media, the sphere of the public was altered by the influx of private interests that received privileged exposure in it—although they were by no means eo ipso representative of the interests of private as the people" (Habermas 1989, 188–189).

But then the public sphere, as Habermas indicates, was never representative of the masses in the first place. But before its transformation, it was at least presumed to articulate a rational view of society's needs rather than parochial interests. Since the transformation, public discourse has become more of a manipulation of thoughts, and "an acclamation-prone mood comes to predominate, an opinion climate instead of public opinion" (Habermas 1989, 217). Habermas is especially concerned about the decline of face-to-face discourse and the actual exchange that results from it. "For Habermas, all mediatized communication is necessarily manipulative, whereas discussion is necessarily democratic" (Agacinski 2001, 141).

But there are questions as to whether the mass media have actually supplanted the public sphere and, for that matter, whether an exclusively rationalist discourse is necessarily democratic. Agacinski contends that democratic debate can still take place within mediated spaces, even if the public sphere has indeed been supplanted by the mass media. Moreover, it is argued, nonrational and emotional views and preferences are part of the democratic experience and have to be reckoned with and accounted for. Hénaff and Strong (2001, 25) write: "It is clear to us…that the imaginary (inseparable from a stage and from imagery) cannot, as such, be *grounded* on democratic reason. Yet the latter in fact never ceases, in an unavoidable concession, to call upon its resources."

The notion of the public sphere provides some insight into Africa's struggles with democracy, though the circumstances of Habermas's sociological inquiry were quite different from Africa's realities through the period he covered. Habermas discusses the development of the public sphere in Europe from the mid-seventeenth century and its transformation beginning in the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. In geographical and political terms, the African polities of the time bear little resemblance to those of today, nor were their political circumstances similar to that of Europe. At the beginning of that period, Africa consisted of small traditionally governed polities, along with expansive empires such as Ghana, Mali, Oyo, and Songhai. This order changed soon enough with European colonizing inquest into Africa in the nineteenth century. The present

political geography of Africa emerged during the colonial period as colonizing powers divvied Africa, lumping diverse ethnic groups together while splitting others.

The politics of African states during this period was necessarily characterized by the contention between the colonizers and the colonized. What public sphere developed during this period could not therefore have shared much with that of Europe, even granted that within Europe there were countries that did not fit Habermas's model. As Villa (2001, 151) writes, in interpreting Hannah Arendt, "the politics of liberation struggles and representative democracy" can hardly yield a public sphere. Liberation struggles are "but the prelude to the founding of a new public sphere," while the struggle for representative democracy "encourages an interest-group politics that undermines a sense of the common or public."

Indeed, when African countries gained independence mostly in the early 1960s, the interest-group discourse was not only intense, it intensified in the crucible of ethnic, regional, and religious politics with all their emotional trappings. The public sphere in the sense of rationalist political discourse could not therefore have flourished in this context. That is not to say it has not existed.

To begin with, as Habermas discussed, the public sphere in its formative years in seventeenth-century Europe was quite close to what obtained in African traditional polities. It was quite typical for the thinking people of traditional African polities to gather in public places and at individuals' homes to discuss the affairs of the society and generate "publicity" that ultimately affected policies. However, in societies where the state was not always distinct from the people—as was typical of small African polities of the time—it is questionable whether such occurrences truly constituted the public sphere. One can be more definitive on the existence of the public sphere in the larger precolonial African polities, such as Ethiopia, Songhai, and the Oyo potentates.

The emergence of modern African states and the growth of the African intelligentsia created situations that more closely approximate the circumstances of the European public sphere. In this regard, Ekeh (1975) has argued that there are actually two publics in contemporary African polities: One resides in traditional contexts of life and governance and the other in modern civic life. The first public is generally virtuous and the latter decadent, Ekeh argues. This distinction is alluded to in this book, in the discussion of traditional African values in Chapter 4. However, as is also suggested in that chapter, the distinction is becoming blurred as the activities of the elite often reflect the emerging civic values of the masses, urban and rural.

That political circumstances compromised the development of the African public sphere is not to say that it has not existed or made a difference. Associations and civil society have proliferated and evolved to occupy the public space (Gymah-Boadi 2004; Obadare 2004), though "interest-group politics" and intergroup distrust have compromised the function of this public space (Ihonvbere 1997; Ikelegbe 2001; Kew 2004; Obadare 2004).

There are two particularly relevant aspects of the compromised function. First, there is the ethnicization of civil society and hence the public sphere, and then there is the exploitation of ethnicization by the state. Although scholars such Peter Ekeh point to the positive values of this element of some polities (see, for instance, Ekeh 2003), it is the contention here that the ethnicization of civil society in Africa has undermined the detached analysis required for the proper functioning of the public sphere.

This problem, which is natural in polyethnic polities, is further complicated by its exploitation by the state. For instance, military regimes in Nigeria infiltrated associations and civil society and exploited ethnic loyalties to cause the groups' disintegration or malfunctioning (Kew 2004; Obadare 2004). A number of such groups therefore found it necessary to become less inclusive and more authoritarian in their organizational structure, even as they sought to push the polity toward democracy or its consolidation. These organizations, therefore, "faced deep problems of accountability and legitimacy in the eyes of the wider polity" (Kew 2004, 120). This ironic development could only compromise their effectiveness. With Nigeria's return to electoral governance, however, many of the organizations are opening up their membership and governance (Kew 2004). These problems notwithstanding, civil society and the press have played considerable roles and have the potential to do more to consolidate democracy.

Press Freedom and Access to Information: Central to the epistemological value of democracy and essential to the functioning of the public sphere is the latter's freedom to be. As Habermas notes, the development of the public sphere in Europe would not have been possible were it not preceded by the lifting or easing of censorship. Until recently, the press in most African countries was severely repressed and access to information was restricted. As discussed in Chapter 2, much has changed in Africa, especially with regard to press freedom. There are exceptions to this trend, such as Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. And

even in countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, and Kenya where press freedom is flourishing more than ever before, there are still disturbing incidents. In Nigeria, there have been incidents of journalists being manhandled while seeking access to public events. In Kenya, the first lady took the police into a newsroom in 2005 and demanded the arrest of an editor for an offending article. It was a mark of the advancement of democratic ethos that the police did not oblige and the first lady was lambasted instead. Indeed, the level of press freedom in many countries in Africa should, in general, be conducive to the proper functioning of the public sphere, if other factors were as well.

The constraint on access has not improved as significantly as press freedom, per se. In Nigeria, there is an ongoing effort to have the government pass a freedom-of-information act. After a drawn-out process, the legislature eventually passed a freedom of information bill in 2006. However, President Obasanjo refused to sign the bill into law. But it is a matter of time before such laws are passed in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa.

Values and Democracy

This chapter has so far discussed the characteristics and dividends of democracy, with reflections on how these apply to Africa. The emphasis has been on the role of the state and leadership. But also prominent in the discourse on democratization is the role of societal values. There are questions as to whether a society has to have certain values to become democratic, and if so whether the values can be inculcated. French scholar Jean-Francois Medart encapsulates the issue with the assertion that there can be "no democracy without democrats" (Cited by Monga 1996, 27).

Among the societal values said to be necessary for democracy are a rationalist world view, civic trust, tolerance, moderation, a sense of fairness and justice, and a secular orientation (Diamond 1999; Fukuyama 1995, 1999). Significantly, these are the same values that are said to accelerate economic development (Harrison 2000; Gill 2000, 3–5).

The same flaws noted in the claim that democratization leads to economic development are also found in the argument that democracy is possible only where people have the pertinent values. Celestin Monga decribes the theory as "elegant but inaccurate and utopian," arguing that: "Were it true, Italian democracy would not work, and neither would French and U.S. democracies. For democrats exist nowhere—there are only human beings who agree, willingly or by

force, to bow to institutions that function in accordance with a set of rules deemed to have been established democratically by the majority of citizens" (Monga 1996, 27). Monga disagrees especially with arguments that African countries were granted independence too rapidly to allow for development of democratic culture and leaders: "Neither the fathers of the American Revolution nor the French revolutionaries needed prior training in order to construct political systems protecting citizens from arbitrary government!" (25).

It is certainly patronizing to suggest that colonialism should have been extended to give Africans time to learn democracy. This argument is not any more tenable than that African countries need further military rule. Still, Monga's outright rejection of the values argument does not seem to reckon with the role the inculcation of values played in the evolution of democracy in the West.

Evolution of Civic Values in the United States

The history of American democracy illustrates this point. In his analysis of the evolution of American civic culture for instance, Schudson (1998) identified four stages: the differential citizen, the partisan citizen, the informed citizen, and the rights-bearing citizens, with the latter two overlapping considerably and lasting up to the present. Each stage of citizenship is/was characterized by a corresponding orientation or attitude toward the state. In the first stage, citizens just trusted leaders and presumed they would do the right things; in the second, they developed loyalty toward political parties and participated in elections as a ritual of democracy; in the third stage citizens evolved (or were supposed to have evolved) into rational members of the electorate who made democratic choices based more on the public good than on party loyalty; this led ultimately to the civic culture of rights for the individual and others, the fourth stage.

Each stage emerged because of the democratic deficiencies of the previous. Of particular interest is the emergence of the information-based civic culture and the rights-oriented citizen. First, reforms intended to clean up the political process caused a decline in the primacy of political parties. Individual citizens therefore had to begin making informed decisions, rather than rely on party lines. But then, "Even the people who had believed most forcefully in the new model citizen came to doubt whether that citizen existed or ever could exist" (Schudson 1998, 190). Even Walter Lippmann who had been an enthusiast of such citizen soon came to conclude that

"democracy could not depend on the omnicompetent citizen" (Schudson 1998, 191).

This realization or conviction gave rise to a crisis of democracy so strong that it became a major issue of discourse "not only in the halls of academia and on the editorial pages of major newspapers, but also in the nooks and crannies of everyday culture" (Bybee 1999, 31). Such was the distrust of public sentiments as an instrument of governance that the U.S. military was openly skeptical about the viability of democracy deep into the twentieth century. "For instance, an official, widely used 1928 United States Army Training Manual stated that democracy led to 'mobocracy,' the rule of the mobs, and that the democratic attitude toward property was 'communistic.' Democracy, the manual concluded, led to 'demogogism, license, agitation, discontent, anarchy'" (Bybee 1999, 31–32). This would be a remarkably accurate description of the experience with democracy in many currently democratizing countries, Nigeria being a poster case (see, for instance, Agbaje 2004).

What is particularly instructive is the policy response to the crisis of democracy in the United States of the early twentieth century. The response was the promotion of the Constitution as a rallying icon of democracy. "From the time of the founding fathers, there had been a sacred aura about the Constitution, manifest in holiday political rhetoric, but in the 1920s a burst of activity cemented that rhetoric in institutional and educational reform" (Schudson 1998, 202).

This is exactly the point about the place of values. Faith in the U.S. Constitution did not develop spontaneously among the masses. It was inculcated through fervent promotion by various institutions of society—including the press and political parties—to the point that "it acquired the trappings of a religious cult" (Schudson 2002, 202). This reverence for the Constitution elevated the Supreme Court in stature, enhancing its ability to check both the power of government and popular sentiments. The result is a much more orderly society in which citizen rights evolved statutorily and by judicial pronouncements, complemented by people's growing awareness of and insistence on their legal rights and respect for others.

Incidentally, it was also during this period that the journalist and social critic Walter Lippmann engaged in the famed debate with the noted philosopher John Dewey over the proper role of journalism in the democratization process. Lippmann's concern about the capacity of the average citizen to engage rationally in the democratic process led him to propose a scientific approach to journalism and democracy. "This new, more 'realistic' democracy would be tempered and guided

by a form of knowledge which, Lippmann believed, rose above sub-jectivity and politics" (Bybee 1999, 32). In rebuttal, Dewey argued that such an approach would only empower the intellectual elite and that science, in any case, is itself an ideology. Democracy, Dewey argued, required the harnessing of collective public expression of interests through a communication process "by which citizens in a society came to understand the nature of their interdependence through a system of shared meaning" (Bybee 1999, 32).

The tension between these philosophies of democracy—and the deficiencies that gave rise to the philosophies—are yet to be resolved. But they point to the need in a democracy to manage or harness citizen sentiments. Monga's argument about the importance of the inculcation of civic values in African polities seems to downplay this reality.

Values for African Democracy

A question that arises, however, is, What values are necessary for Africa's democratization? Salih (2001, 3) notes, for instance, that "To manage democracy requires the internalisation of the values and norms associated with those democratic governance institutions that integrate people's actual lives, their economic expectations, political aspirations and their struggle to improve their well-being," but he also adds that the "far-reaching implication of this statement is that African democracies cannot and should not be treated as potential replicas of Western democracies." This is quite consistent with Dewey's argument against the intellectual-aristocratic approach to democracy.

In the African context, a major concern is the protection of ethnic identities and interests and the preservation of communalist values. Dahl uses the phrase polyarchy to refer to democracies that rest on multiple pillars of power as contrasts with monarchies. Similarly, Linz and Stepan (2001) use the term state-nations (rather than nation state) to describe countries such as Nigeria and India which are strongly multiethnic). Nation state suggests more homogeneity than is true of such countries; whereas state-nations acknowledges the reality of multiple nationalities. Linz and Stepan argue that rather than aspire to nation-state status, such countries should realistically pursue policies of inclusiveness that maintain the state-nations status. It is similar concerns that led Wiredu (1998) to prescribe a consensual form of democracy for African countries.

Whatever form of democracy Africa pursues, certain values are indispensable, and to the extent that these values are lagging, they

have to be reinforced or inculcated. Central to any democratic governance is the belief in a noncoercive means of resolving differences and developing policies. Sartori (2001, 56) uses the phrase "taming of politics" to refer to advancement in political culture whereby "politics no longer kills, is no longer a warlike affair, and . . . peacelike politics affirms itself as the standard modus operandi of a polity." The challenge in many democratizing countries is how to inculcate the values necessary to tame politics.

This is especially important because it underpins the other challenges for democratization. Structural changes and leadership reforms become easier when politics is tamed. Even economic development becomes a less important factor of democratic consolidation. "The greater the cultural predisposition of the society to value democracy intrinsically, the less successful policies will need to be in generating economic growth and relieving major social problems" (Diamond 1999, 76). That has long happened in countries such as Botswana (Molutsi 2004) and Costa Rica (Pettiford 1999), which are located in two regions of the world that have been characterized by despotic rule. Their paths to democratic consolidation are illustrative.

Botswana started out with the same kinds of problems that racked other African countries: poverty, ethnic tension, and even external hostility from apartheid South Africa. Botswana, however, started out with a democratic tradition, the "Kgotla democracy," which remains the foundation of the modern governance structure (Kerr 2001). Kerr shows that Kgotla, an assembly of the people in traditional governance in Botswana, may have enhanced Botswana's democracy because of its encouragement of popular participation, open discussion, and tolerance. That 80–90 percent of Botswanans speak the same language also helped (Molutsi 2004).

Molutsi cites two major developments that solidified Botswana's democracy. The first was political accommodation by the constituent ethnic/racial groups. The second was the exploration of diamond that gave an immediate boost to the impoverished economy. Molutsi especially credits visionary leadership for Botwswana's success, but he also acknowledges that such leadership has existed elsewhere in Africa—along with the exploration of minerals—and yet those countries have failed to attain Botswana's success. Molutsi's (2004, 177) explanation is that, "while visionary leadership may have been present, functioning democratic structures and respect for rules were missing." In Botswana, all of these factors coalesced to ensure the establishment and consolidation of democracy.

Costa Rica's case in Central America is even more instructive. Costa Rican democracy is said to date from about 1889 and the president has been directly elected since 1914. A number of factors are cited for the consolidation of its democracy (Pettiford 1999). First—and ironically—a lack of natural resources caused the Spanish colonizers to virtually ignore Costa Rica. It was settled in primarily by Spanish farmers, who lived relatively peacefully with the sparse Native American population. This led to relative egalitarianism early in Costa Rica's colonial history.

In 1948, an armed uprising in reaction to perceived irregularity in an election, briefly interrupted the democratic process. The leader of the revolution, José Figueres, soon handed over to the winner of the election. This gesture by the highly popular military leader both reflects the already strong democratic ethos of Costa Ricans and also reinforced it. The military was abolished soon after.

Before handing over to the elected government, Figueres was pressured by the Communist Party to institute labor and social policies that enhanced the well being of Costa Rican masses. Figueres subsequently banned the Communist Party. But these policies were further pursued after the military itself was abolished and funds accordingly redirected. Still, the banning of the Communist Party earned Costa Rica a favorite status in Washington, which rewarded it with financial aid.

And so despite the kind of continued inequalities that caused instability or authoritarian governance elsewhere in Central America, Costa Rica remained an enduring democracy. Now, Costa Ricans have a "quasi-religious belief" in democracy "that transcends any short-term limits on its content, and involves a clear recognition of what has been avoided as a result" (Pettiford 1999, 100).

In both case histories, just as in the U.S. example earlier, the deepening of democracy depended considerably on civic values, along with other political and economic factors. The deepening of democracy depended on the growing appreciation of its normative elements, especially the internalization of the principles of accommodation.

The Ghotla tradition of Botswana aside, democratic governance is a common feature of African traditional polities. Awa (2003) has offered similar insight with regard to the Igbo in Nigeria, the Tiriki of Kenya, and the Baolé of Côte d'Ivoire, among others.

Of further significance is that surveys show that contemporary Africans express strong preference for democracy, with 75 percent preferring it in all circumstances (Bratton and Mattes 2001, 2004). The preference is significantly higher in some countries such as Botswana (82 percent) and Nigeria (81 percent). At least one study

also suggests that Africans conceive of democracy in liberal terms, associating it especially with freedom (Marcus, Mease, and Ottemoeller, 2001). But, of course, it is one thing to express a general philosophic preference, and another thing to manifest that opinion in behavior and choices when faced with specific situations.

Faced with political and/or economic difficulties, for instance, Africans have routinely welcomed military coups that overthrow elected governments. Yet, there has been a pervasive awareness that the military should not be permanent in government. As far back as 1972, for instance, the Nigerian military government undertook a concerted effort—especially through public lectures—to persuade the public that military rule was progressive and should be considered as a long-term form of governance. "The deeply skeptical public response convinced the officers that there was no market for their product" (Young 1999, 19). Still, most subsequent military coups—including those that overthrew elected governments—were greeted with public exuberance and press accolades.

Such ambivalence in political orientation is, of course, not unique to Africans. Americans, for instance, are strongly in favor of freedom and liberty, until confronted with opinions and behaviors they do not like (Hentoff 1992; Smith III et al 1997). In most African countries, the disparity between expressed preference and civic behavior is much wider, and for this, one can point to material circumstances, the minimal experience with democracy, and a learned culture of civic cynicism.

The Press and the Political Process

The perspectives in this chapter do not provide a crisp rendition of democracy; rather, they encapsulate its complexity. An understanding of this complexity, the choices and their implications, and the necessary orientation of the people have to be a part of the democratizing process. Three major criteria emerge here for assessing the press's role in the consolidation of Africa's democracies. First, is the press's role as a watchdog on the government. The second is the press's commitment to the cultivation of democratic ethos within the polity. The third is the press's effectiveness in collating the people's opinions and preferences and articulating the same to the state.

Underlying all of these criteria is the representation of democracy as a complex undertaking that yields intrinsic and instrumental dividends in due course, but only if certain civic orientations are present. Any tendency by the press to present democracy as a quick panacea for society's problems is bound to intensify the social forces that have

undermined its development. As will be developed in subsequent chapters, this might be the case, for instance, with the African press's obsession with "democratic dividends" in reporting and commenting on governments elected following prolonged military rule.

The failures of governments, whether in not meeting the needs of the people or because of the plunder of public coffers, have produced a considerable lack of faith. The extent of the distrust in some polities may be related, however, to the construction of expectations and "the moral frameworks" that underpin them (Wuthnow 1999, 227). Such frameworks include notions of what should be expected and what circumstances may constitute excusable bases for their nonrealization.

In an analysis of the role of the mass media in Africa's democratization, Ogundimu (2000, 235) writes:

> The idea that democracy comes in bits and pieces and through struggle rather than design is one that political scientists and others studying this process need to pay more attention to and develop theoretically. As we have suggested in several places above, democratization in Africa is not about consolidation but about contestation, notably for expansion of communicative spaces within which people can gain the social and political confidence needed to act more authoritatively in the political arena.

The need to expand communicative spaces is definitely there, even as the spaces are expanding, thanks to advancements in information technologies and literacy. However, the ultimate goal of contestation should be consolidation, if we understand consolidation to be the deepening and stabilization of democratic norms and processes. What is desperately needed in the communicative space is the means of understanding the natural rules of the contestation, especially the implications of individual agency. Contestations that are not guided by principles or appropriate visions of society can hardly bring about stable democracy, or democracy of any kind. This is the challenge of civic cynicism and why it has to be addressed, irrespective of the theoretical road to Africa's political and economic advancement.

LIBERALIZATION AND THE NOTION OF WESTERN VALUES

A major concern in the democratization of non-Western countries is the question of whether political liberalization is the same as Westernization. This concern arises, in part, because the literature on

political liberalization is characterized by the selective conception of Western values. A common practice in the literature is to refer to liberal values such as individual rights and freedom as Western. But liberalism is not any more Western than say Platonism, Machiavellianism, and Nazism. Yet no discussion of the practice of such philosophies anywhere would carry the appellation "Western values," even though these philosophies still constitute a significant element of the politics of Western countries.

The values that today are rightly described as supportive of liberal democracy were propagated in the West in the last two centuries or so. In fact, as events of World War II make clear, these values were hardly set in the West until the second half of the 20th century. Even now in the twentieth century, a significant portion of the regulatory function of the European Union is geared toward propagating such values. There continues to be tension between subscribers to what is called Western liberalism and those who advocate the politics of Hitler and Mussolini. In the United States, the political philosophy of the religious right is closer to that of Iran's Guardian Council than to Mill's libertarianism. These counterliberal dimensions of Western politics, which in many cases are not on the fringe, do not feature in the notion of the Western.

The tendency to idealize Western liberalism often presents a distorted blueprint for democratization. As Orvis (2001, 18–19) writes, for instance, with regard to the characterization of the West's civil society, it sets "impossibly high expectations for African civil society. . . . But the conventional view is not really a full rendering of the Western tradition; it is derived rather narrowly from Tocqueville's use of the term."

The Western/non-Western dichotomy had considerable utility as shorthand for distinguishing between the non-Communist and Communist worlds during the Cold War. Its utility has diminished considerably in the present global political context (see, for instance, Ibelema, Powell, and Self 2001). Analysts should, therefore, be careful about characterizing liberalization, per se, as Western. Accordingly, civic reorientation is discussed here as part of a democratizing process, rather than the cultivation of Western values.

The Nigerian Press and
the First Republic

In an analysis of the African press as a catalyst for democracy, there is perhaps no better case study than of Nigeria's First Republic. This was the period of approximately five years between Nigeria's independence from Britain on October 1, 1960 and a military coup, on January 15, 1966. It was a period of vibrant, if contentious, democracy and a correspondingly feisty press. What was considered the showcase of African democracy was ended by the military coup, which subsequently led to a 30-month civil war. This development set Nigeria on a political and civic path from which it is yet to fully recover. It also had lasting repercussions on democratization in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. The interface of press and politics during this period in Nigerian history demonstrates the potential as well as the liability of the African press as an instrument of democracy. It also suggests the impetus of civic cynicism and its intensification.

Nigeria's Manifest Destiny

In the years after independence, Nigeria was considered not just the showcase of African democracy, but also a country destined for success. The Nigerian elite brimmed with confidence and there was a sense of manifest destiny. The confidence even overflowed into arrogance on occasion. For instance, the Nigerian prime minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, once bristled over comparison of Ghana with Nigeria. It was like comparing an ant with an elephant, he said (*West African Pilot*, April 22, 65). Though the press criticized Balewa for the undiplomatic comment, there was no mistaking Nigerians' sense of their place in the world and their country's prospects for success. General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's second military head of state (1966–1975), said this of the enthusiasm surrounding Nigeria's

independence in 1960: "The zeal and enthusiasm was legendary. The excitement and hopes knew no bounds.... [Nigeria] was looked up to by other African countries and other black races or people of the world to lead the way" (*Guardian*, June 23, 2001).

It was not that Nigeria was ever without problems. Quite the contrary! Challenges to the country's cohesiveness were perennial. There was the titanic jostling for dominance among Nigeria's ethnic triumvirate: the Hausa/Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East. There was the incipient restiveness of the country's myriad ethnic minorities. There were crises over censuses and elections. And the country faced a major political fault in the division of the people into two religious camps: the Muslim in the North and West and the Christian in the East and West. Yet Nigeria seemed poised to thrive. Perhaps, not since the demise of the Songhai empire in the late sixteenth century had an African polity held out so much promise for so many.

The conviction that Nigeria was bound for success derived from a number of factors. First, there was Nigeria's population that dwarfed that of every other African country. This was a source or pride during the First Republic, when Nigeria was projected to become the first African country to reach 100 million people. For instance, in a New Year's message in 1966—amidst a bloody crisis—the acting Senate president, Nwafo Arizu, appealed to this pride in urging restraint to ensure the survival of the country (*West African Pilot*, January 1, 1966). Then there is the relative abundance of natural resources ranging from the agricultural to the mineral and crude oil. Finally, the industriousness and enterprise of the people made the strongest case for promising economic prospects.

From a political perspective, what stood out about the First Republic was its political brinkmanship. Even before independence, it was evident to the Nigerian elite that viability as a nation would have to depend on compromises. From the negotiations that led to the amalgamation of the so-called Northern and Southern Protectorates in 1914 to the establishment of Nigeria's first independent government in 1960, Nigerians demonstrated a knack for compromises. This knack served the country especially well during the teething years that constituted the First Republic. Several stalemates—particularly over elections and censuses—threatened the country's viability. In each case, the crisis was resolved through negotiations and compromises. And therein lay Nigeria's short-lived reputation as Africa's showcase of democracy.

Underlying the spirit of compromise was the commitment of the Nigerian political class to the very notion of nationhood and the

democratic basis on which it would thrive or fail. Of course, even then this commitment was not ironclad, as evident in suggestions that the right to secede be included in early constitutions. Still, in general, Nigeria's stature and potential were a source of pride for the Nigerian elite and even their counterparts in the African diaspora.

The Nigerian press championed the cultivation of this national self-image, despite their various and rivalrous political allegiances. Though with the exception of the *Daily Times* and its sister publications, the newspapers generally engaged in sycophantic and polemical journalism, they almost universally promoted the cause of democracy and national unity. Central to this commitment was the press's articulation of the notion that Nigeria occupied a special place in Africa and that Africa's destiny rested to a great extent on Nigeria. This notion was especially manifest in the press's coverage of Nigeria's activism and leadership on matters of Africa's unity, decolonization, and conflict resolution. Balewa, the prime minister, was depicted as a superstar in African and geopolitical diplomacy. He hosted numerous heads of government and shuttled to various capitals on diplomatic missions. The press duly chronicled his activities and utterances, all the while noting how they manifested Nigeria's stature in the world.

Nigerians also variously revered the three other political stalwarts of the pre/postindependence years: Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamdi Azikiwe, and Ahmadu Bello, representing respectively the West, the East, and the North. Bello could have become the prime minister in 1960, if he so desired, but as the spiritual leader of the Muslim North, it is believed that he preferred to be the regional premier so as to stay "at home." Yet his influence in national politics was legendary. In contrast, Awolowo and Azikiwe eagerly sought national leadership. Both also owned newspaper chains that did their lot to inspire followers and endear the leaders as Awo and Zik. The radical Awolowo could have been Nigeria's Kwame Nkrumah, the socialist president of Ghana, if he had become Nigeria's president or prime minister. But much as he aspired to national leadership, his uncompromising politics destined him to be perennially in the opposition as leader of the Action Group (AG). In fact, his radicalism soon led him to prison on conviction for sedition. But that never diminished his aura, especially in the West.

As Nigeria's first president—a nonexecutive position—Zik was one of Africa's most esteemed statesmen. He also established "the first newspaper chain in West Africa" (Bourgault 1995, 155). To these papers, Zik was close to a deity. Some even took to branding other papers as unpatriotic for daring to criticize Zik. Zik did his part

to encourage his adulation, having developed a reputation for unabashedly promoting himself as intellectually endowed. But he also never missed an opportunity to articulate the idea of Nigeria's special place in Africa, and the press zestfully promoted that notion.

The theme of Nigeria's manifest destiny is encapsulated in a headline in the *West African Pilot* of January 1, 1964: "We are a model of democracy of Africa—Zik." Similarly, a front-page banner headline in the *West African Pilot* of June 7, 1965, proclaims: "Nigeria has won a lot of confidence in Africa—Zik." The story on Africa's confidence in Nigeria detailed the frequent trips by African leaders to Nigeria for advice or consultation. Foreign leaders' characterization of Nigeria's democracy and promise was similarly played up. Referring to remarks by the British Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, the *Pilot* of April 6, 1965, carried the headline: "Nigeria is Africa's leader in parliamentary democracy—Lord Caradon." Before then there was the headline: "World press laud Nigerian leaders" (*West African Pilot*, January 8, 1965).

When Balewa returned from a Commonwealth conference in London in June 1965, the *Pilot* editorialized that he was the "nation's bouquet" and urged Nigerians to give him a hero's welcome for his performance (June 26, 1965). The *Pilot's* exuberance must have been aided by the fact that its party of affinity, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC), had joined Balewa's Nigerian National Alliance (NNA) to form a coalition national government a few months earlier. Still, the general pattern of coverage in this regard was to extol Nigeria's special place. Days before the military coup in January 1966, Nigeria hosted a meeting of the Commonwealth to address the declaration of independence by the minority government in what was then Rhodesia. The *Daily Times* (January 10, 1966) wrote in a front-page editorial: "For the first time in its chequered history, the Commonwealth of Nations has moved from its traditional seat in London.... For Nigeria, this is a historic occasion. We are indeed making history."

Even the performance of nonpolitical leaders is reported within this frame. For instance, a *Daily Times* (September. 24, 1965) editorial, "Our Finest hour," lauds Nigerian artisans for their success and the glory they bring to the country. Similarly, the positive remarks of expatriates were played up. Remarks by an Italian physician, for instance, to the effect that Nigerians are physiologically and environmentally endowed was prominently reported by the *Pilot*, under the headline: "Nigerians are blessed" (January 29, 1964).

Nigeria's press freedom was also a matter of national pride. At a conference of the International Press Institute in London in 1965, for

instance, Peter Enahoro of the *Daily Times* bragged about this difference from other African countries. Even his paper's rival, the *Pilot*, gave his remarks prominent coverage under the headline: "'We are free to talk our minds in Nigeria.' Enahoro tells world of African 'Caesars'" (*West African Pilot*, May 27, 1965). Significantly, at the time of Peter Enahoro's remarks, kinsman Anthony Enahoro was in prison for sedition. There can hardly be a more apt illustration of the tension of Nigerian politics and the value yet placed on press freedom. The politics was contentious, yet the press was relatively free—at least in its partisan operation. This freedom enabled it not only to report and comment on the politics, but also to seek to cultivate Nigerians' sense of self as a nation.

Such press orientation has been shown to have the ultimate effect of creating a national narrative, or even myth, that spurs the political and economic advancement of the country. Such is the case of the United States, where the sense of manifest destiny inspired individual and collective achievement (Adams 1931, 1943; Schudson 1998). Similarly, the stability of democracy in Costa Rica—even when the rest of Central America was mired in despotism and unstable governance—is credited in part to the people's early awareness of and pride in their special status (Pettiford 1999). The marriage of a political philosophy to collective identity establishes a reference point for civic behavior. This is especially critical for the gamesmanship that is inherent in democratic governance.

The postindependence Nigerian press not only sought to create such a pivot of nationhood, but it also regularly referred to it while analyzing the country's various challenges and crises. Nationalists who fought for independence were covered as heroes, much as happens in the United States. Such coverage was especially common in the periods of independence anniversaries. In the week leading up to October 1 in 1965, for instance, the *Daily Times* carried two such articles: "Patriots chose path of rebellion" (September 24) and "'We endured jeers, British jails'" (September 27).

In this spirit, Atigus Guni, a columnist for the *Pilot*, appealed to the pivot of nationhood in a new year's essay in January 1964 that assessed Nigeria's successes and travails the preceding year. He noted, among other things, that 1963 was the year that Nigeria formally became a republic; the first Nigerian university, the Ibadan University College, became autonomous and granted its first degrees, and Nigeria's Dick Tiger won and later lost the world middle weight championship. It was also the year in which a number of prominent Nigerians, including Anthony Enahoro and Obafemi Awolowo, the

leader of the political party, the AG, were convicted and imprisoned for treason. Moreover, the "masses of our people continued to vegetate in penury and want," Guni writes, before evoking the notion of specialness:

> But yet our people continued to enjoy liberties which are a luxury in some neighboring countries. We continued to tolerate toleration, to eschew violence and to cherish the rule of law.
> And so, I am still very proud to be a Nigerian, *a distinct people from the rest of the African race* [my emphasis] (January 1, 1964).

This notion of Nigerian nationhood would be evoked repeatedly as the First Republic went through several trials up to its end.

The Press and Politics of Compromise

Even before independence, Nigeria was already surviving on compromises. In the formative years leading to independence, Nigeria had several new constitutions and postindependence Nigeria continued this tradition. As Joseph (1999) has written, postindependence Nigeria has undertaken more "constitutional engineering" to accommodate different interests than any other country in the world.

The press has been an active player in this politics of compromise. Even when its articulation of the issues was overtly partisan, it usually urged compromises and lauded them once they were reached. As will be shown below, the press's lauding of compromises as an instrument of democracy was a significant contribution to the relative success of the short-lived First Republic. But then, the often biased coverage and vitriolic commentary on the issues of the crises undercut the compromises and made future agreements more difficult. As noted in Chapter 2, Nigeria's major newspapers during this period were owned mostly by political parties, individual politicians, and the regional and federal governments. The radio and TV stations were owned only by the federal and regional governments. Therefore, with the exception of the independent *Daily Times,* the press skewed news coverage and commentary even as it sought compromises. Often the bias is intense enough to aggravate prejudices and animosities among rival groups. Thus, even as the press cultivated a sense of pride in Nigeria in the larger sense, it also contributed to the demise of the democracy it was so proud of.

As will be shown below, the *Daily Times* was an exception to the blatant bias. Its coverage of Nigeria's crises was almost always balanced, certainly much more so than the other major papers'. However,

though the *Times* was by far the largest circulating paper during the First Republic, it could not by itself counteract the divisive impact of the rest of the press. The difference between partisanship and objective coverage was most evident in the coverage of the electoral crises of 1964–1965 and 1965–1966.

In a general sense, both electoral crises inhered in the regional and ethnic rivalry that had hampered the emergence of truly national parties in Nigeria. At independence, the three dominant parties—the Northern People's Congress (NPC), the NCNC, and the AG were, respectively, dominant in the Northern, Eastern, and Western regions. However, within the AG, an ideological rift soon emerged between a faction that favored coalition with the NPC to form a government of national unity and a faction that favored strict opposition in hopes of one day wresting national leadership from the NPC. The rift intensified when Obafemi Awolowo, the leader of the anticoalition faction, relinquished the premiership of Western Nigeria to join the federal Parliament and was replaced as premier by Samuel Akintola, who was pro-coalition. When the pro-Awolowo faction in the Western regional Parliament voted to oust Akintola as premier, he established the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), which formed an alliance with the ruling NPC and regained the premiership of the Western region. This opened up the West as the only region of significant multiparty contest. The NPC, the NNDP, and other minor parties ultimately formed the NNA and the NCNC allied with the AG to establish the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). The stage was thus set for a titanic political collision in the Western region (Sklar 1963, 1991).

Press and Electoral Crisis of 1964–1965

The elections of December 30, 1964—the first national elections after independence—were conducted in the context of this struggle for political control, with all its long-term implications. With the regional governments exercising considerable autonomy, it was inevitable that they would seek to obstruct rival parties' campaigns. There were reports of denied permits for campaign rallies, harassment of campaign workers, and assaults. Though all the parties complained of such incidents, UPGA seemed most aggrieved. Their officials complained vociferously of severe restrictions and harassments in the Northern and the Western regions. So blatant were the restrictions that even the federal government-owned *Morning Post* took the unusual step of editorializing in favor of its boss's opponents in one instance. In late October, the UPGA's Michael Okpara, the premier

of the Eastern region, was denied use of the town hall in Ogbomosho, Western region. The *Post* criticized the refusal in an editorial, demonstrating the potential of some government-owned press to report and comment relatively evenhandedly. However, the *Post* retracted the editorial soon after, a clear indication of its political encumbrance.

Unless their pronouncements were intended as cynical façades, it would seem that the top political leaders themselves did not support restrictions. Most of the restrictions appear to be the work of over-zealous subordinates intent on reaping the prebendal rewards of their leaders' victory. The press carried several news reports of the premiers and party leaders urging their followers to allow their opponents to campaign freely in their territories. For instance, the *Pilot* of November 4 carried the front-page headline, "Don't hamper Okara's campaign, Sardauna gives order," a reference to Ahmadu Bello, who was the Sardauna of Sokoto, a religious/traditional political title of considerable authority in Northern region. Still, the incidents of campaign obstruction and harassment continued.

The general state of election-related insecurity prompted the electoral commission to consider postponing the elections. According to press reports, a majority of the commission members had opted for the postponement. But the commission chairman decided to go on with the elections, pressured to do so—according to UPGA—by Balewa's government. With just a few weeks before the elections, UPGA announced its decision to boycott them. The day before the elections, three members of the electoral commission—from the East, Midwest and Lagos—resigned. That their joint statement was released and distributed by UPGA suggests also that the resignations were in solidarity and coordination with that party.

UPGA's boycott effectively precluded any voting in the East and ensured that the outcome of the national elections would be of questionable validity. The elections proceeded normally elsewhere in the country, though UPGA's call for boycott was honored by a substantial number of its follower's in the other regions. Not surprisingly, when the election results were announced, the NNA was the landslide winner in the national parliamentary elections. Meanwhile, there were conflicting reports as to who won the elections in the West, with both the NNA and UPGA claiming victory. As Allah De, one of Nigeria's most popular columnists of that era, later wrote of the election in his usually witty and poetic style:

> It hardly got off the ground, that December show; bad omen hovered around it. The more the judges [Electoral Commission] tried to make

the dramatis personae take a bow and start the show, the worse the confusion that followed. Ultimately, there was a show, and what a show! It was held in bits and pieces; when it was all over, the new baby called the Federal Republic of Nigeria became the victim of the gravest illness that ever afflicted an innocent thing (Daily Times, November 7, 1965).

After its withdrawal, UPGA made it clear that it would not accept the results; after the elections, the alliance reiterated that stance. As president, Zik was required to call on the winning party to form a national government. When he announced that he would rather resign than ask the NNA to form a government, it was evident that the country was at the edge of a political abyss. In a speech to the nation, Zik recounted the irregularities and inconclusiveness of the elections as a result of the boycott, and then added:

> I find it extremely awkward to exercise the power to call upon any person to form a Government. True the Constitution is clear on this issue, but my decision is that I will not exercise such a power and I would rather resign (*Daily Times*, January 3, 1965).

Zik argued on principles. But his awkward position was also made more acute by the fact that he was the founder of the NCNC, the larger coalition partner in UPGA. His pronouncement was exactly what UPGA needed to strengthen its leverage. Still, in concluding his address, Zik again appealed to the notion that Nigeria's democracy needed to be preserved as a beacon to Africa: "My fellow countrymen and women, let us strive honestly to hold aloft the torch of democracy as an oasis in a desert" (*Daily Times*, January 3, 1965).

Balewa, whose term as prime minister would soon expire without the president's mandate to form a new government, was also under pressure to seek a way out. In his own national broadcast, he said:

> The future of this country is in very grave danger just now. In order to avoid bloodshed, for which I cannot accept any responsibility because it is not for a cause which I think is right, I would humbly suggest that we have a conference of the representatives of all the Governments in the Federation so as to decide, among ourselves, what the future of our country should be (*Daily Times*, January 3, 1965).

Press commentaries mirrored Zik and Balewa's calls for negotiated compromise. For instance, in a front-page editorial with the headline "Let's try," the *Pilot* (January 1, 1965), expressed hope that Nigeria would maintain its reputation of pulling back from the brink. However,

the *Pilot* and the other politically affiliated newspapers left no doubt as to whom to blame for the impasse. To the *New Nigerian*, the *Morning Post* (the federal government-sponsored newspaper), and a slew of NNA affiliated papers, Zik's stance was a subversion of the constitution. But to the *Pilot* and other pro-UPGA papers, Zik was a hero. It was a matter of conscience over constitutionalism, as the *Pilot* put it in a front-page editorial on January 5. The papers engaged in attacks against one another, paralleling the battles among their patrons. Early in the political/press war, the *Pilot* (October 8, 1964) even carried a front-page headline that read: "'*Post*' is our enemy—NCNC."

Still, the call for a compromise was near universal. News of movements in that direction was given prominent coverage. This front-page banner headline in the *Times* of January 2, 1965, was typical: "Balewa and Zik May Compromise." When a compromise was reached a few days later, the press applauded it and stressed its significance in cementing Nigeria's democratic ethos and image. However, the emphasis varied to reflect the partisanship. The *Post* (January 4, 1965) was quick to applaud the NNA for letting the spirit of compromise take precedence over constitutional rights. It gave short shrift to the fact that the results were severely compromised by electoral violations and boycotts. The *Pilot* (January 5, 1965), of course, stressed these facts and applauded Zik and UPGA for insisting on justice over legalism. The *Times* was nonpartisan. In an editorial titled "Tragedy averted," the *Times* (January 6, 1965) hailed the compromise as another demonstration of Nigerians' democratic ethos: "Elsewhere, the climax of the terrible period we have just passed through would have been the counting of the dead and the maimed. But we in Nigeria believe in solution by discussion."

Events were soon to show that the *Times* was too optimistic about Nigerians' democratic ethos. However, the paper was eerily prophetic in editorializing on what Nigeria averted with the compromise. For later in 1965, Nigeria faced a similar crisis, but in this instance, a compromise was not reached fast enough despite the urgings of segments of the press. The consequence was bloodshed, the end of the First Republic, and even greater bloodshed.

Press and Electoral Crisis of 1965–1966

As part of the compromise of January 1965, the political parties and regional governments had agreed to conduct new elections in the Eastern and Western regions. However, the structural and systemic

problems that precipitated the 1964–1965 crisis were still there, as were the political maneuvering and distrust. Anxiety over the likelihood of another stalemate at the brink of violence prompted a flurry of proposals to enhance political stability. To promote interethnic understanding, for instance, Balewa suggested in July 1965 that all legislators should tour all sections of the country. The *Daily Times* (July 5, 1965) endorsed this proposal: "The worst enemy of Nigerian unity today is tribalism, a cankerworm that can be traced to lack of contact and sympathy among the different ethnic groups in the country." Some leaders, including Dan Ibekwe, the federal minister of state for foreign affairs, called for curbs on the powers of the regional governments. Dennis Osadebay, the premier of the Midwestern region, went further to propose an all-party government, arguing that Nigeria was not ready for multiparty democracy.

None of these suggestions were implemented before the election of October 11, 1965. In fact, the call for an all-party government was widely opposed, including by Ahmadu Bello, the premier of the Northern region and an influential member of the ruling party in the federal government. Vested interests aside, such a government would have finally put to rest the notion that Nigeria was special as a democratic polity in Africa. There was general optimism that despite the ominous political clouds, the country would muddle through another election. A *Daily Times* editorial on the fifth anniversary of Nigeria's independence reflected the guarded mood (October 1, 1965). There was "every reason to be optimistic" despite "moments of great anxiety," the paper asserted, and the "question of divorce was entirely out of the question." Osadebay expressed similar optimism in his independence day broadcast reported on the same page in a story that summarized the premiers' messages. Osadebay returned to the notion of Nigeria's special status as an African democracy:

> We have every reason to be proud of the great esteem with which this great country with her leadership is held on the African continent, in the Commonwealth, nay throughout the world. The laudable role which this Republic has continued to play in her pursuit for peace in a troubled world; in pursuit of unity and understanding on the African continent, and our successful cooperation with our fellow members of the Commonwealth deserve special mention and therefore deserve the ever-increasing support of every Nigerian (*Daily Times*, October 1, 1965).

To maintain this stature, Osadebay urged Nigerians to "rededicate themselves anew to unity by doing everything in our lives which will promote unity while avoiding those things which tend to divide us."

However, in the same story, Michael Okpara, the premier of the Eastern region and leader of the NCNC, reflected the increasing realization that the ideals on which Nigerians brimmed with confidence were being shattered. Okpara expressed dismay at what he described as the dishonoring of the founding fathers' pledge of commitment to democracy. "The evil agents of tribalism have no qualms about throwing their weight about, and voices that once sang unity, fraternity and equality now chant tribalism, alive, alive," Okpara said in his independent day broadcast. There was still some ray of hope for the triumph of democracy in Nigeria, he added, but only because, as the *Times* paraphrased him, "nationalists valuing highly the freedom of the individual and the political system were determined more than ever before to fight to the bitter end until victory, which was inevitable, was achieved." Okpara's pessimistic view more closely portended the violence that would erupt in less than two weeks following the October 11 elections in the West.

The results of the elections were bitterly disputed, and the dispute almost immediately erupted into riot and mayhem. The core issue in the dispute was allegations of election rigging. Specifically, the AG was certain that public sentiment against the incumbent premier, Samuel L. Akintola, was so strong that he and his party, the NNDP, could not have won the elections. Yet the official result indicated that he had won. The AG's followers reacted with deadly riots. For weeks they rampaged in the Western region, killing people, ransacking offices, and burning cars and buildings. The notion of Nigerians as a democratic people who eschewed violence in favor of negotiations and compromises was being dashed.

The mayhem was hardly unexpected or spontaneous. Just before the momentous elections, Zik left the country ostensibly for medical check ups. Months earlier, there were explicit threats of violence if the election was rigged. In its June 28 issue, for instance, the *Pilot* had the front-page headline, "UPGA promises chaos in West if . . . ." Alas, there is a certain self-fulfilling nature to such threats. In this instance, it could be presumed that violence was inevitable if the NNDP won, as its victory would have been enough evidence to its rivals that the election was rigged. However, there were considerable irregularities in the elections—more than enough to justify concerns about their fairness and even validity. There were serious incidents of subversion of attempts of opposition candidates to file nomination documents. Incidents of violence and threats of violence were rampant. The day before the elections, an election official was assassinated. On the day of the elections, there were missing ballots and politically related killings, intimidation and harassment of voters.

In a letter to the regional governor about five weeks after the elections, Eyo Esua, the chairman of the Electoral Commission—for the federal as well as the Western elections—conceded most of these irregularities (*Pilot*, November 20, 1965). He said the commission was powerless to stop the irregularities, including those perpetuated by the commission's own staff, because considerable power was vested in the regional government. Curiously, the commission chairman said the letter represented his personal views, and not the commission's. His colleagues dissociated themselves from his assertions and he was forced to resign soon after.

In an editorial responding to Esua's letter, the *Daily Times* (November 22, 1965) wondered why he waited so long to offer his perspectives and why he accepted terms of responsibility that compromised the elections even before they were conducted. The paper called on Esua to resign. Columnist Allah De concurred: "Whatever may be the qualities of the chairman of the Federal Electoral Commission, Eyo Esua . . . he should please not conduct another election for Nigeria" (*Daily Times*, January 7, 1966).

But the problems go much deeper than the commission chairman's competence and integrity, or lack thereof. No chairman of Nigeria's electoral commission has been deemed to have succeeded, despite the painstaking selection process that usually yields individuals of known personal integrity. As of 1965, the administrative structure of the elections was culpable. The power of the regional government to control the elections virtually guaranteed its failure. On this score, in criticizing Esua, the press also should have taken responsibility for not publicizing and advocating changes to the power of the commission to ensure its independence and effectiveness. But then, as will be discussed more fully in subsequent chapters, even when the structures were changed, electoral irregularities continued. The reason is simple: people run elections, and when they believe that their fate is tied to the outcome and not to the integrity of the process, they readily partake in rigging the ballots. And so, even as the 2007 elections in Nigeria approached, a major issue remained on how to ensure their integrity. As will be noted later, there was still no solution.

Such is the sordid history of Nigerian elections. With the possible exception of the 1993 elections, which were micromanaged by the military and then annulled, Nigerian elections have always been marred by serious irregularities and claims of rigging. Even the elections of 1959, which gave birth to the First Republic and were overseen by British colonial officials, are said to have been rigged by the British in favor of Northerners (see, for instance, Soyinka 2006). If

this is the case, then civic cynicism in electoral matters was bequeathed to Nigeria.

More realistically, the problem of election rigging, as well as its presumption, lies in the enormous power of the government to control and dole out resources and the consequent fear of disenfranchisement for the groups not in power. Before his tragic death in an air crash in 1996 that raised suspicions of sabotage, Claude Ake, the noted Nigerian political scientist, devoted much of his scholarship to demonstrating this problem of economic control and the instability of Nigerian politics (Ake 1996). Similarly, Nigeria's political turbulence, including the civil war of 1967–1970, has been attributed to group fears of dominance (Kirk-Greene 1975). Because of the fusion of political power and economic control, elections are perceived as a matter of survival, and in matters of survival the tendency is to triumph by any means necessary. This then was the basis of prebendal politics in Nigeria (Joseph 1987) and the attendant development and metastasis of civic cynicism.

As O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, 59) write in their study of democratizing countries, "the 'contingent consent' which underlies modern political democracy" is predicated on a set of agreed upon rules of contest and governance that the constituent party elites agreed to abide by. "In their turn, citizens will presumably accept a democracy based on such a competition, provided its outcome remains contingent upon their collective preferences as expressed through fair and regular elections of uncertain outcome." When the rules are subverted, there is attendant loss of faith in the political process and that reverberates throughout society and beyond the realm of politics.

The 1965 elections in the West were particularly significant because of the perception that they would decidedly empower some people and disenfranchise others. Even if the elections had been cleanly conducted, there probably would have been violence nonetheless. Alas, they were not. Still, chaos and bloodshed could have been avoided as happened earlier in the year, if the mayhem had not been preplanned and orchestrated. In this regard, the partisan press was instrumental in inflaming the passions that erupted after the elections, even as segments of the press were derelict in not crusading against evident realities that made fair elections improbable. Thus, even as the press sought to cultivate the Nigerian democratic ethos, its partisanship helped to push the country in the opposite direction. This contrasts considerably with Nigerian press performance during the elections of 2003 and 2007, as will be discussed in Chapter 8.

Tenuous Hold on Specialness

Though the mayhem of 1965 tested the ability to represent Nigeria as a special case of African democracy, the press did not give up on this notion. In fact, its appeal for peace rested on it. However, the contrast in performance between the partisan and independent press demonstrates the greater utility of the latter in attempting to steer a troubled polity toward democratic solutions. For this purpose, the *West African Pilot*, as representative of the partisan press, will be contrasted with the *Daily Times*, the only major, truly independent paper of the period. Other papers will be cited, of course, as necessary.

Partisan Pilot

With the approach of the elections, the *Pilot* and the *Daily Times* left little doubt that Nigeria was approaching a defining moment in its history. However, while the *Times* was more balanced and nuanced in its reportage and commentary, the *Pilot* left little doubt as to who were politically virtuous and who were incorrigibly roguish. The *Pilot*'s editorial on October 11, the day of the elections, was pungent:

> The job of the "West African Pilot" today is a simple but very vital one. It is a plaintive summons for all eligible voters in Western Nigeria to come out today and vote for the United Progressive Grand Alliance.
>
> In voting for the redemption of the West from the jackboots of the NNDP, we don't need to remind the Western electorate that no half measures will do. The NNDP is a festering cancer which only a concerted and determined total action can thoroughly wipe away.

The editorial sounds more like a call to arms than a plea to vote. Or what is one to make of the phrase "concerted and determined total action"? So overzealous was the *Pilot* in its partisanship that Zik, the founder and first editor whom the paper deified, was forced to rebuke it publicly for attributing to him what he never said (*Daily Times*, October 7, 1965).

Two days after the elections, the *Pilot* reported that the UPGA had won the Western parliamentary election by a margin of 68-25. The paper's source was not the election commission, but the AG's acting president and candidate for the premiership of Western Nigeria, Dauda Adegbenro. On the same day as the *Pilot*'s report, the *Times* announced the official results from the electoral commission, which had the NNDP leading UPGA 51-10, with 33 seats still pending in the tally. While the *Times* reported formation of

government by the incumbent premier, Samuel L. Akintola, the *Pilot* reported formation of the regional government by Adegbenro. Adegbenro and his colleagues were arrested for illegal assumption of office. But he denied the press reports, what the *Pilot* had begun to refer to as an allegation. In remarks to the press while still in detention, Adegbenro said that he had only expressed his readiness to form a government if the governor asked him to, as required by the constitution (*Pilot*, October 19, 1965). Adegbenro pledged to use only constitutional means to contest the results and was released two days later. But neither his release nor the pledge quelled the riots.

Consistent with its prior coverage, the *Pilot* flailed away in its editorials and columns on the violence. The essence of the editorials was not to condemn the carnage, but to suggest the magnitude of the political wrongs that it believed necessitated it. One got the impression that the greater the carnage, the more evident is the egregiousness of the wrongs that spurred it. The *Pilot* editorialized in this vein in issue after issue, and often on its front page. This was in addition to the concurring and sometimes more vitriolic commentary of its columnists. When UPGA officials and supporters were assaulted, the *Pilot* referred to the attackers as thugs. When NNDP officials and supporters were attacked, the paper portrayed the attackers as incensed fighters for justice.

Here are representative excerpts from a new story, an editorial, and a column:

> ADEGBENRO FIRM ON ELECTIONS. Says Only Justice Can Restore Peace (front-page news, October 23, 1965).

> It has become so clear that the events in the West are a matter of resistance against oppression—the oppression of imposing an unpopular government on the people (front-page editorial, November 1, 1965).

> Insurgents against the conduct of the election are today on top, on the news schedule.... As I write, they are said to be staging a house to house coup to oust the thieves who stole their votes.... Surely the NNDP can't make a fire and cover the chimney to keep the smoke from escaping. The high voltage resentment by the Westerners against injustice has been as a result of accumulated grievances (column, November 6, 1965).

Not long into the crisis, the *Pilot* abandoned the notion that Nigerian democracy was viable, let alone special. In a front-page editorial titled "PM Must Think Again," the *Pilot* (November 1, 1965) addressed

Balewa, the prime minister: "It does not lead the country anywhere to issue stupid denials of the daily occurrences in the West or to pretend that all is well in the region. It is only rational to admit that we have failed in the administration of a Federal Constitution in the country. *In that event the only alternative may be to break up*" (emphasis mine). Such pessimism and militancy contrasted sharply with the *Pilot*'s passionate embrace of the military government that would soon follow. It was not that the *Pilot* preferred a military government to a democratic one, per se; it was more about the political alignment and ethnic makeup of the leadership. Of course, when the breakup that the *Pilot* suggested materialized less than two years later, the bloodshed made the 1965 disorder seem unremarkable.

The *Pilot* was roundly criticized in the press and probably chided from within its political hierarchy for its suggestion of Nigeria's break up. In subsequent editorials, it alluded to the criticism and seemed to back-pedal ever so softly. "We may be misunderstood or called names for exposing the truth as we honestly see it," the paper wrote as it urged the government to take measures "to arrest the hand of doom before it spreads havoc on the rest of Nigeria" (November 3, 1965). It even seemed to soften its good versus evil editorial frame. In applauding traditional leaders of Lagos for deciding to mediate in the West's crisis, the *Pilot* (November 8, 1965) wrote: "The disagreement of Yoruba leaders does not emanate from any outside cause or causes. And the Oba[1] of Lagos and his chiefs will do well to pursue the reconciliation envisaged with an objectivity that will defy the sweet words and rivalry fights [*sic*] of politicians." From suggesting secession, the *Pilot* began to advocate some form of unity government for the region or even emergency rule (November 19, 1965). Still, the paper derided "the sporadic attempts of the so-called peace truce being conducted by UPGA and the NNDP in certain obscure areas of the Western Region…. The tin gods of the NNDP must know that nobody worships them because their heart is made of stone. Their altar is steeped in blood and nobody who wants salvation should go near it" (*Pilot*, December 30, 1965).

As will be discussed in Chapter 8, the *Pilot*'s partisan militancy contrasted sharply with the editorial orientation of Nigeria's major newspapers during the elections of 2003 and 2007, elections that, in places, were as tainted as (probably even more tainted than) the Western Region's elections of 1965. The *Pilot*'s partisan journalism also contrasts with the *Times*' reportage, which was closer to that of the current press and suggests the potential difference the press could have made in the 1965 crisis if it had been predominantly independent.

Tamer Times

For quite sometime after the crises, the *Times* and its columnists maintained an editorial silence on the situation, while providing balanced news coverage. For a paper with a vibrant editorial page and popular columnists, it was an odd period of silence. That was enough to rile its partisan readers. The paper and its top columnists—Allah De, Peter Pan, and Tai Solarin—were deluged with letters accusing them of cowardice and demanding that they take a stand. Both Allah De and Solarin were from the West and Peter Pan was from the Midwest, and this may have contributed to their initial reticence. As Tai Solarin paraphrased his harshest critic and fan:

> When the death-knell tolled in the Western Region election, he went on, he anxiously waited to read what my comments would be when the week's Thursday came. He found there were none. I was too afraid to go to jail, he charged. He therefore got me removed from the position of respectability he had carved for me in his heart and dumped me in the same slag-heap on which there were the decaying carcasses of so many of his fallen angels (*Daily Times*, November 18, 1965).

Solarin admitted being stung by the criticism, and, without explaining why he was silent for so long, he called for new elections that should be conducted fairly.

But even before him, the *Times* and the other columnists had waded in. In general, the editorials and columns were more restrained and conciliatory. They seemed less inclined to demonize and exult, but to appeal to the collective good. In a passionate column that called on the federal government to redress the grievances and end the mayhem, for instance, Peter Pan reiterated the notion that Nigeria was "Africa's lone glimmer of hope for democracy" (*Daily Times*, November 3, 1965). He went on to make an eloquent argument for the centrality of democratic ethos in civic action:

> When the haze has cleared from the eyes of the jubilant and the glaze no longer glints in the eyes of the angry; when the dust of violence has thinned and the fire and fury of conscious objectors have dwindled into embers, we shall see that more important than the temporary occupation of office in Western Nigeria is the grave threat to democracy which the muddle and mess of happenings in that Region have visited upon the entire Federation.

When Nigeria hosted a meeting of the British Commonwealth of Nations in the midst of the crisis, the *Daily Times* (January 10, 1966)

similarly capitalized on the mythic Nigerian democratic ethos: "Let us forget our bitterness, the rancor, the bad faith and the callousness of the past few months. Let us remember our world-wide reputation for resolving our disputes in the famous Nigerian manner. Let us make the best of this rare opportunity."

The *Daily Times*' first editorial plunge into the crisis, "Path to peace," appeared on its front page on October 25, 1965. The paper sought to be conciliatory in stating that it had no doubt that Nigerian leaders were anxious to resolve the conflict. It urged the NNDP and Akintola, its leader, to immediately invite UPGA to join in a coalition government. This would have been similar to the compromise the year before that gave rise to an NPC-NCNC coalition in the federal government and ended that constitutional impasse. In a similar editorial in its December 2 issue, the *Daily Times* argued that a solution to the crisis required the joint effort of the political leaders, not just the prime minister's: "If the events of the last election in Western Nigeria and its aftermath have tended to distort the image of the country, the responsibility of finding a solution rests on all—the President, the Prime Minister and the Regional Premiers." Significantly, the editorial characterized the violence not as a refutation of Nigeria's democratic ethos but as its distortion.

Unlike the *Pilot*, the *Daily Times* saw political action and the stoppage of the violence as parallel rather than dependent actions. "Two solutions have to be found to the impasse in the West. One is political and the other concerns the maintenance of law and order," the paper wrote in the December 2 editorial. The paper also emphatically condemned the violence: "Violence does not pay and for many years Nigerian leaders had condemned violence as a means of settling political disputes. Why should they not now get together and talk things over." Similarly, in a Christmas eve editorial titled "Time for peace," the *Daily Times* (December 24, 1965), wrote: "Arson, violence and thuggery are actions that everybody must denounce as the joyous bells of yuletide ring."

The *Daily Times*' most concerted proposal for resolving the crisis was published on December 16 in a full front-page editorial that continued on Page 5. In "A call for truce," the paper placed the onus of action on Balewa. Rather than demonize him, however, the editorial played on normal human ego by lauding Balewa's accomplishments as the basis for suggesting that he would be up to the current challenge. The paper made a number of specific proposals:

- That a meeting of all the political party/regional leaders be convened immediately.
- That an all-party (not one-party) government be formed in the West.

- That the AG and the NCNC be asked to nominate their members to join the Western regional Parliament.
- That the arrangement remain in place until fair and credible elections are conducted.
- That Balewa, the prime minister, should lead the effort to find a compromise.

"Peace with honors is not just gallantry, it is the achievement of great minds, of smart men who know when to pull their punches in order to win uncertain victory," the editorial stated.

The responses of the rival parties to the editorial were essentially hostile, with the NNDP being a little more accommodating (*Daily Times*, December 24, 1965). Writing on behalf of the NNDP, Theophilous Benson, one of the party's leaders, took issues with the paper's characterization of the violence, its call for the prime minister's intervention, and the NNDP's partnership with UPGA. Regarding the violence, Benson argued that 90 percent of the people killed were supporters of the NNDP and the worst instances had taken place in Ijebu province—where UPGA won all the regional parliamentary seats—and Egba province—where UPGA won a majority of the seats. The pattern was inconsistent with the claim that the violence erupted from frustrations with electoral irregularities, he argued. Benson also rejected the proposal that Balewa intervene, arguing that the constitutional guarantees of regional autonomy forbade such intervention.

Balewa had also given the same reason for his inaction, though the constitution did authorize the prime minister's intervention when law and order was threatened (*Daily Times*, November 17, 1965). Why he did not deem the mayhem and insecurity in the region to have met the constitutional test can only be attributed to a political decision to remain faithful to his party's regional ally. The NNDP's one concession to the *Daily Times* proposal was that the party would form a coalition government with the AG, but not with the NCNC, the AG's partner in UPGA. The NNDP believed that the violence in the West was orchestrated by the NCNC, which drew its membership primarily from the East.

UPGA's response was even more uncompromising. Writing on its behalf, Bisi Onabanjo insisted on fresh elections and the immediate resignation of Akintola. As to the likelihood that fresh elections in this context would exacerbate the crisis, Onabanjo said people who made such arguments "are not only kidding themselves but are consciously dishonest." About 80 percent of the Yoruba would vote for

UPGA, he argued, and only a system that guaranteed them that right and ensured justice would end the violence. "Anyone going into a broad-based Government as suggested by you [the *Daily Times*] without guaranteeing these basic essentials will be regarded as betraying the cause of the people and will be rejected," Onabanjo wrote. This position is consistent with UPGA's explanation of why it did not go to court to challenge the elections: First, the fact of electoral fraud had been clearly determined; court petitions would take years to adjudicate and would be a waste of time; even if the petitions were granted, the NNDP Speaker of the House was unlikely to call for fresh elections (*Daily Times*, December 9, 1965). Not stated was that the same irregularities would probably have recurred.

End of Compromises

UPGA and the *Pilot* were not the only entities that rejected compromises over this crisis. At least two of the *Daily Times* columnists expressed stances that were similar to the *Pilot*'s, that is, much more uncompromising than their paper's editorials. In his column that appealed to Nigerians' democratic ethos, Peter Pan (*Daily Times*, November 3, 1965) argued that the seeds of the mayhem were sown by the compromises reached in other problematic plebiscites, including one that created the Midwestern Region. The solution, he suggested, lay in conducting public affairs cleanly to avoid impasses in the first place. Solarin made a similar argument about two weeks later. In a column titled "There's One Way Out" (*Daily Times*, November 18, 1965), Solarin suggested that another compromise was not a solution: "There is only one path to peace. It is the path of a fair and free election as there was in Lagos only last Saturday...."

It is doubtful that these arguments would have been made with the hindsight of the events that would transpire in about two months. A compromise similar to that of January 1965—problematic as it may have been in principle—might have averted Nigeria's first military coup and given the young democracy more time to mature. As Robinson (1994, 40) has argued "a given culture of politics may be altered over time through a process of political learning." In their seminal studies of transitions from military to electoral democracy, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986) note the importance of the evolution of what Dahl (1970) calls the "democratic bargain." The ease of establishing such a bargain "varies from society to society depending on cleavage patterns and such subjective factors as the degree of mutual trust, the standards of fairness, and the willingness to

compromise" (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 59). In the Nigeria of 1965, the cleavage pattern was seismic, mutual trust was hardly existent, and the standards of fairness were adolescent. The only element with which to prop the polity toward maturity was compromise.

Yet the highly polarized atmosphere made it harder for the press to rally effectively around this theme. Attempts by the partisan press to evince even a veneer of objectivity were readily stifled. "A large section of the press unfortunately has been silenced and is now a willing tool for the rape of democracy," Michael Opkara, the premier of the Eastern region said in an independence day address (*Daily Times*, October 1, 1965). Okpara was referring, of course, to the news media controlled by his rivals. But as demonstrated with the *Pilot*, papers that supported his NCNC and allied parties were hardly objective or uncensored. In fact, provinces in the Eastern region were the first to ban disapproved newspapers from circulation.

Indeed, the press itself became a victim of the crisis. Municipalities in the various regions banned papers that supported their opposing parties, or otherwise were disapproved of. Even the independent *Daily Times* was banned in provinces in Eastern Nigeria. More than that, media establishments and personnel came under attacks. The offices of the *Daily Times* and the *Morning Post* in Ibadan were torched. Journalists and other media personnel were roughed up by people who disapproved of their reportage or lack thereof. Some journalists, including the editors of the *Pilot* and the *Daily Express*, were arrested for reportage judged to be seditious.

Broadcast operations were also sabotaged. In one instance in Ibadan, the capital of the Western region, an address by the premier, Samuel L. Akintola, which was prerecorded for broadcast on the regional government television, WNTV, was preempted by a gunman. In place of Akintola's address, it was announced that his rival won the election and that he should be ousted. Wole Soyinka, Nigeria's perennial rebel and a 1986 Nobel laureate, was arrested, tried, and freed for this breach. In another instance, a WNTV news broadcast was mysteriously and briefly preempted in the Lagos area by a news transmission from the Ghanaian Broadcasting Corporation. And so the news media became mired in the political quagmire they covered.

There is little doubt that the partisanship and constraints on the press contributed to exacerbating the crises and impeding a search for solutions. Improbable as it may seem, Balewa's refusal to more fully engage in seeking a resolution to the crisis may have resulted from his misjudgment of the situation. If so, such misjudgment could only have been possible if he was exposed only to carefully managed

information, and that was improbable in a press system that was free and independent. Balewa did not fiddle while a part of Nigeria burned. Rather, while the mayhem raged and the coup that would end his life and the First Republic loomed, he immersed himself in problems elsewhere in Africa. Weeks before the coup, he hosted a conference of the British Commonwealth in Lagos to address the unilateral declaration of independence by the white minority government of Rhodesia. It was one of his most triumphant moments and also his last.

Meanwhile, despite its problems, the press did not completely abdicate its role. The importance of preserving Nigeria and its democracy remained a clarion call. A 1966 New Year's address from the acting president, Nwafo Orizu, for instance, received front-page coverage by the newspapers, with most stressing his points about unity, temperance, and perseverance. "Removal of mutual fear our 1966 greatest task—Orizu" blared the headline in the *West African Pilot* of January 1, 1966. The *Daily Times* of the same date went with the headline: "Orizu calls for unity." This excerpt from the speech, as contained in the *Pilot*'s story, encapsulates Orizu's and the press's contextualization of the crisis:

> Our present problems are universal. Such problems must face new nations like ourselves. Indeed, the older nations are not free from these interminable wranglings which show that after all, no one is infallible.

Orizu called for the same wisdom and temperance that had resolved earlier crises. The *Daily Times* followed the coverage with this editorial:

> The need for 1966 is to forge inter-tribal unity and encourage inter-regional understanding. The will is to survive as one nation in spite of language and cultural differences. Nigeria is one nation. It must survive as one. That is the resolution for 1966.

In what was a promising sign that a compromise agreement was forthcoming, the *New Nigerian* editorialized in its January 13, 1966 issue calling on Bello to intervene with his counterpart and ally in the West to end the violent stalemate. The paper wrote:

> Facts have to be faced, no matter how distasteful they may be. And the facts are that thousands of people in the West—ordinary people, not power-mad politicians—are convinced that the last elections were not

properly conducted. They remain convinced that Chief Akintola has no right to be in power.

Again, they may be entirely wrong in this conviction. But that is what they believe....

No one condones violence. No one should bow before it, but again facts have to be faced and the fact is that force is having to be used to prevent violence in the West from spreading.

But this cannot possibly be the final solution. This must spring from the heart of men. From humility and magnanimity. From this reason we think that Sir Ahmadu [Bello] and Chief Akintola should lead a concerted move to talk things over....

The *New Nigerian* editorial praised the character of Akintola, but there was the implication that his resignation might be in order.

As a partisan paper that reflected the opinion of the political establishment in the Northern region, the *New Nigerian* editorial was an unmistakable indication that Bello and the NPC had recognized the danger Nigeria faced and were ready to make the political deals necessary to avert further bloodshed and the erosion of faith in Nigeria's democracy. This realization, which probably would have guaranteed a peace agreement and probably strengthened the democracy by discouraging future electoral misconducts, never made it to the discussion table.

Despite the serious disturbances in Western Nigeria and the growing spate of coups in Africa, the NPC government and much of the political establishment did not seem particularly concerned about the probability of a coup. "Even though some information about the coup leaked to the political authority and military command, none of them took the report seriously" (Williams 2002, 107). Perhaps they believed unrealistically in the notion of Nigerians' democratic ethos. However, just a few days before the coup, Richard Akinjide, the NNDP's general secretary was reported to have insinuated "that the UPGA has plans to take over the whole country by violence" (*West African Pilot*, January 13, 1966). The military struck two days later, killing Balewa, Bello, Akintola and several senior military officers of Northern origin.

Not only had Nigeria thus joined the ranks of the many African countries that had come under military rule, its very stature in the continent ensured that more African coups were to follow. Moreover, the differential pattern of the killings, more so than the coup itself, threw Nigeria into the political pits from which it is only now climbing out. The coup was led primary by Igbo army officers, people from the East, where the NCNC/UPGA dominated; their most notable victims were from the North and the West and all were members (or presumed sympathizers) of the NPC/NNDP. Whatever the motives

of the leaders of the coup, this fact alone discredited it. The coup became the most public and indisputable manifestation of civic cynicism. Electoral rigging may be denied, but not the discriminatory killing of political leaders and military officers.

Significantly, the leader of the coup, Major Chukwuma Nzeogwu, was a reputed idealist and nationalist who would not have condoned, let alone planned, partisan killings (Madiebo 1980; Obasanjo 1980; Ademoyega 1981). Alexander Madiebo, the commanding officer of the secession during much of the civil war that ensued, offers this summation of Nzeogwu's objectives as he discerned them after they met the day after the coup:

> He explained that the aim of his revolution was to get rid of the corrupt and incorrigible politicians and have them replaced with true nationalists. He regretted that it had become necessary to use force to do this when it could have been done through democratic election—a system which was no longer possible in Nigeria (Madiebo 1980, 19).

If change by elections was no longer possible in Nigeria, change by a military coup engendered even greater problems. As the Nigerian historian Obaro Ikime put it:

> It took a few days before the pattern of killings began to raise queries in people's minds. Why were the Premier of the Eastern Region and that of the Midwest, who were Igbo, not killed? Why was it that the bulk of the senior military officers killed were of Northern origin? Why was [J. T. U.] Aguiyi-Ironsi, an Igbo, and the most senior officer in the Nigerian Army, not killed, if the idea was to eliminate the most senior cadre of officers? By the time these questions began to be asked, the First Republic had come to an abrupt end, and a military regime led by Major General Aguiyi-Ironsi was in office (Ikime 2002, 59–60).

The answers to Ikime's questions have varied. Madiebo (1980, 391) offers the partial explanation that:

> Major Nzeogwu made a major mistake in the sharing out of tasks to the officers who were to carry out the revolution in the Lagos area. Some of the officers he chose to neutralize certain senior Northern Nigerian officers happened to be those who had personal grudges against these same officers. They saw this then as an opportunity to engage in bloody personal vendettas, oblivious of the harm this would do to the revolution.

If this explanation suggests that Nzeogwu never intended the coup to be bloody, it contradicts Madiebo's earlier quote of Nzeogwu's expressed approach to the coup: "Nigeria has a population of 50 million.

We can afford, and we are prepared to sacrifice a million to achieve our aims and objectives" (Madiebo 1980, 23). It seems more plausible that some people's lives were selectively spared in contradiction of Nzeogwu's principles.

Indeed, whatever may have been the reason for the discriminatory killings, the inevitable conclusion was that the coup was nothing less than a military dimension of the political rivalry that had bedeviled Nigeria (Dudley 1973; Garba 1982; Williams 2002). In his analysis of the events leading up to the coup, the political scientist B.J. Dudley concludes that "the coup was motivated by partisan considerations." And so, what was conceived of as a messianic, if bloody, revolution ended up as the starkest manifestation of civic cynicism. In a speech in June 2001, General Gowon said this of the coup: "[T]hat singular act drastically changed the course of Nigeria's history from emerging civil democratic rule to military rule with all the attendant problems that followed thereafter." Indeed, Nigeria was about to go through its most harrowing times.

The killing of some of the North's most revered political, military, and religious figures triggered a pogrom against the Igbo and other Eastern Nigerians in the North. A countercoup in July 1966 toppled the Igbo-led military government, killing the military head of state, Aguiyi-Ironsi, along with several fellow Igbo officers and men. Despite, the revenge coup and killings, the pogrom against the Igbo continued in the North. Nigerians, especially Easterners in the North, had to flee to their regions of origin. When negotiations between the federal military government of General Yakubu Gowon failed to produce an agreement for continued federation, the Eastern region, under General Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared itself the Republic of Biafra in May 1967. The Nigerian civil war began soon after and lasted until January 1970. Before it was all over, at least 500,000 people had died; some estimates put the figures as high as two million.

In light of this tragic record of military incursion into Nigerian politics, one would have thought that the Nigerian press would turn decidedly against military rule, especially once even a semblance of democracy was restored. But, as will be discussed in the next chapter, this was not the case. In fact, sections of the partisan press began actively to court military rule when angered by political events. It was evidence that democracy was a long way from being enshrined in Nigeria and much of Africa.

Military Coups and Press/Public Support

The advent of military rule in Nigeria marked a low point of democracy in Africa. Nigeria, after all, was the country that prided itself as Africa's oasis of democracy. However, the tradition of coups was well established in Africa before the Nigerian Army joined the fray. In the two months before Nigeria's first military coup on January 15, 1966, for instance, there were at least four such coups in Africa, and two of those were in Nigeria's West African neighborhood. About 10 days before Nigeria's coup, the military in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) forced the president to relinquish power. Three days earlier, Col. Bedel Bokassa overthrew the government of the Central African Republic. This coup was itself immediately preceded by one in Congo (Kinshasa) on November 25, 1965, led by General Joseph Mobutu (who in 1972 renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko to boast of his invincibility as a warrior-leader). The tiny West African country of Dahomey (now Benin) outdid all others by having two coups in a little more than three weeks—on November 29, and December 22, 1965—for a total of three coups within two years.

The rampant coups in postindependence Africa continued through the 1970s and 1980s and did not taper off until the later 1990s. It was a domino effect that only now has its counterpoint in the sweeping democratization. Just as the political atmosphere of the 1990s spurred democratization, the African political environment of the 1960s through the 1980s nurtured military coups. Besides, African militaries had "role models" and "good company" outside the continent. Military coups were already established in Latin America and Asia long before most sub-Saharan African countries became independent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Thailand's first coup, for instance, was in the 1930s; its latest coup, in September 2006, was its

eighteenth (see table 7.1). Given the comparable cultural and economic climates, it was logical that African political developments would parallel those of these regions, rather than those of the consolidated democracies in the West.

The high incidence of military rule in Africa and elsewhere has attracted considerable scholarly attention. The two primary questions are regarding why coups occur and their consequences for political and economic advancement. The question of consequences has been addressed, though somewhat indirectly, in the discussion of the dividends of democracy in Chapter 5 and it will be further summed up in the concluding section of this chapter. The focus of this chapter is the question of why. It will be shown that whatever other explanations are offered for the frequency of coups in Africa, civic cynicism is an underlying factor. Military coups exemplified and accelerated the insidiousness of civic cynicism in many African polities. Moreover, it will be argued, coups became routine and military governments endured because the press—and the general populace—embraced the "military solution" or at least did little to underscore its impotence as a means of political order.

Factors/Types of Military Coups

The thrust of scholarly analyses of military coups in Africa is that they result from the structural factors of African politics. Among the noted factors are: ethnic or religious plurality, the conflictual politics inherent in such plurality, the strength and discipline of the military relative to the feeble political institutions, and the patterns of external dependency relations (Pye 1962; Levy 1966; Jenkins and Kposowa 1990; Kposowa and Jenkins 1993; Kandeh, 2004). In their comparative analysis of data on countries related to postulated causes of military coups in Africa, Jenkins and Kposowa (1990, 869) conclude that, "Military centrality is the most consistent independent force behind coups." However, they state, ethnic contestation among the military and political elite, rather than mass action, is the typical triggering factor of military coups. Jenkins and Kposowa concede that nonstructural factors are present in some coups. Yet, they write, "In view of our success in explaining all coup events with a single set of structural variables, however, we think it more fruitful to assume that they have common structural origins" (Jenkins and Kposowa 1990, 873).

Other structural analyses stress class struggle, rather than ethnic rivalry as the most significant factor. Kandeh (2004) argues, for instance, that a high number of military coups in Africa were carried

Table 7.1 Selected African Coups in Chronological Order (1950–2006)

Country	Form of Government	Date	Precipitate Reason	Coup Leader and Rank
Egypt	Monarchy	1952 (July 23)	Tension between party, monarchy	Gen. Mohammed Naguib
Sudan	Civilian	1958 (November 17)	Ideological	Lt. Gen. Ahmed Abboud
Togo	Democratic	1963 (January 13)	Returning French army veterans not absorbed	Emmanuel Bodjolle (ex-Master-Sergeant in French army)
Benin (then Dahomey)	Democratic	1963 (October 28)	Economic difficulties	Col. Christophe Soglo
Congo (Kinshasa)	Democratic	1965 (November 25)	Regional unrest; political power struggle	Gen. Joseph Mobutu
Benin (then Dahomey)	Appointed, civilian	1965 (November 29)	Political power struggle	Gen. Christophe Soglo
Benin (then Dahomey)	Appointed, civilian	1965 (December 23)	Labor unrest	Gen. Christophe Soglo
Central African Republic	Civilian	1966 (January 1)	Army pay reduced	Col. Bedel Bokassa
Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta)	Civilian/one-party	1966 (January 4)	Strike over austerity measures	Lt. Col. Sangoule Lamizana
Ghana	Democratic	1966 (February 24)	Military budget cut; despotic actions	Lt. Gen. J.A. Ankrah
Nigeria	Democratic	1966 (January 15)	Civil unrest over election results	Maj. Chukwuma Nzeogwu
Nigeria	Military	1966 (July 29)	Revenge countercoup	Brig. Murtala Muhammed[1]

Table 7.1 Continued

Country	Form of Government	Date	Precipitate Reason	Coup Leader and Rank
Libya	Monarchy	1969 (September 1)	Ideological differences	Col. Mormar Gaddafi
Ghana	Democratic	1972 (January 13)	Military budget cut, currency devaluation	Col. Ignatius K. Acheampong
Ethiopia	Monarchy	1974 (September 12)	Military dissatisfaction	Lt. Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam
Ghana	Military	1979 (June 4)	Economic; corruption	Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings[2]
Liberia	Democratic	1980 (April 12)	Economic, social dissatisfaction	Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe
Ghana	Democratic	1981 (December 31)	Economic problems; corruption	Flt. Lt. Jerry Rawlings
Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta)	Military	1983 (August 4)	Ideological differences	Capts. Blaise Compaore and Thomas Sankara
Nigeria	Democratic	1983 (December 31)	Election irregularity; corruption	Maj. Gen. Muhammadu Buhari
Guinea-Bissau	Democratic	1999 (May 7)	Postponing elections	Junta
Côte d'Ivoire	Democratic	1999 (December 24)	Pay dispute; ethnic tension	Gen. Robert Guei
Mauritania	Democratic	2005 (August 3)	Dictatorial government	Col. Ely Ould Mohammad Vall

out not by senior officers, but by junior and even noncommissioned officers. Kandeh cites several examples, including coups in Togo in 1963 (led by former French army Master-Sergeant Emmanuel Bodjolle), Ghana in 1979 (led by Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings), Liberia in 1980 (led by Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe).

However, Kandeh and other structural analysts, including Jenkins and Kposowa, concede that value issues are often involved as well. As Kandeh (2004, 27) notes: "The interaction of class, ethnicity, corporatism, patron-clientelism, and personal ambitions in shaping military coups often makes it very difficult to single out any one factor as the most determinant." Personal ambition is certainly a matter of values, and it may well permeate the structural factors listed with it. This becomes quite evident once one goes beyond the rhetoric of coup leaders and examines their likely motives. In his detailed narratives on African coups, for instance, Onwumechili (1998, 41) concludes that, "Several African coups can be directly attributed to personal jealousies and ambitions." It seems tenable to argue that the resort to coups is inherently a matter of political values, whereas their successful execution is strongly related to structural factors. This argument is especially important with regard to coups against democratic governments, even by the minimalist definition of democracy.

In fact, a discussion of military coups and the probable motivations calls for categorization of coups by the type of government deposed. Four categories are readily discernible in this regard, namely, coups that overthrow: 1) monarchical governments, 2) military governments, 3) military-installed civilian governments, and 4) democratic governments. Of particular interest in this analysis are coups in the fourth category. The other categories do not necessarily bear on democratization nor, per se, reflect counterdemocratic values.

Coups that end monarchical governments are potentially a step toward republican government, and as such, are not necessarily antidemocratic. However, they often became even more tyrannical than the monarchies they overthrew. Examples are Gen. Mohammed Naguib's overthrow of King Farouk of Egypt in 1952, Captain Muammar al-Qaddafi's overthrow of King Idris al-Senussi of Libya in September 1969, and Lt. Col. Mengistu Halie Mariam overthrow of Emperor Hallie Selassie of Ethiopia in September 1974. These countries retain elements of despotism uptil 2007. Of the three countries, only Ethiopia has democratized significantly despite its considerable clamp on civil liberties, including press freedom. Egypt remains an authoritarian state with marginal concessions to civil liberties. In Libya, Gaddafi has enjoyed a 37-year longevity that would be the

envy of any monarch anywhere. In combination, the experience of these countries suggests that military coups are not the ideal means of transition from monarchical rule to democracy.

The second category of coups merely transfers power from one faction or rival in the military to another. As such, they often exemplify what Jenkins and Kposowa (1990, 872) refer to as an "elite-based conflict of the spoils of political rule." However, such coups may be antidemocracy or pro-democracy, depending on their ultimate aim. Some coups against military regimes are intended to scuttle transitions to democratic governance. A few are intended to end unpopular dictatorships and make transitions to democracy. Notable among them was Amadou Toumani Toure's overthrow of General Moussa Traore in Mali in 1991. Traore oversaw an election within a year and handed over power to the winner, Alpha Oumar Konare. Significantly Traore became a national hero. When Konare's maximum two five-year terms ended in 2002, Traore contested and won the presidential election as a member of a different party.

The third category of coups, the overthrow of a military-installed civilian government, is only partially a coup given that in such instances the military already were significantly in control. Such were the cases of General Christophe Soglo, who twice installed and removed civilian governments in Benin in the 1960s; and General Sani Abacha, who forced out Nigeria's military-installed civilian government in 1993 and promoted himself from defense minister to head of state. Still, such coups represent a setback for democracy because the overthrown civilian governments tend to engage in at least a modicum of democratic processes.

The coups that are most damaging to democratization and consolidation are those against elected governments. It is not that elected governments are necessarily true democracies. In fact, in many cases the elections that bring the governments to power are rigged or conducted in ways that neutralize the opposition. In such instances, the legitimacy of the government is understandably in question. However, even in such worst-case scenarios—and there have been quite a few in Africa—military interventions have not been the answer. Rather than rectify the problem, they often retarded the processes of political reform and democratic evolution.

The typical reasons given by coup leaders are: economic distress among the populace, mismanagement, political struggle between units of government, social unrest, lack of visionary leadership, injustice, and, especially, government corruption (Decalo 1990; Jenkins and Kposowa 1990; Onwumechili 1998; Kandeh 2004). Major

Nzeogwu's indirect explanation of the coup that ended Nigeria's First Republic subsumed most of these reasons: "The aim of the Revolutionary Council is to establish a strong, united and prosperous nation, free from corruption and internal strife" (see Agbese 2000, 11). When Colonel Bedel Bokassa seized power in Central African Republic on January 2, 1966, his justification was that he wanted to redress social injustice. In Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta), Lieutenant Colonel Sangoule Lamizana explained his coup of January 5, 1966 as necessary to preserve peace. The coup followed a general strike that had lasted for four days, as workers protested the government's austerity measures.

However, there often are less pious reasons than the ones given. As already noted, class interests, ethnic/elite rivalry, and personal ambition are common reasons for coups. Bokassa's coup in Central African Republic, for instance, followed a reduction in pay for the army, as part of the government's effort to limit expenditure (Nigerian *Sunday Times*, January 2, 1966). Similarly, in 1963, Togolese soldiers who returned from serving in the French army overthrew the government of Sylvanus Olympio, after he refused to absorb them into the Togolese army (Kandeh 2004).

On occasion, coup makers are frank about such interests, though they wrap their expression within the rhetoric of the general welfare. When, for instance, General Murtala Mohammed overthrew the post-civil war government of General Yakubu Gowon in Nigeria, the justification was that "the Government has not been able to fulfill the legitimate expectations of our people" and that "Nigeria has been left to drift" (see Agbese 2000, 46). But General Mohammed was also frank enough to add: "Unknown to the general public, the feeling of disillusion was also evident among members of the Armed Forces whose administration was neglected but who, out of sheer loyalty to the Nation, and in the hope that there would be a change, continued to suffer in silence" (see Agbese 2000, 47). Concerns about such dissatisfaction often led African governments to spend disproportionate amounts of money on the military to ensure their loyalty at the expense of the general welfare.

Some coups result from personal ambition, the case of Congo (Kinshasa) being a prime example. Although Congo had experienced considerable political turmoil, including a secessionist war, there was some progress toward stability when Mobutu overthrew the government of Joseph Kasavubu. In the wake of fierce power struggle between Kasavubu and Prime Minister Tshombe, Congo had scheduled an election for the following year. Mobutu canceled the

elections and declared that he would retain power for five years. He kept it for 32. He apparently did not want to take chances with an election that could have lessened his justification for seizing power. Sometimes fears of or resentment over not being promoted have been reasons for coups. The overthrow of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana in 1966 by Colonel Emmanuel Kotoko and General Joseph Ankrah is said to be so motivated, as was the 1972 overthrow of President Kofi Busia by then Colonel Ignatius Acheampong (Decalo 1990).

And then there were coups rooted in revolutionary fervor or principled, if sometimes naïve, attempts to steer the polity in the right direction. Coup makers in this category are those who fit this characterization of the military, as written by a participant in Ghana's first coups:

> The military, apart from being nationalistic, could be generally described as strongly puritanical, hence their dislike for corruption and general decadence. The military demand the qualities they see in themselves, for example, dedication and selfless service, in the society of which they form a part. Their view of morality embraces modesty, quiet efficiency and non-indulgence in both private and official life (Ocran 1977, 65).

Among Africa's coup makers, the closest to this idealized description would be Flight Lieutenant Rawlings of Ghana, Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, and arguably Major Nzeogwu of Nigeria. Libya's Gaddafi would readily fit this mold as well, except that his self-perpetuation in power can hardly be seen as selfless.

Nzeogwu's case has been discussed in the preceding chapter. Suffice to note here, that it appears that the crisis in Western Nigeria merely provided the young majors an opportune circumstance to stage a coup. As Ademola Ademoyega, one of the majors that led Nigeria's first coup d'etat, narrates he and Ifeajuna were already convinced by 1961 that a military revolution was the only path to Nigeria's political salvation (Ademoyega 1981). Nigeria was then barely one year old as an independent country. With such insipient revolutionary fervor, a coup was just a matter of time. How the Nigerian majors' idealism would have shaped the course of Nigerian politics will never be known. After the coup stalled, Nzeogwu and his colleagues were forced to hand over power to their superior officers, and that precluded any implementation of their political ideals. In any case, it was unlikely that they would have lasted in office given the countercoup and civil war that soon followed. Rawlings' and Sankara's cases are more illustrative of the manifestation of the idealism of military interventions in Africa. As will be argued subsequently, however, the

cases suggest that, even with the best of intentions and practices, military interventions have proven that political problems are best solved politically.

Rawlings' Coups

Although Rawlings has his critics, his first coup seems motivated by genuine concern for the welfare of the people rather than personal ambition or group interest. As a teenager he had seen first hand the impact of corruption on the welfare of the people. As Shillington (1992) narrates, for instance, Rawlings was chagrined to witness the collapse of buildings meant for the resettlement of Ghanaians displaced by the construction of a dam. The buildings were poorly constructed not because of incompetence or lack of funds, but because the people in charge stole and sold bags of the cement meant for the constructions. "He had been brought up to believe that people in authority should display the highest standards of integrity and yet everywhere he saw numerous examples of people in authority illegally enriching themselves at the expense of the poor and the helpless" (Shillington 1992, 34).

By the time Rawlings was commissioned in 1969 as a pilot officer in the air force, Ghana had already had its first military coup. He was in the service when Ghana experienced its second successful coup in 1972. However, the succeeding military regimes did not fare better in improving the conditions that ostensibly inspired the coups. Rawlings, who had been promoted to flight lieutenant in 1978, defied military protocol and expressed his displeasure in what was a measured mutiny. The government, which was then headed by General Fred Akuffo, promptly arrested Rawlings and put him on trial. But Rawlings' sentiments represented those of the rank and file of the military, as well as of the general populace. On June 4, 1979, a subaltern coup ended Akuffo's regime and, on the same day, Rawlings left what was essentially a death row and became Ghana's new head of state.

Under popular pressure, Rawlings ordered the "trial" and execution of the last three military heads of state—Acheampong, Afrifa, and Akuffo—along with several other top military officers. Death sentences and long prison terms were similarly imposed on several other officers and civilians after secret trials that echoed the bloodbath of the French Revolution.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the selfless spirit of the coup, Rawlings continued with elections planned for that year. Barely five months after coming to power, Rawlings handed over power to Dr. Hilla Limann, who had won the run-off presidential election. In his hand-over speech,

however, Rawlings pointedly reminded Limann that he would be under watch by the military. The watch did not last long. On December 31, 1981, Rawlings ousted Limann in another military coup. The ostensible reason was that Limann was not doing enough to pursue the goal of the revolution. Moreover, insecurity about Rawlings' threat had led Limann's government to try to neutralize his clout. As will be more fully discussed, this second coup is more emblematic of the military's tendency to impose itself because it can.

Nonetheless, Rawlings led Ghana through a period of difficult political and economic transitions. The Ghanaian economy bottomed out under his watch. Inflation was in excess of 100 percent, and the currency, the cedis, became essentially worthless in the exchange market. Rawlings had to resort to the very austerity measures from which he and previous revolutionaries said they wanted to rescue Ghanaians. He had little choice but to accept the stringent terms of economic restructuring imposed by international lending institutions. He instituted market reforms and unprecedented austerity measures. Impoverished Ghanaians who could not cope with the situation teemed to neighboring countries, especially Nigeria.

Yet, with a reservoir of the confidence of the populace and a dose of repression, Rawlings was able to stay the course until the Ghanaian economy began a gradual yet remarkable recovery. Meanwhile, he survived several coup and assassination attempts. In 1992, after about 11 years of military rule, Rawlings felt confident enough to accede to pressures to return Ghana to democratic rule. He contested in and won the election, with his party claiming about 94.5 percent of the seats in Parliament. The margin of victory resulted from opposition boycott of the election in protest of its contrived nature. "However, the voters did not boycott the election, thus giving legitimacy to Rawlings' victory" (Mwakikagile 2001, 48).

Rawlings renewed his mandate in 1996 in an election that was more closely contested and considered fairer. Rawlings' stepped down in 2000 in keeping with the constitutional limit of two terms. In what suggests the level of consolidation of Ghana's democracy, Rawlings would-be successor in the National Democratic Congress lost the election that year to the opposition. Thus, Rawlings the revolutionary could be credited with restoring Ghana to a relatively stable democracy and conservative economy. Yet, as Rawlings would concede, Ghana did not transcend its civic, political, and economic problems during his 19-year continuous tenure. Ghana's democratic evolution is only now beginning.

Sankara the Robin Hood

Rawlings coup in Ghana inspired junior officers in other African countries. Whereas most were motivated by the desire for power, a few shared Rawlings ideals. Among the latter group were the junior officers who overthrew the government of Burkina Faso (then Upper Volta) in 1983 and installed Captain Thomas Sankara as head of state. Though Sankara's regime was short-lived, he established the reputation of a conscientious officer who wanted the best for his country. "Dubbed the 'Robin Hood of the Sahel,' Thomas Sankara was the most visionary leader of the militariat to emerge in Africa.... His abiding sense of mission, clarity of purpose, and sincerity of efforts to empower and uplift his country's peasants stand out as shining examples of an alternative possibility for the militariat" (Kandeh 2004, 62).

Sankara ascended power in August 1983, following Burkina Faso's fourth successful post-independence coup. As recounted by Kandeh (2004), earlier in the year, the socialist Sankara had resigned from the government of Commander Jean-Baptiste Quedraogo because of ideological differences and was promptly arrested and imprisoned. Sankara's ideological ally, Captain Blaise Compoare, escaped and lead an attack that freed Sankara and overthrew Quedraogo's government. From 1983 until 1987, Sankara led a government that "represented a blend of nationalism, Marxism-Leninism, Pan-Africanism and anti-imperialism" (Kandeh 2004, 125). Sankara's regime pursued policies of mass political empowerment, economic self-sufficiency, government transparency, and ascetic discipline and self-sacrifice on the part of the political leaders.

It was the Sankara government that changed the country's name from Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, a name that suggests the transformative spirit of the regime. Sankara explained in a *Newsweek* (November 19, 1984, 68) interview that Burkina stands for nobility and uprightness while Faso means community. However, the ideals did not prevent rivalry and infighting within the ruling cadre. Sankara was assassinated in a palace coup on October 15, 1987, ending one of Africa's most spirited attempts at principled leadership.

As will be discussed in more detail later, it is evident from these cases that military interventions are inherently problematic. They often are motivated by less than patriotic reasons. Even when they are grounded in principles, they are still liable to the contradictions and intrigues of their existence. Yet, in most instances, they were welcomed, sometimes even courted, by the press and the general public.

Press and Popular Support for Coups

With few exceptions, military coups in Africa were met with press and popular support. Coup announcements typically engender widespread jubilation on the streets and fawning editorials in newspapers. The primary reason is that when people are in economic distress or under political turmoil, the natural tendency is to seek a messiah to deliver them. In many African countries, the military were perceived as that messiah and they presented themselves as such after every coup.

Moreover, Africa's politicians—in and out of government—often failed to be true democrats and public servants. There was widespread tendency for those in power to become megalomaniacs and forget the very principles of democracy that put them in power. Ghana's Nkrumah was probably the most notable in this regard among Africa's first cadre of political leaders. Other leaders were ostentatious, corrupt, and superficial in their commitment to the well being of their people. Opposition politicians were not any better. Quite a few were guided by the cynical view that if they could not get power or its spoils, they would frustrate the efforts of the government by various means, including incubating violent resistance. Nkrumah, for instance, faced assassination attempts and political sabotage early in his tenure as head of state. His defensive reaction to the experience must have contributed to the despotic tendencies of his government.

That elections rarely led to a change of government sometimes made political situations seem hopeless for those seeking change. Elections were often rigged. Even when they were not rigged, the fields of contest were typically stacked against opponents. Presidents and prime ministers often built a cult of personality through populism, prebendal relationships, and/or the support of their majority ethnic groups. The state-owned media also served as their mouthpieces. Thus entrenched, they gear policies toward maintaining the resulting privileges rather than pursuing policies of long-term benefit for the populace. Given the prevalence of such circumstances, Africa's ambitious or activist military always had abundant reasons for intervening, and those reasons usually resonated among the populace.

Alas, support for military rule often manifests a belief in the magic wand for economic and political problems. As Ocran (1977, 116), writes, "In Africa where the political awareness is low people become enthusiastic about military rule mainly out of ignorance of its true nature." Even people in a position to know better are often blinded by immediate interests, including political partisanship. Those at the

losing end of political contests sometimes court military intervention or welcome it once it occurred.

For instance, in 1983, during an election in Nigeria's Second Republic, the *Nigerian Tribune* for several days ran on the corner of its front page: "Those who make peaceful change impossible, make violent change inevitable." The quote of Bobby Kennedy's[3] remarks in the context of American politics had much more ominous implications in a country where a military coup and a civil war had followed an electoral crisis. In fact, Nigeria's political circumstances in 1983 were remarkably similar to the situation in 1965.

The 1983 election pitted the incumbent National Party of Nigeria (NPN) against the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and the Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP) as the three major parties. Though the parties had, by law, become more integrated in ethnicity and region, they roughly paralleled the NPC, AG, and NCNC parties of the First Republic. As with the NPC in 1965, the NPN was the incumbent and dominant party in 1983 and was considered capable of and inclined toward rigging the elections. The *Tribune*, which was sympathetic toward the AG, ran the warning as a reminder of the post-election crisis of 1965 and the attendant coup. It was not a facetious warning. The government of President Shehu Shagari was overthrown on December 31, 1983, merely weeks after it was reelected. And the opposition press applauded.

Such a favorable reaction to a coup was all too common among Africa's opposition parties. When Mobutu overthrew the government of President Joseph Kasavubu in 1965, his rival, Moise Tshombe, welcomed the coup. That was until Mobutu cancelled forthcoming elections and announced that he would retain power for five years. Sometimes opposition parties even collaborate with the military to effect a coup. For instance, the unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the democratic government of Gambia in 1981 was backed by one of the opposition parties (Mwakikagile 2001).

Strangely enough, African political leaders often enthusiastically embraced military regimes on the continent. One such instance yielded an irony of ironies. When Mobutu overthrew Kasavubu in December 1965, the then Nigerian prime minister, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, instantly cabled his congratulations and pledge of cooperation. As reported in the *Daily Times* of December 4, the day after the coup, Balewa's message read in part: "Having noted the change of government which has recently taken place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I wish, on behalf of the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to offer you and your government our

sincere good wishes." Balewa could not have imagined that his government would be overthrown a little over a month later in a military coup that took his life.

Once the military is in power, civilian groups sometimes insist on their staying. In Nigeria in 1979, General Obasanjo's transition program—and ultimate handover to an elected government—was opposed by "several groups and persons" (Agbese 2000, 65). Later, in the 1990s, Generals Ibrahim B. Babangida and Abacha exploited such vested interests to prolong their regimes. For instance, the loftily named Association for Better Nigeria—a civilian group that crusaded for continued military rule—was instrumental in the annulment of the presidential elections of 1993, an act that brought Nigeria to the brink of another civil war. Such vested interests also facilitated General Abacha's subsequent attempt to metamorphose from a military dictator to an elected president. By the time he died suddenly in 1998, he had coopted the support of the five political parties that would have been vying for leadership of the country. Though Abacha was ruthless in dealing with opponents, it was improbable that he garnered the parties' supports just by wielding the stick. He must have dangled quite a few carrots as well.

An editorial by the Ghanaian *Daily Graphic* of February 28, 1974 typified the unabashed belief in the efficacy and necessity of military regimes in Africa. The editorial chided critics of military rule for failing to acknowledge the justifications for military coups. It offered the explanation that military regimes in Africa have come to be because of the decadence of African politics and the need for each African country to develop a form of democracy that suited its peculiar circumstances:

> There can scarcely be any controversy about the fact that the political stability being enjoyed by many African countries today is due to the work of the military governments.... Our own experience in Ghana is rich in facts that point at the inevitability and great value of most of the military takeovers. There is no question that our nation was on a steady course to political, economic and general social decadence if the military had not stepped in to steer affairs back into a new course towards national revival (quoted in Ocran 1977, 134).

The *Graphic* was an independent and feisty newspaper before the Nkrumah government acquired it in 1962 (Asante 1996). The editorial appeared during the regime of Colonel Acheampong, who had overthrown Busia's elected government about two years earlier. Acheampong's government was itself overthrown by General Fred

Akuffo in 1977, and Akuffo was overthrown by Rawlings' supporters in 1979, amidst another transition to democracy. If, indeed, the military were as much a blessing to Ghana as the *Graphics* claimed, there would have been no need for the overthrow of so many military regimes. Significantly, the reasons for most of these coups—whether against elected governments or military regimes—were carbon copies of those for the preceding coups: concentration of power, corruption, and deteriorating economy.

As a matter of fact, military regimes often proved incapable of handling the problems for which they ostensibly seized power. Even the best-case scenarios, such as Rawlings, still had to muddle through to some measure of success. And that has exposed the myth of a military solution. In general, the performance of the African military regimes dashed the predictions of those who saw them as disciplined agents of Africa's modernization and political stability (see, for instance, Pye 1962; Levy 1966). Their failure inheres in their liabilities and contradictions.

Problems of Military Rule

The fundamental problem of military rule—irrespective of their real or ostensible reason for coming to be—is that governance is a political matter, and that is not the province of the military. The corollary to this assertion is also its paradox: The politicization of the military occurs in tandem with their being drawn into the very morass of politics: the factionalism, the corruption, and the larceny. This robs them of what reputation they enjoyed as the guardians of the national interest. As Ocran, the former Ghanaian military officer, writes: "In fact most armies that get involved directly and massively in running governments become corrupt.... If the impression has been created that the military in Ghana, Nigeria or elsewhere are above corruption it is because the military in these countries have not in the past been exposed to corruptive influences" (Ocran 1977, 115–116).

Inherent liabilities

More than that, military regimes are saddled with a number of other inherent or self-created liabilities. First, they do not provide for retention decisions and transfer of power, when applicable. Second, the maintenance of power that was neither conferred democratically nor inherited by tradition carries with it the burden of illegitimacy. Third, the very fact of military coups legitimizes violent, extralegal, and nefarious means of attaining goals or imposing a political order.

Fourth, even when the military are successful in stabilizing a country politically and economically, they often have the effect of a lid on a boiling pot. Sooner or later, the steam will burst out—during or after the regime. The fifth and most consequential liability of military interventions is that they delay or even regress the development or entrenchment of democratic ethos, institutions, and processes.

The essential difference between military and civil rule is that the latter allows for a formal procedure for retaining or changing a government. This applies as much to communal governments (as in traditional African societies), communist governments (as in China), and the pluralist and liberal democracies (as in the West and elsewhere). Without such a procedure, there is only one means of changing the head of state, and that is through a coup. Given this reality, military governments necessarily function in a paranoid mode. They readily perceive disagreements and criticisms as threats. Accordingly, they resort to elaborate, and sometimes draconian, mechanisms of control and repression. Such is the case, incidentally, with quasi-military regimes, such as Gaddafi's in Libya, Castro's in Cuba, and Kim Jong II of North Korea.

Related to the procedure for retention or change is the problem of legitimacy. All governments somehow derive their legitimacy via recognition of their authority by the people. Such recognition confers authority, which is different from power. When governments come to be through an established process, including succession by tradition, they are conferred with authority, which legitimizes their power. Military governments, in contrast, lack nominal legitimacy because they usurp power, often through violent and bloody means. The inherent insecurity requires, on the one hand, the use of coercion and violence to consolidate power and, on the other hand, the cooption of potential opponents or rivals through prebendal deals.

However, military regimes often obtain legal legitimacy by having the ousted government sign over their authority. More important than legal authority, they typically seek popular legitimacy by appealing directly to the people. They justify their coup by discrediting the ousted government and arguing that it had lost its legitimacy by failure to live up to certain expectations of the people. To the extent that the people find such explanations valid—and in Africa, they readily did—the military gain legitimacy and authority through popular acceptance. However, such acceptance is often short-lived, as military governments typically become guilty of the failings of the governments they overthrew. At this point, the absence of a procedure for retention or change creates tension, which is often resolved by another

military coup. And the cycle continues until there is a transition to civil rule. Even then, the military would often return for virtually the same reasons as before.

Ironically, military regimes often create or intensify problems that destabilize the civil governments that succeed them, and that becomes a justification for subsequent overthrow of these governments. This is part of the reason that democratization often becomes its own undoing, as it unleashes forces that undermine democratic governance. A factor of this paradox is the military's legitimization of violence as a means of reaching political goals. This is the ultimate manifestation of civic cynicism. It is a common phenomenon that after the military steps into politics, the incidence of militarized conflicts goes up, even at the communal level. Not only do military regimes legitimize violence, they also facilitate its actualization, as they tend to make arms more widely available. In Nigeria, for instance, the military revolt of Isaac Boro in the Niger Delta came on the heels of the coup of January 15, 1966. Improbable as Boro's rebellion was, he remains an inspiration for the more potent insurgency that continues to bedevil the Niger Delta. The pattern has been repeated in Uganda, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, among several other countries.

Moreover, as noted earlier, one of the means by which military governments seek legitimation is to coopt support by doling out favors to different groups. This has the tendency to pit groups against one another in conflicts that otherwise would seem senseless. As Agbaje (1992, 17) has written, "there tends to be a correlation between state allocation of resources along the lines of class, ethnicity, religion, and regionalism, for instance, and the encouragement of disruptive fissures along these same lines of cleavage . . . ." Such allocations are more problematic under military regimes because they are often not subjected to democratic processes of rationalization. Rather, they are extended to pacify opponents or to coopt groups that would provide leverage against opposition. General Babangida, who presided over Nigeria from 1984 to 1993, was renowned for this tactic that came to be known as settling. It is strategically targeted appeasement that often engenders or intensifies group rivalries and political fissions.

Even when military regimes establish a stable political and economic order, it is often ephemeral. The military rule by decrees, many of which are untenable in the normal processes of democracy, including judicial review. In Ghana, for instance, Rawlings' first, brief regime forced inflation down by martial measures, including the arrest and imprisonment of people who sold goods above imposed prices. "But once the hammer of the AFRC [Armed Forces Revolutionary

Council] was lifted, there was little beyond wishful thinking to prevent inflation from soaring again" (Shillington 1992, 71). Similarly, with regard to politics, the contestations inherent in democratization will ultimately play out once the repressive lid is lifted. Thus, in many cases, the military merely postpones the inevitable: the contentious working out of political differences. And as already noted, such delays often and eventually result in militarized and militant contestation.

When the military hand over power to an elected government under provisions that their decrees and decisions be retained, they sometimes are not and cannot. The AFRC, for instance, imposed long prison sentences on hundreds of Ghanaians, military and civilian, and stipulated in the provisions for transition to an elected government that the sentences should not be reconsidered. But the parliament and courts bulked. Though President Limann wanted to abide by the provisions, as did the Supreme Court—with considerable reservations—the trial courts released most of the prisoners on technicalities, anyway. Meanwhile, Limann could not intervene to stop the releases because of constitutional guarantees of judicial independence (Shillington 1992). Yet these releases were part of the reasons Rawlings seized power again about two years later.

Of all the liabilities of military regimes, their disruption of the democratization process and even alternative forms of civil governance is the most egregious for purposes of this analysis. All of the liabilities discussed above add up to this. As Ihonvbere (1998, 61) writes in one case analysis:

> However one looks at the Nigerian experience, the military has been a disaster to the process of political development. Its frequent intervention has subverted the possibilities for development in several areas. It has failed to nurture the emergence of a rational and responsible political class. It has failed to give the country a workable political structure worth the name, as reflected in the creation of ever more states. It has reduced the worth of the judiciary and the academy through constant harassment and the politics of domestication and incorporation.

One could dispute some aspects of Ihonvbere's indictment of Nigeria's military regimes. For instance, the presidential system of government that General Obasanjo's military regime instituted in 1979 is entirely workable, if only Nigerians had the civic values to make it work. And the military's creation of ever more states resulted from incessant agitation from the people affected. Still, Ihonvbere is essentially on the mark. Military interventions in Nigeria have stunted the development of the civic values and political sensibility necessary for sustaining a

democratic order. The same could be said of most of the African countries where the military usurped power for prolonged periods or repeatedly cut short attempts at democratic governance.

As suggested in the discussion of the Rawlings and Sankara regimes, some military regime leaders rose above the corrupting influence of their countries' politics and were principled in their drive to cleanse the political order. But even such regimes were not beyond the general liabilities of military regimes discussed here. Sankara was killed in a coup, the only way to change military regimes. The case of Ghana and Rawlings illustrate the inherent problem of military regimes even better.

Best-case Scenario and the Futility of Military Rule

Rawlings was, perhaps, the most successful of sub-Saharan African military leaders. He led Ghana through a period of most remarkable economic and political transition from 1981 to 2000. Yet his regime illustrates why, as O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, 32) put it, the military "must somehow be induced to modify their messianic image." Rawlings' relative success notwithstanding, his coup against Limann was still emblematic of the arrogance of military interventions. It reflected a certain attitude toward democracy as a system of government that may be expended with for any reason. In this sense, like most coups against elected governments, it reflects civic values that are inherently antidemocratic.

As Shillington (1992) and Mwakikagile (2001) note, Ghana's economy was in dire straits and was deteriorating when Limann was elected president and he was slow to take corrective measures. Like most democratic governments, the Limann government's immediate actions—the importation of consumer goods—were intended for the short-term gratification of constituencies. Such actions, along with crop failure, only worsened the economy (Mwakikagile 2001). However, late in 1981, the government began to take measures that could have fundamentally improved the economy. For instance, it increased prices of export produce (Shillington 1992), a measure that would raise the income of farmers and peasants while boosting production and the foreign exchange. Ghanaians would never know what impact those measures would have had on the economy because Rawlings overthrew Limann soon after. Among other things, Rawlings accused Limann of bringing the economy close to ruin.

By the same yardstick, Rawlings should not have lasted long enough to see his draconian policies yield dividend. As already noted, Ghanaians suffered immeasurably during his early years. Lacking opportunities

and hope, many of them abandoned their country in search of a better life in other African countries. Even some of the well off left on self-exile. "By 1983, the economy was in tatters, torn further by Nigeria's expulsion of 800,000 Ghanaians who were forced to return to their native land. Even before [then], the economy was just limping along, while some sectors had already collapsed" (Mwakikagile 2001, 48).

Inevitably, Rawlings came under vocal criticism, especially from students and the bar association. As Mwakikagile (2001, 43) put it, "in spite of his populist revolution, Rawlings incurred the wrath of many...Ghanaians who saw him, not as a benevolent dictator, but as a ruthless despot who shed blood without the slightest compunction." It took much less discontent to spur Rawlings' coup against Limann. In fact, between September 1982 and June 1983, Rawlings survived four coup attempts (Mwakikagile 2001). If any of those had succeeded, Rawlings would not have had the chance to become the success that he turned out to be.

Moreover, despite the executions and long-term imprisonments of hundreds of Ghanaians for corruption and other civic vices, Rawlings hardly reduced those vices. His frustration manifested in frequent public tirades against government officials, businesses, and various other segments of society. Eight years into his military regime and before his transformation into a civilian president, Rawlings conceded his failures with uncommon candor:

> Despite probes, Committees of Enquiry, dismissals and prosecutions of wrongdoers, despite restructuring exercises, new management, the provision of new equipment and capital, many of our organizations, state enterprises and corporations continue to swallow public money and fail to provide the services and goods which we expect of them, and also fail to pay their tax obligations, dividends and other expected revenues.
>
> Too many people in these outfits, from management to workforce, still steal, embezzle and cheat (Ayittey 1992, 139, quoting from the *People's Graphic*, January 6, 1990).

The phrase "from management to workforce" is especially noteworthy as it suggests the insidiousness of the problem. When the military intervene, they often provide simplistic analyses of national problems. Few are candid enough to admit afterward that the challenges are beyond them. Rather, they savor the spoils of power until they are overthrown or pressured into a democratic transition. Few voluntarily relinquish power to a democratic government and stand by the democratic process rather than scuttle it.

Rawlings and a number of other military leaders sought to have it both ways: They bowed to demands for multiparty elections, but used their clout to ensure that they are elected. Rawlings, who distrusted pluralistic democracy, called for elections within three months of the announcement in 1992. The short period virtually guaranteed that he would be elected. "The major opposition parties barely had enough time to start canvassing for votes" (Panford 1998, 123). Opposition boycott of the elections further assured Rawlings election.

As noted earlier, Nigeria's General Abacha attempted a similar transition in 1998, apparently having Rawlings as a role model. But, unlike Rawlings, he did not want to take chances with even the façade of a contest. He had all five political parties nominate him as their candidate. If Abacha had not died suddenly and mysteriously before realizing his goals, his scheme certainly would have taken Nigeria closer to the brink of another civil war.

The role model for both Rawlings and Abacha must have been Lieutenant Colonel Sangoule Lamizana of Burkina Faso. He seized power in 1966 and transformed himself into a president in 1969. However, again unlike Rawlings, he did not bother to go through the façade of competing for the office; he merely held a referendum to approve a constitution under which he would be president and have the power to appoint the prime minister. When a standoff arose in 1974 between the prime minister and the leader of the national assembly, Lamizana again suspended the constitution, dissolved the assembly, and appointed a new government (Kandeh 2004). Such was the absoluteness of military power in some African countries and the attitude to democracy.

What followed Lamizana's 15-year rule further encapsulates the liability of military rule in Africa. Lamizana was overthrown in November 1980 by Colonel Saye Zerbo. Two years later, Zerbo was overthrown in a coup led by Colonel Gabriel Yarian Some. The resulting government was headed by Commander Jean-Baptiste Quedraogo, who fell out with and imprisoned radical junior officers in the government, including Sankara and Compaore. Compaore escaped and lead a coup against Quedraogo that installed Sankara as head of state in August 1983. Four years later, on October 15, 1987, Compaore's loyalists assassinated Sankara, giving Compaore the reins of power. Given the ideological consonance between the two, there hardly could have been a more cynical reason than that "Compaore felt overshadowed by Sankara" (Kandeh 2004, 139). To counter general displeasure over the killing of the populist Sankara, Compaore resorted to repressive measures to silence and eliminate opposition. Such was the bane of military interventions.

The End of Military Regimes

Though it would be a mistake to suggest that rampant military coups in Africa are things of the past, it could be said with some confidence that the worst is over. To begin with, African people have had enough experience with military regimes to realize that they do not hold the key to Africa's salvation. That military regimes, in general, have not improved the lots of African people is hardly disputable. That those regimes have taken a toll on lives, civil liberties, and democratic evolution is also self-evident. Even where the regimes had a measure of success, they were not worth the cost.

The end of the Cold War has also taken away a catalyst for military coups. During the peak of the Cold War, African countries were contest grounds. The United States and the Soviet Union—the superpower combatants in the Cold War—assessed African leaders in terms of whether their policies were capitalist- or communist-tending. And both rivals formulated friendly or hostile policies accordingly. The intelligence, arms, and leverage they provided—through the CIA and KGB, respectively—were major factors in whether a government survived or was overthrown (see, Stockwell 1978). For instance, Patrice Lumumba and Kwame Nkrumah both pursued socialist policies in Congo and Ghana, respectively, and earned the ire of the United States. The CIA played major roles in Lumumba's assassination in 1961 and Nkrumah's overthrow in 1966 (Stockwell 1978). It is important to stress that the superpowers did not necessarily carry out coups. They merely exploited internal class or ideological divisions.

Of greatest significance is that the African press has decisively turned against coups and military government, and so has the African populace (Bratton and Mattes 2004). As noted earlier, the press in some African countries welcomed and even courted military coups. Still, such support was typically short-lived as the press generally began to crusade for a return to democratic rule sooner than later. Such crusades became particularly vociferous in the 1990s, notably in Nigeria and Ghana. The Nigerian case best exemplifies resurgent press resistance to and discrediting of military rule in Africa.

The Nigerian Press and "June 12"

Between 1993 and 1999, the growing independent press in Nigeria fought what, in effect, was a pitched battle with the military government. The "June 12" crisis, christened after the event that precipitated

it, ended only after the military conducted elections and handed over to a civilian government in May 1999.

The crisis began soon after a presidential election on June 12, 1993. With a delay in releasing the official results of the election, rumors spread that it would be annulled. The press immediately started a campaign against such an action. The election was considered the most credible in postindependence Nigeria. Unofficial results indicated that it was won by a candidate from Western Nigeria, which, in Nigerian geopolitics, is a part of the South. If the victory had stood, it would have given Nigeria's top executive position to a Southerner for the first time in Nigeria's history. On June 23, General Ibrahim B. Babangida, the head of state, confirmed the rumors by announcing to a stunned nation that the election had, indeed, been annulled. His primary reason was that his government wanted to save the judiciary from embarrassing itself, a reference to conflicting court orders resulting from challenges to the election.

Given that the judicial process provided a definite means of resolving conflicting lower court rulings, there was little question that the election was annulled for a much different reason. At least two conjectures for the annulment were inevitable. The first was that the military just wanted to prolong its rule. The second was the Northern-dominated military did not want to hand over power to a Southerner. The third and least noted reason was that the presumed winner of the election, Mashood Abiola, was personally resented by top military officers. Given the cynicism in Nigerian politics, these are all plausible reasons. Perhaps, there was a little bit of each, along with sheer miscalculations of the country's mood (Soyinka 1996; Omoruyi 1999).

Whatever the reasons for the annulment, they pointed to the entrenchment and caprice of military rule. The independent press, which was heavily based in the South, objected and mounted a concerted pressure on the military to reinstate the election. When the advocacy failed, the press resorted to a scorching coverage of the regime.

To muzzle the criticism, the government unleashed unprecedented harsh measures against the press. Several newspapers were shut down for up to 18 months, including the Guardian, the Punch, and the Concord groups. These publishing houses were estimated to account for 50 percent of Nigeria's newspaper circulation at the time. Other newspapers and magazines were proscribed for shorter periods. Some of those that were not proscribed had several of their editions confiscated before they reached the newsstands. Meanwhile several editors and journalists were arrested and jailed. Some eventually went underground and continued publishing from there.

The harassment took its toll on the Nigerian press, forcing some publications, such as *Newswatch*, to tone down their scrutiny of the regime. But others continued defiantly, becoming even more vituperative in their attacks (Olorunyomi 1998; Ibelema 2003). In the end, the press succeeded in ensuring disillusionment with military rule. The press attacks established for the general populace that the military were, at least, as corrupt as the civilian politicians. Thus, the military's claim of a moral high ground was no longer tenable.

Though it took the mysterious death of the presiding dictator, General Sani Abacha, to create the opportunity for transition to an elected government, the independent press has to be credited with ensuring that military rule has become much less acceptable to Nigerians. And so, when the *Economist* predicted in January 2003 that the Nigerian military was "waiting not so patiently" to seize power again if problems arise from elections that year, a columnist for Nigeria's weekly magazine The *News* (January 13, 2003), could confidently assert: "Speaking of a military coup d'etat at this age is like exhuming a dinosaur."

A Ghanaian Case

The Nigerian press's epic battle with the military does not have an equivalent in Africa. This is not to say that the press elsewhere did not resist despotism. Though the press was to a greater extent dominated by government newspapers, it still engaged in some measure of criticism of the military governments. Notable in this regard among Ghanaian journalists was Elizabeth Ohene of the government-owned *Daily Graphic*. At a time of bloodletting during Rawlings revolution, Ohene's was a virtual lone voice in calling for a stop. As discussed earlier, hundreds of Ghanaians were executed, imprisoned, or publicly flogged in the months following Rawlings coup of June 4, 1979. Such was the revolutionary fervor and fear that the Ghanaian press and civil society remained mum on the bloodletting and compromise of due process. Ohene was the singular voice that called for an end to the brutish order. "She condemned the macabre slogan of the times, 'Let the blood flow!', and argued that any further executions would merely serve to brutalize the general public" (Shillington 1992, 55). Moreover, bloodletting was not the answer to Ghana's problems, she argued. When another round of executions followed, Ohene challenged the country's civil society to speak out, and gradually they did.

Ohene's courage is noteworthy for several reasons. First it was uncommon for journalists on government-owned news media to pointedly condemn the government on such a significant issue. Second,

the atmosphere was so charged that she had reason to fear not just government reprisal, but worse still, vigilante justice of radicalized groups, including students. While, indeed, the idealistic Rawlings applauded Ohene's courage, a mob attacked her office (Shillington 1992). Also significant is that Ohene's courage helped to facilitate journalistic independence and critical reportage of government policies in Ghana. That environment contributed to Rawlings reluctant transitions to multiparty democracy in 1979 and again in 1992.

Continental Solidarity

The press's discrediting of military rule complements an emergent supranational solidarity against it. Up to the late 1990s, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) steadfastly abided by a founding policy of not interfering in the affairs of its members. This policy was successful in minimizing the internationalization of conflicts on the continent. Its liability, however, was that unlike the European Union, it had little influence on the governing principles of its member states. This changed in 2002 when the OAU transformed into the African Union (AU), whose charter included provisions that required governments of member states to adhere to principles of good governance.

Even before the African Union abandoned the principle of noninterference, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) had abandoned this policy. In 1990, ECOWAS intervened in Liberia to arrest the prolonged civil war there. In 1997, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), as the intervention force was called, deployed in Sierra Leone to reinstate the overthrown president. This operation was engineered—ironically—by Nigeria's most infamous despot, General Sani Abacha. When in 1999, the brutal rebels overran and terrorized Freetown, the capital city, ECOMOG intervened again to eject the rebels. ECOWAS has since formally established the policy of not recognizing military coups. Coups since then in Niger (April 1999) and Guinea-Bissau (May 1999) have been vigorously opposed and reversed. A number of coups have since been reversed or checkmated by the regional solidarity. When President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo died in February 2005 and the military hurriedly changed the constitution to have Eyadema's son succeed him, there was concerted opposition from within West Africa and beyond. Eyadema's son, Faure Gnassingbe, was forced to call an election. Though the election was of questionable credibility and Gnassingbe won it, at least the message is clear that African governments no longer embrace coups of any kind.

Conclusion

That the African people and press have become disillusioned with military interventions is quite evident. It is certainly a factor in the democratic milestones that have been registered around Africa in the past few years. Even military officers have begun to tout the primacy of democracy. In October 1999, Nigeria's chief of army staff, Victor Malu, instructed his troops to shoot any officer who undertook a coup (Nigeria News Network, October 8, 1999). In July 2001, an army divisional general officer, Major-General Thaddeus Akande, urged members of the armed forces who were uncomfortable with the democratic order to quit the services (*Guardian*, July 8, 2001). Some officers were even saying what would have been heretical in the barracks up to the 1980s: that the military fare better under civilian rule. In 2001, for instance, the chief of staff of Nigeria's air force, Air Vice Marshal Jonah Donfa Wuyep, bragged to the press about the improved readiness of his personnel and attributed it to the return to democracy (*Guardian*, June 11, 2001).

The military in a number of countries are also undertaking public relations efforts to improve their image. In Ghana, for instance, the military sponsored an activities day in March 2002 to promote civilian-military relations (*Accra Mail*, March 4, 2002). In Nigeria the National War College sponsored a seminar in February 2003 on the topic, "The Media and the Military" (*Tell*, February 3, 2003). The seminar featured participants from the Nigerian press and academia, the various branches of the armed forces, and military officers from nine other African countries. Among the significant perspectives was a retired Nigerian air force officer's complaint that the press continued to be antimilitary four years after restoration of civilian rule. The deputy commandant of the college conceded, however, that military intervention in politics was to blame for press hostility toward the military. There was a consensus that military schools should introduce courses in military-press relations. Despite the differences, these occasions suggest a growing appreciation of the permanence of democracy and the military's niche in it.

Press Reembrace of Democracy

The African press's support for military rule was never wholesale or unconditional. For the most part, press support for military regimes had resulted from sycophancy and the dictates of ownership, as discussed earlier. Even in the bleakest periods of despotism, some journalists and news media took brave stands in calling for democracy or, at least, a liberalization of the polity. What is new in Africa's current political dispensation is the dominance of independent newspapers, the introduction of independent broadcasting, and a keen awareness that even as a short-gap measure, military rule is politically regressive. The military emperor has been shown to have no clothes. These realities and the global trend of liberalization have coalesced to spur the African press to assert its freedom more stridently, to take a more concerted stand against dictatorship, and to crusade for a deepening of democracy.

Not only has the press played its role in discrediting military regimes, it is also crusading against all of the malfeasance of adolescent democracy. It is crusading for the enhancement of democratic rights and processes and against corruption and other civic vices. In other words, the press is not just against military rule, it is also becoming a bulwark against the forms of civilian autocracy that dominated African polities along with—and sometimes indistinguishable from—military regimes. And, in some significant ways, the press is performing better in educating the public and inspiring the temperance necessary to sustain democracy. However, as will be discussed in this and subsequent chapters, the major deficiency in press performance is with regard to inculcating a deeper understanding of the necessities of democracy. Moreover, there remain elements of press coverage that hearken back to the era of the precedence of political loyalties over fidelity to democracy. But, as will be demonstrated, such press tendency is no longer dominant.

The Nigerian experience with consolidating elections in 2003 and 2007 is discussed in-depth as a case study. Of particular focus is the election of 2003, the first after the transition from military rule in 1999. As will be explained below, such elections have truncated Nigeria's democratization in the past. The election of 2007 was also very significant, as it was the first time that a prime minister or executive president has had to be replaced through constitutional stipulations. However, it was the election of 2003 that set the stage for the debacle of 2007, even as it held out promise for consolidation of Africa's largest democracy. The promise lies especially in the Nigerian press's performance during that election, which is contrasted with that of the 1960s to illustrate its transformation. Comparable press performance is also discussed with regard to several other African countries, including Zambia, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mali.

Shepherding an Election: A Case Study

The African press's renewed commitment to democracy is best illustrated with regard to the Nigerian press coverage of the country's consolidating elections in 2003. The Nigerian press approached the elections with considerable apprehension and delicateness. Having emerged from the most repressive period in its history, the press had more than the usual self-interest in wanting the survival of the nascent democracy. As summarized in the preceding chapter, the Nigerian press and individual journalists paid a considerable price in resisting the perpetuation of military by Generals Babangida and Abacha. As such they had reason to take a more than usual interest in helping to shepherd the democracy they sacrificed to bring about.

Moreover, consolidating elections—that is those that come at the end of the first term of a newly instituted democratic regime—have proven problematic in Nigeria. The first such election came in 1964, toward the end of the first term of Nigeria's first postindependence government. As discussed fully in Chapter 6, this election ultimately led to a military coup in 1966 and a civil war subsequently. Nigeria did not return to electoral governance until 1979. A consolidating election took place in 1983, and the incumbent government won. But as with the elections in 1964 and 1965, the election of 1983 was marred by irregularities. Though it did not engender widespread bloodshed as in 1965, it still generated political tension and some violence. This provided the military with a reason for another intervention just months later.

The coup of December 31, 1983 began another prolonged period of military rule that lasted until 1999. As discussed in Chapter 7, an election that was to return Nigeria to electoral rule in 1993 was annulled, plunging the country into a six-year crisis that threatened another civil war. Having done its part to restore electoral democracy in 1999, the Nigerian press was particularly keen on ensuring that democracy did not again flounder in 2003. However, Nigeria's record of consolidating elections did not inspire confidence. In fact, the press feared the worst and did its best to avert it. As the daily *National Interest*—then in its second year—editorialized on April 13, 2003: "Nigeria has a tryst with history on April 19, 2003. It is a tryst with history because that day will be either the beginning of the end of the geographical entity known as Nigeria or the end of the long and numerous beginnings the country has repeatedly had in the area of statecraft."

The press, of course, preferred the latter outcome. Relative to 1964–1965, the press's capacity to shepherd elections was much more enhanced in 2003 because of the dominance of independent newspapers and magazine and the introduction of nongovernmental broadcasting.

In 1964–1965, most of the major newspapers were politically affiliated and the broadcast stations were all owned by the federal and regional governments. Most were overt in their partisanship. By 2003 the press had become much less partisan, overall, and therefore more capable of shepherding a volatile democracy.

Preelection Anxieties

The elections of 2003 were conducted in a much more militarized context than the elections of 1964–1965. Though there was at least a façade of political realignment during the 2003 elections, the threat of political conflagration still loomed. The incumbent president in 2003, Olusegun Obasanjo, was from Western Nigeria, the flashpoint of Nigeria's other electoral crises. This was a diffusing factor.

However, there were other potential flashpoints. Though the incumbent party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), was substantially national in character, the competing parties reflected the regional/ethnic cleavages that bedeviled previous democratic regimes. The North, in particular, was itching to return to the pinnacle of national leadership. For the first time since independence it did not produce Nigeria's head of government/state, as of the election of 1999. Its elite political machinery, the Arewa Forum, wanted back the power. Accordingly, it backed the PDP's closest rival, the All

Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), which had its strongest following in the North. The third largest contending party, the Alliance for Democracy (AD) had its base in Western Nigeria and was seen as a reincarnation of the Action Group. Similarly, the All People's Party (APP) drew its strength from the Igbo of Southeastern Nigeria and was headed by Odumegwu Ojukwu, the erstwhile leader of the Eastern Region's attempted session. Added to this mix was the militarization of Nigerian politics in general and the increased militancy of Southern minority groups in particular.

The Nigerian press, therefore, had every reason to be jittery with the approach of the elections of 2003. Its response was two pronged. First, it sought to impress upon the political actors and the populace the dividends of democracy and why and how it could be sustained. Second, it raised alarms about activities and trends that could again scuttle democracy. The reminder to Nigerians of the importance of democracy actually began soon after the elections of 1999. The press seized every opportunity to demonstrate that the democracy had produced dividends. U.S. President Bill Clinton's visit to Nigeria in August 2000 provided a particularly visible, even if symbolic, opportunity for the argument. Given that Western countries shunned Nigeria during the prolonged military regime, the visit of a U.S. president soon after the restoration of democracy was covered to stress its connection to Nigeria's transition to democracy.

In an editorial in its issue of August 21, 2000, the Nigerian *Guardian* wrote: "The United States in particular treated Nigeria as a pariah nation.... Mr. Clinton's visit officially signals the end of Nigeria's isolation by America." Similarly, the newsmagazine *Newswatch* (August 28, 2000) reported that the visit "is seen in diplomatic circle as the high point of US endorsement of Nigeria's return to democracy." On the day of President Clinton's arrival, the *Guardian* quoted Samuel Berger, the national security adviser, as saying that Clinton's visit was to demonstrate "strong support for the most important democratic transition in Africa since the collapse of apartheid."

President Clinton's visit was also supposed to provide material democratic dividend. *Newswatch* (August 28, 2000) put it this way in a summary placed below the headline of its coverage: "Nigerians expect President Bill Clinton's three-day visit to the country to usher in a regime of economic, political and socio-cultural benefits." Given that there was no poll to back up this claim, this summation can only be interpreted as *Newswatch*'s projection of how Nigerians should perceive the visit. Other papers pursued the same theme. The *Guardian* (August 24, 2000) quoted an industrialist as saying: "Clinton's visit

should demonstrate confidence in the Nigerian economy, in Nigerian democracy, in the return of investment and in the protection of assets." *Tell* magazine (September 11, 2000) was more circumspect. In an article following the visit, the magazine would only report that the visit provides a "glimmer of hope for economic revival for a nation in distress."

In all, the papers effectively linked Clinton's visit to the reality of democratic governance and the prospect for economic revival. By the time President George W. Bush visited Nigeria about three years later, the euphoria of democracy had tapered off considerably. In fact, Nigeria was already mired in tensions arising from the conduct of the consolidating elections. Still, Bush's visit was also analyzed to suggest the dividends of democracy.

This was the theme that dominated coverage of preelection developments. The idea was that preservation of democracy took precedent over partisan advantages. The theme was encapsulated in an editorial by the daily newspaper the *Sun* (January 25, 2003). The concluding paragraph was italicized and underlined, and it reads in part: "We believe it is time to put a lie to the jinx of civilian-to-civilian transition." As will be further discussed, this theme of coverage contributed to the press's editorial stance that whatever grievances anyone had about the elections should be resolved peacefully through the democratic process.

The second thrust in the press's preelection coverage was to raise alarms regarding developments that could undermine the democracy. These included allegations of fraudulent printing of ballot papers, widespread importation of arms by politicians, a spate of political assassinations, all pointing to the prospects not only of bloody elections but of a violent aftermath. As Kayode Samuel, a columnist for the *Vanguard* (March 14, 2003), put it, "It is really all so depressing." There was little that the press could do about the cynical developments, except to point out their dangers to democracy, to urge particular actions, and to upbraid officials for not doing enough to deal with the problems.

Regarding discovery of fake ballots months before the elections, for instance, the daily tabloid the *Sun* (January 25, 2003) editorialized: "Every single Nigerian is already in tenterhooks over the coming April general elections. The least the electoral body should do is to calm frayed nerves and reassure all that it will conduct a free and fair polls." The emphasis on reassuring the people is quite significant. As with any democracy, confidence in the system is critical. Things often go wrong, as happens in advanced democracies such as the

United States; it takes confidence in the system to not let these problems wreck the system as a whole. Of course, electoral irregularities in Nigeria and a number of other African countries are much more serious than what are likely to happen in U.S. or European elections. However, the exaggerated perception of irregularities is a problem of its own. Thus, the editorial suggests, even in the midst of problems, any confidence-building measure might help.

Similarly, in an edition just before the elections, *Newswatch* magazine (April 14, 2003) reported on the preelection anxieties. The cover has as its main story the caption, "2003 Elections: My Fears—Guobadia." Despite the somewhat alarmist cover, the story itself was more about assurances than fears. This is comparable to the U.S. press's coverage of social and political problems. Even as it provides extensive coverage of problems, the U.S. press tends to reassure the public that all will be well (Gans 1979).

The spate of assassinations and violence in general posed the greatest threat to Nigerian democracy. In a matter of months before the elections, several high profile political figures in both the incumbent and opposition parties were assassinated. Most prominent among them were Bola Ige, the attorney general and a member of the ruling party, the PDP (December 2001) and Marshall Harry, a PDP defector and regional campaign coordinator for the second leading party, the ANPP (March 5, 2003). Just days before the presidential elections, President Obasanjo's daughter barely escaped what must have been an assassination attempt, as her traveling convoy was attacked and a driver and a guard were killed (*Vanguard*, April 22, 2003). The tension was palpable. As the columnist Kayode Samuel put it, Nigerian "politics seems to have fallen under the thumbs of warlords with formidable war chests and private armies, constituting themselves into states within the state."

Coverage of the tension tended to depict perpetrators of the violence as enemies of democracy. An editorial cartoon in the *Vanguard* (March 14, 2003) depicts a politician being chased by a Grim Ripper-like figure with a huge axe. The caption reads, "Don't ask for whom the bell tolls…it tolls for thee!" It was a message not just for politicians, but for all Nigerians. In his column following the death of Marhall Harry, Samuel wrote: "Democracy cannot be built on violence casually deployed. And we must take it that whoever goes about targeting political leaders for murder seeks to de-legitimize the democratic order…As we sympathize with the family of Dr. Marshal Harry, we must continue to remind ourselves of the danger we face from elements intent on using murder as a tool in their power games"

(*Vanguard*, March 14, 2003). The implicit appeal for solidarity against enemies of democracy contrasts with the significantly partisan and even inciting coverage of Nigeria's electoral crisis in 1965.

Some publications were, perhaps, unduly alarmist. *Tell* magazine, which was foremost in resisting prolonged military rule during the June 12 crisis, was also notable in this regard. Among its cover pages before the elections were the following: "Nigerians Fear for 2003" (January 6, 2003); "2003 Polls: States Set to Explode" (February 17, 2003); and "Gunning for Another June 12: Secret Moves to Scuttle Elections" (April 14, 2003). In all such coverage, the tone was neither partisan nor inciting. The thrust of the analyses was to prod those in relevant positions to take necessary measures to forestall problems. For instance, in the issue with the cover "Gunning for Another June 12," *Tell* provides critical analysis of the implications of calls to postpone the elections. Such calls in 1993 gave rise to a legal tussle that provided the military the ostensible reason for nullifying the elections of June 12 that year and precipitating a protracted political crisis.

Postelection Euphoria

When the elections took place without the feared bloodbath and chaos, the press was generally euphoric. The first elections April 12, 2003, were for the legislatures. In the years of parliamentary democracy, these would have been the decisive elections. But with the presidential system first instituted in 1979, the legislative elections were no longer paramount. Their execution and outcome, however, were pointers to what could be expected of the presidential and governorship elections that would follow. Still, given that the presidency had become the pivot of government, anxieties remained that election to this office might still prove to be the flashpoint. And so, when the elections were conducted on April 19 without the breakdown of order, the press was exuberant.

In the 1960s, the tone of the major newspapers and broadcast stations would have reflected the victory or loss of their affiliated political parties. But the largely independent press of 2003 covered the outcome not to celebrate or bemoan any party's victory, but to herald the triumph of democracy. The front pages of Nigeria's newspapers carried euphoric headlines. Almost unanimously the reports were to the effect that elections had been successful and violence-free. The front page of the *Sunday Punch* (April 13, 2003), for instance, was filled with headlines and photos that mostly celebrated this triumph of democracy. The major cover headline was in large,

yellow letters: "Peaceful poll, large turnout." Under this appeared the sub-cover titles: "I'm satisfied—Obasanjo" and "We've shamed critics—Guobadia." However, tucked in a rectangular box to the left corner of the page are the sub-cover titles, in smaller types: "Eight die in pockets of violence" and "Gunmen snatch ballots boxes…in Enugu." An election in which eight people died and gunmen snatched ballot boxes would not ordinarily be described as peaceful. That it was so described—almost universally—was indicative of what was feared.

In fact, it would appear that irregularities and discontent over the 2003 elections were comparable in significant respects to those in the 1964–1965 and 1983 elections. That contestations in 2003 did not escalate into a crisis is partly to the credit of the press and partly the result of an evolving political order in which the dominant party was no longer closely associated with any one region or ethnic group. The nonpartisan coverage gave commensurate voice to all sides. In addition to chronicling the problems, the press offered analysis that provided a counterbalancing perspective.

Defusing a Postelectoral Crisis

No sooner had the press—and all Nigerians—exhaled in relief than the realities of the "peaceful" election began to sink in. There were serious irregularities in several states and precincts. The losing parties protested vociferously. The runner-up party, the ANPP, was particularly strident. Its leader, Muhammadu Buhari, threatened mass action against the government. It was of no little significance that he was the military officer who overthrew the last reelected government. His coup was partly in response to complaints—and evidence—that the election was rigged.

Equally significant is that, like Obasanjo and Buhari, the presidential candidate who emerged third in the elections was a notable former military officer, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. It was Ojukwu who led Eastern Nigeria into secession, as Biafra, and precipitated the civil war of 1967–1970. Ojukwu, who competed as a candidate for the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA), joined Buhari in calling for rejection of the election results and resistance of its implementation. Not coincidentally, Ojukwu's party adopted a name and acronym that harkened back to 1965. As discussed in Chapter 7, Eastern Nigeria-dominated National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) party was a partner in the UPGA whose rivalry with the ruling Northern People's Congress (NPC) degenerated into

political and security chaos in Western Nigeria. As the daily the *National Interest* (April 13, 2003) put it in its preelection coverage: "To many political pundits Ojukwu's entrance into the presidential fray is a reminder that the issues that led to the Nigerian civil war are yet to be resolved."

The rigging of the 2003 elections illustrates the insidiousness of civic cynicism, especially to the extent that it involved the PDP. The PDP was clearly the dominant party in the country, with considerable support from all regions. There was little question that, in a fair election, it would have won a majority of the offices it competed for, including the presidency. To the extent that the party's operatives engaged in rigging, it was more out of inclination than necessity.

For instance, the PDP was popular enough in Rivers State to have readily retained the governorship and a majority of the legislature. Yet, Rivers State was considered the poster case for rigging in the 2003 elections. The results showed that the governor, Peter Odili, received 2.1 million of the 2.2 million reported votes, or about 95 percent. The claimed voter turnout was nearly the entire number of registered voters in the state. Moreover, the Transition Monitoring Group (TMG) reported poor voter turnout there resulting from rainfall in parts of the state, factional violence in the state capital, Port Harcourt, days before the election, and skepticism all around about the meaningfulness of voting. And so, the TMG's chairman, Festus Okoye, "came to the inevitable conclusion that the results from Rivers State did not represent the will of the people" (*Punch*, April 22, 2003). In reality, it is not so much that the governor's reelection did not represent the will of the people; it is that the election was so compromised that the result was not a valid gauge of that will. It certainly did little to inspire confidence in Nigeria's democratic process. Election monitors reported similarly serious irregularities in 10 other of Nigeria's 36 states and moderate problems in several more.

On the confidence-building side, independent monitoring groups rejected allegations of irregularity by losers in several other states. In Western Nigerian states, for instance, the dominant AD was virtually swept by the PDP, prompting allegations of rigging. The same states had rejected their native son, Obasanjo, in 1999. Then, he and his party lost the entire region, including his own state, Ogun. But the political dynamics were much different then. In 1999, the Yoruba, the constituent ethnic group of Southwestern Nigeria, perceived Obasanjo as a front for Northern powerbrokers. By 2003, Obasanjo and the PDP had gained enough trust and supporters in the region to

wrestle it from the AD. Thus, Okoye, of the TMG, was able to vouch for the credibility of the election in this region. This is of no little significance. Southwestern Nigeria, or the West, as it is also called, has been the most volatile region in Nigerian electoral history. As may be recalled, it was the region whose political conflagration in 1965 ultimately plunged Nigeria into a civil war.

The Press and Civics of Election Rigging

Though not all claims of electoral fraud were valid, there was sufficient irregularity in the 2003 elections to produce another volatile situation. The scope of the irregularities was such that even members of the PDP ultimately conceded it. This excerpt of an interview of Vice President Atiku Abubakar by the *Punch* (May 29, 2006) illustrates the open acknowledgement of the rigging.

> THE PUNCH: You have been described as a master strategist. How did you mastermind the rigging of the 2003 elections?
>
> ABUBAKAR: That's an unfair question. I did not conduct that election. It was conducted by the Independent National Electoral Commission. I'm just one single individual and I was in my home state in Adamawa where I voted. So, how would I have been the mastermind of the rigging of the elections? Was I in Rivers State? There was rigging in Rivers, did I rig there?

The interview was conducted at a time when Atiku and the PDP leadership, including President Obasanjo, were at loggerheads. And the governor of Rivers State, Peter Odili, was Atiku's presumed rival in the forthcoming 2007 elections. Still, Atiku's response to the newspaper's question was a significant admission by the second highest official on the PDP's ticket during the 2003 elections.

The problem of rigging and other irregularities presented the press with a challenge. With Buhari and other losing presidential candidates threatening mass action, there were serious concerns about Nigeria's democracy. The press had to toe a fine line. On the one hand, it had to report credibly on the irregularities and to condemn them. On the other hand, it had to be cautious about inflaming passions and cheering on a potentially destabilizing protest. The press's balancing act in this regard is quite consistent with the needs of a fragile democracy.

The press did not flinch from reporting the irregularities and giving voice to the losing parties and candidates. Whereas the first round of reporting on the elections was about its success, the focus soon

after was on what went wrong. In its first issue after the presidential elections, for instance, *Tell* magazine (April 28, 2003) emphasized the factors of PDP's victory, including especially its "routing of [the] AD" in the latter's stronghold. The acknowledgment of irregularities and some violence was buried in the penultimate paragraph of the long cover story. The editor's preface urged those who complained of rigging to "be careful not to jump to the wrong conclusions." By the following issue, however, *Tell* itself had reached that conclusion. Its cover of May 5, 2003 proclaimed: "PDP's Dubious Victory." In the story, the magazine reported and analyzed the various serious manifestations of rigging in several states. *Tell* and other independent publications apparently took off the gloves once the feared cataclysm did not materialize or seem imminent and the scope of the irregularities became evident.

Coverage by the weekly magazine the *News* presents a good case for analysis. Its special election issue (May 5, 2003) indicated the following three major stories: "PDP Under Fire"; "Opposition, Monitors Allege Fraud"; " 'There will be trouble'—Ojukwu warns." In these and other stories, the magazine reported on the discontent of losing contestants and the assessments of two major monitoring groups, sponsored, respectively, by the European Union (EU) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI). The NDI's group consisted of 50 monitors drawn from 12 African, Asian, European, and North American countries.

The *News* excerpted comments by aggrieved officials and reports by the monitoring group. The paper did not flinch in quoting some of the harshest verdicts:

> The election should better be cancelled or there will be trouble in this country. I will certainly reclaim my stolen mandate. I will use non-violent means to reclaim my mandate.
> —Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, APGA

> Let them announce Obasanjo as winner; he will be in power but his government will lack legitimacy. We will see how he will govern Nigeria.
> —Senator Uba Ahmed, ANPP

> Many instances of ballot box stuffing, changing of results and other serious irregularities were observed in Cross River, Delta, Enugu, Kaduna, Imo and Rivers State. The election in these states lack credibility and appropriate measures must be taken by the relevant authorities.
> —European Union Election Observer Mission

> The delegation witnessed widely varying electoral practices on April 19: those that were conducted in a generally orderly manner, where problems occurred but were localized and not likely to have a measurable impact on the outcome; and those where blatant malpractices clearly distorted the poll results in the areas where they occurred. Serious irregularities appeared more widespread in certain states; others were concentrated in areas within states.
>
> — National Democratic Institute

Much as the press was pointed in reporting the serious problems of the elections, it was also balanced and contextual. For instance, though the PDP seemed to have been the beneficiary of much of the irregularities, press reportage also pointed to instances in which it may have been victimized. For instance, the PDP attributed its loss of the governorship of Kano state to the ANPP to vote manipulation. In general, the analyses were balanced in pointing out legitimate and fraudulent factors of victory and defeat. Among other things, the press provided insights into developments that suggested that without the irregularities, the outcome of the elections would have differed only in specifics.

For instance, the *News*, like other publications, credibly explained the PDP's stunning success in the Western states, where the AD had dominated. Among the factors of the PDP's victory were the advantages of presidential incumbency, including the leverage to make deals and promises, and the financial means to saturate the airwaves with campaign commercials. These were enough to entice voters and inspire widespread, sometimes temporary, defections. For instance, to facilitate the reelection of Obasanjo, the Yoruba-dominated AD chose not to field a presidential candidate. The strategy must have backfired on the AD's candidates. Voters in the southwestern states apparently went beyond voting for Obasanjo to voting for his party's other candidates. Moreover, the PDP candidates had more campaign money to spend. As Idowu Obasa, a columnist for the *News* (May 5, 2003), put it: "These elections revealed beyond doubt that only a candidate with access to huge funds has a chance."

In other states and localities, rival party operatives struck deals with the ruling PDP to offer no contest. Governor Odili's margin of victory in Rivers State, for instance, resulted, at least in part, from such deals. As an indication, shortly after the elections, leaders of the ANPP in 17 local government areas of the state, along with other parties' chieftains, jointly and publicly defected to the PDP. Even those who did not defect from their parties jointly went to the State House to congratulate the governor and pledge their loyalty. As the

Daily Independent (July 10, 2003) summed it up: "With these developments, the opposition in Rivers State seems to have resigned to fate, and what has emerged is a state where the governor enjoys unparallel[ed] acceptance." A partisan coverage would have excluded this insight into an evidently compromised election.

There is, of course, the unmistakable irony that a state in which the governor was so widely accepted was also the state where independent monitors observed some of the most blatant rigging. The paradox is explained, perhaps, by Raheem Adedoyin, a publicity secretary for the PDP, who offered the improbable claim that "you can only rig where you are loved" (*Vanguard*, May 12, 2003).

As both an observer and would-be participant in the elections, I have first-hand knowledge of this anomalous association of electoral love and rigging. While on research sabbatical, I had eagerly registered to vote for the first time as a Nigerian. Alas, that was not to be. There was no voting at all in my precinct in the Bonny local government area in Rivers State. There was no ballot station, no election officials, and no party representatives. The voting there, as in a number of other precincts, had apparently been predetermined. Even the voters in the rural precinct seemed to know that. No one milled around in search of a ballot station. It has always been like that, I was told by those who had been there during previous elections.

From all indications, local party chieftains had conceded the elections to the PDP primarily to avert violence and personal dangers and secondarily to secure whatever concessions and rewards they could. (In past elections, local party leaders have had to go into hiding to protect themselves from hired thugs.) Even with the deals, it was improbable that every voter in that precinct would have voted for the incumbent governor and party. That the balloting was preempted by deal making could only intensify cynicism toward elections, irrespective of individual party loyalties.

A not so aberrant factor of the elections is the electability of the contending candidates. The press duly reported on this factor by analyzing the major candidates' liabilities. Regarding the presidential election, the press reported on the considerable political baggage of Buhari's candidacy. To begin with, his military government from December 1983 to August 1985 was considered one of Nigeria's most draconian. The regime was especially notorious for its Decree No. 4, which criminalized critical reporting on the government and imprisoned several journalists for its violation. Second, Buhari has been pestered by questions about reportedly missing money from the Petroleum Trust Fund, which he managed before his coup in 1983.

There is still no certainty as to what actually happened. A commission of inquiry announced that the report of missing funds was merely an auditing error. However, Nigerians generally remain convinced that the money was embezzled (see, for instance, Soyinka 1996). In its preelection coverage, *Tell* (February 3, 2003) offered this summation: "Buhari, hitherto unknown for any sparkling democratic credentials, is now…trying to mend his famed gait and taciturnity to suit the current democratic ambience. But the more he struggles to adapt to his new environment, the harder the ghosts of his past haunt him."

Even Buhari's running mate, Chuba Okadigbo, did not bring a clean slate to the ticket. Okadigbo was forced out as the president of the Senate because of improper use of funds and financial misman-agement. As an Igbo (from Southeasten Nigeria), Okadigbo brought the usual ethnic/regional balance to the ticket, Buhari being a Hausa-Fulani (from the North). Still, given Buhari's many options, the choice of Okadigbo puzzled the press.

Buhari was also unappealing to many Southerners for other rea-sons. Though his running mate was a Christian, Buhari was consid-ered an Islamic zealot. His pro-sharia stance, supportive comments on the deadly riots by Muslims in opposition to Nigeria's aborted hosting of the Miss World Pageant in 2002, and reports that he had urged Muslims to never vote for Christians are just a few issues that defined Buhari's image. A writer for the *Vanguard* (January 24, 2003) summed up his case against Buhari thus: "Nigeria can not afford relapse into the tragedy of the past when ethnic champions, religious fanatics and sectional leaders masquerade as statesmen." Buhari's campaign was also reportedly funded by the family of the late General Abacha, Nigeria's most reviled despot, who stashed away the equiva-lent of millions of dollars in foreign banks before his death in 1998.

The press also reported on Ojukwu's own political liabilities. As the secessionist leader during the Nigerian civil war, Ojukwu was hardly acceptable to the electorate outside of the Igbo-populated Southeastern states. Even there, he had his detractors. Following his pardon by President Shehu Shagari in 1982, Ojukwu returned from exile and joined Shagari's National Party of Nigeria (NPN), which many people considered a reincarnation of the ruling party of the 1960s, the NPC. The choice of political alignment alienated Ojukwu from some Igbo, who saw the rapprochement with his former politi-cal foes as defection from the Igbo cause.

In all, the coverage was not partisan, conformist, inflammatory, or unduly sensationalistic. More than that, there was a chorus of edito-rial pleas to aggrieved parties to take their cases to the electoral

commission and the courts, rather than incite violence. There were concerns that the ruling party had considerable leverage on the electoral commission, just as it did on the electoral process in general. Therefore, it was almost begging the question to ask aggrieved parties to have confidence in the commission. However, press reportage and commentary were to the effect that the democratic process must not be endangered because its execution was compromised. In rejecting calls for an interim government, for instance, *This Day* (May 25, 2003) editorialized: "Though this constitution may not be perfect and while those who currently run the system may have compromised it in several ways, whatever remedy we seek must certainly follow a laid down constitutional procedure. To look for ways outside it is to plunge the nation into chaos." This thrust of the Nigerian press is consistent with theories of democratic deepening, which stress the centrality of constitutionalism (Schudson 1998; Diamond 1999).

When Buhari and Ojukwu threatened "mass action," the press almost unanimously rejected the call. Not surprisingly, turnouts for the protests were scanty. It was only the heavy-handed response of law enforcement that could have caused an escalation. But that never happened. The press similarly rejected calls for an interim government that would replace the Obasanjo administration pending new elections. The press noted that a similar government in 1993 was mired in a crisis of legitimacy and did not lead to the promised elections. Rather, the military promptly returned to government in full force. The following excerpts from editorials, columns, and news stories represent the dominant perspective on the election:

> [P]reventing Obasanjo from taking office next week will do Nigeria and her new democracy more harm than good.
>
> — Ike Okonta, columnist, This Day (May 25, 2003).

> There is…the need for all to be patient in nurturing democratic norms.
>
> —*Punch*, editorial (December 17, 2003).

> With claims and counter-claims of electoral malpractices swathing the air, with emotions bursting through the roof, the clouds are gathering again…. There is an urgent need for political actors and stake-holders to step back from the brink and seek legal and/or political solutions to prevent this much feared and much prophesied dooms-day scenario from becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.
>
> —*This Day*, editorial (April 28, 2003).

The *New Nigerian* (April 21, 2003) went further than most papers in editorializing that any challenge to the election results is unhealthy for Nigeria's democracy: "[T]here is...one nagging problem," the paper wrote. "It is our inability or refusal to accept electoral defeat gracefully. Our penchant for contesting every election result in the courts often leaves our fledgling democracy terribly bruised at the end of the day." It was a significant endorsement that suggests that though most of the cleavages in Nigerian politics remain, there have been significant realignments.

During the politics of the 1960s, the *New Nigerian* was a staunch voice of the Northern political oligarchy. In 2003, this oligarchy constituted the Arewa Forum, a political organization that represented Northern political interests. The Arewa Forum was a strident critic of the Obasanjo administration. It was also credited with hoisting the Buhari candidacy on the ANPP. That the *New Nigerian* would so enthusiastically endorse an election that the Arewa Forum's candidate and party lost so badly is an indication of the political shifts that could ultimately neutralize the cleavages of ethnicity, region, and religion. One cannot ignore the fact, however, that the *New Nigerian's* editorial politics changed considerably after the paper's acquisition in 1976 by the federal government.

Nigerian Press's Frustration with the Elections of 2007

It is significant to note here that the Nigerian press's faith that the political process will cleanse itself was considerably shaken by the sordid conduct of the elections of 2007. If election monitors hedged their comments in 2003, they condemned the elections of 2007 stridently and unanimously. With weeks to go before the elections, there was no certainty as to who would contest and who was banned from contesting for the presidency and other offices. Vice President Atiku Abubakar, who had defected from the PDP to a newly formed Action Congress (AC), was supposed to be a formidable challenger to the PDP's nominee, Umar Musa Yar'Adua. However, President Obasanjo made no secret of his resolve to keep Abubakar from succeeding him.

Meanwhile, Abubakar was battling indictments for misuse of government funds under his management as vice president. Like several other candidates for other offices, he was banned by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission from contesting elections. By the time the High Court cleared him for the elections, the ballots were already printed. For some indicted candidates for state offices, their

clearance came after the elections. These complications and the electoral commission's deficient preparations combined with existing sources of irregularities to yield election results that were universally condemned. So gross were the irregularities that the electoral commission reported polling results from precincts where there were no elections at all (*Punch*, April 20, 2007).

Ironically, what could readily be Nigeria's most dubious elections may have also produced its most principled president. Yar'Adua, who won the presidency in a landslide, is widely considered a virtuous leader. As a state governor, he was known to have served selflessly, becoming one of the few governors to complete their tenure with a clean record. Significantly, one of his inaugural pledges was to clean up the electoral process.

Yet, his election tested the Nigerian press's sensibilities. Whereas in 2003 the press was virtually unanimous in calling for case-by-case judicial review, in 2007 a number of independent papers abandoned their caution and called for outright cancellation of the elections. Following the first round of elections (for state offices), the usually temperate *Guardian*, of all papers, was strident in calling for their cancellation and postponement of the presidential elections. The paper's editorial of April 19, 2007, begins emphatically:

> For all intents and purposes last Saturday's gubernatorial and State Assembly elections were a charade, and their outcome unacceptable. They represented, not just a theft of the people's mandate but a subversion of their rights to freely choose their leaders.

In rejecting its own (and the rest of the press's) orientation in 2003, the *Guardian* continues:

> The situation calls for radical solutions, although the options available to save the country from impending danger are now very few indeed. The usual, easy route is to advocate putting up with the charade, not rocking the boat in the guise of building democracy. But Nigeria today is beyond such simplistic postulation. Democracy cannot be built on injustice and deceit.

The *Guardian* recommended the invocation of Section 146 of the constitution, which calls for the Senate president to assume the presidency for 90 days during which, in the *newspaper's* words, "he shall establish new agencies to organise credible elections that will be acceptable to the generality of Nigerians." The editorial does not indicate on what basis the editors presume that the Senate president

can conduct more credible elections within 90 days. As the *Punch* (April 20, 2007) wrote in a countereditorial rejecting an interim government and postponement of the federal elections, "Calls for an interim government of any kind…tend to presume that a new, untainted group will emerge with no vested interests whatsoever. This, to say the least, is a simplistic view."

Although the *Guardian* was not alone in calling for cancellation of the elections—state and federal—a significant number of newspapers and magazines remained cautious about such extraordinary measures. They continued to advocate temperance and resort to judicial review. Still, the frustration of the *Guardian* and other papers points to the reality that the press's shepherding role can only last for so long if elections continue to miss minimal standards of credibility. Moreover, the relative calm that followed the elections can be attributed in part to a fortuitous coincidence. The three most viable candidates— Yar'Adua, Buhari, and Abubakar—also happen to be of the same ethnic/religious stock: Hausa-Fulani Muslims from Northern Nigeria. In fact, Yar'Adua and Buhari are both from of the state of Katsina. It is unlikely that the incendiary factors of ethnicity and religion would be thus muted in future elections.

Shepherding Elections across the Continent

The Nigerian press's shepherding of Nigeria's elections in 2003 is replicated in various degrees by the press in other African countries. As will be more fully discussed in Chapter 9, most elections in African countries have been contentious and the results seriously disputed. In many instances, the press played significant roles in shepherding the elections, though sometimes unsuccessfully.

As in Nigeria, the strong performance of the independent print press across Africa has been a factor in the relative success of most of the elections. Examples include, the role of *Public Agenda* in Ghana, the *Daily Monitor* in Ethiopia, the *Nation* in Kenya, and the *Post* in Zambia. Similar independent papers in these and other African countries provided coverage for a wide range of election issues and views during the respective countries' elections. Even in a country such as Zimbabwe, where elections are stage-managed by Robert Mugabe's machinery, the *Daily News* and the sister weeklies the Zimbabwe *Independent* (Fridays) and the Zimbabwe *Standard* (Sundays) have courageously provided a voice for a diversity of viewpoints.

The broadcast press is of particular significance in this regard given that it remains the major source of information for the populace. This

is especially true of radio, though television coverage of urban centers and environs is also considerable and growing. However, though private broadcasting has grown exponentially with respect to radio, the state/government still dominates television broadcasting in most countries. This makes the independence of state/government broadcasting of continuing significance in the democratic process.

In a number of countries, including Benin, Mali, and Ghana, the state/government-owned broadcast press demonstrated considerable independence during elections. The broadcast media in Benin have reflected the populist nature of Benin's democratization. After nearly 27 years of military dictatorship, the people of Benin took matters into their own hands in 1990. During a national conference to discuss the political future of their country, the attendees declared the gathering a sovereign conference, in effect, wrestling power from General Mathieu Kérékou, the despot since 1972. The conference drafted a constitution under which an elected government was inaugurated in 1991. This spontaneous assertion of people's power has manifested in the open nature of Benin's press, including the state-owned media. The performance of the Malian news media in the country's elections in 2002 is similarly commended. In its assessment of the success of the elections, the Carter Center reported, for instance, that, "A wide range of viewpoints was expressed through Mali's broad range of newspapers and radio stations" (Carter Center 2002).

In Ghana, private radio stations were the primary catalyst of an open marketplace of viewpoints during the election of 2000. Ghana joined the growing number of African countries that have voted out an incumbent party in favor of another, a significant indicator of the deepening of democracy. Even the government-owned Ghana Broadcasting Corporation was much more balanced than it used to be, in keeping with stipulations of the 1992 constitution. Together, the Ghanaian media contributed to ensuring free and fair elections in 2000. "On the two election days, when armed groups came to the polling stations, ostensibly to maintain order but in reality to intimidate voters, the media called on the security forces to defend the constitution and appealed to voters not to let themselves be intimidated" (Veen 2004, 326). Given the outcome of the election, voters must have heeded the appeal. That Jerry Rawlings could not run because of a constitutionally mandated term limit certainly eased the way for John Agyekum Kufuor's victory. However, Rawlings' popularity and influence, along with his party's leverage, would have provided a formidable advantage for their candidate. These advantages were neutralized by the aggressive coverage of the press, especially

the independent radio stations, making it possible for an opposition candidate to win the presidency.

Upholding Democratic Processes

Shepherding elections is only the beginning of the press's role in the democratizing process. Ensuring that the resulting government is actually democratic is the more enduring task. As Diamond (1999, 74) has written, "there are three generic tasks that all new and fragile democracies must handle if they are to become consolidated: democratic deepening, political institutionalization, and regime performance." By democratic deepening, Diamond refers to cultivation of values such as respect for rights, due process, and the constitutional process. Institutionalization refers to clear definition of functions, and rules of political competition, independence of different components of government, and such other functions that provide a dependable structure for the democratic order. Diamond (1999, 77) construes regime performance in broad terms "to include the political outputs and character of the regime, as well as the material conditions it generates (or for which it is seen to be responsible)."

Accordingly, an important role of the press in the consolidation of democracy is to crusade against policies and tendencies that would undermine its deepening and institutionalization. Such tendencies include the subversion of the checks and balances in the democratic process, the lack of transparency in government, the abridgment of press freedom, and attempts at self-perpetuation that, in effect, constitute obstacles to democratic renewal. These have been the bane of previous democratic regimes in Africa. Transparency is especially important because it is the basis for every other facet of democratic consolidation; it is the only means of ensuring accountability. The African press has crusaded to ensure the institutionalization of this fundamental element of democracy.

Some African leaders, steeped in the tradition of authoritarian secrecy, have had difficulty opening up the governance process beyond such areas as legislative deliberations. For instance, when Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi gave a press conference in 2006 to an invited group of domestic reporters, he acknowledged that "it was the first such meeting in 14 years" (Crawford 2006b). In several African countries, the press has been crusading for laws that would grant journalists access to government documents and records, the equivalent of the Freedom of Information Act in the United States. As of 2007, just a few African countries—South Africa, Uganda, and

Angola—have freedom of information laws (*Daily Independent*, Lagos, February 25, 2007). Nigeria was so close to having such a law that the *Daily Independent* actually included it in the list. However, just before his term expired in May 2007, President Obasanjo formally declined to sign the bill, thus leaving the next legislature to start anew. A few other countries, including Ghana, have provisions that serve the same purposes. Still, that only a few African countries have explicit laws on freedom of information is indicative of the resistance to transparency.

Even the most democratic of Africa's new crop of leaders are finding the press's demand for accountability rather taxing. On the occasion of his first 100 days in office in 2001, for instance, Ghana's Kufuor chided the press: "I am told that in countries that have this 100 days tradition, it is meant to mark the end of the honeymoon season that the media give a new administration. I have certainly not been allowed (to enjoy) this leisure" (Pan African News Agency, April 18, 2001). Kufuor is actually much more liberal in opening up to the press. On the occasion of his first 100 days, he held an open 90-minute forum with the Ghanaian press, during which he fielded unflinching questions from the journalists. A columnist for the newspaper *Public Agenda* (April 17, 2001) writes: "Where his predecessor, Rawlings, kept journalists at arms length, Kufuor has pursued a relentless communication link with the media."

The press in Burundi has demonstrated some of the most courageous commitment to democracy, given the context of one of Africa's most combustible polities. Its ethnic composition and power structure mirrored that of neighboring Rwanda, where about half a million people were killed in 1994 in a pogrom that was rooted in ethnopolitical tension. Just as in Rwanda, the Tutsi minority in Burundi dominated political power over the majority Hutu. However, in 2000, Burundi's military government was pressured from within and outside the country to adopt democratic rule. The independent press, especially radio, played an important role in the transition to and sustenance of democracy. As Crawford (2006a) writes in a report to the U.S.-based Committee to Protect Journalists: "Burundi's new democracy remains fragile, but the country's independent media— particularly the radio stations that have emerged in recent years—are increasingly self-confident. They have shown courage and solidarity in the face of attacks, and they have won some significant victories. For example, in 2003, when the government banned Radio Isanganiro and RPA [Radio Publique Africaine] for allowing a rebel spokesman on the air, other private stations announced a blackout of government

news. The bans were lifted shortly afterward." The press in other African countries has similarly campaigned to remind leaders of the difference between democracy and autocracy.

Meanwhile, some elected governments continue to engage in repression at levels comparable to those of military regimes or civilian dictatorships. Notable among these are Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. In fact, Robert Mugabe's authoritarian regime—sustained since 1980 with dubious elections—barely qualify as a democracy. In Ethiopia, the government clamped down on the press after a disputed election in 2005. Several journalists were jailed and put on trial for charges of treason, which could result in the death sentence. Yet, the independent press in both countries remains defiant and continues to demand for democratic processes. In Ethiopia, the press continued to call on the authorities to address the opposition's complaints. One of the imprisoned journalists was publisher Fassil Yenealem. When representatives of the Committee to Protect Journalists visited him in prison and asked him whether he had a message for Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, he responded: "The journalists should be released. Banning the press means banning democracy. The prime minister has done some very good things in the last 14 years. The media are not against the government but against injustice" (Crawford 2006b).

Some heads of state or government have tended to circumvent the legislatures and to manipulate the judiciary or ignore their opinions. In Nigeria, for instance, there was at least one major attempt to impeach President Obasanjo during each of his two tenures, and both were for failure to follow constitutionally mandated procedures. He was said to ignore approved budgets and allocate funds at his discretion. Worse still, he was known to ignore court rulings. Late in 2006, he fired his vice president, Atiku Abubakar, after the latter formally declared his membership in another party. Obasanjo announced the firing without regard for constitutional stipulations on removing a vice president. He sought judicial review only after he faced strident criticism. He abandoned the effort after an adverse court ruling, but the vice president hardly functioned as such.

Even in the relatively more sedate politics of Ghana, the constitution is amenable to subversion. For instance, the constitution stipulated the minimum number of justices in the Supreme Court, but not the maximum. As the *Ghana Chronicle* (May 7, 2001) editorialized, it is a loophole that could easily be exploited by the executive to pack the court with cronies at the most vantage point. "It follows, therefore, that if a president has succeeded in crowding the Supreme Court with sympathetic and sycophantic judges and can count on a pliant Chief

Justice, he can get decisions going his way all the time." Accordingly, the paper called for a constitutional amendment to plug this hole. Regarding instances of searches and arrests of some present and former government officials, the *Accra Mail* (April 19, 2001) editorialized: "It is said that when you have been bitten by a snake before, even the sight of a coiled rope is enough to frighten you. So even before the details have made their way into the public domain, we would want to caution our security agencies concerning the manner in which they exercise their powers of arrest, search, detention, etc."

The African press's most significant success in scuttling efforts to undermine the continent's democratizing has to be in crusading against entrenchment of particular individuals in office. This is an important dimension of Africa's democratization because entrenchment of Africa's first crop of postcolonial leaders was a major factor in the demise of the democratization of that era. It led to civilian despotism and contributed to the rampancy of military coups. Two failed attempts at entrenchment during the current wave of democratization—one in Zambia and the other in Nigeria—illustrate the role the press now plays in deepening democracy in Africa.

Scuttling Chiluba's Ambition in Zambia

When Frederick Chiluba won Zamiba's presidential election in 1991, it was a milestone in Zambian history and a significant political event in Africa. Chiluba defeated Kenneth Kaunda, an eminent member of the African cadre of nationalists who became heads of state or government at independence and, for decades, maintained a tight grip on power. Many of their contemporaries, including Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah, Sierra Leone's Milton Maggai, and Congo's Patrice Lumumba were overthrown and/or assassinated early in their political career. Others, such as Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta and Senegal's Leopold Senghor, passed on the mantle to protégés. Some, like Côte d'Ivoire's Houghet Boughnny, managed to cling to power until their deaths. Kaunda was the only member of the long-reigning crop of African heads of state to subject himself to a fair election and to allow himself to lose it. This was after a 27-year tenure, dating from Zambia's independence from Britain on October 24, 1964.

During much of this period, Zambia was a one-party state, as Kaunda abolished opposition parties in 1972. The election of 1991 gave Zambians their first opportunity in more than 20 years for an alternative leadership. The opportunity did not come easily. Kaunda opened up Zambia's governance to multiparty contest following riots

and bloodshed. When the opportunity came, Zambians made it clear that they wanted a change. However, it was not just a change in leadership or a change of party. They also wrote into a new constitution the stipulation that a president should serve no more than two five-year terms. Chiluba, a populist trade unionist, was a force in these changes.

Despite this history, Chiluba sought to extend his own tenure. Toward the end of his second five-year term, his party, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD) held a convention during which 80 percent of the delegates approved of amending the constitution to extend the president's term. Though Chiluba argued later that the decision was purely an internal affair of the party, there was little question that the next step would have been to have the MMD-dominated legislature amend the constitution. Chiluba had earlier demonstrated his resolve on the matter by having Vice President Christon Tembo, 8 cabinet ministers, and at least 13 other top MMD officials dismissed from the party after they opposed the constitutional change (Panafrican News Agency, May 4, 2001).

But the Zambia of 2001 was not the same as that of 1972, when Kaunda ensured his extended tenure by banning other political parties. The MMD's decision stirred an uproar and the press gave voice to the opposition. In news stories and commentaries in independent newspapers in Zambia and across the continent, there was a chorus of condemnation. In its May 2, 2001 edition, for instance, the Zambian independent daily, the *Post*, ran the headline, "We Won't Allow Chiluba to Amend the Constitution, Vows Inonge Wina." The *Post* quoted Wina, the chairman of the Non-Governmental Organizations Co-ordinating Committee: "I do not take it. Zambians should not take to sitting down. They should do something." They did. They protested on the streets and on the pages of newspapers.

They found solidarity from other African countries. In an editorial in its edition of May 4, 2001, for instance, the Nigeria daily the *Guardian* urged Chiluba to gracefully step down rather than plunge Zambia into a political crisis. The editorial titled "Chiluba: Zambia shall be free," added: "The people of Zambia cannot afford to fold their arms and watch events imposed on them by a power-monger president. They should rise in support of all those who have spoken against the incipient tyranny Chiluba's ambition represents.... As it is often said, eternal vigilance is the price to pay for democracy. For Zambia to be free, Chiluba must go." It is not incidental that the title of the editorial incorporates the title of Kaunda's autobiographical account of the struggle for Zambia's independence (Kaunda 1962).

The message got to Chiluba. In a national broadcast two days after his party approved the term extension, Chiluba urged that the quest be abandoned in the national interest. Chiluba claimed that it was never his intent to extend his term: "Ten years ago when you the people of Zambia opted for a popular government, I promised that I will serve faithfully and when I have served my two terms I will leave office. That has always been my position and that is the only statement I have made . . . . I have said nothing to contradict my earlier pronouncements. I still stand by my word, I will leave office at the end of my term" (Panafrican News Agency, May 4, 2001). Chiluba's seeming political piety notwithstanding, his announcement was seen as a forced change of mind. The Panafrican News Agency (May 4, 2001) was typical in the headline of its coverage: "Chiluba Abandons Re-Election Bid, Dissolves Cabinet." It was a triumph for Zambia's democracy and the independent press, in particular.

Defeating Obasanjo's Quest in Nigeria

Chiluba's failure to extend his tenure and the Nigerian press's fierce condemnation of this attempt did not dissuade President Obasanjo from a similar attempt in Nigeria in 2006. The circumstances were quite similar. Obasanjo was elected after about 15 years of military rule and the constitution stipulated a maximum of two four-year terms of office. In 2006, he was in the final year of his second term and seemed determined to stay on. Initially, he bandied about the idea of constitutional amendments, without specifying the clause on presidential tenure. Even before then, there was widespread speculation in the press that Obasanjo intended to prolong his tenure. The president's request for an overview of the constitution in the last year of his tenure moved the idea of a third term from speculation to a certified quest. Even people who doubted that Obasanjo would possibly consider such a quest began to take it seriously.

In some respects, Obasanjo seemed an unlikely person to want to extend his presidency. In 1979, he became the first Nigerian military leader to hand over power to an elected government, ending about 13 years of military rule. This act elevated him to the status of one of Africa's most regarded statesmen. When the military returned to power in December 1983 and would not relinquish power, Obasanjo became one of its most notable critics. For this he was charged with complicity in an alleged coup in 1995, was tried and imprisoned. He was still in prison when General Sani Abacha's death in 1998 occasioned the transition to democratic rule and Obasanjo's release. When

the PDP was formed and became the major contender for office, Obasanjo was nominated as its presidential candidate.

Obasanjo's nomination was intended to heal the festering rift engendered by the "June 12" crisis. The Yoruba of the Southwest were still restive over the annulment by a Northern-dominated military of a presidential election that one of their own won. As a Yoruba who enjoyed the confidence of the Northern powerbrokers, Obasanjo was the candidate whose victory would bridge the interregional and interethnic divide.

Before his nomination, Obasanjo portrayed himself as a reluctant candidate, who would accept the gauntlet for the interest of the nation. Once elected, however, he presided with considerable zeal. However, his administration was rocked by one crisis after another, including two attempted impeachments. On occasions, there were serious calls for citizen protest to force him out of office. Such attempts fizzled in part because of an interest in maintaining stability and also because Obasanjo's tenure would soon run out. Given this context, a constitutional amendment to extend his tenure could not have been more ill advised. Yet he was determined to push it through.

The Nigerian press, which had long stopped its delicate treatment of the Obasanjo administration, unleashed some of its most vituperative attacks. To his credit, Obasanjo did little to rein in the attacks. However, when Nigeria's only independent television network, African Independent Television (AIT), scheduled a 30-minute documentary on failed attempts to extend presidential terms, the government stopped it. In what had to be an indication of the government's resolve to push through the change, agents of State Security Service ransacked the offices of Daar Communications, corporate owner of AIT and RayPower FM, and confiscated the tape. In an interview on Nigeria Television Authority (NTA) in August 2006, an official of the regulatory agency, Nigerian Broadcasting Commission (NBC), denied that such harassments of AIT had any political motive. Rather he accused AIT of irresponsible journalism.

The censorship of AIT failed to defeat the opposition. At the end of a protracted political process, the Nigerian Senate, on May 16, 2006, resoundingly rejected the proposed amendment, to the relief of the Nigerian public. The Nigerian *Guardian*, described the decision as "the most momentous event in the country since the annulled June 12, 1993 election." In a lengthy editorial, the *Guardian* (May 23, 2006) commended the Senate for an act "of a high moral standard and integrity." Noting the considerable pressure the legislators

faced from the presidency and a majority of the state governors, whose tenure also would have been extended, the *Guardian* wrote: "It can hardly be gainsaid that the lawmakers' move against the so-called third term agenda represents a phenomenal victory for democracy, the rule of law and due process. Commonsense has prevailed, and the progressives in the society have won their spurs against a project regarded as a nightmare while it lasted." Similar opinions appeared in virtually all of Nigeria's independent newspapers.

Like Chiluba in Zambia, Obasanjo said nothing about his desire for a third. He let his aides speak for him, and they left no doubt as to his determination to extend his tenure. After the amendment was rejected, Obasanjo, unlike Chiluba, did not deny an interest in running for a third term. Rather, in an address to the PDP's National Executive Committee on May 18, 2006, an address he said was also intended for the nation as a whole, Obasanjo conceded defeat:

> The National Assembly as the constitutional and legitimate body for making laws for this country, including the supreme law of the land—the Constitution—has just concluded as it deemed fit, especially the Senate, the exercise on the amendment to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The outcome is victory for democracy. There is no absolute right and absolute truth except God. And in any argument or debate, there is bound to be an element of right and wrong or truth and untruth on either side. And we must respect each other no matter the human verdict and human foibles.

Obasanjo acknowledged that the quest for a constitutional amendment had generated deep divisions within the party and the country and he complained of "media excesses" and "derogatory statements and unfounded allegations." He provided this detail of the tension generated by the attempted amendment:

> There are some regrettable reports from all accounts that I received, and that is the threat of, or actual use of blackmail, intimidation and violence on both sides.
>
> Once debate and discourse are being substituted by intimidation, blackmail, threats and violence, then democracy is in great danger. I have also received allegations of bribery which EFCC [Economic and Financial Crimes Commission] is investigating. Apart from these unsavoury allegations, the exercise is another process in the operation of our Constitution. The Constitution should, hopefully, be strengthened by the process and the exercise that have just been concluded.

It could be said that the reactions that perturbed Obasanjo would have been a mere preview of the upheaval that would have attended an extension of his term. The Nigerian press played a significant role in ensuring that that did not happen. There was certain unanimity among the independent press in pointing out the dangers of the president's quest. The result was a galvanized public opposition that transcended ethnicity and regions.

A similar performance by the independent press in Kenya ensured that power was transferred from one party to another in 2003, about 40 years since Kenya's independence from Britain. During much of these years, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), ruled Kenya as a de facto one-party state. The revered nationalist, Jomo Kenyatta, was president (or prime minister) from 1963 until his death in 1978. His protégé, Daniel arap Moi, took over from there and formalized the one-party structure in 1981. About 10 years later, in 1991, Moi was pressured into allowing multiparty electoral competition. However, the splintering of a coalition party ensured that Moi and KANU would win the subsequent election in December 1992 and again in 1997. Having thus completed the two-term limit imposed by the reforms of 1991, Moi had to step aside for his own protégé, Uhuru Kenyatta, to contest the presidency for KANU.

The press campaigned hard to ensure that the opposition parties were given a fair chance. When it was reported that President Moi planned to visit President George W. Bush in Washington just weeks before the election, a columnist for the *Nation* (December 1, 2002) wrote: "One hopes that President Bush will also emphasise that the December 27 elections should be free, fair and peaceful. That he will encourage the Kenya Government not to misappropriate taxpayers' money through the misuse of the provincial administration and Kenya Broadcasting Corporation to campaign for the Kanu candidate, as well as ensure a smooth transfer of power if the candidate loses, as most opinion polls indicate." As it turned out, the opposition party the National Rainbow Coalition won the election and its leader, Mwai Kibaki, became only the third president of Kenya since independence in 1963.

Press Recidivism and Subversion of Democracy

Much as the African press has begun to assert itself more than ever before in the democratization process, there are still some recidivist elements in its performance and constraints. These include remnants

of antidemocratic partisanship, progovernment bias of state-sponsored media, and even continued government censorship.

Press Advocacy of a Coup?

In Nigeria, though coverage of the 2003 elections was much more consonant with the requisites of a democracy-consolidating press compared to that of the 1964–1965 and 1983 elections, it was not without recidivist aspects. The most notable manifestation of recidivism was an editorial by the *Daily Trust*, a paper that replaced the *New Nigerian* as the voice of the Northern power block. In a lengthy front-page editorial in its issue of November 14, 2003, the paper all but advocated a coup as the proper response to the tarnished elections. The paper recounted Nigeria's tortuous history of elections and coups d'etat. Among other things, it noted that Obasanjo, the first Nigeria military head of state to transfer power to an elected government, also supported a coup against the civilian government that succeeded him. The circumstances of that government's reelection were similar to that of Obasanjo's reelection, the *Daily Trust* noted.

As discussed in Chapter 7, the *Nigeria Tribune*, an affiliate of the runner-up Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), had in 1983 brazenly called for a coup against the reelected government of Shehu Shagari. The *Daily Trust* suggests that the same might be in order for Obasanjo in 2003. "[T]here seems to be a thinly disguised public wish for the military to once again intervene again in our politics," the paper wrote. Given that there was, indeed, no such public yearning, the editorial could only be interpreted as the *Daily Trust's* own "thinly disguised" call for a coup. Perhaps, the "public" the editorial referred to was not the Nigerian public, per se, but the aggrieved politicians who still fumed at their losses.

Whatever may be the *Daily Trust's* intentions, the paper was severely taken to task by the rest of the Nigerian press. The paper denied that the editorial was a call for a coup. It even went as far as to publish advertisements in other papers denying the advocacy of a coup. The editorial itself included caveats to that end. It noted that the history of the military in Nigerian governance demonstrated that whatever their initial good deeds they ultimately became liabilities to the polity. But then, if the *Daily Trust* was, indeed, advocating a coup, it was a matter of prudence to have incorporated elements of deniability, and the caveats provided that.

The caveats notwithstanding, the substance and tone of the editorial certainly suggested that a coup would be in order. The paper did

not merely catalogue the failures of the Obasanjo government, it also stressed the parallels between these failures and conditions that resulted in coups in the past. Moreover, the editorial noted Obasanjo's support of one such coup—Buhari's coup in December 1983—and suggested that it would be retributive justice if Obasanjo suffered a similar fate.

The *Daily Trust* duly received a trashing in the Nigerian press. While acknowledging the failures the *Daily Trust* enumerated, the *Punch* (December 17, 2003), for instance, editorialized, "But let it be emphasized that imperfections in the nation's fledgling democracy can only be corrected through legitimate means, and a coup d'etat is not one of them." Similar opinions ran in the gamut of the Nigerian press. That the *Daily Trust* was thus forced into spirited denial of advocacy of a coup contrasts with the brazenness of the *Tribune*'s own calls for a coup in 1983.

In fact, since Nigeria returned to democratic governance in 1999, the press had become ultravigilant in reminding the military to stay out. Editorials against military coups have become routine whenever there is national tension, especially between arms of the government. Such editorials were common, for instance, when the legislature threatened to impeach Obasanjo. There was even a greater chorus of anticoup editorials in 2003, when the Nigerian Labor Congress went on strikes to protest Obasanjo's increases of fuel price. In each instance, the chorus of editorials warned the military not to use the tension as an excuse for intervention.

Government Broadcasting and Subversion of Democracy

Another area of press recidivism is with regard to the performance of the government-owned press in some countries, among them Nigeria, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Zimbabwe. The failure of stations in these countries to cover elections with any degree of balance contributes to the compromising of these elections.

During Nigeria's elections of 2003, the level of sycophancy among some broadcast stations was comparable to what obtained during the elections of the 1960s. The state government–sponsored stations were especially guilty in this regard. They generally did not engage in the polemics of the 1960s, but their one-sided coverage effectively blacked out rival candidates in many states. They are seconded in unbalanced coverage by the local stations that constitute the network of NTA. These stations too tended to mirror the political interests of

the party in control of the federal government, the PDP, especially in states where the PDP also controls the state government. Network news by the NTA was more balanced in its coverage. The network reasonably extended coverage to the challengers, especially the most competitive candidate. However, even there the tendency to overreport on the incumbent was still evident.

Not surprisingly, the Rivers State Broadcasting Corporation stood out with regard to skewed coverage. Here, the airwaves—both radio and television—were blanketed by news coverage of and commercial jingles for the incumbent governor, Peter Odili. It was as though there were no competitors for the governorship. In fact, it seemed there were no other state offices being contested for, except the governorship. Governor Odili's commercial jingles were so pervasive on radio and television, children began to sing them at playgrounds. The exclusive coverage reflected the conduct of the election and, predictably, its outcome.

Skewed coverage by government-sponsored broadcasting in Nigeria is particularly significant because unlike countries such as Ghana and Benin, where independent broadcasters offer a dose of political coverage, independent stations in Nigeria tend to be heavily commercialized and exclusively music oriented. In general, their news and public affairs broadcast did little to neutralize the impact of government-sponsored stations. The one significant non-governmental television network in Nigeria, AIT, has made some inroads in broadening public discourse. However, it is yet to have the same reach as the government-owned network and stations, collectively. Moreover, the AIT is struggling both for financial footing and against hyperactive regulation.

Skewed coverage by government-sponsored broadcast outlets in Nigeria was not limited to the elections. Regarding coverage of labor strikes in July 2003 over fuel price increases, the *Vanguard* (July 10, 2003) editorialized as follows: "Nearly all of [the government-owned media] exhibited disregard of the ethics of the profession. They turned facts on their heads to indicate unabashedly that they are tools of government for the oppression of the people." The *Vanguard*, a prolabor daily, may have overreached in its rhetoric, but its assessment points to the reality that government-owned media in Africa still tend toward the authoritarian model of press philosophy than the democratic. In this sense, they may be subverting Africa's democratization.

Regarding Zambia's election in 2001, independent monitors condemned the government-owned broadcast media for a skewed coverage in favor of the incumbent party, the MMD, despite election laws against such bias. In a report issued in December 2001, the Carter

Center's observer mission criticized the government-owned media for not being balanced in covering the election and granting access to candidates. The skewed balance contributed to an uneven playing field for opposition parties, the center concluded. The European Union Election Monitoring Group (EU-EMG) concurred. Michael Meadowcroft, the chief observer for EU-EMG, reported that the skewed coverage transversed the period before, during, and after the elections. Meadowcroft said that: "This culminated vividly in the cancellation by ZNBC of a long planned and carefully organised live debate on the eve of poll with presidential candidates in order to transmit an hour long interview with President Chiluba, which was obvious campaigning broadcast on behalf of MMD and its presidential candidate" (*Post*, January 1, 2002).

In Kenya, the government-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) was usually known to be more independent than other similar operations in Africa. However, in a report on the election of December 2002, Andrew Harding of the BBC, described the KBC as "a shameless mouthpiece for the government right up to the eve of these historic polls" (BBC, December 29, 2002). The bias in coverage was so overt that a crowd celebrating the opposition's victory danced "rebelliously in front of the Nairobi headquarters of KBC." The independent media managed to create an even playing field for the opposition, though, as Human Rights Watch reported before the election, "bureaucratic restrictions on radio licenses mean few opposition voices can be heard outside of Nairobi."

Uganda's election in February 2006 was similarly marred by skewed coverage. The Uganda Broadcasting Corporation Television (UBC TV) devoted 79.7 percent of its election coverage to the incumbent presidential candidate, Yoweri Museveni. The candidate with the second highest coverage received just 11.5 percent of the coverage, and the other three candidates shared 8.8 percent (European Union Election Observation Mission 2006). Coverage by UBC Radio was much less skewed, with the incumbent receiving 55 percent of the coverage. The broadcasters were evidently unfamiliar with objective coverage of elections, given that Museveni had maintained a one-party state until pressured into the election of 2006.

Ethiopia's government-owned broadcasters did worse than skew coverage of an election; it joined the government in persecuting the press. During campaigns for the election of 2005, "opposition parties were allowed unprecedented access to state media, including the state monopoly broadcast sector" (Crawford 2006b). However, after the privately owned press sided with the opposition in alleging electoral

irregularities, the government and its broadcasters turned against it. The government clamped down on protesters, shut down 8 of the countries 20 privately owned newspapers, and arrested several journalists. Some of the journalists were put on trial for treason, with the possibility of life imprisonments or death sentences. Some went into hiding to escape arrest. Rather than come to their defense, the government-owned stations joined the attack against their independent colleagues. The stations broadcast photos of the wanted journalists and urged viewers who know their whereabouts to report to the government. Such is the extremity of undemocratic use of some of Africa's government-owned broadcast operations.

Interpreting Democracy as Dividends

Aside from the recidivistic aspects of press performance, there are also some failings in the portrayal of democracy. For instance, if the Nigerian press, as a whole, was exemplary in its coverage of the elections in 2003 and 2007, it did not excel as well in interpreting democracy to the people. A major weakness is with regard to the press's penchant for equating democracy with economic enfranchisement. The same is true of the interpretation of democracy by the press in other African countries. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the press has been eager to make the case that democracy has its dividends. This was especially the case in Nigeria soon after the end of military rule in 1999. Unfortunately, the press has not deviated from the notion that the primary—perhaps, even defining—dividend of democracy is economic. This leaves in place the postindependence rationalization that economic problems justified military intervention.

In criticizing the *Daily Trust* editorial that seems to call for a coup against Nigeria's President Obasanjo, the *Punch* (December 17, 2003) asserted: "Nobody, however, disagrees with the *Daily Trust* that it is the responsibility of the executive and legislative arms of government to actively avert a coup. There is the urgent duty to alleviate the suffering of ordinary Nigerians." It might not have seemed so to the writers of the editorial, but this one passage basically negates the otherwise passionate defense of democracy against military coups. Hardly anyone would disagree that the government has a responsibility to pursue policies that improve the people's quality of life. But that goal should be an end in itself, not a means of averting military coups. To link the two suggests only a partial commitment to democracy. As Schedler (2001, 149) has written, democracy is consolidated only when it is seen as "the only game in town." And as Diamond (1999,

76) has found, "The greater the cultural predisposition of the society to value democracy intrinsically, the less successful policies will need to be in generating economic growth and relieving major social problems." Any suggestion, even if well meaning, that democracy is conditional is inherently counter to the civic lessons necessary for consolidation.

Moreover, as summarized in Chapter 5, there is no consensus that democracy necessarily leads to increased prosperity. To the extent that democratization unleashes forces of economic development, this outcome is not instantaneous. It depends on the extent to which democracy stabilizes society and provides conducive and stimulating environment for innovation and enterprise. Alas, in the short term and in some respects, democratization in Africa often engenders the opposite environment. Therefore, the expectation of instantaneous substantive economic dividend suggests a misunderstanding of the causal relationship.

Historically, economic development and democratization have had mutual causative effects. In his seminal analysis, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy" Lipset (1959) argues that a level of economic development and social order is necessary to sustain democracy. This was certainly the case in Europe, where economic development was a catalyst for democratization (Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens 1992). More recently, countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, and even China have experienced growing prosperity under regimes that are authoritarian in various degrees. In turn, the economic development has become the impetus of incremental democratization, even in communist China. On the other hand, democratic values, in tandem with capitalism, have further spurred economic development (Huntington 1991; Landes 1998; Harrison and Huntington 2000). Western Europe demonstrated this reality in contrast with its communist Eastern Europe.

Sartori (2001) has argued that liberal democracy as a political value was originally unrelated to economic perquisites. "As Western democracies developed and attained higher levels of democratization, however, demo-power became demo-appetite, and the policy content of the liberal-constitutional forms increasingly centered around disruptive issues, around 'who gets how much of what'" (Sartori 2001, 56). The shift, Sartori surmised, was reinforced by a decline of ethics in society, the utilitarian thrust of Anglo-American democracy, and the advent of Marxist materialism.

In developing countries, the idea that democracy ought to yield immediate economic dividend gives rise to cynicism and disillusionment.

It hampers the internalization of values necessary to sustain democracy. Just as important, it creates unrealistic expectations. "While authoritarianism is identified with corruption, inequality, and inefficiency, democracy is perceived as the magic recipe that will allow all these evils to be overcome" (Laïdi 2002, 77). Laïdi goes further:

> What follows from this is a purely instrumental conception of democracy and those who embody it. As a result, politics is less a matter of representation than a consumerist project of getting services. Democracy then becomes a sort of "salary for citizenship" whose value is measured by the gauge of one's "buying power." If one does not obtain this or that service, democracy appears to be just an abstraction. (79)

In fact, when the unrealistic expectations are not met, democracy is perceived not just as an abstraction, but as an obstacle. Hence, "when it comes to the question of democracy's durability, socioeconomic factors are significant—the mortality rate of poor democracies is higher than that of rich ones" (O'Donnell 2002, 10). The goal of the press should be to inculcate an implicit faith in democracy and against dictatorships of all kinds.

The pro-democracy editorial by the *Punch* is not isolated in otherwise implying the conditionality of democracy. In its short-term assessments of Africa's democratization, the African press has been incessant in using the yardstick of economic performance. Such editorials are common in the press of all democratizing African countries, from Ghana to Mozambique. Paul Kofi Fynn, the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana, must have had such sentiments in mind when he told Ghanaian journalists in 2001 that democracy is like a flower planted during the dry season: It has to be watered with dedication for it to bloom. Fynn told the press: "Anybody who loves flowers but is not prepared to water the garden should not expect the flower to blossom. Ghanaians must, therefore, unite to offer suggestions to sustain democracy instead of sitting on the fence to criticise" (*Ghanaian Chronicle*, April 18, 2001).

As exemplified by the *Punch*, such comments usually are not intended to encourage military intervention. Rather, they are reminders to political leaders of their obligations to the people, as well as references to the typical reasons given by the military for their coups and countercoups. Indeed, African people's attitude toward democracy has tended to reflect the material rewards. As Diamond (1999, 77) puts it, "If democratic legitimacy and procedural commitment form the principal foundation of regime consolidation, the performance

of the regime is a crucial variable affecting the development and internalization of beliefs about legitimacy." However, Diamond is careful to define performance in general, rather than in purely material terms.

Any suggestion that a democratic regime has to justify itself through economic performance is inherently antidemocracy. This is quite different from holding a particular government or party accountable for the success or failure of its economic policies. Such is an obligation of the press. The linkage of democracy and economic performance unnecessarily creates disillusionment with democracy and so impedes its consolidation. As discussed in Chapter 5, democracy is a societal process that has both intrinsic and instrumental values. In its intrinsic value, it is a way of life that affirms the valence of all individuals and groups in relation to the whole. In instrumental terms, it is the open process by which society works out its relationships and governance. When the press stresses the economic dividend, it distorts the essence of democracy and endangers its survival.

This is not to suggest that, at least in the long run, there should be no economic dividend. Democracy is the political system most consonant with capitalism, and as a model for economic development, capitalism no longer has a credible rival. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that a well-functioning democracy has to be a facilitator of economic development (Landes1998; Przeworski et al. 2000). But the operative phrase is "well functioning." Whether democracy facilitates economic development would depend on several other factors, including especially the stability of the country. In reporting on democratic dividends, the press tends to gloss over this and the long-term conditionality.

Conclusion

The African press has to be given some credit for the relative success to date of Africa's democratization. Its vigorous campaign against authoritarianism and its vestiges is strengthening Africa's democracy. The press has also been a factor in the trend toward fairer elections. This accounts for Africa's most significant trend in democracy: the growing instances of transfer of power from one political party to another, including in Zambia (1991), Malawi (1994), Senegal (2000), Ghana (2000), Mali (2002), and Kenya (2002). Given Africa's history of one-party states—by law or de facto—transfer of power has to be the most significant indication of the deepening of democracy.

Countries that have not experienced the milestone of party-to-party transfer of power have at least abided by constitutional term limits. In

the past, such limits were either nonexistent or existed as a political mirage. Other countries have experienced multiparty democracy longer than ever. For instance, when Nigeria conducted its presidential election in April 2007, it was the first time that its elected government has completed two terms without being overthrown. Before then, the longest uninterrupted democratic government lasted for a little more than five years (October 1960 to January 1966). By 2007, it has lasted for eight years, with hope—albeit tense hope—for much more.

It is not that the conditions that provided ostensible reasons for military coups in the past are gone. In fact, as will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, democracy is more chaotic now in several countries than it was in the 1960s. The difference is that the military in a vast majority of the countries have been chastened into allowing the political process to run its course, rather than intervening with promises of messianic deliverance. The African press played a significant role in this political progress.

However, the challenge ahead for the African press is even greater than before. Military rule and civilian despotism present tangible targets of press campaigns. The obstacles and desired changes are self-evident. In contrast, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter, the causes of chaotic democracy are more diffused and the remedy more complex. The press has to approach the challenge with commensurate sophistication in its coverage. It is no longer enough to depict democracy as something done or undone by political leaders; it is important to articulate it as a process that is rooted in the civic values of the governed. For instance, as demonstrated with regard to the Nigerian example, even the rigging of elections typically require hierarchical participation in prebendal relations. It is a manifestation of a cynical attitude toward democracy that goes beyond party and election officials. The more the people are oriented to have implicit faith in the democratic process, the greater its prospects and the less likely ambitious or messianic military officers will venture to scuttle it.

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Civic Cynicism and Disordered Democracy

Democracy in Africa has deepened more than ever before. Still, it is on precarious footing as its constituent elements remain under strain. Ethnic, regional, and religious rivalries continue to be destabilizing factors of Africa's democracies, along with economic stress. But the underlying and aggravating problems remain the credibility and perception of the political process. The credibility of elections and the insidiousness of corruption underlie much of the political upheaval that beset African polities.

The general election is the most fundamental element of democracy; yet in Africa it is often its greatest hurdle. Even as multiparty elections become routine, they continue to generate violence and bloodshed in many countries. They are often seriously compromised, and even where they are conducted credibly, the losing sides still find reasons to reject them and to threaten or resort to violence. The result is that many governments are burdened with the challenge of asserting their legitimacy. The problems of Nigeria's elections are discussed in detail in Chapter 6 to analyze what led to the truncation of what was considered Africa's showcase of democracy and in Chapter 8 as a case study of the press's shepherding of a consolidating election. The broader selection of cases discussed below is intended to illustrate the common string running through Africa's polities: the problem of civic cynicism.

Electoral problems not only undercut faith in democracy, they also intensify generalized cynicism that permeates all facets of life. As Kpundeh (2004, 123) has noted: "In the context of Africa, it can be argued that the frequent and recurrent refusal of public office holders to follow the fundamental tenets of participatory governance and to account for their actions and expenditures is a major reason why corruption has lingered and even grown." The irregularities also intensify

what is generally referred to as a culture of impunity, the civic value by which groups and individuals act on the bases what they *can* rather than what they *should*. The purpose of this chapter is not to catalogue the manifestation of these problems, but to discuss their interplay with Africa's democratization. Central to the analysis is the intersection of social attitudes and political behavior, and why press crusade for political reform has to go in tandem with a crusade for civic reorientation.

Electoral Problems and Political Violence

As Nigeria prepared for general elections in April 2007, the concern for electoral violence was so palpable that the civil society established an organization for the sole purpose of stemming it. As the name suggests, the National Campaign on Reduction of Electoral Violence (NACOREV) was established in 2006 to propose policies and educate the public on the prevention of violence during elections. In remarks during the launching of NACOREV in December 2006, retired General Abdulsalam Abubakar, who oversaw Nigeria's transition to democracy during his brief tenure as head of state (June 1998 to May 1999), remarked on the impact of violence on Nigeria's democracy: "In the other parts of the world, citizens joyfully look forward to elections as an opportunity to right what is wrong with their political leadership; here, in Nigeria, it is a time for violence. Many Nigerians are afraid of what could happen to them. These are not idle anxieties; it is a serious matter. War is looming and if care is not [taken] we will regret our silence" (*Defense Times Magazine*, December 2006). What General Abubakar said of Nigerian elections applies to various degrees to a majority of Africa's growing democracies. In most African countries, people are killed in the course of an election. If only a few people are killed, as in Nigeria in 2003, the election is judged to be peaceful. In more serious cases, elections have led to or accentuated the cleavages of civil war, as in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire.

In general, Africa's elections have followed a four-stage pattern: The preelection months are usually tense and sometimes violent; yet the balloting days are generally peaceful and the turnout heavy; then the postelection periods are characterized by protests, which are sometimes violent and are met with repression; finally, and in most cases, some accommodations are made and a semblance of order is maintained. The pattern tends to hold irrespective of the credibility

of the elections. The general orderliness and heavy turnout on balloting days are especially significant in that they represent strong indications of Africans' belief in the democratic process as a solution to their countries' challenges. The trend is consistent with opinion polls showing that Africans, even more so than people in other developing regions, believe that democracy should be the option in all circumstances (Bratton and Mattes 2001, 2004).

Given the usual preelection tensions and threats of violence and the high incidence of electoral riggings, it would be understandable if people in most African countries hold cynical views of elections. Yet, all across the continent, from Congo to Zambia, the people turn out heavily to vote. Quite often they wait in line for hours, sometimes the entire day. Yet there are hardly any instances of disorder among the voters. The few instances of reported disorder were perpetrated in isolated locales by hired agents. However, the general pattern of peaceful balloting typically results from strong measures to limit the movement of people. In many instances, vehicular traffic is banned on election day, except for specified official purposes.

As for preelection tensions and violence, they result from mutual distrust among the contestants. A pervasive problem is incumbent candidates' misuse of their advantages. Often they do not distinguish between their privileges and the prerogatives of the state and the people, including competing candidates. Government funds are often used for campaign purposes and government-sponsored newspapers and broadcast houses often operate as though they belonged to the incumbent. In a report on Uganda's election in 2006, for instance, the European Union Election Observation Mission noted these exploitations of incumbency:

> [A] level playing field was not in place for these elections. Despite the adoption of a multi-party system, the Movement structures remained intact, active and funded by the State throughout the election period, with the effect that the President and his party enjoyed substantial advantages over their opponents, which went further than the usual advantages of incumbency. Further, the President and his party (the National Resistance Party Organisation) utilised state resources in support of their campaign, including use of government cars, personnel and advertising, and received overwhelming and positive coverage on State television and radio (European Union Election Observation Mission Uganda 2006).

Similarly, agencies of national security, from the police to the army, are at the command of incumbents, who use them against opponents,

justifiably and unjustifiably. Presidents and prime ministers do not hesitate to arrest and jail their opponents, for the slightest provocation.

In reaction to these leverages of incumbency and sometimes in reflection of the dearth of a democratic culture, opposition candidates often presume the worst. Accordingly, they resort to inflammatory utterances and actions, including threats of and the sponsorship of violent demonstrations. In the context of political instability, this is enough reason for jittery governments to resort to repressive actions. This in turn heightens the political tension. Thus, even when the polling appears to have gone smoothly, the incumbent leverage and underlying tension and distrust readily become factors of tabulation of the ballots and the perception of their accuracy. Even when independent observers vouch for the transparency of the process, the outcome is still likely to be rejected and protested by those to whom it was unfavorable.

A factor of the electoral problems in Africa is the limited experience with multiparty elections. Even in the absence of nefarious behavior, the task of organizing a credible election is a mammoth one. It can only be improved through repeated experience. The logistics are even more daunting in African countries, where communications and transportation conditions are typically inadequate for the challenges. Compounding these challenges is the sheer number of parties and candidates that vie for office. In relatively small Liberia, 22 candidates vied for the presidency in 2006. In the much larger Congo (Kinshasa), 33 parties contested. These would be staggering numbers even in countries with centuries of experience. In African countries, they present an unwieldy array of challenges of coordination. Somewhere, somehow there is bound to be some irregulary. How much of these should be accepted as inherent in such polities is a matter at the heart of some challenges to elections in Africa.

To a considerable extent, however, election problems in Africa are perpetuated by those seeking to win by any means necessary, or their supporters, who may be even more overzealous. The irregularities observed by independent election monitors are similar to those discussed with regard to Nigeria, though with varying magnitude. Among these are preelection violence and voter intimidation, vote counts that are inconsistent with other known facts of the election, irregularities in the delivery of blank and completed ballots, lack of transparency in the counting process, and improper use of government workers as campaign staff. These are in addition to the serious problems of inequitable access to government-sponsored media.

Preelection violence and the general tension that often constitutes the backdrop of African elections are the most palpable irregularities. Election-related assassinations have taken place in several countries, including Nigeria, Côte d'Ivoire, and Zambia. That is in addition to the killings of ordinary people in these and several other countries.

Democratic Republic of Congo

In October 2006, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (or Congo Kinshasa) joined the ranks of African countries that have turned to elections. Before then Congo had endured decades of Mobutu sese Seko's autocracy, a few more years of military juntas, and about four years of civil war and an insurgency that involved the armed forces of at least seven other countries. Mobutu's 32-year autocracy had survived several rebellions, sometimes with the aid of French and U.S. intervention. But Mobutu's cult of personality meant that the institutions of state never developed (Afoaku 1998). With his health failing, his regime eventually collapsed in May 1997 under pressure from a ragtag rebel group led by Laurent Kabila. Kabila himself was assassinated in January 2001 and was succeeded as president by his son, Joseph Kabila. The young Kabila pursued a more conciliatory policy and signed peace agreements with neighboring countries (Rwanda and Uganda) and several of the rebel groups that had fought for control over the country. The election of October 2006 was the culmination of the peace initiatives.

With about 33 parties contesting, the election had to be one of the most unwieldy in Africa and elsewhere. With no one winning a majority of the votes, the top two candidates, one being Joseph Kabila, contested in a run-off election. Independent monitors generally praised the elections, especially the run-off, despite several irregularities. The polling itself was generally peaceful, for a country that had been at the brink of disintegration. Still, voters at two precincts were killed and the ballot stations ransacked. Other irregularities included higher than explicable numbers of ballots in some precincts and inflated numbers of "voter by exemption," a scheme that allowed some people to vote at wards other than where they were registered. In all, however, election monitors generally concurred with the Carter Center that: "The manipulation we have found were perpetrated by supporters of both candidates and the geographic distribution of the abuses did not benefit one candidate significantly over the other" (Carter Center 2006, November 27). The election rules included an appeals process that went all the way to the Supreme Court.

Nonetheless, there was an outbreak of protests and violence once the results were announced. The protesters accused the government of rigging the election in favor of Joseph Kabila. Among other things, mobs attacked the Supreme Court, the institution whose independence is central to the practice of a democracy. Meanwhile, rebel attacks continued, especially in the eastern region, where foreign rebels and local militia were each estimated to number up to 8,000. In a report issued in January 2007, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) warned that Congo's future stability will depend on success in managing the militia and building or strengthening the institutions of democracy, including the parliament and the judiciary (United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, 2007).

However, these tasks are complicated by civic values that had developed over decades of authoritarianism followed by about six years of civil war. The parliament, three-fifths of which are members of Kabila's party, has increasingly marginalized the opposition. The judiciary also appears to be pro-government. The DRC finds a level of corruption in the institutions of government and indiscipline within the military. All this adds up to an uncertain political and economic future for a country that is rich in mineral resources.

Liberia

Another country that has turned to elections to resolve its political upheaval is Liberia. The former U.S. colony had experienced political spasms since President William R. Tolbert, Jr. was overthrown in April 1980 by Master Sergeant Samuel K. Doe. The coup was a culmination of tension between "native" Liberians and descendants of former American slaves who were resettled in Liberia beginning in 1822. Though a small percentage of the population, the Ameri-Liberians had dominated leadership of the country. Doe's coup was, in part, the "native" Liberians' revolt against the dominance. The repressive Doe was himself assassinated in 1990, not long after one of his aides, Charles Taylor, launched a military rebellion against him. For about seven years, Liberia was plunged into a civil war that had the country in ruins. With the assistance of the West African Economic Community and the United Nations, Liberia conducted elections in 1997 and Taylor won the presidency handily. Given that Taylor's forces had the upper hand in the civil war, his victory was seen as a pragmatic choice by the electorate.

Like Doe, however, Taylor became a ruthless autocratic. Among other things he fomented a brutal guerilla movement in Sierra Leone

as a means of securing some of the country's diamond. By 2002, his own government was literally under siege by Liberian rebel forces. In 2003, he accepted a UN-brokered agreement under which he left Liberia for exile in Nigeria.

Taylor's departure paved the way for a more peaceful general election in October 2005. As many as 22 candidates vied for the presidency, necessitating a run-off between the two top candidates, George Weah and Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. Weah, a national soccer hero, received the highest percentage of votes, drawing his staunchest support from Liberia's large youth population. Johnson-Sirleaf, who competed against Taylor in the 1997 election and was the establishment candidate, came in second. The order was reversed, however, in the runoffs in November 2005. Johnson-Sirleaf received about 59 percent of the votes to Weah's 41 percent.

Violent demonstrations broke out even as the ballots were being tabulated. Weah charged that the election was rigged and his followers agreed. Hundreds marched through the streets of Monrovia, pelting stones at UN security personnel deployed there to safeguard the elections and maintain order. They chanted, "No Weah, no peace! "No Weah, no peace!" They were dispersed with teargas after they attempted to invade the U.S. embassy and tried to attack other office buildings. It took pressures from the international community, including the African Union and the Western African Economic Community, to keep the demonstrations from escalating into another civil war. Weah's credibility among the youth also worked in Liberia's favor as they heeded his call to avoid violence and let him pursue their grievances through legal means.

Liberia is now in a tenuous state of calm. Despite the optimism that greeted the election of Africa's first female head of state, Liberia remains a country in distress. The institutions of government remain weak and corruption endemic. Johnson-Sirleaf has been criticized for her style of leadership and ineffectiveness in reining in corruption, especially among her allies. Some critics have questioned whether Liberia can fully recover from its failed-state status under a unitary government.

Bai M. Gbala, Liberia's former Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, has argued that breaking up Liberia into a federation of four regions is necessary to reform its politics and spur development. The Liberian newspaper, the *Analyst* (December 28, 2006), quotes Gbala as saying that "the prevailing 'failed State conditions' of the Liberian State are the result of the panorama of social, economic and political ills intrinsic in and brought about by the Unitary structure of government."

This structure, Gbala argues, is incompatible with Liberians' view of ethnicity as the focal point of political action in the country. "Towards this end, we suggest that the Liberian nation be re-subdivided into four major provinces (Eastern, North Central, South Central and Western) and given local autonomy to elect their political leaders now appointed by Monrovia. By this approach, local/regional leaders and citizens will assume the responsibility of local/regional decision-making while they participate, as equal partners, in national affairs."

Decentralization is, of course, the standard prescription for reversing an autocratic order. The resulting structural change usually eases the major political fault lines. However, it rarely has much impact on corruption and the related civic vices. More often than not, political decentralization provides the opportunity for corruption to more people at different levels of government. The net result is usually continued hardship on the populace. A greater number of common people may benefit from the fact that the prebendal relations are brought closer to home. However, the overall impact on societal progress remains marginal, for as long as corruption and nepotism consumes an undue amount of state resources. This reality is best illustrated by Nigeria. At independence, it had three political divisions. There are now 36 states. Yet corruption is greater than ever and development is stunted despite huge oil revenues and windfalls.

Moreover, ethnic-based political divisions are rarely an end game. As Kieh, Jr. (1998, 155) writes, in analyzing the ethnic factor of Liberian politics:

> [E]thnic groups in African states are not monolithic. The only characteristic its members usually have in common is a generic ethno-cultural background—language and customs, among others. Beyond this, they are divided along class, professional, gender, age and religious lines. Consequently, it is impossible for such disparate ethnic groups with their own internal schisms to fashion a common set of ethnic interests and agenda.

Of course, ethnic divisions are still exploited for political purposes. But once the contest with others becomes less salient, intraethnic cleavages become the fault lines. The crisis in Anambra state in Nigeria since the 2003 elections illustrates this political phenomenon, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Suffice to say that the civic values that make ethnicity preeminent in politics continues to undermine democratic institutions and processes even after structural changes to accommodate the ethnic divisions.

Côte d'Ivoire

In, Côte d'Ivoire hundreds of people died in election-related violence in 2000 and subsequently. The violence, which had a dual ethnic and regional dimension, was provoked, in part, by the disqualification of the northern opposition leader, Alassane Ouattara, on the grounds that he supposedly was not Ivorian. Accordingly, Northern Ivorians who were largely loyal to Ouattara clashed with Southerners, who mostly supported Laurent Gbagbo. When election results were announced, however, Robert Guei, who came to power in a military coup in 1999, claimed victory. But evidence that he rigged the election was so strong that Ivorians mounted concerted demonstrations that forced him to step down and hand over to Gbagbo, the probable winner. In a deft political accommodation that seemed to portend well for Ivorian democracy, Gbagbo appointed Guei the defense minister in the government of national unity. However, in September 2002, Guei resigned from the government and established a new political party. A coup attempt followed soon after and degenerated into a civil war. Early in the crises, Guei was shot by Gbagbo's loyalists, who suspected him of sponsoring the rebellion.

Kenya

Like Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya was a relatively stable country through much of its postindependence history. Its stability derived from the stature of its first postcolonial president, Jomo Kenyatta, who presided over a one-party state. That stability unraveled when the mantle of leadership of the ruling party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), was passed on to Kenyatta's protégé, Daniel arap Moi. When Moi was forced to abandon one-party rule, interethnic violence intensified. "During the1990s, Kenya held two multi-party elections, but both were suspect, and accompanied by politically motivated 'ethnic' violence, which resulted in hundreds of deaths and the displacement of some 400,000 people" (Human Rights Watch 2002). To stem ethnic conflict and tension, Moi even sought to ban all broadcasts in local languages.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia's election in 2005 was generally peaceful before and during the polling. However, violent protests broke out following the announcement of the reelection of the government of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi. The opposition Coalition for Unity and Democracy

(CUD) complained that the election was rigged in favor of the ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). The government reacted harshly to suppress the protests, and the outcome was the death of at least 80 people. The crisis was exacerbated by the ethnic dimension. As is common in Africa, Ethiopian politics has a decidedly ethnic alignment. The EPRDF is associated with Tigrayans, whereas CUD draws its strength from Amharas. The rest of Ethiopia's ethnic groups, including the Oromos and Somalis, are interspersed in these and lesser parties. The crackdown on the opposition, therefore, had the hue of an ethnic conflict, though it was essentially another instance of electoral problems, in reality or perception.

Democracy's Weak Pillars

These summaries suggest a major challenge facing African democracies. It is no longer the structure of government or the formal process that is the primary stumbling block to democratic consolidation and economic progress. It is the content of the structures and adherence to the processes that makes the difference. To a great extent, this is a challenge of overcoming or transcending a political culture and civic values that have been engrained over a long period of time. As Ihonvbere (1998a, 221) has noted, "at least until recently, the new pro-democracy movements and political parties have tended to exhibit some traits which are common to the more traditional parties: corruption, opportunism, the marginalization of women, concentration in specific regions or urban centers, personalization of politics, confusion, fragmentation, excessive ambition and focus on power…." The situation is not the same across parties and countries, but Ihonvbere's summation remains a significant dimension of Africa's democratization.

Recycling "Old Guards"

Accordingly, one of the challenges to Africa's democratization is that its content continues to bear disquieting resemblance to the regimes being replaced. The continuing prominence of retired military officers in the politics of some countries is the most obvious manifestation of this reality. The emergence of new political parties headed by people who for long were an integral part of the governments being replaced is another manifestation. Such leaders are inherently saddled with experiential baggage, which informs their political behavior and their inclination to change.

In Nigeria, for instance, the top four parties in the presidential election of 2003 had former military officers as their candidates. They include two former military heads of state (General Obasanjo for the PDP and General Buhari for the All Nigerian Peoples Party [ANPP]) and the secessionist leader of the Nigeria civil war, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu (for APGA). Obasanjo's performance has been dogged by the perception that he remains an army officer in character. Haughty and temperamental, Obasanjo seemed to prefer to lead more by imperial fiat than by the democratic process. Despite this experience with Obasanjo, the political allure of retired generals continues in Nigeria. Buhari and Ojukwu were also two of the most viable contenders in the presidential elections of 2007.

In other countries, the problem is that of recycling old political hands. One of the drawbacks to Africa's first party-to-party transition (in Zambia), for instance, was that the new order resembled the old considerably. When Zambians voted out the long-entrenched government of Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party (UNIP), they were optimistic about the prospects of governance by the umbrella party of opposition groups, the Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD). However, as Ihonvbere (1998a, 227) notes, "few paid attention to the fact that the leading cadres of the MMD were actually persons who had served Kaunda very well in the UNIP and had been dismissed for one offense or another."

The problem of recycling the old in the new order results, of course, from the fact that political prominence and experience comes from participating in government. And when a government or form of government is entrenched for a long time, "new" leaders are very likely to emerge from the old order. In countries, such as Nigeria, with a long history of military rule, the "new" leaders are military officers; in countries such as Zambia, where a civilian government was entrenched, the "new" leaders normally emerge from the entrenched government. Only continued multiparty politics would give rise to a truly new cadre of leadership.

But then old leadership is only the most evident of the political carryovers. The entrenched civic culture and attitude toward governance is more problematic. Military rule and one-party politics had retarded the development of a culture of civic discipline and political accommodation. Political pursuits were typically opportunistic and bereft of philosophical dedication. These realities have continued to retard Africa's democratization.

Political Parties, Opportunism, and Indiscipline

The instability of and lack of discipline within political parties are among the manifestations of the politics of opportunism. They are responsible for the unwieldy proliferation of political parties, as well as the dearth of party loyalty, both of which are destabilizing. The challenge of conducting an election in which 33 political parties contested has already been noted with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. But even in countries where there are much fewer parties, the incidence of shifting alliances make for unpredictability. It is not just alliances of parties, but also of their prominent members. Given the absence of an ideological or philosophical bond, leading party members have no qualms about bolting to another party. Usually, the reason is the individual's failure to obtain a desired position or privilege.

The politics of party switching reached a fever pitch in Nigeria as the 2007 elections approached. Governors, senators, and local party leaders switched parties at such a rate that the characteristics of the parties became indefinable. The ultimate switch was by the vice president, Atiku Abubakar, who had engaged in a long-running feud with the president. Late in 2006, Abubakar formally announced what had been widely reported: that he had defected from the People's Democratic Party (PDP) to the AC. The Obasanjo administration promptly announced that the vice president's office was vacant. Following blistering attacks from the press for ignoring constitutional stipulations on the removal of the vice president, the Obasanjo administration backtracked on its declaration, even before the court of appeal declared it unconstitutional.

As a mark of their distrust of politicians, Nigerians widely believed that Obasanjo merely orchestrated the crisis as a strategy for muddling the 2007 elections and scuttling the transition from his administration. The ultimate goal, it was believed, was to attain the tenure prolongation that he failed to attain through the attempted constitutional amendment in 2006. In reality, the crisis illustrates the vagaries of a constitutional regime that is yet to have its major ambiguities sorted out. It also illustrates the strains on the system when the participants pursue personal ambitions without regard for the health of the polity. President Obasanjo declared the vice presidency vacant on the grounds that the constitution stipulates that a presidential candidate is to pick a running mate from the same party. The constitution does not address a circumstance in which the incumbent vice president defects to another party. However, it does stipulate that only the

National Assembly may remove the vice president through impeachment. This left the president in a quandary when the vice president defected without resigning.

Such mega-crises are more readily resolved through judicial review, as happened in Nigeria. More insidiously problematic is the lack of party discipline. As Diamond and others have noted, the viability of a democratic order is dependent substantially on the health of the political parties around which the political process is woven. Indiscipline and disorder within the parties mean instability for the polity. Indiscipline is especially problematic for parties that are voted into power following a period of entrenched government, military or civilian. This was one of the factors that frustrated Frederick Chiluba's MMD government in Zambia between 1991 and 2001. The party had difficulty coordinating policies between the central and regional governments and there were "acts of insubordination, disrespect for party rules and decisions and power struggles…" (Ihonvbere 1998a, 232). Differences are, of course, inherent in a healthy democratic order. However, they become dysfunctional to the polity when they prevent the adoption and implementation of a comprehensive policy and the coordination of the different levels of government.

Civic Opportunism

Opportunism in the political process is not limited to people at the helm of leadership, it is also a manifest value among people at the various rungs of the political ladder. A significant percentage of people see their participation in the political process in terms of their pecuniary benefits rather than as civic duty. Candidates for office have learned, for instance, that it is no longer enough to make promises about projects and policies. Such promises have become passé and, as the voters know too well, are rarely ever fulfilled or even attempted. In countries such as Nigeria, prospective voters now demand instant cash or other material payment for their support.

It is, of course, difficult to document such demands and transactions. The experience of a candidate for the governorship of Lagos State in 2003 is, however, quite illustrative. In an article in *Newswatch* magazine (July 28, 2003), Bamidele Aturu, a legal practitioner, recounts being flustered by the scope of this demand on candidates for office. Though he was fully aware that candidates for office often sprayed cash at campaign gatherings, bus stops, and marketplaces, he "did not…imagine that up to 90 percent of the voters indeed expected some form of bribe or the other from all contestants." Prospective

voters actually became angry at him on realizing that the campaign pamphlets he handed out did not include "the second page," a reference to bribe money.

This expectation was evidently created by politicians who sought to exploit poverty and want. For many, it has now become a civic norm, which in turn further corrupts the political process in a vicious cycle. Such expectations do not disappear after elections. Rather, they permeate public service and all forms of civic life. Census takers expect payoffs from the communities they are posted to. Clerks in government offices demand payment for forms meant for distribution to people who need to fill them. Employment offices set up to help people find jobs often demand payoffs that the jobless cannot afford. In some cases such offices were set up in response to restive demonstrations, and they were manned by leaders of the demonstrations. The net effect of these manifestations of civic cynicism is intensified distress for the people and degradation of the polity. As Aturu writes with regard to the consequences of electoral campaigns and bribing voters:

> In fact, the people have been turned into victims of poverty. They are victimized by the very people who should make life easier for them. But if the vicious cycle must end, the victims must wake up. They must refuse to participate in the process of their own victimization. They need to know that N1,000 bribe every four years cannot feed them or pay their house rents.

It would take considerable campaign of awareness by the press to bring about such a realization.

The Anambra Debacle

A political debacle in a Nigerian state illustrates the extent of the grossness of political indiscipline and the ethic of opportunism. As the *Vanguard* (July 28, 2003) characterized it, it was "the outcome of the cash-and-carry politics that has become the order of the day in this country." It was a case in which the police, in effect, attempted a coup against a recently elected state governor at the behest of his political benefactor. In a country where so many improbable things happen—including the arrest of an assistant inspector general of police for armed robbery—the kidnapping of a governor by his benefactor was nonetheless riveting. It continued to make front-page headlines months after the abduction, as the presidency, the legislature and the judiciary all became immersed in the political and legal quagmire.

In a nutshell, the attempted removal was the culmination of a power struggle between the elected governor of Anambra State, Chris Ngige, and the man who largely financed his campaign, Chris Uba. According to Ngige's account to the press, differences between him and his friend and political ally, Uba, began to emerge during the campaigns. It reached a climax after Ngige, a physician by profession, was inaugurated. Uba wanted to be the ultimate decision maker in the affairs of the state and also demanded staggering amounts from government coffers as immediate reimbursement supposedly for his campaign expenses. When Ngige declined both demands, Uba decided to force him out.

Uba, a grade school dropout who amassed considerable fortune by burrowing into the confidence of another business tycoon, boasted of being "the greatest godfather in Nigeria" because he supposedly engineered the election of all the principal office holders in Anambra state. *Newswatch* (July 28, 2003, 45), quotes him as saying, "I (pay to) put politicians there, and I also have the power to remove any of them, who does not perform up to my expectation anytime I like." Given that Uba's attempt to remove Ngige from office came barely two months after the latter became governor, it was obvious that performance was not the issue. Certainly not in the ordinary sense of the word.

On July 10, 2003, the day of what the press took to calling Nigeria's first civilian coup, a squad of 37 mobile policemen, led by Assistant Inspector-General Raphael Ige, was dispatched from a neighboring state, Enugu, to effect the abduction. According to a report by an ad hoc committee set up by the Nigerian Senate, the squad cordoned off the state government premises, disarmed the governor's security aides, and abducted him (*Vanguard*, August 2, 2003). Ngige was taken to a hotel, from where he secretly called a Nigerian television station, which broadcast the story of his abduction.

Meanwhile, as the five-hour abduction was in progress, Ngige's deputy governor presented Ngige's purported letter of resignation to the state legislature, which promptly accepted the resignation. Ngige's foes sought to have his deputy, Okey Udeh, sworn in as governor. The plan was thwarted by the state senior judge, who reportedly went into hiding. Nonetheless, Udeh brandished Ngige's purported letter of resignation and proclaimed himself governor. The broadcast of Ngige's abduction aborted the succession process, at least temporarily. The legislature subsequently reversed its approval of the purported letter of resignation after declaring it invalid.

As details of the imbroglio unfolded, it became evident that the attempted coup against Ngige had the backing or at least connivance

of the presidency. Moreover, Ngige himself was hardly an innocent victim of the intrigue. He had, indeed, signed documents and made pledges that compromised his authority as governor and subverted constitutional governance. In a front-page editorial calling for Ngige's resignation, the *Vanguard* (July 28, 2003) wrote:

> We read with nausea stories of a groveling 52-year-old governor before a 39-year old upstart because of power. We heard stories of a governor who signed contractual agreements to pawn away the state with glee and was repudiating them with utter abandon…
>
> What is clear now is that Chris Ngige has exhibited the shamelessness of a cad: he has displayed an integrity that is very questionable. He can no longer be trusted because as a leopard he cannot change his spots. He is not a fit and proper person to mount the exalted office of the Governor of a State.

Ultimately, Ngige was forced out, not because of his contractual agreement with his benefactor, but because his election was found to be fraudulent. Before then, the abduction had generated a plethora of court opinions, attempted impeachment of the deputy governor, calls for impeachment of the president, and the forced retirement of the assistant inspector general of police, Ige, who commanded the abduction squad. Ige died about six months later, in January 2004.

More than Ngige's own conduct was the question of the role of the presidency in the abduction. Given that the president is the ultimate commander of the police, he should have been aghast that they were used to effect a nefarious political agreement. Yet days into the crisis, he seemed unfazed, claiming that it was merely a legal matter that would be resolved. However, the behavior of the executive arm of government, including law enforcement, left little doubt as to where the president's sympathy lay. Neither Uba nor the assistant superintendent of police was prosecuted for treason. Rather, even after Ngige reassumed the office of the governor, he was denied the usual police detail. He temporarily established his own security outfit.

The press carried reports that suggested that the presidency was not only sympathetic toward Ngige's abduction but may have given it a wink and a nod. The headlines and cover captions were quite pointed: " A Kingdom of open robberies" (*This Day*, July 23, 2003); "Abuja is to blame for Anambra crisis" (Sunday *Vanguard*, July 27, 2003); "Anambra Assembly indicts Obasanjo" (*Daily Trust*, January 8, 2004); "Chris Uba: Aso Rock Mercenary in Anambra" (*Newswatch*,

July 28, 2003). Incidentally, Abuja is the seat of Nigeria's federal government and Aso Rock is the equivalent of the White House and West Minister Abbey.

The reports pointed to probable reasons for the president's lack of outrage toward the abduction. He held Ngige in disdain, Uba's brother, Andy Uba, was the president's special assistant on domestic affairs, and Uba was a major financier of the PDP. In its cover story on the crisis in the July 28, 2003 issue, *Newswatch* magazine asserted that:

> With the family connection, Chris Uba has direct and unrestricted access to the president, who gave him the mandate to hand-pick candidates for the past elections in Anambra and facilitated the rigging of the election in the state through the help of the police especially during [the] April 19 polls which produced Ngige as the governor.

The magazine asserts further that:

> The ganster-like bombardment of the Anambra Government House by a team led by Raphael Ige, assistant inspector general of Police, Zone 9, for the first time brought the fact home to many Nigerians that Aso Rock was solidly behind the continuous fracas between the money-bags and both past and present governors of the state.

The abduction was never dealt with in a manner appropriate for a breach of order of that magnitude. None of the abductors was tried for treason, let alone imprisoned. The president ordered the Public Service Commission to investigate the police's involvement. However, as *Newswatch* (July 28, 2003) editorialized about this order and other investigations ordered by the legislature, such inquiries often serve to defuse crises rather than deal with them. The editorial urged instead for the arrest and trial of the participants for treason:

> We need the president's order, if [that's] what the police are waiting for, to arrest Ige, Uba, Chuma Nzeribe and all those who hatched, executed or in any way collaborated with the commission of this crime and bring them to trial. That is the only right action. Anything else merely begs the question.

This did not happen. In a column for *This Day* (July 23, 2003) titled "A Kingdom of Open Robberies," Sonnie Ekwowusi wrote: "One of the reasons why Aso Rock will not like to see the crisis resolved in favour of democracy is that it will expose the evil deeds and open

robberies of some big politicians who will not like to be exposed." This widely held view of the crisis was confirmed in March 2006, when an appeals court affirmed the electoral commission's nullification of Ngige's election as the governor of Anambra State.

This ironic resolution three years after the abduction meant that neither Ngige nor his abductors—fellow members of the PDP— could retain the governorship. Rather, Ngige was replaced by Peter Obi, of a rival party, the All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA).

As discussed in Chapter 8, Anambra was one of the states in which independent monitors reported serious irregularities during the 2003 elections. And the leader of APGA, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, was one of the most strident contenders that the elections were rigged.

The replacement of Ngige did not end Anambra's dark political opera, however. Obi was impeached by the majority PDP legislature within eight months of his taking office "in a spurious manner that bore the trappings of abuse of power and disregard for due process" (*Guardian*, February 21, 2007). Obi was replaced by his deputy, Virgy Etiaba, who thus became Nigeria's first female governor. However, Obi's impeachment was quashed by a unanimous judgment of an appeals court in February 2007, that is, about two months before the next election.

The Ngige affair epitomizes the complex tangle of democracy in the context of civic cynicism. In a sense, it demonstrates that the structure and process of democracy is becoming entrenched in Nigeria. After all, as was said of the Watergate affair in the United States, the Ngige affair proved that the system worked. However, the resolution provided little justice to victors in the election, who hardly got to govern; nor to the people of the state, who had four changes in governorship in four years and, in effect, had no stable government through an entire election cycle. The Ngige affair was also emblematic of the broader culture of impunity. That a civilian could go as far as Uba did in seeking to impose his will reflects and reinforces the civic ethic that clout and means supersede law and due process. In his column in *This Day*, Ekwowusi was circumspect about public outrage toward Ngige's abduction. To begin with, it was belated, he wrote. More than that, "if Uba had succeeded in overthrowing Ngige, everybody would have been worshipping him as before. Nothing succeeds like success." First, of course, Uba had to "settle" everyone that mattered. The ethic of means over law and clout over right manifests in all facets of civic life.

Armed Conflicts and Compromised Democracy

The proliferation of theaters of armed conflicts in African countries is one manifestation of the culture of impunity. Most of the problems had their roots in the winner-takes-all characteristics of postcolonial African politics by which the spoils of leadership tended to go to favored groups. Given that ethnicity and religion were the most convenient rallying point for such politics, they also became the cleavages for political contest and civil strife. Where there are numerically dominant ethnic groups, they readily monopolize the advantages of power. Where there is relative parity, as in Nigeria, the rigging of elections becomes the norm. In some countries, such as Rwanda and Burundi, minority groups actually dominated power because of quirks in the colonial transfer of power and privilege. Most armed conflicts and recurrent ethnic violence in Africa result from one or a combination of these situations.

However, with hardly any exception, the actual beneficiary of the inequities in the use of resources is the political class. Though ethnicity and religion may be used to galvanize support, the masses have little to show for it. Thus, in any of the contexts above, the actual problem lies not in who is in power, but how the power is used and to whose advantage. More often than not, the advantages are to the insiders among the political class and their associates in business.

There is a paradox about this government-engendered class inequity. Until recently, most African governments pursued a quasi-socialist economic policy by which the governments controlled all natural resources. Even with the privatization policies being pursued by several countries, government control of resources remains significant. The ostensible purpose is to ensure equitable and judicious use of revenues for national development. However, African governments' focus on building elite support systems rather than ensuring equitable distribution of resources has accentuated class inequities rather than attenuate them. And this makes the sharing of the proverbial national cake all the more contentious. In oil-exporting countries such as Angola, Cameroon, and Nigeria governments own or otherwise control the means of exploration, refinement, and distribution both of the primary and secondary products. The same is true of countries such as Congo, Guinea, and Sierra Leone that are rich in minerals such as bauxite, copper, diamonds, gold, and iron ore.

Armed Conflicts and Resource Control

Accordingly, armed conflicts and civil disorder in several countries have arisen or been sustained because of resource control. Thus, in Africa, the wealth of the land often does not serve the needs of the masses because it is wasted in corruption or the struggle for its control.

In Guinea, the issue of resource control was at the root of a civil disorder that cost hundreds of lives from January 2007. The labor union went on strike to force President Lansana Conté to liberalize his governance largely to pave the way for more equitable use of the country's natural resources. As columnist John Kaninda wrote in the Johannesburg-based *Business Day* (January 26, 2007), "Guinea is the world's leading exporter of bauxite," yet the revenue is of little benefit to the masses because of "a political class that is very adept at using state channels and mechanisms for self-enrichment." The strike and related protests paralyzed the country for 18 days and claimed the lives of at least 59 Guineans. To quell the unrest, Conté agreed to nominate a consensus prime minister to whom he would cede much of his power. However, he appointed an associate to the dismay of the labor union. Violence erupted again, as the union resumed strikes and protests. In response, Conté declared martial law. An anonymous analyst for allafrica.com (February 12, 2007) speculated that Conté's choice of a prime minister indicated that either his concession was a ploy to buy time or he was under pressure from vested interests. The second wave of strikes and violence ended late in February after Conté agreed to appoint an independent prime minister from a list provided by the union and opposition parties.

Guinea's political crisis represents the more benign end of the struggle for democratic governance and resource control. It perhaps best exemplifies Monga's thesis on disorder and the people's determination to wrestle control of their destiny at all costs. Angola, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria represent the most tragic ends of the spectrum of struggle.

> Angola is a fabulously wealthy country endowed with abundant reserves of oil, diamonds, and other precious minerals. Paradoxically, this country is also consistently regarded as a problematic state. For more than a quarter century of civil war, the country has tottered precariously on the edge of collapse. This situation of prolonged instability provided ideal conditions for rapacious national elites to pillage the country's resources, seemingly oblivious to the suffering of most Angolans" (Malaquias 2007, 115).

Though the long civil war had its roots in political ideology and ethnic differences, it was sustained for the most part by the struggle to control the country's vast oil and diamond resources. The rebel group the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA from the name in Portuguese) fiercely resisted attempts to dislodge it from Angola's diamond-rich territories. And it was able to maintain its long guerilla campaign by trading diamond for arms and supplies. On its part, the government of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) was able to sustain the war because of its reliance on crude oil production and sales. "[T]he fact that oil accounts for 46 per cent of Angola's GDP, 90 per cent of its total exports and more than 94 per cent of government revenues provides a glimpse of this sector's importance as the regime's critical support pillar" (Malaquias 2007, 121). Similarly, the civil war in Sierra Leone was fought primarily to control its diamond mines.

In Nigeria, control of the country's crude oil production and export was a significant dimension of the war of secession and reunification from July 1967 to January 1970. Today, the issue of revenue sharing is the impetus of military activities of groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF). The various people of the Niger Delta together constitute a minority in Nigeria. Yet, much of Nigeria's crude oil and natural gas derivation is from this region. Meanwhile, political power, and therefore resource control, has rested with Nigeria's larger ethnic groups. A judicious policy of resource allocation would have ensured the development of the areas of resource derivation while also ensuring the fair sharing of revenue with the rest of Nigeria's regions. However, because resource allocation has been determined more by political power than equity and justice, the Niger Delta has remained one of Nigeria's most impoverished areas. Remedying this inequity has been the pivotal issue in the military unrest in the region.

Whatever may be the basis of such armed conflicts, however, there is always the dimension of opportunism. Individual ambition is often the underlying factor of insurrections. As Human Rights Watch reports, for instance, a number of the myriad militant groups in the Niger Delta, including NDPVF, emerged or consolidated to control routes for "oil bunkering," the illegal siphoning and sale of Nigeria's crude oil (Human Rights Watch 2005). In Angola, the late Jonas Savimbi, who was resilient in leading the UNITA movement, was an even more notable example of an opportunist rebel.

Beyond opportunism, armed conflicts for whatever reason invariably contribute to the culture of impunity. The sheer brutality of some of the insurrections is one indication. Groups fighting for justice would be expected to be good to the common people. Yet, in case after case rebel groups were harsh to ordinary people who had no hand in the injustice they are supposedly fighting against. The savagery of the rebel groups the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone and the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda are among the most notorious cases. But even in Nigeria, where the armed activities are targeted primarily at the oil industry, ordinary citizens also get victimized. Ferries and speedboats transporting ordinary people are frequently attacked and robbed by groups that are not distinguishable from those that are ostensibly fighting for the people.

Moreover, many of the conflicts that rack the Niger Delta are not necessarily intended to redress injustice; they are more about jostling for advantage. There are internecine violence among the constituent minority groups: the Ijaw versus the Uhrobo in what used to be the Midwestern Region; the Okrika and the Ogoni, and the Okrika and the Ikwere in what Nigerians call the South-South. Some of the most destructive conflicts have been within small ethnic groups and subdivisions of those groups. Portions of Okrika town, for instance, were razed in 2004 in sectional fighting. The Kalabari similarly engaged in ferocious intersectional fighting that left several people dead and communities in disarray. Such conflicts are common within sub-groups of larger ethnic groups. For interethnic conflicts—such as that between the Ijaw and Itsekiri in the Warri metropolitan area—the typical cause of violent clashes is contests for the location of local government headquarters and similar privileges. The ferocity of these conflicts can only be explained with reference to the militarization of politics.

Religion as a Dimension

Along with ethnicity and its variants, religion has been a major cleavage in African politics and conflicts. In reality, however, religion, like ethnicity, is often a convenient front for the contest for political power and resource control. Such has been the case in Sudan, Senegal and Nigeria, for instance.

The pogrom against the people of Darfur in Sudan has garnered considerable headlines in the Western press, especially since 2004 when then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell visited the area and declared the atrocities genocide. Hardly noted is that Darfur was not much of a theater of conflict while the Sudanese government

engaged in a 20-year civil war with Southern secessionists. Until a power-sharing agreement was reached in May 2004, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) fought for the independence of Southern Sudan. The Southerners wanted to secede from Sudan because of their peripheral status in the interests of the government in Khartoum. The religious dimension was emphasized in the coverage and analysis of this war. However, the equally—perhaps more—ferocious violence in the Muslim Darfur points to the centrality of resource control and the leverage of elite power.

Unlike the South, the people of Darfur are predominantly Muslim. Their armed rebellion, just as the Sudanese government was reaching an accord with the SPLA, was probably not coincidental. The quest for redress of disenfranchisement is strongest when such a gesture is extended to another marginalized group. Conversely, the government's brutal reaction—directly and through the Janjaweed—manifests a strong resolve to repress another demand for equitable sharing of the national cake. The reaction, in fact, may have reflected deep resentment of the settlement with the South.

In Nigeria, religious conflicts flare up incessantly, especially in the Muslim North for reasons both tenuous and substantive. Two of the most serious eruptions under the current democratization occurred over the institution of sharia law in northern states beginning in 2000 and the attempted hosting of Miss World in 2002. In both instances riots and clashes between Christians and Muslims resulted in substantial loss of lives and the destruction of churches, mosques, homes, and businesses.

Although sharia laws had long existed in Muslim Nigeria, its application had been localized. An attempt to incorporate it into the constitution during the 1979 transition from military rule was vigorously debated—by the drafting commission and the general public—and was rejected. It remained a largely dormant issue through the short-lived Second Republic and the subsequent prolonged military regime. However, soon after the return to democratic rule in 1999, the northern state of Zamfara became the first to introduce sharia as statutory law. Zamfara was soon followed by most other states in the North.

This introduction of theocratic governance in an otherwise secular nation caused considerable unease among Christians, especially Southerners resident in the North. When the Christians protested, especially in the metropolitan city of Kaduna, they were attacked by Muslim mobs. In episodes reminiscent of the events that led to the 1967–1970 civil war, the armed mobs attacked Southern residents, killing people and torching their homes and churches. Reprisal

killings of northern Muslims soon followed in eastern states. This first serious test of the newly installed elected government was kept from deteriorating only through heavy deployment of security personnel and the concerted effort of political leaders from all the regions. Significantly, the strong sentiment in southern Nigeria was that the introduction of the sharia and the subsequent violence were intended to undermine the government of Nigeria's first executive president from the South.

Internecine violence continued to flare between Christians and Muslims in the North, sometimes for no evident reason other than the mere parade of one group or the other. A serious conflict broke out in November 2002, when Nigeria attempted to host the Miss World Pageant in the capital city of Abuja. Muslims rioted, especially in the northern city of Kaduna, where there is perennial tension in relations with Christians. The protesters claimed that the event was inconsistent with Islamic faith and should not be held in a city they believe should be guided by Islamic principles. Muslim passion was further inflamed when a columnist for *This Day* wryly remarked that Prophet Mohammed would not have minded picking a wife from among the contestants.

By the time the riots were over, an estimated 200 people had been killed and 4,000 homes and religious institutions destroyed. Among the properties destroyed was the office of *This Day* in Kaduna. The Islamist government of Zamfara—the first state to introduce sharia as statutory law in Nigeria—pronounced the fatwa on the columnist, Isioma Daniel. She had to be spirited to the neighboring country of Benin, from where she arranged her self-exile in Europe. The management of *This Day* had to apologize profusely and repeatedly to defuse the violence and calm the passions directed at it. Meanwhile, the pageant was moved to London.

While religious sensitivity was a factor in the reaction to the pageant, the political dimension was also transparent. In her first public statement about the riots—a poignant essay in the Nigerian *Guardian* (February 17, 2003)—Daniel remarked on this reality of Nigerian democracy:

> Nothing justified a religious group killing people simply because they considered a remark offensive. Who did they think they were? God? Surely God can fight his own battles.... It seemed evident that Islamic clerics and imams egged on the riots for political reasons. They were keen to utilise the blind fervour of idle youths.

Even in Senegal, whose population is more than 90 percent Muslim, there is an Islamist insurgency that seeks to establish a theological

order. It is a rebellion against a secular government that also happens to be one of Africa's few enduring democracies. Though the lingering conflict is cast in religious terms, it is more a quest for power and political control.

General Disorder and
Social Distress

Indeed, the turbulence in African politics has its social dimension. A glance through the U.S. State Department's travel advisory website suggests the scope of insecurity in Africa's urban centers. Although such advisories can be unduly alarmist to people who do not know enough about Africa to put them in context, they nonetheless point to realities that degrade the quality of life beyond the consequences of economic performance. The spate of armed robbery in African cities, for instance, has affected everything from nightlife to building designs. In many cities, there are "no-go" areas after dark. In some cities, life essentially shuts down a few hours into nightfall. One outcome is that the middle class, no less than the financial elite, now erect hideous walls to surround their dwellings for a measure of protection. In cities such as Johannesburg, Lagos, Kinshasa, Nairobi, and Accra walls are not always enough to keep armed robbers away.

In Nigeria, such armed robberies are called "operations," as in military operations. They typically involve a large contingent of heavily armed men against whom even the police are no match. Their boldness and method suggest that they involve people who have had military training and some may still be active in the services. As noted earlier in passing, an assistant inspector general of police was once arrested while leading a contingent of armed robbers. Even military personnel, active or out of service, are involved in armed robbery. A special report on this trend by *Tell* magazine (January 13, 2003), titled "The Robbers in Uniform," details several instances of military personnel at various levels turning to armed robbery as a lucrative career. Some of those arrested were still in active service. Some turned to this criminal life after being dismissed from the forces for one offense or another. Others resigned of their own accord for the sole purpose of using their military skills for armed robbery.

Sometimes the groups operate in broad daylight, especially on highways and during bank robberies. Often the police do not arrive at the scenes until the operations are over. This has reinforced the belief that law enforcement agencies are aware of such operations and—in complicity or for fear of their own safety—choose to stay

out. A measure of the sense of insecurity in Nigeria is that many governors get around only in bullet-proof jeeps. In February 2005, an ad for bullet-proof vests for the general public debuted in the *Guardian*. Incidentally, at the cost of $925 each, only the wealthy—criminally and otherwise—can afford them.

A lesser, yet consequential, menace is the operations of "area boys." They are territorial groups of youths who extort money from ordinary citizens who pass through or conduct business in their areas of control. Some are lightly armed, with knives and guns. Others threaten and bluff their way to extract what they can. Though area boys are not as feared as the armed robbery contingents that invade neighborhoods and banks, they contribute in no little measure to the distress of everyday existence.

To combat the menace of armed robbery and extortions, the police often mount checkpoints at strategic locations on thoroughfares and neighborhood. However, these checkpoints themselves often turn into extortion posts, as the police look for every excuse to question, delay, and threaten to arrest innocent motorists. The typical excuse is that one was in possession of an item, such as television or radio without a receipt for it. People generally do not retain, let alone carry, receipts of household items that they may be moving for whatever reason. Few stores in Africa accept returned merchandize in the tradition of Wal-Mart. So, there is not much incentive to keep receipts for long, and the police know that. Their practice of using such excuses to extort money has contributed to their reputation as one of the most corrupt institutions in Africa. A survey commissioned by the Ugandan government in 2005, for instance, found that the police was the most corrupt institution in the country. According to the survey, as reported by the *Monitor* (May 6, 2005) of Kampala, "the police [have] continued to exhibit the negative practices of bribery, extortion and corruption. Magistrates and High Court judges came next in extortion."

That reputation and the ineffectiveness of the police in combating crime have spurred vigilantism in Africa's urban centers. In Nigeria, the most notable case was in—where else?—Anambra, probably the most violent state and one with the most operatic politics. Here a group formally named the Anambra State Vigilance Service, but widely known as the Bakassi Boys, was formed soon after the inauguration of a civilian government in 1999. In principle its task was to aid the ineffectual federal police to combat the debilitating crime in the state. In reality, however, it dispensed street justice, including the summary execution of suspected criminals. In just one day in 2001, the group reportedly executed 36 suspected criminals without judicial

proceeding (*Guardian*, June 8, 2001). The unorthodox campaign drastically reduced crimes and was soon copied by other states, including especially Abia. On the other hand, apart from the affront to rudimentary principles of justice—including the probable victimization of innocent people—the extrajudicial killings only contributed to the culture of impunity. Accordingly, the Bakassi Boys generated considerable outcry from civil society and were ultimately reined in. Predictably, however, their demise was followed by a resurgence of crime in their states of operation.

A more orthodox response to the crime wave is the establishment of special police units in African countries. In Nigeria, the unit is named "Operation Fire for Fire," a reference to the potent firepower of robbers. The idea of special units is to train and equip police units to engage in the kind of combat that armed robbery contingents warrant. Such units have proven to be more effective than the regular police.

However, even such vigorous law enforcement has its limitations. They do not address the underlying factor: the social implications of juxtaposing the deprivation of the masses with the ego-driven display of opulence by the rich few. Though this is a common phenomenon in countries around the world and is the subject of Marxist ire, it is much more problematic in countries in which the fraudulent basis of wealth is all too evident. In such contexts, even well thought out government programs to alleviate poverty can only go so far in reducing extortionist behaviors and violence. As Kunle Sanyaolu wrote in a column about the menace of armed robbery and area boys (*Guardian,* January 28, 2007):

> Anyone seeking to solve the problems of hoodlums and area boys should also be mindful of the complication that over the years, the boys have become lazy and accustomed to thriving under social turbulence. They have developed a taste for quick money and living on the fast lane. When the environment is calm, it is not productive for them, so they have to organize something to disrupt the peace.

Sanyaolu thus encapsulates the interplay of civic cynicism at its various layers and the challenge of combating it.

Taming the Corruption Monster

With few exceptions, corruption in African countries ranges from widespread to endemic (Hope and Chikulo 2000). It is the underlying thread running through the challenges of Africa's democratization,

including the armed conflicts and general disorder. In a sense, it is the most subversive element of Africa's democratization as it is the nucleus of civic cynicism. Apart from its corroding impact on civic values, it is responsible for poor utilization of resources, and this in turn breeds discontent, disorder, and social maladies. As Kpundeh (2004, 121) put it:

> In several African countries, the effects of corruption have translated into political instability, frequent regime changes, and unstable economic investment environment. These factors have resulted in slowing the consolidation of participatory governance in the region. Therefore, controlling corruption is one of the greatest challenges to the establishment and consolidation of democratic systems and a [proper] governance environment in African countries.

The chairman of Nigeria's anticorruption agency, Mallam Nuhu Ribadu, went even further in describing the gravity of corruption. In a speech before the U.S. House Committee on International Development in May 2006, Ribadu (2006) put it this way:

> Corruption is responsible for perpetual collapse of infrastructure and institutions; it is the cause of the endemic poverty in Africa; it is behind the underdevelopment and cyclical failure of democracy to take root in Africa. Corruption is worse than terrorism. Public officials who are corrupt should receive worse treatment than that reserved for terrorists.

Across Africa, there is a resurgent acknowledgment of the seriousness of corruption, and in official policies, at least, governments are trying to grapple with it. However, the insidious nature of corruption and the civic values under which it thrives have made its containment a tenuous undertaking. The anti-corruption crusades are themselves often corrupted by the very values that necessitated them. For one thing the elite who benefit the most from corruption are also the ones who control the mechanism for the crusade against it. Predictably, there is a lack of fervor for the task. Accordingly, "In many cases, anticorruption campaigns are political, rather than ideological, in motivation, scope, and objectives" (Kpundeh 2004, 133). Even when people with the fervor and courage to tackle corruption evenhandedly are charged with the task, they find that they may have to turn their swords against the very people who appointed them. In many countries, a sweeping anticorruption campaign would bring down entire legislatures and cabinets. Such campaigns are invariably stymied

or steered toward selective enforcement. The experiences of Nigeria and Kenya in this regard illustrate in the most dramatic way the potentials of and systemic impediments to these efforts. The challenge is also illustrated with reference to Uganda and Ghana.

Combating Corruption in Nigeria

Corruption in Nigeria is considered one of the extreme cases in Africa. Not surprisingly, Nigeria's anticorruption campaign has yielded some of the most dramatic incidents in Africa. One of the first acts of the newly instituted democratic government in 1999 was the establishment of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Related Offences Commission (ICPC) in 2000. The ICPC was joined by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) in 2003, when the enabling act was passed. Since then, the EFCC has been, in the words of Nuhu Ribadu, its chairman, "the arrowhead in the fight against corruption in Nigeria" (Ribadu 2006).

Critics of the EFCC have accused it of differential patterns of prosecution, especially of being a tool of the president's power politics. That the EFCC's commissioners serve at the president's discretion contributes to the criticism. By the constituting act, the president appoints the commissioners with the approval of the National Assembly, and a commissioner "may at any time be removed by the President . . . if the President is satisfied that it is not in the interest of the Commission or the interest of the public that the member should continue in office." However, whatever the merits of critics' claims against the EFCC, it has emerged as the most consequential anticorruption agency in Nigerian history. It has brought the crusade against corruption as close to the doors of power as has ever before. Its investigation of corruption and prosecution of offenders has brought down Nigeria's top law enforcement officer, three governors, several legislators, members of the president's cabinet, and hordes of other top officials. At some point in 2006, the EFCC reported that 31 of Nigeria's 36 state governors were under investigation.

Perhaps, more important than the probes and convictions, the EFCC's potentially most significant role may be that of helping determine who is fit to run for office. Although the EFCC's role in this regard is purely advisory, it collaborates with the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to weed out corrupt officials from the list of prospective candidates for various offices. With about three months to go before national elections in 2007, for instance, the EFCC released a list of 130 candidates it deemed unfit to hold public

office on account of evidence of their corruption. The list included the vice president (who was running for the presidency) and 52 members of the ruling party. The rest were candidates for federal and state legislatures and governorships and represented all of Nigeria's six major parties. In most of the cases, the candidates were judged unfit based on their involvement in some form of fraud or corruption while holding other public offices.

Elections aside, the EFCC's regular task is investigating, prosecuting, and, as applicable, providing evidence for impeachment of incumbents. The cases of Governors Joshua Dariye of Plateau state, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa state, and Ayo Fayose of Ekiti state are perhaps the most convoluted and illustrative of the challenges of anticorruption campaigns in the context of endemic and pervasive corruption.

Dariye's case formally began in September 2004 when he and an associate were arrested by British detectives for money laundering, after they could not provide convincing explanation for £117,000 found in their possession at a hotel in London. The detectives were said to be on the trails of a fraudster when they supposedly stumbled on the sum. Before the pair could be tried, they jumped bail and escaped to Nigeria. Because governors have immunity from prosecution while in office, the EFCC could not arrest Dariye. However, the agency sought to investigate him and his associates. They were resisted, sometimes violently. In December 2005, the EFCC issued a report detailing the resistance:

> On Sunday, 4th December 2005, Governor Joshua Dariye personally sought to prevent operatives of the commission from effecting the arrest of his long-time acquaintance, Ms. Christabel Bentu, who it would be recalled, was arrested along with him on 2nd September 2004, by the Metropolitan Police in a London hotel on suspicion of money laundering . . . .
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> On Tuesday, 6th December 2005, on Mr. Dariye's orders, an EFCC operative was manhandled, disarmed and abducted in the premises of the KIPC Guest House, Jos, where the operatives went to effect the arrest of . . . a [suspected] linchpin in the alleged money laundering activities of the governor.
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> On Wednesday, 7th December 2005, Mr. Dariye himself personally led the assault on the EFCC team who had gone to execute a search warrant on the premises of his younger brother, Haruna Dariye. The EFCC team was disarmed by the governor's security detail, thoroughly beaten and had their vehicles smashed. The melee facilitated the escape of suspects and the destruction of evidence.

Dariye was apparently standing by a threat he had issued earlier, as quoted by a columnist for the *Guardian* (February 12, 2006): "Enough is enough for EFCC...I am from Mushere and we eat dogs, my brothers from Pankshin eat dogs also, likewise Anaguta and Berom; if these dogs come from Abuja again, we will eat them. When next they come, they might end up in our pot of soup." In this, Dariye variously refers to real dogs and metaphorically to EFCC agents.

Dariye was eventually impeached in November 2006 in a process that was entangled in a constitutional and moral web. Dariye immediately went into hiding. About four months later, in March 2007, an appeals court overturned his impeachment and the state government appealed to the Supreme Court. Dariye's allies were planning a welcome-back and reinstallation party for which, according to the newspaper *Weekly Trust* (March 10, 2007), they had budgeted N20 million (about $160,000). "Part of the expenses, reliable sources said, includes the printing of posters, t-shirts, face caps and other mementos with the portrait of the removed governor on them while an elaborate coverage of the reception with the electronic as well as other media organs is being negotiated." After the Supreme Court also rejected Dariye's impeachment, he returned to office with weeks to go before handing over to an elected successor.

The legal, political, and moral issues that surrounded Dariye's impeachment were complicated. Only 8 of the 24 legislators of Plateau state attended the session to deliberate on the impeachment. Even they had to be bused in to the state legislature under armed guard by the EFCC to safeguard them from possible mob attack. Thirteen of the rest of the legislators, including the speaker and his deputy, were in custody of the EFCC for alleged involvement in money laundering. By some interpretation of the constitution, 14 of the legislators also lost their seats by defecting to another party in the wake of the scandal. That left 8 legislators to deliberate on the impeachment. However, the constitution requires two-thirds of the legislators' votes to impeach the governor.

The question, then, was whether two-thirds refers to the total number or the eligible members. If the latter is correct, then the 6-2 vote in favor of impeachment exceeded the requirement. The thrust of legal opinion, including that of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), was that the impeachment was unconstitutional. However, Nigeria's preeminent legal activist, Gani Fawehinmi, disagreed. In an interview published in the *Sunday Vanguard* (November 19, 2006), Fawehinmi argued not only that the impeachment was constitutional but that the conundrum of illegality and corruption sometimes puts

the EFCC in situations where it has to choose between "legal justice" and "social justice." The latter should be the focus, Fawehinmi said. He takes issues with the bar association for focusing excessively on the legal and not the social context of the law. "[O]nce you don't put legal justice within the context of social justice, the whole thing will lose its meaning."

In analyzing the role of lawyers in complicating anticorruption campaigns, Fawehinmi draws attention to the factor of class and privilege:

> I am ashamed that some of our colleagues are treating EFCC as if it is a leper.... The energy we put through the [NBA] and the generality of lawyers into fighting the cause of the rich people, if we put the same energy in fighting the [cause] of the country, we will not be where [we] are today. That is my fundamental disagreement with them and this affects the way they construe the function of the constitution (*Sunday Vanguard*, November 19, 2006).

Of course, the lawyers whom Fawehinmi so pointedly rebukes would say that their goal is to protect the constitution. Still, there is no arguing that it is much more profitable to defend the rights of the rich than that of the poor. In the process, legal technicalities readily provide a haven for fraud and corruption.

In this sense, there are parallels between the dilemma of the EFCC and that of individual organizations of civil society during Nigeria's military regimes of the 1990s. Several of the organizations adopted authoritarian structures after they were infiltrated and their democratic processes exploited to undermine them. The paradoxical strategy, in turn, discredited the organizations, making them less effective nonetheless (Kew 2004).

The case of Governor Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa state followed virtually the same pattern as Dariye's, even as the latter's case dragged on. Like Dariye, Alamieyeseigha was arrested in London in September 2005 and charged with money laundering. British police reported finding £1 million cash in his possession and additional £0.8 million in his bank accounts. Before he could be tried, however, Alamieyeseigha escaped from detention and made his way to Nigeria, reportedly dressed as a woman. Ironically, he was denied bail to keep him from repeating Dariye's feat. Yet, he did. When he arrived in Yenagoa, the Bayelsa state capital, he was welcomed as a hero by a throng of jubilant supporters. Given Governor Alamieyeseigha's constitutional protection from prosecution, the Nigerian government was faced with the dilemma of keeping a jail escapee as governor or ignore his constitutional immunity in the event that the state legislature fails to impeach him.

Also given the substantial public support that Alamieyeseigha still enjoyed, impeachment was not at all guaranteed. When the state chief justice, Emmanuel Igoniwari, inaugurated a panel to formally study the charges and make recommendations to the state assembly, he warned the members to be steadfast in resisting pressures: "You should not allow yourselves to be kicked or tossed about because you will not only incur my displeasure but you will incur the displeasure of Bayelsans, Nigerians and the Almighty God whose judgment awaits you in the future" (*Guardian*, Dec. 6, 2005). He himself had been under intense pressure, he told the panelists. "It was like a Tsunami, even after knowing that my duty was only to set up a panel and drop out, it did not stop. Request turned into threats and this was compounded by wicked and evil rumours." The tension was so high that the state legislature had to temporarily relocate to Lagos, the former national capital, in order to hold the impeachment hearings. Meanwhile, federal troops had to be deployed in Yenagoa and environs to maintain order. Alamieyeseigha was impeached, arrested, and imprisoned in December 2005.

The Alamieyeseigha saga illustrates the complex intersection of corruption and disorder in African societies. As governor of one of the states in the Niger Delta, he was in the position to help redress the problem of resource allocation that has fueled armed rebellion in the region. His money laundering and corruption is evidence that the lack of development in the region results not only from inequitable allocation of funds, but also from the fraudulent use of allocated funds at the state and local government levels. In fact, a study of local governments in Rivers State—Bayelsa's sister state—suggests that the misappropriation of funds may be proportionately greatest at the local government level. In the study released in January 2007, Human Rights Watch concluded that:

> Many local governments throughout Rivers State have become mired in patterns of corruption so pervasive and so debilitating that, with the exception of paying civil service salaries, they have virtually ceased to perform any of the duties assigned to them. Some local government chairmen do not even reside in their local governments, returning there only to pay salaries and give out the remainder of their monthly allocations as patronage. The problem has become so widespread that exceptions to the dismal norm are rare (Human Rights Watch 2007, 24–25).

According to the *Economist*, "The budget of the main Delta state [presumably Rivers State] last year [2006] was a hefty $1.3 billion, all of this from the central government. Yet, thanks to the avarice of

local politicians, most was siphoned off before reaching the people who remain some of Africa's poorest and sickest" (Nigeria: Mission Impossible, Nearly, 2007). A study of local governments in other states in the Niger Delta and elsewhere in Nigeria is likely to reach similar conclusions.

As the Alamieyeseigha affair captivated Nigerians, another political and legal drama played out in the state of Ekiti, where the governor also faced impeachment. Here, again, the campaign against corruption became entangled in the very insidiousness of corruption and the related political machinations. Even more than the preceding cases, the drama in Ekiti epitomized the challenge of tackling corruption constitutionally when the constitutional process itself is used as a shield or a political instrument.

The case arose when Governor Ayo Fayose faced various allegations, including corruption, misappropriation of funds, and the operation of a bank account in a foreign country, which is illegal for office holders. Following investigations and reports by the EFCC, the Ekiti assembly asked the state chief justice to establish a panel to investigate the allegations. With minimal effort at examining the evidence, the panel cleared the governor. And here is where the complexity arises. Contrary to the constitutional requirement of probity of members of such panels, Fawehinmi asserts that: "90% of them were of questionable integrity or lack [any] integrity at all. One was kicked out as a result of fraud in the civil service, one was [a] contractor to Fayose, some are even relations to Fayose and his wife, and to compound the whole thing, [the empanelling chief justice] said he did not know their antecedent."

The Ekiti state assembly considered the panel's conclusion to be a miscarriage of justice and resorted to an unconstitutional measure to redress it. The assembly fired and replaced the chief justice, though it was not in its power to do so. The new chief justice instituted another panel, which investigated the allegations against the governor and confirmed them. The assembly subsequently impeached Governor Fayose and his deputy, Abiodun Olujimi. However, with the preponderance of legal opinions on their side, both rejected their impeachments. Fayose continued to insist that he was the governor. His deputy, Olujimi, also asserted that he was the governor, apparently accepting the validity of his boss's impeachment. Meanwhile, the assembly appointed a new governor, thus leaving the state with three persons who asserted a claim to the office.

While conceding that the replacement of the chief justice by the Ekiti assembly was unconstitutional, Fawehinmi argued that it led to

a desirable outcome, the necessary impeachment of the governor. Yet with three people claiming to be governor, Ekiti was on the verge of political implosion. In October 2006, President Obasanjo declared a state of emergency in Ekiti and appointed a caretaker governor.

The drama of corruption in Nigeria is not limited to politicians. The military were back in the news in 2004, when two ships detained by the Nigerian navy for transporting stolen crude oil disappeared. The ships were partaking in what Nigerians call oil bunkering, the theft of an estimated 30,000 barrels of oil daily. The MT Jimoh was found a few weeks later repainted with a new name, but the MT African Pride remained missing. Three senior naval officers—Rear Admirals Francis Agbiti, Samuel Kolawole, and Anthonio Bob-Manuel—were court-martialed for complicity. In January 2005, Agbiti and Kolawole were both found guilty and discharged from service and Bob-Manuel was acquitted.

Obasanjo's critics assert that the president uses the EFCC merely to bring down his political enemies, which they say includes anyone who opposes him. The EFCC's indictment of Vice President Atiku Abubakar is widely believed to be so motivated. That Atiku's prosecution began in the wake of President Obasanjo's failed quest for tenure extension is generally cited as evidence of the political motive. Atiku's opposition to the tenure extension snapped already tense relations between him and Obasanjo. Subsequently, the EFCC has issued reports indicting the vice president for mismanaging the country's Petroleum Technology Development Fund. On at least two occasions, the courts have thrown out the EFCC's cases against the vice president. Still, his name remains on the EFCC's list of candidates who should not run for the elections slated for April 2007. Also, the three governors whose impeachments are discussed above were all political adversaries of President Obasanjo. However, there are also several high-level appointees, including the cabinet members and the police chief who have been brought down by the EFCC. The inspector general of police, Tafa Balogun, was sentenced to six months imprisonment in November 2005, after pleading guilty to eight counts of corruption. The judge said the lenient sentence was in consideration of Balogun's remorse and status as a first-time offender.

Combating Corruption in Kenya

When President Kibaki campaigned for the office in January 2002, one of his pledges was to seek to root out corruption in government. He kept that promise in January 2003, soon after taking office, by

appointing an anticorruption crusading journalist, John Githongo, as his permanent secretary for governance and ethics. It was a lofty position from which Githongo would seek to clean up the insidious corruption in Kenya's public life. However, two years later, in February 2005, Githongo resigned in frustration and fear for his life.

In African countries, appointments such as Githongo's are often a means of coopting the crusader into the government fold to silence him. However, Githongo saw his appointment as a means of actualizing what he had been crusading for as a journalist. His scrutiny of the use of government funds readily led to his uncovering of fraudulent transfers and contract awards to phantom companies. Of particular interest was the use of Anglo Leasing and Finance Ltd, a phantom company established during President Moi's government that continued to be used by members of Kibaki's cabinet. According to Githongo's report, millions of dollars worth of contract were awarded to the company at inflated prices and for services that were not performed. Several members of President Kibaki's government were directly implicated.

Not surprisingly, Githongo came under concerted pressure to back off his crusade. He was bribed and threatened. Still he doggedly pursued his crusade. Meanwhile, Kibaki initially failed to act against his cabinet members and associates, concerned perhaps that he might unravel the coalition that had just replaced Kenya's governing party for the first time since independence. Meanwhile, threats against Githongo intensified. Fearing for his life, he fled to Britain in January 2005.

However, he did not remain silent in self-exile. He compiled his report on the state of corruption in Kenya and sent it to Kibaki and apparently made copies available to the press. The details and magnitude of the frauds riled a Kenyan public that had taken corruption as a given. The vice president and at least two ministers were directly implicated. While President Kibaki did not seem to have been directly involved, the report suggests that he was aware of the schemes and looked the other way. One of the ministers resigned ostensibly to devote his time to defending himself. Another was forced out, but only after Britain had publicly embarrassed the Kenyan government by revoking the minister's visa.

Even as national elections approached in 2007, the Kenyan government remained embroiled in the Anglo Leasing affair and similar scandals. There was public outcry when the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission (KACC) seemed inclined to discontinuing the investigation. In January 2007, Githongo kept up the pressure by releasing a tape that he said was of voices of government ministers making statements

that implicated them. The tapes, which he posted on a website, reignited public pressure on the KACC to sustain the investigations.

Later that month, Kibaki's commitment to fighting corruption became a major issue when he appeared before the African Peer Review Mechanism, a process by which African heads of state evaluate and critique their colleagues' performance. The mechanism was established in 2001 as a component of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) before it came under the direct administration of the African Union. In defense of his government, Kibaki noted that in 2006 he established a five-year plan to sustain the campaign against corruption. As quoted by the Nairobi-based daily, the *Nation* (January 29, 2007), Kibaki told his colleagues, "We have made enormous progress in the past four years in laying the foundations required for an issue-based, people-oriented and accountable democratic political system." Of course, it is so much easier to make such assertions and promulgate five-year plans than to actually confront the realities of corruption.

Public Attitude to Corruption

Important as public attitude is to the success of anticorruption campaigns, it is not always enthusiastic or wholly supportive. The muddled political and civic contexts of anticorruption crusades result in mixed public attitudes and reactions. The obstacles are the reality or appearance of politicization of such crusades that interface with existing cynical attitude toward corruption.

In Nigeria, the EFCC's campaign has received public reactions ranging from fervent support to skepticism and outright resistance to the impeachment of obviously guilty parties. Indicted parties readily cite political prosecution even when the evidence of their corruption is glaring. For this reason and other political reasons, indicted politicians have little difficulty rallying support around them. When Governor Alamieyeseigha was facing impeachment, for instance, he not only blamed it on political persecution, but sought to incite ethnic passion against the Obasanjo administration and the EFCC. In a speech after his escape from Britain, he focused not on explaining the millions of British pound sterling he had in cash and bank accounts, but on attacking the British law enforcement and especially the Nigerian government:

> Be reminded that the modest triumph and pride I brought to the Ijaw nation in the recent past was won on behalf of all our people. That is

why the persecution I suffer today amounts to the persecution of all Bayelsans and the Ijaw nation.

The battle is not simply against Alamieyeseigha. It is against every Ijaw man, woman and child. It is a calculated attempt to discredit all we have achieved so far as a people.

But we must not relent. Our detractors are treading a well-beaten path, believing as always that the only way to silence the agitation of our people for a fair deal in the Nigerian federation is to haunt and hound the minority leadership.

Remember that I am not the only son of the soil who has suffered this kind of fate. The enemies of Ijaw land have repeatedly done everything they can to bring prominent sons and daughters of the Ijaw nation to an inglorious end (*Daily Independent*, November 24, 2005).

Alamieyeseigha even accused protesters against his resumption of office as being instruments of their people's oppression. "Unfortunately, our own people always provide the weapon for the enemy. Only yesterday, some youths took to the streets of Yenagoa, carrying placards against my person. Given the tumultuous welcome I received only a day before, it is clear to any discerning mind that the agents of destabilization are at work." With such rhetoric, Alamieyeseigha succeeded in creating a political crisis in a matter that was purely criminal. Similar appeals ran through the public statements of Dariye of Plateau state and Fayose of Ekiti state. And they similarly engendered violence and political crisis that had the effect of checkmating the anticorruption crusade.

In Ghana, which is placed in the "widespread," rather than "endemic," category of corruption, anticorruption crusades still get tangled in civic cynicism. When an opposition member of parliament, Daniel Kwasi Abodakpi, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in February 2007 for fraud, his colleagues in the National Democratic Congress (NDC) walked out of parliament in protest and boycotted its meetings for several weeks. As reported by the *Accra Mail* (February 7, 2007), the issue was not so much about whether Abodakpi defrauded the government of at least $250,000, it was that his prosecution was politically motivated and the sentence too harsh. The national chairman of the NDC, Dr. Kwabena Agyei, believed that the sentence was part of the ruling party's quest to destroy the NDC: "NPP has still not abandoned its declared agenda to use the Fast Track Courts to destroy the National Democratic Congress through the use of political trials to jail the party's leading members and functionaries."

The Fast Track Courts were established to speed up trials to avoid the cynical manipulation of the judicial process that results in unending trials. Yet, as the *Accra Mail* reported, "The case itself was anything but fast, having been in court for the best part of the last five years." Still, Agyei accused the court of having been dictated to. "The judge may have been spoken to by an unknown person to decide the case in a particular manner," Agyei said at a press conference. Such a strong charge against the court is also an indictment of Ghana's anticorruption crusade and is bound to affect public attitude toward it.

This feeds into prevailing public attitude that corruption is a fact of life. Not only do people readily partake in it, they also tend to shrug it off when they are victimized. People are generally resigned or indifferent when witnessing acts of fraud and corruption. A government-commissioned study in Uganda in 2005 illustrates this problem. As the Ugandan *Monitor* (May 6, 2005) reported in summarizing the findings of the survey: "[E]mbezzlement of public funds partly thrives because of little knowledge about how cases of extortion and embezzlement of public funds could be reported. Only two in 10 of those who knew how to report the corrupt practices have ever reported them."

This disturbing statistic does not necessarily suggest that such a high percentage of people condone or partake in fraud and corruption. People whose personal values strongly reject corruption may still act indifferent out of fear of being victimized or the conviction that reporting it would make no difference. Typically, only the most blatant acts of corruption even gets the public's attention. The Guinean labor union forced President Conté to relinquish much of his power in 2006 because of his interference with the country's anticorruption campaign. However, it was the audacity of the president's action that triggered the backlash. Conté brazenly had two of his friends released from jail after they were arrested in 2006 for fraud and embezzlement. The affront was too much even for a people that Conté had ruled with audacity since he seized power in 1984.

Gani Fawehinmi, Nigeria's legal luminary and activist, believes that corruption in public life would be most readily reduced if the public stridently makes its voice heard, as the Guinean labor union has done. Referring to Nigeria's three case analysis of corruption discussed above, Fawehinmi said: "This is not the society that cultivates the culture of street protest otherwise if what Dariye has done, Fayose has done, what Alamieyeseigha has done had been done in a street-protest-culture society, they would have gone a long time ago. They would have been forced out of government, either resign on their own or kicked out by the people."

Conclusion

The foregoing analysis of disordered democracy in Africa may seem to portray an intractable situation. In reality, it embodies more hope than despair. The hope lies in the prospects for incremental improvement in the conditions analyzed. Of particular importance are improvements in the conduct of elections and the sustenance of anticorruption campaigns. Success in these areas are likely to yield greater transparency and accountability in governance, increased faith in due process, and declining proclivity toward violence as a means of political leverage and economic profit.

Even though elections in Africa remain problematic, there is a concerted effort to make them credible. In countries such as Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia, for instance, there have been notable improvements in the conduct and credibility of the elections. Even in Nigeria, where the elections of 2007 were seriously compromised, one could say that they were still an improvement in places over previous elections. The increased presence of local and international election monitors, who issue objective reports, is bound to have positive effects over the long run. So, especially, is the growing independence of election commissions and review courts. In a number of instances, the review courts or boards have even nullified elections or modified the results in ways that go against incumbent governments.

Anticorruption crusades have shown comparable prospects of cleaning up public life and governance. As discussed above, the obstacles are enormous. However, there appears to be more resolve and concerted effort across the continent than ever before to pursue the campaign. That several African governments have agreed to subject themselves to the African Union's peer review mechanism is by itself noteworthy. Granted, the mechanism is vague on corrective measures and it relies on the collegial assessment of peers, rather than the more disinterested expertise of civil society and development agencies such as the World Bank (Kebonang and Fombad 2006). Still, as Fombad (2006, 34) assessed the mechanism and related initiatives, "The AU democracy agenda is today one of the boldest and most daring initiatives that the leaders of the continent have ever embarked upon."

Within African countries, the courage and determination of anticorruption czars such as John Githongo of Kenya and Nuhu Ribadu of Nigeria is proving to be quite potent. Even after he resigned and left Kenya for fear for his safety, Githongo remained an effective crusader who kept the pressure both on his successor and the Kenyan government. Similarly, the EFCC, for which Ribadu is chairman, has

established a track record that if sustained would soon remove Nigeria from the list of one of the world's most corrupt countries. The EFCC's work has duly received domestic and international commendation. However, there is also severe criticism by the press and segments of civil society, especially the legal community. Such criticism does not seem to reckon with the enormity of the task and the reality that corruption in Nigeria is too insidious to be dealt with in one swoop. Nor can there be any progress at all if the EFCC is not granted the legal latitude to overcome the quagmire of endemic corruption.

However, an important dimension of anticorruption campaigns is the extent to which they are perceived by the general public to be consequential and apolitical. To this end, it is important, indeed, that anticorruption agencies operate within the law and be evenhanded in their investigation and prosecution of public officials. Still, when critical assessment focuses unduly on legal technicalities and political balance rather than the evidence against the prosecuted, it tends to portray the corrupt as victims rather than villains. This reinforces the cynical view that everyone is corrupt and, therefore, it is devious to prosecute anyone.

On a theoretical note, the analysis here supports the idea that the challenges facing African countries extend beyond that of leadership, especially when leadership is conceived of in terms of the national apex. Critics such as Monga (1996) who blame African leaders, almost exclusively, for Africa's problems do not give due consideration to the reality of a metastasized civic cancer. The extent of corruption in Nigeria's local government, for instance, is manifestation of its grassroots nature. The primary rationale for local governments is to bring government closer to the people, to make it truly a government of the people, for the people, and by the people. Pervasive corruption at this level suggests grassroots accommodation of corruption, or, at least, grassroots entrenchment of prebendalism.

Monga also argues that social and political disorder in Africa is the result of the people's attempt to wrestle the reins of power by all means necessary. This is certainly the case for attempts geared at changing the status quo, as has happened in Kenya, Guinea, Cameroon, Zambia, and a number of other African countries. However, it should be evident that political upheavals and general social disorder are not necessarily geared toward changing the existing order or undermining corrupt authority. As the discussion of area boys suggests, for instance, people often victimize others like them because of the opportunity, rather than an ideological rebellion. The applicable ethic seems encapsulated in a proverb widely used among

one of Nigeria's ethnic groups: "A snake has to swallow another to grow bigger." That, too, is the ethic at the highest echelons of leadership and corruption. This ethic and the related values will have to be stemmed to make Africa's democracy whole. This applies, no less, to Africa's economic development.

Combating Civic Cynicism

The search for solutions to the problems of developing countries generally pits two contending perspectives: the structural and the value oriented. Structural theorists stress the importance of the development and reinforcement of institutions of government, along with the entrenchment of due processes. Accordingly, structural theorists tend to blame government and institutional deficiencies almost exclusively for the failures of countries to develop stable democracies and advance economically. A contrary perspective is that values, including cultures and traditions, are the primary determinants of democratic order and economic development. The argument of this book, to reiterate, is that political structures and civic values are coderived and mutually reinforcing.

Perhaps an analogy—which might not be original—would be helpful in setting up the concluding points of this book. The situation in many African countries is analogous to a dysfunctional army in which the soldiers disregard the battle plan and abscond for the most tenuous reasons. There are at least two possible origins for such a situation. Perhaps, the commanders had over the years demonstrated incompetence and cowardice. Consequently, the troops under their command have no faith in the leadership and so resort to their best judgment as individuals. Conversely, it could be that the successive commanders drafted poor battle plans to accommodate known tendencies among the troops. Let us say, for instance, that this hypothetical army is drawn from a cowardly culture, the commanders are likely to reflect cowardice in their character. Even if they transcended that culture, their battle plans are likely to take into consideration the cowardice of the troops, and such plans are likely to result in defeat. Defeats, in turn, will reinforce the dysfunction. Over a period of time, the army will degenerate into a defeatist psyche in which soldiers seek out spoils they can find for themselves, while avoiding all dangers and evincing no bravery.

In this scenario, even if the dysfunction resulted from leadership failures, it cannot be rectified merely by changing commanders. Even the best battle plan will fizzle if the troops lack the mindset necessary to execute it. This, incidentally, is the reason few polities or armies go to war without engaging in some degree of propaganda.

There are limitations, of course, to this analogy, not the least of which is that the command-and-control order of the military is quite different from that of society at large. Still, there is enough parallel in the dynamics of leadership and follower ship. The analysis in this book is to the effect that civic cynicism in Africa originated primarily from the pressures of modernization and the related failures of African leaders, but it has since metastasized into the general population. On the other hand, there are aspects of African culture that may have contributed to the leadership failures. Much of the discussion of Africa's problems focuses on governments and their reform. The African press, in particular, has focused its critical attention almost exclusively on government and leaders. References to the larger civic culture are scant. The recommendations here focus more on culture and civic values than on structural issues. The intent is not at all to make governance a secondary concern. Rather, the recommendations on values are stressed to point out a necessary dimension of reform that is not getting due attention. Still it is important first to make recommendations about the press and the political process and leadership.

Democracy as the Only Option

The most important task facing the African press is to continue to cultivate the civic value that democracy is Africa's only option. This is no easy task, of course. With irregularities, outright rigging, violence, and intimidation, elections in many African countries continue to be compromised. Once in office, many political leaders at all levels have little qualms about siphoning public funds for personal benefits. Meanwhile, there is continued economic difficulty, and armed conflicts, thuggery, and crime—which some people blame on democracy—also degrade the quality of life. Yet, amidst all this, democracy holds the best promise of sustained reform and regeneration.

The solution to Africa's continuing disordered democracy lies not in the return to military rule and other forms of despotism, but in the gradual resolution of these conflicts through democratic processes. This has happened (or is happening) in countries such as Botswana and South Africa (Molutsi 2004; Friedman 2004). With regard to Nigeria, Adebanwi (2004, 327) has noted that the explosion of ethnic

conflict following the return to democratic rule in 1999 resulted from pent-up frustration due to the "constriction of the democratic, public sphere for several years by the military."

Military governments and dictatorships may succeed in imposing some form of order, but they merely postpone the political sorting out that will take place sooner or later. They may muzzle and incarcerate dissidents, but this only builds resentments that will find more visceral and often violent expression in the future. The consolidation of democracy requires commitment to the building of democratic institutions, and this requires a combination of vigilance and patience. It also requires the development of social capital, which, in a circular way, is best undertaken in a democratic context.

Given the variety of what may be called democracy, it is important to summarize here the concept of democracy that guides this recommendation. First, one has to concede that democracy necessarily takes on the hue of its cultural context. On the other hand, cultures evolve, and the introduction of democracy necessarily becomes a part of this evolution. Whatever the cultural nuances, democracy should provide the structure and process by which the interests of constituent groups are aggregated and accommodated. However, African countries do not have to aspire to be prototypes of European and North American countries in order to become democracies. African culture is much more communitarian than Western culture. Therefore, in establishing social policies, for instance, African countries may find it necessary to weight communal interests more heavily than individual liberties. This should not make them less democratic. Similarly, all cultures have their taboos, some of which fade away while others endure. It would be a folly to institute democracy without regard for such concerns.

On the other hand, a central principle of democracy is justice. As Lomasky (1999, 279) writes: "Justice is the most universal of the virtues insofar as it involves a disposition to give to all persons their due. It is in this way quite unlike charity or loyalty or kindliness, the objects of which are select—and selected—subset of those with whom one interacts." Therefore, a major responsibility of the African press is to critique and urge the redress of cultural prejudices that disenfranchise sections of the population. African countries generally do not have social class systems that are as rigid as India's caste system or South Africa's dismantled apartheid politics. There are pockets of comparable social systems, such as the osu among the Igbo of Nigeria. (The osu are descendants of people that had been turned over to the gods as sacrifice, and among the Igbo, they are not to be associated

with.) Just as with the caste system in India, such social stigmatization is breaking down in Africa. More significant is the ethnic chauvinism that sometimes becomes unwritten policy. Countries such as Rwanda and Burundi are overcoming such prejudices, but only after considerable bloodshed.

One cannot speak of democracy, of course, without reference to the processes by which the people revisit and make changes to their leadership: elections. Not only do elections provide the opportunity for change in leadership, they are also the process by which social policies are directed. Such may happen by direct vote, as in the placement of issues on the ballot, or by the election of people who share certain values and who would legislate accordingly. Elections—and the related campaigns—also provide the opportunity for concentrated articulation of issues. Not only do people get to hear about candidates, they are also made to grapple with issues of justice and equity. Even when such articulations become antagonists on the surface, they nonetheless sow seeds of empathy that may influence social policies in due course.

Cleaning Up Elections

The multiple significance of elections makes it all the more important that they be conducted credibly. The African press has to continue its role in critiquing the process, publicizing irregularities, and crusading for due punishment of subverts. This, of course, is a delicate art. The press has to be aggressive in uncovering wrongdoings without being so incendiary as to inflame the polity. As the Nigerian press demonstrated during the elections of 2003, a delicate balance can be struck. The point is to stress that problems with the democratic process are not reasons to truncate it.

The reality that democracy is an evolving process cannot be overstressed. It cannot be consolidated without civic commitment and prolonged practice. On the eve of Nigeria's elections in 2003, the speaker of the House of Representatives, Ghali Umar Na'Abba, was quoted by the *Weekend Vanguard* (January 25 2003) as saying: "I think we are going to take pains to transit into democracy. We cannot say we have true democracy today, but it is through practice that we can perfect democracy." A few months after the interview, Na'Abba would face the vicissitudes of Nigeria's democracy. He was voted out of government in the ensuing elections, no doubt the consequence of his attempt to have President Obasanjo impeached. In a healthy democracy, Na'Abba's loss would have reflected the people's

disapproval of his performance. But he believed, quite credibly, that his loss was engineered, probably through unfair means. Na'Abba was understandably bitter about the loss, but he accepted it with a measure of equanimity that demonstrates his remarks that true democracy emerges only with practice.

As Nigeria approached the elections of April 2007, the issue of electoral irregularities remained dominant. When questioned by the *Punch* (May 29, 2006) about the prospects for fair elections, presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar expressed a philosophy similar to Na'Abba's: "We are trying to ensure that we get a proper election in this country. We should be improving from one election to the other." Even though the elections of 2007 were not improvements over those 2003, such views, if widely shared and exemplified, will constitute the basis of consolidation of democracy in Africa.

A major reason for electoral irregularities is the determination of incumbents to remain entrenched. Therefore, a most significant development in Africa's democratization is the institution of term limits. Press crusades to uphold this constitutional requirement have enhanced the consolidation of democracy in countries such as Ghana, Zambia, Kenya, and Nigeria. In countries, such as Uganda, which do not have term limits, an important task for the press is to crusade for them. Term limits are not the panacea for electoral irregularities, but they remove an important incentive.

The press also has to counteract the exploitation of ethnic cleavages, which is one of the factors of electoral irregularities, including especially violence. This role is more feasible now that the independent press has become dominant in many African countries. The Nigerian press, again, well exemplifies the evolution from a political to a nonpartisan press system. Even as ethnic conflicts and violence continue to rack Nigeria and dominate political analysis about the country's future, an immensely significant development is the perceptible detribalization of political discourse in the Nigerian press. Perhaps not since the early years of nationalism has reportage on national affairs been more focused on policies and personalities than on the ethnic dimension. This is reflected in its balancing act in covering the 2003 elections. Resentment over the election rigging by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) did not degenerate into chaos as in 1964 and 1965 partly because of the press's delicate steering and partly because the PDP was not associated with any one ethnic group.

In contrast, postelection conflicts in Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Congo have continued to manifest strong ethnic cleavages. Such cleavages are unlikely to become insignificant in African countries

any time soon. Even in Ghana, where Rawlings' leadership made considerable inroad in reducing ethnic cleavages, it remains significant. When Ghanaian Member of Parliament Dan Kwasi Abodakpi was convicted of corruption in February 2007, his National Democratic Congress (NDC), protested that the conviction was not just political but also ethnic persecution (*Ghanaian Chronicle*, February 21, 2007). The independent press should be aggressive in covering such claims to expose the reality or condemn the cynicism.

Beyond such structural issues, the masses need to be educated about their role as guardians of democracy. Abel Guobadia, the chairman of Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in 2003 suggested as much in an interview with the news media before the elections that year. It was impossible for him as one person or INEC as a body to guarantee that the elections were conducted cleanly, he noted. The INEC, he said, would be deploying about half a million Nigerians as poll workers. "So if Nigerians decide to be dishonest, the elections will be dishonest. If Nigerians decide to be honest, we shall have a good election. It is not what Abel Guobadia says" (*Vanguard*, March 18, 2003). Guobadia could be faulted for suggesting that he and INEC did not bear particular responsibility in inculcating the necessary ethics in the deployed poll workers. But as he pointed out in the story: "The onus is on all of us. We all have a role to play in the electoral process. You pressman, your role is even more vital than that of INEC."

Significantly, Guobadia's comments were buried inside a story that was itself buried in the middle of Page 3, amid five other headlines and an advertisement. Given the reality and significance of Guobadia's remarks, they should have been stressed in the story, which should have been more prominently placed. It was not because of the press's near exclusive focus on critiquing leaders and institutions but not the wider contexts of their functioning.

In the months leading up to elections, the press could do better than raise alarms about impending dooms or condemn election commissioners and their chairs. Such coverage often leads to a sense of despair and resignation among the general populace, a mindset that increases, rather than reduce, the probability of irregularities and violence. The press could go beyond criticism and alarms to inspiring the general populace to play whatever roles they could play to ensure clean elections. Student groups, unions, and women's organizations, for instance, could be inspired to become mass monitors and whistleblowers.

Ghana's landmark election of 2000 was successful in part because the press took this approach. The independent radio in particular

educated and inspired people about their responsibilities as custodians of the election. The mere awareness that people's consciousness had been aroused to action was by itself a deterrent to rigging. That Ghana went through a period during which popular demand led to the execution of several public officials probably made arousal of public consciousness an even more portent deterrent. But such a history is not necessary for public consciousness to be effective.

Oversimplification and Demonization

Indeed, one way in which the African press can become a better watchdog of government is to reflect the reality that leadership is only a part of the problem of governance. A major flaw in press coverage of public affairs is the tendency to attribute all failings of the system to the particular person or office, in the case of elections to the chairman of the commission. Such narrow characterization of problems oversimplifies the reality and misleads the citizenry regarding their individual and collective responsibility. Even with the most competent planning and principled leadership, the conduct of elections may still go awry if there is no matching commitment among the subalterns and foot soldiers. The same goes for the conduct of censuses, which has also defied credible execution in Nigeria and other African countries.

The tendency to blame government is so strong that commentators find some way to do so for anything that goes wrong. In January 2007, for instance, the government of Singapore hanged a 21-year-old Nigerian, Iwuchukwu Amara Tochi, for drug trafficking. The aspiring soccer star was reportedly seeking to enter Asia to market his talent, when he was arrested for possessing a suitcase filled with heroin. He testified that he was unaware of the content of the suitcase, that it was given to him by a man he met in Pakistan for delivery in Singapore for a reward of $2,000. The *Guardian* carried two columns on Tochi's execution in its Sunday edition of January 28, 2007, and both blamed the Nigerian government for what happened. Both columnists argued that the young man would not have been put in the circumstances if the Nigerian government had provided better opportunity or cared more for the people. One of the columnists wrote exclusively on this point. The other also urged caution when delivering packages overseas even for acquaintances.

It would seem callous to criticize a young man who lost his life because of an unconscionable drug trafficker and a draconian law. Still, the press could have commented on this incident to reflect the pitfall of a civic philosophy of success by any means. This, after all, is

the underlying reason for corruption, fraud, and the other civic maladies in Nigeria and many other African countries. It is the reason for dysfunctional and ineffective governments. A 21-year-old who accepts to deliver a suitcase for $2,000 reward would, as a government official, accept millions of dollars of kickbacks.

Government corruption and ineffectiveness are, indeed, factors of mercenary and Machiavellian behaviors. However, the lack of opportunity that is a consequence of governance failings is only one cause of such social trend. The resulting civic cynicism that permeates the populace is an even more consequential factor. Not surprisingly, the pattern of social distress in African countries does not correspond with the level of development and economic opportunity. Countries such as Angola, Congo (Kinshasa), Nigeria, and even South Africa where there is a high rate of murder, robberies, and violence are also some of Africa's most prosperous. In contrast, poorer countries such as Senegal and Tanzania are much more orderly and less violent. It is not because the people have more opportunities, but because of their civic values. Leopold Senghor's principled leadership of Senegal and the resulting relatively tranquil polity nurtured corresponding civic values. In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere's urbane leadership also nurtured a similar civic order. In contrast, the crisis of governance—including civil wars and military regimes—in Angola, Congo, and Nigeria engendered a different civic ethos in these countries. So did apartheid—and the struggle against it—in South Africa.

Irrespective of their origins, it is not profitable to continue to blame every civic vice on government. Civic cynicism has become a force of its own, irrespective of what the government does. The crime rate in South African cities, especially Johannesburg and Soweto, has remained dangerously high and even escalated despite the concerted efforts of the governments of Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki, both leaders of unimpeachable character and commitment. As the Associated Press (August 26, 2006) reported, "between April 2004 and March 2005, 18,793 people were murdered in South Africa, an average of 51 a day in a nation of 47 million." This makes Africa's richest country probably also its most violent (outside of the context of war).

For explanation, one needs only to reflect on the fact that apartheid was readily the most cynical form of government in Africa. The stark degradation of a proud people by a minority inevitably gave rise to violent resistance and mindset. Perhaps, the most public manifestation of the mindset was the practice of "necklacing," which was common on the streets of Soweto during the 1980s through the early 1990s. It was the fate of people suspected of collaborating with agents

of the apartheid government. Young antiapartheid activists would hang tires on the suspects' shoulders, douse them with gasoline, and set them on fire. Even after the end of apartheid, the mindset that made such grisly incidents routine cannot spontaneously disappear, not even with the best economic policies and governance. Governments can always do more to create opportunities and lesson the likelihood of antisocial behaviors. Still, as noted in Chapter 9 with regard to area boys in Nigeria, social programs can only make so much difference in the presence of countervailing ingrained values.

Indeed, behaviors are products of circumstances and values. Social analysis that credits one and not the other is inherently flawed. Therefore, press commentary that points exclusively to government failures and concedes nothing to civic values only partially addresses the problem. More significantly it provides moral rationalization for individuals who engage in behaviors that raise social distress and ultimately hurt them. Alas, the allure of journalistic heroism makes the critique of social behavior less appealing to the press. For the independent press, in any case, journalists do not earn their stripes by criticizing people. Heroism lies more in taking on leaders, and the harsher the terms, the better. The public, of course, responds well to this; even the thugs feel vindicated. And publications gain in circulation. The consequence is that civic cynicism at the grassroots is reinforced. The reluctance of the independent press to take a critical stance on society also results from the fact that such was the forte of government-owned news media. They preached to the people while painting a glossy image of the government and ignoring its rot. Predictably, they lacked credibility and their exhortations were barely meaningful. In contrast, the independent press in African countries has proven itself. Its critical stance toward governments has earned it the credibility to more effectively critique the society as well.

A related problem to that of exclusive blame of government is the demonization of individuals at the helm, be they presidents, prime ministers, or chairmen of electoral commissions. In Guinea, the problem is Conté, in Zimbabwe it is Mugabe, in Uganda it is Museveni, and in Nigeria it was Obasanjo. Reportage in this regard often overlooks the immediate context of the president's or prime minister's policies: his cabinet members, party, and supporters. When President Obasanjo got his party to agree to a constitutional amendment that would extend his term in office, he was branded a would-be dictator and president for life. Little was commented upon why the horde of party leadership and membership went along, knowing the dare implications for Nigeria's democratization. Obasanjo's quest would

have become reality if the National Assembly had not mustered the courage to reject the amendment. Most African heads of state could be so checkmated if those in the position to do so had the will and related values.

Sometimes government leaders are vilified even when they pursue unpopular, but possibly justifiable policies. For instance, when during his second term Obasanjo sought to increase gas prices, the commentators depicted him as Lucifer in presidential garb. The overwhelming opinion was that his polices were manifestation of wickedness and lack of compassion. *Newswatch* magazine was not at all circumspect in its coverage. Its issue of November 17, 2003 had on its cover, in large, uppercase letters, "Obasanjo's Satanic Agenda." In the article and in press coverage in general, the principles of the economic policy was articulated only here and there, usually by government officials, who were on the defensive and, therefore, sounded more like apologists than objective analysts.

Journalists could have pointed out, for instance, that in the 1980s similar policies were implemented in Britain by the government of Margaret Thatcher, and they ultimately revived Britain's then moribund economy. The purpose should not necessarily have been to support Obasanjo's policies, as they might, indeed, be wrong for Nigeria. What such analysis does is illuminate the policy options, rationales, and implications. In contrast, mere vilification of the president only contributes to uninformed public attitude and the intensification of civic cynicism.

Of course, the British press also vilified Margaret Thatcher. However, because of the ideological balance of the British press, the pros and cons of Thatcher's policies received comparable articulation. In contrast, the Nigerian press is dominated by a sympathy-for-the-common-man orientation that yields analyses that often do not go beyond castigating the government, the president in particular. And so policy analysis, especially by populist columnists, is often not a matter of weighing options, but about the menace of evil leaders. It is this tendency of the African press that Bourgault (1995, 185) refers to as "aggregative rather than analytical thought." African journalists are wont to employ phrases such as "the suffering masses" and "the corridors of power," while leaving unanalyzed the interfaces, linkages, or explanatory principles.

Such one-dimensional coverage typically leaves the people unaware of the challenges their country faces beyond leadership failures and corruption. As such, they have nothing close to an accurate idea of the requisites for national advancement. They have unrealistic

expectations as to what their government can do, and they are even less aware of what they should do individually or collectively.

The African press's coverage of the current democratization reflects this one-dimensional orientation. In fanning the euphoria over democratization, the press presented it as a panacea. Accordingly, in country after country, there was euphoria and an expectant chorus for democratic dividends. It was as though the mere replacement of a dictatorial regime would open up the heavens for manna to rain down. Certainly, democratization was reason enough to be excited. It was an important step in political and civic development. Yet there were challenges that went beyond governance or were left over by previous governments.

When Frederick Chiluba replaced Kenneth Kaunda as president of Zambia in 1992, for instance, he also inherited a staggering debt burden that limited the capacity of his government to implement even a fraction of its promised social programs. In addition, he was a political pioneer in Africa: an opposition activist who got to govern by defeating the incumbent at the polls. Moreover, Chiluba accomplished this feat with a coalition of differing political interests. Governing with such a coalition was an unfamiliar political terrain in Africa, and the turbulence and setbacks of Chiluba's government reflected this (Ihonvbere 1998a). If Zambia's foreseeable realities had been adequately articulated, they would have tampered the euphoria of political change with realistic expectations.

The African press can do more in creating awareness of such challenges and articulating a vision of the people's role in meeting them. Besides matters of civic culture, which will be discussed later, such articulation could include, an explanation of the role of the citizenry in holding the government accountable. It could be made clear, for instance, that a government is not necessarily a good government merely because it promised a clinic or school for the community and built it. A democratic government should be open about all the money in its coffers, account for it all, and demonstrate that it has made the best judgment in its expenditures.

African governments often coopt the loyalty of various communities by constructing meager facilities for them. If people understand that such projects may be mere gestures that mask graft and misappropriation of funds, they are less likely to fawn over and massage the egos of government officials. Rather than ingratiate them with dance and praise singing during the usual pomp-and-circumstance of ribbon cutting, the people might instead engage the officials in frank dialogues about their overall needs, expectations, and the possibilities.

If there had been specific allegations of government corruption, the people should engage the officials in strident but civil discussion about it. And they should demand transparent account rather than the kind of platitudes that Governor Alameiyesigha of Nigeria's Bayelsa state used to attempt to deflect the case of money laundering against him. Merely serving notice of concern is much better than fawning over officials. There is no worse deterrent to civic crime than the people's expression of disdain toward those who commit it, and there is no better incentive than continued adoration. This is a point that the press cannot overstate.

Dissecting Problems, Charting Progress

Along with the problem of exclusive focus on top leadership is the problem of overgeneralization. There is a need for greater precision in identifying the source of problems and charting progress on those problems. Just like criticism of the general public, acknowledging progress or hopeful signs is not appealing to the press. Yet, it may well be the press's most import contribution to combating civic cynicism. Coverage of public affairs that merely bemoans the state of affairs and provides no reason for hope induces despair. Despite the insidiousness of corruption, for instance, there are exemplary leaders. Despite the overall problems of leadership in any given country, some leaders are better than others. Within countries, some government departments perform better than others. Among state or provincial administrators, some are better than others. A flawed election may be a significant improvement over previous elections. Stressing these differences leaves the citizenry with the realization that there is some progressive or, at least, some basis to hope for it.

Yet, here again, there is an inducement for the independent press to downplay progress or the basis for hope. The fawning propaganda of government-sponsored news media has thoroughly discredited such coverage. Moreover, the independent press certainly does not want to seem to have been coopted by the government. That is a sure wrecker of credibility. But again, only the independent press has the credibility to make such a perspective in coverage believable, provided it does not flinch in reporting and commenting on the failings of governments. Of course, there is some aspect of such coverage in Africa's independent press. However, the pervasive message of gloom tends to overshadow the counterpoint.

The Nigerian press's vilification of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) illustrates the problem of such coverage.

Despite the commission's trailblazing campaign, it was castigated much more than it was applauded in the Nigerian press. In the process the country risked throwing away the baby with the birth water. Whatever the EFCC's shortcomings, Nigeria had everything to lose by damaging its credibility. Of course, the EFCC's critical function made it an important agency for press scrutiny and criticism. However, when criticism overlooks the Herculean nature of the commission's task, fails to duly acknowledge its strides, but constantly impugns its motives, it not only gives plundering government officials a measure of comfort, but also undermines the effectiveness of the sorely needed commission.

The point here is similar to one made during the electoral imbroglio in the United States in 2000. When the Supreme Court issued a ruling in which it rejected ballot recounts and, in effective, handed the presidency to George W. Bush and the Republicans, there was an outcry that questioned the court's impartiality. The criticism was soon mooted, however, as papers across the country carried commentaries to the effect that, if unrestrained, such criticism could undermine the authority of the court. Whatever may be the justified misgivings about the court's judgment, they were not to be allowed to damage, perhaps, the most important pillar of American democracy.

Regarding the EFCC, the criticism is that it goes after officials who had crossed President Obasanjo somehow or another. Indeed, a majority of the commission's targets could readily be so classified. But it also means that a significant number could not be so characterized. But then critics who are wedded to the political explanation would find a reason to argue that the President did not like anyone whom the EFCC investigated and prosecuted. Thus, there arose a circular logic: If the EFCC prosecuted someone, the president must want his downfall. The president's brazen exercise of power makes this contrarian logic all the more appealing.

Yet, rather than vilify the EFCC, the press could have stressed that it was carrying out its campaign under difficult political circumstances. Political calculations had to be a part of its strategy if it was to have any impact whatsoever. From this perspective, the EFCC would be applauded for its heroism in bringing down some of the presidents' closest allies, including a loyal police chief and cabinet members. The press would still take the commission to task for not being evenhanded. In this context, however, the criticism is more likely to spur the commission to bolder action rather than shred its credibility and undermine its effectiveness.

Similarly, the press could serve more as the commission's ally by crusading for its greater independence. For instance, the commission

was made up largely of members of various departments of the executive arm of government, and the president could appoint and fire the commission chairman. This is not an unusual setup. In most countries the executive arm of government is responsible for enforcing the law, including campaigning against corruption. And it is not unusual for questions to be raised about the impartiality of this responsibility.

In the United States, for instance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is an arm of the Justice Department, which is part of the executive arm of government. The president appoints (with Senate confirmation) both the director of the FBI and the attorney general (who heads the Justice Department) and may fire either at will. In turn, the Justice Department hires federal prosecutors, who are dispersed all around the country with considerable powers and discretion. In part because of a sense of professional and civic duty and in part because of press and public scrutiny, prosecutors tend to exercise their powers apolitically. Still questions arise, especially when federal attorneys prosecute political leaders belonging to the president's rival party.

In newly democratizing countries, where misuse of political powers is much more brazen, there may be the need for a stronger check on executive powers for purposes of prosecuting corruption. But then such checks also have the potential of neutralizing the effectiveness of anticorruption agencies given that the checks could provide corrupt politicians more opportunities to frustrate the work of the agency. Still, a vigilant press will serve the cause of democratization more by crusading for such checks, rather than vilify an agency that may be doing the best possible in the circumstance. As noted in Chapter 9, the African press's doggedness in facilitating anticorruption campaigns has to be one of its most crucial contributions to the consolidation of democracy. Certainly, accurately conveying to the public the progress made in the campaign may have a multiplier effect in reducing the general civic cynicism and serving notice to other corrupt officials that the bell is tolling for them.

The comparison of the performance of government departments and office holders is another means for the press to convey actual or potential progress. The press in various African countries does this at this time, but haphazardly. In Nigeria, the success and courage of Nora Nkem Akunyili as the director-general of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) was widely reported in the press. Despite threats to Akunyili's life, NAFDAC doggedly went after drug counterfeiters. The agency's success in interdicting and burning counterfeit drugs made it likely that

when Nigerians bought drugs from pharmacies, they were getting what was ordered. The press similarly spotlighted the achievements of some state governors.

It would be much more helpful to make such reporting more routine and standardized. In this regard, the press in every African country could collaborate with the appropriate agencies of civil society to establish indices for various areas of achievement relative to the funds available to each level or department of government. Economists, public accountants, and economic departments at universities, for instance, can help determine the level of infrastructural advancement a given state should attain given the funds that are allocated to it. Physicians and health associations can do the same in the areas of health. Government departments at different levels may be publicly evaluated in terms of their performance. The best performing should be duly acknowledged and the least should be made to account for their shortfalls. Given the likely array of shortfalls, the press may choose its priorities and concentrate on those in its crusade for corrective measures.

The feasibility of the more precise reportorial scrutiny recommended here rests to a considerable extent, but not entirely, on the accessibility of government documents and records to the press. As indicated in Chapter 9, there has been some progress in this regard, as a number of African governments are inching toward transparency. The press has to be unrelenting in demanding such openness. However, where governments are not forthcoming in making records available, the press in collaboration with the appropriate institutions noted earlier can find ways to estimate government resources and how they are being used.

Along the same lines, the press could help to create a realistic vision of where the society as a whole could be if its resources were properly utilized. In its report in 2006 on Africa's prospects for development, the National Intelligence Commission stated, "If African leaders can develop their own vocabularies to explain economic development to their citizens, the likelihood of a political consensus developing in favor of growth will be much higher" (National Intelligence Commission 2006). In the absence of such cogent articulation by governments, the African press could lead the people to lead the government. Current reportage and commentary in this regard tends to be oversimplified with the usual claim, "If only we had good leaders." Critics often overstate the capacity of governments to deliver the goods. Vaclav Havel, of the Czech Republic, confessed this much in an interview with *Newsweek* magazine about two years after his transition from poet/critic to president. "It is much easier to sit at home

and write about things than to rule," he told *Newsweek* (July 22, 1991, 31). By the time Havel left office in 2003, he had gone from being a popular inspiration for the anticommunist revolution to the subject of widespread disillusionment.

Articulating a vision of development requires careful weighing of all the factors that facilitate and hinder development and establishing a realistic consensus. If the African press can lead in establishing such a vision and getting people to see the wisdom, leaders will have little choice but to follow. Of particular importance, is the education of the people on their roles, including the connection between their values, behavior, and goals. In this regard, the game theory developed by economists may provide heuristic guidelines. Game theory begins with the assumption that people are primarily interested in fulfilling their own needs and desires rather than acting out of a sense of obligation for the common good. However, people may also realize that altruistic behavior and cooperation with others may be the best way to fulfill themselves. "The mathematics behind game theory simply seeks to understand in a formal way the strategies by which people can move from selfish interests to cooperative outcomes" (Fukuyama 2000, 106). Civic cynicism is certainly explained by the assumptions of games theory, and the precepts of the theory may help the press contribute to the rebuilding of social capital. This would require collaboration between social scientists and journalists.

Though not necessarily an exemplification of games theory, the success of Pentecostalist theology in Africa illustrates the efficacy of an appeal to people's "selfish" interests for the larger good. As discussed earlier, the reason that Pentecostalist theology is so appealing in Africa is its emphasis on rewards to the individual here and now. Have faith, praise the Lord, serve in the church, and contribute generously and you will be rewarded abundantly! This contrasts with traditional Christianity, which tends to mirror Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, with an emphasis on virtues for the sake of godliness and the hereafter. Granted that religious appeals are of a different order from the secular, the African press may still be able to articulate civic virtues in material terms so that the rewards to individuals may become more palpable.

Such an approach is in contrast with moralizing for the public good, which is of little effect on public behavior. Rather it would involve using actual figures to project the tangible benefits to communities and individuals. When combined with the specific scrutiny of government expenditures, this completes the circle of civic reform.

What is being proposed here is, of course, an exacting form of reporting. Yet, there is little alternative to addressing civic cynicism.

More specific scrutiny of expenditures, for instance, will do more to unravel misuse of public resources than a million excoriating or polemical columns. It is in keeping with Lippmann's (1995) recommendation that journalists aim for scientific precision in reporting reality. Not only does such reporting point the way to actual solutions, it also orients the public toward an increasingly constructive civic attitude. It better defines the contours of governance problems rather than leave them an unmanageable blur of reality and perceptions. This alone should make people feel more hopeful and less helpless.

In its crusade for accountability, the press could also do more to prod guilty officials to public confessions. This is a staple of religious conversions. Sinners stand in front of congregations and, with tears streaming, admit to their transgressions and vow their repentance. They usually do not give details of their transgressions; they just say enough for the congregation to get the idea. Similar confessions by erring public officials are common in Asian countries, such as China and Japan, which are steeped in Confucian ethics. They are rare among African officials. Even if they are caught with the smoking gun in their hand and the murdered victim at their feet, African officials are likely to claim that they are victims of ethnic or political persecution. Yet anticorruption campaigns in Africa could use the services of repentant rogues. They can help remake corruption a matter of shame. The press can seek the collaboration of pastors, imams, and other preachers to pressure the prominent civic sinners in their flock to make public confessions. This would be more consequential than whimsical.

Reforming Africa's Uneconomic Culture

The Cameroonian economist Daniel Etounga-Manguelle has raised the question, "Does Africa need a cultural adjustment program?" (Etounga-Manguelle 2000). As he has discussed in various publications, the answer is emphatically yes. In general, African culture is socially rich but economically impoverishing. From the communalist values of the extended family system to celebratory ethos and extravagant ceremonies, African traditions provide considerable social values while exacting enormous economic cost. A most important role the African press can play in addressing civic cynicism is to spearhead dialogue on these African traditions that inhibit economic development and induce or provide the supportive environment for civic vices.

Even beneficial practices, such as the extended family system, should be discussed. Africans may have to make some choices. They

are not either/or choices, but choices nonetheless. The approach could be to "mend it, not end" (with due credit to President Bill Clinton, who used the phrase to enunciate his policy on welfare reform).

Economists generally agree that there are certain value systems that facilitate economic development. Harrison summarizes them in 10 categories:

1. time or future orientation
2. work and achievement as the basis of reward, self-satisfaction, and prestige
3. inclination toward frugality
4. premium on education
5. merit as the basis of reward
6. sense of community beyond family radius (an indication of social capital)
7. societal ethical code
8. justice and fair play
9. a dispersed and horizontal pattern of authority and
10. secularism.

The discussion in this book clearly suggests that a number of these values, to varying degrees, are lacking in contemporary Africa. Acutely lacking in the political process is factor number 8: justice and fair play. In the social realm, so is factor number 3: the inclination toward frugality.

Yet, with a few possible exceptions, most of the values can be integrated into African culture without losing its identity or socially desirable features. It is not necessary to follow a uniform path, as countries such as Japan and South Korea have demonstrated. Indeed, as Fukuyama (1995, 351) argues, "democracy and capitalism work best when they are leavened with cultural traditions that arise from nonliberal sources" and "modernity and tradition can coexist in a stable equilibrium for extended periods of time." What is important is to address these features of traditions that are at odds with democratization and economic development.

In matters of governance and within the broader crucible of modernization, the sense of community, justice, and fair play and a commitment to ethical codes are definitely lacking in contemporary Africa. The rampancy of corruption and fraud and the incidence of vote rigging and violence are some of the more obvious manifestations. The civic values of justice and fair play are, however, quite characteristic of African traditional societies, as is the work ethic. The

value that is problematic at both the contemporary and traditional contexts is that of frugality. More specifically, the problem is what Veblen (1899) identifies as the values of "pecuniary emulation" and "conspicuous consumption."

In his seminal treatise on the "leisure class" in the United States of the late nineteenth century, Veblen asserts that public regard was tied to the appearance of affluence. Therefore, people sought respect and self-esteem by expending lavishly on those things that could publicly be displayed as status symbols.

> In any community where such an invidious comparison of persons is habitually made, visible success becomes an end sought for its own utility as a basis of esteem....
>
> Those members of the community who fall short of this, somewhat indefinite, normal degree of prowess or of property suffer in the esteem of their fellow-men; and consequently they suffer also in their own esteem, since the usual basis of self-respect is the respect accorded by one's neighbours. Only individuals with an aberrant temperament can in the long run retain their self-esteem in the face of the disesteem of their fellows. Apparent exceptions to the rule are met with, especially among people with strong religious convictions. But these apparent exceptions are scarcely real exceptions, since such persons commonly fall back on the putative approbation of some supernatural witness of their deeds (Veblen 1899, 30).

What is particularly pertinent in Veblen's treatise is that the appearance of affluence, not the generation of wealth, is the primary social force. Thus, even the poorest members of society engage in patterns of "conspicuous consumption" that approximate or mimic those of the leisure class. Veblen's treatise applies with uncanny precision to contemporary African society. This has intensified the economic burden already inherent in African traditions.

African societies are generally celebratory cultures. Everything from naming ceremonies to funerals tends to involve elaborate ceremonies. Marriages and initiations are occasions for festive ceremonies that involve serving drinks and meals to an indeterminate number of people. The expenses of such occasions have escalated, as the culture of conspicuous consumption takes hold. This culture has itself become the norm because of a widening gulf between the rich and the poor, and especially the ease with which people of ordinary means become affluent virtually overnight.

Usually, people become wealthy because of uncommon endowment or industry. The generality of society would usually recognize such

people as a special class and might not be inclined to imitate them. However, when people of ordinary means become wealthy virtually overnight—as happens in societies of extreme corruption—they are more likely to flaunt their wealthy and make others of ordinary means want to keep up. This is the reason for the culture of consumption in Africa today. With few exceptions, everyone is afflicted with it. In Veblen's analysis, only a few people escape the pull of the value trend, and these include the very religious. In Africa, however, the religious exception is limited given the Pentecostalist emphasis on material well-being. A common refrain in this regard is, "My God is not a poor God." The pressures from Africa's conspicuous consumption radiate through all socioeconomic classes and, to a substantial degree, accounts for fraud and corruption at all levels. More than that, it works against basic principles of economic development.

During the period of Veblen's analysis, the United States was riding the wave of industrial revolution. Therefore, conspicuous consumption in that context might have served as an impetus for economic expansion by creating demand for industrial production. In the context of twentieth- and twenty-first-century Africa, however, the effect is the opposite. As Huntington (1991, 316) notes, "economic development for the very late developing countries, meaning largely Africa, may well be more difficult than it was for earlier developers because the advantages of backwardness are outweighed by the widening historically unprecedented gap between rich countries and poor countries." Part of the disadvantages of late development is that conspicuous consumption in developing countries primarily benefits developed countries, from which most of the consumed goods are imported. Industries in developed countries, of course, have the advantage of advancement and economy of scale. Moreover, they benefit from the fact that people in developing countries aspire to the standard of living in developed countries, especially the United States and Western Europe. The resulting social propensity undercuts economic development.

In his stage theory of economic development, Rostow (1960) posited that countries go through five stages: traditional society, precondition for industrialization, take-off of industrialization, prematurity of industrialization, and the stage of maturity. In the prematurity stage, the benefits of industrial development spill into all other facets of life, including the generation of the service economy. By the final stage, mass consumption has become a feature of the economy, which is then driven by consumer demand. Given this posit, it is evident that the attainment of mass consumption without commensurate industrialization is bound to be dysfunctional to any economy.

The effect is aggravated in Africa by an even greater tendency to match the Joneses. In the United States and Europe where the middle class is dominant, they also serve as a referent group for most others. In Africa, however, where the gulf between the rich and the poor is much greater, the referent point tends to be the habits of the rich. Therefore, in ceremonies, for instance, the level of opulence that used to be a preserve of the very rich have in time become the norm. These include weddings, funerals, and initiation ceremonies. On matters of clothing during such occasions, there is not much difference between the very rich and the average person. One only has to visit a church in an African city to witness the phenomenon.

Data on consumer behavior in Africa are hard to come by and often unreliable. The informal sector continues to account for a large proportion of economic activity in Africa, and data on such activity are more difficult to collect or estimate. The generally uneven pattern of data collection in Africa makes comparison with other countries all the more difficult. When such comparisons are made, the figures on African countries are likely to understate the reality. This is probably the case with table 10.1. The table was generated to compare spending on clothing and shoes. As Veblen states, for purposes of assessing conspicuous consumption, "no line of consumption affords a more

Table 10.1 Expenditure on Clothing and Shoes for Selected Countries

Countries	Population 2005 (000)	Annual Gross Income Per Capita 2005 (USD)	Annual Consumer Expenditure on Clothes and Shoes 2005 (USD million)	Annual Consumer Expenditure on Clothes & Shoes Per Capita 2005 (USD)	Expenditure Per Capita as % of Gross Income Per Capita 2005
United States	286,597	31,838	350,515	1,223	3.8
Canada	32,241	24,791	29,506	915	3.7
Norway	4,605	37,951	6,561	1,425	3.8
China	1,304,130	840	57,906	44	5.3
India	1,089,072	466	20,031	18	3.9
South Korea	47,339	12,075	17,095	361	3.0
Nigeria	128,676	361	3,651	28	7.8
South Africa	48,565	2,778	6,680	138	5.0

Source: The figures are curled or calculated from data in *World Consumer Lifestyles Databook: Key Trends 2006 (5th edition)*.

apt illustration than expenditure on dress." Nigeria and South Africa are the only African countries for which data on such consumer expenditure could be found. The other six countries on the table were selected to represent various income levels among non-African countries.

As the table indicates, Nigerians' per capita annual spending on clothing and shoes ($28) is actually paltry, and is the second lowest of the seven countries after India ($18). South Africa's expenditure of $138 is only a fraction of those of Norway, United States, and Canada, but it is several times that of the other developing countries, except South Korea. The gap in clothing expenditure between Norway and Canada and the rest of the countries in the table is, of course, representative of the gap in economic advancement. Norway is ranked No. 1 in the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index of 2005, Canada is ranked No. 5, and the United States is No. 10. These compare with South Korea at No. 28, China at 85, South Africa at 120, India at 127, and Nigeria 158 (of 177 countries). Per capita expenditures by Norway, United States, and Canada on clothing are each higher than the gross per capita income of China, India, and Nigeria, respectively. Indeed, Norway's per capita expenditure on clothing is about four times Nigeria's gross per capita income.

Still, Norway's expenditure on clothing is not at all extravagant. Norway is a small country of 4.6 million people, most of whom are relatively affluent and living in a very cold climate. As a percentage of gross per capita income, its expenditure of 3.8 percent is virtually the same as that of the United States (3.8), Canada (3.7 percent), India (3.9 percent), and South Korea (3.0 percent). Nigeria's expenditure rate of 7.8 percent is by far the highest of the eight countries. This is explained, in part, by Nigeria's low per capita income base, which is probably underestimated for the reasons given earlier. However, it is very likely that the expenditure figures are even more grossly underestimated. What could be said with some certainty is that much of Nigeria's expenditure on clothing is by the middle class and above, and not by the poor subsistent masses, whose vast numbers depress the per capita figures. In the absence of data, one could speculate that if upper income Norwegians were compared with upper income Nigerians or South Africans, the expenditure on clothing by the Africans would be relatively much higher as well.

The pattern of conspicuous consumption in Africa is masked by the general poverty, for which it is to some extent to blame. It is especially evident in the pattern of spending on myriad ceremonies.

Ceremonies are prime components of African cultures, and their costs are escalating in the competition of conspicuous consumption. Average families pay thousands of dollars for marriage ceremonies, funerals, and initiations into traditional clubs, womanhood, manhood, and the like. The grandeur of such ceremonies matches or exceeds what the upper middle class would undertake in Western Europe or North America.

Among non-Muslim Nigerians, for instance, prospective couples go through two or three marriage ceremonies: the traditional, the church wedding, and/or a court wedding. Each involves feeding hundreds of people with sumptuous meals and drinks. Funerals of ordinary people typically involve overnight vigils, which are more like festivities. This is followed by church service and burial the following day, and the congregation is usually fed at a reception sponsored by the bereaved family. Because of the high expense, non-Muslim families rarely ever bury their dead in a matter of days. Some funerals are delayed for longer than a year. This time is needed to raise funds, plan for the festivities, and sometimes even build a house. Such is the value that homes in which people lived throughout their lives are deemed unfit to host their funerals.

Discourse on Africa's economic situation rarely touches on the negative economic impact of the frequent expenses related to these cultural expenses. The pressures of the extended family system get more attention. For instance, in explaining why the African military readily became as corrupt as the governments they overthrew, a former Ghanaian officer explained: "Military men are subject to the same influences of the extended family system which most people believe are the primary causes of the average African's inability to live within his means, and therefore of his resort to bribery and other means to augment his earnings" (Ocran 1977, 116). Often unstated is that the financial pressures of the extended family system result not just from bread and butter needs or even education and health. The cost of supporting Africa's celebratory traditions is a major factor.

The African press needs to arouse consciousness in this regard. For a continent that lags so far behind other regions and face enormous disadvantages of development, any avoidable impediment has to be addressed. Africa's celebratory ethos has its social advantages. For one thing, they provide necessary diversion from the drudgery of life. Festivities and ceremonies are better social alternatives to Hollywood's often subversive movies and television shows, for instance. Moreover, they are traditions. The question is whether the traditions can be

modified to minimize the expenses. Rather than sumptuous meals, for instance, may people be encouraged to serve snacks and water?

Even with minimal press leadership in addressing this issue, there are some movements in the recommendation. Some dioceses of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, for instance, have banned overnight vigils and restricted the time lag between deaths and funerals. The Niger Delta Diocese, for instance, requires families to bury their dead within four weeks for the church to be involved in the funeral. The Right Reverend Gabriel H. Pepple, the bishop of the diocese, explained that the restriction was intended to minimize funeral expenses. Bishop Pepple provided this insight into the problem of lavish funerals: "People spend money that was not made available to the person for feeding and medical care. Some don't come to see parents. Sometimes parents die of hunger. So we think Christians shouldn't be mocking themselves that way" (Pepple 2006).

Along the same vein, in 2003, the council of chiefs of the Ogba-Egbema people in Rivers State, Nigeria, decreed a drastic cut in bride price and funeral expenses. The action was spurred by complaints by people that the costs were prohibitive. Moreover, the paramount chief explained that there were too many spinsters among his people and high bride price was to blame. But even the newly decreed expenses are still quite high for a family of average means. Yet, it is the spirit of the action that is of importance.

Even Africa's extended family values need to be tweaked. At this time, there often is greater pressure on the proverbial bread winner in the extended family than those who may not be doing enough to pull their own weight. Breadwinners often face resentment for failure to lift the rest of the family, especially when compared with other extended families' breadwinners. Usually the comparison is without regard for the breadwinner's actual means or how the yardstick may have acquired the financial prowess. The inherent pressure—even when not explicitly expressed—militates in favor of fraud and corruption. It would seem more productive to prod less successful family members to be more enterprising. Yet, as Veblen explains, part of the ethos of conspicuous consumption is that people do not want to be seen making a living by less than befitting employment. Accordingly, it is common for African youth in urban centers to remain idle rather than undertake menial jobs or return home to farm or fish.

Incidentally, it has been argued that societies with strong extended family bonds tend to be weaker in social capital in general. "In some cases, there appears to be something of an inverse relationship between the bonds of trust and reciprocity inside and outside the family: when

one is very strong, the other tends to be weak" (Fukuyama 2000). Still, as Fukuyama also notes, "Families are important sources of social capital everywhere." The challenge is to find a way to extend the radius of trust and sense of justice to the larger society.

Civic Education and National Vision

In contemporary liberalism, civic education sounds rather archaic. Yet, it has to be a component of Africa's democratization. The press alone cannot do it; yet its role is crucial. Educational institutions can do more to plant the civic seed, but it has to be kept from weltering from society's materialistic pressures. Civic reorientation would require a concerted and continuing effort. Churches and mosques could be prodded to engage in service to others as part of spirituality, not just service to the church and praise of God. If somehow, the spirit of charity is enthroned in societal values, it may in time displace the materialistic value by which people's esteem depends so much on their material stature, or the appearance thereof.

A related challenge for African countries is to rebuild a sense of community and civic pride. So much of what happens in contemporary Africa would not have been tolerated in traditional African societies. The condoning of corruption, for instance, is a new phenomenon. As a matter of pride and civic ethic, traditional African families and societies would be aghast at members embezzling public funds. Family members would readily pressure one of their own to refund embezzled funds. If he cannot, the family is likely to contribute money to replace the embezzled funds rather than bear the shame. Can such sense of honor and community be rebuilt in the contemporary context, when corruption is now accepted? It is an uphill task, but not impossible. The challenge again is to reinculcate the ethic of shame as the prime factor of civic pride.

To these ends, the press in each African country has to develop some narrative that would inspire a vision of the citizenry. This is arguably the greatest contribution of the U.S. press to America's development. The notions of manifest destiny and the American dream have over the years been a staple of the U.S. press. Irrespective of the criticism of individuals, the U.S. press somehow cultivated the notion of a country on a mission. It was a country without royalty or traditional deities. Yet, the press wove the notion of specialness through narratives on heroes, ideals, and vision. Whether they were about George Washington's military exploits and statesmanship or Patrick Henry's oratory ("Give me liberty or give death"), the narratives

took on mythical dimensions. Through his rags-to-riches narratives, Horatio Alger alone must have inspired many a young men to the ideals of overcoming poverty through enterprise and resourcefulness. These narratives came to define the American psyche and inspire visions of democracy and economic development (Adams 1931, 1943).

As discussed in Chapter 6, the Nigerian press was in initial stages of creating such a narrative for the country before the coup of January 1966. With repeated disillusionments over the years, it is difficult to return to the same narrative. Moreover, Nigeria hardly has any George Washington, a national hero whose name resonates in every part of the country. Its most notable independence-era heroes—Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, among others—all carry political baggage in some region or another. Yet, there are the Herbert MacCauleys and Mbonu Ojikes, people who played inspiring roles in Nigeria's history but did not stay around long enough to be tainted by its odiferous politics. Their ideas of liberty and order can be articulated to inspire.

The press in other African countries can find similar narratives to create a vision of nationhood. In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta is more of a national hero than Nigeria's postindependence leaders. Despite his benign dictatorship, he has broad national appeal. As such, his vision of Uhuru and his role in the resistance movement against colonialism could be the basis of a pervasive national narrative, much as that of George Washington in the United States.

Ghana's celebration of its fiftieth anniversary of independence in March 2007 could also provide the catalyst for a national narrative. As the first country to become independent in sub-Saharan Africa, Ghana occupies a special place in African history. Its first postindependence prime minister, Kwame Nkrumah, lost some of his hero status after he became dictatorial and much of it after he was overthrown in 1966. Yet, his vision for Ghana and pan-Africanism is being appreciated now more than ever before. In fact, the transition of the Organization of African Unity into the more efficacious African Union reflects Nkrumah's vision—some might say obsession—before his overthrow. Ghana continued its trendsetting in 2000 by becoming one of the first African countries to demonstrate democratic consolidation with a transition from one party to another. These, along with Ghana's precolonial history as an empire-state, provide more than abundant basis for the development of an inspiring national myth.

Perhaps, the one African country that is ahead of all others in being steeped in a national myth is Senegal. Senegal's genteel national

character reflects a blend of the philosophy of negritude and French republicanism. Senegal's first postindependence president, the poet-philosopher Leopold Senghor, articulated the philosophy of negritude as an expression of African humanism. To various degrees, it has since guided cultural production and discourse in Senegal, along with the cultural and political influence of Senegal's colonizer (Snipe 2003). The combination seems to have provided a relatively stable national vision of cultural and political identity, and that has to be a factor of Senegal's relatively stable politics. Alas, that stability is only now being threatened by Islamic insurgence. Still, the press and cultural producers in other African countries have to find such philosophical pivot for a narrative on nationhood.

Part of the national narratives has to be a vision of how lingering conflicts can be resolved. Given that the political space in most African countries has opened well enough to make further democratic reform promising, the press ought to take a firm stand against rebel insurgency in African countries. No doubt, there remain genuine grievances all across Africa. Inequity, imbalance in power sharing, and government recalcitrance remain realities in several African polities. However, armed insurgencies are hardly the solution. They raise the general distress and contribute to the culture of impunity. Whatever the grievances, the human and capital resources invested in military insurgency can best be harnessed in the political sphere to bring about changes.

In many cases, as in the Niger Delta in Nigeria, the fight for resources is a matter of justice. Still, struggles over resources often become obstacles to the creation of more resources. In fact, such struggles and the related national ethic turn resources into a curse. Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, President Obasanjo's assistant on budget monitoring and price intelligence, articulated this argument cogently in an interview with *This Day* (June 27, 2005) during a national conference on resource allocation:

> It is dangerous to be in a country where citizens do nothing else except to haggle over resources. You know, I was talking to one of my brothers from the North yesterday and I said to him, you know frankly speaking if I were at the conference, I would be taking a different position [that is, not reject the demands of Niger Delta representatives for 50 percent allocation based on area of derivation]. I will explain to you why. I said to him if our brothers from the Niger Delta say they want 100 per cent of the oil revenue, I would get every other person to agree so that we can give them 100 per cent of the oil revenue. Do you know why? Oil revenue is a demon over this nation. It is exactly this oil

revenue that stunted the growth of the nation. This is a nation that is going to get into greatness not by virtue of oil, not by virtue of solid minerals, not by virtue of mining or gas. It is a nation purposed to get into greatness because of you and me. Our greatest asset is our human capital.

Ezekwesili's argument finds ready corroboration. Around the world, including Africa, there are countries with much less resources than Nigeria, yet the people live much more comfortably than Nigerians.

In order to help checkmate armed conflicts and rebellions in Africa, the press has to articulate a vision of democracy similar to that of Safford (2002, 156): "Democracy always has been and always will be both an unending process and a balancing act . . . . It is the hope of this writer that quality mass education will enable us to maintain the optimum balance of liberty, order, and equality." To which one might add fairness and justice for all.

Conclusion

Nothing in this book is intended to suggest a panacea or quick remedy. Quite the contrary, civic reorientation of the magnitude proposed here is inherently a long-term process. Its potential is to be judged not by its short-term yield, but in the gradual transformation. It would be unrealistic to expect an overnight mass conversion to civic virtue. However, as more people become aware of their stake in an ordered society and the individual values necessary to bring about that order, pressure will build on others and the institutions of power to make corresponding changes. This is probably what Thomas Paine, the American revolutionary journalist and soldier, meant in saying that: "Of more worth is one honest man to society and in the sight of God than all the crowned ruffians that ever lived" (quoted by Moyers, 2003).

A major obstacle to the reform of African societies is the general conviction that societies' problems are beyond individual agency. A major responsibility of the press is to try to change this mindset. In urging his American compatriots to help make their society better, the late Bobby Kennedy, said: "Some people see things as they are and wonder why. Others see things as they ought to be and say why not." The task of the press is to help people see things as they ought to be and understand what they ought to do.

There is a certain momentum toward democratic consolidation and economic development in Africa. Governance reforms are

progressing, though not nearly at the optimum pace. Intergovernment coordination is stronger than ever, as embodied by the African Union and related agencies, especially the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The international community also seems to be recognizing the importance of Africa in the global order. With the increasing insecurity in the Middle East, the United States is turning to African countries for oil. The *New York Times* (March 21, 2007) reported, for instance, that by the year 2015, the United States would be importing 25 percent of its crude oil from western African countries, a 40 percent increase. Included in the calculation is the southwestern country Angola, which is emerging from 27 years of civil war and is poised for an even greater economic expansion than did Nigeria in the 1970s after its civil war.

Several African countries are benefiting from substantial debt relief from lending institutions. Aid policies, including the U.S. Africa Growth and Opportunity Act and the Tony Blair initiative in Britain, seem genuinely charitable in contrast with the exploitative lending of the past. The United Nations is also likely to be an even stronger contributor to Africa's development in the next several years. On his appointment as the United Nations Secretary-General in 2006, Ban Ki-moon declared that Africa's development will be the focal point of his tenure.

Put together, these developments point to substantive, if incremental, advancements in Africa's governance and economy. To maximize the benefits of these opportunities, however, it is necessary to galvanize public opinion and reorient civic values. People have to believe that their well-being depends on civic reforms at all levels, and they should know why and how. At the minimum, they have to understand that social capital translates into economic capital—for individuals.

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Postscript: A Groundswell
of Social Capital

In the introductory chapters, I narrate some personal experiences that illustrate the depletion of social capital in Africa. I will end this analysis by narrating contrary experiences, those that illustrate the groundswell of goodwill and social capital.

To begin with, as a youngster growing up in one of the villages that constitute the Bonny archipelago in the Niger delta, I was immersed in the kind of civic culture that inspired the title of Hillary Rodham Clinton's book *It Takes a Village*. The sense of community was strong in Agbanama village of the 1960s, as was/is typical of African villages. Children moved about and played anywhere in that and surrounding villages without fear of harm. The typical remark from adults to children was, "You must be the son of.... Greet him for me." Or, "You must be the daughter of.... Tell her I will be visiting soon."

When adults assembled in the village center to make governance decisions, the discussion was typically raucous. In the midst of it all, however, some consensus would emerge and even dissenters would tend to abide by it. In the absence of banking institutions, individuals were trusted with the community's funds, and they typically accounted for every penny. When there was a breach of such trust, the offending individual would for long live with the community's disdain. My paternal aunt, who traded in food items and household supplies, routinely extended credit to her more impoverished customers. Given that neither she nor her customers were literate, they relied on memory and good faith to keep records. Expectedly, recollections often differed. Yet, they typically talked through their recollections to reach an agreement. Poverty notwithstanding, they would make concessions to maintain trust and bond.

My later experience with urban Nigeria suggests other manifestations of social capital. I will recall two such experiences here. Early in 1975, I traveled from Port Harcourt to Ife to obtain admission papers to the University of Ife. I had applied for the forms by mail, but

having not received the form as the admission deadline neared, I decided to make the trip. The distance should have been covered in, perhaps, six hours, but the trip required jutting from taxi to taxi and the roads were in very poor conditions. Though I left Port Harcourt about 7 a.m., I did not get to Ife until about 10 p.m. Arriving late at Ife thwarted my improbable plans to head back to Port Harcourt the same day. My plan B was to check into a local motel. But Ife was a dangerous city at night, the taxi driver told me. He was particularly concerned about the risks of ritual killing, and so he asked me to spend the night with his family.

I was apprehensive about accepting such an offer. What if he was one of those ritual killers? All that my family members knew was that I left for Ife. Even the most intrepid investigator could do little with that. I had no way of notifying family members where I was, as only the affluent had phones in those days and they hardly worked. Still, I had little choice but to accept the taxi driver's offer. I knew no one in Ife, and if I had to go to a motel, I would still have to rely on the driver's goodwill to find one. Therefore, though the driver seemed to be a kind person even before he offered to host me, it was with considerable trepidation that I walked behind him into his home. My anxiety eased somewhat when his wife and two toddlers emerged to greet me. She offered me dinner, which I ate without much relish, though I was famished. I slept fitfully that night on a floor mat in the parlor, my sleep affected more by my anxiety than the hard floor. As it turned out, my fears were not necessary. The next morning the taxi driver drove me to a motor park from which I took a taxi to the university campus.

About six years later, I had a comparable experience, this time in Port Harcourt. It was Christmas eve in 1980, and I was just back in Nigeria for the first time since leaving in April 1976 to study in the United States. My flight from Lagos to Port Harcourt arrived about 7 p.m., but without my luggage. I had to wait until the next flight. By the time it arrived, most of the taxis had left. The few drivers who remained demanded exorbitant fares, which only a few passengers could afford. Worse still, the taxis would only go so far into the city. Boarding them meant having to wait for another taxi on a thoroughfare, with luggage, in the middle of the night. Most of the passengers chose to pitch their tents all over the arrival terminal and tried to get what sleep was possible in the circumstance.

About 3 a.m., there was some stirring as several passengers clamored to the exit door. As it turned out, the police had just arrived in their patrol Jeep. They entered the terminal and chatted with different

passengers. I got to talk with one of them, who asked me where I was heading. I was ultimately heading to my hometown, Bonny, for Christmas holidays, I told him. This piqued his interest. Bonny was his first posting after his cadet training, he said, brimming. It was evident he had a good experience there. He asked me to wait as he dashed off to talk with the squad commander. He returned soon after to ask me to ride with them in the patrol Jeep. On that occasion, my only anxiety was over the speed with which the Jeep veered around large potholes. It was about 4 a.m. when the driver dropped my helper and me at his home off a two-lane highway. His wife woke up to serve me an early breakfast of biscuits and tea. Soon there was sufficient daylight to safely resume my journey, and they helped me with my luggage back to the highway to flag down a bus heading into town.

At the time of this writing, these charitable acts were, respectively, about 32 and 27 years in the past. Yet I recall them vividly because of the enduring impression they left on me. One involved an ordinary citizen and the other a policeman, the very embodiment of corruption in African countries. Some people might say that those were the days. But I believe that such humanism remains a part of the African way of life. It is reason to hope that social capital in Africa will be rebuilt despite the prevalent civic cynicism.

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Notes

6   The Nigerian Press and the First Republic

1. The Oba is the equivalent of a king among the Yoruba.

7   Military Coups and Press/Public Support

1. Brigadier Muhammed gave the reins of power to the army chief of staff, Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, whom he overthrew and succeeded in 1975.
2. Rawlings was actually in prison and on trial. He inspired, perhaps even directed, the coup from there.
3. This quote is also variously attributed to President John Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr.

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Index