

# Hegemonic agendas, intermesticity and conflicts in the post-colonial state

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## **Abstract**

Drawing from the literature and interpreting the evidence, this article explores the sources, factors and forces that interact to spark and drive conflict in the post-colonial state and its environment. It advances that the structure of the post-colonial state and its immediate environment is characterised by the juxtaposition of transnational groups and proto states interacting with sovereign entities. This *intermestic* (international/domestic) environment engenders a security dilemma to which constituent groups and their extra-territorial affiliates respond by seeking to appropriate the totality of the space. Simultaneously, elite systemic forces engage to impose their strategic interests. The state is thus doubly instrumental. Forces from both the first and second levels align in collaborative and confrontational engagements in pursuit of partisan interests. The objectives of the competing loci of power to appropriate the total space or carve out an autonomous Lebensraum instigate a zero-sum game. Coercion is the principal currency of this engagement. Structural factors, principally the incongruous internal construction and the intermestic location of the state, account for the proneness of whole sub-regions to implode.

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The evolved behaviour of post-colonial states in the post-Cold War period responds to the complex realities of the state and its environment.

### **Crises and challenges in post-colonial states**

The African state and inter-state system are perpetually in crisis. Chinua Achebe (2009) posits that Africa continues to persevere under the burden of political instability and religious, social, racial and ethnic strife. Tiesse (2004:23), citing Kouassi Yao, states that since 1952 when the first coup d'état was executed against King Farouk by Abdel Gamel Nasser in Egypt, post-colonial Africa has witnessed over 85 coups d'état. The figures reach over 100 if failed attempts are taken into consideration. Of the 85 to 95 conflicts registered since 1945, over 45 were civil wars. Some of these wars had long durations, sometimes reaching up to 40 years as in the case of the fratricidal war in Chad, over 40 years in the Sudan, 30 years in Eritrea and 27 in Angola. These wars have not spared any part of the continent. Patrick J. McGowan (2006) highlights that from independence through 2004, the sixteen West African states have experienced 44 successful military-led coups, 43 often bloody failed coups, at least 82 coup plots, 7 civil wars, and many other forms of political conflict. North Africa has been marked by guerrilla wars that are raging in Algeria and Egypt.

Some post-colonial states, such as Angola, were embroiled in civil war for virtually the entire quarter century of their existence. Meredith (2005:238) observes that Equatorial Guinea enjoyed only 145 days of independence before it was pitched into a nightmare of brutality and coercion that lasted for 11 years, and George Ayitteh (1998:193) notes that in 1996 civil war raged in at least 17 African countries. By 2005, many more countries, including states hitherto considered stable oases, were engulfed in conflict. In this connection, Robert Istok and Tomas Koziak (2010:81) classify Côte d'Ivoire as a failed state.

Many of the imploding states share contiguous borders as whole sub-regions simply fall apart. Stewart Patrick (2011) asserts that beyond those living in countries in conflict, neighbouring states are impacted by violent conflict through refugee flows, arms trafficking and disease – all of which are rarely contained within national borders. He cites the devastation wrought throughout

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Africa's Great Lakes region in the decade and a half since the Rwandan genocide, with warring militias, arms flows, and epidemics crisscrossing notional national frontiers. He also observes that the risk of regional contagion is compounded when weak and vulnerable states are adjacent to other countries with similar characteristics and few defences against spillovers. In West Africa an orbit of conflict stretched from the Casamance region of Senegal through Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

The propensity for conflict in the post-colonial African state and sub-region defies colonially inspired divisions. Conflicts raged across linguistic and colonial divisions: Anglophone, Arab, Francophone and Lusophone states. The proneness to conflict also defies the size of state. Guinea Bissau, with a population of 1,2 million fought a war in 1997, in 2000 and mini skirmishes in 2005, and skinned its president Bernardino Viera alive in 2010. Medium level states such as Senegal has faced an irredentist war in its Casamance province for over three decades. Large countries like Sudan, Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo are perpetually embroiled in conflict. Even the newest state, South Sudan, emerged into internal conflict.

Many explanations have been professed for this state of affairs. Olorunsola (1972) advances that conflicts in the post-colonial states have been variously attributed to the politics of cultural sub-nationalism and ethnic differences. Stephen Ellis (1999) traces conflict to deeply rooted religious thinking, while Lake and Rothchild (1996) emphasise collective fears of the future. These understandings of conflict in the post-colonial state environment, at best, capture important fragments of the complex phenomenon. But they are state-centric in explaining conflict within the confines of the post-colonial state. They miss the critical relevance of the structural complexity of the environment in which the post-colonial state is located.

### **The sources of conflict in the post-colonial state**

It is posited here that conflict inheres in the instrumental character of the post-colonial state. At one level, the post-colonial state is a vehicle for the hegemonic agendas of internally contending forces and transnational forces in its immediate external environment. At another level, the state is a tool for the advancement

of the hegemonic agendas of powerful elite forces in the international state system. These forces align with domestic players whose strategic interests are served by this cooperation. This bloc is opposed by other domestic forces with divergent interests to determine the direction in which the post-colonial state should evolve. The interaction between these disparate forces creates conflict, determines the trajectory of the conflict as well as influences its outcome. The post-colonial state is neither an end in itself nor represents a monolithic interest in the manner of the modern classic state. Flowing from this, the processes of the post-colonial state are defined by the struggle for partisan appropriation, consolidation and hegemonic control of the state. Power transitions imply regime changes that lead to radical transformations within and outside of that state. Coercion, rather than persuasion, is the conventional rule of the game. In many of these states, proto states, constituted by alienated groups outside the margins of the state emerge and live side by side in competitive relations with the state until one or the other is able to appropriate the political space and seek to consolidate its new hegemony. Violence peaks during hegemonic transitions or consolidation of the hegemonies. Proto states form part of the internal and overlapping external environment and contribute to the mobilisation of violence to effect transitions of power.

Gerard Hagg (2008) highlights that in post-colonial African countries political power struggles generally take two forms: the state is in conflict with identity groups (state-identity conflict), and identity groups compete for 'ownership' or dominance of the state (inter-identity conflict). The two levels of conflict seldom occur or remain in isolation but are interactive and can develop in two directions: from the state to society and from society to the state. The state may actively support one identity in inter-identity conflict if this identity occupies powerful positions within the state. In reality, such states often encourage dominant identities to use state resources and institutions to suppress other identities. Therefore, strategic interaction among groups is characterised by competition for control of the state as the dominant group in the state sets the terms of competition between its rivals. Accordingly, Lake and Rothchild (1996) assert that the pursuit of particularistic objectives often becomes embodied in competing visions of just, legitimate, and appropriate political orders. The sources

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of conflict in the post-colonial state are thus found first in its peculiar internal structure and second, by implication, in the structure of its intermestic external environment. This environment is constituted by state actors in the immediate sub-region, a myriad of transnational forces that traverse the boundaries of two or more states and whose loyalties are primarily to the group rather than to the state, as well as proto states that periodically emerge to challenge the supremacy of the post-colonial state. The post-colonial state attempts to impose an order on disparate groups that are distinguished by relative cultural and value dissonances and are often traditionally hostile to each other. The existence of transnational and extraterritorial stakeholders who perceive legitimate interests to protect in the outcomes of the strategic interactions in the environment of the state has critical implications. A configuration of power may emerge that advances the interest of the international community in controlling the internal political forces in the post-colonial state and dominating the immediate and larger environment. The internal construction and the processes of the post-colonial state impact on the nature of relationships generated with the external environment of the post-colonial state. The nature of relationships elicited by the structure of the external environment, including the state system, also impact on the internal characteristic of the post-colonial state. Conflict in the post-colonial state may thus be caused or exacerbated by a clash of interests between blocs of transnational forces challenging the civil order of the post-colonial state. Conflicts in the post-colonial state are thus hardly only internal to any one post-colonial state entity. This osmotic interaction constrains the strategic choices of the many rational actors within the post-colonial state. It defines the ground rules within the external environment composed of unlike units.

Georg Sørensen (2009) asserts that in weak states the classical security dilemma has been turned on its head: instead of domestic order and international threat there are domestic threat and international order. The political process refers to intense struggles of contending groups to control resources and to dominate state policy. The struggle seeks to impose partisan agendas of the competing entities, incorporating forces outside the boundaries of the post-colonial state. This process generates security dilemmas that drive the actions of the constituent groups seeking to appropriate the state. The political process is a struggle without

safeguards for all implicated. This process leads not only to the weakening of the post-colonial state, but also undermines the state system in the immediate neighbourhood. This environment is described as *intermestic*. The structure and organising principles of the post-colonial state deviate significantly from those of the classic Westphalian modern state.

### **Organising principles of a conventional state system**

The ordering principle of a conventional inter-state system is characterised by its decentralised and anarchic nature because the system lacks order and organisation. Waltz (1979) states that the inter-state system is formed by the co-acting of the units and maintained on a principle of self help. In this scenario, a state is conceived of as a single rational actor with undisputed control over the territory that the state claims and uncontested sovereignty and legitimacy of rule. The interactions of these states form the structure of the inter-state system. The structure is also determined by the functional differentiation and the extent of power capabilities of the respective states. The structure of the system changes with changes in the distribution of power across the system's units. These changes in structure alter expectations about how the units will behave and the outcomes that interaction between units will produce. Waltz (1979) further elaborates on this definition of structures:

- Structures are defined, first, according to the principle by which a system is ordered. Systems are transformed if one ordering principle replaces another. To move from the anarchic realm is to move from one system to another.
- Structures are defined, second, by the specification of functions of differentiated units. Hierarchic systems change if functions are differently defined and allotted. For anarchic systems, the criterion of systems change derived from the second part of the definition drops out since the system is composed of like units.
- Structures are defined, third, by the distribution of capabilities across units. Changes in this distribution are changes of system whether the system be anarchic or hierarchic.

### The ordering principles of the post-colonial state system

The ordering principles of the post-colonial state are characterised by internal and external disorder. The internal and external order is maintained on the principle of self-ascendance. As a product of mechanical fiat, the post-colonial state is not constituted on the basis of any form of contract between it, its peoples as corporate entities and individuals as alleged citizens. It is not underpinned by any overarching vision that is universally acknowledged by all its constituent units. Consequently, Meredith (2005:1–14) affirms that there are no universally acknowledged sovereign national interests. The national interest is the interest of the dominant group in society. It is therefore a fleeting interest. National interests change with regime changes. As a crude variant of the Westphalian system of states, the post-colonial state is characterised by the lack of a unitary sovereign vision and an inability to develop a monistic structure entailing one locus of power. Interaction among the contending forces is driven by the search for partisan appropriation of the state in order to impose the ideas, worldview, religion, identity and material interests of a particular group as national interests. As Charles Chidi Achodo (2000:4) notes, the result is the scramble for the control of the centre and the natural resources in various countries. He adds that in such a context, complex political and ethnic issues are manipulated in order to plunder and control the mineral wealth of the countries. The state is thus in a state of permanent crisis. Violence lurks just behind the façade.

As Chabal and Daloz (1999:xv) observe, the acuteness of Africa's crisis is such as to defy the usual parameters of current political analysis. Though the post-colonial state is formally hierarchically ordered, in many instances many loci of power exist side by side with the state. There are multiple centres of rational action in the post-colonial state. James Ferguson (2006) notes that 'the state' may not necessarily refer to an actor, but it is the name of a way of tying together, multiplying, and coordinating power relations, a kind of knotting or congealing of power. The legitimacy of the state is perpetually contested by the existence of potential proto states within the post-colonial state. These proto states have demonstrated the capacity to participate in international life, including deploying substantial force to fight along with and also against armies of state actors. These set the post-colonial state apart from the classic modern state.

Importantly, these internal deviations determine the contours of the immediate external environment in which the inter-state system is located. This *intermestic* environment is thus conceptually distinct from the inter-state system. Though the inter-state system is central to the structure of the external environment, the character of the immediate environment is principally defined by the presence of proto states and the cross-border flow of transnational interest groups perceiving legitimate stakes in the affairs of the post-colonial state. These distinctions have radical implications. The formal state seeks the perpetuation of the structure of the state as presently constituted, while the goal of the proto state is either to transform the structure of the state or to carve out a new autonomous political space from the formal state. In instances, the proto states – exemplified by greater Liberia under Charles Taylor and greater Côte d’Ivoire of the Forces Nouvelles – have demonstrated more coercive capabilities than the opposing post-colonial state. Their objectives were achieved through war.

### **Hegemonic transnational forces in the intermestic environment**

The constraints posed by the intermestic immediate environment of the post-colonial state are different from those posed to the modern state by the structure of the inter-state system. The structure of their respective states and state systems are different. The interplay of the incongruous structure of the post-colonial state and the intrusion of transnational (transmestic) forces in its internal processes give conflicts in the post-colonial state their intermestic character. This attribute challenges the traditional notion of conflicts in post-colonial states as purely domestic, for transnational forces directly stake their claims in the crisis. The outcome of the conflict also has implications for developments in neighbouring states. Conflicts in post-colonial states express internal structural deficiencies and problematic structures within the immediate sub-system of the post-colonial states. What many analysts have perceived as spillover effects are indeed expressions of the intrinsic sub-systemic linkages to the violent conflicts that flare up in the various post-colonial states. J. Andrew Grant (2010:244) demonstrated that in the cases of Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire, when fragile states begin to fail, order within the wider region begins to

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change and transforms order in contiguous states. Both the post-colonial state and its inter-state system are at once anarchic and hierarchically ordered.

Intermesticity thus refers to two qualitative attributes of the environment of the post-colonial state. It alludes first to the character of the immediate external environment that is created by the close juxtaposition of transnational forces, proto states and the post-colonial state within the same geo-political space. Secondly, it captures the implication of the character of the external environment on the rules or governing principles of the post-colonial state system. It draws attention to the fact that while conflict in the post-colonial state may play out within a discernible political space or the territory of one state, legitimate stakeholders and parties to the conflict can be found just across the immediate frontiers of the state. These extra-territorial (transmestic) stakeholders are often, but to differing degrees, direct participants in the ensuing armed hostilities of the conflict. The degree of direct engagement would depend on a host of factors including the configuration of power and other structural considerations pertinent to the conflict. In extreme situations, hostilities may cross into the territory of a neighbouring state and the armed hostilities fought outside the territorial confines of the post-colonial state objectively at war. These are illustrated in Charles Krause's (1998) interview of major actors on the conflict in the Congo-Rwanda-Burundi-Uganda axis.

A domino effect is set off when any one state in the sub-region implodes as the violence, in time, spreads across adjacent borders. The complex linkages between the contending domestic forces and their transnational allies across international borders and the perceived legitimacy of the stakes of these transnational forces in the affairs of the various states in which they are represented imply that there are no affairs strictly internal to and limited to each of the formally demarcated sovereign states whose communities are inextricably linked. The transitional affinities of groups in the region render all states vulnerable as conflict in one state escalates. The conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau and instability in Guinea were all linked, forming an orbit of instability in the sub-region. The linkages reflect the sub-regional flow of sociological affinities across state boundaries. The alliances of the diverse peoples in the various states may not necessarily mesh with the formal policy of the various states in which

the transnational community is represented, as their group interest may be distinct from the interest of the various states. These diverse interests are sources of tensions throughout all the states and entities in that sub-system.

Post-colonial states do not just implode; whole sub-regions are ultimately engulfed in violent political hostilities. The conflict which began in Liberia in December 1989 eventually engulfed Sierra Leone with the rise of Foday Sankor's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1991, war in Guinea Bissau in 1997 and an insurrection of the Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (MPCI) led by Ibrahim Coulibaly in September 2002.

### **Neo-colonial and religious hegemony**

At the second level, the post-colonial state remains an instrument for the articulation of interests that are secondary to its own interests. The internal weaknesses of the state make it perpetually vulnerable to be used as an instrument of the interests of elite state actors. The interests of its super-ordinate ally in the global system are imposed on it. Alain Rouvez (1994:17) points out that the relations between the sub-Saharan state in Africa and its metropolitan centre do not depend only on the latter's strength and motives but also, by definition, on the former's weakness. He cites the success of medium powers like France and Britain, or even a small power like Belgium, to invest parts of Africa either because the subjugated nations are willing to cooperate or because they are too weak.

The interests of the metropolitan elite state actors in relation to the post-colonial state are predicated on many factors. They may revolve around historical rivalry with competing elite actors, strategic factors, a sense of a global mission, a need for the validation of a national sense of worth and relevance in world affairs or ideological considerations. Economic exploitation is a powerful motive, which may motivate the creation of spheres of interest in the post-colonial states system by neo-colonial forces. Smock (1993) cites Rouvez (1993) as observing that of all the former colonial powers, France undoubtedly has been able to preserve the largest influence in its African colonies. Smock (1993:5) further highlights that in the early 1960s, France usually intervened to protect newly established

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post-colonial regimes against domestic uprisings; later it would engage in both open and covert operations in defence of these regimes or to undermine the influence of rival European and African powers (Biafra, 1969), or to reinstate an established head of state (Gabon, 1964), or to remove one as in the Central African Republic in 1979. The peddling of influence by predatory states in Africa has continued in the post-Cold War era, with slight changes in tactics involving more subtlety than hitherto. In effect, the competition to build spheres of influence also entailed a process of appropriation of the post-colonial state. The external force may also be expressed in the promotion of a certain idea, such as a religious force seeking to expand its global reach.

Whether the external hegemonic force is expressed in a state or by a religious idea, to articulate its interests, these forces require local allies. These allies have oftentimes already been put in place by the colonial force or have already been well entrenched as in the case of a religious idea. New domestic friends may also be cultivated following radical restructuring in the post-colonial state that may have altered the balance of forces in the state – as exemplified by the rise of Ivorian nationalists in 2000. The internal politics of these proxies must coincide with or advance the perceived interests of the intruding external forces. The post-colonial space is largely perceived as areas where the dissemination of new ideas and philosophy is relatively cheap.

The instrumentality of the post-colonial state is enfeebled by structural weaknesses at two levels – the micro, internal one and the macro one of the inter-state system. The dominant force in the post-colonial state is thus embroiled at one and the same time in two concrete projects. It seeks to consolidate its control over domestic contending forces and their allied forces in the environment on the one hand, while on the other hand it tries to protect perceptions of its international legal sovereignty within the context of its subjugation.

Post-colonial relations between the former colonial metropolises and post-colonial states had three dimensions. These were the sustenance of linguistic and cultural affinities built over years of unrivalled domination, geo-strategic interests, and economic exploitation of the post-colonial state. These three elements constitute the trinity of interests that underpin relations between the

metropole and its post-colonial dependencies. On the part of the post-colonial state, the state, with its contending domestic forces, must submit itself to this subjugation. In return it is assured of protection and legitimacy. The metropole plays the role of an assurance broker and the guarantor of last resort for its allies. The substance of French policy in post-colonial Africa, even in the post-Cold War period, remains unchanged, despite the altered environment of the post-colonial states. This policy is exemplified in French struggles in the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

Johann Hari (2007) asserts that for 40 years the French government has been fighting a secret war in Africa, hidden not only from its people, but from the world. It has led the French to slaughter democrats, install dictator after dictator – and to fund and fuel the most vicious genocide since the Nazis. The war reflects the imperative for a metropolitan power to perpetuate regimes that are amenable to control in its various post-colonial holdings. This control has become critical in the post-Cold War era when traditional ideological rationalisations for maintaining hegemonic control of the post-colonial state have dissipated. The end of the Cold War delegitimised the social, political and economic strangle-hold of post-colonial states by their metropolises. The post-Cold War democratic wave in post-colonial Africa was predicated on this transformation at the global level and thus has led to a radical opening of the political space. This new opening has translated into regime transitions underpinned by democratic values in the post-sovereign national conference era, which came in the wake of the end of the Cold War.

Against the changing political landscape in post-colonial states in Africa, the strategies of neo-colonial control have been altered. Osuolale Alalade (2012) argues that national processes in post-colonial states, including democratic processes, are ultimately mediated by self-appointed powerful external forces that have determinant influences over outcomes. The new strategies respond to the reality that regime changes are inevitable and imply power transitions from old to new allies. The policy appears to undermine regimes with radical orientations and install forces who assure the continued domination of the ex-colonial power. The preferred option would be to stick to old allies as in Cameroon and Congo Brazzaville, in Togo following the death of Gbasingbe

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Eyadema, and lately in Côte d'Ivoire with the ascendance of Alassane Ouattara as president with French help. Lucy Ash (1998:1) cites French President Jacques Chirac's emphasis at the Franco-African summit on the permanent presence of France in post-colonial and post-Cold War Africa:

France is not one of those countries which from time to time rediscovers Africa. We just don't pop in for a visit or when there's a disaster. France – for a very long time – has been your friend. We have a common history and we're always there, day in day out... Make no mistake about it: France will not abandon Africa, we are in for the long run.

In post-sovereign conference Congo Brazzaville, France had earlier abandoned its long time ally, Denis Sassou Nguesso in favour of Pascal Lissouba, justified by France's adoption of new moral and ethical standards espoused by Mitterrand in La Baule in 1990. In spite of this, the culture of patrimonialism and cronyism in its post-colonial dependencies remains the essential policy instrument of control of France. Whitney (1997:3) draws attention to this character of relations between France and its post-colonial dependencies when he observes that:

... democracy and human rights were not the main standard by which French presidents measured their African policies, however. Instead, it was loyalty, a word that crops up often in French histories of the post-colonial era. What it meant was that French governments would support African leaders who remained loyal to France, which depended on French Africa for much of its oil and \$10 billion a year in trade.

A second force is constituted by disparate religious affiliations and contrapulling world-views which seek to consolidate their influence in society and their unrelenting expansionism in society and in the post-colonial state. Christianity and Islam, per se, pose no problem. The disruptive potential lies in the close juxtapositioning of the so-called major religions within the same political space vying for dominance. The world-views that derive from foreign religions that have been bequeathed to the post-colonial societies create value dissonance that exacerbates cleavages. Indeed, in West Africa the broad line of ethno-religious cleavage runs horizontally from East to West roughly 150 to 200

kilometres north of the Atlantic coast. North of this line, the population are mainly Muslims who see the Arab way of life as a model. South of this line, the people are mainly Christian. Although in the face of the assault of western influences due to the propagation of Christianity and westernisation their world-view has been heavily impacted by the West, the ethnic groups south of this line have managed to protect their traditional outlooks. Among the Yoruba, with a significant proportion of Muslims, the world-view is basically western. Colonial policies tended to reinforce a perception of differences among the various groups, such as the indirect rule of Lord Lugard in northern Nigeria, reinforcing emerging value dissonance with the Christian south. Later the two groups became amalgamated into one political entity. The salafist Boko Haram, seeking to Islamise the whole country, has exacerbated the problem.

Thus, the Islamic and Arab world-views and values that are intrinsic to them predominate in the north of the country. This has led to sharp divisions in the country that generated a lot of tensions and impacted on national processes. The declaration of the Sharia as the legal code for nineteen states in the north that share contiguous borders has posed serious problems as many have dubbed the declaration an act of secession from the Nigerian federation. The value dissonance arising from the close juxtaposing of differing world-views has proven to be a major source of violence in the post-colonial state. This close proximity, especially when religious differences coincide with ethnic identities, reinforces the sense of unity of communities across international frontiers and their sense of separateness from compatriots with whom they are trapped in the political space of the post-colonial state. The question arises as to from which of the competing religious traditions the vision and a philosophy to underpin the *raison d'être* of the state is to derive. Both traditions seek the appropriation of the state and hegemonic influence in its affairs. Behind each of these foreign forces are identifiable external actors.

### **Internally ascending rebels and proto states**

The interaction of the myriad of internal and external forces driving the internal process of the post-colonial state revolves around one question. Whitney (1997:189) posits that the central question is who the real owners of the country

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are and who would rule over whom. The post-colonial state is an arena for the continuous struggle for ascendancy of often irreconcilable opposing interests. These interests include value-systems, attitudes, and overall world-views that are associated with the diverse constituent units that occupy the political space. Horowitz (1985:188) affirms that evidence abounds that control of the state is a central ethnic conflict objective. Meredith (2005:8) advances that the conflicting interests form the permanent undercurrents of the internal dynamic of the state. Violence, in one form or the other, lurks in the interaction between the groups that constitute the national process. It is often directed by the group in control of the state against competitor groups. However, the dominant regime often fails to subdue those who continue to challenge the legitimacy of the status quo. Each group retains some capacity for violence within the state apparatus or outside of it. Violence may also be initiated by one of the subordinated groups against the state, which, in any case, represents only the repressive and dominant part of the contending forces in the state. At given opportunities, massive violence is triggered and accentuated by all parties. Soon, violence becomes the main currency for political intercourse between contending forces in the state. This is directed at achieving regime change. At other times, violence is deployed with the broader goal of creating a new and permanent political space in the form of secession. Each group perceives its ultimate vision as the possession of a sovereign state to rid itself of the perceived constraints to the entrenchment of its values, including world-views, and developmental aspirations in the anachronistic post-colonial state.

The main articulators of vision in the post-colonial state are groups and peoples. Accordingly, Bruce J. Berman (1998:306) proposes that even as African politicians ritually denounce 'tribalism', in the open secret of African politics, they sedulously attend to the maintenance of the ethnic networks of patronage that are the basis of their power. The main units in the drive for power in this state are therefore competing groups. Individuals act in the name of the group. These individual actors embody group political goals and spear-head the drive for power for the group. Their actions and policy choices are legitimated by their fit into the goals of the group. These individual political actors have some latitude in choosing particular tactics or approaches to achieve clearly defined goals of its

natural constituency. They may act in unison within a formal institution such as a political party, which must be under its control. But their tactics must pass the litmus test of advancing the ultimate political goal of the group. The group constitutes a natural constituency of unquestioning allegiance and support for the actors in the arena of the state. The individual and party embodying the group interests are validated by assured landslide victories in elections.

This arena includes the political, the economic and the social. Power is, of course, often an instrument to secure other tangible goods and benefits, including benefits for members of an ethnic group. Horowitz (1985:186) notes that power may also be the benefit. In the post-colonial state, the pervasive systemic material and ideological dissonance and the search for domination lead to mutual insecurity for all. This results in incessant competition for power. Power is equated with political control. The resulting politics is a politics of exclusion. Horowitz (1985:199) explains that short of eliminating competition in the physical sense, groups seek to impose a homogenous identity on the state and to compel the acknowledgement of their prominence. As a result, the integrity of every group is threatened by each and every constituent unit. The strategic choices of each group are informed by the security dilemma confronting all contending units in that political space.

As absolute control is the end goal of the political process for all groups, the political system in the post-colonial state environment is most prone to violence when one constituent group perceives an opportunity to bring to an end the domination of another group. This is often the case at the dissolution of the one-party state system, or through death of a charismatic leader or at the imposition by external forces of a mechanism leading to sudden democratisation of the political process. The process of regime change has often sparked the start of violent conflicts as contending forces see the process as a unique opportunity to wrest power from those who were in control. These changes may be ushered in through revolutionary means such as a coup d'état designed to dislodge the dominant group from power. It may also be through democratic means in which case elections legitimise the consolidation of the rule of the dominant forces or the transition to another potential hegemony. In the nominally democratic scenario in a post-colonial political process which is marked by the absence of

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commitment to any social or ideological principles, the population structure becomes a critical indicator of the potential configuration of power in the post-colonial state. The political power of groups is determined by demography, the resources available to each group, and their capacity to organise effectively. Lake and Rothchild propose that more powerful groups have a larger say in setting the terms of the contract. The conflict in Côte d'Ivoire ultimately was about legitimising evolved demographic structures. The calculus of insurrection must reckon with the engagement of transnational allies in the immediate environment and the response of the dominant external force.

### **The emergence and ascendance of proto states**

One critical element of differentiation in the post-colonial state is based on degrees of access to the centre of power in the state. At the core of the state is the group that has consolidated its appropriation and instituted its hegemony. Various groups are located on concentric rings around the core to indicate their relative proximity to or distance from access to the state. Groups located even further than the rings that delineate the margins of the state are in a zone of alienation where the beginnings of rebellions may be expected. When a rebellion is proclaimed and a rebel movement seizes control and begins to establish some semblance of administration in areas within national territories under its control, it has transformed itself into a proto state. Such rebel movements often enjoy overt or covert support or complicity from sympathetic state actors in the inter-state system as well as the transnational allies in the intermestic environment. Through such support, proto states such as in Southern Sudan, greater Côte d'Ivoire with capital at Bouake and greater Liberia with capital at Gbarnga survived for considerable periods of time. South Sudan survived for more than 30 years and eventually gained statehood. Greater Liberia and greater Côte d'Ivoire eventually seized control of the respective states.

In the post-Cold War period, proto states have been overtly engaged as allies of post-colonial regimes in conflict. Jérôme Tubiana (2008) illuminates that Khartoum and N'Djamena have been engaged in an on-again, off-again proxy conflict using one another's rebel movements since the Darfur conflict began in 2003, most intensively since 2005. Also, Khartoum has attempted on multiple

occasions to unify the Chadian rebel groups to destabilise or even overthrow the Déby regime. John Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/SPLM) in south Sudan, Jonas Savimbi's UNITA within Angola, and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia with its capital at Gbarnga are celebrated proto states. Before the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko for Zaire, Howard W. French (1997) reported that the people of East Kasai province stood confidently on the verge of independence. The province managed its own currency, promoted its own development projects and had just opened its own university. These proto states all managed to enter into the diplomatic mainstream within and outside their sub-regions. In the case of the SPLA, as with UNITA in Angola, it is inconceivable to think of it in any way other than as a government perpetually at war with the state of Northern Sudan.

Proto states are therefore non-state actors who, to varying degrees, have attributes of states, even if they do not possess formal recognition as sovereign states. These actors have territories under their control, with populations, informal economies in their zones and enjoy a monopoly of coercive apparatus in their enclaves. Sometimes they can project force outside the territorial confines of states in which they are embedded. Above all, they conduct foreign relations to a limited extent and challenge the supremacy of the states in which they operate as a parallel state. In terms of capabilities, the state actors are not necessarily superior. These proto states are very much a part of the overall structure of the environment of the post-colonial state. Their activities impact on the policy options available to state actors, either as allies or as impediments to the articulation of policy preferences of state actors.

The nature of constraints on the behaviour of a post-colonial state posed by such an environment is qualitatively different from those imposed on the modern state by the inter-state system of modern and post-modern states. In this environment, the dominant contending units in the respective post-colonial states are quite keen that their legitimate interests, implying the interests of the residual or major segment of their communities of power in the neighbouring state are taken care of. These elements, who are autonomous actors in the adjacent state, are transnational allies in the post-colonial states. In crisis, they uninhibitedly intervene in the affairs of the post-colonial state.

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For the structure of the inter-state system, the post-colonial state system is constituted by functionally unlike units. A second implication is that the constituent unit of this system, the post-colonial state, is not hierarchically ordered all the way, since the supremacy of the central power, the formal state, is contested by embryonic states. These proto states are effectively power-based non-state actors in the external environment of the post-colonial state. There exist multiple centres of power engaged in a rational calculus based on differently set or even diametrically opposed political goals. Due to the informality of engagements defining relations between proto states and post-colonial states in this external environment, the ground rules of the inter-state system and the external environment are not formally codified. Proto states foster interactions that have critical importance for conflict in the post-colonial state and the inter-state system constituted by it. Joseph Sany (2010:6) identifies key international parties in the Ivorian conflict to include France and Burkina Faso. He adds that France, the former colonial power, was accused of being partial and adds that Burkina Faso, whose citizens constitute the majority of foreigners in Côte d'Ivoire, has been accused by the government of supporting the rebels.

Following a failed coup d'état in September 2002, two thirds of the territory of Côte d'Ivoire, on the northern frontiers with Mali and Burkina Faso and on the western border with Liberia, were under the control of the Forces Nouvelles. The rebel movement – now known as the Forces Nouvelles (FN), or 'New Forces' – Daniel Balint Kurti (2007:2) observed gradually began to look more like a government with an increasingly well-organised bureaucracy. The Secretary-General, Guillaume Soro, acted as the political head. He led the rebellion in all negotiations including the conduct of external relations with sympathetic or conniving neighbouring states. The Chief of Defence Staff, Colonel Bakayoko, was the military head. He was accountable to the Secretary-General, who was the head of the military akin to the Commander in Chief. In January 2004, the Forces Nouvelles created a Political Directorate of 8 Secretaries. The members of the directorate included Louis Andre Dacoury-Tabley, Deputy Secretary-General of the movement, in charge of relations with institutions of state and political parties, Dosso Moussa for Economy and Finance, Konate Sidiki spokesperson

and secretary for Mobilisation, Coulibaly Gnenema for Legislation and Human Rights, Amadou Kone for Elections, Alain Lobognon for Communication, Guie Guillaume for Identification, and Togba Mamadou for Social Affairs. Only the Secretary-General and the Chief of Staff could make public policy pronouncements.

The policy-making organ of the Forces Nouvelles included the Secretary-General, the Chief of Defence Staff, the deputy Secretary-General, the Spokesman of the Forces Nouvelles, the zonal Commanders, and the 9 ministers of the Force Nouvelles, who also served as delegates to the central government. Administration in the Forces Nouvelles-controlled regions was structured on a military command system. The command zones included Bouna, which housed the strategic rear operational base only a few kilometres away from the Burkinabe border. Bouna was under the command of Mourou Ouattara. Korhogo military command was under Fofie Kouakou, Vavoua under Kone Zakaria and the South Zonal Command was controlled by Cherif Ousmane, who also controlled Ferkessedougou which was placed under the direction of Soumaila Drabo. Before the schisms that led to the formation of the Front de Libération Nationale (FLN), the Northern Zonal Command was led by Isiaka Ouattara, also known as Wattao.

Each of the zonal commanders had a military formation under his charge. The Anaconda formation was under Wattao while Cherif Ousmane commanded the Guepard. These zonal commands set up their sub-administrative headquarters in the former departmental offices under the watch of sector commanders. Direct administration was undertaken by the department officials. Many Conseillers Généraux, holdovers from the central administration, still function, under the watch of sector commanders deployed from the Zonal Commands. Sergeant Sylla Inza was the sector commander of Tiermigboue. The sector commander of Ouangolodougou was Daouda Diamanche, also known as Jordan. Chef Vetcho was responsible for the North Central sector command. The Chief of Security for Bouake was Corporal Kolo.

In April 2004, the Secretary-General created institutions to facilitate governmental functions. He reopened the prisons and started competitive recruitment into

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the law enforcement agencies. In July 2005, the Secretary-General promoted the Chief of Staff to a General. He stressed that it was unacceptable for officers in the Forces Armées Nationales du Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI) to advance while their counterparts in the Forces Nouvelles remained stagnant.<sup>1</sup>

The administration of the proto state is sited in Bouake. Revenues are drawn from four sources. The first includes subventions received from states and transnational communities in the sub-region as well as further abroad who have declared a vested interest in the outcome of the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. Secondly, enterprises engaged in the exploitation of resources under license from the Forces Nouvelles pay levies to the authorities. A third source is individual Ivorians who donate funds. Fourthly, significant funds initially came from periodic breaks into the vaults of the large branches of the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) that were left unguarded. These were complimented with monies extorted from the population under various guises.<sup>2</sup>

### Conclusion

The structural construction of the post-colonial African state and the peculiar historicity of that genre of state constitute a challenging contemporaneous Hobbesian environment in which inheres the potential for conflict and instability. This potential is expressed in a security dilemma that drives the reflexes of competing constituent groups and their extraterritorial affiliates in their interactions with the state and outside of it. Transnational affinities are critical in formulating group responses to threats perceived by state group actors within the intermestic environment. Such affinities are the source of the informal solidary codes that define invisible relations of groups in the immediate environment of conflict. In the search for local ascendancy, the dominant internal force is transformed into an instrument for the advancement of the strategic objectives of elite forces. The goals of the external ally may be at variance with the objective

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1 Statement of Guillaume Soro, Secretary-General of the Forces Nouvelles on 20 April 2004 to end his official tour of the Savanne province.

2 Road blocks are set up by the respective commanders of the rebellion. Markets are raided for all sorts of levies. Revenues extorted from the population often end up in the private pockets of the officials of the proto state.

interests of the subordinated post-colonial state. The post-colonial state is weak without any credible organic glue in terms of common worldview, value system, national or a predominant religious identification to hold its fractious society together. There is a lack of national civic theology. Against this backdrop, the national process is pervasively and permanently contentious, with violence as the main currency to sustain the tenuous control that the ascendant group in the state enjoys. Violence is exacerbated when an opportunity for regime change to dislodge the current ascendant group opens up, for instance through the ballot box. Attempts to institute national value distribution through democratic channels in the post-colonial state are played out in the context of the struggle for total partisan appropriation of the post-colonial state. This gives rise to a paradox as democratic openings and elections become immediate triggers of violence.

The challenges identified above, especially the lack of credible organic glue in terms of common worldview and value systems in African post-colonial states, reflect the potential role of credible, ethical and moral leadership in preventing conflict. This is exemplified in Nelson Mandela of South Africa and the 'Mwalimu', Julius Nyerere of Tanzania. The concepts of the African Renaissance and the Ujaama enunciated respectively by the two statesmen provided critical groundings to cement a vision for each of the two countries. The exemplary lifestyles of the two also provided the moral barometer to guide the future leadership of the country. The lack of such credible, ethical and moral leadership would seem to be the most critical deficit across the spectrum of African post-colonial states.

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