

Control Freakery and the Moral Hazard Problem in Sub Saharan Africa

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One of the most salient characteristics defining post-independent African regimes has been the fantastic degree of control the vampiristic government leaders have exerted on their political and economic systems. A vampire state is a regime underpinned by personalization of authority and the private use of national assets. It is a system characterized by patronage, ethnic exclusiveness, and discriminatory clientilism designed to secure political loyalty and unequivocal support from special interest groups.

Since the early days of independence, Africa witnessed the rapid ascendance of small but powerful interest groups whose methods of governance were marked by corruption, nepotism, and dictatorship. These particular features drove many countries in the continent to experience bloody upheavals and/or severe economic impoverishment generally. Until the early 1990s, most governments in the Sub Saharan region were one-party dictatorships or military oligarchies that exercised absolute and hegemonic control over domestic processes in all their diversity. Civilian regimes did display democratic trappings of governance yet, in essence, the states were steeped in totalitarianism. In many respects, the Cold War politics between the then superpowers nurtured conditions that

tended to foster and legitimize the breadth of ubiquitous control, though one should hasten to add that the extensive scale and depth of control freakery also stemmed from the desire of dictatorial leaders to guarantee their own self-preservation. In short, Sub Saharan African states endured at least four decades of totalitarian dictatorship as leaders of these regimes served as control freaks.

The wave of political liberalisation that swept the region in the 1990s did not drastically weaken the grip of control for over a decade or so. In fact, most leaders continued to exert totalitarian influence as they sought to neutralize the potential political and economic threats posed by the nascent opposition forces. It emerged that the same old instruments of control freakery were applied tactically and strategically by those in power within the bounds of plausible deniability. The underlying aim has been to intimidate and paralyze the political adversaries through harassment, oppression, assassinations, deprivation, and the like.

However, as the 1990s drew to a close, most of Africa's control freaks resorted less frequently to such vicious measures. Donor pressure seems to have played a major role in curtailing the use of arbitrary violence though evidence has been growing that many rulers continue to employ methods of terror and economic disenfranchisement in pursuit of narrow, selfish goals.

The failure of many African states to appreciably broaden political space for an all-inclusive participation and empowerment of citizens is a manifestation of crippling misgovernance, a feature that constrains dynamic human potential and stifles creativity and innovation. This invariably forges a dysfunctional 'order', one that induces maldevelopment. A maldeveloped order is a system where vampiristic clientilism rules

supreme and where a tiny clique of totalitarian rulers (virtually the sole beneficiaries of a dysfunctional regime) wield unchecked power effectively disenfranchising and condemning the majority to a life of miserable deprivation, drudgery, impoverishment, and utter wretchedness. Shadow states are notoriously dysfunctional because of their intrinsic capacity to grossly subvert market processes. Dirigiste regulatory controls, particularly if their applications are generic and widespread, would intensify the dysfunctional character of a misgoverned state. When such conditions obtain for long, or when aggrieved parties feel that the circumstances need not be endured any further, the potential for a catastrophic explosion would loom large.

In this article, I shall address the following. First, I will consider the forms and manifestations control freakery has taken in Sub Saharan Africa. Second, I will show how the employment of this totalitarian device during elections in the multi-party era precipitated the moral hazard problem for foreign governments and the global society at large. Finally, the chapter will conclude by examining the freakery implications of shadow state rulers as they impoverish the masses, smother liberty prospects, and pursue narrow vested interests and selfish goals.

African leaders as control freaks

From the disturbing catalogue of ruinous political and economic excesses witnessed in vampiristic regimes in the continent, it would be credible to argue that Africa has been badly served by its leaders. And much of the horrible leadership has been exercised through tragic forms of control freakery. Now, manifestations of control freakery in Africa are many, and while these are usually apparent in the day-to-day lives of shadow states, they

happen to get more pronounced in election years and during elections. Let us consider the various instruments African leaders have employed in exercising political control.

The instrument of political putrefaction

But how is the grip of tight control exerted by vampire rulers? In the particular form it has taken, control freakery in Africa is a manifestation of political corruption in the management of state affairs. Most African leaders, particularly the incumbents in power, have been, and continue to be, control freaks. A cursory glance of Africa's political landscape indicates that control freakery is almost a pathological condition in shadow states and quasi-democracies. One manifestation of this behaviour has been in the leaders' facile politicisation of almost every issue that has had the potential of improving the competitive prospects of opposition forces or even the condition of recalcitrant individuals the incumbents don't like. In the multiparty era in Africa, official controls have been legendary and have been exercised through a maze of arbitrary sanctions often invoked under illegitimate veils of spurious legality. However, most reasonable people will see these invocations for what they really are. Controls are forged as convenient devices to disenfranchise the opposition. Control freaks have generally employed several instruments to this end, one of which is the instrument of political putrefaction.

Shadow state rulers exert control over their economies using the instrument of corruption; here, they would illegally dish out public assets and national resources to friends and irritating foes alike so that virtually no leader remains would remain untainted by crime. National banks would be instructed to issue loans to favoured individuals often using questionable methods that circumvent lawful procedures. Potential thorns in the vampire's flesh would be encouraged to obtain such loans, this ruse serving as a weapon of

blackmail when political exigencies arise. Criminal adulteration is therefore one of the devices employed to silence leaders and heads of all national institutions-the police, the army, the judiciary, public universities and other educational organs, public banks, the parliament, the civil service, and the public media. In this game of criminal contamination, the more the merrier, politically speaking. This soul-degrading programme of political putrefaction is designed and executed to save the leader's own skin when the survival chips are down; in all this, he is driven by the instinct of self-preservation. In the main, when accusations of criminal conduct are directed at the helmsman, all those putrefied would instinctively rally behind their leader. They would, indeed, circle the wagon in defence of their helmsman, realising full well that his political demise would provoke a fall out that could potentially condemn their own futures to miserable oblivion or legal incarceration. Rather unwittingly, the proximate implementers enlisted purposely and expressly for an incumbent's scheming designs get heavily enmeshed in extra-legal acts of political vulgarization.

The bastardization of national institutions and its various leaders by those at the helm of governmental affairs is the worst form of governance. Using corruption as an instrument of control is a kind of vulgarization that pollutes the human soul of all affected parties. The reason why the vulgarization of social, political and economic systems by rulers is such a horrible experience is because the morbid process strikes at the very heart of society's moral fibre leading, in the final analysis, to erosion of sublime values and norms and the perpetuation of moral decay generally. Its insidiousness is almost cancer-like---you only realize its lethal destructiveness when it is too late.

The instrument of vengeful thanklessness

In nearly all cases, the incumbents would mobilize the police and other forces of coercion to do their dirty work. The prosecuting agents would invariably be under the direct orders of an incumbent's lieutenants. Behind the scenes would invariably be the evil genius controlling the pawn's moves, pawns in the incumbent's chessboard of political vulgarisation.

Given the ubiquitous totalitarianism control freaks exert on state institutions, including their power to hire and fire--and indeed, the mortal power over whether you will live or die-- those ordered to carry out disenfranchising functions are left with no option but to 'co-operate'. Even if one would be tempted to say 'No' on grounds of principle, the fear of the drastic consequences would serve to transform one into a compliant tool. Those who have been pauperised for insurbodination would either paraded politically or be referred to tangentially as reminders to those with a rebellious streak. Those enlisted as accomplices would think of their children, their families, and other relations and dependants, and weighing the costs and tribulations all these may be forced to endure in lieu of their non-cooperation, they would decide to go along with the insidious machinations of shadow rulers. In any case, the heads manning the mobilized institutions would rationalize that they owe their high profile, once-in-a-lifetime, appointments (and the unbelievable perks that go with them) to the helmsman. In shadow states, there is no such thing as legal recourse for victims of injustice because the judiciary, like all other state institutions, are under the controlling thumb of the evil genius. And the helmsmen of these regimes, as polished control freaks, have clamped down hard, sometimes with crude finesse, on forces

threatening them. In the true Orwellian sense, state-sponsored terrorism has been a palpable phenomenon in African shadow states.

Even if cronies grow obscenely rich (through patronage and personal favouritism) to the point of becoming self-reliant, they would scarcely dare assert their independence by disregarding the supreme benefactor of a shadow state. It would be suicidal for proteges to attempt to bite the hand that feeds them. For, clientelist benefactors would have nearly all their bases covered to prevent such a potential eventuality. If push comes to shove, the assertive former loyal and dependent beneficiary could easily lose his life for system-threatening insubordination. Rulers in shadow states would make this abundantly clear through tangentially cryptic messages and thinly veiled threats. And when conditions permit, the offended rulers would pull all the Machiavellian stops to impart a near-lethal or fatal blow to the 'thankless' former ally. Supreme oligarchs in shadow states would, from time to time, perform such rituals of sacrifice to keep every body in line, friends and foe alike.

Could the murder of Paul Tembo, six hours before he was to give damaging evidence of high level corruption against Chiluba's government, an instance of vengeful thanklessness? It will be recalled that Mr. Tembo was a key former member of Chiluba's political party. Was this a case of political assassination?

The instrument of political immobilization

Shadow state rulers may also apply the *instrument of political immobilization* from their arsenal of control freakery. They would throw technical spanners in the works of opposition figures to lessen their prospects of electoral participation or parliamentary representation. In its most acute form, this instrument can be invoked as *a weapon of*

political liquidation. This would entail the introduction of constitutional caveats or riders that would effectively blow away the electoral chances of targeted political enemies.

For instance, President Chiluba of Zambia confirmed his dubious credentials as a control freak when he politically prevailed on particular state institutions to strip Kenneth Kaunda, the opposition party's candidate and the country's former president, of Zambian citizenship in 1996. According to Chiluba, Kaunda was of Malawian parentage. By this technical gimmickery, he had peremptorily disenfranchised Kaunda, in effect, barring him from elections and from ever holding a Zambian public office.¹ In West Africa, similar disenfranchising manoeuvres were prosecuted by two other control freaks, Henry Konan Bedie and General Robert Guei, both of Cote d'Ivoire. As an incumbent in the 1998, President Bedie brandished the citizenship card against his main rival Alassane Dramane Ouattara in multi-party elections. He declared that Ouattara, who once served as Cote d'Ivoire's prime minister, was a national of Bukina Faso. By stripping him of Ivorian citizenship, Bedie had, in effect, emasculated Ouattara's political ambitions to public office. Bedie was announced the winner in the fraudulent and rigged elections and was installed as the president of Cote d'Ivoire. But the country descended into worrying restlessness bordering on civil war, a feature that apparently prompted General Guei to oust Bedie in a military take over in 1999. Bedie fled to France as the militocrat promised his countrymen new elections within a year.

However, in the run-up to the election in October, 2000, General Guei's control freakery became apparent to the outside world. He used state institutions to bar several opposition candidates from contesting, the candidacy of Alassane Ouattara. Again, like Bedie before him, Guei branded Ouattara an alien thus eliminating him as an election rival.

In spite of the fever-pitch civil restiveness, the Ivorian elections were held in their fraudulent and rigged form. The opposition candidate, Laurent Gbagbo of the Ivorian Popular Front, was heading for victory much to the chagrin of Guei. He ordered the election commission to reverse the results and have him declared the winner. Violence broke out and Guei, unable to stand the post-elections heat, was reported to have fled the country soon thereafter.² Gbagbo was sworn in as the new head of state against the background of tense emotions in the opposition ranks. The era of another control freak had been brought to an abrupt halt, but that of a new one had been born.³

The instrument of criminal hooliganism

This crude weapon which I also dub as the instrument of criminal terrorism, would be unleashed on the politically vocal personalities regarded as political thorns in the government's flesh in a bid to terrify them into silence. The targeted individuals are loathed by those in power for publicly and loudly issuing embarrassing statements or for pursuing potentially sensitive investigatory courses of action with seemingly damaging repercussions to incumbent political managers. In its application, the instrument would entail dispatching "thugs of fortune" to the residential homes of the humiliating gadflies during wee hours of morning. In their politically-motivated adventures, the agents would take-off with valuable goods as well as cash so that the criminal skirmish displays all the trappings of a "normal" break-in or robbery. But to the discerning observer, the peculiar "imprints" left behind every time such incidents occur tend to cast suspicions on the "normal" theory. If anything, the systematic oddities thrown up by escapades of criminal hooliganism tend to sharpen the penumbra of suspected political motivation.

The Instrument of atavistic legal harassment

This venomous device would ostensibly be invoked against political foes on an on-and-off basis and for the flimsiest of evidence of wrongdoing. The pursuit of political victimization through courts would at times be a favoured means by the powers that be especially when the judiciary is readily susceptible to political interference and executive manipulation. To the incumbents, the obvious advantage rendered by this approach is that their heinous political objectives would materialize under the façade of apparently legitimate legal processes. The aim is to either paralyze the enemy forces or induce behavioural subservience acceptable to the expectations of the incumbent political managers. The rulers' unspoken threat of intermittently resorting to legal instruments to exact obedience or sheepish docility from apparently fire-breathing radicals (bent on taking embarrassing pot-shots at government) has invariably sent chills down the spines of such activists. Basically, the main concern among the politically belligerent government opponents, has been the fear that those in power would overly criminalize fairly banal and petty felonies to degrees eliciting horrendously harsh penalties. For example, an opponent could use the platform afforded by a political rally to inform the public about the economy-debilitating crimes committed by those in power. Such adverse publicity could prompt the government to charge the person with incitement or accuse him of trying to cause disaffection against the head of state. These crimes normally carry severe sentences in Sub Saharan Africa. Anxious of the potential paralysis this could cause on an opponent's political career or financial fortunes, the enemy forces are either driven to capitulation or to tone down their vitriolic rhetoric against the powers-that-be.

The instrument of political assassination

In vampire regimes, political killings and mysterious and unresolved murders would not be uncommon. Human rights are violated with impunity, and rule by fear is the norm. But such states would also be characterized by underhand manipulation of the judiciary with respect to corruption cases that have exposed the politically well connected. Filibustering tactics would routinely drag out cases for years on end. Justice would be delayed, and therefore denied; adjournments would be frequent and long drawn out. In this twisting and turning, the shadow rulers would hope that the corruption cases would simply go away or be swept under the carpet. And the suspected criminals would still remain part of the entourage of the shadow machinery.

To vicious shadow state rulers, soft targets in the opposition ranks end up being fare game. The targets are carefully chosen. Women are usually left out. Rather than strike a fatal blow to really big opposition heavyweights (and therefore risk to precipitate an unmanageable crisis), such rulers would annihilate close allies of such weights. In their estimation, the murders would send a powerful message all right, namely, to scare the hell out of persistent political gadflies. It is like saying: "if we can strike this close, then you can be next--so watch out. Your only salvation is to abandon your crusade."

For reasons of self-preservation, shadow state rulers would invariably have a murderous gameplan. The idea is to send paralyzing chills down the spines of opposition personalities that irritatingly and embarrassingly rub the system the wrong way.

One form of control employed in Banda's Malawi was to instill fear through assassinations.

"Politicians who were tipped as heirs apparent-- and opponents who plotted his ouster--were assassinated by death squads run largely by armed thugs of his Malawi Young Pioneers. Others were detained and tortured or were hounded into exile." ⁴

But how many political enemies, real and imagined, can shadow states go on killing? Every new victim only darkens the tainted image of the powers-that-be. But to those at the helm, they will go on killing selected targets as long as they can get away with it. And they will be enough *time spread* between one murder and the next so that emotions do not build up to a crescendo. In any high stakes game such as this, a “cooling off period” must be factored in. Therefore, orchestrated political assassinations are an instrument of control.

Although control freakery in Africa has spread its tentacles to nearly all areas of national life, shadow state leaders have occasionally exercised a degree of caution in regard to where they tread. But one area where the paralyzing hand of control freaks has stretched out to suppress or snuff out freedom has been in the press realm. The media, the pressmen, and writers in Africa have routinely been targeted by the powers-that-be for disclosure of corruption scandals, and for holding governments accountable. While the expansion of political space through political liberalization has opened up enormous opportunities for facilitating public empowerment, increased public access to information, and participation in governance, the process has also entailed the accentuation of risks. In this regard, shadow rulers have devised new forms of restrictive practices to muzzle the press and constrain writers. Virulent forms of censorship and journalistic harassment have sharpened

in intensity, these manifesting themselves in the tightening of libel laws, the introduction of strangulating and punitive fines for media ‘perturbations’, and the victimization of journalists and media barons (such as the expeditious pressing of charges for unrelated offences) for demonstrating pronounced enthusiasm in monitoring and reporting government performance. Since shadow states and quasi-democracies are systems that have too many skeletons to hide, the media role of public education and information dissemination is particularly disconcerting and career-threatening to powerful vested interests.

As a matter of fact, writers of conscience in general and journalists in particular have had to endure hounding campaigns and sustained onslaughts of nightmarish proportions for exposing national misgovernance in all its diversity. The brazen murder of the Mozambican journalist, Carloso Cardoso, in November, 2000, has illustrated the prevalence of the climate of insecurity under which the media and its practitioners operate. Mr Cardoso was a courageous, a no-nonsense journalist famous for exposing injustices, corruption in high places, and gross misgovernment of public resources-in short, for disclosing the depths and scope of misgovernance across the length and breadth of the Mozambiquean society. Evidently, his legendary characteristic of calling a spade a spade, of pulling no punches when reporting scandals of public interest, and of incisive forthrightness in the monitoring of government performance-all these must have ruffled several feathers in both the opposition and government camps. As such, he must have made political enemies, and his murder should, in all probability, be seen in that light.

Next door in Zimbabwe in February 2001, a privately-owned printing press was bombed to smithereens by forces many believe to be government-sponsored. Prior to the

terrorism, the powers that be had expressed grave reservations about the *Daily News* critical reporting, one official statement going as far as threatening its dissolution or closure. The bombing catastrophe followed fast in the heels of mob-like vigilantism directed against the newspaper when over 4000 copies of an issue were confiscated and annihilated by government supporters. All these dreadful acts were part of a vicious campaign, apparently engineered by, or with the connivance of, the ZANU-PF apparatus, to cripple the operations of *Daily News*.

In January 1995, the no-nonsense editor of a newsletter (*Impartial Fax*) in Angola was gunned down seemingly by forces linked or sympathetic to the government. Observers attributed his death to remarks that provoked the wrath of Angola's political elite. The editor censured President Dos Santos' regime for taking the Angolan economy to the cleaners.

Outspoken literary figures and intellectuals have also had their freedoms curtailed or their lives threatened though such tendencies have declined sharply in recent years. During the height of the one-party era, literary intellectuals found themselves sitting on a powder keg; to save their own skins, they cleverly opted to damn their respective governments with faint praise. For the most part, they would avoid open and scathing criticism of the powers-that-be; indeed, they would politely decline press interviews. And when invited to deliver public lectures, they would play it safe by tackling esoteric subjects.

Before the onset of political liberalization in the 1990s, several outspoken and literary intellectuals sought exile abroad. They are those who opted to live abroad because of political and economic exigencies. However, they are also numerous Africans who were

forced to stay away largely for political reasons. Some even returned when the new political circumstances appeared to be relatively accommodating.

Yet, a score of intellectuals (those forced by political factors) have refused to return (even on regular, visitation basis) despite notable advances in political liberalization in their respective countries. They have refused to take the gamble because they still reckon the political risks to be too great. Lastly, they are those who have opted to walk in and out of their countries (following political liberalization) while continuing to live and work abroad. Africa has lost a lot of invaluable expertise (brain drain) on account of political and economic factors. However, astute rulers of such regimes do not invariably resort to assassinations all the time. The carrot of bribery would also be brandished from time to time to neutralize a crusader's efforts at rocking the incumbent's boat.

The instrument of economic annihilation

But, another tool that freaks employ is the *instrument of economic annihilation*. Here, enemies of shadow state rulers are exposed to forces of impoverishment. Their business premises or commercial assets would be reined in systematically and deliberately. Shadow state rulers could unleash hordes of agents to loot, burn, or raze to the ground money-spinning business outfits of belligerent or acutely bellicose political enemies. By targeting their sources of wealth and economic independence, the rulers would, in effect, be taking the wind off the enemies' economic sails.

But leaders of this genre could also impoverish political enemies or opposition forces by denying them the "wheels of development" i.e. a vibrant and viable infrastructural system. Dilapidated roads, for instance, would increase the cost of doing business hence pricing opposition zones out of the market.

The instrument of political co-habitation

In addition, shadow state rulers may be forced by political exigencies to pull fresh rabbits out of their hats of control freakery. Here, they would brandish the *instrument of political cohabitation*. The move would entail the institutionalization of political alliances or co-operation with other parties in a bid to outwit and outdo supposedly rabid opposition forces. Often, this instrument is used in conjunction with the weapon of political putrefaction.

The instrument of economic deprivation

Yet another tool of control in the kit of shadow state rulers is the *instrument of economic deprivation*. Through budgetary and fiscal means, the regimes would deliberately starve certain branches of the economy with funds and other vital resources and services in a bid to coerce recalcitrant forces into submission. This act of brinkmanship is designed to forge an unbearable atmosphere of utter desperation. A leader's expectation here is that the uncooperative or hostile forces would be so badly traumatized that they would 'choose' to go along with him at the helm rather than risk absolute deprivation. In other words, if opposition manoeuvres to seek his ouster would impel him to take the economy to the cleaners, then they would rather acquiesce to his horrible steersmanship and still have something to eat.

The instrument of chaotic destabilization

Two more weapons will be considered here, namely, *the instrument of chaotic destabilization*, on the one hand, and the *instrument of organized anarchy*, on the other. With respect to the former, shadow state rulers would not hesitate to provoke a process of internal displacement of people if this would achieve their goal of survival or political

continuity. It is a weapon invariably employed during election years. A ruler's machine could start an insidious rumour that could engender alarm and panic among the targeted inhabitants in particular villages. Or, agents would stage a well-organized, politically-motivated raid in some opposition heartlands that would send people packing. The idea is to give opposition voters, real and imagined, the willies. The fear-stricken residents would flee in terror thereby dimming the electoral prospects of opposition parties.

Incumbent leaders in Zimbabwe and Zanzibar confirmed their unenviable credentials as control freaks in the periods preceding and during the elections. President Robert Mugabe and his rigging machine have been accused of seriously undermining the campaigning efforts of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) under Morgan Tsvengera. Not only were MDC political rallies disrupted and the right of assembly denied by state police, but they were also refused a fair share of air time in state-controlled media. In Zanzibar, control freakery was horribly demonstrated when the outgoing president Salim Amour of the Chama Cha Mapenduzi (CCM) resorted to unorthodox tactics to emasculate Sharif Hamad's party bid to assume constitutional power. His Civic United Front (CUF) supporters and campaigners experienced what to many appeared to be state-sponsored terrorism. So sustained were the violent onslaughts and the evident cases of unrelenting police brutality that the independent commonwealth election observers condemned the state-administered exercise as a "colossal contempt for democracy". According to independent newspaper reports, many polling stations in opposition strongholds remained closed during the expected balloting period. In several cases, the stations, which opened very late, suffered massive irregularities such as unavailability of balloting papers and/or truancy of election clerks and reporting officers. Moreover, they were reports that ballot

boxes with cast votes had been grabbed out of the counting halls by police when the counting was unmistakably giving the opposition candidates a prospective victory or leading edge. Such acts of election thuggery occurred in the presence of international election observers. Registered opposition agents were refused to accompany the police transporters, raising suspicious that ballot boxes were tampered with to rig the elections in favour of CCM.

In the run-up to the elections, opposition rallies were marred by police sponsored violence and disruptions.⁵ The state-owned media apparently treated the CUF as a pariah organization; it hardly received fair airtime during the preparatory period. And all along, the Zanzibar Electoral Commission chaired by Abdulrahman Mwinyi Jumbe responded like a barking but not a biting bulldog. By all accounts, it was a politically neutered outfit. In all candour, it is inconceivable that such grotesque levels of electoral terrorism and political thuggery could ever have occurred without the direct connivance of or behind-the-scenes orchestration by, the incumbent regime. Yet, political gangsterism was not a new dynamic in the political affairs of Zanzibar. In 1995, the Commonwealth Observers had concluded that the incumbent CCM government monstrously rigged the first multiparty elections in the semi-autonomous archipelago. The leaders have demonstrated that inspite of *de jure* multipartyism, they have not been able to stomach political liberalization

In February, 2001, Zanzibar's Chief Minister, Mr. Nahodha, was interviewed by the BBC's Swahili service about the islands' refugees in Mombasa escaping state-sponsored persecution in the aftermath of the general elections. He responded by saying that people have been in the habit of moving to new areas since the time of Prophet Muhammad, so the wave of refugees heading towards the coastal town of Mombasa in Kenya was not

something new and, therefore, no big deal. True to form, he seemed to have his history, politics, and psychology all mixed up. Prophet Muhammad, a resident of Mecca, was forced to seek refuge in Medina following religious persecution as much as the Zanzibari residents sought refuge in Kenya following state-sponsored political persecution in the archipelago. But while Mr. Nahodha's tone in the BBC interview gave the impression that re-locations were ordinary events, the truth is that forcible displacements have never been. If Prophet Muhammad's flight to Medina was Mr. Nahodha's point of reference, then he failed to appreciate that the affected parties did not like it one bit. In fact, the persecution-provoked crisis was so significant, and decisively so, that it marked the beginning of a new era in Islamic history. The refugee event was epoch-making in temporal terms; it marked the birth of the Muslim calendar. For all practical purposes, Mr. Nahodha was attempting to trivialize a refugee crisis, but his referential benchmark did just the opposite. In political and historical terms, his responses displayed jaw-dropping naivette at the very least. In Zanzibar as elsewhere in Africa where shadow states or quasi-democracies are in place, the phenomenon of control freakery is a pathological condition.

But this instrument need not necessarily be applied during electoral years. If the aim is to pauperise political enemies, it would be directed against tourism-related opposition investments. The threat of violence in such strongholds would be enough to scare the tourists. This would deny opposition leaders requisite income and, therefore, the means to strengthen and operate the opposition's political machinery.

The instrument of organized anarchy

Finally, a word about the *instrument of organized anarchy* in the control antics of shadow state rulers. For all practical purposes, it would serve the interests of such leaders if

institutions and investments owned and managed by opposition forces in opposition strongholds could get engulfed in interminable turmoil, internecine strife, and deeply degrading shouting matches. Therefore, through remote control networks, shadow state rulers would adroitly manipulate situations so that a cantankerous climate of conflict and friction develops. By fomenting trouble and organizing anarchy, a leader is able to drain the energies of opposition forces through a war of self-attrition and endogenous self-degeneration. For example, farmers would find themselves pitted against company directors; shareholders and managers would be locked in unending legal wrangles; or farmer representatives would be split right down the middle as they trade insults, accuse each other of asset stripping, and engage in confrontational politics. Such drama works in favour of shadow state leaders. The latter would craftily maintain studious aloofness, or occasionally throw a statement or two to register their own concern and even "empathize" with those at the receiving end. Yet, few would doubt that he is the evil genius behind the chorus and cacophony of internecine conduct of the warring parties in opposition strongholds.

The truth is that they don't feel safe out of power. Can they trust those who will succeed them? Would stepping aside not be tantamount to playing Russian roulette? Would they not be risking their very lives by not being in control? Only control freaks could ensure their own safety by going on, and on, and on, but even this is not a guarantee. Obviously, moral decay in many African states seems to be largely confined to the urban areas. Yet, it is indubitably true that, by and large, human actions are rooted in self-preservation.

These, then, are some of the major instruments control freaks employ in state management.

The 'Moral Hazard' problem in Africa

Elections in Africa have been a tortuous affair. The biggest stumbling block to free and fair democratic elections has been state-sponsored political terrorism mostly orchestrated by ethnically partisan incumbent administrations under the guise of maintaining law and order. Are democratic arrangements better suited to addressing the bogey of ethnic dominance in societies that are so sharply sensitive to ethnic partisanship? Could democracy be trusted to have in-built solutions to achieve ethnic equity, or is there a real danger that ethnically preponderant communities would craftily use democratic symbols to realize exclusive, partisan advantages? And could an initial advantage be exploited by those in power to consolidate and perpetuate ethnic dominance?

The potentially disruptive political struggles in the Zanzibar archipelago in the year 2000 have largely been a reflection of deep ethno-racial tensions between the so-called indigenous 'black' inhabitants and the 'lighter' complexioned citizens of Arab lineage. In all fairness, the racial categorizations are not so neat; the archipelago has experienced significant racial miscegenation. There is, therefore, a sizeable segment of the racially mixed with blood relations and bonds strewn across the ethno-racial divide. However, the broad racial battle lines that defined the convulsive conflagration of the 1964 Zanzibar revolution have continued to condition the configuration of political 'accommodation', certainly of tenuous existence, between the groups. The so-called indigenes have dominated the political and economic life of the island nation almost to the virtual exclusion of racially

mixed inhabitants of Arab lineage. The politics of exclusion seem to be played out along ethno-racial identities. No wonder the latter groups feel aggrieved and disenfranchised.

The CCM cabinet of the former president, Dr. Salmin Amour, reflected this discriminatory dichotomy, but so had the cabinets of all CCM governments since the revolution. Besides, this bigotry is said to have prevailed in all state institutions-the Electoral Commission, the army, judiciary, police, civil service, etc.

What transpired in Zanzibar before and during the elections was tragic to say the least. The political barbarism that left most sane observers flabbergasted called for some robust response from regional and international communities. If the international community fails to punitively penalise the savage gangsterism that tipped the election stakes decisively in favour of the party in power, then we expect many leaders of shadow states in Africa to pick their cue and embrace this yoboo culture as well. Here, we have to deal with the moral hazard problem in Africa. Many had thought that President Benjamin Mkapa's visit to Zanzibar would have underscored the necessity of civility and peaceful adversarial intercourse. Years of diplomatic service enjoyed by Mkapa potentially aroused, if not dictated, this expectation. However, when Mkapa endorsed the gross outcome of the Zanzibari election against the very reasoned judgement of international observers, he raised serious eyebrows. It was as though the calls to have the elections repeated amounted to whistling in the wind. Apparently, the years of diplomatic service, of just conduct within the canons of decency and civil etiquette, did not refine Mkapa's orientation in terms of substance. By failing to uphold moral values and universal principles of democratic accountability and justice (which international observers had sought for and expected), Mkapa had, at least in body language if not in his taciturnity, subscribed to the crudity of

political barbarism, something that his many years of diplomatic service should have led him to express avert repugnance against. It seems that the exquisite grinning exterior has tended to mask a raw Machiavellian streak of crass political calculation.

It appears that the formula used by incumbents of shadow states or quasi-democracies to retain power is this:

"Oppress the opposition using every means necessary--disrupt their assemblies, deny them licenses to congregate, cancel their permits at the last minute; beat up the opposition, use the police or plain clothes' saboteurs to physically assault several opposition supporters, if possible kill a few; frustrate opposition programs, take the wind out of their sails, never allow them breathing space to organize, and criminalize most of their activities.

When polling day draws near, intensify political gangsterism. And on polling day, use legitimate instruments of coercion to terrorise opposition figures, supporters, and strongholds. Engender a sense of insecurity and fear to drive away real and potential opposition voters. Make sure that polling stations in opposition areas are not opened in time, or not at all. Of course, open a few, but delay the delivery of ballot boxes and papers. Create confusion and despondency by delivering mixed up ballots that serve no useful purpose; Never deliver the right ones. However, have some genuine ballot papers, but limit their supply to inconsequentially low levels. And when the official closing time is due, tell all those in queues to go home. Harass the opposition agents, and use unorthodox methods to transfer votes-containing boxes to particular state offices (e.g. police stations, or district commissioners protected backyards, etc.). Here, stuff the voter boxes with pre-filled ballot papers favouring the ruling party's candidates. Never take chances; pull all the stops to

ensure decisive victory. In such a rigged (pre-and post-) election environment, pay no attention to heaves of exasperation and cries of foul play from the opposition. Let them fume and breathe brimstone and fire. Let them draw the attention of donors and the international community. When commonwealth observers and members of the diplomatic coup begin making unpalatable noises, pretend to be doing something serious to correct some irregularities, particularly those that will not compromise your goal. Your goal is to win by any means necessary.

Take keen interest in the counting of votes. Wherever possible, arrange with the officers of the local administration (the District Commissioner (the Returning Officer), the Police, etc.) to make sure that the ballot papers are counted at a different place from the polling station. This creates opportunities, during transportation, for introducing contraband boxes stuffed with pre-filled ballot papers supporting the candidate of the incumbent party. It also allows for replacing those ballot boxes suspected of heavily favouring the opposition candidate with the pre-stuffed ones. In the counting hall, do not concede defeat even if it is obvious that you have lost. Make sure that the Returning officer does not announce the adverse results. Buy time. Do this by insisting on votes re-count. You know that the results will not be any different, but go on repeating the process for days on end. Such delays have a tactical value and a strategic benefit. As days go by, an opportunity will arise to turn the tables artificially. At some point, the opposition, being so sure of their victory, will lose their guard. Here, you act swiftly and decisively. You and the Returning Officer, having conspired and hatched this plot before hand, would now reverse the vote counts in a reciprocal fashion. Or you would agree to artificially add new digits as "appropriate" to the respective election totals so that the genuine loser wins and the genuine winner loses. If all

else fail, then look for excuses to provoke a pandemonium in the counting hall. As blows are exchanged and wrestling matches ensue, ask the Returning Officer to call the police. Their role is not to calm the atmosphere or engender a climate of civility. Rather, their aim, according to well-drilled instructions, would be to aggravate the situation by targeting their clubs and batons on the opposition forces. This will send them out of the hall helter skelter. Once the hall is opposition-free, proceed with the plan to alter the results in your favour. The Returning Officer should then announce the contrived results, and proceed to have the counting hall cleared at once.

In short, the formula for winning against all odds is this: *never, never* concede defeat. As a candidate of the incumbent party, the potential for manipulating the ultimate result are finite but real. In the final analysis, it is a battle of nerves. Have the nerve to conduct a war of attrition.

With all these stumbling blocks and sins of omission and commission, opposition party (or parties) will most likely throw its hands in the air in frustration. It will urge its supporters to boycott the elections *en masse*. At this stage, you would have got them where you want. They will have played into your hands. Don't be perturbed; go ahead with the elections as planned. With the opposition out of the way, the ruling party will be assured of victory.

Ignore the calls of a repeat of the elections. Proceed with counting the votes; of course, this is a formality. Declare the ruling party winner, and swear in the new (or old) head of state in a stage-managed official ceremony. Make sure to have the media publicise the event far and wide.

Finally, inaugurate the new government, and proceed to run the country as though you have earned a fresh and an overwhelming mandate. From now on, it should be *business-as-usual*."

This, in short, is the general format shadow states or quasi-democracies employ in retaining power and ensuring perpetual political continuity. Yes, donors will issue threats to withhold aid and some will even put their money where their mouths are. But these will simply amount to spitting in the wind. Because soon thereafter, especially after the dust has settled, several donors (who had hitherto expressed grave reservations about the rigged elections and even threatened sanctions) would begin doing business with the new government in power. The OAU's initial protests would give way to deafening silence. Soon, it would be business-as-usual.⁶

Now, governments in SSA are conscious of these tendencies. They recognise that all the fuming and threatening language will die down. While they have discovered that international protests and threats will always be forthcoming, they have also realized that the world soon reverts to a business-as-usual mode despite massive scales of disenfranchisement witnessed before and during elections. As such, the protests are like water off a duck's back.

Evidently, the display of such a petering response has posed one of the greatest dangers to democracy in Africa. In the final analysis, it amounts, in real terms, to effectively condoning political barbarism and disenfranchisement across the region.

Indeed, the failure to devise, and in the process, implement robust mechanisms to forestall unconstitutional tendencies of disenfranchisement has entrenched the *moral hazard* problem in very ominous ways. Such apparent toleration is likely to induce adverse

copycat behaviour in many Sub-Saharan African countries. And when ambassadors of some powerful western countries flagrantly support rigged leaders, they only reinforce the perpetuation of the moral hazard problem in Africa.⁷ The callous statements made by the American Ambassador to Tanzania seems to aid and abet this phenomenon.

Predatory leaders in a multi-party Africa have either amended their national constitutions or expressed their wish to do so to increase their presidential terms from two to three. If leadership is about public service, one wonders how a leader who has presided over degeneration, increased misery, and further impoverishment of the vast majority in two terms could ever succeed in turning things around by adding a third one. By all accounts, leaders of this genre are largely driven by the instinct of self-preservation and do not care what irreparable harm they inflict on many innocent lives.

In recent times, some of the most dramatic scenes of control freakery appear to have been played out in Guinea and Zimbabwe respectively. In the west African country, President Lansana Conte devised political manouvres designed to perpetuate his hold on power. On 11th November, 2001, Guineans were treated to a referendum scripted by Conte which called for the deletion of the constitutional clause barring him from seeking a third term in office. Many observers expressed doubts over the 98.36% “yes vote” to amend the constitution and increase the office mandate from 5 to 7 years. Moreover the “affirmative” approval would allow Conte, now aged 67, to run for as many terms as he wished (the mandates were open-ended) since the presidential age limit of 70 would no longer apply under an amended constitution.

No country in Africa has ever registered an 87% voter turnout for an election. The constraints to achieving such a spectacular level of voter registration – poor infrastructure,

inaccessible ballot centres, inadequate administrative and technical capacity, illiteracy, limited organizational and mobilizational abilities, etc. -- would militate against such a monumental electoral response. Moreover, the apparently immiscible ethnic divisions that characterize Guinea's socio-political landscape could hardly be germane to engender a 98% affirmative vote. As such, the published statistics are too good to be true. Only government organs and electoral commissions *controlled* and susceptible to manipulation by the powers that be are capable of prosecuting such incredible programs in statistical engineering. Conte captured power in 1984 following a military coup he masterminded, but Guinea has failed to prosper under his leadership. Over the years, his regime has not only experienced vicious political excesses but has also suffered from ruinous forms of economic mismanagement. His ardour to remain in control for ages on end is therefore not surprising; he could be fearful of the dreadful prospects of poetic justice that could be meted out by patriotic managers of a new political order. Old sins cast long shadows.

As pointed out earlier, the capacity of African leaders to close ranks can be legendary. But over the years, such thrusts have displayed a paradoxical quality. During the anti-colonial struggles, African leaders supported each other (morally, politically, militarily and economically) in a cause that was deemed both sacred and noble. The quest for freedom was a cementing factor; they all joined forces to liberate their countries from colonial bondage.

In the mid-1970s, many African states circled the continental wagon in support of an Egypt-inspired, Arab-sponsored OAU resolution to boycott Israel and break diplomatic relations with it.⁸ This was seen as a lofty gesture rooted in the principles of justice and international law.

However, there have been occasions when African leaders closed rank in support of one of their own, not because they were approving the revolting excesses of an erring leader, but because of the bare-faced hypocrisy of powerful external bullies (attempting to rein in African governments they loathe). The bellicose kerfuffle, if not the high-octane acrimony, between the mainly white western countries and the predominantly black Zimbabwean regime is worthy of note here. If anything, the near-incendiary exchanges demonstrated that there was no love lost between the opposing protagonists. But what really precipitated the descent in relations?

It had been common knowledge throughout Africa that President Mugabe and his domestic allies were perpetrating grave human right abuses against members of the opposition camp. But let us put this problem in context. Why did Mugabe's regime turned violent again as the 20th century drew to a close? It is not often appreciated that Mugabe was caught between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea. This, of course, should not absolve him from the misdeeds he committed against so many innocent civilians in Zimbabwe. By 1995, pressure exerted on Mugabe by the war veterans had reached a crescendo. Their demands had become pretty unbearable. They asked the Government to pay them a monthly income for the years they had spent in the bush fighting Ian Smith. They had formed their own association that was becoming exceedingly more powerful with every passing day. The land re-distribution had not taken place after years of empty promises. The British Government was not keen to fulfill its side of the bargain. Mugabe feared that if the aggrieved war veterans decided to solve their grievances violently, as they had threatened to do, he would be the most immediate casualty. But perhaps Mugabe would have managed to assuage this threat if Zimbabwe's Labour movement, later transformed

into a political party, had not appeared on the scene. Led by Morgan Tsvengera, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was growing menacingly, a fact Mugabe would have ignored to his own political peril. In any case, Mugabe was deeply angered by intelligence reports suggesting that White farmers, through their powerful association, were funding MDC. What was he to do faced with such a dual threat? He decided to join forces with the Devil he knew best i.e. the war veterans. Many frightened analysts in Zimbabwe argue that Mugabe did not like this marriage of political convenience one bit.

The violent invasions of white farms by pro-ZANU-PF war veterans ostensibly drew much adverse publicity. Violations of democratic processes and infringements of individual liberties were almost routine during the run-up to the presidential elections held in March 2002. Moreover, the apparently strategic reductions in the number of polling stations in what appeared to be opposition strongholds provoked accusations of foul play. These excesses gave Mugabe's international detractors considerable ammunition to demonize him, to declare the electoral process and the entire electioneering phase as rigged, and to denounce the polls as neither free nor fair.

The view across Africa was that the west was profoundly exasperated by Mugabe's treatment of Zimbabwe's white minority in connection with the extremely volatile and sensitive land question. It was perceived that it was this racial factor (embedded in the land conflict), and not the democratic abuses, that prompted the western governments to pick up the cudgels against his regime. So spirited, overwhelming, and focussed was the west's campaign of vilification that, to a novice, the whole drama could easily have been turned into a grand lesson in democratic verbiage. To the politically inquisitive, the speeches, newspaper articles, and television debates in western circles were perhaps a welcome

exposure to the vertiginous but deeply stirring vocabulary of the democratic repertoire. By all indications, the presentations had all the hallmarks of meretriciously packaged distance learning programs.

Yet, this verbal and literary onslaught on Mugabe left a very strange taste in the mouth. Many people across the length and breadth of Sub-Saharan Africa wondered: if the western governments were so pathologically obsessed with democratic traditions which they say they valued very deeply, then where were they when horrendous pre-election political excesses were being committed in Zanzibar, New Guinea, and a score of other African countries? From the unflattering reaction of African leaders attending the Commonwealth Conference in Brisbane, Australia, in February 2002, it was plain that the black delegates had seen right through the thick fat, if not the dense cellulite, of western hypocrisy.

At Brisbane, the numerical might of African representatives was pitted against the racially distinct battalion of John Howard (Australian Prime Minister), Tony Blair (the British Prime Minister), and Jean Chretienne (Canadian Prime Minister). Their proposal to secure Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth was not one that fell on deaf ears; rather, it was more a case of a message not taken seriously. And the underlying reason for this pooh-pooh body language was not that Africa was approving Mugabe's excessive perturbations, but because the west, in pursuing democratic advocacy, has been selectively partisan to the core. Given its track record, the African leaders felt that the west's self-righteous indignation against Zimbabwe amounted to a farrago of sanctimonious nonsense. It is this behavioral chalantry in the west's international relations that have fanned the amber of moral hazardry in Africa.

Analysts, for instance, have been dismayed by the west's appalling inconsistency in the assertive application of democratic principles between Nigeria and Algeria following multi-party elections in the early 1990s. When the Islamic Party FIS was poised to win the polls in Algeria, the army intervened at the eleventh hour to deny it certain victory. The electoral event was cancelled on the eve of this triumphant prospect. The west, which over the years has incessantly reminded us about how valued democracy is to them, were conspicuous by their deafening silence. More crucially, because the democratic process was subverted by a *military takeover*, the west's reaction in terms of aggressive diplomatic onslaughts was expected to be all the more caustic. In other words, the west's prosaic tradition of exhibiting uncompromising hostility towards military intervention was expected to view the Algerian crudity with utmost gravity. Accordingly, the torrents of bellicose condemnation were anticipated to flow in full measure and unedited. This, however, did not come to pass. What the world heard were inconsequential, one-line statements that smacked off tokenism.

But the west's reaction towards the military government in Nigeria following Sani Abacha's the dramatic cancellation of the multiparty elections in 1993 was swift, loaded, and overwhelming. To purists of the democratic faith, the verbal castigation did not disappoint. Sani Abacha was accused of subverting democratic processes, among other things, and condemned for robbing the presidential rival, Mr. Mashoud Abiola, of certain victory. To an objective analyst, the abysmal variation in the sharply contrasting reactions was a puzzle of profound intellectual disorientation. Why the double standards in the expression and articulation of democratic advocacy?

Apparently, the issue at stake was not democracy as such, but *Islam*. The prospect of an Islamic government managing a strategic resource at the helm of national affairs in oil-rich Algeria was too dreadful to contemplate. One did not have to stretch the imagination too far to discover that the west was concerned by the ideological and geopolitical ramifications of an Iran-like regime establishing itself on the southern shores of the Mediterranean. Therefore, foisting the democratic banner is only convenient when propitious circumstances permit; that it enjoys universal validity is more a sentiment honored in mythology than in reality. Such exhibitions of duplicity have tended to reduce democratic advocacy to the level of political detritus.

In the case of Nigeria, the prospective ascension to power by a highly westernized, liberal Muslim was not a worrying state of affairs to the U.S. On the contrary, given the phenomenon of ethno-religious assertiveness in Nigeria's power politics, the decisive ethno-geographical shift in the locus of power away from the traditional quarters would have been seen as a distinct political improvement in Washington. Of course, in the west's calculus of political management and control, a non-Muslim of docile temperament would be preferred to those that depict the remotest signs of potential radicalism. In the main, complete buffoons with some skill in general political management would make good candidates especially if their natures combine the characteristics of gullibility and dirigibility in their spectra of political and economic dispositions. For all practical purposes, Abiola's candidatural qualities i.e. his educational orientation, depth of cultural westernization; liberal religious socialization, etc. were sufficiently endearing to cause any jitters in the west. In any case, what was reassuring to western capitals was that he did not emerge from the conservative bastions of Nigeria's Islamic civilization.

In short, the impression fostered by the west that it is an incorrigible democracy-loving socio-political and economic order seems to have more holes than Swiss cheese. The democratic banner often applied discriminately and strategically to achieve defined objectives, has been a rhetorical device carrying a specific instrumental value. You can bet your life supporting the presumption that concepts of democracy will not be invoked by the west in situations where its ideological applecart risks being upset. The Cold War period affords too many examples in this regard, but numerous cases can also be drawn from contemporary times.

Consummate political operators such as Madagascar's incumbent president, Didier Ratsiraka, would be laughing all the way to any election result knowing how expedient the hypocrisy and inconsistency of the west lends itself to fraudulent exploitation that would enable control freaks like him to reap illicit electoral dividends. For instance, the international community blatantly betrayed the Madagascans in general and undermined the democratic values in particular when it failed to demand that Ratsiraka adhere to this basic democratic imperatives of transparency and accountability during elections. His refusal to accept public scrutiny of the original voting records of the 16th December 2001 polls flew in the face of the position espoused by the west. The same community has vehemently proclaimed the significance of these inviolable principles in other electoral processes (e.g. Mugabe's Zimbabwe and Abacha's Nigeria). Yet, these sublime democratic requirements were subverted peremptorily when Ratsiraka, who has ruled Madagascar since 1975, refused to allow European election observers into the country to monitor and assess the conduct of the elections. There was a deafening international outcry when Zimbabwe refused to allow

election monitors from some EC countries, but virtually no protests when Ratsiraka's government refused entry of international observers.

Moreover, the powerful donor countries never reacted with punitive threats nor expressed the desire to read the Riot Act even when Ratsiraka's government was believed to have been behind the deliberate and pre-meditated vandalism of public infrastructure i.e. strategic bridges, the aim being to starve, paralyze, and debilitate Marc Ravalomanana's supporters to ruinous submission. Ratsiraka's genocidal siege of Anatananarive (where Ravalomanana's supporters had converged *en masse*) was a clear demonstration of the criminal lengths to which the consummate Machiavellian would go to remain in power. Where was the democracy-loving international community when the Machiavellian acts of genocidal skullduggery were being meted out to the anti-Ratsiraka's forces?

Ravalomanana, the opposition leader widely perceived to have won the general elections, had every reason to doubt the government-proclaimed results which gave him a score of 46.2% against Ratsiraka's 40.8%. Mr. Ratsiraka refusal to subject the voting records to public scrutiny as demanded by Mr. Ravalomanana and which the west had originally endorsed tends to validate the opposition's suspicion that where there is a pungent electoral smoke, there must be a fraudulent election fire. For, if Ratsiraka had been so sure of the veracity of the announced results, why turn down calls for public scrutiny – at least to dispel doubts about his democratic credentials by subscribing to the imperatives of transparency and accountability? True to form, the west displayed double standards in its agenda of democratic advocacy, a sure recipe for institutionalizing the moral hazard problem in Africa.

It is in this *context of relativity* that the hypocrisy of the western governments needs to be seen. Because they lack consistency in the operationalization of democratic advocacy, they send mixed and confused signals across time and space. As such, those African regimes that have been projected as the “darlings” of the west tend to draw fateful lessons of parochial political expediency from the west’s hypocritical experience. And when their regimes or leaders are allowed to get away with murder, then the potential prospect for illicit copycat behaviour is heightened. The idea of selecting and choosing whom to censure when governments commit transgressive aberrations across the spectrum never escapes the notice of consummate political functionaries. It is the institutionalization of this hypocritical tendency in the management of international affairs by the so-called inveterate democracy-loving west that has stoked the fires of moral hazardry in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Experiences from the African landscape show that, by and large, African political leaders have been extremely adept at doing bad things but remarkably pathetic in undertaking, prosecuting, and managing good programs and projects. The efficiency with which politicians have engaged in destructive plots, machinations, intrigue, skullduggery, and the like against political opponents or groups they despise has been legendary. Besides, most leaders have summoned their strength and employed diabolical skills in embezzling public funds, in ripping off and destroying potentially productive state institutions, and in taking their economies to the cleaners.

However, when it comes to matters of significance to the masses they are supposed to serve, the same level of passion, versatility, efficiency, energy, commitment, drive, and zealotry (typically displayed, pronounced and manifested when prosecuting depraved

operations and wicked schemes) seem to be non-existent or in extremely short supply. This partly explains the depth of malaise in contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Southern African state of Zimbabwe, President Robert Mugabe had established himself as an inveterate practitioner of control freakery following his government's move to pass draconian new laws designed to reinforce his Machiavellian power grip on the country. Shattered by the MDC's phenomenal results during the general elections in April, 2001, Mugabe's jarring response took the form of introducing several pieces of legislation ahead of the presidential elections in March, 2002. *The General Laws Amendment Act* banned foreign journalists and independent monitors from covering and observing the polls respectively, while the *Public Order and Security Bill* criminalized any criticism of President Mugabe. Before the former became law, it suffered a decisive defeat when first tabled in parliament, but contrary to constitutional provisions and parliamentary standing orders that forbids re-introducing a bill twice during the same session of parliament, Mugabe's parliamentary and battering brigade went ahead and did just that. Furthermore, to complement the highly controversial control measures, Mugabe's government passed the *Access to Information and Protection Bill* that restricted media freedom and operations. The new legislation imposed registration requirements for private media firms, and required journalists to obtain licenses and seek special ministerial permission to work in Zimbabwe or acquire renewable accreditation for local journalists representing foreign news organizations. Violators of these controls were subject to stiff penalties such as prohibitive fines and long prison terms. The Media and Information Commission, a state body that ruled on any contravention of the "professional and ethical standards" administered the Media Law.

Reactions to Zimbabwe's draconian manouvres came thick and fast. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit held in Blantyre, Malawi on 14th January, 2002, urged Mugabe to rescind the harsh laws⁹. The European Union threatened economic sanctions, while Britain lobbied for Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth¹⁰. The U.S.-based international *Committee to Protect Journalists* accused Mugabe of subverting parliamentary procedure¹¹. The U.S. House of Representatives endorsed a sanctions-supporting measure designed to exert pressure on Zimbabwe to abandon a whole raft of human rights abuses, namely, infringement of rights to assembly and association, media muzzling, restrictions on Trade Union activity, and pre-polling election rigging¹². While the Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu called for international sanctions against Mugabe¹³, the human rights body, *Amnesty International*, condemned Mugabe and urged the international community to take tougher measures against his government¹⁴. And the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, added her authoritative voice in criticizing the Zimbabwean leader¹⁵.

By whatever measure, the international community was certainly justified in taking great exception to Mugabe's horrendous excesses, but it is the manner in which the west reacted to these events in the two different African countries that raises the moral hazard problem in Africa. Both Guinea and Zimbabwe have not only deviated from the norms of expected democratic behavior, but have also grossly violated fundamental human and constitutional rights. Both Conte and Mugabe have abused their systems and those they (mis) govern. Both need to be condemned for their political and economic excesses. Indeed, the levers of international pressure and censure need to be applied uniformly when constitutional freedoms and human rights are under threat.

Yet, the powerful western countries and institutions have lacked consistency when invoking the principles of democracy and standards of accountability. Some despotic and disenfranchising governments, such as Zanzibar and Algeria, would get away with murder even when evidence of rigging and electoral fraud are unmistakable. Algeria was given a “thumbs up” by the western world when the military intervened in 1993 to deny FIS election victory. But when Abacha did the same thing against Masoud Abiola in the 1993 Nigerian elections, the same western powers came down on the West African dictator like a ton of bricks. Similarly, while Conte’s political excesses were treated like the offence of a motorist parking on a double yellow line, Mugabe’s antics of control freakery were relentlessly and viciously demonized as criminal abuses. Keen observers see this Janus-faced approach to democratic violations as an illustration of a Jekyll and Hyde diplomacy in international relations.

The persistence of such double standards and duplicity has not only raised questions about the moral authority of western countries in the invocation of such universal principles, but has also been seen as a recipe for moral hazardousness in political behaviour in Africa and elsewhere. Hypocrisy is a serious manifestation of corrupt diplomacy.

When Chiluba expressed his desire to change the Zambian national constitution to run for a third term, opposition to the idea began to grow in intensity. The Church was not amused. In the process, the connection between Christianity and political leadership was raised. Chiluba had declared publicly in the early 1990s that Zambia was a Christian country. Moreover, whenever a publicity opportunity arose, he never failed to parade himself as a devout Christian. Many Zambians ardently believe that Chiluba has needlessly exploited his lifetime connections with the creed as a political convenience. They cite

chapter and verse of how he has preached water and drank wine, failed to uphold the constitution on several occasions, and shielded and protected friends and political allies (accused of very serious crimes) from facing the full wrath of the law. If Christianity, as I know it, is against crime including the protection of law-breakers, where does Chiluba's Christian devoutness lie? The idea of attending Church on Sunday and then, once outside, behaving as though God does not exist, is certainly illustrative of a Janus-type personality. When a leader appears to be a Brutus and a Judas all rolled in one, then the word devoutness would seem to have a meaning different from the authentic one intended. Church attendance is not a measure of devoutness if you socialize with the Devil or apply his methods at your place of work or anywhere else. It is perhaps sensible to beware of leaders who say "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's".

But this double-faced orientation is not an uncommon feature among leaders in Africa. Charles Taylor of Liberia seems to know the Bible inside out; he also claims to be a practising Christian. When he was building his house in Monrovia, he told a reporter that his rooms would be sounding Christian music. But could a leader be viewed as a devout member of the Christian faith if his politics have been associated with plunder, destruction, and human rights violations? As a matter of fact, how religiously devout can one be if one attends service regularly but practices tribalism at work, in dishing out consultancies, in job recruitment, in awarding scholarships, in offering promotions, etc.?

In general, could dictators, tyrants, and despots be regarded as authentically devout in the moral and religious sense? Evidently, most leaders in Africa, Muslim and Christian, have exploited religion as an instrument of political convenience.

This tendency has at times been emphasized more by the body language of leaders rather than through official statements. Religion has often been exploited to serve corrupt political ends even though secularism has been waved publicly as an operative constitutional card. The distinguished political scientist, Professor Ali Mazrui, observed the display of this dichotomous hypocrisy in Kenya in the following way:

"In Kenya, the Christian fraternity in power appointed fellow Christians to ministerial positions for 30 years almost exclusively--and basically ignored the 40% of the population (indigenous and/or Muslim) which was not Christianized. The Constitution envisaged the country as a secular state--but the Head of State emphasized Christian credentials. Once again, Church and State were supposed to be institutionally separated, but religion and politics were intricately intertwined."¹⁶

This remains to be the case to this very day.

Conclusion

Africa has been told time and again to respect human rights and institutionalise appropriate regimes of democratic governance. Western governments, led invariably by the United States, have been the most ardent advocates of this evangelism. Yet, quasi-democratic systems in Africa have witnessed a wide spectrum of mixed signals coming from the so-called citadels of democracy. Some of the worst dictatorships such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, etc. have been America's best friends. Algeria military is not condemned for undermining democratic changes through the ballot, but Abacha's Nigeria is vilified for suspending the electoral process. But despite all these double standards, the

west has the moral audacity to tell the world that they is a difference between white and black. Moral hazardry in Africa is certainly fuelled by the west's barefaced charlatanry. In the end, the west is its own worst enemy.

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NOTES

¹ In a politically surprising announcement (November, 2000), Chiluba was to drop his disenfranchising charge against Kaunda. Kaunda responded by saying that Chiluba did not have a case all along and that his act was a demonstration of his political cowardice.

² Apparently, it transpired that Guei was holed up in a hideout inside the country contradicting earlier rumours about his unceremonious exit.

³ Gbagbo repeated the stance taken by his predecessors of disenfranchising Ouattara.

⁴ See *The East African* "EU Concerned About Zanzibar", Nation Centre, Nairobi, Kenya, October 16th-22nd, 2000, p.36. The weekly publication notes: "There have been reports of police harassing opposition supporters, disrupting party meetings, conducting unwarranted house searches, in barring meetings of more than two persons in the streets of Zanzibar... The Electoral Commission has also been accused of omitting hundreds of CUF supporters from the voters' roll, in a move to reduce the number of opposition votes".

⁵ Consider, for instance, the announcement made in December, 2000, by the donor community to resume development aid. It was reported that the aid-givers were "...satisfied with the leadership of the newly elected Zanzibar President.." For this stance, see *The East African*, "Donors May Resume Aid to Zanzibar", December 25-31, 2000, p.1, Nairobi, Kenya.

⁶ Note the remarks made by the American Ambassador to Tanzania, Rev, Charles Stith, when he unabashedly endorsed through praise the new CCM government of Zanzibar. See *ibid*, *The East African*, p.28.

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 28.

⁸ The initiative appears to have been triggered by two broad concerns: one, consternation over Israel's illegal occupation of Arab lands seized during wars, and two, the realization that Israel and the then South African Apartheid regime were working hard in glove to assist the latter build nuclear capability. The point was not lost on Africans; to them, the long-standing secretive collaboration between the settler communities was bolstering the Apartheid machine and therefore working against the interests of the liberation movement at large.

⁹ See *Daily Nation* (2002) "SADC in plea to Zimbabwe", January 15th, Nairobi, Kenya, p.12.

¹⁰ See *Daily Nation* (2002) "Zimbabwe passes new laws", January 18th, Nairobi, Kenya, p.12.

¹¹ *ibid*, p.12.

¹² See *Daily Nation* (2001) "US House calls for Zimbabwe sanctions" December 6th, Nairobi, Kenya, p.14.

¹³ See *Sunday Nation* (2002) "Censure Mugabe, says Tutu", January 13th, Nairobi Kenya, p.7.

¹⁴ *op. cit* *Daily Nation* (2002) "SADC in pleas to Zimbabwe", p.12

¹⁵ See *Daily Nation* (2002) "UN criticizes Mugabe" January 17th, Nairobi, Kenya, p.13.

¹⁶ See Mazrui, A. (1994) "Culture, Church, and State" in *Africa Events*, vol. 10, no.2, p.30.