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Contents

West Africa.
A Comparative Study of Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods in Liberia and Ghana

Christian-Radu CHEREJI
Charles WRATTO KING

Abstract. *In this paper, we will share thoughts about the indigenous patterns through which disputes are resolved in West Africa. Emphasis will be placed on the Liberian and Ghanaian traditional structures of conflict resolution. To resolve disputes caused by various issues, the elders of West Africa adopted several approaches in reaching a resolution. In Liberia, we shall explore and discuss the Palava Hut Agreements, the sharing of a Kola Nut, the Doe-Dee's Agreement, Sassy wood, under the palm wine tree deliberations and much more. In Ghana, we shall look at the processes, cultures, actors, mediators, and spiritual dimension of the Akans.*

Keywords: *West Africa, traditional conflict resolution, method, indigenous patterns, dispute, culture, mediator, spiritual dimension, agreement.*

Christian-Radu CHEREJI,
Director,
Conflict Studies Center

Charles WRATTO KING,
Associate researcher,
Conflict Studies Center

Without any doubt, traditional dispute resolution has played and still plays a significant role in the everyday lives of West Africans (Zartmann, 2000; Nkwi-Walters, 2013). In a region where most states' legal systems are based mainly on colonial laws which are highly influenced by individualistic orientation and do not suit the social structures on the ground (West Africa) where they're being implemented, most West Africans seem comfortable with resolving their dispute traditionally. Not only have such methods of resolving disputes been in practice for centuries and known as a sure means of trashing out their differences (in order to live in harmony), or as a connector that breaks barriers and unites people of differ-

ent regional, ethnic or religious backgrounds (and helps them maintain closer relationships with one another), but they have also been used extensively since the proclamation of independence, as the new nation-states of West Africa have failed to satisfy the judiciary needs of their citizens. In addition, states' legal systems in West Africa have largely ignored the restoration and reconciliation of social harmony between conflicting parties and focused mostly on punishing the guilty party. Also, although these legal systems are said to have been established on the principles of justice, equality and fair play, there is, in many cases, some high level corruption, while justice seems to be available for only a few. Furthermore, deep-rooted indigenous values are not being taken into account by the legal systems and this creates an atmosphere of suspicion about the effectiveness of such a system.

Overview

A lot of brutal wars have been fought since the establishment of new nation-states in West Africa. Sadly, many of these wars are civil wars, not wars between independent states. In her paper, *A Cultural Approach to Conflict Transformation*, Ineba Bob-Manuel argues that the struggle for political dominance among the elite who took over from the colonial powers has been a major contributing factor to the constant discord and discontent in Africa (Bob-Manuel, 2000).

In Nigeria, the Igbo broke away shortly after obtaining independence from imperial Britain in an attempt to establish the Republic of Biafra on May 30th, 1967. The result was a bloody civil war, which ended in 1970. Under Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People also agitated for a separate homeland of the Ogoni people. Regretfully for the Ogonis, on November 10th, 1995, Saro-Wiwa and eight others (the Ogoni Nine) were killed by hanging. Later it was the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta.

In Liberia, led by Charles Taylor and Prince Johnson, the Gio and Mano tribes swore to completely wipe out the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups due to the brutality they had experienced from the Doe's regime. The result was 14 years of madness which took away almost 300,000 lives.

In Sierra Leone, the colonial government allowed the most important chiefs, known as Paramount Chiefs, to have considerable power, but competition for the office led to violent among rival ruling families. Tension in rural communities was caused not only by this rivalry between ruling families, but also by the discontent of the rural population as the chiefs abused power and exploited their own people to meet the demands of the British.

Despite the accumulated grievances throughout history, circumstantial factors do not directly trigger violence; there should be active protagonists who take advantage of

these grievances by channeling them into the road to war. In Sierra Leone's case, the main protagonist was the Revolutionary United Front.

The Tuareg in Mali have engaged in non-violent and violent confrontations with the Malian state almost from the time of independence, in search of greater autonomy, but the result has led Mali into constant instability. The Ivory Coast, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, to mention just a few, all have similar stories.

Regardless of their immediate causes, one thing is clear, and this is that many of these wars have their roots in colonialism and foreign influence. That isn't to say that West Africans (in some ways) are not responsible for their present situation. Apart from Liberia (which gained its independence in 1847), the vast majority of West Africa was still governed by Kings, Chiefs and Council of Elders, with each tribe controlling its own affairs. However, the 1884-5 Berlin conference, in which Africa was not allowed to be represented (at least by the then independent nation, Liberia), drew lines to fit the needs of the imperialist powers (Shillington). And by doing so, enemy tribes were fused together while peaceful tribes were divided to form independent states.

The result was that, when colonialism ended, each of the tribes wanted control over the new state and its vast resources. These quests have constantly led to countless acts of violence. Though the Europeans set up democracies before they left, Western democracy has been a total failure on the African continent, in general, and in West Africa in particular, partly because such democracies were designed on a corrupt structure so that the colonialist powers would still indirectly maintain their grips on the region while Africans would share the blame of self-destruction and human sufferings. (Nkrumah, 1965).

In addition, it can be argued that this system of exploitation both from within and outside the continent is equally responsible for such radical jihadist activities by Boko Haram and other terrorist organizations operating within West Africa today, as a report from Africa Centre for Strategic Studies clearly indicates.

Furthermore, the failure of democracy and the unequal distribution of wealth have also given birth to a new phase of war. In the real sense, it is not war as we know it and although they may hide under its umbrella to attract world sympathy, they're not freedom fighters either. So what are they? They are thieves, rapists, gangsters and psychopaths whose methods and ideologies are brutal and inhuman. Their goal is profit making and nothing more. War has become an instrument of business in Africa. Kidnap a few children, give them weapons to unleash terror on civilians living in areas rich in natural resources, and you'll become a millionaire overnight. In the end, you might receive amnesty from the government and walk away free. In his article, "Africa's Forever Wars", Jeffrey Gettleman argues that the simple reason why some of Africa's bloodiest and most brutal wars never seem to end is because combatants in Africa don't have

much of an ideology or clear goals. They care less about taking over capitals or major cities and in fact, they prefer the deep bushes where it is far easier to commit crimes. He further argues that today's rebels seem especially uninterested in winning converts; instead they steal other people's children, stick Kalashnikovs or axes in their hands, and turn them into killers (Gettleman, 2012).

As a former child soldier, a victim and a perpetrator of such unimaginable circumstances, one of the authors of this study considers that Gettleman's perspective on the warring situation in Africa is nothing but the absolute truth, even if he cannot completely agree with his methods of addressing the situation, which could lead to the loss of more innocent lives as warlords use human shields for protection.

Gettleman also notes that a warlord with a desire for a better political and social integration would start his revolution in the capital (where the nation's president and his corrupt leaders reside) and not in little villages where innocent people, who have nothing to do with politics, struggle to make a living. It should be recorded that the civil wars of Liberia, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Sudan, to mention a few, all have started in deep jungles, with little children as young as seven captured and forced to become soldiers. The future of every nation is in the hands of its youth, but in Africa the youth are chosen and trained by warlords to destroy themselves and the infrastructures of their respective nations.

Against this backdrop, one may agree that African warlords are not interested in national unity or development. Unfortunately, most international bodies seem to fall for their lies and cooperate with warlords in order to reach a win-win solution which, in most cases, makes the situation even worse. As mentioned above, since the end of colonialism, Africa, and West Africa in particular (apart from the Republic of Ghana), has experienced and is still experiencing some of the bloodiest wars on the planet, despite its enormous wealth.

The question is: how did West Africans, in pre-colonial period, who built such vast empires and kingdoms (some of which having a considerable degree of sophistication) settle their disputes? It is pretty clear that, in order to set up polities of any significance, a people has to develop effective mechanisms to (peacefully) solve its conflicts, otherwise its efforts would be in vain and the people, weakened and vulnerable, would be at the mercy of its enemies. No doubt, some of these kingdoms (such as the Akan kingdom) were built on violence and slavery, but even if that was the case, what held the people together for that long? Surely a peaceful co-existence could not have been achieved and maintained through violence alone.

According to Bob-Manuel, it is only when potential and actual conflicts in Africa are understood in their social contexts that they can be solved. Values and beliefs, fears and suspicions, interests and needs, attitudes and actions, relationships and networks,

origins and root causes of the conflicts must be taken into deep consideration. She also noted that, since the end of the Cold War, Africa has been torn apart by extremely intense conflicts which have resulted in the deaths of millions, and that the use of Western methods in resolving these conflict has failed. As for reasons for the failure, she points to the erosion of the values that existed within the traditional African societies and the replacement of these values by foreign ones to which Africans are unable to adapt. William I. Zartman also notes that "Africa's reputation in conflict management has historic and even contemporary footnotes".

Clearly, the ancestors of West Africans may have seen conflict as an unwelcome evil which was a part of their everyday lives. Perhaps they may have thought that if they could do little or nothing about drought and other natural disasters, when a dispute appeared and threatened their unity, there was a need to approach it in agreement.

Methods of Indigenous Dispute Resolution in Liberia: An Insider's Perspective.

Let's begin our discussion on Liberia with the trial by ordeal commonly known as Sassywood. By definition, Sassywood is the belief in ancestral spirits by indigenous Liberians and a tribal justice system that has been in practice for generations. In most formal justice proceedings in Liberia, the guilty may escape punishment and innocent persons may be wrongly convicted. However, unlike legal criminal court proceedings, the judgment of Sassywood is in the hands of the spirits of their forefathers and it is usually performed in cases of theft, death or witchcraft.

There are different forms of Sassywood. In some cases, the accused will be given a mixture of bitter indigenous plants to drink. If he/she pukes, this demonstrates that the accused is not guilty. Failure to do so in the case of murder constitutes guilt and the accused will be shamed and ostracized from the town or village. In the case of theft of property:

- The guilty is shamed publicly
- The guilty acknowledges responsibility
- The guilty repents
- The guilty makes restitution and asks for forgiveness
- The guilty pays compensation or is required to do farm or other domestic work, if unable to pay
- The guilty is reconciled with the victim's family and the community at large

One unique characteristic of this form of traditional justice system is that (after performing the required rites) it provides an opportunity for the guilty to reunite with his victim and reintegrate into society. At the All-Africa Conference on African Principles of Conflict

Resolution and Reconciliation held in November 1999 in Addis Ababa, Lanek argued that the Western legal approach emphasizes establishing guilt and executing punishment, without reference to the victim or taking into account future reincorporation of the offender into the community; instead offenders receive physical and material penalties as well as the use of force and costly prisons sanction (Lanek, 1999). The process effectively encourages the accused to deny responsibility while traditional approaches to peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation are co-operative and can be indirect and circumstantial, which effectively encourages the accused to admit responsibility.

However, Sassywood practices in Liberia aren't limited to the drinking of bitter herbs. Another method consists of placing a machete or metal in a fire until it gets red-hot, then bringing it in contact with the accused, usually the person's leg. If the accused withdraws from the heat, he or she is ruled guilty. If innocent, the red-hot machete will not harm the person. In other forms of sassy wood practices, a straw is tied around the neck of the accused, which is followed by an incantation from the native priest (a representative of the spirit world). During this process, if the accused is guilty the straw will choke his or her neck. If the straw does not tighten the accused is deemed not guilty. In cases where the accused is not guilty, the accuser is told to apologize and pay for damages.

Since the creation of the state in the early 1800s, the Liberian government has failed to meet the judicial needs of its people. In a country with a demanding desire for instant traditional justice in resolving disputes, the government of Liberia, under foreign pressure, has added salt to the wound by making Sassywood practices illegal and by vowing to prosecute those caught in the act, as shown in an IRIN report. The government's action regarding Sassywood is not only counterproductive, as the local population strongly believes in it, but also raises lots of questions about the reasons behind the tendency to bury alive such traditional justice systems and conflict resolution methods if they have proven so effective. There is a need to reflect on the following questions:

- Why is the Liberian government now ashamed of a tradition (sassywood) which has been in practice for thousands of years, and regarded by the people as one of the sure means of resolving disputes?

- Why hasn't the government replaced the practice with an effective and strong legal justice system that will meet the judicial needs of every citizen?

- In Liberia, there is a saying: an empty rice bag cannot stand. Giving that the nation is just recovering from 14 years of brutal civil war and does need lots of international support (in order to cope with the countless challenges the country is facing), is the government in fact

Western methods of resolving conflict in Africa have failed due to the erosion of the values that existed within the traditional African societies and the replacement of these values with foreign ones. Ineba Bob-Manuel.

tricking its foreign partners in believing that it is dancing to the beats of their drums, while turning a blind eye and allowing the practice to continue?

- Or, knowing that such practices <u>cannot</u> be stopped and providing no effective alternatives to them, is the government producing another recipe for bloody conflict in an already fragile country?

As for those practising it, there is no doubt where their point of view stands. *"*No amount of laws or government order can stop sassywood", Yerkula Zaizay, a resident of Gbarnga, told IRIN. "It is a tradition that our forefathers left us. This is better than going to court. My late grandfather taught me how to apply sassywood and it is part of my culture, so it cannot be easily stopped."

Gbarnga resident Bono said, "We cannot waste our time going to court. Sassywood is our courtroom. This is what our forefathers have been practising in the past and it has been working."

Sharing the Kola Nut practice

The sharing of a kola nut is another peaceful practice through which disputes are resolved in Liberia. During the traditional war years, a weaker king or ruler would (through his representatives) send a kola nut to his enemy. The move was not only as a sign of surrender, but also a significant initial step in clearing the warring atmosphere to enable the parties engage in dialogue. This is why traditional Liberians believed that he who brings kola nut brings life.

The sharing of the kola nut is mainly based on forgiveness and can be applied to the everyday affairs of the people. For instance, if a case is reported and after investigation the chiefs and elders are convinced that the accused is guilty, he/she is told to make restitution that could be in the form of chicken, goat or a traditional drink. However, before these items are presented to the victim, the accused must first and foremost present a kola nut to his victim. If the victim rejects the kola nut or receives and puts it in his/her pocket or holds it in a closed palm or instructs the accused to give the kola nut to one of the elders seated, then this indicates that the victim still holds a grudge against his perpetrator. On the contrary, if the victim receives the kola nut directly from the hands of the accused, takes a bite and shares the rest with the accused, then this means that the dispute is settled. The victim will be praised by the elders and chiefs and in addition be told that the ancestors are proud of him or her.

Palava Hut Agreements

Conflicts occurring between communities, individuals or tribal groups in the traditional Liberian society are usually resolved by the elders. As noted by Bob-Manuel, a Western mediator may begin the exploration by retracing the steps of the parties to the point

of the initial conflict. But an experienced African elder, considering the social realities, may start from a vintage point further back and try to form a frame of social reference. He may ask questions such as: "who are you, where are you from, where did you grow up, what do you like doing?" and so on. She explained that these questions may provide clues not only about the immediate causes but that they may reveal long-standing grievances which would offer a wider and deeper insight on the differences and similarities between the parties.

Palaver means a prolonged discussion. It is a traditional circular hut made from clay and bamboo or wood with a thatched roof. Traditionally, villagers gathered in the hut to discuss an issue until it was resolved. The location of the hut is chosen by the village elders or spiritual elders and the villagers work together to construct the hut. It is also a place to receive visitors and, because it is believed that the spirits of the ancestors will be at every meeting held in the hut, it's intentionally constructed very low such that anyone entering will bow in total submission to the gods and spirits of the land. Discussions in the hut cover everything from murder, theft, divorce, war, debt, land disputes, and more. The most unique characteristic of the hut is that no one (not even the elders) leaves the hut until a resolution is reached.

Although there are a lot of similarities between the various ethnic groups of Liberia with regard to their pattern of resolving disputes in the Pavala hut, the process is different in various areas. For instance, the Kru, Bassa, Belle, Grebo, and Krahn ethnic groups of Liberia believe that the palava hut is the ideal place for perpetrators to confess and seek forgiveness from their victims. Meetings are presided over by a chief or by elders. The reporter or in most cases, the victim is questioned and asked to speak first. The accused will then have his/her moment to speak. The families of both the accused and victim must be present or represented by an elder of the family, if they cannot be reached. Once hearings have taken place and the truth is established, certain rituals must be performed.

There are also differences of the palava hut practices related to the gravity of the case. In non-violent cases, the guilty party is required to provide a number of items usually a traditional fabric, a chicken or goat, palm oil, cane-gin (liquor) rice, cassava and so on. During the ritual ceremony some of the liquor is poured on the ground to invoke the ancestral spirits. After a brief moment of incantation, the elders will drink a bit of the liquor and share the rest with the parties in conflict. The aim is to ensure that the resolution is respected. A person who fails to do so will be visited by the spirits. According to Bob-Manuel, when Africans gather to resolve their differences, divine punishment is used to show what the breach of peace would bring upon the society and the conflicting parties (Bob-Manuel, 1999). The women of both families cook the food items and a meal is held for the two families, including the contesting parties and other members of the community who may have witnessed the offence being commit-

ted. If the victim accepts the perpetrator's apology, he/she is praised by the elders and is told that the ancestors are pleased.

In the case of murder, things change. According to the traditional beliefs of the tribes listed above, a person does not deserve death no matter the crime they may have committed (as compared to "civilized" European and North-American societies that have practiced and still practice the death penalty for certain crimes!). In addition, it is forbidden for women and children to see corpses, so, if the corpse was exposed, it has to be covered and hastily buried.

> *The Western legal approach encourages the accused to deny responsibility, whereas indigenous African methods of peace, conflict resolution and reconciliation are co-operative and can be indirect and circumstantial, which does effectively encourage the accused to admit responsibility.*

As talks begins between the victim and perpetrator's family, the perpetrator is protected and kept in secret to prevent further bloodshed either by the victim's family or by anyone seeking revenge. Special rituals are performed during the period of grieving to ensure that the dead person is accepted in the ancestral realm. Secret meetings are held with the perpetrator to hear the circumstances that led to the killing, for historical references and not to condone the killing. Once this is done, the elders then decide a penalty. In addition, the perpetrator is required to provide a list of items that would be used to appease the ancestral spirits by means of an elaborate ritual so as to cleanse the perpetrator of the evil he or she has committed. The closing ritual includes the preparation of a meal from the various items used in the cleansing ritual and all join in, including the two families involved. Tradition demands that the meal be consumed entirely on the same day.

After the ceremony is complete, the perpetrator is required to make restitution in several ways. First, a public apology is made to the victim's family. In addition, a white plate is presented to the victim's family as an indication of guilt and atonement as well as a plea for forgiveness. Following the acceptance of the apology, the perpetrator is banished from the community for a period of three farming circles (three years) if the murder was an accidental one. If it was an intended act, the perpetrator will be banished for a period of seven farming circles. The aim is to allow the victim's family heal from the pains a bit. Other rituals during this period include the shaving of the hair of both men and women, and women are to remain in dark clothes for a period of one year.

Although dealt with in absolute secrecy, rape is a serious and shameful crime among these tribes. The perpetrator has brought great shame on the men in the community, already deemed guilty, and his presence is not allowed during talks. However, he is represented by the eldest male in his family, such as his great grandfather, grandfather, father or elder brother as the case may be. The victim is also represented but she is not allowed to be at the meeting because her identity must remain unknown to the public.

When resolving this form of dispute, the representative of the rapist approaches the father of the victim carrying a palm branch, prostrates himself before the father of the victim and holds his feet as a gesture of apology and a request for forgiveness. He remains in this position until the victim's father or representative takes the palm branch from his hand. If the branch is taken, the victim's father lightly taps the branch on the back of the prostrated person, rests his right hand on his back and acknowledges his apology and his request for forgiveness. Once this happens, he is allowed to stand, at which time he apologizes profusely for the sins of his son or the member of his clan who has perpetrated this heinous crime and asks for forgiveness. For the Bassa people, the fine is only a white chicken and a white kola nut. Treatment of the victim is the responsibility of the rapist's family, which is usually carried out by a woman, but all of these are done in total secrecy.

Slah practices

Dr. Gbaba describes "Slah" as a basic spiritual component of peace enforcement in the traditional Liberian conflict resolution and reconciliation model (Gbaba, 2010). According to him, slah is carried out to seal a covenant between parties to a conflict and it binds all parties to the decision that is made by the council of elders, chiefs, and Zoes (A *Zoe* is a person responsible for customary rituals). The process also includes a pause in hostilities which allows the "Doe-dee agreement" to be negotiated between the warring parties under the supervision of the elders, chiefs and Zoes, before a "Slah" is performed. In the Krahn language, *Doe-dee* means "from the same mother" and it demonstrates brotherhood among all Liberians. In addition, it is forbidden for "Doe-dees" to shed one another's blood. Hence, it translates as meaning that all mankind are brothers and sisters from the same ancestry.

The descendants of these ethnic groups are spiritually and co-sanguinely related. For instance, the Kru, Greboe, Bassa, Gbis Gborh, Belleh, Dewions and Krahn are traditional Doe-dees. Also, related through marriages, the Krahn, Mano, and Gio are Doe-dees. However, in a situation where any of these ethnic groups engage in hostilities against one another and shed blood, it is traditionally customary for a "Slah" to be made in order to appease the spirits of the forefathers for breaking the traditional law that prohibits "Doe-dees" to shed one another's blood.

Slah is usually done by slaughtering cows, sheep, goats, chickens etc, and by preparing and eating together a sacred meal called "Gbowah." Also, because the women and children prepare Gbowah from these different ethnic groups, Slah does not only bring together the warring parties but also their families. In some cases, the party who started the conflict will offer an unmarried woman to the chief warrior of the other party as a wife. This is to prevent them from engaging in further bloodshed.

The Mendes have a little different approach from the Kru, Greboe, Bassa, and Krahn. When resolving conflict, the Zoes, chiefs and elders are the key players among the

Mende-speaking groups of Liberia. Hearings can be public, in which case they take place in the palava hut, or depending on the nature of the case hearing, they would take place at the "Zoe bush" (a secret forest), in which case only the initiated members of that particular ethnic group are allowed. Depending on their role in the offence, the perpetrator or his representative may be invited if they are not members of that ethnic group. Once hearings have taken place and the truth is established, the accused is required to make restitution and ask for forgiveness.

If the offence is of a violent nature, such as rape or murder, a cleansing ceremony will be required. It includes the slaughter of an animal followed by an elaborate ritual in which the victim or his/her representative and the perpetrator are symbolically washed with the blood of the animal. The perpetrator and the victim or selected representative may also be required to have an herbal bath and to drink a brew made from alcoholic or herbal ingredients. The purpose of the cleansing process is to exorcise evil, restore the integrity of the victim and the perpetrator, and remove any defilement that may have come to the town or village because the ancestral spirits who do not tolerate such offences were offended. It is believed that only those who have been visited by an evil spirit would commit violent crimes. Depending on the nature of the violence, the animal in question may be a fowl or a goat in cases of rape, or a cow in the case of a murder.

Murder is the most abominable offence among the Mende-speaking people of Liberia. In case of murder, the perpetrator is arrested, detained and shackled to ensure that he or she does not escape. If it was premeditated, the perpetrator is heavily fined (with the payment of several cows) and banished from the town or village. If it was involuntary or accidental, a plea for forgiveness is entered and the Zoe and his council urge the victim's family to accept the plea. In this particular case an oath is required. An animal is killed, preferably a sheep, which is part of the fine paid by the perpetrator. Certain internal organs of the slaughtered animal such as the liver, heart, and tongue are extracted. A concoction is made of them and the Zoe holds it above the head of the perpetrator as he or she vows never to commit such an offence again. The family of the victim is then required to accept the apology and offer forgiveness, following the prompting of the Zoe and the council members. The Zoe then holds up the concoction and the family of the victim vows not to take revenge. Once this is concluded, the cleansing ceremony follows. First, the perpetrator is cleansed, the spirits are appeased and the town or village is cleansed by pouring blood from the slaughtered animal onto the ground while the Zoe recites an incantation inviting the ancestral spirit to drive out the evil spirit that has visited them, and to look kindly on all the villagers and prevent such a misfortune from happening to them again. This is followed by a big meal that the families of both the victim and the perpetrator share.

Palm Wine Tree Deliberations

This traditional pattern of resolving dispute usually takes place under a palm wine tree. Unlike the Doe-dee's agreements, Sassywood or palava huts agreements, women are not allowed to be a part of this deliberation. However, if the matter involves a woman, a male from her family would represent her. During this process, the men will leave the village or town and go deep into the forest; there they will sit under a palm tree and drink the wine from it. The wine is white in colour, which according to traditional Liberian beliefs is a sign of purity and openness of heart. In addition, the parties in dispute, the elders and witnesses will all drink from the same cup, which indicates oneness. After they have drunk a larger quantity of the wine, the parties will then present their grievances for deliberations. Just like the pavala hut agreements, the men wouldn't leave the forest until the situation is resolved. When an agreement is reached, all parties (guilty or not guilty) will acknowledge their wrongs, apologize and embrace each other before leaving the bush.

Indigenous Practices of Conflict Resolution among the Akans of Ghana

When dealing with dispute, the Akans are concerned with restoring social harmony between the parties in conflict, and this is done by both parties exposing the truth about what went wrong and who kick-started the dispute. Basically, the process is regarded as a truth and reconciliation moment and not a legal court proceeding. However, to get to the root causes of the dispute, the elders or chiefs in charge ensure that the process is transparent.

One such way of ensuring transparency is by encouraging the parties to speak out their grievance in a free and frank, but respectful manner. This indicates that indigenous methods accept conflict as something that has to be discussed until a resolution is reached. According to Fred Mensah, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms can be defined as the "capability of social norms and customs to hold members of a group together by effectively setting and facilitating the terms of their relationship, sustainability and collective action for achieving mutually beneficial ends" (Mensah, 2005).

At the grassroots level, conflict resolution is regarded as a healing process during which all parties are expected to contribute positively. This is so because the guilty is considered not to have sinned against his victim(s) alone but also against the ancestors and the spirits that protects the lands. Against this backdrop, there is always a high degree of urgency towards the re-building of social harmony between communities, families, individuals and the spirit world. To appease the spirits, reconciliation often requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals including exchange of gifts, and slaughter of animals such as goats, chickens, sheep, cows to mention a few. The spiritual dimension of conflict resolution refers to creating and restoring an impaired relationship with

God, the ancestor's spirits, family and neighbours as the case might be. It is important to note that rituals play a vital role in the reconciliation process as they help to link people to the past, future and present.

The Akans have a well-structured political, judicial, and arbitration system of traditional justice which has been preserved by the elders as a cultural heritage for the people. In addition, Ghanaians' traditional institutions play two important roles: a proactive role to promote social cohesion, harmony, peaceful coexistence; and a reactive role in resolving disputes that have already occurred (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, 2008).

The paramount chief or *omanhene* is the leader of the traditional institute; next to him are the divisional chiefs (Ohene and Odikro), meaning the owners of the villages. The main seat of authority among the Akans consists of the chief, his elders, the queen mother and the linguist. The elders represent all the people in the division. In Akan states, democratic rule is based on consultation, open discussion, consensus building and coalitions. The composition of the traditional authority also demonstrates the Akan notion of open democracy. The Akans believe that judgement should be wise and practical so that whatever decision they arrived at would improve their relationships with one another. The villages consist of a number of clans or family groups, with each clan or family group headed by an elder of the family known as Abusua pinyin.

The process includes, but is not limited to, the following (Okrah, 2003):

– Arbitration – this is where the parties formally present their cases at the chief's courts. Such cases include conflicts over land and other property. Since the chief is the custodian of the land and its boundaries, all land cases are referred to him. However, cases that are reported to the chief but not withdrawn for mediation must go through the formal mediation process.

– Dwanetoa: this means appealing to a mediator to intervene on your behalf. Mediation is so important to the Akans that there is a chief for mediation. Usually they are people with status, recognition, integrity and experience in the community. To avoid confrontations, the Akans adopted different forms of mediation. In some cases, party A may plead through a mediator for the use of (for instance), party B's land or property. In other cases, the offender may admit guilt to the mediator and ask the mediator to plead on his/her behalf to the victim. This is to avoid a situation that may potentially escalate the present conflict situation.

The list of Akans' strategies and tactics goes on and on. However, according to Brock Utne, the elders and mediators may use pressure, persuasion, recommendations, suggestions, relevant norms, and rules to arrive at a solution (Brock Utne, 2001).

The Spiritual Dimensions of Conflict Resolution among the Akans

In most, if not all-African societies, the spirit world plays a major role in maintaining social order among the people. That being said, there are special conflict situations that require spiritual intervention because such cases are regarded as beyond human understanding. The chiefs and elders would try their best to reach a resolution, but if they fail, the case may then be turned over to the spirits of the ancestors and the gods of the lands for settlement.

The spiritual dimension of conflict resolution in West Africa is a voluntary process and it's mostly suggested by the accused party (in cases of witchcrafts, rape, theft, among others), as they wish to express their innocence. It is important to note that there are classifications of witchcrafts, and not all witches support evil doings. According to Kendie, the process in the Akan state involves oath-taking, incantations, curses, witchcrafts, and it is supervised by the traditional and spiritual leaders including the fetish priests, custodians of deities, herbalists, and soothsayers (Kendie, 2006). In a protracted case where the complexity of the matter makes it difficult to discern who is right or wrong in a case (Okogeri, 1974), the process is directed towards the supernatural world for settlement of disputes. Man plays little or no part. Sometimes this appeal to the spirit realm is made when human efforts fail or when no confidence is reposed on the human panel. This is practised in cases such as murder, witchcraft, in land matters and so on.

During the process, the victim may ask the accused to swear on a tutelary deity of his/her choice to prove his/her innocence. On the other hand, the accused may opt to swear on any powerful "Alusi" (gods) in order to free him/herself from the accusation. If the plaintiff accepts the accused's offer to swear, he is bound to regard the dispute as closed and to wait for the supernatural judgement. The perjurer may die as a result or may suffer grave misfortune or illness. The more dreadful consequence is that the perjurer's family and sometimes, the entire village may suffer from some obscure illness which may put the lineage in danger of complete extinction.

Instead of conclusion

The recite of the various traditional practices of conflict resolution used by peoples of Liberia and Ghana can go a long way (Zartman, 2005); it is not the purpose of this study to make an exhaustive exposition of them. What we do want is to bring to light several observations about these practices:

1. The resilience of these practices, even after so many years of exposure to the colonial and post-colonial rule based on Western values and methods of conflict resolution. It is correct to note that the colonial administration regularly left conflict resolution in the hands of the leaders of the indigenous communities, intervening only on severe cases (murder, violent clashes between communities, disputes between

indigenous people and colonists or colonial authorities etc), which ensured their survival. The fact that they continue to be trusted by the people is not only because they are rooted in the traditional beliefs and have a powerful spiritual component, but also because they provide a still more effective way to solve conflicts compared to the incompetent and often corrupt justice systems set up by the new states after gaining independence.

2. The emphasis on re-conciliation as opposed to Western practices, which place the accent on punishment. It is worth noting that the West is just "discovering" the alternative dispute resolution methods and restorative justice as better ways to deal with crime and conflicts, while still putting a lot of pressure on the African governments to get rid of the traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution based on the argument that these mechanisms offend human rights. A comparative study of the effectiveness (in terms of prevention and of preventing re-occurrence of conflict) of the African traditional methods of conflict resolution with the American methods based on punishment and reclusion (the US are locking up a disproportionate part of their population, compared to the rest of the world, without any solid evidence of this diminishing the crime rate and, most important, the number of repeat offenders) would be an interesting research which could provide significant results.

3. The erosion of the effectiveness of the traditional methods of conflict resolution, as African societies moves (slowly, but inevitably) closer to the modern standards and structures. The effectiveness of the traditional methods relied partially (but consistently) on the values held in high regard by the members of the communities; as these values fade away either by exposure to modernization or by the disruptions provoked by prolonged civil wars and insurgencies, the traditional methods will be less and less effective. Sad is the fact that, as they lose their mojo, they are not replaced by a solid and competent modern justice system that can rapidly address the disputes and provide effective solutions.

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An Analysis
of Iran's Nuclear Program

Iustin MUREŞANU-IGNAT

Abstract. *The current diplomatic overtures and negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the international community under the P5+1 format (the five UN Security Council Permanent Members plus Germany) for resolving the issue of the nuclear program of Iran have caught the world's attention in the autumn of 2013. Whether the result of these negotiations will lead to a genuine rapprochement between Iran and the rest of the world or a worsening of the relations with the Middle East state is an acute question these days. The answer is yet to come, but an inquiry into the causes of the present state of affairs may prove useful for shaping that answer. This paper attempts to look into the complex relationships and events that drive the policies of global and regional actors towards the nuclear program of Iran. While by no means a comprehensive study, we believe that this modest endeavor can only improve the understanding of this complex issue.*

Keywords: *Iran, Islamic Republic of Iran, United States, United Nations, Israel, Saudi Arabia, France, Russia, sanctions, nuclear program, conflict.*

Iustin MUREŞANU-IGNAT
Associate researcher,
Conflict Studies Center
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The controversies over Iran's nuclear program and the current process of international negotiations to bring it under international control are based both on the existing structure of the international system and on the efforts of nuclear nonproliferation.

We believe that the conflict on Iran's nuclear activities is based on different interpretations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) (UN, 2005). The NPT is usually understood as a "Grand Bargain" between the five countries that possess nuclear weapons and the rest of the world who do not possess them, and is established on three fundamental "pillars": nuclear non-proliferation, the peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear disarmament. While "non-weapons" states

are pledging that they will not seek to obtain nuclear weapons, the "weapons states" commit to nuclear disarmament, and all parties agree to the "inalienable right" to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Generally, there have been two different approaches to these "bargains" of the NPT, one offer them equal standing, and one states that the goal of non-proliferation is above the other two (CSIS, 2012). There has been much debate and controversy over the letter and spirit of the NPT (ACA, 2011), and especially over the nuclear fuel-cycle technology, or the "dual use" capabilities (CFR, 2012), which in the case of Iran have led to decades-long tensions with the international community and the imposition of sanctions against it. The dispute is whether Iran, as a signatory of the NPT, has the right to enrich uranium under the international safeguards.

While Iran has followed the former approach to the NPT, upholding its "right to enrich", the international community under the leadership of the United States, have adopted the latter view, not only regarding Iran, but for other countries too (Iraq, North Korea, and also Brazil or South Africa).

The United States have pursued, under the G.W. Bush administration, a vigorous policy of nuclear non-proliferation. Under the new directions and necessities of the "War on Terror", America has tried hard in the last decade to limit the access to nuclear technologies (AIEA, 2004). But it used different ways in dealing with the various countries that were trying to access those technologies. There are remarkable differences between the way in which US have dealt with the nuclear programs of several countries in the '90s, like South Africa, Argentina or Brazil, compared to the programs of other countries, like Iraq, North Korea or Iran, or the so-called "Axis of Evil".

Comparisons between the cases of Brazil and Iran are interesting, because their relations with United States shared some similarities in the early years after the end of the Cold War. Brazil has researched nuclear technology between '60s and '90s, and even had a nuclear weapons program. Although that program stopped in 1991, Brazil was a late signatory of the NPT and still runs a nuclear program with military applications, for powering nuclear submarines (ACA, 2013). It had a not-so-smooth relationship with the US regarding its right to enrich uranium, which Brazil jealously defends (ENS, 2006). Despite these asperities and the clear military applications of Brazil's nuclear program, its relationship with the US has never sunk to the depths of that of Iran, and the question of international sanctions against Brazil has never been "on the table".

While Iran also has a nuclear program that is decades-long and has terrible relations with the United States, that also go back decades, the approach America has used in dealing with the Iranian nuclear program has been entirely different than with Brazil or South Africa, or even North Korea, for that matter. Although negotiations on the issue have taken place in the last decade, there has been an outright hostility to the concept of such a nuclear program.

It is interesting, then, to see some of the aspects that lie beneath the inflammatory declarations on both sides and try to find out what are the reasons for some of the regional and global actors involved in the Iranian nuclear controversy.

A History of Iran's Nuclear Program

Iran's nuclear program can be traced back to the times of the Shah, when, with the help of the United States, the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) established the Tehran Nuclear Research Center in 1967. The scientific facility was equipped with a 5MW research reactor for which US supplied the fuel, in form of highly enriched uranium (UN, 1967).

Under the rule of the Shah, Iran embarked on an extensive nuclear energy program. In 1974, mindful to the prospect of future oil-depletion, the Shah aimed at achieving around 23GW of electricity from nuclear power plants. These ambitious nuclear projects had to rely heavily on technical and fuel assistance from the United States and Europe. In the following years, Iran completed agreements with West-German (Kraftwerk Union – a subsidiary of Siemens) and French (Framatome) companies to build and supply two 1,200MW reactors at Bushehr and two other 900MW reactors.

Although fuel was initially to be provided by the companies building the reactors, plans were made to allow Iran to create its own infrastructure for enriching uranium. In 1975, President Ford approved the National Security Decision Memorandum 292, which allowed for "US materials to be fabricated into fuel in Iran for use in its own reactors and for pass-through to third countries with whom we have Agreement" (NSC, 1975).

A year later, US went even further, by requesting that Iran enrich uranium. In National Security Decision Memorandum 324, the American negotiators were meant to "seek a strong political commitment from Iran to pursue the multinational/binational reprocessing plant concept, according the US the opportunity to participate in the project" (NSC, 1976). The extraction of plutonium from the reactor fuel allowed for a complete nuclear fuel cycle. In those days, Iran was allowed to enrich uranium, extract plutonium, and US was seeking to make a profit out of it.

When the Iranian Revolution erupted in 1979, the country's nuclear activities were put on hold. Following the breakdown of the relations with the US, most of the countries terminated their cooperation with Iran under US pressure. The ensuing war with Iraq, which started in 1980, diverted the resources necessary for the nuclear development and damaged Iranian nuclear infrastructure. The two nuclear reactors under construction at Bushehr were bombed by Iraqi air force several times (Iran Watch, 2004).

After the war ended, the Iranian nuclear program was resuscitated. In the late '80s, during the presidency of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Tehran searched for new partners to support its nuclear development. Turned down by Western countries, it looked to the

former Cold War enemies of the US, Russia and China. Two protocols were signed with China, in 1985 and 1990, and one with Russia in 1995. The latter deal was intended to complete the construction of the Bushehr nuclear reactors, supply the fuel for them and create the infrastructure for Iran's own enrichment plants (IW, 1995). But pressures from the US blocked some of these agreements and transfers, particularly the enrichment technology. Also, during the '90s, it is believed that Iran acquired some uranium enrichment technology through the underground black market network run by the rogue Pakistani scientist, A.Q.Khan (CRS, 2005).

It is worth mentioning that in early '90s, when rumors of the Iranian undisclosed nuclear activities surfaced in the Western media, Tehran allowed IAEA inspectors full access to all the sites and facilities they required to see. There was nothing inconsistent with the provisions of the NPT Treaty allowing the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Things started to precipitate in early 2000, when MEK (Mojahedin-e-Khalq – People's Mojahedin of Iran) disclosed to the media the scope of the Iranian enrichment efforts (IW, 2002). Consisting of two sites under construction, Natanz enrichment facility and Arak heavy-water reactor, these are still the point of disagreement between Iran and the international community. It is believed that MEK learned about these sites from the Israeli intelligence agency, Mossad (Hersh, 2012). In December 2002, construction at the two sites was confirmed by satellite photos showed on US television networks, and US Government promptly accused Iran of "across-the-board pursuit of weapons of mass destruction".

After IAEA inspections toured the country in 2003, it found no concrete evidence linking the Iranian nuclear program with the development of nuclear weapons, but stated that Iran has failed to comply with some of its safeguards agreements "with respect to the reporting of nuclear material and its processing and use" and "declaration of facilities where such material has been processed and stored" (IAEA, 2003). The report also stated that a "foreign supplier" was involved in providing the designs for Iran's uranium enrichment facilities. While it doesn't mention it by name, it is believed that China was supporting Tehran's enrichment development in the '90s.

As a technical intermission, Iran's struggle to obtain nuclear expertise has led it on the path to enriched uranium or plutonium, which can be used for both nuclear reactor fuel AND nuclear weapon fuel. Both elements are "fissile" and split when struck by neutrons, releasing energy which can be used to heat water in a nuclear reactor to produce electrical power, or, by chain-reaction, to destroy a city.

Uranium-235, the isotope required for nuclear fuel, can be found naturally in uranium deposits in a tiny quantity (0.7%). As such, obtaining a higher concentration of U235 requires the processing of uranium or the so-called "yellowcake", then gasified into

UF6 (uranium hexafluoride) which is pumped into centrifuges that serves to enrich the uranium until it's suitable for the intended purpose. The approximate levels of enriched uranium and their uses are:

- 3.5-5% for nuclear power plants reactors (Low-Enriched Uranium – LEU)
- 20-30% for research reactors (Highly-Enriched Uranium – HEU)
- 40% for the production of medical isotopes (HEU)
- 60-80% for naval nuclear reactors (HEU)
- 90% and above for weapons production (HEU).

The enrichment process can be achieved in a number of other ways, like laser isotopic separation, aerodynamic isotope separation, electromagnetic isotope separation, plasma separation etc. Iran has opted for the centrifuge separation because is the least expensive and can be achieved on an industrial scale, something that would be very difficult with the other techniques. It also acquired the designs of centrifuge technology from the Khan network (CRS, 2005).

Plutonium-239 can also be used for nuclear weapons or power and heat generation, nuclear research and medical applications. It is found in nature only in trace amounts, but can be obtained as a byproduct of commercial or research nuclear reactors. Plutonium producing reactors use heavy water as an essential ingredient in the nuclear reactions designed to produce plutonium.

Iran has started the building of a heavy water production plant at Arak in 2002 and in 2003 it announced its plan to construct a 40MW heavy water research reactor (also called Iran Nuclear Research Reactor (IR-40)). This reactor would use uranium as a fuel, but it would be also capable of producing plutonium. The reactor construction site was visited by IAEA inspectors in 2010, who confirmed its advanced construction stage. However, building activities were slow and the reactor is not yet complete. It is projected to become operational in 2014.

Iran has repeatedly claimed that the IR-40 facility is designed for research, development and for the production of isotopes with medical and industrial applications. It is a point that few in the international community believe, because these types of reactors have been used to produce weapon-grade plutonium. Some well-known examples of these kinds of reactors are Cirus in India (CCNR, 1996) and probably Dimona in Israel.

In the spring of 2003 the Iranian government attempted an agreement with the US, through Swiss intermediaries. The so called "Grand Bargain" saw the Iranians put everything on the table. They offered full transparency of their nuclear program, the withdrawal of their support for Hezbollah and Hamas organizations and asked for security guarantees from the US, an end of the sanctions and the normalization of their

relations. But the Bush administration, recently victorious in Iraq turned down the offer (PBS, 2007).

In a spirit of cooperation, Iranian representatives met with three European countries (France, Germany and United Kingdom – EU-3) in an attempt to settle the issues about its nuclear program. A joint statement was issued in October 2003 – the Tehran Declaration (IAEA, 2003) – stating that Iran will strengthen its cooperation with IAEA and suspend its uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities during the negotiations. The EU-3 group agreed to recognize Iran's nuclear rights under the NPT and offered access to modern nuclear technology and supplies.

The IAEA November 2003 report stated that Iran failed to comply with Safeguard measures in reporting the entirety of its nuclear activities, but "found no evidence" of a nuclear weapons program (IAEA, 2003). Later that year Iran signed an additional protocol with the IAEA, allowing unobstructed, on-the-spot inspections from the IAEA and in 2004 suspended its uranium enrichment process as a voluntary confidence-building measure. While the talks with the EU-3 dragged on for more than a year (Reuters, 2005), probably stalled by US pressures, in September 2004 the US Secretary of State called Iran "a growing danger" and called for "UN Security Council to impose sanctions" (BBC, 2005).

Events took a turn for the worse in 2005, with the advent of the hardline Ahmadinejad presidency. The new administration considered that the EU-3 broke their October 2003 commitments and took a tougher position in the negotiations (Oborne, 2013). While in August 2005 it resumed its uranium enrichment activities, in September the new Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad offered in a speech at the UN General Assembly that Iranian nuclear program might be managed by an international consortium, in which Iran would share ownership. The offer was refused by the European Union and the United States.

In February 2006, Iran resumed its uranium enrichment at Natanz nuclear facility and in April president Ahmadinejad announced that Iran had successfully managed to enrich uranium at 3.5%, most likely a small quantity produced by about 100 centrifuges. After US demands in April that Tehran stop its enrichment process and Iranian refusal in August, UN Security Council voted the implementation of sanctions against Iran in December 2006.

The following years were marked by increased efforts by Iran to "master the nuclear fuel cycle" (mining, preparation, usage, reprocessing and storage) and the international community imposing more sanctions against it. Although IAEA was allowed to carry out inspections to Iranian nuclear sites, cooperation with the international body was limited, and negotiations with Iran stagnated. Hardliners, radicals and neoconservatives on both sides made increasingly difficult any attempt to negotiate the unresolved issues.

On the Iranian side, great efforts were made to accomplish the enrichment of uranium on an industrial scale. To this end, at the nuclear facilities at Natanz and Fordow an increased number of centrifuges were installed: 7,231 in June (IAEA, 2009) and 8,308 in August 2009 (IAEA, 2009), 8,600 in January 2010 (IAEA, 2010), 10,400 in November 2012 (IAEA, 2012) and 15,400 in August 2013 (IAEA, 2013), with some thousands estimated being already manufactured and in reserve. Although not all centrifuges were operational, the increased capacity for enrichment is noteworthy. The levels of uranium enrichment were mostly at 3.5%, with some minor quantities at 20%, all within legal levels for civil usage in nuclear power plants and production of medical isotopes (IAEA, 2013).

While the IAEA did not find evidence of a "weaponized" nuclear program, its reports did not rule out the possibility of covert nuclear activities, due to the lack of Iranian cooperation beyond the letter of the international agreements and the dual-use nature of some nuclear related activities. The issue was further inflamed by Iran's ballistic missiles tests in July 2008 and again in September 2009.

Further talks to resolve the issue of the Iranian nuclear program were held intermittently in Geneva in P5+1 format (the five UN Security Council permanent members: United States, Russia, China, United Kingdom, France, plus Germany) between 2006 and 2013. Little progress was made until the autumn of 2013, when an agreement was struck on November 24.

Undermining Iran's Nuclear Program

Between 2007 and 2012, there were a number of attempts to sabotage the nuclear program of Iran. The most important two of these are the Stuxnet malware which infected the computers at Natanz nuclear enrichment facility and the assassination of key Iranian nuclear scientists.

Regarding the Stuxnet malware, or computer virus, it was discovered in July 2010, when a Belarus computer security company found the virus on computers belonging to an Iranian client. It has generated much debate around the world, because of its particular functions.

Initially believed to be designed to steal nuclear industrial secrets, it was later discovered that it was much more than that. It affected only computers which had Siemens software systems, which are used in Iran's nuclear enrichment activities (Jones, 2007). It acted in a particular way, different from other computer viruses, by way of increasing the pressure in the high-speed rotating centrifuges used for separating the U235 isotope. It also covered its attack by hiding the sensor readings of this abnormal activity from the monitoring systems. The result of this sabotage was an increased number of centrifuges failures and breakdowns.

But this sabotage was designed to be so stealthy, that the virus's actions avoided any centrifuge disruption that would lead to its immediate destruction, because its subsequent examination would have revealed the sabotage.

It is believed that this computer-based attack against Iran's nuclear program started in 2007, but reached critical damage between 2009 and 2010, and caused delays in the program of up to 2 years (Schwartz, 2012). It also affected it in a psychological way, because Iranian scientists began to doubt their abilities of conducting such an industrial enterprise. The total effectiveness of this attack is of some dispute, because ultimately galvanized Iran's nuclear efforts.

The Stuxnet computer virus was most likely created by a nation-state, because it required vast resources and considerable intelligence on industrial characteristics and technical parameters of the centrifuges it affected, resources far larger that would have been available to other developers (Flanagan, 2011). It is believed that behind its creation and deployment were US and Israeli agencies, as part of the wider US-Israeli cyberwarfare effort, under the name Operation Olympic Games, started under the presidency of G.W. Bush (Sanger, 2012).

Between 2007 and 2012, four Iranian scientists who were associated with the country's nuclear program died by bomb explosion, gunshot or poisoning, while a fifth scientist barely survived a car bombing. The authors of these assassinations are unknown, but suspected to be deployed by powers opposed to the nuclear development of Iran. Speculations were made about the authors being US or Israeli hitmen, but also belonging to MEK, an Iranian dissident organization, known for its terrorist attacks (Dareini, 2012).

International Sanctions against Iran

The sanctions imposed upon Iran were instituted initially by the United States after the Tehran embassy incident, later by the European countries under US pressure, and by the UN Security Council because Iran failed to comply with IAEA Safeguards mechanisms.

UN Sanctions

Since 2006, UN Security Council passed several resolutions imposing sanctions on Iran, based on IAEA reports stating Iran's non-compliance with its Safeguards Agreements. These sanctions followed an official Iranian rejection of suspension of all uranium enrichment and reprocessing activities. The most important resolutions imposing international and legal-binding sanctions against Iran are:

- UNSC resolution 1737 (December 23rd 2006) – imposed sanctions banning the supply of nuclear-related materials and technology, and froze the assets of key individuals and companies related to the nuclear program (UN, 2006).

- UNSC Resolution 1747 (March 24th 2007) – imposed an arms embargo and expanded the freeze on Iranian assets (UN, 2007).

- UNSC Resolution 1803 (March 3rd 2008) – extended the asset freezes and called upon states to monitor the activities of Iranian banks, inspect Iranian ships and aircraft, and to monitor the movement of individuals involved with the program through their territory (UN, 2007).

- UNSC Resolution 1929 (June 9th 2010) – banned Iran from participating in any activities related to ballistic missiles, tightened the arms embargo, travel bans on individuals involved with the program, froze the funds and assets of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, and recommended that states inspect Iranian cargo, prohibit the servicing of Iranian vessels involved in prohibited activities, prevent the provision of financial services used for sensitive nuclear activities, closely watch Iranian individuals and entities when dealing with them, prohibit the opening of Iranian banks on their territory and prevent Iranian banks from entering into relationship with their banks if it might contribute to the nuclear program, and prevent financial institutions operating in their territory from opening offices and accounts in Iran (UN, 2010).

US Sanctions (Jones, 2013)

In November 1979, Iranian students captured 52 American personnel at the US Embassy in Tehran and held them hostage for 444 days. President Carter tried unsuccessfully to obtain their freedom, including by authorizing a military rescue. The hostages were freed shortly after Ronald Reagan became president, in January 1981. The diplomatic relations between the two countries were broken and not restored since.

The Carter administration imposed the first round of escalating sanctions against Iran, starting with the ban on Iranian oil imports and following with blocking all $12 billion in Iranian government assets in the US in April 1980, an embargo on all US trade and travel with Iran was also imposed. These restrictions were lifted after the release of the hostages.

The Reagan administration imposed various restrictions on Iran, primarily based on the declaration that Iran was a state sponsor of international terrorism, following the 1983 bombing of the US Marine peacekeepers in Lebanon. The restrictions included U.S. opposition to World Bank loans to Iran. During the Iran-Iraq War, increasing restrictions were placed upon export to Iran on items that could have been adapted for military use. It was an extensive embargo, including for example scuba-diving equipment. In 1987, all US imports from Iran were also banned.

The Clinton administration expanded considerably the sanctions already in place. In March 1995, all US participation in Iranian petroleum development was forbidden, and in May a total trade and investment embargo on Iran was put in place. The Iran and Libya Sanctions Act (ILSA) of 1996 was passed overwhelmingly by the US Congress,

with provisions to force foreign companies to limit or terminate their investments in Iranian oil and gas industry.

The Bush administration ordered repeatedly the freezing of assets of companies and individuals believed to be involved in Iran's support of terrorism, in its role of destabilization of Iraq and its nuclear and missile programs. Foreign entities were also targeted by the sanctions, especially Chinese and Russian companies, for helping Iran's nuclear and missile programs.

The Obama administration saw Congress pass with overwhelming majority the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA). This piece of law targets the supply of refined petroleum products delivered to Iran by non-US companies. Due to a poor oil-refinement infrastructure, Iran imports about 30% of its gasoline. A growing approval by US European and Gulf allies to increase pressure on Iran saw major international oil companies announcing a halt of refined petroleum products to Iran. For example, BP terminated their supplying of jet fuel for Iran Air (Spencer, 2010) at European airports. In 2008, banks and other financial institutions in the US were prohibited to process transfers, transactions or payments between Iranian and non-Iranian banks.

Overall, US individuals and companies located anywhere (even offshore subsidiaries) are prohibited to engage in any kind of relations with Iran. These include purchases, sales, transportation, swaps, financing or brokering transactions related to goods or services of Iranian private or government origin. Other sanctions target financial, insurance and shipping companies in helping Iran sell oil.

New sanctions were imposed on July 1st and 31st 2013, after the new Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, considered to be a moderate, was elected into office in June. They prohibit foreign financial institutions to conduct transactions using the Iranian currency, the *rial*, with the purpose of making it "useless" outside of Iran. The new sanctions also forbid companies and individuals to do businesses in the US if they conduct or facilitate financial transactions through Iran's central bank. They also impose sanctions against Iranian officials suspected of human rights abuses and, significantly, limited the ability of the President of the United States to lift the sanctions, should a diplomatic agreement be achieved (USC, 2013).

The impositions of the 2013 sanctions, in the wake of the election of the moderate Hassan Rouhani and the possibility that a normalization of relations could follow, hints to the strong anti-Iranian sentiment in US Congress. Also, various provisions regarding punishment of foreign companies from doing businesses with Iran is doubtful, at best.

EU Sanctions

European Union imposed a number of sanctions on Iran, following the December 2006 UNSC Resolution 1737 and the breakdown of talks between EU-3 and Iran.

The first round of sanctions was imposed in April 2007 and went beyond the provisions stated in UNSC Resolution 1737 (EUbusiness, 2007).

In January 2012, the Council of the European Union imposed an embargo on Iranian oil exports, froze the assets of the Iranian Central Bank in the EU and halted the trading of various commodities, mainly gold, silver and petroleum-refined products. The Council also put restrictions on foreign trade, financial services, energy sector technologies, insurance and reinsurance activities by EU-based insurance companies with Iran (Torbat, 2012).

The EU sanctions also affect Iranian trade in graphite, aluminum, steel, coal and software designed for integrated industrial processes, with further impact on Iran's auto sector, including light and heavy vehicles, passenger cars, trucks, buses, minibuses, pick-up trucks and motorcycles.

On March 17th 2012, the SWIFT electronic banking network disconnected from its international network all Iranian banks that were identified as in breach of the EU sanctions (Reuters, 2012). As such, those banks and financial institutions are unable to conduct any international electronic financial transaction. This provision probably had the heaviest impact upon Iranian economy.

As a result of the Geneva 3 diplomatic agreement struck on November 24, Iran has achieved some easing of the sanctions imposed upon it. More precisely, until the end of May 2014, the United States and the European Union will "pause their efforts to reduce Iran's crude oil sales" (JPA, 2013) and unfreeze some of the Iranian assets in Western banks. Also, the easing will allow trading on precious metals, car and aviation industry spare-parts, food and agricultural products, medicine and medical devices. The United States and European Union will also refrain from imposing new sanctions (JPA, 2013).

Sanctions Controversy

It has been a matter of international agreement that the sanctions imposed on Iran were beginning to have a serious impact on Iranian economy by 2013. Various riots and unrest in Iran over the price of various goods and devaluation of the Iranian currency *rial* occurred in 2012 and 2013 (BBC, 2012). But despite crippling sanctions, Iran has not relented in its determination to continue its nuclear program.

On the other hand, disagreement occurred about whether the Iranian people blame the government or the West for the growing economic problems in the country. The evaluation of the sanctions' impact is further complicated by disagreement over the

purpose of these sanctions, on what they are meant to achieve. Numerous opinions have been forwarded, probably with an equal number of objectives. Some of these objectives include:

- Taking a moral stance against human rights abuses in Iran

- Deterring other countries from taking the same nuclear route as Tehran

- Signaling international disapproval

- Delaying and disrupting Tehran's nuclear and missile programs

- Helping the democratic opposition

- Crippling the country, or at least the government

- Using sanctions as leverage to open fruitful negotiations on the nuclear issue or perhaps on a broader set of issues

- Persuading Iran to halt its uranium enrichment efforts.

Each of these stated objectives are debatable. Probably the most controversial one is the last one. Iran has stated tirelessly that it will never, ever surrender its right to enrich uranium. While the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1970 does mention "the inalienable right of all the Parties to the Treaty to develop research, production and use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without discrimination and in conformity with Articles I and II of this Treaty" (UN, 2005), the word "enrichment" is not particularly mentioned. This legal technicality, combined with the IAEA 2003-2013 reports which stated that no evidence was found on a "weaponized" Iranian nuclear program has led to speculation over the real reasons of US opposition to the nuclear program of Iran.

There have also been discussions on the legality of some provisions of these sanctions. In early 2013, a European Union Court declared that the EU must eliminate the sanctions it has imposed on one of Iran's largest banks, due to insufficient evidence presented that the bank was involved in Iran's nuclear program (Reuters, 2013).

Another point of argument in the Iran's sanctions controversy is missed investment opportunities. When Tehran decided to privatize some sectors of its economy in the last years, Western companies watched helplessly how Chinese and Russian companies got the lion's share of those investments.

Last, but not least, one viewpoint stands to be noted. The US and European efforts to restrict investments and businesses of any kind with Iran, both at home and abroad, effectively cut the country from the international financial system. As an unforeseen consequence of this lack of international financial access, when the 2008 economic crisis started in US and later extended to Europe and the rest of the world, Iran was effectively insulated from the effects of the crisis.

Iran's Energy Crisis

One point that has received remarkably little attention in the decades-long dispute about Iran's nuclear program is the reason why such a program exists in the first place. The Shah of Iran first seized the opportunity in early '70s, when the fundamentals of the nuclear program were first discussed in Iran. The size of the population and its estimated growth, combined with a rather poor refinement capacity (true now as it was four decades ago) make for a high domestic energy demand and consumption.

Iran is one of the richest countries in the world in terms of hydrocarbon resources. It has the world's fourth largest proven oil reserves, after Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Canada (EIA, 2013). At the current levels of production, it is estimated that these reserves will last more than a century. Because of the international sanctions, its production capacity declined sharply in the last five years, in fact increasing the life-span of its oil reserves. It also has the world's second largest natural gas reserves: 26.74 trillion cubic meters (EIA, 2013).

Despite all these hydrocarbon riches, the reason for Iran's energy crisis is that domestic demand for energy has spiked in the last years, while energy supply has been falling. Demand has risen due to economic growth based on high international oil prices and an increased population. Another reason for this increased demand for oil and gas has been the vast subsidies on the price of these commodities (Hassanzadeh, 2012). Heavy subsidized prices for petroleum-refined products are common in the Middle East countries, but in Iran these subsidies are larger than in any other country (Hassanzadeh, 2012). As a result of this policy the fuel prices in Iran are only a fraction of their world level. These subsidies cost around $7 billion, or 16% of government spending (IMF, 2011).

In addition, Iran has a growing automobile industry, with probably up to one million cars produced each year. This is one way of coping with one million young Iranian entering the labor market each year (IMF, 2011). Finally, oil and gas are used to produce electricity, also at heavily subsidized prices (EIA, 2013). And in the last years, electricity consumption has risen by 5.9% annually.

These are the reasons given for the country's nuclear program. There are high hopes in Iran that nuclear power will help meet its growing energy requirements. In September 2011, Bushehr nuclear power plant started supplying electricity to the grid, the first commercial nuclear power plant in the Middle East. Iran wants to further expand Bushehr facility with two new units and another nuclear power plant at Darkhovin (IAEA, 2009).

International Opposition to Iran's Nuclear Program

Israel

Because of the last decade's inflammatory statements on both Iranian and Israeli sides with threats going back and forth, it is difficult to see the early relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Israel. Today's stances of both countries are based upon actions and reactions which can be traced in the early years of the Islamic Republic.

After the mutual friendship between Iran under the Shah and Israel, things changed completely after the Islamic Revolution. In 1979, at the direct initiative of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, diplomatic relations with Israel were unilaterally broken.

It is believed that this gesture was based upon the new revolutionary and religious ideology which laid at the foundation of the new republic. Iran fulfills the paradigm that a revolutionary regime aims at exporting its ideology. What was true for Revolutionary France in the late 18th century, for Soviet Union in the first half of the 20th century, was true now for the Islamic Republic of Iran. The main concept of the new regime was the necessity to export the Islamic Revolution throughout the Muslim world, especially the Middle East. With Israel residing at the heart of the region and controlling Muslim sacred sites, it is easy to see how it was an obstacle.

With Islamic Iran declared "leader of the Muslim World" (Puder, 2013), it is easy to understand why the Palestinian issue gained a completely new meaning and the continued support given by Iran to the Muslims considered oppressed or attacked by Israel, such as Hezbollah in Southern Lebanon or Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

This support to movements considered extremist or terrorist by the international community has raised international ire against Iran. It is important to remember that the initial US sanctions imposed upon Iran by President Carter following the seizing of the US Embassy in Tehran were lifted after the release of the hostages, and were imposed again only several years later, after President Reagan accused Iran of supporting international terrorism.

This fundamental, innate need to export the principles of the Islamic Revolution has led Iranian leaders to accuse Israel time and again of being an "illegal state", or a "parasite" (GS, 2011). Relations only took a turn for the worse after the election of the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in 2005, a hardliner of Iranian politics. Since that time, Iran has become known as the main enemy of Israel and the United States.

Ahmadinejad adopted a policy of confrontation with Israel through proxies, such as direct support for Hezbollah during the 2006 Lebanon War (Klein, 2006), or providing weapons for Hamas in the Gaza Strip (Haaretz, 2009). These proxy confrontations are still ongoing today, with Iran offering substantial support for Syria's Assad regime,

while Israel apparently carrying regular strikes against the same regime. Ahmadinejad presidency also saw the acceleration of the Iranian nuclear program, with hostile reactions to the international attempts of supervision, and the increased implementation of sanctions against Iran by the international community.

With Israel being under right-wing governments, it responded to the Iranian actions with more than words. This period saw the computer attack against Iranian nuclear enrichment facility in Natanz with the Stuxnet virus, and the assassination of Iranian nuclear scientists. While there are no direct evidences involving Israel in these actions, it is widely believed to be behind them.

While Iran appears to have a more moderate leader since June 2013, with Hassan Rouhani inclined to find a diplomatic solution to Iran's international problems, Israel is still under the government of the right-wing prime-minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He has adopted an increasingly hostile attitude against Iran, ranging from inflammatory statements, to direct threats against the nuclear program of Iran. While some of his actions may raise a smile, like his bomb-cartoon showed in the UN General Assembly, other actions raise concerns, like the recent Israeli air force long bombing drills over the Mediterranean, or his overtures regarding a military strike on Iran with Saudi support.

During autumn 2013, while the international diplomatic machinery was slowly moving towards a new round of talks with Iran, Israel consistently opposed to any such attempts. Each and every time, Israel's message was one of fierce resistance to the talks or their condemnation. It is believed that Geneva 2 round failed because of leaked information about the proposals being discussed and agreed on the evening of November 9th, to which Benjamin Netanyahu reacted predictably.

It is doubtful that the relations between the two countries will reach normalization in the foreseeable future. It is too early to tell. The mistrust between the two countries runs deep and will take a long time to heal. And with an ongoing proxy war in Syria, it will take even longer.

The United States

It is difficult to discern, among all the inflamed rhetoric directed against the Iranian nuclear program, the real reasons for the United States' opposition to the Iranian nuclear program.

Although the relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States got off on the wrong foot with the US Tehran Embassy incident, and got worse ever since, some points in their evolution deserve to be mentioned, along with the forces driving them. The existing anti-American sentiment in Iran, such as it is, is based primarily on a spiral of actions on both sides, and generated primarily by an apparent inability to understand each other.

It is important, however, to mention that the Iranian foreign policy towards the United States is fundamentally different than that towards the Middle East. While pursuing a policy of uniting the fellow Muslims, opposing Israel as an unnatural entity and helping other Muslims in their fight with it, the view towards United States is completely different. It is an Iranian paradox, if you will. A passionate view of the Middle East compared with a calmer, rational approach to the world's only superpower.

The first signs of mistrust started in the early years of the Cold War, when the first democratically elected prime-minister of Iran, Mohammed Mossadeq was overthrown in a CIA-sponsored coup, at the request of the British. The subsequent monarchical rule by the Shah of Iran was deeply unpopular in Iran, because of its arbitrary and oppressive rule, based to a high degree on the US support for the Shah.

After the Shah was deposed, he asked and received asylum in the US for medical treatment. The Iranian population feared that from the US the Shah will plot his return to power with the support of the CIA, as had happened 26 years earlier. This was the main reason for the storming of the US Embassy in Tehran and the following hostage crisis.

During the 80s, the relations between the two countries worsened with the Lebanon terrorist bombing attack, carried out by Hezbollah with the support of Iran, the support offered to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war and the 1988 attack by the US Navy on tow Iranian oil platforms and the imposition of the sanctions by the Reagan administration.

After the end of the Cold War, US foreign policy in the Middle East became more assertive, inclined to create a new political and security architecture in the Middle East. This became possible with the advent of the United States as the sole superpower and the defeat of Iraq in the first Gulf War. This new political and security order became apparent with the starting of the Israel-Palestinian peace process, which had high hopes in the 90s.

The United States attempted to attract Iran in this new order, but Iran rejected, not out of anti-Americanism, but most probably because of its fierce independent foreign policy (Leverett&Leverett, 2013). It is interesting to note some seemingly disparate events, but which we believe lead to one conclusion. The imposition of the new round of sanctions by the Clinton administration against Iran coincides with the creation of the US Navy's 5th Fleet, based in Bahrain in the Persian Gulf (May-July 1995). Even though the US have deployed 500,000 troops on the ground in the Middle East in 1990 with hundreds of thousands more in support, there was no need for the creation of this 5th Fleet. We believe that this synchronicity is based on Iran's refusal to participate in the new political and security structure of the region, designed by the United States in the early 90s.

In this respect, Iran is considered a revisionist power in the region by the Unites States, because it desires to change the existing regional order. To achieve this, it follows a rational diplomacy, centered on soft power, which seeks to achieve Muslim unity

throughout the region. Its strategy is to change the balance of power in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, and so on, in order to make the region more secure for itself (Leverett&Leverett, 2013).

On the other hand, the US policy in the Middle East allowed the use of its military supremacy to coerce and leverage political outcomes, to subordinate the major states in the region to a US-managed or dominated, political and security architecture in the Middle East. This emphasis on the military was especially true under the George W. Bush administration, with two major wars in the region lasting more than a decade.

A case may be made with regard to the Iranian nuclear program and US military power. While the nuclear program advanced in the first half of the previous decade, the main enrichment facility was at Natanz, in an open facility. But with the development of the Fordow nuclear site in 2005-2006, which is in an underground fortified bunker, relatively safe from attacks, the United States suddenly started to manifest a fierce opposition to the program and pursued the imposition of sanctions in 2006.

This may lead to the hypothesis that America could have accepted, grudgingly, a vulnerable Iranian nuclear program. But an invulnerable program appeared to be unacceptable. This is more striking, as the IAEA inspections observed both sites and found that there is no weaponized nuclear program and the same enrichment level were pursued in both locations.

The closing of the Fordow facility was also repeatedly demanded by the Israeli Prime-Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was demanded by the P5+1 group during the 2013 Geneva negotiations and accepted by Iran in the November 24th agreement. The saying goes that "if we can't bomb it, they can't have it" (Leverett&Leverett, 2013).

Iran has demonstrated its willingness to cooperate with United States on more than one occasion. In Bosnia during the wars in former Yugoslavia (Beelman, 2011), in Afghanistan in fighting the Taliban and stabilizing the country, Iran demonstrated that it does not have an implacable anti-American foreign policy.

A different view than the one presented these days in the media about the conflict between Iran and the US may be a systemic one, in which the hegemon power tries to impose the rules of the international system on its members, and punishes those who do not accept those rules.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi opposition to the neighbor across the Gulf is widely known. This is based upon several factors, among which the religious differences and the balance of power in the region.

The religious card is played both on domestic and foreign fronts. Internally, Saudi Arabia considers its stance against Iran as a convenient tool for containing the domestic op-

position. If this tool was not so important before the advent of the Arab Spring, it has become of utmost importance since. This is working very well at containing the domestic opposition with a distraction from the various socio-economic pressures and manipulating sectarian tensions. With the rise of the Arab Spring, the Gulf monarchies in general (Diwan, 2011) and Saudi Arabia in particular have insisted on the Shia membership in the opposition movements, a move that allowed them to delegitimize their criticism as Iranian subversion attempts.

The sectarian division card works equally well on its foreign policy, in as far as many Western countries are giving constant support to the Arab Gulf monarchies in opposition to the possible alternative of Iranian-style theocracies, revolutionary and furiously anti-Western.

Even more on the outside front, there appears to be a strong and structured Saudi plan to counter Iran on all possible ways. From giving almost unconditioned support to the Syrian rebels, ranging from supplying money and weapons to plans for creating a rebel "Syrian Liberation Army" based in Jordan (Sayigh, 2013), Saudi Arabia struggles to oppose Iran on the Syrian side. The country has also called vehemently for an invasion of Southern Lebanon, in order to oust the Shiite Hezbollah movement from its stronghold.

Saudi Arabia also has strong ties with Pakistan, with a possible view of encircling Iran. It has been supporting this country for a long time, investing in Pakistani nuclear program. It has been recently reported that the nuclear ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia run so deep, that the Saudis have already purchased nuclear weapons from Pakistan, and the missile infrastructure has already been built in the country in order to accommodate these weapons, once they would be delivered (Urban, 2013). They are supposed to be delivered to Saudi Arabia if talks with Iran would fail and there would be no obstacles left for Iran to pursue the achievement of nuclear weapons. While these allegations are difficult to prove, they reflect a state of mind within the royal house of Saud, one extremely determined anti-Iranian.

The events in the Middle East this year also include a curious move from Saudi Arabia. It has changed its stance on Israel to a friendlier one, following the ancient principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". Their mutual concerns over Iranian nuclear program have led to a "thaw" in their relations, and even sparked ideas of possible military cooperation against Iran. This particular rapprochement between former enemies may be dangerous, though mostly for Saudi Arabia, because of the long anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian sentiment in the country.

What complicates the Saudi side even more is the succession crisis developing in the country. The current Saudi king is reportedly on his dying bed, and the princes of the royal family are absorbed in their jockeying for power. In these conditions, the country's foreign policy has largely been directed by the Saudi Intelligence Chief, Prince Bandar

bin Sultan, in the last months. His trip to Russia in August this year, where he tried to persuade the Russian president Vladimir Putin to abandon Syria, is well-known. With this larger-than-life character holding the reigns of Saudi foreign policy, the country is guaranteed to perpetuate its hostility towards Iran.

France

One of the most surprising opponents to a nuclear agreement with Iran was France. Or maybe it was not so surprisingly, considering some of the following: France was among the main proponents of the intervention in Libya in 2011 and participated heavily with military hardware. A few months later, France intervened again militarily, this time in Mali, where it maintains a significant military presence for the foreseeable future.

France has also taken a rather "hawkish" position on the issue of intervention in Syria in early autumn of 2013, where it was, if not the only European proponent for intervention, definitely was the strongest one. Also the recent NATO exercise in Poland needs to be mentioned, Steadfast Jazz 2013, where France was one of the main participants. Last, but not least, the recent agreement hammered in Geneva in late November could have been achieved earlier, if it had not been for France's opposition to the draft proposed at the second meeting, on November 7-9, 2013.

In an unusual position for France, a long-time critic of the US's role "as the world policeman", it has emerged in recent years as probably the most interventionist of the Western states. This aggressiveness on the international stage is undertaken at a time of an apparent diminishing influence, with the French military suffering budget cuts (The Economist, 2011) and French economy undergoing hardships. Even more remarkable is that this "hawkishness" in Middle East and North Africa was pursued under different governments, from both sides of the French political spectrum.

One possible explanation for France's new stance is the new power configuration in the Middle East and North Africa, where old regimes have been wiped out in the crucible of the Arab Spring, the new ones are still shaky, and the United States are in an apparent retreat from the region with a focus on the "Pivot to Asia" and the withdrawal of their troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. There appears to be a relative power vacuum in the region, which France hurried to fill in the recent years.

Although the last-minute US retreat from attacking Syria in early September 2013 has left France alone on the frontlines, and forced it back to the reality of its limits, it did not cool down enough the hot-heads in Paris. Only two months later, France was again posturing in an aggressive stance.

Another view of the recent French behavior in opposing the Geneva 2 talks is given by the formidable military contracts with the Arab monarchies (DefenseNews, 2013). It is most likely that France was persuaded into opposition by the promises of contracts for

aircrafts, warships, missile systems and a possible construction of nuclear power plants in Saudi Arabia (ConstructionWeek, 2013). Regarding the last point, it is ironic that Iran is not allowed to have a nuclear program, while France is bidding to build and operate nuclear power plants for its Wahhabi allies. Also worth mentioning are the economic ties with Qatar, another petro-monarchy which fears Iran, which has invested heavily in France, especially Paris.

Last, but not least, is necessary to mention the Jewish lobby in France, which shared a great responsibility in France's opposition to an initial agreement in Geneva. It has been reported that Meyer Habib, a French MP and a high official with the Representative Council of Jewish Institutions in France (CRIF), the Jewish organization with the most political power in France, has intervened directly to the French foreign minister Laurent Fabius to oppose the Geneva 2 draft agreement, threatening with an Israeli attack on Iran (Times of Israel, 2013).

The case of Russia

Russia is following the current developments in the issue of the nuclear program of Iran with interest, but also with mixed feelings. It has adamantly rejected any possibility of a military strike against Iran, and has kept its position unchanged over the years. The model that Russia proposed for solving the Iranian nuclear case was always through negotiations.

If Iran manages to find a workable, diplomatic solution for the world to accept its nuclear program, and engineers a way out of the current standoff with the United States and Israel, it will only enhance its current regional position. This means that any arrangements between Iran and the US will serve only to increase its influence over the Middle East. This can only serve Russia's interests, which has good relations with Iran, having cultivating them over the last decades.

These good relations between Russia and Iran serve a number of Russian interests. A "rehabilitated" Iran can help stabilize Afghanistan and reduce the terrorist threat that is fomenting there and could spread to the rest of Central Asia. Iran could also join the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) after getting rid of the international sanctions, which would boost the organization's strength and prestige.

More importantly, there has been an alignment of interests of both countries in the case of Syria. The Syrian conflict has significantly altered the political, diplomatic and military outlook of the Middle East in the last few years. Russia's position regarding the international response on Syria has led to the evolution of a situational alliance between Moscow, Damascus, Tehran and Hezbollah. This alliance, whether temporary or not, only time will tell, has made Russia a strong and influential player in the region. The recent thwarting of the West attack on Syria two months ago and

the negotiations with Egypt for a Russian naval base are testimony of Russia's new role in the Middle East.

But there is another side of the process of "thawing" the relations between Iran and the West for Russia. A case may be made that the current "special" relationship with Iran is based mainly on it being punished with terrible sanctions that are crippling its economy and having nowhere else to turn but to Russia. This is true for the fields of nuclear cooperation – the construction of nuclear power plants – and political and military cooperation. But Russia fears that as soon as Iran will have other opportunities, it will try to reorient itself to some more influential Western countries. There could be a risk that a country eager to be "friendly" in times of trouble will look elsewhere after its isolation alleviates. The examples of Serbia after the fall of Milosevic and Libya after Gadhafi have put Russia on guard in this respect.

Another point that could be made for Russia not wanting a too great rapprochement between Iran and the West is related to Iran's oil and gas deposits. With the sanctions in place, those hydrocarbon reserves are kept out of the international market, thus not driving down their price. Oil prices are quite high due to ban on Iranian oil sales. Maybe even more important is the fact that the Iranian ample reserves of natural gas are unable to find their way to the European market and thus be a competitor to Gazprom's iron grip on the European countries. If Iran gets rehabilitated, the Nabucco pipeline project, currently dead but still on some life-support, could see a sudden resurrection (Kashfi, 2013). After Russia fought almost a decade to kill it through South-Stream, it is probably the last thing it would like to see.

As such, the Iranian file is a complex one for Russia, with both threats and opportunities. Whether Russian fears of an Iranian divorce are to become reality, the developments in the next six months will tell.

In conclusion

A potential "thaw" in the relations between Iran and United States would have a great impact on the political and strategic landscape of the Middle East and the world. It remains to be seen if such an opening is possible, despite glittering diplomatic breakthroughs. The enemies of such a process are many and powerful.

The US Congress reconvenes on December 9[th,] 2013 and has a number of new bills imposing new and more terrible sanctions on Iran. At the moment those bills are pending discussion, but should they come into effect as laws, they would spell disaster in any diplomatic understanding. Any such move would be seen as breaking the good faith of the negotiation process and would effectively kill any possibility, however remote, of an understating between Iran and the West. The powerful Jewish lobby in Washington has demonstrated its grip on the US Congress votes regarding Iran on more than one

occasion, the recent example being the aborted US military strike on Syria. Should Israel desire to torpedo any deal reached in Geneva this autumn, it is surely within its means to do so.

That, in turn, would lead to an escalation of the current conflict with Iran, generating a "nuclear crisis". The moderates now in power in Tehran would be discredited in the eyes of the Iranian population, with a possible return to a hardline attitude towards the West. Iran would undoubtedly continue to enrich uranium and to further develop its nuclear program. That move would also give fuel to the hawks in Jerusalem and Washington alike, forcing president Obama to really consider the "military option" against Iran. And with the Middle Eat in flames, things could only get worse.

Saudi Arabia's opposition to Iran has been discussed above, but deserves to be mentioned once more. The country has criticized the US "softness" on Syria and Iran and has threatened with dissolution of the existing alliance. Should an Iranian opening to the West gain momentum, it could very well mean a breakup of Saudi Arabia from the US orbit. Although claims could also be made that another patron is difficult to find, the development of the US shale sector and the advent of China as the world's largest oil importing country may offer hints to the potential route the Saudis will take.

Another point that requires attention is that at the present moment, when Iranian economy is "in the ropes", oil sales are low, the population is starting to complain against the crippling sanctions, the country still manages to project its influence in the region (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon) and fight a proxy war with the West in Syria. Even in such dire conditions, Iran is still a formidable player. Should sanctions be removed completely, its economy being opened to international investments and oil sales booming, it will dominate the region even more. It is enough to say that if Saudi Arabia fears Iran when it is weak, they would be just horrified if it gets stronger. And the effects of horror upon the rational judgment are well-known.

On the other hand, a successful international management of the Iranian nuclear program will have its share of benefits. Ranging from a greater cooperation with United States in fighting terrorism, stabilizing Afghanistan and strengthen the US foothold into Central Asia, providing a peaceful resolution to the Syrian civil war, restraining Hezbollah in Lebanon, to helping Egypt get back on its feet from the convulsions of the Arab Spring and beyond, the list goes on and on. Given the US attempts to shift its focus to Asia/Pacific, Iran may help in the American efforts to leave behind a stable Middle East. Considering the rational Iranian approach to its relations with the United States, the future may have a distinct bright possibility.

Regarding the relations with Israel, these could take a longer time to mend. It is unlikely that the revolutionary attitudes towards the "oppressor" of the fellow Muslims and

the "parasite" will be easily extinguished. But better relations are not impossible, with positive effects on the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations being just one example.

Another interesting idea is to consider the effects of an Iranian opening to the rest of the world upon the Iranian society. The theories of globalization effects on the various societies are well established in this respect. Although the Iranian society is by no means patriarchal and could be considered a rather modern society when compared to some Arab petro monarchies in the Middle East, decades-long international sanctions have shielded it against the full spectrum of the globalization consequences, with all their upheavals and successes. Should that shield be removed, Iran will undoubtedly undergo profound changes and challenges with surprising repercussions. Only time will tell.

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Central African Republic.
Understanding the Séléka Insurrection
of March 24 2013

Henry Kam KAH

Abstract. *The Séléka insurrection of March 24, 2003 in the Central African Republic (CAR) did not surprise observers of the chequered history of this country. Since political independence from France in August 1960, the CAR has been unstable for most of its history. The formation of armed groups, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons and the tussle for leadership among the elite and other forces have rendered the country ungovernable. This paper examines the rationale behind the Séléka insurrection of 2013 against a background of unfulfilled promises and tussle for the leadership of a country that is notorious for internal dissension. This union of different armed groups with diverse agendas seems not to be able to hold this country together, as instability continues in the country.*

Keywords*: Africa, Central African Republic, Séléka, Insurrection, Political Instability.*

Henry KAM KAH, PhD,
University of Buea,
Cameroon

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The African continent is known to be a continent of armed insurgency, civil unrest, and instability. Some of the countries that have witnessed internecine conflicts of one kind or another include Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Congo, Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the CAR (Joseph, 2012, p. 23-25; Cilliers and Schünemann, 2013, p. 9-10). In the Sub-Saharan African region, military power between states and insurgency appears to be shifting often in favour of the latter. This has more or less compelled African states to deploy forces beyond their borders more frequently (Howe, 2001, p. 1). In Ethiopia for instance, the govern-

ment has been at war with the Oromo for a long time, and in Somalia, the brutalities of the *Al-Shabaab* are well known including also sea piracy. These conflicts have compromised peace and security in the Horn of Africa and beyond. In Nigeria the *Boko Haram* insurgency and the activities of armed militias in the Niger Delta have threatened the peace and unity of this colossus of Africa. In the Central African sub-region to which is located the CAR, wars and conflicts have created unfavourable socio-political and economic conditions. There is also a proliferation of internal and inter-state violence in the sub-region. In fact, recurrent political crises and military hostilities have kept the central African sub-region continuously in the headlines. (Musifiku, 1999, p. 90-91; Frère, 2010, p. 1).

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a member of the Economic and Monetary Community of the Central African States known by its French acronym as CEMAC. It is also a member state of the Economic Community of the Central African States (ECCAS). The country, with an estimated population of over 4.5 million (Miles, 2013) is rich in natural resources, notably diamond, gold, copper, uranium, and timber. Its ethnic configuration indicates that the CAR is an amalgamation of various ethnic groups, like many other African countries. The Gbaya are an important ethnic group in the CAR. They got to the country because they were seeking refuge from the Fulani of Northern Cameroon in the early 19th century. The Banda, who were fleeing the Muslim Arab slave raids of Sudan, also moved into the country later in the 19th century. There are over 80 ethnic groups in the country, each with its own language. The largest ethnic groups in the country include the Gbaya 33%, Banda 27%, Mandjia 13%, Sara 10%, Mboum 7%, M'Baka 4%, and Yakoma 4%. The other smaller groups make up the remaining 2%. The major religious groups to which the people adhere are indigenous and also foreign. While over 35% of the population is of indigenous beliefs, 25% adhere to Protestantism, and another 25% are Catholics, while 15% are Muslims (Alusala, 2007, p. 11).

In terms of the standards of living in Africa, the CAR has one of the lowest, in spite of its rich natural endowments. In the domain of infrastructure, the road network of the country is not regularly maintained and some communities suffer from a chronic shortage of drinking water. The country is also politically unstable, corruption and street mugging are rife, and the economic climate is uncertain, attracting little foreign investment. The CAR has barely functioning state institutions, an economy in shambles, an impoverished population, and a security apparatus in complete disarray (N'Ddiaye, 2007, p.1; Central African Republic Country Level Information; Country Profile Central African Republic). These problems put together have made the country vulnerable to insurgency and instability in the Central African sub-region. This has often resulted in intervention and interference of various forms by gullible and self-seeking neighboring states notably Chad, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Objectives and Significance of the Study

In this study our focus is on the bases of the *Séléka* insurrection, which resulted in the overthrow of the government of General François Bozizé in March 2013. This rebellion was one out of the many that took place in the country since its independence from France in August 1960. The historical roots of the instability and disintegration of the country are examined to show that CAR had problems from its creation and these have manifested themselves in fratricidal wars time and again. The study also examines the grievances of the *Séléka* insurgents and the challenges that await the new *Séléka* led government which, if not carefully handled, is still likely to plunge the country further into greater chaos and pandemonium.

The significance of this study today cannot be over-emphasized. Since the CAR has been in instability, witnessed a leadership crisis, coups, counter-coups and armed insurrections, there is a compelling need to unravel the factors responsible for these events. Although the country is rich in natural resources such as timber, gold, copper and diamond, paradoxically it is one of the poorest in the world. The saga in a country rich in natural endowments only lends credence to the fact that countries with resources like Nigeria and Angola are cursed. While the problems of nation-building in the CAR may not only be attributed to the abundance of natural resources, they have contributed to the present state of affairs. The roots of the instability in the country are not only internal, but more importantly external.

Again, this study is important because continuous instability in the CAR is a clear indication that ECCAS and CEMAC charged with the responsibility of mobilizing the countries of the Central African sub-region have failed to bring peace and stability in this country. Rather, the country has been engaged in serious conflicts with two members of these blocs, namely Chad and the DRC. The failure of these two blocs to seek a lasting solution to the crisis in the CAR makes a mockery of the continental unity preached by the African Union (AU). For Africa to attain this goal, the regional groupings must take the lead and facilitate the task of the AU, otherwise the continent will continue to spend resources for resolving conflicts rather than providing for the daily needs of the people. To better understand the *Séléka* insurgency in the CAR, there is need to resort to the history of the country before and after independence.

Roots of Rebellion in the CAR

The roots of the crisis and instability in the Central African sub-region as a whole are in the French policy of assimilation, which became the guiding principle for colonial administration. Forje (2005, p. 228) argues that the politics of assimilation pursued by the French in the Central African sub-region was a betrayal of national sovereignty. This betrayal of sovereignty was compounded by the emergence of the governing elite.

This class of people converted this into a new form of hegemony. Hegemonic tendencies were expressed in the form of transfer of state property into personal/private property, ethical cleansing of the state and the creation of a family dynasty as the legitimate source of succession. Forje further argues that the sovereignty of the people of this sub-region was greedily hijacked by this privileged elite few. They instituted the politics of exclusion in place of inclusion. The result of this kind of policy, after the newly gained independence, plunged the Central African region into turmoil. The creation of the CAR, from the period of colonization to independence in 1960, witnessed a manifestation of hegemonic tendencies in different ways by both the French and the local elite.

The numerous crises in the CAR have their roots in the history of the country, from the past to its independence from France, on August 13, 1960. French colonial administration and the Arab slave trade in the area contributed negatively to the future stability of the country. The territory was initially organized in 1894 as the colony of Ubangi-Shari and subsequently united administratively with Chad in 1905. In 1910, the territory was incorporated into the French Equatorial Africa (Afrique Equatoriale Française, AEF) which was a federation of three colonies, namely Gabon, Middle Congo (Moyen Congo) and Ubangi-Shari-Chad. Four years later, Chad was separated from the Ubangi-Shari colony and made up a separate territory. The Ubangi-Shari, as the CAR was called at the time, received less attention and resources from France than the other AEF territories, namely the present day Republic of Congo, Gabon, and Chad. Rather, thousands of its population was forced to work on infrastructure projects elsewhere in AEF and this was of little benefit to the territory because its own infrastructure remained poor. Besides, the Arab slave trade raids from present day Chad and the Sudan resulted in decline of the population in large areas of the CAR. This eventually had an effect on the development and the ethnic and religious tensions in the country today (Alusala, 2007, p. 11; Berman and Lombard, 2008, p. 3).

French colonial administration and the Arab slave trade raids laid the basis of the present mayhem in the CAR with ramifications on neighbouring countries like Chad and Sudan. The administration of the territory as an integral part of the AEF did not encourage the French to devote resources towards its own separate development. Rather, they channeled resources towards the development of other areas, especially the Republic of Congo and Gabon, at the expense of the people of the CAR. To make matters worse, the population was 'carted away' to work on the infrastructure of other territories while their own infrastructure was unattended to. It remained poor and underdeveloped throughout the period of French colonial administration. The joint administration of the CAR with Chad seemingly gave post-independence governments of Chad the justification to meddle in the internal affairs of the country, and allowed armed groups from both countries to operate with impunity across their own borders and destabilize their governments. On the other hand, the Arab slave raids across the territory created

a culture of aggression which now manifests itself in the present abductions or kidnappings, a common practice among belligerents in the struggle for the control of the CAR. The aftermath of the slave raids also led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) that has continued to destabilize the CAR and its neighbours today.

Again, the colonial administration in Ubangi-Shari was underfinanced and mostly poorly trained. It also created a brutal and authoritarian, yet ineffectual regime in the country. This administration laid emphasis on cash-cropping, like cotton, and used coercive means to levy taxes on the population. Besides, diamond and gold mining which the French initiated in 1927 was a preserve of the Europeans who got all the benefits from it (Bauters, 2012, p. 9). When it got its independence, the country was one of the poorest and underdeveloped. Its problems were compounded by the authoritarian governments of David Dacko and his successor Jean-Bedel Bokassa. Dacko and Bokassa who declared himself emperor established an authoritarian regime similar to that of the French during the colonial era. Dacko reinforced his grip on power through constitutional reforms in 1962 and 1964. These reforms concentrated power in the hands of the executive branch of government and effectively removed the idea of political parties competing for power. The president banned independent trade unions in the country and censorship was tightened. On his part, Jean-Bedel Bokassa declared himself as "President for life" in 1972 and emperor in 1977 (Polity IV Country, 2010, p. 1; Bauters, 2012, p.10-12). Actions like the colonial government taxes on cotton farmers were increased, making life very difficult for the peasants. The problems of the CAR can be understood against a backdrop of this ineffectual and autocratic administration of the French and the early leaders who ruled the CAR after it gained independence from France on August 13, 1960.

The road to the independence of the CAR in August 1960 from French rule was in itself problematic and sowed seeds of discord for the political leadership of the country. The head of government during the transition period leading to independence, Barthélemy Boganda, a former Catholic priest, preferred to lead his party, the Movement for the Social Evolution of Black Africa (MESAN) with his cousin David Dacko, who eventually became the first president of the CAR at independence on August 13, 1960, after the death of Boganda in a plane crash. Another cousin of David Dacko, who served under him as Army Chief of Staff, Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power from him through a coup (Alusala, 2007, p. 12; Bauters, 2012, p. 10). The ethnical cleansing of leadership and governance in the CAR was also pursued by General André Kolingba when he seized power in 1981. During his tenure in office that lasted until 1993, he shamelessly filled the *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA) with members of his Yakoma ethnic group, one of the smallest in the country, compared to others like the Gbaya. Ange-Félix Patassé, who succeeded Kolingba in 1993 compounded matters further when he created ethnic militia groups to support his regime. These militias were composed of people mostly from the Sara, Kaba, and Gbaya groups of his home region. Even General Françoise

Bozizé's leadership from 2003 to 2013 was accused of ethnic considerations in the leadership of the country (A Widening War, 2007, p. 3; Bauters, 2012, p. 14). This was a precedent set by Boganda and pursued by his successors who ruled the country after independence. Such a precedent was bound to lead to resistance in the future.

Bases of the March 2013 Government Overthrow

The path to the March 2013 *Séléka* seizure of power in the CAR can easily been traced to 1993 when multiparty elections were organized in the country. General André Kolingba, who had ruled the CAR as his private property from 1981 to 1993 finally yielded to the will of the people and the wind of change that was blowing from the West by accepting multiparty democracy. This election led to his defeat at the polls and resulted in civil unrest, army mutinies, instability and civil war in the country (Frère, 2010, p. 2). The defeat of General André Kolingba in the general elections of 1993 was an ill omen for the country. It laid the foundation for numerous coup attempts on the government of Ange-Félix Patassé which ended in his overthrow and the overthrow of his successor General François Bozizé in the March 2013 armed insurrection. Between 1993 and 2003, when Ange-Félix Patassé was forced out of power by Bozizé and his men, seven coup attempts were organized against his government. This was not a mere coincidence, but a result of the system of governance that had been put in place by former leaders of the country namely David Dacko, Jean-Bédel Bokassa and André Kolingba. It was also due to the fact that the CAR like other African countries was experiencing a tumultuous economic quagmire and increased armed insurrection against the second elected government in the history of the country.

When Patassé became the democratically elected president of the CAR in 1993, he seemed not to have learnt anything from history. He sought to follow the footsteps of André Kolingba by promoting ethnicity in state governance (Forje, 2005, p. 227-228). Kolingba, while in office, had embarked on a massive recruitment of the Yakoma, his ethnic group, into the army at the expense of other ethnic groups and by the time he left office in 1993, 70 % of the army was in the hands of the Yakoma who are only 4 % of the population of the CAR. Patassé did not arrest this problem rather he accentuated it by exploiting his Northern heritage for political gain. Ethnicisation of public space has been a common feature of countries of the Central African sub region including Cameroon (Fomin, 2005, p. 167). By pursuing this policy of ethnicisation of governance the problems of CAR were compounded because a rift was created between the *Riverain* and *Savaniers* as the people of the South and North were/are referred to. President Patassé redeployed the Yakoma military recruited by Kolingba and most Presidential Guards during his period of rule were from the Sara-Kaba ethnic group of the North. The overwhelming presence of the Yakoma in the military remained a source of instability for the government of Patassé between 1993 and 2003 when his government was toppled by Bozizé (Polity IV Country Report, 2010, p. 3; Mehler, 2009).

In spite of the ethnic politics of Patassé, the Northern part of the CAR remained relatively underdeveloped under his presidency. The reform he initiated in the security services created a rift between the FACA, the regular army, and the Presidential Guards, leading to serious security problems for the country (Bauters, 2012, p. 13). From 1991 to the overthrow of Patassé and Bozizé, the security forces of the CAR were as divided as never before. This is one of the problems that led to the attempt by Kolingba and Bozizé in 2001 and 2002 respectively to topple the Patassé regime and culminated with the defeat of Patassé's forces in 2003.

Although armed groups existed in the CAR from the late seventies and early eighties spanning from the government of Bokassa to Kolingba like the *Mouvement centrafricain pour la liberation nationale* (MCLN) of Rudolph Idi Lala, these were hardly considered as a pressing matter, because firearms were scarce at the time. After the fall of Bokassa arms were smuggled in from Chad and the number skyrocketed when the government of Hissène Habré was toppled in 1990. Many more arms were smuggled into the country after the fall of Mobutu in 1997. As many arms were smuggled into the country, children were co-opted into fighting in the armed groups (Ayike, 2005, p. 192; Organized Crime, 2011, p. 7). President Patassé took over the mantle of leadership in the CAR when the number of arms and armed groups had increased in the country (Bauters, 2012, p. 18). Many more armed groups emerged to challenge existing ones and also government forces created a situation of insecurity and instability. Throughout his reign Patassé was faced with the problem of handling the differences between the different military services and to suppress armed groups, many of whom operated with foreign support from neighboring countries like the DRC, Sudan, and Chad.

The military crisis in the CAR in 1996 was exacerbated by a serious political crisis which led to widespread public discontent over social and economic problems. Due to the prolonged non-payment of salary arrears of the soldiers, civilians were regularly attacked by the men in uniform (Internal Displacement, 2007, p. 9; Taylor, 2005, p. 241; IFAD Participation in the Debt Initiative, 2008, p. 1). Civil servants and government workers also went through a decade of unpaid wages which compounded the socio-political crises of the country from 1996 onwards leading to Patassé's overthrow in 2003 (Central African Republic, Country Level Information). To protect himself and continue to rule the people, Patassé enlisted foreign support from Libya and the DRC and also created a personal armed group known as *karako*, meaning "peanut" in the local *Sango* language (Mehler, 2009; Bauters, 2012, p. 13). The economic problems of the people were compounded by the devaluation of the franc CFA by 50% due to international pressure which only impoverished the population further (Berman, 2008, p. 6). Their reaction, in the mid-1990s, was a descent into violence against the state, which threatened its very existence and stability and made the government of Patassé vulnerable to several coup attempts throughout the period of his administration of the CAR.

The dismissal of General François Bozizé as Army Chief of Staff by President Patassé in 2001 helped the sacked Chief of Staff to escape to Chad and mobilize forces against him with a view to assuming the mantle of leadership in the country. Bozizé escaped to Chad with several hundreds of troops loyal to him. They were all determined to bring the government of Patassé to its knees (War Crimes, 2003, p. 36). While in Chad, he enlisted the support of several armed groups in the Northern part of the CAR and was also given assistance by the Chadian government for strategic reasons. One of these reasons was to secure the oil fields of Chad and make the border with the CAR safe for Chad's economic and other interests. Had Patassé not out rightly dismissed Bozizé, his government might have survived beyond the 2003 military take-over that was commandeered by Bozizé. He might also have successfully organized another election after that of 1999 to ensure a peaceful transfer of power and the consolidation of democracy in the country. Unable to withstand the incessant armed attacks of the Bozizé rebel group, Patassé's men yielded when they were overpowered by those of Bozizé with the assistance of Chadians. The presidential palace fell to Bozizé while President Patassé was out of the country attending a Community of Sahel-Saharan States (COMESA) summit in Niger (Mehler, 2009). Upon his return from this summit, the president could not land in Bangui and was forced to fly to Cameroon and finally took exile in Togo.

Other issues which led to mounting hatred for the Patassé government included widespread mismanagement and self-enrichment by the ruling elite of the country. There was also the outright buying of members of parliament and exclusion of formerly privileged groups like the Yakoma under the previous government of André Kolingba (Mehler, 2009). These grievances of the people formed the basis for the army mutinies of 1996/97, the coup attempts of 2001/2002 and the successful rebellion of 2003 that saw power change hands from Patassé to Bozizé. The common citizen could hardly come to terms with mismanagement of state resources. The privileged enriched themselves while the masses wallowed in squalor with no basic amenities like water and electricity. The government of Patassé was bound to crumble like a pack of cards because of the policy of exclusion and selective treatment that it adopted. This policy pitted many other groups from the South against those from the North. This was more so because Patassé was the first leader of the country to come from the North (Country Profile, 2007, p. 4) and people from the densely populated North-West impoverished region also expected improvements in their region, which were not forthcoming. Patassé was therefore placed in a dilemma, which was satisfying his kith and kin of the North and other discontented groups in the South of the country.

People of the Northern part of the CAR who expected much from their own began to develop misgivings with Patassé's government. In an attempt to counter the cross-border raids of Bozizé's men in the North and the *coupeur des routes* syndrome, President Patassé had set up a special force outside the regular army. It was led by Colonel

Abdoulaye Miskine, a former commando in Chad. This special force of mercenaries was a mixed bunch with some having links with former President Hissène Habre and others to Goukouni Queiddeye. They committed serious atrocities on the population in the North as was reported by local human rights organizations (Bauters, 2012, p. 13; War Crimes, 2003, p. 36; Ghura 2004, p.14). Opponents of the government criticized the excesses of this special force and especially Colonel Miskine who had Chadian connections. It was however difficult to tackle the problems of the *coupeur des routes* and the armed attacks orchestrated by Bozizé and his men because of the porous borders in the North and the numerous armed groups operating across the borders of Sudan and Chad, countries with a very long history of civil wars. Bozizé became president through seizure of power, but soon after he ran into problems with his supporters, which explains why there was opposition to his administration leading to an insurgency and defeat in March 2013.

Nature of Séléka Insurgency

The *Séléka* insurgency of March 24, 2013, which led to the change of leadership from François Bozizé to Michel Am Nondroko Djotodia, was due to several factors dating back to peace talks with the government in 2007. The word *Séléka* is a Sango word for union or alliance, that is, a coalition of about five separate rebel groups, which include the *Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement* (UFDR), the *Convention des patriots pour la justice et la paix* (CPJP) and the *Convention patriotique pour le salut Wa Kodro* (CSPK). Two other groups joined the ranks of the *Séléka,* namely the *Front démocratique du peuple Centrafricain* (FDPC) and a Chadian group called the *Front populaire pour le redressement* (FPR). These groups are mainly from the restive North East of the CAR, a region that is geographically isolated, historically marginalized and almost stateless. Within the ranks of the coalition were also Islamic jihadists from Chad and Sudan. Fighters of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) also joined the *Séléka* rebels in the capture of the government of the CAR (Central African Republic Conflict 2012 to Present; Miles, 2013; Vircoulon, 2013; Urgent Humanitarian Needs, 2013; Looming Food Crisis, 2013; Seleka Rebels in the Central African Republic, 16 May 2013). Prior to their defeat of the government of Bozizé, they received support from armed fighters from neighboring Sudan, notably the *Janjaweed* which has been accused of committing atrocities against civilians in the Darfur region (Larson, 2013).

The road to the *Séléka* rebellion is in fact an effect of the CAR-Bush War that lasted from 2004 to 2007. The war started barely one year after Bozizé seized power in a military coup while president Patassé was attending a summit in Niger. This Bush War started with a rebellion organized by the UFDR in North Eastern CAR led by Michel Djotodia. The war soon escalated into a major fight, where the UFDR forces fought against the CAR government together with other rebel groups located in other parts of the CAR.

The other rebel groups included the *Groupe d'action patriotique pour la liberation de Centrafrique* (GAPLC), the CPJP, the *L'Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie* (APRD), the *Mouvements des liberateurs Centrafricains pour la justice* (MLCJ) and the *Front démocratique Centrafricain* (FDC). The combined attack on the new government of Bozizé from these groups led to the displacement of thousands of people for about three years (Central African Republic Conflict 2012-Present). In spite of a peace agreement between the Bozizé government and the CPJP to end the Bush War, political violence continued especially in the Eastern and Central regions of the CAR. It was clear that the legitimacy of the government of Bozizé was seriously challenged by the armed groups that refused to sign a peace agreement with the government. As long as the government neither suppressed these groups nor provided uncontested leadership of the country, it was clear that from its inception in 2003, it was doomed for failure.

The insurgency of the *Séléka* took on a very decisive phase in December 2012. The reasons that were advanced by the rebel groups for waging war against the government included the argument that there was no solution to the problem of the armed groups of North Eastern CAR, human rights abuses, the lack of a program of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) for the fighters, as well as a crippled security system in the country. The disarmament of the fighters had been planned since the agreements of Libreville in 2007 and 2008, but this was never implemented due to the lack of political will of the Bozizé regime. For example, the accords between the government and the rebel groups included financial support and other assistance for insurgents who laid down their arms (Central African Republic Déja-Vu, 2008; Urgent Humanitarian Needs, 2013; Miles, 2013; Boas and Hentz, 2013, p. 2; Seleka Central Africa's, 24 March 2013; Central African Republic, 10 May 2013; Ngoupana, 2013). The *Séléka* leadership also claimed that they were fighting because of a lack of progress after a peace deal ended the 2004-2007 Bush War (Central African Republic Conflict 2012-Present). A Catholic Bishop, Mgr. Aguirre Monus, however argued that the main goal of the *Séléka* coalition was to overthrow the government and impose a regime of Islamic imprint. He contended that a majority of the people who belonged to the coalition were jihadists who spoke Arabic, and who killed, raped civilians, looted homes and Christian missions, not mosques (The Pope App, 2013). Although the bishop saw in the *Séléka* a jihadist group fighting to impose Islam in the CAR, the coalition is more complex in its objectives and membership than religion. Whatever the case, only time will tell if the argument of the bishop and other observers is true. Besides, only 15 % of the population of the CAR is Muslim (Azikiwe, 2013). A majority of the population adhere to other religious groups notably the Protestant, Catholic and indigenous religions. This alone is likely going to deter the new government from imposing a theocratic state in the CAR, at least in the foreseeable future.

In spite of the argument of the *Séléka* to justify the insurrection in the CAR in 2013, other people have a contrary opinion to their real motivation. For example, according to Alex Vines of Catham House, a London-based institute that studies international affairs, the actions of the *Séléka* were based purely on ambition. He posited that "all accounts of the *Séléka* are that they have no development vision for CAR. It's exclusively about redistribution of patrimony from having captured the state" (Associated Press, 2013). This argument could be supported by the attitude of the elite of the country. None of these elite who have been accused of war crimes or other problems have ever been killed in the process. The same elite who become government ministers today are rebels of tomorrow fighting against the government and the state and going scot free. It is also difficult to explain the impunity with which successive governments privatize the state and its resources to members of their ethnic group or to a privileged few to the extent that after their defeat, the next government is held hostage by ethnic loyalties and previously privileged groups. With the complex interplay of issues one can only partially agree with Alex Vine's argument that the *Séléka* coalition wanted participation or complete control of the redistribution of the resources of the country by leading it.

There were other reasons for the emergence of the *Séléka* in the CAR and the war it waged on the government of François Bozizé. For a long time there was a lack of governance in the Vakaga and Haute Kotto regions of the North; the permeable borders and widespread contraband of weapons and other goods in this region constituted a perfect environment for the emergence of the *Séléka* coalition. Other grievances of the people that led to a *Séléka* insurgence on the government included Bozizé's imposition of his relatives in the transitional government, his rearmament through the purchase of helicopters and his delay in releasing political prisoners as agreed upon during the accords with the opposition. *Séléka* militants also demanded the withdrawal of South African troops deployed in Bangui in 2012 due to an agreement between the South African government and that of the CAR. The rebels were also encouraged by the fact that regional peers in Central Africa during the Libreville peace talks blamed Bozizé for closing down political space and dialogue with the opposition. Proof of this was seen in the fact that the multinational CEMAC force in the CAR FOMUC did not intervene when the rebels moved towards Bangui and took it over (Vircoulon, 2013; Central African Republic, 2013). There was therefore a generalized atmosphere of uncertainty considering the non-implementation of the Libreville Accords, with each party blaming the other for failure to implement it. The *Séléka* coalition took advantage of this and other grievances to launch a sustained attack on the government from December 2012 leading to yet another peace deal or cease-fire on January 11, 2013.

The *Séléka* acting strongly against the government of Bozizé from late November 2012, forced the government to the negotiation table once more in January 2013. This was more so because between December 2012 and January 2013 the war had led to a loom-

ing food crisis because of the hike in prices among other consequences. On January 11, 2013, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Libreville Gabon through the mediation of CEMAC. Following the agreement, the *Séléka* coalition dropped its demand for the resignation of François Bozizé. The president, on his part, agreed to appoint a Prime Minister from the opposition by January 18, 2013. In accordance with the agreement, Bozizé appointed Nicolas Tiangaye as Prime Minister in replacement of Faustin-Archange Touadéra. Senior *Séléka* leader Michel Djotodia became the Defence Minister. To enforce the cease-fire agreement and a peace deal, foreign troops including those from South Africa were deployed in the CAR. In spite of these appointments and the deployment of foreign troops to assist in bringing back the CAR to the path of peace and stability, the ceasefire was broken barely six days later, with each party accusing the other of not respecting it (BBC News, 2013). In March, the *Séléka* recalled Djotodia and four other Ministers from the transitional government and asked for the withdrawal of the South African National Defense Forces (SANDF) that was protecting Bangui, the capital of the CAR. This was a clear indication of the collapse of the January ceasefire agreement and also a challenge to the continuous rule of Bozizé although the coalition had agreed to Bozizé's rule until the 2016 elections during the ceasefire agreement of January 2013. It was also an indication of the misgivings that had developed within the ranks of the *Séléka*. Some military commanders of the coalition felt that Djotodia had negotiated an agreement too quickly with Bozizé to his own private and not the collective interest of the fighters (Vircoulon, 2013; Besseling, 2013).

The withdrawal of Djotodia and four other coalition Ministers from the government was the beginning of a war of failure for the government of Bozizé and success for the rebel coalition. Things moved on rather fast and not in favor of the government of Bozizé. The coalition led multiplied attacks on key towns and cities and brought them under their control. Bangui, the capital of the CAR, finally capitulated on March 24, 2013, and President Bozizé escaped to Cameroon. Later that day, Michel Djotodia declared himself President of the country and the constitution and the national assembly were suspended and dissolved. He pledged to respect a peace deal that was signed earlier in 2013. Earlier, he had declared that he would rule the country for three years and thereafter organize elections. Following the coup, the borders of the CAR were closed with neighboring countries. The government of Djotodia was condemned by member states of CEMAC (Global Times, 2013) but paradoxically called for the formation of an inclusive transitional council and the holding of elections in 18 months and not three years as envisioned by Djotodia. The eventual putting in place of a transitional parliament of 105 members and their election of Djotodia as the only candidate who had earlier declared himself president led to the tacit recognition of the government by African leaders. Djotodia is the first CAR president from the remote, neglected and large North East.

In order to stamp his authority over the country after the ouster of the government of Bozizé, the new military leader of the CAR Djotodia on March 31, 2013, named a government. This government consisted of nine members of the *Séléka*. There were eight representatives of parties that opposed Bozizé while he was in office and one of the members of government was associated with the government of Bozizé. Sixteen positions were reserved for the representatives of civil society but the opposition to the *Séléka* government argues that these are actually disguised allies of the *Séléka* (Central African Republic Conflict 2012-Present). Whether this government will perform and address the myriad of problems of the people of the CAR or not is yet to be seen. The Djotodia government is barely a few months in office but there are disturbing signals as to whether it will deliver on its promises or not. Fighting by forces loyal to the ousted president continue.

As soon as the *Séléka* coalition took over the CAR, its fighters went on a rampage executing opponents, raping women, and looting homes. The takeover also resulted in recruitment of children, disappearances and kidnappings. The fighters particularly targeted members of FACA and many killings occurred in the urban areas in broad daylight. Commanders of the coalition seemed not to be able to maintain discipline within the ranks of the *Séléka* fighters (Ngoupana, 2013; Ngoupana, 2013; Vatican Radio, 2013; Reuters, 2013). Contrary to the Kimberley Process that claims that the origin of diamonds sold on the world market be made known, *Séléka* elements are strengthening their control of the lucrative diamond industry and have been selling some of the stones (Krista, 2013; Seleka Rebels Gain Control, 11 May 2013) rather illegally. In the midst of outrage against the excesses of the *Séléka* fighters, Djotodia created a National Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on crimes and human rights abuses committed in the CAR since 2002, including not only the regimes of Patassé but also that of Bozizé (Reuters, 2013). This is an evasive approach to the blatant human rights abuses of the coalition forces. The establishment of a Commission of Inquiry by the government is simply a way of buying time and laying the matter to rest. This will only be possible if the government will succeed in stamping its authority over the institutions of the state. It is also difficult for a coalition with different agendas to work in a coherent manner since each group wants to get the best in the redistribution of the resources of the country.

Other social problems that resulted from the *Séléka* insurgency in the CAR included the challenges to good health, nutrition because of souring food prices, clean water and insecurity. In Bangui for example, only two hospitals were functioning by April 2013 and schools were closed in the whole country while civil servants were still to get back to work. The closure of the borders had a devastating effect on the people because there was no movement of commercial goods from Douala in Cameroon to the CAR. Douala is the main port for exports and imports for the CAR. One month after the military

takeover in the CAR, motorbike taxi and bus drivers went on strike to protest because of insecurity, extortion and violence against them (Africa/Central Africa Fides.org). These are signals to the massive challenges that await the *Séléka* led government which if not well handled and on time will contribute to its own failure like other regimes before it.

Lessons and Preoccupations

Going through the arguments that were raised by the *Séléka* fighters to justify the armed insurrection against the government of Bozizé and the continuing socio-political problems of the country borne out of its historic past, there are a number of preoccupations for the *Séléka* led government. Considering the degree of instability and disintegration in the Central African region due to the escalating wars in the CAR and neighboring countries like Sudan, DRC and Chad one may argue that this country may find difficulties in solving its own problems which are inextricably linked to the problems of the neighbors and other countries having influence there. Since independence, many regulations that have been enacted are not properly enforced by the leaders, for their selfish interests. High-ranking dignitaries circumvent the rules because of the feeling that they are above the law that should control and guide everyone.

Today, the *Séléka* are in control of the CAR but the country has known internal schism since independence and factional fighting from the late 1970s to the present. The state has been unable to guarantee the security of its citizens or its borders for a long time, and armed groups freely move and act at will across the border. Through frequent conflicts in the country, over 103,153 people were internally displaced by 2011. There is a common saying among the people of the CAR that "the state stops at PK 12" meaning that the official government reach and control does not extend beyond 12Km radius around Bangui, the capital of the CAR. This is because there is the emergence of parallel structures replacing the failing state institutions in different parts of the country (Zafar and Kubota, 2003; Unicef Central African Republic, 2009; Frère, 2010, p. 3-10; Central African Republic, 2011; Bauters, 2012). Again, in the CAR the rulers of today are the rebels of yesterday, and former inner circle members who fall from grace escape to join rebel movements and return to power and influence soon after. There are therefore no guarantees that the *Sèlèka* coalition will successfully and deliberately tackle these problems when the groups that constitute this coalition have different agendas. There is also no guarantee that coming from the North of the country like Patassè the leader of the people Michel Djotodia will improve the lives of the people of this region and control the border with Sudan, the DRC and Chad, where there have been interventions in the past. This is even more compelling for the North East of the country, which is the least developed of all of the regions of the CAR.

Another pending issue in the political evolution of the CAR is the differences that have existed over the years between the FACA, a small and ineffective force, made up of sev-

eral branches which often perceive each other as rivals, the Presidential Guard being the best known and the Gendarmerie which operates on its own. In fact, rather than complementing the army, the gendarmerie has historically competed with it or with other government security agencies, all of this for the president's trust and support to the exclusion of the others. Since its creation shortly after independence, the gendarmerie has at times functioned independently and at other times served under the chief of staff of the armed forces (Berman and Lombard, 2008, p. 15; Bauters, 2012, p. 24). This is compounded by the proliferation of self-defense groups in different parts of the country. Whenever there has been a change of government, the military has been affected through further polarization. In the present circumstance, the *Sèlèka* fighters have taken over Bangui and the security of the country. Former FACA soldiers and others serving the government of Bozizè have either been suppressed or forced to flee with weapons. This is a very serious problem because the security of the country can neither be ethnicised as was done by Kolingba, Patassè and Bozizè, nor changed at will by those who seize power with the barrel of a gun. Soon after the *Sèlèka* took over control of Bangui they began to attack and kill regular forces. The problem for this government is how to demobilize and re-integrate former fighters and former regular forces of the country. This was one of the reasons that led to their attack on the government of Bozizè and may well be 'a pain in the neck' of the new government.

The fact that the *Séléka* is a coalition of groups from within and outside the CAR is a problem and is likely to be a source of disagreement between the leaders in the future. Experience shows that the Bozizé seizure of power from Patassé was owed to support from rebel forces from Chad. When he took over control over the state he made use of Chadian fighters. No sooner than he took over, did the Bush War of 2004 to 2007 break out. Many of the former fighters were disgruntled with their non-remuneration to the degree that they wanted and took to fighting against the government. Throughout the negotiations between the government and the rebels, the issue of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration became a thorny one. How could people be disarmed, demobilized and reintegrated when there were no safeguards for this to take place? Armed groups that fought against the government accused it of failing to make this happen. Today, some of the armed groups are in power and the problem of sharing the spoils of war will crop up and is likely going to be a subject of disagreement in the very near future. How this is handled today in order not to allow for a repeat of the problem is yet to be seen with the *Séléka* leadership.

The formation of a government after an insurgency goes with agreements and disagreements between the belligerents and other forces eager to participate in governance. Following the military take-over in March 2013, and the transitional government that was formed, there are already dissenting voices condemning the distribution of positions. Many have interpreted the government as an overwhelmingly led *Séléka* regime

to the exclusion of others. Other voices argue that the attempt to expand power-sharing might actually end up sharing too much power to the instability of the state (Bekoe, 2013). Fears are already being expressed against Djotodia, accusing him of wanting to turn the CAR in an Islamic state. How the government responds to this and how the ministers serve the population will determine subsequent response to it either through civil unrest or support for its actions. The onus is therefore on these ministers and the entire cabinet to rise above sectarian interests and serve the country with the aim of bringing lasting peace and stability.

The way out of some of the problems of the CAR is to prevent disgruntled politicians from using newly formed armed groups; originally addressing local grievances to re-launch themselves into the political scene and to develop functioning democratic institutions. There is also need to address local grievances and develop faith in elected representatives of the people while restoring their dignity. It is also important for Djotodia to forge new networks with the existing political elite to appease different ethnic interests and rally the population towards rebuilding a country destroyed by many years of insurgencies. Bekoe (2013) argues that if some of these issues are considered, it will staff off a coup; he also suggests that a critical partnership is necessary with the citizenry to inspire confidence and support. This can be made possible through earnest reform, reconciliation, and disarmament, which is a problem since state officials are unable to make the presence of the government felt in all the nooks and crannies of the country. Based on the sources of instability, the CAR government must truly engage in meaningful bilateral relations with neighboring countries to handle the problems of refugees and other insurgent groups. This can be mutually beneficial if it is involved in trying to support these countries in solving their problems, because, by extension, it will be handling some of the complex problems associated with the instability in these neighboring countries. In short, it will also be a way of solving some of the problems of the CAR.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have traced the origins of the instability in the CAR leading to the *Séléka* overthrow of President François Bozizé in March 2013. The way the country was created and governed by France within French Equatorial Africa and the leadership of the country at independence laid the foundation for internal division and fighting. Again, the ethnicisation of politics and the military beginning with the government of General André Kolingba through Ange-Félix Patassé to Bozizé infuriated those groups that were excluded from the management of the affairs of the CAR. It was therefore just a matter of time for these governments to be defeated in an election as was the case of Kolingba or be forced out of power as was the case of Patassé and Bozizé. Patassé managed to rule the country for ten years against mounting tension and seven coup attempts.

Several attempts were made to bring discontented parties together following the Bush War of 2004-2007. The Libreville Accords, which were aimed at seeking a lasting so-

lution to the leadership crisis in the CAR eventually failed, as the parties to the talks accused one another of not respecting the terms of the engagement. Things dragged on until December 2012 when about five of the armed groups came together in a union to topple the government of Bozizé. In spite of the January peace talks, which saw the entry into government of members of the *Séléka* group, things soon turned sour when these members of government were recalled and fighting broke out again. The presence of South African troops and those of member countries of the Central African union did not deter the *Séléka* from advancing towards Bangui. In fact, in an attempt to stop the group from advancing on to the capital, South African forces were killed in the process.

Since March 24, the *Séléka* took over control of the CAR as François Bozizé fled the country to Cameroon. Supporters of the former leader were attacked and killed. There is still general insecurity in the country as fighting, killings, and looting continue in several parts of the territory. It is not certain how long this will last and how the present leadership will tackle this. If care is not taken, the same way through which the present leadership came to power will be the same way it will go. The signs are there to show that there is still no peace and assurance of good leadership in this country. What seem to go on are reprisals, which make the present government not different from the previous ones. Sooner, rather than later, destabilizing neighbors like Chad and Sudan will continue to fuel the crisis and benefit from the chaos that characterizes the leadership of the CAR.

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Cameroon. Too Much to Carry: The Perception and Ramifications of Boko Haram's Activities on Cameroon

Walter Gam NKWI

Abstract. *This paper examines the activities and consequences of Boko Haram in Nigeria and how it is perceived and conceived in Cameroon within the government circles and the local population. It further focuses on the historical roots of the Boko Haram. Using internet sources, secondary data and personal observations, the paper contends that this conflict, like most conflicts in human history, has a spill-over effect which has affected Cameroon in a significant way. Both the government and local population have to a large extent been affected by the activities of Boko Haram.*

Key words*: Boko Haram, Cameroon, Nigeria, Yaounde Summit, ECOWAS, West Africa, Gulf of Guinea, Piracy.*

Walter Gam NKWI, PhD
University of Buea,
Cameroon

Introduction: Objectives; Understanding Boko Haram

Two unrelated events have inspired me to write to this paper. First, from Monday 24 to Tuesday 25 June 2013, twenty-five West African and Central African heads of State met in Yaoundé, Cameroon for the summit on Maritime Security in the Gulf of Guinea. This was meant to coordinate their efforts in addressing illegal activities in the region that have recently surpassed Somali piracy. The challenge facing the Yaoundé Summit, one of the most important ever held in Africa, was to provide a coordinated regional and international response to the scourges of piracy, drug trafficking, armed robbery and other illegal maritime activities in the Gulf of Guinea. To this end, the

leaders reviewed and adopted a series of measures that were previously reviewed at the March 2013 inter-ministerial conference which was held in Cotonou, the capital of Benin. In Cotonou, the ministers for Security, Foreign Affairs and Defense from the 25 West African and Central African States produced a Memorandum of Understanding on maritime security in these two African regions and approved a draft Code of Conduct designed to prevent and combat piracy, armed robbery and illegal activities committed against ships. The Yaounde summit was organized with the support of the United Nations and the African Union was attended by member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Commission of the Gulf of Guinea (CGG), among other international partners. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), 966 sailors were attacked, with 5 of 206 hostages killed in West Africa in 2012, compared to 851 off the Somali coast in the Gulf of Aden, a notorious piracy area. In the first quarter of 2013, the Gulf of Guinea, where there are large-scale oil industry operations on the West African coast, was the scene of 15 incidents. Nigeria alone suffered 11 cases of piracy in the region (including 9 involving firearms), and Cote d'Ivoire suffered 3 incidents, the report said. This paper is not about the Gulf of Guinea per se. It is about Boko Haram, whose activities span the geographical space of Central and West Africa emanating from Nigeria. It is the microcosm of a larger project which seeks to evaluate the impact of Boko Haram conflict around the Lake Chad region. It specifically focuses on the consequences of Boko Haram on Cameroon.

This anecdotal story points us to several issues. The first is the existence of Boko Haram across Nigeria-Cameroon boundary and the kidnapping of foreigners. The second is the complicity of Boko Haram with al Queda. The third is the relationship of Boko Haram with AQIM and the Tuareg rebels of Northern Mali. All these suggest the importance and gravity of Boko Haram conflict in the sub-region but this essay focuses on the net effect of Boko Haram on Cameroon.

Conflict is a feature of all human societies, poor or rich; developed or underdeveloped. Consequently, no human group or community exists without the logical dialectical opposition of friend-enemy either among its members or between it and others. Human groups exist with definite objectives which may be realized with or without the assistance of others. Whoever puts into jeopardy the concrete realization of the common objectives or the achievement of the *bonum commune* creates a situation of conflict and becomes the enemy or a less friendly partner (Nkwi, 1987, p. 64). The African continent has witnessed conflicts of various kinds. These conflicts are as varied as its causes and the ways these conflicts affect other areas are as diverse as the regions.

One of the distinguishing features of Africa's political chemistry is its many protracted social and political conflicts. These conflicts do not operate in isolation. Their activities have ripple effects in the areas which they operate. North, Central and West Africa ap-

pear to be rife with conflicts and arm militias seeking for a redress of cultural norms according to their whims and caprices. The Al-Shabab of Somalia representing the horn of Africa, the Boko Haram of West Africa and Al-Qaeda branch of North Africa, AQIM of Mali; Janjaweed of Darfur, the Seleka rebels which have taken the better part of Central Africa. All these have a common objective, which is to do away with Western civilization. According to these groups, the Western civilization is 'evil' and should therefore be cleansed. The event which occurred in the North of Cameroon and which was orchestrated by Boko Haram was just a tip of an iceberg indicating and confirming that a conflict in a country would have its ramifications felt by its neighbours and beyond. Is this what has been going through most of the continent with groups that resemble Boko Haram in formation and objectives? This paper takes its inspiration from such events and focuses on examining the deeper effects and historicity of Boko Haram on Cameroon.

What is Boko Haram?

Boko Haram has received multiple meanings and definitions from scholars with varied backgrounds (Adibe, 2012; Adesoji, 2010; Akokegh, 2012; Cook, 2011; Johnson, 2011; Last, 2009; Mantzikos, 2010; Ojo, 2010; Onapajo, 2012; Pham, 2012; Thomson, 2012; Walker, 2012). Despite all these various definitions, there is need to contextualize the meaning of Boko Haram. Broadly, it is known as the Congregation and People of Tradition for the Proselytism and Jihad. It is an Islamic movement which strongly opposes non sharia legal systems and what they deem as Westernization. It seeks to establish the sharia law in the country, especially in the Northern parts of Nigeria. It was formed in Maiduguri. Etymologically, the term Boko Haram comes from Hausa, an indigenous language that is largely spoken in Northern Nigeria. 'Boko' in Hausa figuratively means "Western education" and "Haram", again figuratively, means "sin" (literally meaning 'forbidden'). Loosely, translated from Hausa therefore the term means "Western education is forbidden" (Rodolico, 2012; Austen, 2010). It means that anything about Western civilization ranging from dressing codes, eating, and culture, is aberrational to Boko Haram. In summary therefore, Boko Haram stands for a civilization against another civilization and therefore could aptly be described as a clash of two civilizations based on religious beliefs.

Since the beginning of the 21st Century (2001), when the activities of Boko Haram became more visible in Nigeria, researchers, scholars and journalists, and jacks-of-all-trades have taken a keen interest in it. The intensity and gravity of the group activities necessitates a visit at the literature. The literature which is legion and indicates that much ink has flown. This will do us some good if we take up some snapshots here to appreciate how much of the ground has been covered thus far. All the literature so far cannot be covered in a single paper. Some scholars have focused on the origins of Boko Haram. Loimeier (2012) provides an historical background paying attention to the Yan

Izala movement of reforms within Islam. Last (2007, 2009 and 2011), International Crisis Group (2010) and Warner (2012, p. 38-40) have all attempted to provide an historical account. Others have defined and sustained their stand that Boko Haram is a terrorist group (see Popoola 2012, p. 43-66; Omitola, 2012; Onapajo, 2012, p. 337-357; Musa, 2012; Soyinka, 2012; Ojo, 2011, p. 45-62; Maiangwa *et al.*, 2012, p. 40-57; Barrett, 2012, p. 719-736; Bagaji, 2012, p. 33-41). Yet, others have posed the question regarding what Boko Haram really is (Walker, 2012; Rogers, 2012, Thomson, 2012; Adibe, 2012; Adesoji, 2010; Akokegh, 2012; Cook, 2011; Mantzikos, 2010). Others still have focused on examining the current happenings surrounding Boko Haram and violence in the south of Nigeria. Watts (2009) offers a nexus between the string of events in the North and the rich oil Delta of South East Nigeria while Walker (2012) offers an interesting link between real and imagined Boko Haram. Other scholars that belonged to this school include Onuoha, 2010; Ifeka, 2010; Danjibo 2009; Adesoji, 2010. Still others have attempted to trace Boko Haram's relations with the Al-Shabab of Somalia (Cook, 2011). Some of the works have remained at best skeletal and limited in scope (Akokegh, 2012, p. 46-55).

This body of literature, although not comprehensive enough, suggests that much has been written on Boko Haram. Despite the significant amount of literature, there are still yawning gaps to piece the 'conflicting narratives together' (Adib, 2012, p. 47-64) and therefore add to the budding literature and debates. The effects of Boko Haram in Cameroon, its perception and conception notwithstanding, have remained a *terra incognita* in the scholarship. In what follows in this paper, I wish to demonstrate not just the activities of Boko Haram but – so crucial to the paper – the consequences of the activities in Cameroon and a deeper historical touch which has not been adequately tackled so far. How has the *modus operandi* of the group affected the geo-politics and social configuration of Cameroon?

In other to achieve this objective, the paper starts by situating the significance of such a study. Is it worth undertaking a study of Boko-Haram in Nigeria and of its ripple effects on global politics? Absolutely yes! From the significance, the paper will logically focus on the historical origins of Boko Haram much so because an historical dimension of such a movement is so important for a proper understanding of today's dynamics. So far the historical accounts given by scholars have remained fractured and not properly tackled.

The third part of the paper will provide a synopsis of the activities of Boko Haram, while in the fourth part I will show the ramifications of Boko Haram in Cameroon. Part five will be the conclusion and the last part a list of reference material used in the paper.

Significance of the Study

The reemergence of the Nigerian militant Islamist group Boko Haram has been a cause for significant concern both to Nigeria and to its neighboring states and above all to the

academia. Since late 2010, the organization has been responsible for a brutal crusade of attacks that have been targeting public officials and institutions and, increasingly, ordinary men, women, and children, wreaking havoc across Northern Nigeria, with its ramifications spilling over to Cameroon. In terms of human casualties, at least 550 people are believed to have been killed in many separate attacks in 2011 alone, a grim toll that has been accelerating while scores of others were maimed, rendered widows or orphans, while others too became refugees. Meanwhile, Boko Haram's rhetoric and tactics indicate that the organization has expanded its reach well beyond its original base in northeastern Nigeria. As a matter of fact, its *modus operandi* indeed has evolved and is still evolving into a transnational threat with links to other terrorist groups and violent extremists in North, West, and East Africa. The group thus constitutes a wider threat to the political, economic, and security interests in Africa and more particularly to the sub-region. Given that Nigeria is Africa's biggest oil exporter (it holds the world's 10th largest proven reserves) as well as the continent's most populous country, instability there has significantly wider implications to world politics and especially to its neighbor Cameroon. For the gravity and intensity of Boko Harma's operations in Nigeria, the table below gives a bird's eye view and makes the paper more relevant, as it charts the path for a better understanding of what is happening in Nigeria and as a result of how the consequences have directly and indirectly spilled over and beyond Nigeria.

Table 1: Date and Place of Operations in Nigeria

Date	Place of Operation
September 7, 2010	Bauchi prison break
December 31, 2010	December 2010 Abuja attack
April 22, 2011	Boko Haram frees 14 prisoners during a jailbreak in Yola, Adamawa State
May 29, 2011	Northern Nigerian bombing
June 16, 2011	The group claims responsibility for the Abuja police headquarters bombing
June 26, 2011	Bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri leaving 25 dead and 12 injured
July 10, 2011	Bombing at the All Christian Fellowship Church in Suleja Niger State
July 11, 2011	The University of Maiduguri temporarily closes down its campus citing security concerns
August 12, 2011	Prominent Muslim Cleric Liman Bana is shot dead by Boko Haram
August 26, 2011	2011 Abuja bombing
November 4, 2011	2011 Damaturu attacks
December 25, 2011	December 2011 Nigeria bombings
January 5–6, 2012	January 2012 Nigeria attacks
January 20, 2012	January 2012 Kano bombings
January 28, 2012	Nigerian army says it killed 11 Boko Haram insurgents
February 8, 2012	Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna.
February 16, 2012	Another prison break staged in central Nigeria; 119 prisoners are released, one warden killed.
March 8, 2012	Christopher McManus, abducted in 2011 by a splinter group Boko Haram, was killed, together with another hostage.
May 31, 2012	During a Joint Task Force raid on a Boko Haram den, it was reported that 5 sect members and a German hostage were killed.

Date	Place of Operation
June 3, 2012	15 church-goers were killed and several injured in a church bombing in Bauchi state. Boku Haram claimed responsibility through spokesperson Abu Qaqa.
June 17, 2012	Suicide bombers strike three churches in the Kaduna State. At least 50 people were killed. 130 bodies were found in Plateau State. It is presumed they were killed by Boko Haram members.
October 3, 2012	Around 25–46 people were massacred in the town of Mubi, in Nigeria, during a night-time raid.
March 18, 2013	2013 Kano Bus bombing: At least 22 killed and 65 injured, when a suicide car bomb exploded at Kano bus station.
May 7, 2013	At least 55 killed and 105 inmates freed in coordinated attacks on army barracks, a prison and police post in Bama town.
July 6, 2013	Yobe State school shooting: 42 people, mostly students, were killed in a school attack in northeast Nigeria.

SOURCE: Ayodeji Bayo Ogunrotifa, (2013) "Class Theory of Terrorim: A Study of Boko Haram" *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, Vol 3 No 1; Also see http//en. Wikipedia.org/wiki/Boko_Haram. Retrieved on September 3rd, 2013.

A cursory peruse of Table 1 above suggests that between 2010 and 2013 there were twenty-six attacks carried out by Boko Haram. Out of these attacks, the least were in 2010. In 2011, there were eleven attacks and the apotheosis of the attacks came in 2012, with thirteen attacks alone. The table should not be taken as covering all the activities of Boko Haram, as this pre-dates 2010. Yet it is relevant for the reader to have a broad view of its activities. These attacks were mostly in the Northern parts of Nigeria and calls into question why and what the origins of Boko Haram are. There is no doubt that countless accounts have been given as to the origins of Boko Haram, but for a more profound appreciation of this paper, a re-capitulation is absolutely necessary. This paper therefore becomes relevant as it adds in its small way to the budding literature on Boko Haram.

Staking the Study Area

Like most of Africa today, Cameroon is a colonial construct. It has passed through three colonial masters, starting with the German administration, which lasted from 1884 to the outbreak of World War One. After the war, the country was partitioned between France and Britain. France took 4/5 of the territory and Britain took 1/5. Both administered their territory as Mandated and Trusteeship zones under the auspices of the League of Nations and United Nations respectively. Britain administered its portion of the territory as an appendage to the Eastern Provinces of Nigeria, while the French administered its own portion as part of the French Equatorial Africa. Both colonial powers carried different colonial policies in territory (Ngoh, 1999).

The outbreak of World War Two quickened the pace of nationalism in the post war period. Constitutional reforms grew apace and, by January 1960, French Cameroon gains

independence as *La Republique,* while British Cameroon, which, under Nigeria, lagged behind, gained its independence through a Plebiscite and a constitutional conference, which was meant to harmonize the constitutions. On October 1ˢᵗ, 1961, it gained independence through Reunification (Ngoh, 1999).

Evidently, from 1961, Cameroon became a bilingual country, with more than 250 ethnic groups. French Cameroon constituted the majority in terms of size and population, while British Cameroon was the minority. The constitutional making, coupled up with these disproportions, was to be a source of conflict for the new state in the coming years. This became known as *the Anglophone problem* as the Anglophones claimed with evidence that they were over marginalized in the country (Nkwi, 2004; Chereji & Lohkoko, 2012). The situation took a quicker turn in the 1990s with the economic downturn and re-democratization after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. As of 2000, the country became riddled with serious crisis ranging from mass unemployment, rising inflation, increase in the prices of foodstuffs and fuel. This made the country too vulnerable for any crisis that could occur in between its borders. This threat was to prove realistic with the operations of Boko Haram in Nigeria.

The Historical Roots of Boko Haram

Several views and schools of thought in relation to the origin of Boko Haram have been cropped up with various arguments about the origins of Boko Haram. One of these views stipulates that Boko Haram is based on the acknowledgment of Osama bin Laden's popularity after the attacks of 9/11 and the strong unpopularity the West faces among a population that is very poor and feels betrayed by its Westernized and/or Western-educated elite. In this sense, Boko Haram is an ultra-violent social movement that has deep roots in the social and economic marginalization of a large section of Nigeria's northern population. This highlights the issue of the divergent (and largely unequal) economic and social dynamics of Northern versus Southern states in Nigeria (Pham, 2011& 2012; Elkaim, 2012; Marchal, 2012; Rogers, 2012). Accordingly, this school of thought gives the impression that Boko Haram got its inspiration and rise to prominence because of Al-Queda, and of Osama Bin Laden, who orchestrated the bombings and ultimate destruction of the twin towers on September 9, 2001.

Another school of thought headed by Aghedo & Osumah (2012, p. 858-863) suggested that Boko Haram could be understood as one group among many. He noted that the group has existed under a variety of names, including "*Ahlulsunna wai'jama'ah hijra* and… the 'Nigerian Taliban' and 'Yusufiyyah' sect", and that the group probably exists in two main factions. The scholars further state that the "country's porous borders" are facilitating and helping the group in terms of movement of people and ammunition as well as its growth in the sub region.

The third school holds that the creation of The Sokoto Caliphate, which was established by Uthman dan Fodio in 1804 to rule parts of what is now Northern Nigeria, Niger and Northern Cameroon in the late 19th century, has a direct relation with the origins of Boko Haram (Ekem, 2012; Thomson, 2012; Hills, 2012). Ever since it fell under British rule in 1903, there has been resistance among the area's Muslims to Western education. Boko Haram was conceived on the basis of previous Islamic revivalist experiences in Nigeria. Its main affiliation is related to the *jama't izalat al bid'a fia iqamat as sunna* (society of removal of innovation and reestablishment of the sunna), known as izala or *ffian izal.* This movement is a *fiahhabi,* anti-sufi movement established in 1978 in Jos by Sheikh Ismaila Idris (1937-2000). It was one of the fastest-growing Islamic reform movements in Nigeria. The movement was very much shaped by the teachings of Sheikh Abubakar Gumi (1922-1992), a leading Islamist pioneer of reform in 20th-century Nigeria. Sheikh Gumi campaigned against sorcery and witchcraft and promoted Islamic education for women until his death in 1992, when *izala* suffered an acrimonious split between two factions within the movement (Jos based and Kaduna based) and as a result appears to have lost most of its authority and credibility among Nigerian Muslims. The two factions eventually reconciled in 2011. This school, in short, shows that Boko Haram is related to another group within Nigeria.

Furthermore, another school which is headed by Hansen & Aliyu Musa, (2013) uses the Martinique scholar, Frantz Fanon's work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, to understand the emergence of Boko Haram. The scholars suggest Fanon's concept of 'the wretched' remains relevant and useful. Apparently, they used the notion of racial foreigner, in this case the British, to position Fanon and how he could make sense of the understanding of Boko Haram. These scholars further draw a link that sees all violence in the north as due to Boko Haram, with AQIM of Mali as influence upon it, rather than affiliates of the latter group being responsible. For instance, the kidnappings of the British and Italian nationals in Sokoto had their roots in the racial xenophobia which implicitly was embedded Fanon's treatise. This school was supported by Forest (2011).

These various narratives about the origins of Boko Haram are relevant to our study. But we need a complete historical compendium to grasp a fuller understanding of the group. The interconnectivity of world states and the attempted hegemony of the West on people of the universe have serious repercussions on the beginnings of Boko Haram in Nigeria. The main objectives of Boko Haram are to do away with anything pro-Western. It goes without saying that Boko Haram is out to purify a civilization that has been adulterated. If these two objectives are tenable, then it is realistic to see the very existence and survival of the group in the light of other global groups which have similar objectives in Africa and the world at large. Boko Haram's origins therefore could be linked to Al-Qaeda; AQIM of Mali, whose activities stretch as far as Algeria, Al-Shabab of Somalia, and Janjaweed of Darfur. It will be a historical misnomer if we attempt to

understand one of these groupings, even if it was Boko Haram, without understanding the involvement and interconnecting cobweb structures of the others. All these groupings have been labeled in the Western media as terrorist organisations because they share one main common objective, which is to give Western civilization a death blow.

Closely related to the above point is the geo-political and/or common historical benchmarks which this Northern Nigeria area shares. Northern Nigeria's ecology is what geographers have known for a very long time as the Sahel. This zone saw the rise of empires which embraced trade as far back as the 10th Century. The ancient empires of the Western Sudan, which started with Ghana, Mali, Kanem, Songhai, and Kanem-Bornu, existed and survived because of Islam, whose rulers embraced trade across the Sahara desert (Abubakar, 1977; Ajayi & Crowder, 1974; Ajayi & Espie, 1969). The empires rose and fell, and the last of the empires was Kanem-Bornu. A cursory observation of the operation of Boko Haram and other sister organisations indicates that they are standing on the ground of the previous Islamic empires of Western Sudan. To add to this point, in 1804, the jihads were launched in Sokoto. The aims and objectives of these holy wars show a similarity with the objectives of Boko Haram and other organisations in the region.

The jihads represented a religious war, albeit its execution and consequence which showed some political indications. As a war to purify Islam, which the adherents felt, rightly or wrongly, that had been compromised, it was fought with renewed ferocity and intensity. The jihads of the 19th century were carried out under the guidance of Uthman dan Fodio against the Hausa states of Northern Nigeria. There is enough mentioning of the name in the literature but the missing link is who he really was and what he really wanted, as well as the relation between his movement and today's Boko Haram.

Uthman dan Fodio, who descended from the Fulbe Toronkawa migrant clan from Futa Toro in the fifteenth century, was born in 1754 in the Hausa state of Gobir. While growing up, it is assumed that he undertook a thorough study of Islamic theology, law and mysticism in the Arabic language. After mastering his studies he gradually and systematically built up a following, and consequently strained the relations that had existed between himself and the traditional rulers of the neighbouring Hausa states (Njeuma, 1978; Fanso, 1989). In 1788-1789 he eluded an assassination attempt which was plotted by the sultan of Gobir. Because of his escape, negotiations were opened to establish peace between Uthman and the sultan, and the former was given the right to spread Islam in the sultanate. Through that preaching Uthman further gained considerable influence and more adherents among the Gobirawa, much to the indignation of the Sultan (Fanso, 1989, p. 81).

It is assumed that at the age of 40, Uthman received, in a dream, instructions to 'unsheathe the sword of truth'. He immediately began preaching that war against the nonbe-

lievers was not only inevitable but necessary, as sanctioned by Prophet Mohammed. The indignant sultan attempted to restrict Uthman and his preaching, while strengthening of Islam in his state resulted in a serious clash between the two. This clash was quite particular and led to the decision by Uthman and his followers to get away from Gobir (to make a hijra) in order to prepare for a holy war. In 1804, open hostilities between Uthman forces and Gobir began. After several battles, Uthman's forces defeated Gobir, and he established his headquarters at Gwandu. Thus the Gobir wars saw the beginning of jihads in Northern Nigeria, which were to extend to the entire sub region. Fulbe emissaries from all over Hausaland and Fumbina went to secure Uthman's blessing and returned to their various states with the flag to propagate the jihad (Adeleye, 1971; Njeuma, 1978). By the time Uthman had established his headquarters at Sokoto, and was at the head of an emerging Islamic Empire, he was known as Shehu, Sultan or Caliph of the Sokoto Caliphate. From this Caliphate, his power radiated to different directions with the sole aim of purifying Islam from Futa Toru to Futa Borno – an area that swallows almost the whole of Sahelian West African countries today (Last, 1977). What is crucial is that this brand of Islam was imported from the Middle East and it passed through North Africa and the Sahara desert to West Africa. It was never Westernized.

The caliphate did not survive forever. European imperialism in Africa suffered the catastrophic effects of the achievements on indigenous nation building and civilizations. First, during the Anglo-German partition of Adamawa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most parts of this empire fell into either German or British hands. The imposition of colonial rule saw the Yola Emirate annihilated, with parts going to modern day Nigeria and Cameroon. When the British colonized Nigeria, Northern Nigeria fell under the grandiose policy of Indirect Rule. Through this policy, the British empowered traditional rulers, especially the emirs and at the same time produced educated elite. This was the beginning of the erosion of the caliphate. The Futa Toro and Futa Bondu which covered the Senegambia and Mali areas witnessed the French onslaught and collapse giving rise to the French Equatorial Africa (Webster & Boahen, 1980, p. 1-46).

What is important again and even more relevant is the relationship between the above literature and Boko Haram. This has a direct relation with Boko Haram in several ways. Boko Haram operates in Northern Nigeria just as the jihadist had done in the 19th Century. Just as Uthman dismissed the adulterated Islam, Boko Haram's teachings today have rejected Western civilization and the secular Nigerian state which they have described as *dagut* ("evil") and unworthy of allegiance in an effort to replace it with a purified Islamic regime. One will not be completely wrong to think that Boko Haram is standing on the footprints of the Sokoto Caliphate that was devastated by the colonial forces. The group's aims are more to do with self-preservation than political or religious, and make a compelling case for their mafia-like organization (Davis, 2012).

Some of Boko Haram's Activities

From the discussion so far, the Boko Haram uprising was not the first forceful attempt to impose a religious agenda in Nigeria. Violence based on religion in Nigeria is indeed neither new nor confined to Muslims. Over the last 30 years what has changed is that religious dissent is based in cities and not, as before, in the countryside (Olaniyi, 2011). Moreover, dissent is increasingly violent, in part because it was urban and therefore in closer proximity to the urban centered authorities. Boko Haram appears to be an original phenomenon in Nigerian history, with targeted assassinations nor car bombings against official buildings, but a sustained campaign of attacks over several months. In the last 30 years, one may quote several precedents: the Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano (Adesoji, 2011), and 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi are often compared to the present situation. Following the Maitatsine crises were several other major clashes. These include the Kano metropolitan riot of October 1982; the Ilorin riot of March 1986; the University of Ibadan crisis of May 1986; the Kafanchan/ Kaduna/ Zaria/ Funtua religious riots of March 1987; the Kaduna poly-technic riot of March 1988; the Bayero university crisis of 1989; the Bauchi/Katsina riots of March /April 1991; the Kano riots of October 1991; the Zangon-Kataf riot of May 1992; the Kano civil disturbance of December 1991; and the Jos crisis of April 1994. Similarly, between 1999 and 2008, 28 other conflicts were reported, the most prominent being the recurrent crises in Jos, in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2008 (for more details see Schwartz, 2010). This litany of attacks shows that many other attacks have been going on in Nigeria besides the Boko Haram. What makes Boko Haram's so unique is their objectives and the sustained ambition to carve out a theocratic Northern Nigeria.

Their activities have often occurred in the Northern Nigerian states, which include, amongst others, Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, Bornu. Their weapons include AK 47 rifles, locally made rifles, double barrels guns, bows and quivers, walkie-talkies (Ibeh, 2013; Adesoji, 2011). With these weapons, it is possible for Boko Haram to attack civilians and even the security forces that stand in their way, to achieve their objectives. In August 2011, the group carried out suicide attacks on the UN headquarters in Abuja, in which more than 20 people were killed. All these attacks have had serious repercussions not only on Nigeria but on their neighbors, also.

Boko-Haram in Cameroon

The consequences of Boko Haram are numerous and varied. The risks presented by the militant group are amplified primarily through the prevalence of porous borders in the West African sub-region. Cameroon is a potential target due to its proximity to Nigeria, as well as to their porous borders, their demographics and their socio-economic realities notwithstanding. Newspaper reports and individual reports indicate that members of the extremist group are increasingly present in Lagdo, a cosmopolitan settlement in the

north Region, causing fear and insecurity/uncertainty amongst the population."They are easily identifiable by their bizarre dressing. "They wear long beards and red or black headscarves" (Tembang, 2012) Peter Kum, a reporter with the French *La Nouvelle Expression,* a daily newspaper reported Tuesday, January 3, 2012. According to him, since several months before, Lagdo locals had testified that the strangers were combing surrounding villages and actively preaching anti-Western sermons, establishing units and proposing huge amounts of money to those willing to follow them.

The Nigerian border with Cameroon is of 1,690 km and many ethnic groups are divided by the border. The porous nature of this border heightens the potential spread of terrorist activities into the country. The vulnerability to the spread of Boko Haram is compounded by the fact that Cameroon shares a border with the Northern Nigerian states, where Boko Haram already exerts a strong influence. This proximity to Northern Nigeria is therefore a particular threat to its security, given the relative ease with which Boko Haram's elements can cross into the country, as it faces a risk with only two of the four Nigerian states bordering Cameroon (Taraba and Adamawa states).

It should be noted that citizens of Cameroon have been suspected of participating in Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria as well. This alleged involvement implies that Boko Haram activities could already be spreading or have already spread across Nigeria's borders and that it could possibly already be conducting some of its activities, such as training recruits, and planning and executing terrorist acts, in neighboring countries. Although there is little evidence, the probability cannot be under looked. Boko Haram also uses neighboring countries as safe havens. Allegations that some Boko Haram militants have migrated to Cameroon after committing attacks in Northern Nigeria are rife. In addition, there have been incidences of Boko Haram attacks on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon. The May 21 suicide attack on a police station in the Taraba state, on Nigeria's border with Cameroon, illustrates the growing level of insecurity at this border post. Although Boko Haram has not claimed responsibility for this incident, the attack is in line with the *modus operandi* of the militant group and, needless to say, exposes the vulnerability of this border area. If Boko Haram has relations with sister organisations like AQIM and Al-Queda, and Janjaweed sympathized with Boko Haram, they must have been helping out as havens of the militias.

Cameroon's vulnerability to terrorism is compounded and complicated by socio-economic malaise and dissatisfaction with the government, which exist in the country, and citizens could easily fraternize with groups like Boko Haram to destabilize the existing peace. But there is no doubt that if left unchecked, the combination of these two elements might allow for fundamentalist ideology to thrive and result in the sprouting of terrorist activities in this country. It is therefore crucial to prevent the movement and infiltration of any elements such as Boko Haram into both countries. But the June 2013 events showed that Cameroon could not be exempted from the activities of Boko Haram.

The kidnapping of a French tourist and subsequent claim by Boko Haram caused panic both within the government and among civilians as well.

Border Security Measures

The governments of Nigeria and Cameroon have made enormous efforts to strengthen border security and prevent the spread of Boko Haram's activities into their regions. This shows the magnitude of Boko Haram's activities in the country. For example, the Nigerian government closed down several times sections of its border with Cameroon as part of stricter border control measures. However, this was insufficient and tighter, more efficient border control measures need to be put in place to prevent the movement of Boko Haram and other criminal elements across borders. This attempt failed because the borders are mostly very porous and one and the same cultural stock of people straddle the borders. In addition, the closure of borders provokes further consequences. It is notable, for instance, that citizens in Cameroon and Nigeria rely on cross-border trade for economic sustenance. For instance, the closure of Cameroon-Nigerian borders greatly hampered trade in that part of Cameroon and Nigeria. Nigerians in particular have borne the brunt of the closure of their border with Cameroon as drought in Northern Nigeria means that many citizens rely on trade with Nigeria for food. The closure of this border has compounded the food shortage problem in Niger.

Other efforts towards border security include the agreement to create a Nigeria-Cameroon trans-border security committee. One of those agreements was signed on February 22, 2012 by the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Olugbena Ashiru, who represented the Federal Government of Nigeria, and the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister Delegate of the Presidency of Cameroon, Amadou Ali, who signed on behalf of the Cameroonian government. According to Ali, the agreement showed that confidence has been restored through permanent dialogue, consultation and re-enforcement of cooperation between Cameroon and Nigeria. On the whole, the Agreement was needed because the members of Boko Haram are well noted for entering Northern Cameroon after causing havoc in Nigeria. The bilateral agreement was meant to establish a security committee as part of measures to further look for possible ways to deny the insurgents and criminal elements easy access through the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary into either Cameroon or Nigeria.

The Concerns in Government Circles in Cameroon

Politically, when the insurgence bombed a police headquarter on June 16, 2011 at Kano, its impact was also on Cameroon. The stakeholders in Cameroon government spoke in panic about a possible infiltration into the country by elements of the radical Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. Coming on the heels of Presidential elections, the government sources did not take it lightly. Historically, the concern was made more serious by the

fact that military people who attempted to overthrow President Paul Biya in the 1984 *coup d'etat* were drawn from the same Northern regions bordering Northern Nigeria which are seen as subject to the perceived infiltration by Boko Haram Islamists. "Should it be true that the Boko Haram elements who have crossed the border into Cameroon contain some of the military people who attempted to overthrow Biya in 1984, then there is a lot of trouble in the works for us both before, during and after the presidential election", said a senior government official who chose to remain anonymous for fear of repercussions from government. The ruling Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM) party has reasons to worry as the ranks of the military are heavily populated by Northern personnel, some of who were accused of being behind the 1984 coup attempt. Furthermore, many of those implicated in that coup fled and took refuge in neighbouring countries, especially in Northern Nigeria.

No doubt, the border zones of both countries have many families who live on either side of the territorial divide and who have much in common. And with the porous boundaries, international border lines tend to fade in the blur. After the 1984 coup attempt, it was rumored that thousands of Northern Cameroonians were extra-judicially killed and buried in mass graves in Biya's home region in the south. Others, such as the current Minister for Communication, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, were tried and sentenced to long prison terms. Another victim was Daokole Daissala, who ironically helped to salvage CPDM out of defeat in the 1992 legislative elections when his MDR faction struck a coalition deal with the ruling party to enable it retain control of Parliament. Mr Daissala was eventually appointed Minister of State for Posts and Telecommunication. The man the Northern putsches were fighting to restore to power in 1984 was Biya's predecessor as Head of State, President Ahmadou Ahidjo.President Ahidjo was popular among his Northern compatriots, and much as the authorities seek to portray matters otherwise, resentment of the Yaounde regime remains high among northerners. Common logic therefore holds that most Northern Muslims are still sympathetic with their man Ahidjo. With the arrival of the Boko Haram in Cameroon, it became obvious that the Biya regime will not take it lightly as it was affected both directly and indirectly.

Furthermore, while presiding at a December 15, 2011 security coordination conclave devoted to maintaining peace and order before, during and after the 2011 end-of-year festive period, the Highest Public civil servant of the region, the Governor of the North Region, El HadjGambo Haman did not mince words. He instructed security forces to be on the alert, noting the increasing influx and presence of Boko Haram militants in parts of the region. "The Boko Haram being chased from Nigeria's Northeast, as well as thousands of runaway Chadian soldiers in irregular situation here must be closely monitored to avoid unwanted trouble throughout the national territory," he warned. Separate sources suspect that the presence of the extremist Boko Haram militants has soared steadily following increasing clampdowns on them by the Nigerian government, especially following the Christmas Day blasts that left close to 50 dead. Security sources

and administrative officials in the North Region, speaking on condition of anonymity, say that for the time being, there is no need to panic (Timchia, 2012). They claim that intensified intelligence monitoring implies the activities of the terrorists are under control.

As a matter of fact Cameroonian authorities and civilians both have been wary of the Boko Haram's activities into local communities and mosaaques. Historically, there are cultural and religious similarities between Cameroon's Far North Region and neighbouring Northeastern Nigeria. One of the worst violence acts that occurred in Northern Nigeria in 1980 was caused by a Cameroonian cleric, Mohammed Marwa, who led the Matatsine insurrections. Cameroon North and Nigeria's north share similar deep-seated Muslim, political grievances and the likelihood is that Boko Haram's ideology could trigger off political problems in Cameroon, as well. This was evident when the Cameroonian political analyst and lecturer in international law at the International relations institute (IRIC) said:

> Cameroon should worry about Boko Haram. We have a civilized Islamic practice in Cameroon. However, we are not sure that we won't have radicals one day. Boko Haram's fight is due to the economic and political context of northern Nigeria, with disputes over the equal sharing of national resources. Cameroon finds itself in a similar context and so measures must be taken (Tembang, 2012).

Such a statement coming from a high profile political and intellectual and illustrates how much of a threat Boko Haram poses to Cameroon. Surprisingly, the government strategy to curb the excesses of Boko Haram has been, for the most part, military. More than 1,600 soldiers have been removed from their barracks and deployed strategically in the Far North region in localities close to the border with Nigeria. At the expense of the military, the ordinary civilian on the street appears not to have any knowledge of what Islam is neither does he/she know what Islamism is all about. Rather than giving a firm knowledge to the inhabitants on this, the government has quarantined troops around the border. Unfortunately, the border is 1,690 km long and they could not possibly have troops all along the entire width and breadth of the border.

For some residents of Cameroon's Far North Region, the troop deployments and increased security measures seem to be causing more fear than Boko Haram. According to Yousouf, "this period is very difficult for us. Our fear is not exactly Boko Haram, but the soldiers' presence. Everyone here is presumed to be a suspect by soldiers…but we have been collaborating with the security forces by giving information and reporting suspected persons"

Mosques and Koranic schools affected

The mosques as well as the koranic schools are areas for the dissemination of Muslim culture. The appearance of Boko Haram in Cameroon sent ripples down the spines of these structures. Collective oral sources within the Moslem community testified that

there were indicators that militants of Boko Haram were in Cameroon and were consequently preaching their doctrines in some mosques. The civil administrators were quite swift to act. On February 2, 2012, the Divisional Officer for Limbe, some 1500 kilometers from Northern Cameroon, Tsanga Foe, closed a mosque when there were allegations that members of Boko Haram had infiltrated it. In a related manner, the Divisional Officer for Wouri, Douala, the economic capital of Cameroon, Benard Okalia Bilai convened Imams and Muslim community leaders and instructed them to come up with ways of repelling any establishment of the Boko Haram sect in Douala and even other parts of Cameroon. In the meeting, he said:

> "We have been informed of attempts of Boko Haram infiltration. Their doctrine is anti social as it condemns Western education. It's a doctrine that condemns what today constitutes the values of our society and top authorities of the country don't accept that such a hateful dogma is established in our communities, and thus the necessity of this meeting.
> We must be vigilant" (Tembang, 2012).

In Yaounde, Hayatou Muhamadou, the head of Islamic studies in the central mosque said: "we don't permit unidentified preachers in mosques and the Islamic community in Cameroon has been warned against such practices…what we cannot guarantee is avoiding unknown worshippers in our local mosque. It is difficult to point out extremists in worship" (Tembang, 2012).This suggests that although precautions could be taken by the mosque authorities, it still remained very doubtful whether security was a 100 percent tight, as it was difficult to avoid unidentified extremist worshippers.

Boko Haram and Refugees in Cameroon etc

Refugees the world over are outcomes of war and natural resources. At a purely social level, the activities of Boko Haram have had serious consequences on the neighboring states, by the number of refugees it has produced in Cameroon and in particular in the Northern Region of Cameroon. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR) reported that no fewer than 3,000 Nigerians have fled into Cameroon as a result of the activities of Boko Haram, adding to the already 100,000 refugees (Timchia, 2013). The arrival in Niger actually compounded and complicated an already parlous situation – the UNCHR confirmed that there were already 6,000 refugees and most of them were children who came from rural villages across the border and from the towns of Maiduguri and Baga in Northern Nigeria. Chad, a third possible destination for the Nigerian refugees fleeing Boko Haram's activities, merely closed its borders although it already had 155 refugees from Nigeria (UNCHR, 2012). Following the fatal Christmas Day attacks in Nigeria claimed by the group, authorities in Cameroon's Far North Region have also reinforced surveillance on all fronts. Several Quran learning centers have been reportedly shut down and Islam teachers were being closely watched by intelligence operatives.

Trade is affected

The activities of Boko Haram have affected cross border trade between Nigeria and Cameroon., which sustains the local economy deals in commodities that include onions, rice, maize, livestock and other agricultural goods, which are exported from the Northern region of Cameroon to Nigeria. Fertilizer, sugar, textiles, 'zua-zua'(petrol) and electronics are imported from Nigeria. According to Doudou Yaouba, a trader in Maroua, the regional capital of the Far North, who exports groundnuts to Nigeria's Borno state and imports sugar and textiles, "this Boko Haram thing has resulted in tight border security and continuous checks, making business impossible to us. This was worsened by the kidnapping of the French tourists. Today all the goods must be checked. I am thinking of starting another business due to the security restrictions".

The Northern Region also depends on Nigerian petrol known in its creole language as 'zua-zua'. This petrol which was often smuggled across the Nigerian-Cameroonian boundary from Nigeria has significantly dropped because of the stricter border controls. This has led to an increase in the price per liter from 500CFA Francs to 650 CFA Francs. Joel Alim, a 'zua-zua, trader in Maroua lamented that "there are so many border checkpoints and its is very difficult for zua-zua suppliers to get through petrol which at the moment costs 650 CFA Francs as compared to 400 CFA Francs before the outbreak of Boko Haram and its activities in Nigeria".

The fertilizer import from Nigeria actually ceased. The Nigerian authorities have banned the production and distribution and hence its export. The Nigerian government had felt that fertilizer was used by Boko Haram to manufacture explosives and bombs which they used in their operations. Similarly, cattle trade was also affected. An important cattle trader, Ousmanou Mamadou, remarked that "more than 1,000 cattle are traded into Nigeria weekly from Cameroon. But the movement of the herds has been very slow and even blocked at certain points by the Nigerian security". Trade in general was negatively affected through the activities of Boko Haram. Trade and customs officials in Maroua maintained that nearly 80 percent of its regional economy has shrunk since the closure of the borders as a result of the activities of Boko Haram in neighboring Nigeria.

Concluding Remarks

I started my story with a short snapshot from two unrelated events, which took place in Northern Cameroon, which was the kidnapping of a French family in that part of the country and the conference of heads of states which took place in Yaounde to find ways to tighten maritime security. As far as the kidnapping of the armed militia was concerned, it was evidently orchestrated by an armed militia group in Nigeria, widely known as Boko Haram. That event had wider implications in the region than meet the eye. It was coming on the heels of activities which Boko Haram had carried out in Nigeria, one of Africa's largest and most populated countries. While anxious to espouse

their ideology which was purely anti-Western and putting in place a theocratic system especially in Northern Nigeria, it has wreaked havoc in Nigeria causing panic in the neighboring states of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and to a little extend Benin. Using a wide range of literature, this essay has accomplished one thing: it has demonstrated with enough evidence that the Boko Haram affected Cameroon in a number of ways. These various ways are political, social and economic. The government circles and the local population received Boko Haram with fear as evident from what the government officials said. On a final note, if proper care is not taken, the ramifications of Boko Haram in the coming years will be more than what this paper has sketched out.

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