



AMANI NEWSLETTER

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AMANI (a Swahili word for peace), is a newsletter founded by the African Working Group (AWG) for DCAR students, faculty and other interested persons. Amani is committed to offering information and analysis on topical issues on peace and conflict in Africa as well as contributions of ideas and activities undertaken by its members.

Top stories

1. Conflict in Libya.
3. Sudan secession
2. The Stalemate in Ivory Coast.
4. Kenya on Trial.
5. Election in Nigeria.

Africa Working Group NEWS

We are happy to announce that AWG will soon be launching the first issue of Journal of Conflict Management in Africa (JCMA) to be edited by Prof. T.Y. Okosun.

AWG now has a new interactive website redesigned and managed by Prof. Okosun. Please visit www.africanworkinggroup.org to join, view reports, activities, journals, and other resources.

During the last AWG business meeting, it was agreed that AWG will branch into three, with the current chapter to be maintained at NSU. Also, AWG plans to invite Dr Jason Campbell to serve as interim faculty director for AWG activities at NSU.

AWG MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

To advance research & publication of general patterns of conflicts in contemporary Africa; to provide avenue for critical analysis of theory; to develop collaborative relationships with universities and related organizations in the area conflict research; to support DCAR students interested in pursuing research on critical topics in Africa such as indigenous conflict resolution processes, resource-based conflict, and ethnic conflict; to develop a network of scholars and practitioners on the African continent with help from DCAR alumni; to provide a social support system to DCAR students and faculty by organizing social events; to organize panels and conferences on selected topics regarding conflicts in Africa; to augment the learning experience of all students with particular emphasis on the needs of students from developing societies.



LIBYA: IT IS CIVIL WAR, STUPID!

The glossing over the definition of the current conflict in Libya by Western media and policy 'experts' is at best a lazy attempt to avoid pragmatic policy action. A state of civil war is declared if it meets the following criteria; combatants are armed and from the same country, one of the parties is a sovereign, parties are fighting over control of territory/ resources or political power. The West's lack of recognition of this fact leads it to inevitably embrace ill advised policy actions, such as the suggested NO-fly zone or even recognition of rebels by some western governments barely a week after the outbreak. It is true that the 41 year old reign by the Gaddafi regime has largely contributed to the frustration we see today due to limited political space. Yet like many authoritarian but politically polarized multiethnic states in Africa, Gaddafi has perfected the patron-client system along ethnic lines. Thus unlike the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, immediate loyalty in Libya is not to the state but to ones' tribe". Most of these 'tribes' by many accounts do not trust each other nor do they believe an 'ethnic outsider' will represent their interests. Worse still, smaller tribes are afraid they may be swamped in any popular process in which they are numerically inferior. The near hysterical reaction of Western observers to the Libyan crisis is neither cognizant of practical analysis, nor is it subject to historical reflection of Western intervention history in the Middle East. A more cautious analysis of the dynamics of the conflict is vital for an effective intervention strategy.

With regard the No-fly zones, some have used the Kosovo case to argue that a 'state of exception' has existed that warrants humanitarian intervention. But as Richard Falk, a Princeton University international law professor opines, "hard cases make bad precedents. But even bad precedents need to find a justification in the circumstances of a new claimed situation of claimed exception, or else there would be a strong reinforcement for the public impression that the powerful act as they will without even pausing to make a principled argument for a proposed departure from the normal legal regime of restraint". Further, there is no assurance that an intervention will lessen the pains of the people, nor will it install a democratic regime, nor has the potential regional backlash been seriously considered. Thus, the imperial temptations to shape the outcome must be tampered with the complex realities of civil war, history and 'Arab Street'.



(Left)Libyan rebels fire anti aircraft guns. (Right) Libyan strongman Muammar Gaddafi seen here with Italian PM Silvia Berlusconi.



Sudan Secession: Opportunities and Challenges

The January 9, 2011 referendum saw an overwhelming 99 percent of southern Sudanese vote to break away from the North. The region which has known conflict for all but a few years since independence is poised to become Africa's newest country. With fertile soils and abundant natural resources, the region holds great promise for growth and investment. The secession which was occasioned by many years of perceived marginalization and discrimination by the North is also testament to the artificiality of the colonial African state system. The palpable euphoria and the eagerness with which the people of the south yearned for independence, was something to behold. Yet amid all the promise, there lies a difficult road ahead for this new nation.



El Bashir and Kiir visit Juba before the referendum

With less than 100 miles of paved roads, the region is infrastructurally one of the most underdeveloped on the continent. There is need for massive investment in building schools and hospitals, supply electricity and clean water, develop a professional civil service as well as a professional military and police. With 95 percent of its budget coming from oil revenues, half of which is spent on defense, the new state will need an expansive fiscal policy framework to supplement its revenue in order to meet the demands on the new nation. Because of military factionalism, ethnic rivalry, and the yet to be resolved questions of oil and the Abyei region, the new state will need to strong central government that can deliver immediate basic services to appease the restless population including many who have come back from the North. Without a decisive and purposive action by the new government in Juba, the world's newest nation is likely to witness the curse that has bedeviled many post colonial developing countries that has often turned the dreams of freedom and development into the familiar nightmares of corruption, inefficiency, clientilism and civil strife.

Further, the central government will need to demobilize its bloated military to a leaner force even through the continuing clashes with other separatists and the standoff in the Abyei region offers little hope that that would happen soon. The ongoing civil service training in the neighboring Kenya should be accelerated and the road net network connecting south Sudan to her East African neighbors that have been key investors in this young nation should be build.



(Above)South Sudan nationals celebrate secession vote

Ivory Coast and the façade of democratic elections

The current stalemate over the outcome of presidential elections in Ivory Coast is yet another indication of aborted elections resulting from lack of proper transitional mechanisms. On November 2, 2010. Ivory Coast went into a presidential runoff between two leading candidates Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara in which according to UN certified results, the incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo lost to his main opposition rival after garnering 46 percent to 54 percent for his rival. The Gbagbo leaning Constitutional Court annulled hundreds of thousands of votes cast for the opposition candidate after days of drama declaring Gbagbo the president- elect. This announcement and refusal to step down was quickly followed by regional denouncement and international sanctions targeted at the regime. Yet despite mounting pressures, Gbabo is digging in. The initial threat of force by the ECOWAS is fading with members fearing the effect it would have on their own large population presence in the Ivory Coast.

The outcome in Ivory Coast election while dramatic is not surprising. The mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition were largely absent. In a highly polarized ethnic environment, the winner take all framework is likely to be perceived as posing an "existential" threat by the loser. By election time, Ivory Coast was a nation split in to two; the Muslim dominated north and the Christian dominated South and West had battled it out for the better part of the last decade. The long legacy of Boignyism that disallowed plurality of political opinion left the country a neophyte in democratic principles. Indeed, the strong hand of Boigny behind the Ivory Coast miracle in Francophone West Africa was also its drawback. If history is anything to go by, the solution to the current stalemate may well lie in some form accommodation of the Gbagbo forces into any new government or an eventual capitulation of the regime under biting regional and international sanctions as the its coffers run dry.



(Top)Pro Ouattara supporters protest on the outskirts of Abidjan.

Africans most educated immigrant group in US. Study shows

Africans have the highest educational attainment rates of any immigrant group in the United States. It is not only the first generation that does well but their children as well. Research shows disproportionate percentage of black students at elite universities who are African or children of African immigrants. In an analysis of Census Bureau data by the Journal of Blacks in higher education, African immigrants to the United States were found more likely to be college educated than any other immigrant group. African immigrants to the U.S. are also more highly educated than any other native-born ethnic group including white Americans. Some 48.9 percent of all African immigrants hold a college diploma. This is slightly more than the percentage of Asian immigrants to the U.S., nearly double the rate of native-born white Americans, and nearly four times the rate of native-born African Americans. In a study examining the levels of success by Kefa Otiso, a geography professor at Bowling Green University, notes that this success is however not equally spread. Success is higher among Africans from English-speaking countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya and Egypt. The immigrants from these countries are able to better adapt and take advantage of educational, social, and economic opportunities available in the United States. With no shortage of trained manpower, how can the African Diaspora contribute to the continent's economic, institutional and political development?



Notable US based African scholars. From left (Ali Mazrui (Kenya) Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), and Francis Deng (Sudan).

Some Recent Developments in Africa

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Kenya's ICC deferral diplomacy: Futile efforts of face-saving or smart strategy?

There are ongoing attempts by the Kenya government to have the International Criminal Court defer the cases against six suspects accused of being behind the post election violence in Kenya. As part of the National Accord that ended the post election violence, the coalition government was supposed to form a commission to investigate the causes of the violence as well as set up a local tribunal to try the suspects of post election violence. Fearing the potential for political witch-hunt, parliament twice defeated a government bill to establish a local tribunal. That politicians were united in their opposition to the local tribunal is testament to the extent to which they lack confidence in the capacity of the local judiciary.



(Top left) ICC prosecutor, Louis Moreno Ocampo (Top right) Kenyan activists protest in support of the ICC. (Below) Faces of the six officials accused of being masterminds of the post election violence.

Yet, months following the defeat of the bill, which meant that the names of suspects are forwarded to the ICC, the revelation of the names of suspects who included senior government officials led the Kenyan elite to reverse course as dramatic as they had stopped it.

Parliament reacted by voting to pull out of the ICC even though the ICC process means that current cases are not affected by Kenya's withdrawal. With a divided government, the Kibaki side of government has since gone on full diplomatic offensive to convince the UNSC of defer the Kenyan case to allow for establishment of a local tribunal. Such efforts are nonetheless futile considering that the United States and Britain, two permanent members have already expressed their willingness to use their veto so the ICC process can proceed.

It is true that the suspects are very powerful individuals who are accustomed to impunity in a justice system they can buy or cajole. But with very slim chances that the Kenyan efforts for deferral are dead on arrival, why is the government lobbying world leaders and the Security Council to grant it a breathing room? My guess is that this is merely an act of face saving. With heightened political temperatures, political observers opine that lack of ICC prosecutions may make the country more volatile in 2012 elections.



North Africa and the fallacy of democratic revolution

Beside the anti-colonial wave that swept across Africa in the 1950s and 60s, and the popular 'democratic revolutions' that followed the fall of the Soviet Union, the sudden changes that are taking place in North Africa and parts of the Middle East are unprecedented both in scope and style. The collapse of the Mubarak regime in Egypt and the popular deposition of Tunisia's Ben Ali have demystified the conventional belief of Arab cultural acquiescence to authoritarianism. In a span of two months, some of Africa's and Middle East's longest serving leaders have either capitulated to popular pressure or are currently fighting for survival. Yet as we have seen, the very success of these revolutions raises questions regarding the viability of their potential replacements. Further, the rapid descent of such protests into civil conflict in Libya illustrates the limits of popular uprisings.

To assume that these are pro-democracy protests is an anomaly. In most of these polities, lack of political opposition and strong civil societies has denied them an institutional framework from which to craft an alternative government. In our modern practice of liberal democracy, it is not possible to have a liberal democracy without a strong civil society. Further, while most protests are united by their common distaste and anger against the status quo, there is no clarity on what they want, nor can they boast of a coherent leadership in pursuit of definable goals. It is a result of such ambiguity that the excitement over the sudden changes has to be seen in the light of the dangerous vacuum they have created. Competing political claims among different groups is only going to increase and so will the ethnic, religious and ideological fault lines. Long suppressed and managed by authoritarian rulers, these fault lines will likely usher in an immediate period of political instability and in some cases civil and ethnic strife. In Egypt, with increased political space, we are likely going to see a period of increased popular demands that will lead to a period of protests against subsequent governments. In Libya, the highly ethnicised and centralized nature of power means highly polarized political claims, a recipe for a long and sustained civil conflict. Thus the way this transition is managed will determine the extent to which these countries will be able to recover from the potential cataclysms. Nonetheless, the sheer idea of popular revolt is a breath of fresh air in a region long dominated by family dynasties.



Egyptians protest Mubarak at Tahrir Square, Cairo, Jan, 2011.

Ten years of civilian rule: Nigerian still years for viable opposition.

It has been more than ten years since Nigeria transitioned from military to civilian rule. In spite of its apparent institutional weaknesses and social problems, Nigeria has twice witnessed the transfer of power to civilian hands. Based on the firm stranglehold of the ruling party (PDP) on Nigerian politics, the current albeit accidental president Goodluck Jonathan is poised to be elected in the upcoming election following the death of his predecessor, Umaru Yaradua. Some of the factors that make such succession predictable include: (1) elite-pacting between the ruling party's northern and southern elite that eliminate a possibility of a formidable challenger, (2) the almost unchecked use of public resources in election campaigns by the incumbent president in which according to some Nigerian media sources runs into millions of dollars, and critically important, is that the lack of a viable and united opposition that would act as an alternative to PDP. Outside PDP, most opposition parties are weak, ethnically or regionally restricted and lack a cohesive agenda around which they can rally their supporters. Institutionally, transition to democracy did not remove the apparatus of patronage that are often easily exploited, nor did it significantly reduce the ability of the incumbent president and governors to abuse office and manipulate electoral outcomes. This has left potential opposition weak and disorganized with little chances of wresting political power. With a vibrant media and a small but educated middle class, the increasingly active civil society may well form the reservoir from which future political parties will be born in Nigeria.



Incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan (left) waves at supporters on a campaign trail, and the former anti-corruption boss Nuhu Ribadu running on opposition Action Congress Party (ACP) (right).

The sage of our forefathers



A man who rushes into battle does not realize that battle entails death (Igbo saying)

If you destroy the bridge you'd better know how to swim (Swahili proverb)

Do not follow the path. Go where there is no path to begin the trail (Ashanti proverb)

Alumni News

Congratulations to the following students and alumni for their achievements:

Michael Fonkem (PhD) successfully defended his dissertation. Congratulations Chief Fonkem

TY Okosun is the current president of National Justice Studies Association. He serves from 2010-2012)

Fr. Andrew Rusatsi, SJ, has been assigned by the Catholic Church to work on the legacy of conflict in Rwanda.

Vitus Ozoke (PhD) has been hired to teach conflict resolution at Salisbury University, Maryland.



From left: Nelson Mandela; SA children cheer Bafana Bafana; Asamoah Gyan (in red); Tshabalala, and Shakira at Fifa WC 2010.

Note from the editor.

Dear AWG family. I would like to send my appreciation to all those who attended the recent Residential Institute. Thank you for your ideas and suggestions. Remember, your contributions are central to future publications. Please send us short stories, ideas or experiences that you may want to share or publish in our newsletter.

Thank you

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