1.9
New Nation States and First Leaders

The historical process by which, in other lands, Heads of State, whether Kings or Presidents, have become figureheads, are no part of our African tradition. So in this respect we politely reject the Westminster model. The man we choose for our President will be the leader of our nation and the leader of our Government; and this, Sir, is what our people understand[1].

Tom Mboya, *Address to the Kenyan Parliament*, 1964

Ghana's independence, the first in sub-Saharan Africa after the Sudan declared itself independent in 1956, inspired nationalists throughout the continent. In the 1958 referendum on the constitution for the French Fifth Republic, unexpectedly, and under influence of Sékou Touré, Guinea voted against membership in the French Community and became fully independent. Denied aid by the frustrated French, Sékou Touré turned to Moscow and Peking. In 1960 another 16 countries achieved independence in West, East and Central Africa and when I passed my final exams at the State College for Tropical Agriculture and prepared for my departure to Mozambique, in the summer of 1965, another 10 had followed suite. During our first three years in Mozambique, Equatorial Guinea, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland joined the league of independent African nations (see table 1).

Table 1: year of independence of (sub-Saharan) African states

West Africa			**East Africa**		
state	colonial power	year ind.	state	colonial power	year ind.
Liberia	n.a.	1847	Ethiopia	n.a.	n.a.
Ghana	B	1957	Somalia	B/I/F	1960
Guinea	F	1958	Tanzania	B	1961
Benin	F	1960	Uganda	B	1962
Cameroon	B/F	1960	Burundi	BE	1962
Republic of the Congo	F	1960	Rwanda	BE	1962
Ivory Coast	F	1960	Kenya	B	1963
Gabon	F	1960	Mozambique	P	1975
Mauretania	F	1960	Djibouti	F	1977
Nigeria	B	1960	Eritrea	E	1996
Senegal	F	1960	**Central Africa**		
Togo	F	1960			
Mali	F	1960	Sudan	B	1956
Sierra Leone	B	1961	Burkina Faso	F	1960
Gambia, The	B	1965	Central African Republic	F	1960
Equatorial Guinea	S	1968	Chad	F	1960
Guinea Bissau	P	1974	Congo Democratic Republic	BE	1960
Angola	P	1975	Niger	F	1960
Southern Africa			Malawi	B	1964
			Zambia	B	1964

South Africa	B	1961	Zimbabwe	B	1980
Botswana	B	1966			
Lesotho	B	1966			
Swaziland	B	1968			
Namibia	SA	1990			

B Britain SA South Africa
F France I Italy
S Spain BE Belgium
P Portugal E Ethiopia

Objectively, none of the African states, including Ghana, were ready for independence. In many places there was tribal and/or regional dissention, sometimes even open disorder, and none of the territories had been adequately prepared, politically and economically, by their colonial masters. In some territories, like the Belgian Congo, serious preparations for independence had only gotten underway two years or less before the event. So it came to be that Congo's constitution was still being drafted at the same time that the Leopoldville's carpenters were preparing the scaffolding for the independence ceremonies on 30th June, 1960. Yet, the risks to move too slowly were deemed greater than the risks to move too fast and hence independence was granted with relative ease. Nationalist leaders who had been denounced earlier as dangerous extremists and had been imprisoned and or exiled - Nkrumah, Olympio, Keita, Kenyatta, Kasavubu, Banda and Kaunda - were found to possess previously unrecognised qualities and were made or elected heads of state. Heads of state who not only inherited "Westminster" and "Paris" like constitutions, encouraging multi-partyism and electoral competition among such parties, but standing national armies as well. It would be these armies that would prove particularly "unruly" with the passing of the years.

The ease with which independence was obtained gave many of the new states a false idea of their own potential. The latter, in reality, was meagre. Most territories belonged to the poorest in the world, more often than not the climate was harsh and variable and diseases and droughts imposed a constant hazard. Most of the population was engaged in subsistence agriculture and very few had access to basic education and health services. As usual there were exceptions and in some countries prosperous peasant communities flourished: Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Ivory Coast. Everywhere, however, child death rates belonged to the highest in the world, life expectancies to the lowest. Few states had more than 200 university students in training[2] and their civil services were qualitatively understaffed. In general the developed economic resources were limited, with only few islands of modern economic activities such as mechanised and irrigated cash crop plantations and well equipped mines. All primary products were subject to world price fluctuations and trade and industry were almost completely under control of foreign companies. The meagre potential was in stark contrast with the immense tasks that lay ahead: the strengthening of political authority (state building), the creation of unity among heterogeneous groups (nation building) and the fulfilment of the material and social needs and expectations of the population (economic and social development). The first shock probably was that political leaders soon found that the parliamentary systems they were to implement did not give them, by far, the power of their predecessors: the Governor Generals. The new system had checks and balances and frustrating divisions between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Soon, therefore, many new states, but not all, moved away from the parliamentary systems and multi-party politics and presidents became powerful, dominating and sometimes menacing figures. Who then were those first national leaders, where did they come from, what did they stand for and what became of them (see table 2)?

Table 2: Selected biographical data of the first presidents of African states[1] that became independent between 1956 and 1969[3]

name	cou	age	det	rel	education				years abroad		political/economical ideology					life style		political sys		theo	coup
					prim	sec	ter	mil	edu	work	soc	marx	lib	non al	pan af	aus	lav	dem	aut		
West Africa																					
Nkrumah	GHA	48	x	C	x	x	x	-	9	3	x	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	x	x
Touré	GUI	36	-	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	x	x	-
Maga	BEN	44	-	?	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	x
Ahidjo	CAM	36	-	?	x	x	-	-	4	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-
Youlou	RoC	43	-	C	x	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-
Houphouët	IVO	?	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	8	-	-	x	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-
M'ba	GAB	58	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-
Daddah	MAU	36	-	M	x	x	x	-	4	-	x	x	-	-	x	x	-	-	x	-	-
Azikiwe	NIG	56	-	C	x	x	x	-	5	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	x
Senghor	SEN	54	-	C	x	x	x	-	8	21	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x	-
Olympio	TOG	58	x	C	x	x	x	-	12	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	x
Keita	MAL	45	x	M	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	x	-	-	x	x	x
Margai	SIE	66	-	C	x	x	x	-	5	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Jawara	GAM	41	-	M	x	x	x	-	5	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Nguema	EQU	44	-	-	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	-
Southern Africa																					
Khama	BOT	45	-	C	x	x	x	-	5	7	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Jonathan	LES	52	-	C	x	?	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Subhuza	SWA	69	-	C	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
East Africa																					
Osman	SOM	52	-	M	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Nyerere	TAN	39	-	C	x	x	x	-	4	-	x	-	-	x	x	x	-	x	-	x	-
Obote	UGA	37	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	-
Mwambutsa	BUR	50	-	?	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x
Kayibanda	RWA	38	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	2	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Kenyatta	KEN	72	x	C	x	x	x	-	4	11	-	-	x	x	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Central Africa																					
El-Azhari	SUD	56	-	M	x	x	x	-	4	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	x
Yaméogo	BF	39	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x
Dacko	CAR	30	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	-	x	-	x	-	x
Tombalbaye	CHA	42	-	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-
Kasavubu	CDR	47	x	C	x	x	-	-	-	1	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	x	-	-	-
Diori	NIG	44	-	C	x	x	x	-	-	2	x	x	-	-	x	x	-	x	-	-	-
Banda	MAL	66	x	C	x	x	x	-	15	18	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-	x	-	-
Kaunda	ZAM	40	x	C	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	-	x	x	x	x	-	x	-	x	-

Legend:

name	first leader after independence	marx	dominantly Marxist ideologies
cou	country's name after independence	lib	dominantly liberal ideologies in the sense of capitalist free market mechanisms and decentralised economic decision taking
age	age at taking office	non al	non-alignment policy
det	detained by colonial power because of nationalist activities	pan af	Pan-African goals
rel	nominal religion Christian/Muslim	aus	austerity in the sense of moderate to luxurious life style
prim	completed primary education	lav	lavish in the sense of extravagant life style
sec	completed secondary education	dem	democratic and/or paternalistic system
ter	completed tertiary education to at least first degree	aut	strongly autocratic system; human rights systematically violated
mil	military education	theo	theories related to the direction in which

[1] In this table only 32 out of 42 independent Sub-Saharan states are presented. Liberia, South Africa and Ethiopia became independent before 1956. Guinea Bissau, Angola, Namibia, Mozambique, Djibouti, Eritrea and Zimbabwe after 1969.

			society should develop
edu	estimated years spent abroad for education	coup	term in office terminated by coup
work	estimated years spent abroad for other than education		
soc	dominantly socialist ideologies		

In the period 1956-1969 there were 32 first leaders of new African countries. When they were named or elected head of state, they were on average 48 years. Some were younger. David Dacko of the Central African Republic was only 30 when he came to power, Moktar Daddah (Mauretania), Ahmadou Ahidjo (Cameroon) an Ahmed Sékou Touré (Guinea) 36 and Milton Oboto (Uganda) 37. Some were of retirement age and beyond. Jomo Kenyatta had reached the respectable age of 72 when he became Kenya's first president, King Sobhuza II of Swaziland was 69 and Hastings Banda of Malawi and Sir Milton Margai of Sierra Leone both 66. All the first leaders had been active in nationalist movements prior to independence, but few were detained or exiled because of their political activities. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia found themselves in prison for brief periods just before independence. Sylvanus Olympio of Togo was deported to Benin, Modibo Keita of Mali to some isolated place in the Sahara and Joseph Kasavubu of Congo to Belgium as late as 1959. Only Jomo Kenyatta, held responsible by the British authorities for the Mau Mau uprising, was sentenced to 7 years confinement in Lodwar, an isolated desert post near lake Turkana.

In general, the first leaders were well educated and many of them had served in metropolitan and local administrations. Fourteen out of 32 took one or more university degrees, usually in humanities, and only four did not finish secondary school: King Sobhuza II, King Mwambutsa IV of Burundi, Ahmed Sékou Touré and Francis Nguema of Equatorial Guinea. The latter two also failed to complete primary school. Tertiary education meant a prolonged stay abroad and most of those in pursuit of academic knowledge did not return to Africa, except for brief visits, for periods between 4 and 15 years. During these years they often combined their studies with wage jobs to cover the costs of tuition fees, board and lodging and in the process became thoroughly acquainted with British, French, American and Austrian (in the case of Sylvanus Olympio) culture and politics. After their studies, some had successful careers abroad as politicians, writers, teachers, lawyers or physicians. Felix Houphouët-Boigny of Ivory Coast, was elected as a member of the French National Assembly in 1945 and became advisor to various French cabinets before returning to Ivory Coast eight years later. Léopold Senghor of Senegal, between 1935 and 1957, taught at French secondary schools, wrote poems and books, fought in the French army, was a member of the French National Assembly and served in a French cabinet. Like other first leaders, such as Nyerere and Kenyatta, Senghor had a complex relationship with the country which colonized his own[4]:

> *Lord*, among the white nations, set France
> at the right hand of the Father.
> *O*, I know she too is Europe, that she
> has stolen my children like a
> brigand to fatten her cornfields
> and cotton fields, for the negro is dung.
> *She* too has brought death and
> guns into my blue villages,
> Has set my people one against

> the other, like dogs fighting over a bone …
> *Yes*, Lord, forgive France who hates her
> occupiers and yet lays so
> heavy an occupation upon me …
> For, I have a great weakness for France.

Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana, the grandson of Khama III and heir to the Ngwato chieftaincy, fell victim to his love for an English girl, when he married her without consent of the colonial authorities and the elders. His impulsive behaviour threw Bechuanaland, the colonial name for Botswana, into a political crisis and after finishing his law studies in Britain in 1948, he was forced to stay in exile until 1956. Jomo Kenyatta went to London for the first time in 1929 to lobby for Kikuyu land rights and to advocate the right to establish African schools. When the Kikuyu Central Association sent him back to Britain again in 1931, he stayed for 15 years. Studying, writing - his *Facing Mount Kenya* is still in print - teaching, working as a farm labourer and marrying an English girl. Hastings Banda was a professional expatriate. Leaving Nyasaland on foot when he was 17, he worked in South Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, and South Africa and then studied medicine in America and Britain where, during WW II, he established a prosperous practice. When the British government decided to support the federation between North and South Rhodesia and Nyasaland, a frustrated Banda, who correctly feared that Rhodesia's racism would prevail, left Britain to establish himself as a doctor in Gold Coast. From there he intensified his campaign against the federation and, 66 years old, flew home to Nyasaland in 1958. The majority of the first leaders, at least nominally, was Christian and some of them, such as Léopold Senghor and François Tombalbaye of Chad, even presided over Muslim majorities. None of the first leaders had a professional military background, but that would change with the second generation of power holders.

One would expect socialism and communism - with their fight against injustice, inequalities and the sufferings brought about by the capitalist mode of production, their denunciation of a totally free and uncontrolled market and their proclaimed necessity for more equal political rights for all citizens and for a levelling of status differences - to be attractive philosophies for those oppressed by the, generally, capitalist colonial systems. It is, therefore, somewhat surprising that only a minority of first leaders held communist and socialist views. Modibo Keita was one of the few outspoken Marxists and his uncompromising, left-wing and anti-Western stance, earned him the Lenin Peace Prize in 1963. He tolerated no opposition parties and in 1967 attempted a nation wide purge very much in the violent anti-intellectual style of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Sékou Touré too was much enchanted by Marxist thinking, but at the same time felt that Marxism needed adaptation to African conditions. After the first two years of his presidency, Kwame Nkrumah was drawn more and more in the Russian and Chinese camps and it was on a state visit to China that he was ousted by a coup led by Lt.-Gen. Ankrah. Moktar Daddah and Hamani Diori of Niger also developed Marxist sympathies of sorts. Some embraced socialism, but kept their distance from Marxism. Léopold Senghor who, after WW II and together with the Afro-Caribbean Aimé Césaire, established the literary movement known as "négritude", gradually developed a theory of African socialism, neither capitalist nor Marxist, that was the political and economical expression of "négritude". Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, after quelling an army mutiny with the help of British marines in 1964 and with national security settled, moved to promote his own

system of African socialism. In 1967 he proclaimed the Arusha Declaration, which became the basis of the Tanzanian socialist system. Its centre piece was *ujamaa* - community or family-hood - a programme for independent self-help. In 1969, as part of *ujamaa*, a villagisation programme started.

It is doubtful whether Kenneth Kaunda's "Social Humanism" - based on his admiration of Gandhi's non-violence as well as on a sentimental vision aimed at returning Africa to its pre-colonial state - was real socialism but it came close. Occasionally some leaders, like Kenya's finance minister Tom Mboya, paid lip-service to socialism but otherwise continued their liberal and capitalist business as usual. As did the majority of other first African leaders. Many were Pan-Africanists and served the Organisation of African Unity in various functions. Some – like Nyerere, Kenyatta and Kaunda – clearly choose for non-alignment, others left the issue undecided or changed sides now and then.

Brought up with a Protestant ethic of work and frugality and a sense of "embarrassment of riches", the lifestyles of the first African leaders always intrigued me. Were they extravagant in the sense of excessive personality cults and the construction of sumptuous palaces and other monuments to enhance their grandeur? Did their lifestyles include the lining of bank accounts in receiver states such as Switzerland and the ownership of chateaux and villas in the Jura and along the lake of Geneva? And, last but not least, how repressive were the new leaders and what was their human rights record? Kwame Nkrumah began his period in office modestly, but gradually fostered an excessive personality cult, was not able or willing to put an end to the gross self-enrichment of some of his ministers and allowed his regime to become extremely oppressive. The latter also applied to Sékou Touré who in the mid-1960s launched a Chinese style cultural revolution and began arresting, torturing and killing opponents. Immediately after independence, Hubert Maga of Benin embarked on a spree of extravagance that included, among others, the building of a sumptuous presidential palace. Macias Nguema was a tyrannical ruler and shortly after coming to power, in 1968, he already had his opponent killed, a fate that befell most of Guinea's elite in later years. Milton Obote began his presidency well within the rules set by the constitution. When, however, a scandal erupted in 1966 over a cache of gold and ivory captured in the Congo and he and his army commander, Idi Amin, were implicated, he abrogated the Ugandan constitution, arrested a number of his cabinet ministers and assumed the presidency. When the Kabaka (king), Edward Mutesa II, protested, Obote had his palace stormed while the Kabaka fled into exile. At independence, Mwami (king) Mwambutsa IV, a Tutsi, became the constitutional monarch of Burundi. After conspiring with a group of Hutu officers in 1965, he was forced to flee and settled comfortably in Switzerland. Gregoire Kayibanda of Rwanda began as a moderate Hutu leader but already in 1963 he took little action when clashes broke out and more than 10.000 Tutsis were killed and 150.000 fled to neighbouring countries. Maurice Yaméogo of Burkina Faso, immediately after becoming president in 1960, suppressed all opposition, ruled by decree and developed such an extravagant life style that government finances were seriously eroded by the mid-1960s. After a series of strikes and violent riots in 1966, Lt.-Col. Sangoule Lamizana took control. Like Yaméogo, David Dacko did not take long to ban all opposition parties and to make a complete mess of the economy. In 1969 Lt.-

Col. Jean-Bedel Bokassa overthrew him and the situation in the Central African Republic soon turned from bad to worse.

As far as the political systems are concerned, only few of the first leaders in the period immediately after independence, remained committed to *multiparty democracy*: Sir Milton Margai, Sir Dawda Jawara and Sir Seretse Khama of Botswana.

Chief Leabua Jonathan of Lesotho, King Sobhuza II, Aden Abdulle Osman of Somalia and Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria all made an effort to keep some form of (multi-party) democracy. *Effective, paternalistic one-party systems* were established by Ahmadou Ahidjo, Felix Houphouët-Biogny, Léopold Senghor, Sylvanus Olympio, Joseph Kasavubu of Congo, Julius Nyerere, Jomo Kenyatta, Hamani Diori, Hastings Banda and Kenneth Kaunda. Although not multi-party and hardly democratic in the Western European sense, the systems maintained some checks and balances. *Autocratic systems* were established by Leon M'ba of Gabon, Moktar Daddah, Milton Obote, Mwami Mwambutsa IV, Grégoire Kayibanda, Ismail el-Azhari of Sudan and François Tombabaye. Downright *dictatorial systems* were soon established by Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sékou Touré, Hubert Maga, Fulbert Youlou, Modibo Keita, Francisco Nguema, Maurice Yameogo and David Dacko. By the end of 1969, 18 out of 32 first leaders were still in power. In nine countries - Ghana, Benin, Nigeria, Mali, Sudan, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Central African Republic and Congo Democratic Republic - the first leaders had been deposed by the military in bloodless coups. Only in Togo blood was shed when Sylvanus Olympio was shot by one of his own soldiers in 1963. Two first presidents, Léon M'ba of Gabon and Sir Milton Margai of Sierra Leone, died of natural causes and two, Fulbert Youlou of the Republic of the Congo and Aden Abdulle Osman of Somalia, were deposed by civilians.

Summarising the biographical data of the first leaders of the new nation states in sub-Saharan Africa, we start with age. When they took office, the great majority of leaders was approaching 50 and could rightly claim the honourable title "mzee". But then, of course, an age of around 50 is what one can expect of a well educated elite with considerable experience. And well educated and experienced the first leaders generally were. With the exception of Sékou Touré of Guinea and Nguema of Equatorial Guinea, both of whom not only mistrusted but eventually also prosecuted many intellectuals in their countries, 30 had completed secondary education and of these 14 held one or more university degrees. With the exception of Fulbert Youlou, who studied in his own Congo, French Cameroon and Gabon, the other leaders took their degrees in Europe or the United States. Quite surprisingly for an elite oppressed by capitalist colonial systems, only five first leaders clearly had Marxist sympathies. Three developed their own versions of African socialism. The remaining 24 leaders favoured some sort of capitalist free market system and decentralised economic decision taking. Contrary to what is often suggested, the great majority of first leaders conducted their state business in a "normal" way in the sense that they adopted a moderate to luxurious life-style and did not systematically and seriously violate human rights. Eight leaders though enjoyed extravagant life-styles and three of them - Nkrumah, Sékou Touré and Nguema - increasingly ignored basic human rights. Only seven leaders remained fully committed to (multi-party) democracy and ten established effective, paternalistic one-party systems which allowed a fair degree of criticism. The remaining 15 leaders either began as dictators or became autocratic

with the progress of time. The absence of checks and balances and lack of accountability in almost half of the political systems of the new free nations in sub-Saharan Africa did not bode well for the future. Neither did the fact that nine of the first leaders were disposed by military coups.

The first years after independence were, of course, exiting all over the sub-Saharan continent. In four countries the transition of power immediately led to chaos and bloodshed: the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Chad and the Sudan. Here the worst fears of the former colonial powers came true and Belgium and France were forced to intervene by sending troops. All of this made world headlines in the first half of the 1960s. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, chaos erupted only four days after independence on 30th June 1960[5]. Army units rebelled against the regime of Joseph Kasavubu and Patrice Lumumba and in the confusion the mineral-rich province of Katanga proclaimed secession under Moise Tschombe. Belgium sent in troops to protect its nationals in the wide spread disorder and killings[6]. These troops, however, landed principally in Katanga where they sustained the secessionist regime of Tshombe. Lumumba appealed to the United Nations to expel the Belgians and to restore internal order and soon UN soldiers, much against the wish of the Soviet Union, were actively taking part in the fighting. When UN forces refused to suppress the Kantangese revolt, Lumumba appealed to the Soviet Union for assistance. Greatly alarmed, the Western powers forced Kasavubu to dismiss Lumumba who immediately contested this move. Not only had Katanga broken away, but there were two factions now claiming to be the legal government. On 14th September power was seized by the pro Western Congolese army leader colonel Joseph Mobutu who turned over power again to Kasavubu in February 1961. Lumumba was captured by the Mobutu forces in January 1961 and subsequently murdered. UN forces eventually began to crush the Katanga rebellion and finally succeeded in 1963 and withdrew. In the mean time, followers of Lumumba rose in a series of rural rebellions and the government was forced to recruit bands of Belgian mercenaries to protect some of the major towns and to restore civil order. In 1964 the United States intervened by sending troops to support the Kasavubu government and slowly some state of order was restored. In 1965 Kasavubu was ousted permanently by a coup led by Mobutu. Cameroon's taxing trials during and shortly after independence were largely the result of its colonial history. During World War II the Germans were driven into exile and in the form of League of Nations mandates, two small parts of Cameroon came to be governed by Britain and the rest by France. In a UN-supervised plebiscite in 1961, the southern British governed part of Cameroon decided to reunify with the former French Cameroon which had become the independent Federal Republic of Cameroon in 1960. The northern British governed part voted to join the Federation of Nigeria. Prior to independence, the French suppressed the socialist Cameroon People's Union (UPC) and this led to a bloody civil war. After independence, under the anti-socialist president Ahmadou Ahidjo, the brutal civil war ended but slowly and civil rights meant very little. In Chad complete independence came on 11th August 1960 and François Tombalbaye became the first president. Civil war broke out almost immediately and centred on the differences between the economically more advanced black Christian south and the traditional Arab Muslim states in the north. Differences that would haunt Chad for decades to come. In the Sudan, elections for a representative parliament were held in 1953 and

won by Ismail al-Azhari. Although he had campaigned to unite Sudan with Egypt, he disowned his campaign promises and declared Sudan an independent republic in 1956. In 1958 the Commander in Chief of the Sudanese army, general Ibrahim Abbud, carried out a bloodless coup, dissolving all political parties. Within a year the power had shifted to the Islamic north, leaving the dominantly black Christian south virtually without a say in the country's affairs.

In 1962, in the midst of a rising rebellion in the south, the government in Khartoum began expelling all foreign Christian missionaries and closing churches and schools, setting the stage for one of the most prolonged and bloody civil wars in sub-Saharan Africa.

Not everywhere there was serious bloodshed, but in many countries the transition of power almost immediately showed the fragility of the political situation. In Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo and Gabon the position of the new leaders was so weak that all were ousted by bloodless coups before the end of 1965. Usually it was the military that intervened, foreshadowing the frequent military interventions in politics in sub-Saharan Africa later. Etienne Gnassinbé Eyadema, a sergeant in the army of president Sylvanus Olympio of Togo, enjoyed the unenviable distinction of being the first, in 1963, to shoot his own leader. President Houphouet of Ivory Coast was more fortunate and in 1963 survived an attempted coup. Prior to and in the first years after independence, in Rwanda and Burundi the tensions between the two major ethnic groups - the Tutsis and Hutus - rose. Rwanda became a republic at independence and the Tutsi king Kigeri was sent into exile. Under leadership of Gregoire Kayibanda, Rwanda's first president, Hutu leadership was soon established in all government quarters and by 1964 some 150.000 Tutsis had fled to neighbouring countries. Contrary to Rwanda, at independence in 1962 Burundi retained the formal trappings of a constitutional monarchy under the Tutsi king Mwambutsa. In 1965 a coup of Hutu officers failed and the Tutsis remained dominant and oppressive. Like in the Sudan, in both Rwanda and Burundi the stage was set for future bloodshed. Somalia in the early 1960s was the first new African nation state to provoke serious border disputes and soldiers were killed along the Ethiopian and Kenyan boarders. In Nigeria independence was granted in 1960 under a federal constitution with an elected prime minister and a ceremonial head of state. On 1st October 1963 Nigeria became a federal republic with Nnamdi Azikiwe as first president. Hardly a year later, under serious regional and ethnic rivalries, federal political arrangements broke down and it would not take long before the Biafra war broke out. Even peaceful Tanzania had its share of unrest when president Julius Nyerere, in the wake of the bloody revolution in Zanzibar in 1964, was forced to suppress an army mutiny with the assistance of British marines. In Mauretania, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, Uganda, Kenya, Niger, Malawi and Zambia the transition of power and the first years after independence were, by and large, peaceful.

Having come to the end of a bird's eye view of African history and about to proceed with an eyewitness account of the vicissitudes of sub-Saharan Africa from 1965 onwards, I feel uneasy on two accounts. First, I am aware that I have not done justice to the richness, diversity and complexity of the history of sub-Saharan Africa. The period from the moment the first three hominids walked from the shadows of time some three-and-three-quarter million years ago until Nkrumah's *'Ghana, our*

beloved country, is for ever free!' , however, is adequately covered in the notes and references and I refer the reader to them. The bird's eye view provided only a background for what was to come next. No more, no less. Second, like so many who have studied Africa's history, I cannot stop asking myself whether the colonial period was a curse or a blessing. On that question I intend to throw some light in the last paragraph of this chapter.

1.10
Colonialism: curse or blessing?

Various authors have, in the past decades, attempted to answer this question in the African context. Lloyd[7], Gann[8] and Rhoodie[9], among others, were advocates of colonialism and highlighted the blessings of 70 years of European rule. Others such as Rodney[10] and Mzarui[11] condemned almost every aspect of it. Frank[12] and Wallerstein[13], among others, approached the issue in a more academic manner by placing colonialism in a global socio-economic context. They also, however, ended up by debiting most of Africa's problems to white capitalist dominance. Adu Boahen[14] is among the few who limited himself to verifiable facts and tried to strike a (difficult) balance. The question would probably not have arisen at all if developments in Africa after independence would have been less disastrous. As it was, already in the late 1970s a mood of despair about the fate of Africa had begun to take hold. At that time, the Organisation of African Unity's secretary general, Edem Kodjo, told a group of African leaders: *'our ancient continent … is on the brink of disaster, hurtling towards the abyss of confrontation, caught in the grip of violence, sinking into the dark night of bloodshed and death … Gone are the smiles, the joys of life'* [15]. In the 1980s it was the World Bank which rang the alarm bell over the *'deepening crisis in Africa',* in the 1990s hope for a change for the better was repeatedly thwarted and what the first decade of the 21st century will bring is still unclear.

Seventy years of European dominance in Africa, of course, had far reaching political, economical and social effects. Some of these were positive, others negative. To throw some light on the question 'curse or blessing' we review the most important ones, starting with the *political sphere*. The consolidation of colonialism around 1900 brought a greater degree of peace and stability to sub-Saharan Africa which around that time in many parts was plagued by violent conflicts. Peace and stability which facilitated normal economic activities, mobility and accelerated the pace of modernisation. Apparently our earlier quote that *'the majority of Africans apprehended the coming of the Europeans as good fortune, bringing internecine local wars to an end ..'* was close to the truth. Next, the Europeans were instrumental to the appearance in Africa of modern, independent, nation states with boundaries that, by and large, remained unchallenged and have undergone little change since independence. The new geo-political set-up linked Africa to the modern world but created its problems as well. Some boundaries cut across ethnic groups and traditional states and kingdoms with widespread social disruption and displacement as a result. Chronic boarder disputes, medleys of peoples, states of vastly different sizes and unequal natural resources were all part of the outcome. In a historical sense, however, all this was not exclusively Africa's misfortune and when modern nation states in Europe came into being in the 19th century similar problems had occurred. The appearance of nation states was accompanied by the establishment of judicial systems tuned to a modern world with civil services likewise geared to modernisation.

The price paid was that indigenous systems of government were weakened and that the colonial manipulation of the institution of chieftaincy resulted in loss of prestige and respect of the traditional rulers in the eyes of their subjects. States also need to defend their external integrity and for this purpose full-time standing armies were created. These were taken over by the new independent African rulers and, as it turned out, they became one of the most problematic aspects of modernisation. Colonial rule, however, can hardly be blamed for that. The modern nation states created also led to a mentality among Africans that government and all public property belonged not to the people, but to the white colonial rulers and could and should, therefore, be taken advantage of at the least opportunity. Decades of elimination of Africans from the decision taking process at regional and national levels led to widespread distrust of the black governments that succeeded colonial administrations. True as this may be, it is also true that few of the new African governments did much to restore the trust of their peoples. Last but not least, colonialism gave rise to the birth of African nationalism and pan-Africanism, both potentially unifying forces. Unfortunately this nationalism was not the result of a positive feeling of identity with a new nation state, but a negative one created by anger, frustration and humiliation. With the overthrow of colonialism that binding feeling became quickly more lose again.

The effects of colonialism in the *economical sphere* were even more contradictory than the political ones. A basic infrastructure of roads, railways, telegraph lines, telephones and airports was already completed by the end of the 1930s and further extended after World War II when more money became available. This infrastructure was not only of economic importance, but also helped to minimise parochialism, regionalism and ethnocentrism. Of course, the infrastructure that was provided was not as adequate as it could have been. Roads and railroads were not always constructed to open up the country, but rather to connect mining areas and areas with cash crops with the sea. A good example is the Gold Coast railway of 1901, first opening up the gold-mining district of Tarkwa and then, a few years later, the forest regions near Kumasi to rubber-tapping and cocoa farming. Often it were not the governments which took on the construction of railway lines, but private companies attracted by grants of land and mining rights. The Compagnie du Congo pour le Commerce et l' Industrie (CCCI), for example, constructed the railway around the Congo rapids in exchange for 1500 hectares for every km of rail. Somewhere between 3.000 and 5.000 km^2 were alienated in this way. In some cases the pragmatic infrastructure construction approach led to sharp differences since territories that were not endowed with resources were grossly neglected. The primary sector of the economy - mining and cash crops like cocoa, coffee, tobacco, ground nuts, sisal and sugarcane - received ample attention right from the start of the European occupation and its further development had far reaching consequences. Gradually the traditional barter economy changed into a money economy, new standards of wealth developed and a class of wage earners emerged. Land became an asset and in response to the large investments necessary for the further development of the primary sector, banking facilities emerged. Africa became - be it somewhat one-sided - integrated into the world economy. Unfortunately, few attempts were made before the mid-1950s to diversify the dominantly agricultural economy of most of the colonies.

As a consequence, on the attainment of independence, most African states found themselves saddled with mono-crop economies and were, therefore, highly sensitive to changes in word market prices. To the detriment of the peasant farmers the focus on large scale agriculture also led to the appropriation of vast tracks of land. In Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), for example, the small white minority not only owned approximately 37 per cent of the most fertile land, but also delayed independence for a decade and a half. The most surprising fact in the sphere of the economy is probably the almost total negligence of industrialisation and the processing of locally produced raw materials and agricultural products. In some sectors totally absurd situations developed. Mozambique, for example, prior to independence featured a modern sugar industry with a capacity of some hundreds of thousands of tonnes of sugar per annum. The sugar produced, however, was dominantly 'plantation raw', a brownish sugar with a distinct molasses taste. Most of this 'plantation raw' was exported to Portugal, refined to white sugar in Lisbon and imported again to Mozambique and other Portuguese colonies. Before 1945, no colonial government had a ministry of industries and even after 1945 this situation remained by and large unchanged. The emergence of a class of Africans with industrial skills was prevented. Not only was industry not stimulated, many crafts and industries that existed before the colonial period - soap, building materials, beads, iron tools, pottery and cloth - were destroyed. Instead, mass production goods were imported from abroad. In trade and commerce, Africans were first pushed out by the European Trading Companies and later by the migrant Indian traders.

The effects of colonialism in the *social sphere* were diverse. Spurred by the spread of Western style education, ascriptive traditional attitudes slowly made place for the emphasis on individual merits and achievements. The school which one attended became more important than the bed in which one was born. The traditional classes - ruling aristocracy, educated elite, ordinary peoples and domestic slaves - were substituted by urban and rural classes. In the urban areas these were the administrative-clerical-professional bourgeoisie, of which there were only a few, the sub-elite and the urban proletariat. In the rural areas, for the first time in African history, a rural proletariat of landless Africans and peasants emerged. After World War II, due to the establishment of an economic base, transport infrastructure enabling food to reach famine areas and campaigns launched against endemic diseases, the population began growing. From approximately 110.000.000 in 1920 to some 225.000.000 in 1960. This population growth coincided with a greatly increased pace of urbanisation and some profited from the urban environment with its hospitals, piped water, sanitary provisions and better housing. Many, however, failed to obtain access to social services which were primarily meant for the benefit of Europeans. The net effect of it all was a widening gap between urban centres and rural areas. Colonialism, in a way, impoverished rural and bastardised urban life. As French, English and Portuguese became a *lingua franca*, with the notable exception of Kenya and Tanzania where Swahili was made the national language, communication between numerous linguistic groups was facilitated and contributed to the coming into being of a national identity. Last but not least, the spread of Western education produced a westernised educated African elite. An elite which constituted the ruling oligarchy and the backbone of civil service of African states in the first two decades after independence.

From the foregoing it is obvious that striking a balance between positive and negative effects of colonialism is difficult. For one, on rational grounds, I disagree with Adu Boahen when he states that *'the final and probably most important negative impact of colonialism was the loss of African sovereignty and independence and with them the right of Africans to shape their destiny or deal directly with the outside world'*. It implies that had Africans been able to shape their destiny or directly deal with the outside world, things would have looked brighter than they do to day. And that, alas, we have no way of knowing. Did colonial rule in no way then frustrate the future of Africa? In numerous and interrelated ways, of course, it did. Two ways feature very prominently in my perception. The first concerns education, employment and racism. By its very nature, the colonial educational system raised hopes of social and economic elevation by offering increasingly liberal education, be it to a few indeed, and at the same time systematically refused to create viable structures to fulfil these hopes. Merits were made subordinate to race, the wish for self-fulfilment of the colonised to the coloniser's wish for perpetual control over his territories. Colonialism had not only roots in racism, through the educational system and job protection it also generated racism. The second concerns industrialisation. When the 'Scramble for Africa' started, industrialisation had already been for some time the engine of modernisation in the Western world. An engine that would eventually steer the West towards the effluent middle-class societies they are today. That engine was, in a crucial period, denied to the African peoples. These people, by and large, were seen as the producers of primary products and the consumers European made ones.

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