

# The Age of Security and Democracy, Nigerian Example: The Way Forward

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the travails of national security in the context of democracy and urbanism. It argues that the securitization of democracy has undermined democratic freedoms. Central to the arguments is that the constrain of democracy in Africa has been the reduction of its principles to serve sentiment of the developing community. It further argues that democracy should be seen as an essentially contested concept, not in ways that denies its core values but that recognize its pluralism. It is this pluralism of democracy that creates the lacuna that in many cases contravene some basic security values such as force and precision particularly in city centers. Democracy in Nigeria attempt compromising security into face saving agenda. This constitutes threat to its essence and commitment to order and obedience. This unfortunately caught most African police napping helplessly. The paper concludes with some ways forward.

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**Index terms**— national security, democracy, security, democratic values, security values, pluralism, social conflict.

## 1 Introduction

ince the acts of violence that destroyed the Twin Towers and a wing of the Pentagon building on September 11, 2001; freedoms and liberties have been restrained around the world in Europe and the US, citizens have become used to stories of extraordinary rendition of foreign detainees, of torture of prisoners, of Guantanamo Bay, as well as a host of new and increased policing powers all in the name of protecting democracy. This is the politics of exceptionalism, where the suspension of liberties and rights is just in the name of defending democracy. As the UK Prime Minister at the time, Tony Blair, put it: 'Here in this country and in other nations round the world, laws will be changed, not to deny basic liberties but to prevent their abuse and protect the most basic liberty of all: freedom terror' (Blair, 2001).

The theme of democracy promotion has not been absent from the 'climate of fear'. On the contrary, in some ways in the age of security democracy has been presented as more imperative than ever -to be promoted everywhere, even if it requires force, as Iraq and Afghanistan illustrate. Understandably, this has caused a lot of unease. As Carothers argues, democracy promotion has been tainted by its association with the war in Iraq and in large part of the world has come to be understood as a codeword for 'regime change' (Abrahamsen, 2000).

In Africa too democracy and security have proved awkward bedfellows. Invocations of 'security' have helped justify restrictions on freedoms and liberty, and suspicions abound that they allies in the 'war on terror' escape international criticism and sanctions against their less than perfect elections and democratic practices. Such concerns come on top of widespread disillusionment with democracy's achievements on the African continent, leading some to speak of Africa's crisis of democracy', or Africa's 'non-transition'. For example, a recent edited collection where African intellectuals reflect on the fate of liberal democracy on the continent concludes with the rather despairing observation that 'current democratic practice and process have been dysfunctional in Africa'. Across the continent, the authors contend, liberal democracy has been hijacked by existing political elite in order to preserve their own power and privileges, reducing electoral processes and elections to mere charades where people are as powerless and as poor as they were in the day of authoritarian rule. Their words; not mine-and of

course, it is dangerous to generalize too much, and while it is definitely possible to point to beacons of hope and to countries that have achieved genuine improvements in terms of democracy and poverty reduction, it is hard to escape a pervasive sense of disappointment with Africa's democratic experiment. In the face of such challenges and critiques, some might be tempted to give up on democracy altogether, to say that it is not for Africa. Others might want to side with those in the so-called 'sequencing debate' that hold that democracy must wait until economic growth and reform has reached a certain level, that democracy is, so to speak, a luxury to be deferred (Chua, 2004). This is not my approach—on the contrary. More than ever it is crucial to defend democracy, and democracy as a value in itself. As such, I side with Nigeria's great political scientist, the late Claude Ake, who more than ten years ago in 1996 observed that 'Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival' (Ake, 1996). Importantly, for Ake, democracy was not a transformation, adaptation, innovation and improvement.

As we enter the post-Bush era, we should seize the opportunity to explore the extent to which democracy can be loosened from security concerns and the politics of exceptionalism. In other words, we should seek to rethink democracy and democracy promotion in ways where it is no longer constrained and undermined in the name of security. But that in itself will not be enough.

I develop this argument by first focusing on the conception of democracy in development discourse and foreign policy, showing that the manner in which democracy has been defined is part of the explanation for Africa's troubled democratic experiment. I then turn to the fate of democracy in the age of security, and the outline some of the anti-democratic effects of the securitization of development. It is here that I think the notion of democracy as an essentially contested concept is useful.

To be clear at the outset: while I do focus on the role of external actors, and more particularly the impact of international development discourse and practice, this is not to say that donors and creditors are to blame for whatever democratic shortcomings we may see in Africa, or that the local political elites that Ake also mentions are without responsibility for the current situation. Far from it! But it is important to consider Africa's democracies in their global context, not only because the initial transitions to democracy in the early 1990s were profoundly influenced by changes in development policy, but also because contemporary international practices continue to have an important impact on the conduct of elections and politics on the continent. Thus, while development and democratisation are frequently presented as the external solutions to Africa's domestic problems, it is crucial to consider the extent to which these two realms—the internal and the external—are intrinsically interwoven. In other words, it is crucial to consider the possibility that the so-called 'internal' problems that democracy and development are intended to solve are in fact related to those 'external' conditions in the first place.

## 2 II.

The Changing Outcome of Democracy in Development Discuss society to 'modernity'. History was seen as a linear progression, and the countries of the South were expected to follow the same development path as the already industrialized parts of the globe. Inspired by the structural functionalism of Talcott Parsons, these early development models were mainly concerned with stimulating economic growth, as all the essential features of modernity were expected to spring from economic prosperity. As societies developed, their various economic, social, cultural and political properties would adjust to development had been reached, it was assumed that democracy would materialize in the same way as it had in conjunction with capitalism and the process of industrialization in the West. As Gabriel Almond put it in 1970, 'in the new and modernizing nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The process of enlightenment and democratization will have their inevitable way' (Almond, 1970).

The status of democracy as an unquestionable goal and inevitable outcome of the process of development was, however, short-lived and soon gave way to a new normative perspective that upheld political order and stability as its main values. This transformation must be seen in the context of the intensification of cold war rivalries in the mid-1960s, which provided the conditions of existence for discourse about developing countries in the following decades. In the light of cold war competition, the realities of Third World economic stagnation and social discontent were reinterpreted. What was previously regarded as a primarily economic challenge and a testing ground for various growth models now became a breeding ground for Communism. To allow political freedom to flourish in such conditions came to be seen as a potentially hazardous strategy, and a fundamental of modernization was replaced by the perception of an essential conflict between the process of modernization and political development. The social transformations associated with rapid economic change, such as urbanization. Increased social differentiation and the provision of education were participation. And while such pressures were recognized as intrinsic features of the modern polity. They were simultaneously feared as potentially destabilizing and detrimental. In a classic

## 3 Global Journal of Human Social Science

Volume XIII Issue W II Version I( D D D D )

Democracy, when it emerged as a central tenet of development in the early 1990s was presented as an uncontested concept, its meaning clearly defined and delineated. For that reason alone, it is worth revisiting the changing fate of democracy in development discourse especially its status in developing countries such as Nigeria.

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Early theories and models in the 1950s and 1960s perceived development as a relatively unproblematic process of transition from 'traditional' contribution to this literature, Pool reasoned that 'in the Congo, in the Dominican Republic, it is clear that order depends on somehow compelling newly mobilized strata to return to a measure of passivity and defeatism from which they have been aroused by the process of modernization. At least temporarily, the maintenance of order requires a lowering of newly acquired expectations and levels of political activity' (De Sola, 1967) by placing such a high premium on order and stability, the central dilemma became how to achieve praise, but the most inconspicuous aspects of development were treated with suspicion. Education, Huntington in relation to India: 'political participation by illiterates ?may well?be less dangerous to criteria for judging the desirability of social reforms can be seen to change from their perceived socio-economic benefits to their capacity to enhance political stability. Accordingly, measures that entailed curbing the privileges of the elite were to be avoided, as were reforms aimed at enhancing the liberties of urban middle classes. In sum, 'reforms directed at the peasantry are a substitute for revolution' (Lumumba-Kasongo, 2005). We see here then, an early linking of democracy and security in development discourse and practice.

Although the intensity of superpower rivalries gradually faded, democracy continued to occupy a subservient position within development discourse. Many donors, especially the Nordic countries, expressed their concern for the poor human rights record in recipient states, but liberal democracy was not a main priority of development aid. Rather it was treated as irrelevant to the development process, banished to the sideline by more immediate concerns like famine, hunger, and over-population. Child mortality and illiteracy. Faced with such a plethora of daunting problems, the absence of civil and political freedoms seemed only a small oversight and an influential body of opinion held that strong, or perhaps even authoritarian, government was more important to developing countries than 'adherence to the niceties of liberal democratic constitutionalism' (Emerson, 1971). African countries were accordingly expected to 'forgo the luxury of conventional democratic institutions and processes' for some time to come (Hodder, 1987).

#### 4 III. Democracy as Security Strategy

While many aspects of democracy promotion have reminded unchanging, the 'climate of fear' that followed September 11, 2001 has seen a subtle reinterpretation of the meaning and status of democracy in development. We need to pause here, and distinguish between the acts of violence that took place on the day and the politics of insecurity that they gave rise to (Cambell, 2002). The two are not the same, in that acts of violence do not speak for themselves, but are interpreted and given meaning by political actors. The events of September 11 has been interpreted so as to result in a general politics of insecurity and fear, and a policy response that paradoxically threatens the very democracy it claims to defend. As Timothy Garton Ash has observed, the conduct of the 'war on terrorism' and 'this atmosphere of menace' might end up being as much a threat to our own freedoms as terrorism itself (Garton, 2002).

How has this played itself out in relation to development and democracy in Africa, and with what consequences? While there were few, if any, direct links between the attacks of September 11 and African, the continent was quickly draw into a new discourse of security and has increasingly come to be seen as a potential security threat. This has centered on a discourse of 'failed' and 'failing' states, and underdevelopment and poverty have become increasingly securitized. Whereas in the past, 'weak', 'failed' or 'fragile' states were regarded as unfortunate development failures, humanitarian crises or low intensity conflicts, the fight against terrorism has elevated them to the status of international security threats, a danger not only to their own neglected and poor populations, but also to world stability. the view was most clearly and straightforwardly stated in the 2002 Security Strategy Of the United States of America, which maintained that the 'events of September 11 2001 taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interest as strong states' (US Government, 2002). 'In Africa', the document continues, 'promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war and desperate poverty. This threatens both the core values of the United States-preserving human dignity-and our strategic priority-combating global terror'.

Similarly, the former UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw argued 'that turning a blind eye to the breakdown of order in any part of the world, however distant, invites direct threats to our national security and well-being' (Straw, 2002). Tellingly, Straw's comments then turned directly to the DRC, and he also specifically mentions Somalia and Liberia as security risks. From the perspective of many rich, Western countries, poor and badly governed states have come to be seen as potential breeding grounds and safe havens for a murky underworld of international terrorism and criminal networks, and in this way development assistance becomes not merely about helping others, but also about defending 'ourselves' (Blair, 2005). Democracy and democracy promotion likewise risk becoming subservient to the perceived security needs of the donor countries and a vaguely defined notion of world stability. Democracy, in other words, has become part of a broader security strategy, and risks being seen not first and foremost a value in and of itself, but a means to the end of security. My suggestion is not that Western donors have abandoned democracy altogether-that would be way too exaggerated a claim. As part of the securitization of development, Western leaders extol liberal democracy as a solution to international insecurity, echoing the Kantian notion of democracies as inherently more peaceful and reliable international partners. Former Prime Minister Tony Blair, for example, argued passionately that 'if we can establish and spread the values of liberty, the rule of law, human rights, and an open society then that is in our national interests too. The Spread of our values makes us safer' (Blair, 1999). And while much has been made of the

Bush administration's emphasis on pre-emptive action, one of the pillars of the US security strategy is to 'extend the peace by seeking to extend the benefits of freedom and prosperity across the globe'. In short, democracy, accountability, and freedom are seen as the basis of security, and must therefore be spread to all corners of the globe, (if necessary by force, as in Iraq).

There is much to commend this view, and the UK Department of International Development might well be right when it claims that 'development and security goals can be pursued in a mutually reinforcing way' (DFID, 2005). The common observation that poverty might lead to radicalization and hence, subsequently, to terrorist violence might also capture important elements of contemporary social and political dynamics, and should not be dismissed lightly. But care is needed: democracy and security might well be two sides of the same coin, in the sense that they are mutually constitutive and reinforcing. But the analogy can be put differently; flip a coin, as it spins in the air both sides are visible, but when it lands, one side is up, the other down. The fear, in other words, is that development assistance might end up being driven by the security interests of donors, regardless of the recipient's records on democracy and human rights, or that we might witness the emergence of a 'new cold war' in development aid, where assistance is rewarded in exchange for allegiance in the 'war against terrorism' and access to natural resources, as feared by several NGOs (Cosgrave, 2004). The EU's Declaration on Combating Terrorism, which states that 'the commitment of countries to combat terrorism on an ongoing basis' would be an influencing factors in EU relations with countries, is a case in point (Gaves, 2006).

A look at recent developments in parts of Africa seems to confirm these concerns: continued and increasing development assistance to Algeria, a key North African ally in the 'war on terror', for example, is a case in point. In Algeria, democratic space has been gradually closed down and civil society-trade unions, political parties, associations and the media-have been subjected to stringent surveillance by the security services, all in the name of the 'war on terror'. In another key ally-state, Ethiopia, the recent local elections were seriously flawed and marked a return to electoral authoritarianism (Aalen and Tronvold, 2009). Yet the international community has been entirely silent. Neither supporting, nor deploying election observers, the donor community could keep quiet in the aftermath, as they supposedly had no substantial and independent observations as a basis for judgment (Aalen and Tronvold, 2009). The US has continued its strong support for Meles Zenawi and his government, who play a key role in the 'war on terror' in the Horn of Africa. The opposition parties have come to recognize that they cannot depend on the international community for help in pushing for democratisation, and lament that with continued US support for the Zenawi government, prospects for anything like a free and fair election in 2010 are very bleak indeed.

More examples could be given; of particular interest perhaps is the establishment of AFRICOM and also the British counter-terrorism initiative, launched in 2003 and designed to develop the 'counter-terrorism and security capacity of weaker nations so as to best support them in protecting our share interests' (Whitaker, 2008).

My key point is that securitization of development is replete with dangers for democracy in Africa. There is the danger that it gives African political leaders another justification for restricting freedom and clamping down on dissident voices; there is the danger that aid might be redirected towards countries and groups that are believed to pose the greatest security threat, rather than towards those in greatest need, and there is the danger that key allies are allowed to substitute democracy and human rights for support in the 'war on terror'. It is perhaps in this context that we can make sense of the concept of 'good enough governance', now so popular in discussions of 'failed' and 'failing' states (DFID, 2005).

IV.

## 5 In Defense of Democracy

In the age of security, we could do well to remember Benjamin Franklin's statement that 'those who would give up essential liberties to purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety'. Similarly, in the age of security it is more important than ever to defend democracy and to restate its value as a goal in and of itself, and not as a means to an end (security). But at the same time it is clear from this brief historical overview that we cannot simply go back to the

## 6 Global Journal of Human Social Science

Volume XIII Issue W II Version I( D D D D )

kind of democracy promoted in the 1990s. If we accept my argument that the linking of democracy to economic liberalization is in important ways part of the explanation for the widespread disillusionment with democracy on the African continent, then we need to think afresh. If this understanding of democracy has led to the emergence of fragile and exclusionary democracies, then what many Western governments today perceive as 'security risks', i.e. 'failed' and 'failing' states are in fact linked to development policies in the first place in the sense that decades of structural adjustment policies and state curtailment led to a gradual weakening of the capacities of the African state both to serve and to secure its citizens. As such, development policies have been part of the problem of 'failed' or 'weak' states, and this alerts us once again to the necessity of a more inclusive approach to democracy in Africa.

The key question of our time is thus how to defend a democracy that is not allied to an economic liberalism of inequality and not subservient to the demands of security? Let me say at once, that I do not think the answer

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is to be found in some predefined model of democracy, that exists somewhere in prefabricated form, ready to be exported and assembled anywhere in the world. Instead, my argument is for a re-engagement with the notion of democracy as an essentially contested concept, one of those concepts where a neutral definition is impossible as rival definitions embody different and indeterminate social and political allegiances and operate within a particular moral and political perspective (Abrahamsen, 2005). It is precisely this notion of contestability that has been banished from contemporary debates about democracy, and that we need to bring back.

To say that democracy is essentially contested, however, does not mean that it has no core features, but instead that these features may differ in time and place. Nor does it necessarily entail a complete relativism, where any practice or system can be labeled democratic, but leads instead towards a greater plurality and contestation of forms and models of democracy. Following Charles Tilly, it is instructive to approach democracy as a particular form of citizenship, and as such it combines broad and relatively equal citizenship with (a) binding consultation of citizens in regard to state personnel and policies as well as (b) protection of citizens from arbitrary state action (Tilly, 1997). Two points follow from this understanding. First, this approach to democracy takes the focus away from particular institutional arrangements, and opens up the possibility that it might be about more than simply elections and institutions, whereby democracy becomes a political system divorced from its broader social and economic settings. It does not imply that elections are unimportant, but allows for the possibility that different forms of institutional arrangements—not only party political competition—can promote democracy, participation and accountability. As such, it allows us to see the possibility of different forms of democracy, perhaps drawing on established democratic theories or models, or perhaps developing what some might want to call a specific African democracy, or different African democracies.

Second, this understanding of democracy does not specify a particular distribution of wealth, or absolute equality, but it specifies instead equal claims on and from the state in a person's capacity as citizen. As such, it refrains from linking democracy to a specific economic policy, but instead leaves that open to democratic negotiation, something for each polity to decide. We are thus back to democracy and development policy, in that it highlights the need for development actors and democracy promoters to allow and even support democratic negotiation over economic policy to take place. In such a setting, we can see the possibility of the emergence of economic policies that are more inclusive and more responsive to the needs of the majority of citizens.

My claim is not that this is a perfect understanding of democracy, nor the only one. For example, this understanding ties democracy to citizenship, and thus leaves open the question of global democracy, the democratisation of global institutions, and also the democratic rights of migrants as noncitizens. These are important questions for democratic theory, and again highlight the need for debate on the very meaning of democracy.

I began by saying that these have been hard times for democracy. Perhaps, as we enter the post-Bush era, we are also looking forward to better times for democracy. Of course, security imperative are not likely to disappear overnight, nor am I suggesting that some of these concerns are not also real and important. But this is an opportune time to challenge the dynamics whereby democracy has come to be bound to security in ways that whether intentionally or not have undermined and threatened democratic freedoms. If this is the case, then this also an urgent time to restate the possibility of rethinking democracy and its relationship to development in a more inclusive ways, and in ways that allow for multiple and plural ways of constructing democracy. As Ake reminds us, 'Africans are seeking democracy as a matter of survival'. I believe this is still the case, and even if in some countries public confidence in democracy is declining, most surveys confirm that African people show a high degree of enthusiasm for democracy and that they believe the democratic form of government to be more legitimate and more desirable than all other forms of governance.<sup>43</sup> However, we need to ask the question of what kind of democracy, or 'whose democracy'? In order to do so, it is useful to remind ourselves about the contestability of democracy: Liberal democracy procedural democracy linked to market liberalism is only one of many possible democracies in political theory. Africa's democratic experiment shows that much is to be gained from exploring these alternatives.

V.

## 7 The Way Out of Security Threats Across the Sahara

The revolutions in the north have inspired sub-Saharan Africans. We can only hope the region's leaders take note. Women demonstrate in the Ivory Coast to condemn the killings at last week's rally and demand Laurent Gbagbo steps down. Photograph: Sia Kambou/AFP/Getty Images. As protests against authoritarian rule spread throughout North Africa and the Middle East, I've been asked whether similar prodemocracy protests could take place in sub-Saharan Africa too. At first glance, the conditions appear ripe. Many sub-Saharan Africans also struggle daily with the consequences of poor governance, stagnating economies and dehumanizing poverty, and rampant violations of human rights.

It's difficult for an outsider to know the local reasons why people in any society finally decide they've had enough of their leaders and rise up against them. It's also dangerous to assume that revolutions occurring simultaneously have the same root causes. But certain factors do help explain the volatility in North Africa and the relative quiet to the south—and why that may not persist indefinitely. The first is the idea of the nation itself, along with regional identity. Because the great majority of peoples of North Africa and the Middle East are Arabs, their ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural connections provide a degree of solidarity within and across

national boundaries. The majority think less along ethnic and more along lines of national identity. Al-Jazeera provides a wealth of information in the region's common language, Arabic, and allows one country's news to reach a broad regional swathe practically instantaneously.

Many in the younger generation are welleducated professionals, eager to make their voices heard. And in Tahrir Square, we heard the protesters chant: "We are all Egyptians," no matter where they came from in Egypt, their social status, or even their religion (Egypt has a small but significant population of Coptic Christians). That sense of national identity was essential to their success. But that national spirit, sadly, is lacking in much of sub-Saharan Africa. For decades, under colonial rule and since independence, many leaders have exploited their peoples' ethnic rivalries and linguistic differences to sow division and maintain their ethnic group's hold on power and the country's purse strings. To this day, in many such states, ethnicity has greater resonance than national identity. Instead of encouraging inter-ethnic understanding and solidarity, leaders have set communities against each other in a struggle for resources and power, making it difficult for citizens to join together for the national interest.

A second factor is the role of the military. The Egyptian army's decision not to fire on protesters was key to the success of the February revolution. Sadly, we couldn't expect the same in sub-Saharan Africa, where in many -if not most -nations both police and army are sources of instability and rancor. Quite often soldiers are hired, paid and promoted by the man in power. As a result, their first loyalty is not to the nation, but to whoever is in the state house. In addition, the majority of the army's recruits may be drawn from the leader's ethnic group, especially if the leader has been in power for many years. Since it isn't likely that the soldiers' micro-nation (tribe) would be demonstrating in the streets, it can be relatively easy for them to open fire on protesters with a certain sense of impunity. More tragic evidence of this was provided last week when unarmed women expressing their opinion about the disputed election in Ivory Coast were mown down by troops loyal to the incumbent president. Not only was this a clear violation of human rights, but evidence of recklessness and impunity, and the extreme lengths to which leaders will go to protect their power.

A third factor is the flow of information. North Africans' geographic proximity to Europe and the ability of significant numbers to travel or study abroad have exposed them to other influences and horizons. Many have access to the latest technology and the wherewithal to use social media to communicate and organize to great effect. But the large majority of people in sub-Saharan Africa don't have access to the same levels of education, or information and technology. It may be that their media are controlled by the state, or independent voices are so worried about being harassed or shut down that they censor themselves or shy away from politics altogether. These constraints make it difficult for ordinary citizens to understand how their governments operate, and less able to calibrate the power of a united and determined people.

Finally, our people tend to tolerate poor governance and fear both their perceived lack of power and their leaders. This year in North Africa enough people shed their fear of losing jobs and property, of reprisals, detention, torture and even death. Until a critical mass does the same, its unlikely sub-Saharan The Age of Security and Democracy, Nigerian Example: the Way Forward Africa will emulate the kind of "people power" we've seen in the north. Even so, many sub-Saharan leaders must be paying close attention and asking themselves: "Could it happen here -my people rising up against me?" Some will make changes, perhaps cosmetic, to appease their populations; others may take bigger steps. One lesson I hope all will draw is that it's better to leave office respected for working for what they believed was the common good, rather than risk being driven out, repudiated and humiliated, by their own people. Even though internet-organized pro-democracy protests earlier this week in Luanda, Angola's capital, were broken up by security forces and the protesters threatened with harsh reprisals by a senior member of the ruling party -tactics we have seen used in numerous African regimes over the years -the truth is that people are not rising up without reason. They are unhappy with how they are being governed and have tried others methods to bring about change that haven't worked.

A wind is blowing. It is heading south, and won't be suppressed forever. In Ivory Coast, despite last week's brutal attack, on the eve of International Women's Day hundreds of women marched to the spot where their colleagues were killed, a clear demonstration that, slowly but surely, even Africans south of the Sahara will shed their fear and confront their dictatorial leaders. The women's bravery will be an inspiration to others in Africa and elsewhere. Eventually the information gap in sub-Saharan Africa will be bridged, partly because the world is not closed anymore: al-Jazeera, CNN and mobile phones -all available in sub-Saharan Africa -mean information can be transferred instantly. There is no doubt that those in the south are watching what's happening in the north. I also hope that the extraordinary events in the north encourage all leaders to provide the governance, development, equity and equality, and respect for human rights their people deserve and to end the culture of impunity. If its member states are slow to recognize the inevitability of change, let us hope that the African Union encourages heads of state to acknowledge that Africa cannot remain an island where leaders continue in office for decades, depriving their people of their rights, violating their freedoms, and impoverishing them.

The way forward is that since in conflict and war, Africa and all its peoples lose. It would be so much better to see Africa awake and have revolutions brought about by the ballot box in free and fair elections, instead of by tanks and bullets. After all, this argument may not always apply to urban crime and violence, which, while considerably more complicated, both at the individual and societal level, is nevertheless not a preferred occupation if people have other opportunities that allow them to earn incomes to meet their needs.

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## 8 VI. The Threat of Urban Crime in Africa

Violent crime in Africa's cities is endemic and in many places worsening. Africa as a whole has a homicide rate of 20 per 100,000 (in Europe it is 5.4, in North America 6.5, and in South America 25.9) (Henderson, 1993). The problem is particularly severe in some urban areas. Kinshasa's homicide rate is estimated to be as high as 112 homicides per 100,000. The Nigerian police have recorded consistently rising rates of murder and attempted murder over the last 20 years (Federal Office of Statistics (FOS), 2006). Rates of armed robbery in Africa are also very high. In Nairobi, 37 percent of residents reported being victims. The rate is 27 percent in some Mozambican cities and 21 percent in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (UNDP, 2005). Research at a Cape Town hospital revealed that 94 percent of patients had at some point faced exposure to violence. South Africa Police Service figures also show an alarming rise in sexual crimes, with 27 percent of men indicating they had committed rape (Beall, 2008).

Whatever the accuracy of crime statistics in Africa, the perception of growing danger has generated widespread anxiety. In Lagos, Nigeria, 70 percent of respondents in a city-wide survey were fearful of being victims of crime. In Nairobi, more than half of the citizens worry about crime "all the time" or "very often (UNDP, 2005)." A World Bank study in Zambia uncovered such a significant fear of crime that it affected the work decisions of teachers.<sup>8</sup> Anecdotal accounts among city dwellers across Africa indicate that urban crime rates have increased rapidly in the last two decades, contributing to pervasive fears that impede commerce, fray social capital, and undermine normal urban activity. Violent crime is a daily threat for many city dwellers.

Such high crime rates have many contributing factors. To a large extent they are not surprising given Africa's poverty coupled with its proximity to wealth in cities. The continent's many protracted conflicts have also undoubtedly played a role. Many African cities have either directly faced war or suffered the social and economic consequences of conflict elsewhere in the country. These conflicts have produced violent political cultures and have traumatized, divided, and further impoverished societies. They have also fostered the availability of firearms. The percentage of city households claiming to own firearms in 2005 was 18.3 in South Africa, 22.1 in Namibia, 31.1 in the DRC, and 56.3 in Burundi (Sachikonye, 2002). Global processes also lie behind Africa's rising urban crime. While the continent's growing integration with international trade has introduced new commodities and market opportunities, it also has attracted illicit businesses, protection rackets, smuggling, and money laundering. New understandings of acceptable practices of livelihood formation have accompanied rising organized crime (The Economist, 2008). Now, the path to success is often perceived as having less to do with education and hard work than with criminality, illicit deals, and trickery.

Africa's weak security services and large numbers of unemployed or underemployed people desperate to earn a living make it an attractive base for international criminals. The United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime has identified West Africa, with its ineffective policing and bribable governments and security forces, as an emerging narcoregion that provides a convenient halfway stop for Latin American drug traders exporting to Europe. Such international crime offers insurgents, militias, extreme political groups, and terrorist organizations opportunities for financing their activities. For instance, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is reported to allow, at a price, heavily armed convoys transporting drugs from West Africa across territory it controls (Hodder, 1987). Other terrorist groups based in Africa support themselves by kidnapping.

The upsurge in urban crime is aggravating other sources of instability. It deters the building of sustainable political institutions, economic growth, and social reconciliation (Igwe, 2010). High crime rates similarly undermine trust in and respect for government, constraining its ability to provide leadership and foster popular participation. These concerns, in turn, depress both domestic and international investment and further weaken economic prospects. The growing threats to stability posed by these internally focused security challenges underscore the expanding importance of Africa's police forces for national security. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that Africa's security forces need to be realigned toward the police to better meet its contemporary internal security challenges.

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## 10 VII. The Weakness of Africa's Police

The sobering reality, however, is that the police in Africa have not had great success in dealing with urban crime. A difficult environment, the police force's traditional disinterest in the poor, and lack of resources both in terms of personnel and in skills and equipment hamper its ability to be effective.

Too often police presence in the high-density locations where most city dwellers live is only sporadic and the number of officers available is very small. Those who are available are commonly undertrained and may even lack literacy skills. Moreover, African governments often severely lack resources, institutional capacity, and in some cases control of territory. Available resources have commonly been tilted heavily toward the military over the police. This preference for the military has weakened the police, who lack management and technical skills, interagency coordination, communication equipment, transport, and even lighting, office space, filing cabinets, stationery, computers, uniforms, and forensic labs—all undermining effectiveness.

Compounding these challenges is a long history of police neglect, corruption, and impunity common in Africa, having its roots in part in coercive colonial policing practices. One continent-wide analysis argues that the police in most African countries are "significantly brutal, corrupt, inefficient, unresponsive and unaccountable to the

## 11 VIII. A PROGRAM FOR TACKLING URBAN CRIME

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generality of the population (Kruijt and Koonings, 1999).” Indeed, multiple reports from Amnesty International, the International Bar Association, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, and other respected international research institutes have frequently documented and criticized police behavior across the continent (HRW, 2008). Afro barometer data found that only a minority of citizens in countries such as Benin, Zambia, Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya trusted their police force “a lot” or “somewhat.”

When police agencies in Africa are working in post conflict situations, they face an even tougher environment. Commonly, in the immediate aftermath, it is found that police personnel have abandoned their posts, been killed, or are no longer suitable for further employment because they committed human rights abuses. For instance, during Sierra Leone’s civil war approximately 900 police officers were killed and a considerable number suffered amputation. As a result, the size of the police force was reduced from 9,317 to 6,600 such that for years after the civil war, police commanders across Sierra Leone reported a serious lack of officers, vehicles, land phones, and accommodation for the officers (HRW, 2008). Thus, in a postconflict situation there is a double dilemma. On the one hand, mechanisms of social order have been undermined, poverty has been exacerbated, and there is a surfeit of weapons and unemployed excombatants. On the other hand, the available resources and security personnel have been reduced, and respect for the agencies may have been diminished still further because of conflict abuses.

Many African governments have introduced new police restructuring, training, and oversight bodies but with limited success. Accordingly, few citizens expect a rapid transformation of policing and police forces. Rather, many continue to doubt their governments’ ability and willingness to finance the The Age of Security and Democracy, Nigerian Example: the Way Forward necessary steps that promise police availability, accountability, and integrity, effectiveness, and community partnership. Their scepticism is reinforced by continuing media accounts of police abuse and collaboration with criminals and citizens’ daily encounters paying bribes to police to allow them through traffic check points or to investigate crimes.

This experience has driven many citizens to look elsewhere for protection. As one Nairobi citizen said, “If you do not make an extra arrangement for security beyond what the state provides, then you are vulnerable to attacks.” In short, official police protection is insufficient to address the growing violence experienced in many African cities. Even local police commanders recognize the need to supplement their weakly performing personnel.

## 11 VIII. A Program for Tackling Urban Crime

Programs for addressing urban crime in Africa must take into account two facts: One, the state police are too weak to undertake the task of crime prevention and investigation by themselves. Two, there are in fact many non-state actors who currently provide the majority of everyday policing in cities. To establish a state police service sufficiently large and equipped to serve all citizens would take years and would be beyond many African state budgets to achieve or to sustain. Conversely, supporting non-state actors already on the ground and who meet certain standards is much less costly and likely to be more sustainable. What is needed, then, is a coordinated program of targeted assistance for community-based and commercial nonstate policing in addition to the support given to state policing (Paddy, 1999). Such a program would not need to start from scratch with unfamiliar actors but could draw on existing though often overlooked successful local partnerships that contribute tangible results and efficiencies. By facilitating such partnerships, international donors can also help address concerns of poor and marginalized communities that make up sizable portions of Africa’s growing urban areas. Partnerships also prevent nonstate actors and state police from being totally autonomous and acting with impunity. Through semiformal partnerships, non-state actors more often integrate and conform to generally accepted policing standards (Paddy, 1999). State-non-state policing partnerships also boost efficiency and performance. Some might fear that support to non-state actors will divert precious resources away from formal policing.

However, most non-state actors require fairly minimal support. They do not use expensive buildings, computers, and vehicles or pay high salaries. A small investment in non-state actors produces benefits for the state police in terms of increased personnel on the ground and enhanced intelligence. Moreover, this can be done alongside state police capacity building initiatives. As such, it constitutes no significant threat to police productivity. On the contrary, partnership permits a division of labour where the police can concentrate on their most essential functions and make use of their special skills, authority, and expertise while non-state actors can undertake their own low-level and everyday policing needs (with backup support from state police in cases where they cannot cope). To better capitalize on these advantages, several priority steps should be taken as ways forward such as: 1. Know the actors and set benchmarks for partnership.

It is vital first to map non-state policing groups, for it is not always obvious who is working in the field, what they are doing, and how. From such a mapping exercise it is important to identify the policing groups who should be supported. Reliable and effective non-state partners will be those groups most open to reform and, above all, those that enjoy widespread local support. Non-state police actors will perform best when they are perceived as legitimate and effective by those they are policing. However, the bar of acceptability should not be set so high as to require a non-state group to meet current international standards. After all, few police forces in Africa would qualify by that criterion. What is important is that a policing group has local credibility, is not criminal or abusive, and is open to reform.



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## 12 Devise performance guidelines and supervisory

mechanisms. An overarching framework of policing standards to guide performance, procedures, jurisdictions, interventions, and other regular activities of non-state policing actors should be developed. An accreditation program that acknowledges demonstrable knowledge and skills of non-state actors would also be beneficial. It could offer a degree of legitimacy to the non-state actors and opportunities to monitor and improve their performance. Accredited non-state policing groups that sign up to a framework of standards could also be held accountable by city-wide structures. Drawing on the Cape Town Partnership model, state police would play a city-wide supervisory and coordinating role. They would receive reports of threatening activity, request a response from non-state policing groups, and determine when the situation demands for the state police to be called in.

It is important to acknowledge that it is not just the non-state actors that should have their standards The Age of Security and Democracy, Nigerian Example: the Way Forward raised. The skills of both partners need to improve. Both sides are then likely to increasingly respect and trust one another and both will gain the support of the people when they demonstrate that they are responsive to local needs and skilled in their respective areas of specialization. This would entail non-state actors solving routine local problems of crime and disorder. The police, in turn, will focus on specialized or more complex criminal investigations and handling major problems.

Year 2013

The Age of Security and Democracy, Nigerian Example: the Way Forward <sup>1 2 3 4 5 6</sup>



Figure 1:

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