
UNIT 13 DETERRITORIALISATION AND PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY

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13.1 INTRODUCTION

Africa has hundreds of distinct ethnic groups (condescendingly referred to by many Westerners as "tribes"). Some share common language, history, cultural values, territory, economic and political institutions. Among the known languages in the world, over eight hundred are spoken in Africa by hundreds of African ethnic groups. Along with Islam and Christianity, there are several hundreds traditional African religions (since each ethnic group has its own religious practices). The ethnic groups range in size from several millions, such as the Hausa, the Baganda, and the Ashanti, to thousands, such as the Nzuma. Boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by the colonial powers, based solely on political and economic expediency, dividing ethnic and language groups among several colonies. In East Africa, the Somalis were divided among Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya; the Maasai between German Tanganyika and British Kenya; in West Africa the Akan split between Cote d'Ivoire and the Gold Coast (known today as Ghana); the Ewe between the Gold Coast and Togo; the Ibo between Nigeria and Cameroon; the Malinke, Yoruba, Fulani, and Ewe splintered between three or more colonial regimes; in Central Africa, the Hutus and Tutsis were spread across Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Uganda and Tanzania; in Southern Africa, the Ovimbundu were spread over several colonial territories. Groups with traditional rivalries or histories of warfare were often included within a single state, such as the Ashanti and Brong in Ghana and the Yoruba and Hausa in Nigeria. The colonial state arbitrarily defined boundaries of the political community with little or no consideration of ethnic groups or realities of African society. These artificial boundaries have created one of the greatest political problems in the post-independence Africa and have led to several wars and conflicts, such as the Biafran War (Nigeria), the war in the Ogaden (Somalia-Ethiopia) and conflicts in the Great Lakes region.

13.2 CONCEPTUALISING SOCIAL IDENTITY

The concept of "identity" has become the primary medium for understanding the relationship between the personal (subjective) and the social, between the individual and the group, the cultural and the political as well as the group and the state. Although there is considerable disagreement of opposing viewpoints on these issues, most agree that question of identity is fundamental to an understanding of the processes that link the individual and personal experience to large-scale cultural, social and political processes. The contemporary use of the term "identity" refers to forms of personhood (individual) as well as collectivities or groups. On the individual level, identity as a definition of

personhood refers to uniqueness, that is, to be differentiated from other people or the whole of mankind, as well as the sameness or continuity of the self across time and space.

At the social or group level, the interaction with significant others such as parents, the family group, and membership groups was initially seen as central factor to the development of identity. However, the role of social groups such as gender, ethnic, race, class and national groups in identity formation has been given greater significance in psychology through the work of a group of British psychologists under Henri Tajfel. "Social identity," according to Tajfel, refers to "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership".

Individual or group identity is not restricted to the individual's definition of the self or the group's definition of itself. It includes the meaning of the self or the group to others. Social identity, then, also refers to the way other people define an individual or individuals belonging to a group and, in this sense, others assign identities. Thus, the individual's identity is what the individual means to himself or herself and the individual's identity to other individuals is what he or she means to them: Likewise, the group's identity is what it means to these groups. Group identity waxes and wanes in response to the imposed identities by outsiders. Thus, a group's self-perception is affected differently if it is "stigmatised or accepted, marginalised, 'invisibilised', discriminated or treated equally, celebrated or debunked by hegemonic mainstreams"

Social identities are always socially constructed and are therefore ever-changing in their boundaries and meanings. Identity as a self and/or collective construct is open to change, re-interpretation (thus enabling a restructuring identity of individuals or collectivities). Identity is open-ended, fluid and constantly in a process of change and transformation. Furthermore, as Catherine Campbell points out: "Identity is constantly constructed and reconstructed as the subject moves from one social situation to another, resulting in a self that is highly fragmented and context-dependent".

Thus individuals have multiple identities in multiple contexts. A person may be simultaneously a peasant woman, a Xhosa, a Transkeian, an African, a Black, a Christian, a member of the ANC, and a South African. Each of these identities assumes significance in a particular context. However, the individual's self-identification is based on choice. For Hall, identification (as opposed to identity) refers to "recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation". Since an individual encounters innumerable possibilities of identifying with certain groups and adhering to certain organisations, to identify with one or several groups always involves selecting certain groups and rejecting others. Identifications are thus always the result of choice, and an individual may change his identifications or identify with several groups.

Identities can function as points of identification, and gain political relevance in terms of the following four major processes:

- i) Social categorisation, which is the segmentation of the world so as to impose an order on the environment and provide a locus of identification for the self;
- ii) Social identity, which is the self-concept developed out of person's membership of a social group and the emotional value attached to that membership;
- iii) Social comparison, which is the comparison of the in group characteristics with the out-group characteristics;

- iv) Psychological distinctiveness, which is the distinctive and positive group members experience in comparison to other relevant groups.

One of the major problems facing heterogeneous states is the reconciliation between identification with distinct sub-cultures, groups or regions on the one hand and identification with the state on the other. Hence many governments of diverse societies regard nation-building as an essential strategy to develop a common culture and patriotism. However, strategies of nation-building differ with regard to the extent to which recognition is given to the existence of and make provision for, subcultures. In some cases, loyalty to the state is regarded as much more important than loyalty to subgroups. In contrast, others regard ethnic, racial and other groupings as building blocks larger than the nation state.

13.3 THE CONCEPT OF NATIONALISM AND NATION

It is difficult to define "nationalism". Noting the diverseness of 'nationalism', Kenneth Minogue states: "Nationalism is a set of ideas, but as they travel from continent to continent, these ideas add up less to a theory than to rhetoric, a form of self-expression by which a certain kind of political excitement can be communicated from an elite to the masses. These ideas are chameleons that take the colour of the locality around them; we saw that German and Indian nationalist might use the same words and mean quite different things, and nationalism combined with socialist ideas in Africa is radically different from nationalism combined with religion or state worship in modern Europe".

According to Ernst Haas, the most important indicator for denoting nationhood is the collective consciousness, as well as the demand for independence. He states that 'nationalism' is an ideology of specific groups of people wishing to create a nation where one does not exist, saying that it ought to exist. It is a political ideology, which aims at the building of a nation. It is also an ideology of a people who have achieved nationhood.

In Africa, there have been two kinds of nationalism during the struggle for political independence since 1945. First, there has been the ethnic sub-nationalism of a community speaking one language. Secondly, there has been multi-ethnic nationalism, where men and women of different ethnic sub-nations have striven together to develop a feeling of patriotism, or love for their political country, and to build one political nation out of numerous ethnic groups.

It is relevant to point out here that nationalism was a strong feature of African civilisation in the pre-colonial period. Colonial rule in general had the twin effects of weakening nationalism and encouraging ethnic sub-nationalism. This may at first glance seem to be refuted by the simple observation that most of Africa's new political nations have grown during the colonial times. This was because the boundaries established in European chancelleries to delineate colonial territories during the "scramble" for Africa have in almost all cases remained intact into the last quarter of the 20th Century. This does not mean, however, that the creation of nations in Africa can be attributed to the colonialists. Indeed, the colonialists destroyed many African political nations in the process of establishing their own political pattern in Africa. Large empires like those of the Tokolor, Mandinka and Fulani were split up between several colonial territories. The independence of smaller nations like that of the Zulu was submerged within a single colonial territory. Several African states, which fell victim to colonialism, managed to re-emerge in the post-colonial substantially with their pre-colonial boundaries. They were hardly affected by the redrawing of the political map of Africa by Europeans. These states were Tunisia, Egypt, the Sudan, Dahomey, Madagascar, Swaziland and

Lesotho. There were two pre-colonial states like Ethiopia and Liberia — that even managed to survive the Scramble for Africa.

The remaining thirty or so new African political nations are commonly supposed to be conglomerations of mainly 'stateless' societies and small states, lumped together casually by colonial map-makers. For example, Uganda was created as a colonial territory out of four Bantu kingdoms and dozens of smaller Bantu and Nilotic 'stateless communities'.

Here the question arises also what, then, constitutes a nation? Is the nation coterminous with the state? Are the Yorubas, Ibos, in Nigeria, the Bamileke, Foulbe, Kirdi, Bamoun in Cameroon, the English and the Scots in Great Britain, separate nations or ethnic groups?

Some political scientists would readily agree that each of the above ethnic group constitutes a nation. These political scientists can be said to belong to the "objective school" of nationhood, as contrasted to the 'subjective school'. According to Walker Connor, a strong supporter of the objective school, each of the Nigerian, Cameroonian and the British ethnic group constitutes a nation. He believes that the self-differentiating ethnic groups are 'nations' and nation's loyalty to group should be called "nationalism". According to him, development of each solidarity as a nation is retarded by compelling them to form "artificial" nation with different people. However, Victor Olorunsola, who belongs to the subjective school, uses the term, "cultural sub-nationalism" for Walker's "ethnic nationalism". He succinctly argued that equating ethnicity with nationalism could lead to "the perpetual fragmentation of sovereign states".

The basic assumptions of the objective school are that: the term 'nation' applies to a people who have common ancestry and history, and possess group values or as John Stuart Mill expressed it, "common sympathies". But according to the subjective school a people of the same nation have a common nationality. They may be part of a nation-states such as the Scots within Great Britain, or Ibo nation within the Nigerian state. People of the same nation can live in several states. The Yorubas for instance, live in both Dahomey and Nigeria. The Hausas are found in several states of West Africa. The objective school argues that a nation is distinguished by a number of empirical indicators. These include a high degree of social mobilisation, national character and history language, common custom and habits, territory, economic and political institutions.

While the objective school emphasises several criteria for a nation, the subjective school emphasises one or two criteria. Their position can be reflected in Ernst Haas definition of a nation. According to him "a nation is a socially mobilised body of individuals believing themselves to be united by some set of characteristics that differentiate them (in their own minds) from "outsiders" and striving to create or maintain their own State". The essential factor for nation building is the collective consciousness and the desire for independence. Haas' conception of nation, which emphasises mobilisation of diverse ethnic groups, agrees with that of Karl Deutsch who states that a nation emerges as a "result of transformation of people of several ethnic elements in the process of social mobilisation". Deutsch defines social mobilisation as a process by which old psychological and economic clusters are eroded and people are made available for new orientation".

The subjective school contends that while one criterion might be vital to the task of nation building in one state, a different factor might be the inevitable criterion in another. For example, the concept of "Somaliness" based on the common origin and history, has been the driving force in the building of a Somali nation; race and centuries of deprivation are vital to Jewish nation; language and religion mark the cravings of Irish nationhood. On the other hand, nation-building in heterogeneous societies such as Nigeria and Cameroon is based primarily on common colonial experience. However,

we should not go much deeper into the differences between these groups. While the subjective group criteria of collective consciousness and desire for independence are essential to bring a new nation into being; eventually the nation maintenance requires common group values, a national character, and a set of political and economic institution. These variables account for the difference between one nation and another, a new nation and an older nation.

13.4 ETHNICITY AND NATIONALISM

In 19th Century Europe, the national group called the "nation" was expected to become the basis of the political "nation-state". The nation-state then came to be regarded as the model of the modern state. However, in the case of Africa, the states of which are clearly multiethnic, nation-state has no meaning. The modern nation-state in the African context is an alien concept. It was imported and transplanted by the colonial powers. Groups were torn apart and others brought together by the colonial demarcation of state and this resulted in the creation of pluralistic communities, with many disparities. Typically, 19th Century European definitions of nationality based on the European political norms of nations with centralised governments and fixed boundaries do not and need not apply to Africa. Politically decentralised nations consisting of ethnic groups, which lacked political unit and central political institutions, were often united by a common language and culture — for example, pre-colonial Kikuyu, Nandi and Luo societies in Kenya. Europeans also applied the 19th Century concept to Africa that human beings belong to a natural group before they become part of a modern political entity. Africans also belonged to natural groups; since their groups were considered to be more primitive, they were thought of not as nations, but as "tribes". Nationalism was seen as a European phenomenon, tribalism as an African one.

In reality, neither the European nation nor the African tribe was a primordial natural grouping. In the pre-industrial societies, individuals were tied not to large nations or tribes, but to much smaller, localised groups. They belonged to villages, clans, parishes or small regions. Immigrants coming to the United States at the turn of the century did not identify with a country — that was a bureaucratic classification imposed on immigrants by the American authorities. Instead, the emergence of broader national or tribal identities is often the result of deliberate manipulation to help further a particular political project. During the 19th Century, for example, the French state relied on publicly provided elementary education and the military draft to develop a French national identity among peasants, whose sense of belonging had previously extended only to a village or a small region. Indeed, in the age of nationalism, all European countries invented myths and re-wrote history to prove the long historical roots of their nations, though the concept of the nation was of recent origin.

In Africa, a combination of socio-economic change, missionary language policies, anthropological studies, and deliberate attempts by the colonial authorities to establish a workable administrative framework caused Africans to move beyond narrower identification with a lineage or a clan and to see themselves as members of large and newly invented tribes. However, while striving to promote a common national-level identity among their citizens at home, the colonial powers usually sought to keep Africans divided into separate tribes. The white regime in South Africa pushed the idea of strengthening separate tribal identities to an extreme through its *apartheid* policy, but it was building upon a long colonial tradition of classifying Africans into tribes.

The identities that the colonial powers helped to crystallise were artificial and of recent origin, not natural and primordial. So, were the new national identities that independent African governments sought to promote through their post-independence "nation-building" efforts. The Zambian nation was as artificial a construct as the Zulu tribe, a more recent one. The epitome of such artificial

nation-building efforts is the promotion by the new South African government of the concept of the "rainbow nation". Obviously, the rainbow nation is not a natural, primordial entity, and nobody is trying to argue that it is.

Because they are not primordial, national and ethnic identities are not fixed, but can change a great deal over time. Whether by accident or intent, as the result of manipulation by political authorities, personal decisions, or simply a slow process of social and economic transformation, individuals come to see themselves as part of a particular ethnic group or nation that was not previously a part of their own or anybody else's consciousness. At the beginning of the 19th Century, there were only a few hundred Zulus in South Africa, the members of a small, obscure clan. By the time the British dismantled the Zulu empire in 1879, most Africans living in the part of Kwa Zulu-Natal north of the Tugela river considered themselves Zulus, and the young men of the region fought in the defence of the Zulu empire against colonial invasion. Under the *apartheid* regime, almost all Africans born in Natal were considered members of the Zulu tribe. The multiplication of the Zulus from a few hundred to seven million in the space of less than two centuries was not the result of a Malthusian nightmare of uncontrolled population growth, but of a political process of ethnic reclassification and identity building. For many Zulus, this ethnic identity has become all-important, in the elections of April 1994, which officially put an end to the *apartheid* regime. Over two million adult South Africans showed that they identified themselves as Zulus by casting their vote for the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its Zulu nationalist platform.

13.5 INDEPENDENT AFRICAN STATES: FROM TRIBALISM TO NATION- BUILDING

Not surprisingly, the newly independent African countries were, influenced by the dominant ideas of the period. They vehemently rejected ethnic nationalism as a threat to the state and the continued modernisation of Africa. They preached instead a "civic," nationalism that, in the early period, was liberal, forward looking, and in retrospect, incredibly optimistic. In fact, the special conditions of African countries reinforced the rejection of ethnic nationalism. The new states were fragile. In Robert Jackson's terminology, they were "quasi-states", possessing the negative sovereignty granted to them by international recognition, but not necessarily the positive sovereignty that derives from the effective ability to control and govern a country. Outside of the cities; much of the citizenry probably identified more with local areas or groups than with the entire country.

Another factor that prompted the African leaders to reject the legitimacy of ethnic identities was the fact that the rest of the world continued to look at ethnic attachments in Africa as primitive tribalism, rather than recognising them as part of the same phenomenon of nationalism that existed elsewhere. Many educated Africans shared this point of view and saw themselves as detribalised—modern people who partook in universal cultural values and whose political allegiance was to the new African state of which they were citizens, rather than to the clan or tribe into which they had been born.

Finally, because so many ethnic groups straddled boundaries, the sub-national ethnic identities were also seen as a complicating factor in the relations among the new states. While it is common throughout the world for population groups to be divided by international boundaries, the problem was more severe in Africa, both because borders had been established by the colonial powers with little knowledge of the situation on the ground and because this had been done so recently that little assimilation had taken place. The decision by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1964 to

accept colonial borders as immutable was reflection of the extent to which all African countries felt vulnerable.

The African leaders hailed the adoption by the OAU of the principle that colonial borders should be respected in the world as an act of statesmanship. By renouncing territorial claims, African leaders spared their countries and conflict and contributed to the maintenance of an African state system that remained extra-ordinarily stable until the 1990s; the only major challenges to the territorial *status quo* have been the attempted secessions of Katanga and Biafra, Eritrean nationalism, Somali irredentism, and the unresolved issue of Western Sahara. But the respect for colonial boundaries had a less-noticed domestic dimension as well, with authoritarian implications. African states were telling their citizens that they had no right to self-determination. Igbos in Nigeria, were told not only by the Nigerian government, but also by the overwhelming majority of other African countries, that no matter how bad things might be in Nigeria, they had no choice but to remain part of the country. Respect for colonial borders could thus be seen as either an act of statesmanship or an act of oppression, depending upon the vantage point of those judging the issue.

Ethnic identities and claims did not, however, disappear in Africa simply because they were denied legitimacy. In fact, as all students of the region know, ethnicity has had a pervasive influence on African politics. Even scholars who ideologically upheld the view that politics must be explained in terms of class relations found themselves reluctantly forced to admit that the impact of ethnicity could neither be ignored nor lightly dismissed as false consciousness. Likewise, the same Africans who were quick to denounce the Western views of a continent mired in tribalism were compelled to analyse the politics of their countries in ethnic terms.

While officially committed to overcoming tribalism, most African leaders manipulated ethnicity in order to keep themselves in power. Some did so in a rather benign way, forging alliances with leaders of many ethnic groups or co-opting potential ethnic opponents into their governments. This did not make for democracy, but it often made for peace and stability, keeping the country together and preventing open conflict from emerging. The second approach was much more destructive; leaders defended their positions by relying on members of their own ethnic groups, or even their clans, to the exclusion of others. This sharpened the divisions and created enmity, particularly when an unpopular leader resorted to strong-arm tactics to control a country, unleashing members of his ethnic group on the rest of the population. Kenya's experience under president Jomo Kenyatta provides an example of the more benign form of ethnic politics, while Somalia under president Mohammed Siad Barre exemplifies the more destructive approach.

No matter how the leaders manipulated ethnicity, they generally maintained the pretence that ethnic groups should not have a role in politics. It is not clear, and it is probably ultimately impossible to determine, whether this official disregard for ethnicity lessened or increased ethnic tensions. Different examples suggest different conclusions. Some countries, particularly those blessed with the absence of a numerically or economically dominant group, such as Tanzania, experienced little ethnic tension. In such a country, a government policy that recognised the legitimacy of ethnic identities might have encouraged ethnic claims, thus creating a more serious problem. On the other hand, Nigeria, where tensions were high from the beginning, met with limited success in its attempts to neutralise the political impact of ethnicity. Repeated increase in the number of states did make the situation somewhat less explosive and might even have been more effective if oil revenue had not concentrated all financial power at the centre. Nevertheless, the ethnic factor continued to lurk as a central issue in Nigerian politics, despite provisions seeking to prevent the formation of ethnic parties. It is possible that a political system that overtly recognised the countries deep divisions and rivalries and

that sought to regulate them through open bargaining and power sharing, rather than through underhanded manipulation, might have met with more success in bringing about a viable system of government.

The fact that most African countries did avoid violent ethnic conflict, despite very unfavourable conditions—ethnic diversity on the one hand, and state weakness on the other—suggests the policy of officially delegitimising ethnicity. While informally seeking to balance ethnic representation, worked fairly well in most cases, however, in those countries where conflict did arise, this policy left the government helpless in its search to find solutions.

The ethnic politics, of the immediate post-independence period can be characterised, on the whole, as remarkably subdued. While both ruling and opposition groups relied on ethnicity as an instrument—even while denouncing it—their goal was generally to control power within the existing borders rather than to form new states. With rare exceptions, ethnic politics did not threaten the integrity of the state. Secession and irredentism were widely condemned, and the persistence of the country within the existing borders was taken for granted by most political rivals. In most cases, ethnicity was used to mobilise support, to allocate favours, to safeguard the power of the incumbent regime, or to mobilise opposition against it, rather than to change state boundaries.

The current democratisation process in Africa has also provoked a defence of the authoritarian state among certain African leaders. President Daniel Arap Moi of Kenya has argued that the liberties of democracy will unleash ethnic rivalry and destroy the fragile unity of the country. Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia argued that the adoption of a multiparty system would bring 'chaos, bloodshed and death'. President Paul Biya of Cameroon defended the power monopoly of his political party by arguing that it ensured 'a united Cameroon devoid of ethnic, linguistic and religious cleavages'.

The majority of societies emerging from colonialism dealt with the problem of diversity by subordinating it to the essential task of "nation-building". In Africa, for example, leaders used the heterogeneous nature of their countries to justify the one-party state. During the early 1960s, a number of popular African leaders—Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Habib Bourguiba, Julius Nyerere—argued that the mass one-party system promoted democracy because it embodied the will of the populace. These one-party states created a comprehensive apparatus of hegemony, including within their structures all the important organs of civil society—trade unions, student and young organisations, women's organisations, among others. The one-party approach was justified in these countries by pointing out that opening the political system to competition and opposition would inevitably lead to ethnic mobilisation and political conflict. Thus, political stability in the multi-ethnic societies of Africa could only be maintained through the single-party state, in which public expression of ethnic or tribal claims were banished and ethnic associations forbidden.

David Welsh points out some of the main arguments underlying such "nation-building" processes:

[E]thnicity is (seen) as a dangerous, disruptive and destabilising force that is highly inimical to the working of democratic government. The best way of coping with it is not to provide it with any structural toe-holds in the political system, by outlawing ethnic parties, rejecting secessionist movements and federalism. By creating a strongly centralised government, you create both a force that is strong enough to fend off and neutralise ethnic challenges and a focus for a new national identity that is based upon the essential unity of interests of the citizenry. A resolutely 'non-racial' or 'non-ethnic' approach is the only one that holds out the hope of inculcating a spirit of national unity and attachment to common symbols of nationhood.

However, Welsh points out that if this approach "is committed to the elimination of ethnicity as a factor the chances are high that undemocratic and coercive measures will be adopted". Thus, it is more likely that this approach will lead to undemocratic, rather than democratic forms of governance.

There are various ways in which the heterogeneity of a society can be constitutionally and/or institutionally expressed. Among the variety of measures, which have been proposed to accommodate diversity in a democracy, is consociationalism. Consociationalism is based on a system of consensual multi-ethnic power-sharing (as opposed to majority rule) in which the autonomy of deeply divided groups is institutionally guaranteed (segmental autonomy) and there is strong respect for the principles of proportionality (in elections, allocating civil service appointments, and granting government subsidies) as well as mutual veto rights. The groups also have control over their own education systems, their own community organisations and a distinct identity while sharing certain overarching values, institutions and identity with the rest of society. Thus, deeply divided heterogeneous societies can become democratic and stable through elite accommodation and co-operation. Austria, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland are given as examples of heterogeneous societies in which a stable democracy has prevailed because of consociational arrangements.

Attitudes towards ethnic nationalism and ethnicity in the 1990s are quite different from those of the 1960s. Ethnic nationalism has once again become salient, destroying the optimistic assumptions prevalent in the 1960s that it would fade and be replaced by a less threatening civic nationalism. Moreover, the formation of ethnic parties in the 1990s in the new multiparty political system have created bitter tensions and destroyed the fragile unity of many countries. Burundi has been one of the cases of increased ethnic violence directly linked to the multiparty elections. The country has a history of an open ethnic conflict and was dominated since independence by the Tutsi minority. Multiparty democratic elections handed power to a Hutu party in June 1993. The incumbent Tutsi politicians appeared to accept this defeat by the Tutsi officers who controlled the army. They staged a military *coup* in October, which ultimately failed, but only after the elected president and many cabinet officers, as well as thousands of civilians, had been killed. Efforts to renegotiate an ethnic pact followed, but they failed to curb violence because neither Hutu nor Tutsi moderate politicians could control the extremists. This leaves the country precariously poised on the verge of a potentially genocidal conflict: Whether Burundi can ever, again, become a functioning, stable state within the existing borders is not clear; but it is certain that this cannot happen in the absence of formal arrangements that define the relations among ethnic groups and perhaps embody ethnicity in the structure of the political system.

But the open 'ethnicisation' of politics resulting from multiparty elections has not always been so destructive. Benin is at the other extreme from Burundi. The country has a long history of ethnic rivalries, but it has managed to hold two very successful multiparty elections since 1991. Both led not only to the defeat of the incumbent president, but also to a shift in the ethnic balance of power, yet neither caused ethnic violence. Simple generalisations about the impact of multiparty elections' on ethnic conflict are not possible.

In some cases, the openly ethnic nature of political parties may even help the process of democratisation in the long run by making these parties more sensitive to the demands of particular constituencies. A case in point is South Africa. Of the three major political parties contesting elections, two are narrowly ethnic—the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which appeals openly to Zulu nationalism and the mostly white National Party (NP), which has broadened its ethnic identity somewhat since 1994 by winning the vote of the "coloured" population of the Western Cape. The African National Congress (ANC), on the other hand, has broad appeal among all African ethnic

groups, including the Zulus, and it also attracts some coloured and Indian voters and a sprinkling of whites. These ethnic divisions create a potentially dangerous situation. There was much fear of violence by both Zulu nationalists and white extremists at the time of the 1994 transitional elections, and unfortunately, the Zulu nationalists' fears proved justified.

Another new pattern of ethnic politics has emerged most clearly in Ethiopia, where the regime that came to power in 1991 restructured the country into a federation of ethnic regions. While this remains the only example of such a solution to the problem of ethnic diversity in Africa at this point, it may be a forerunner of things to come elsewhere.

13.6 SUMMARY

We have discussed the problems that the African leaders faced during the nation-building process. The point is that they inherited an extremely weak political system and a periphery having fragmented tribal societies, with low levels of economic and social development, which were earlier homogeneous and self-contained. Contemporary African political and social set ups owe their origin to European "scramble" for Africa in the 19th Century. The sphere of influence of the European powers consisted of several tribal set ups, which were fragmented by the concept of a fixed boundary. European political set up came to possess disparate societies, under a distinct political system and inter-societal relationship. Thus, African societies underwent different political and socio-economic experiences under colonial powers. However, the tribal values, norms and structures survived the colonial experience even when their existence was not legally recognised. Under the process of modernisation, the migration from rural to urban areas grew and the individual was beset with multiple identities. In the post-independent period, African states inherited the colonial legacy and the crises of dual identity for Africa continued.

13.7 EXERCISES

- 1) Define the concepts of 'nation' and 'multi-ethnic nationalism' in the African context.
- 2) In the pre-industrial societies, Africans were part of a natural group. Do you agree?
- 3) Why did most of the African countries reject ethnic nationalism during the post-independent period?
- 4) What were the factors responsible for the resurgence of ethnic conflict in the countries like Burundi and Rwanda in the 1990s?