

The Shadow State in Africa: A Discussion

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DPMF Occasional Paper, No. 5



DPMF

**Development Policy
Management Forum**

Addis Ababa

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Printed in Ethiopia

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Introduction

Recent years have witnessed the burgeoning of literature on the African State. Most Western authors now speak of the “criminalization of the African State” or the “chaotic African State”. Whilst there is some element of truth in some of these characterizations, this is not something that can be generalized for all African states and neither is this phenomenon inevitable. This article focuses on William Reno’s conception of the African State as a “Shadow State”.

William Reno’s definition of a Shadow State, a phenomenon present in various parts of post-colonial Africa, has the following core elements. He perceives it to be a form of personal rule, where decisions and actions are taken by an individual ruler and do not conform to a set of written laws and procedures, although these might be present. Shadow State rulers manipulate external actors’ access to both formal and clandestine markets, by relying on the global recognition of sovereignty, and are thereby able to undermine formal government institutions. This is often to their benefit especially as such institutions may acquire interests and powers at odds with the rulers’ efforts to retain power. Another way in which rulers undermine formal government institutions is by way of weakening bureaucratic structures and manipulating markets in order to “enrich themselves and control others”. Thus Shadow States or “informal commercially orientated networks” are created that operate alongside remaining government bureaucracies (Reno 2000, 434-35).

This essay aims to expand on Reno’s definition, by focusing on three areas closely linked to the Shadow State phenomenon. The first is

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the involvement of external actors in the activities of Shadow State rulers and the extent to which the former have often been directly supportive of the maintenance of “Shadow States”. Through such actions, attempts at democratisation and or peace brokering are undermined.

The second is the presence of symptoms of or actual state collapse in regimes with strong indications of Shadow State elements. Through weakening of bureaucratic institutions, Shadow State rulers manage to exploit their states’ resources and enrich themselves. This comes at a price, however. If too little is done for the population in terms of provision of goods and services or accountable representation, this element of Shadow State rule could have a detrimental effect on the ruler’s position in the long-term.

The third area to be discussed is that of the importance of civil society, almost completely disregarded by Reno, both in transitions from Shadow State regimes, as well as in fledgling democracies. The latter point is particularly relevant when one considers Reno’s definition of the Shadow State as a “matter of degree”, rather than an “all or nothing” phenomenon (p. 442).

The conclusion is in support of Reno’s imperative that material support is needed for those who “articulate ideological and programmatic alternatives to this form of despotism” (ibid, p. 459). The important issue here is that international recognition should not be limited to the sovereign state, which often only represents the interests of an incumbent elite, but should embrace those who wish to represent the needs of society.

The Shadow State Unpacked

According to Reno, Shadow State rulers depend on external actors to recognise the façade of sovereignty. Because of this, government power can be used as a tool to ensure enrichment of government elites and control of economic markets with the aim of increasing power and controlling access to resources. Global recognition of sovereignty also helps create entrepreneurial opportunities for rulers and enables them to benefit favoured associates (ibid, p. 437).

External involvement in the Shadow State economy becomes especially relevant when one considers that Nigeria, Angola and Equatorial Guinea attracted a quarter of private foreign investment between 1994 and 1996, despite the fact that Nigeria ranks 81st out of 83 states on Transparency International's corruption index, while the latter two are not even ranked. A problem is the involvement of violent youths in areas with available natural resources, as they are offered economic opportunities in otherwise often wrecked economy. Foreign firms hired by Shadow State rulers are thus expected to deal with this "threat to stability". The dilemma for foreign investors and officials is that if stability in a Shadow State is maintained, corruption may be entrenched at the same time (ibid, p. 458).

In the same way, France upheld the corruptness of Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire during the Cold War. When anti-Mobutu dissidents entered the Shaba province from Angola in 1977 and the Zairean regime faced near collapse, France and Morocco intervened. The rebels were driven back into Angola (McNulty 1999, 62). Thus, Mobutu's image of a buffer against communism, as well as the substantial natural resource wealth of the country, which he used for winning the support of external powers including the United States, upheld his regime (ibid, p. 64). This is despite the fact that Mobutu and his inner circle were exploiting the country for their own benefit. In 1997, the Zairean leader's wealth was estimated at between US\$ 6 and US\$ 8 billion (ibid, p. 60).

It is ironic that western states, traditional representatives of human rights and democracy, should support an unaccountable and self-enriching leader. The next logical step would be to examine the importance of external support to the Shadow State.

Mobutu was supported by the West for the first seven years after the end of the Cold War, mainly due to threats of an outbreak of ethnic violence should he lose his grip on power. In 1997, however, France and the US withdrew their support, which had also undermined attempts at democratisation. The country's first democratically elected government under Etienne Tshisekedi was forced to share power with Mobutu due to external pressure (ibid, p. 68). Neither of

the two intervened when Laurent Kabila's *Alliance des forces democratiques pour la liberation du Congo-Zaire* (AFDL), together with Rwandan and Ugandan support, challenged and ultimately overthrew the Zairian dictatorship. Reasons can be attributed to the US's disillusionment with intervening in Africa following the 1992 Somalia crisis. It also placed a great deal of emphasis on stability in the region, something which it felt Mobutu could no longer provide. France, due to its questionable record in the region, was also prevented from intervening (ibid, pp. 73-75). One might argue here that external intervention might once again have saved the Shadow State regime, as it had 20 years before.

Similarly, external complicity becomes evident in the ongoing civil war in Angola, which has also contributed to bringing about a Shadow State scenario. What differs here from Zaire as a single self-enriching entity is the fact that both the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA)-dominated government and the opposition National Union for Total Independence (UNITA) have evolved into billion-dollar enterprises. The Angolan President, Edoardo dos Santos, is labelled as one of the world's 50 richest men. In 2000, despite continuous pressure from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government was not able to account for US \$1,5 billion in oil revenues. In the same way, UNITA benefited from the ongoing civil war by means of its profitable, albeit illegal, trade in diamonds (Donaldson 2002, 17).

A unilateral ceasefire announced by UNITA on 20 September 1993 was disregarded by the MPLA, which did not want to cede the four-fifths of Angolan territory which the opposition controlled at the time. While an oil and weapons embargo was placed on UNITA by the international community, due to lack of an official ceasefire agreement between the two parties, the MPLA was relieved of the ban on arms acquisition, which had formed part of the 1991 Bicesse Accords. The MPLA recruited mercenary special forces (a prominent example was Executive Outcomes) and new weapons. An attack was then launched on UNITA-held territories throughout the ensuing peace negotiations. UNITA consequently made use of middlemen, who provided fuel and weapons in return for diamonds, and the war resumed (Cleary 1999, 146).

One can argue that external support for the MPLA, evident in lifting the fuel and weapons embargo that had been placed on both parties in 1991, played a part in fuelling the conflict at this stage of its history. By favouring one side while discrediting the other, the international community, even if it cannot be seen as directly responsible for the resumption of the conflict, bears some responsibility. Here, factors such as whether UNITA would have honoured its peaceful intentions or whether war might have resumed even if the arms ban on the MPLA had stayed in place, have to be taken into account. The aim is to show how one side, as corrupt and unaccountable as the other, was nonetheless favoured. Rather than allowing only one of the sides to acquire ammunition and fuel, emphasis should have been placed on the futility of a military solution and the focus should have been on awarding both states equal status.

Leaders of Shadow States also often endanger themselves, in the long run, by a deliberate weakening of institutional structures and by paying too little attention to the needs of their population. Here the issue of state collapse and its link to Shadow State regimes comes in. State collapse has different elements. A collapsed state is no longer able to perform the functions expected of it and the process of collapse involves the disintegration of its authority structure and law and order. There is no longer a guarantee of security or rule of law and public services decline or cease to exist (Mathews and Solomon 2001, 25). When such a situation exists, different factors, including internal and external resistance, may contribute to the downfall of a Shadow State regime.

Mobutu's loss of power could be stated as an example here. As published in 1993, four years before the Zairian dictator was to be ousted, reasons could already be found for why the population would support an overthrow of the government. The allocation of scarce economic resource and operating funds starts in the capital Kinshasa, before extending to regional and sub-regional capitals, which finally had to allocate funds to smaller towns and villages. Due to economic scarcity and an underdeveloped infrastructure, entire rural areas have to operate without state assistance. Furthermore, at this stage already, poverty was a serious problem, unemployment levels were

high with few opportunities in the public sector and even fewer in the private sector (Leslie 1993, 128).

In 1996, options for change seemed limited as the government in the years before had desperately attempted to hold on to power by silencing the opposition. In 1991, protesting students at the university campus in Lubumbashi were massacred. In 1992, a group of demonstrators was killed by government troops in Kinshasa. When the AFDL thus launched its military offensive against the government, it effectively managed to capture resurgent Congolese nationalism, “pushing at an open door of people wearied by corruption, looting and the collapse of public services, to hasten its progress across a country in which it was at best actively supported and at worst unopposed” (McNulty 1999, pp. 74-75).

External factors, which played a role here, demonstrate that sometimes more is needed than internal resistance. Various other countries in the region opposed Mobutu’s regime, most noticeably Rwanda and Angola. Rwanda needed to protect itself against a presumably imminent reinvasion from defeated Rwandan army (FAR) and *Interahamwe* forces, by destroying both the Zairian mini-states, which were harbouring them, as well as the forces themselves. Angola’s President Dos Santos also wanted to take revenge on Mobutu, who had continuously attempted to undermine the Angolan government in Luanda. When the Rwandan-led offensive reached Kinshasa, Angola supplied tanks and heavy artillery to push UNITA, the ex-FAR and the rump *Forces Armées Zairoises* (FAZ) into Brazzaville (ibid, pp. 76-77). Other external factors include “the unsustainability of Mobutu; the failure of French-sponsored propaganda which argued that he must be sustained nonetheless; the lack of a potential intervener in the absence of France; and crucially, a corresponding Western (i.e., US) non-intervention response...” (ibid, p.71).

Another instance where state collapse may lead to an overthrow of an incumbent leader in the long run is in the case of Zimbabwe’s President Mugabe. Here the relatively recent government policy of repression of the opposition and discrimination against white commercial farmers has caused considerable damage to the

country's economy and infrastructure. The illegal and violent occupation of farms by thousands of so-called war veterans, encouraged by Mugabe, began in February 2000 (Robinson 2002, 34). This behaviour was reportedly influenced by Mugabe's "fast track" policy, calling for the seizure of 90 percent of white-owned farmland for black resettlement. A law was passed in May 2000, allowing government to repossess 841 farms without compensation; an additional 500 were added shortly after the legislative elections (*Europa* 2001, 4426-4427). While Mugabe and his ruling elite have accumulated substantial amounts of capital and property, the country has been thrown into severe economic distress. Unemployment is at 60 percent, 60 percent of the country's population live below the poverty line and inflation is at 112 percent (Robinson 2002, 33). According to Zimbabwe's Commercial Farmers' Union, supplies of maize, wheat, tobacco, coffee, meat and dairy products have dropped between 20 and 50 percent. Beef exports, which were worth \$90 million in 2000, have completely disappeared (Hawthorne 2001, 31).

Though this policy seems to have secured government power for Mugabe in the short term, it remains to be seen to what extent state collapse in Zimbabwe will continue before the regime itself caves in. As far as external variables are concerned, Zimbabwe is facing increasing signs of international isolation. Not only has Zimbabwe been suspended from the Commonwealth, following a damning Commonwealth observer mission's report, but "smart" sanctions against the ruling elite in Zimbabwe remain very much on the US and European Union (EU) agenda (Forrest and Pressly 2002, 7). It is therefore unlikely that the international community would support Mugabe, should an increasingly vehement internal opposition and a more and more dissatisfied population threaten his hold on power.

Unlike the Zairian situation, however, Zimbabwe's immediate regional neighbours, most noticeably South Africa, do not seem to greatly oppose Mugabe's regime. African National Congress (ANC) parliamentarians declared the Zimbabwe election as a "credible reflection of the people's will" and members of the South African observer mission to Zimbabwe stated, "Zimbabwe is a sovereign country capable of running its own affairs" (Forrest 2002, 23). This is an invalid assessment taking into account the abuse which

Zimbabwe's sovereign government is inflicting on its population, both directly, as in the case of the opposition and white farmers, and indirectly, as is evident in the country's dismal economic situation. According to the *Zimbabwe Independent's* editor, Iden Wetherell, the South Africans "are acting as Mugabe's apologists" in terms of every aspect of policy (Forrest and Pressly 2002, 7).

Nonetheless, the population's sentiments and the determined stance of the opposition in the face of government repression indicate that Mugabe's hold on power in the long run is by no means a foregone conclusion. In 2001, opinion polls showed that 56 percent of Zimbabweans favour impeachment of the president, while only 14 percent want Mugabe to remain in office (Moore 2002, 254). Another survey conducted among 1900 households for the Helen Suzman Foundation provided the following results: 68 percent of respondents said that their lives had deteriorated in the past five years, whereas 71 percent stated that their living standards had fallen (*Africa Confidential* 2000, 1-2). These sentiments are expressed in the civil society, which has proved to be essential to the population. Rather than "appealing to government's favour or fleeing the country" (Reno 2000, 446), Reno's expected behaviour for opposition groupings in a Shadow State, several civil society groupings in Zimbabwe formed the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in December 1997, calling for a new constitution (Sithole 2001, 161). The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), Zimbabwe's strongest opposition party which has recently posed a major challenge to Mugabe's hold on the presidency, constitutes many former NCA leaders and has its origins in the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions. Thus here is an indication of how civil society is able to organise itself in efforts to challenge elements of Shadow State rule, as manifest in the current Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) regime. Despite having lost the 2002 presidential elections, the fairness of which is highly contested, the party's resilience in the face of government intimidation and harassment is noteworthy.

Beyond the Shadow State

What is necessary then is to discuss those elements most likely manifest in civil societies, which might help bring about the transition from a Shadow State to a more accountable form of regime. The transition from *apartheid* South Africa to its current relatively democratic situation is an example of where civil society was instrumental in bringing about such a change. It can be argued that the *apartheid* state possessed strong Shadow State characteristics, as resources were only provided to a limited part of the population, while a white elite benefited from its extractive character. In 1970, for example, almost 100,000 posts reserved for whites remained empty, while hundreds of thousands of blacks remained unemployed. Also, while white wages rose by 74 percent in real terms between 1960 and 1970, black wages increased only by 47 percent. Wage differences in mining: from 15,5:1 to 19,7:1 indicate the considerable increase in earnings between the two population groups during the same period (Gardner 1997, 13). Also, under *apartheid*, 75 percent of South Africa's population had no representation of any kind in central government organs, while less than fifteen percent had meaningful representation (*ibid*, p. 203). Again this substantiates the strong Shadow State elements manifest in South Africa's *apartheid* regime.

Civil society, along with increasing isolation from the international community, a declining economy and splits within the ruling National Party made the transition possible. Several reasons are attributed to the substantial influence of civil society:

1. There was a large variety of associational forms from cultural organisations to township groupings;
2. No racial divide existed as people of all races were allowed membership;
3. Unions became increasingly adamant in their opposition to *apartheid*;
4. Various differences between numerous civil society groupings were temporarily held off to enable the formation of the United Democratic Front (Zuern 2000, 115).

Thus, although Reno focuses on Shadow States' "lack (of) any programme of social transformation or economic growth"; their "move(s) to disrupt any coherent interest group that might emerge as a competitor for power" and their "(attempt) to encourage dependence on (their) favour" (Reno 2000, 443), the above example indicates the potentially important part that an independent civil society can play in making possible a transition from Shadow State to more accountable rule.

Certain pre-requisites apply, however. It is of considerable importance that civil society organisations should be independent of the state and not be created, controlled or funded by it (*ibid*, p. 102). This becomes especially important when one considers the "watch dog" function that is expected of civil society once the transformation process is well under way. It is also important to bring in Reno's argument that a Shadow State exists as a "matter of degree" rather than as an "all or nothing" phenomenon (Reno 2000, 442). The following case studies should thus be interpreted in the context of fledgling democracies having emerged from non-democratic regimes with heavy Shadow State elements. Civil Society is essential to prevent serious setbacks to democratic institutions and a simultaneous slide back into increased levels of corruption and non-accountability.

The first country to be discussed here is South Africa. Though largely acknowledged as a functioning democracy, some disconcerting elements of increased authoritarianism, when it comes to policy decisions, have become evident.

A strategic defence review was conducted by the Ministry of Defence between 1995 and 1996, in order to see what equipment the South African National Defence Force needed to acquire. This amounted to little more than a "wish list" because, as the Department of Defence well realised, funding was unavailable. According to The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Idasa), this "wish list" is what Parliament approved in March 1998, not increased defence expenditure. Despite this, in December 1999 the government entered into transactions for the purchase of submarines, corvettes, helicopters, trainer jets and fighter jets, the cost of which had risen to

an estimated R50-billion by April 2001, because of fluctuations in the value of the Rand (Kirk 2001).

Information in the *Mail & Guardian* on 2 June 2000 referred to the Office of the Auditor General's uncovering of evidence that "good procedures and good process were not always observed in respect of the weapons deals" (ibid). In this respect both the independent institutions of the state as well as the media seem to have been performing their functions effectively.

However, difficulties arose with regard to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (Scopa), which called for an inquiry into the deal in October 2000. Apparently Scopa also asked for the inclusion of Judge Willem Heath's special investigating unit in the probe. Such an inclusion would have been of supreme importance and significance as "the Heath unit is the only investigating body with the power to rescind state contracts if it believes the state has been the victim of any form of skullduggery". Subsequently, however, Scopa's ANC members denied that they had originally intended to ask for Heath's inclusion in the probe. A few months later, on 28 February 2001, they adopted a motion that the 14th report of Scopa did not specifically call for the inclusion of the special investigating unit in the arms deal probe. This was shortly followed by Heath being removed from his position as head of the investigating unit after the Constitutional Court had ruled that a judge cannot head the unit (ibid).

Both the ambiguity present in Scopa's intentions with regard to the special investigation unit and the apparent dominance of ANC affiliations within Scopa thus seemed to undermine the effective functioning of Scopa. This was aggravated by the government's substitution of Andrew Feinstein, chairperson of the ANC public accounts committee study group, who had challenged several arms-deal related issues, with Jeff Doidge, the hardline ANC deputy chief whip, on 2 February 2002. The issue of Feinstein's replacement became even more controversial later in the year when he resigned from Parliament, saying that he feared that "the National Assembly (was) becoming sidelined and that elements within the ANC (were) becoming increasingly intolerant of independent minds". Feinstein

also expressed his fears that “the government (had) used its clout to dampen the investigation into the arms deal and that the probe could throw up weak and toothless findings” (ibid).

To show how the substantial cost of transactions linked to the arms deal, approximately R50-billion as stated earlier, has been contributing to increased elements of Shadow Statism in the South African government, the following three points need to be taken into consideration.

1. While the government has made provision for substantial expenditure on the procurement of arms, the Eastern Cape Province (an area of South Africa that is in desperate need of poverty alleviation) has an annual health and welfare budget of only approximately R8.5-billion. In other words: what is being spent on the arms deal amounts to more than six years of that province’s health and welfare budget (Idasa. 2001).
2. On 25 March 2001 *The Sunday Times* published the fact that Tony Yengeni, chairperson of the parliamentary defence committee, had obtained a cut-price Mercedes Benz ML320 from an arms company. Yengeni was later arrested on corruption charges relating to his acquisition of the luxury vehicle. This was not the only incidence of corruption linked to the arms deal, as was shown when *The Sunday Times* continued to expose arms deal officials to whom thirty luxury cars had been sold at cut prices (Kirk 2001).
3. On 26 May 2000, the *Mail & Guardian* exposed African Defence Systems (ADS) and Futuristic Business Solutions (FBS) for winning lucrative contracts in the arms deal. Elements of nepotism surfaced here as the defence acquisition chief “Chippy” Shaik’s brother ran ADS, a company which also employed Chippy Shaik’s wife, Zarina. Further information revealed that ADS directors Tshepo Molai and Lambert Moloi were also directors of FBS – both these persons were also close to former defence minister Joe Modise (ibid).

The above points demonstrate that, firstly, the government disadvantaged sectors of the population by committing itself to the arms deal, as becomes clear by comparing government expenditure on the arms deal with that on health and welfare in the Eastern Cape Province. Secondly, corruption and self-enrichment as well as incidences of nepotism by members of the government associated with the arms deal come to the fore. This ties in with certain characteristics of Shadow State rule, insofar as in a shadow state the government follows policies of self-enrichment, while paying only scant attention to public services and socio-economic upliftment.

Though the arms deal has thus suggested increasing tendencies of authoritarianism in the government, as well as self-enrichment and corruption at the expense of the population, according to the Institute for Democracy in South Africa certain “lessons for democratic accountability” may be learnt here, which tie in closely with the presence of a strong, financially independent and active civil society.

1. Capacity for democracy is a valuable and apparently quite elusive commodity in this context. There are many challenges that need to be surmounted. But the very fact of the debate, the constitutional and other tussles are evidence of a vibrant democracy coming to terms with the reality of political life. So while it is inescapably true that the institutions of democratic governance are fragile, they are not so fragile that they will die. They are alive and kicking, helped by the important attention that the media and organisations of civil society are paying them.
2. Although the relationship between government and the media seems to be constantly on the brink of a watershed, the role of the media in the arms deal deserves commendation. It has tested the durability and stamina - and some have been found wanting - but a small number of determined investigative journalists have added to their reputation as a result of this case and in so doing have made their own positive contribution to democratic accountability (Idasa 2001).

To conclude this point then, although elements of Shadow Statism, as discussed above, have become evident in South Africa's government, the incidents of irregularities and corruption linked to the arms deal have been uncovered by a vocal independent media and important civil society organisations such as Idasa. These thus have a very important "watch dog" function to perform in South Africa's fledgling democracy.

The second country to be discussed is Mozambique, where civil society has been very efficient in exposing government corruption in the past. In 1995, for example, the independent press was able to expose the "corruption, ineffectiveness and distortion" of the Mozambican police. As a result the government was forced to remove Interior Minister Manuel Antonio from his post (Seleti 2000, 360).

Though this seems like an example of a positive development as far as Mozambican civil society is concerned, its capacity has been restricted. Two examples serve to illustrate this point:

1. In 1999 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) stated that it was prepared to open up future Structural Adjustment Programme discussions to civil society. The government refused. Prime Minister Pascoal Mocimbi stated that "it is not (the government's) practice to involve civil society in our negotiations with the IMF". This is a worrisome development as a substantial part of the challenge to the economic programme, representing Mozambican workers or business' interests, has emerged from civil society (Harrison 1999, 166-180).
2. Often civil society organisations in Mozambique are constrained in terms of finances. The Organisation of Mozambican Women, which detached itself from the ruling Mozambique Liberation Front (Frelimo) in 1990, was forced to re-affiliate itself with the government in 1996 because of financial reasons. This seriously undermines civil society's ability to criticise the government.

Here it can be argued that a decrease in civil society's recognition by government and/or independence can lead towards increased elements of Shadow "Statism". So, for example, in 1994 Mozambican ministers increased their personal salaries by 200 percent without informing the general public (ibid, 170). Also, civil servants are not paid enough to survive and thus the state becomes a competition field for corruption, which no one in those immediate surroundings is willing to expose (ibid 75). What is also disconcerting here is the retreat option taken by the population as it becomes increasingly disillusioned with the government. The low levels of voter turnout in the 1998 elections in Mozambique, 14.6 percent, illustrate this trend. This makes it even more likely that government will pursue policies of self-enrichment, while ignoring the needs of its increasingly disinterested population.

From the above case studies of South Africa and Mozambique, it becomes clear that civil society, in terms of initiative, recognition by political parties and economic independence, is a crucial factor in combating elements of Shadow "Statism", which as has been argued above often exist in a "matter-of-degree" fashion in fledgling democracies. This is a point, which has been neglected by Reno.

Conclusion

The above arguments thus fill in the perceived gap and focus on instances when civil society can play a crucial role in combating Shadow "Statism". It is here, in conclusion, that Reno's alternative to "Shadow State" rule may be incorporated in line with what has so far been proposed in the essay. Reno states: "... (a) politically less likely remedy would be to materially support those people in "Shadow State" societies, who articulate ideological and programmatic alternatives to this form of despotism" (Reno 2000, 459). Such people need to become organised at first in civil society, and later perhaps political, groupings. Such groups would often be in direct contact with the needs of the population as Shadow States usually only focus on the immediate environment of the ruling circle. The actual functioning of the informal sector is left up to either traditional societal structures or civil society organizations.

An example is the functioning of the “second economy” in the both the former Zaire and the now Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). In the absence of effective central government structures, petty trade, import and transportation of goods, as well as informal businesses have allowed citizens to continue their lives and to survive (Mathews and Solomon 2001, 24-31). Though the size of the second economy is difficult to estimate, a 1987 household-budget survey in Kinshasa showed that only 25 percent of household income was derived from wages and salaries, whereas about 29 percent came from unknown so-called second economy activities. If one takes these numbers to be indicative of the rest of the country, official economic data on Zaire/the DRC’s economy will be highly inaccurate. Many of these economic activities are illegal; stealing from the formal economy often provides the resources necessary for the second economy’s functioning. Nonetheless, the latter will continue to play an important part as economic decline persists (Leslie 1993, 129-131). This is precisely why it is important that such activities are organised into legitimate groupings.

Thus it becomes obvious that the international community should not limit its support to sovereign state’s leaders. As in the case of Mobutu’s Zaire, Dos Santos’ MPLA and Mugabe’s Zimbabwe, support for the government may spell disaster for the economic welfare of the country’s populations. The term sovereignty thus needs to be revised to encompass broader groupings, more representative of people’s needs.

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