

African Cultural Diversity in the Media

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Old question, new factors

The issue of cultural diversity in sub-Saharan Africa is an old problem which already concerned colonial administrations and post-independence African elites, the promoters of that common but extremely delicate commodity, democracy, and it still concerns today's promoters of cosmopolitanism.

The colonial administrations (both British and French) found themselves facing the issue of cultural diversity. How were they to bring under colonial law such differing peoples as those located in the same administrative region, whom the chance effects of colonial geographical divisions on a map had managed to lump together? How were they to make the law, decipher signs of revolts and set about recruiting collaborators in populations whose components did not speak the same language or conform to either the same ontological system or the same legal rationality, still less the same founding myths? In other words, how were they to understand that diversity of cultures, then bend it to the new colonial norm? How can obedience coming from the *one* (the civilizer) understand diversity? French colonialism came up with an answer to the question of diversity confronting obedience: diversity must be assimilated – everyone had to deny themselves and become almost French. British colonialism came up with the opposite answer: everyone was to be equal but in servitude, *indirect rule*. The colonized peoples could keep their social structures, myths and hierarchies provided they all, from smallest to greatest, served the greatness of the British crown. *African elites* also faced the diversity problem at the moment when they had to shake off the colonial yoke. Having been united in the anti-colonial struggle, how were they to manage the post-independence period? In other words, diversity here came up against the issue of the nations' constitutions. How were they to lump together ethnic groups which often had nothing in common and tell them to conjugate the same verbs in the same tenses in order to come up with the nation's founding narrative? How were they to manage living together? What would be the bond? Some African elites invented political philosophies based,

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for instance, on the *idea of family* as the bond; I could cite here former President Nyerere of Tanzania's African socialism Ujamaa. Others came up with an answer to the diversity question by promoting the extremely vague and quite essentialist notion of African Authenticity, which immediately makes us think of Marshal Mobutu of ex-Zaire. Diversity is explained here by an unvarying essence that is African-ness.

With the disenchantment with independence in Africa, economic failure, the crimes of the elites from the independence years, the paralysis of symbolism, which was often accompanied by manifestations of the sacred – tailored to fit the official religions – and finally the states' loss of dynamism, the 1990s, assisted by the new order in international politics, ushered in a so-called phase of democratization. This was about rethinking citizenship and *the relationship to politics*, which was unfortunately reduced to the petty proportions of the state. There were international conferences, elites resigned from governments and, having resumed state titles and attributes, finally introduced multiparty systems, which were previously forbidden. This democratization was a response to the notion of diversity. With a multiparty system ethnic logic would be silenced and a public sphere for discussion opened up. Sadly the answer to the diversity issue fell far short of expectations. Multiparty systems designed to respond to the diversity question produced only *many versions of the same* by ignoring the fact that true diversity is less *the industrial-scale duplication of the same* – same parties, same newspapers unliberated from capitalist logic and the quest for sensation – than *the encroachment on the same of the strange*, the different and the unexpected. In the meantime there appeared the Chernobyl cloud – which passed over without worrying about border police – the Rwanda genocides, civil war and ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia. Henceforth, with the creation of international penal courts to try those guilty of genocide, since this world is our *common habitat* – which is proved to us by sea pollution and climate change – the issue of cultural diversity has been included in cosmopolitanism. Henceforth nativism and nationalism are much too narrow for thinking about cultural diversity. This cosmopolitical issue with its many aspects has been formulated by Ulrich Beck and in Africa by Appiah (2006). But the question of cultural diversity is here seen holistically, without taking note of the emergence of the unique from within its structures.

My approach will bring in the co-presence of the plurality of both media and cultures. I shall not give here the outline of a comparative study designed to evaluate how the media, in the specificity of their structures and the uniqueness of their context of enunciation, promote or not the peaceful coexistence of cultures. Such irenic coexistence, if it existed, would not account for the conflict necessarily implied in any human exchange. My approach, which is more modest and clumsy, will take an oblique route, of asking through the media about notions of *bond* and *common world*. How do plurality of media and cultural diversity in Africa promote, tear apart, knit together again *what constitutes the common world* for Africans? What kinds of *mediation make it possible for us to think the common world*? What is *the nature of the narratives* that this common world produces in the midst of diversity? What are the *illusions and failed attempts* that come with this common world created by the coexistence of cultures and the plurality of the media? What can cultural impasses and media diversity bring to the debate about living together which is one of the major

problems around cultural diversity? And how does this cultural diversity behave in the kingdom of the *culture industry*? To get a better grasp of the issues around this diversity I shall start from a phenomenological approach which stresses facts (I) and from them I shall extract some problems. Then I shall explore the question of transparency and responsibility (II), which will be enriched by those of recognition (III) and orality (IV). Finally I shall analyse the issue of diversity as regards the media at a time when terrorism (V) is becoming a major factor in international relations.

From facts to problems

1 – *Fact*: In the 1960s a Bantu peasant from south Cameroon was frequently to be found working in his field of cocoa trees with a radio sitting on a bush and, at the same time as he followed news or music broadcast by the radio, he was able to interpret a drum (*nkou*) message coming from the next village telling of a summons to an urgent meeting of the village. *Conclusion*: Here there is diversity of media. *Problems*: 1) In Africa there is starting to occur media competition between those belonging to traditional African cultures and those imported by technoscience; 2) In the same person there is already a cultural diversity which these two media remind us of. So the problem arises of *levels of understanding* when there is diversity of cultures.

2 – *Fact*: Around the 1980s Radio Cameroun, a station from the Centre, broadcast programmes in national languages (*Ewondo* by Antoine Bihina bi Manga and *Bassaa* by Tjeck Biyaga) to consolidate national unity after a disturbed independence period. Around the 1990s Radio Mille Collines in Rwanda was encouraging part of the population to revolt against another part. *Conclusion*: From the situation of cultural and ethnic diversity a diversity of use of the same medium, radio, can be seen, unity for some, division for others. *Problems*: 1) What is the relationship between the media and consolidation or dislocation? 2) Media and conflict.

3 – *Fact*: We are in an African city (Abidjan) on the street near a hotel in a working-class neighbourhood (Marcory) at a newspaper stall, and we can see on sale side by side: a) *Amina* (a women's magazine targeted at young African women and African female elites) trying hard to show off a very slim woman called Bâ who is supposed to be the symbol of African beauty; b) *Elle* (a French women's magazine) recounting the slimming efforts of Angelina Jolie, the Hollywood icon; and c) *Ebony* (a women's magazine for the Afro-American elite) showing a laughing, almost comic doctor priding himself on taking part in cosmetic surgery on the nose of a certain singer called Jackson. *Conclusion*: Cultural diversity is here in the middle of Africa, a diversity that follows the route of a three-cornered trade. On this street corner in Marcory in the depths of Ivory Coast we are living at one and the same time to the beat of Africa (*Amina*), France (*Elle*) and the USA (*Ebony*). *Problem*: How can we raise the question of cultural diversity at a time when there is a globalization of culture?

4 – *Facts*: We are in an African capital or medium-sized town, a television set is on and images are flashing past, people round the set are chatting and gossiping about everything, glancing only sideways at the images. We are in a cybercafé still somewhere in Africa, net-surfers are browsing with their noses close to the screen; other people are all around just for a chat. *Conclusion*: We can see there are two categories

of people: those with their eyes on the screen and those who are just there, for whom the medium is simply an opportunity to meet up. *Problem:* What spaces for sociability are being promoted by media diversity today given these different audiences?

I could bring in other media, situations and actors. It transpires that the pairing of *media* and *cultural diversity* raises at least three kinds of question. First, how does cultural diversity see its relationship with traditions and how has the replacement of traditional media by those from elsewhere come about? How has the problem of adapting or recycling those media been dealt with? Then, the relationship with violence, conflict and peace is one of the future issues for the plurality of media and cultures. How do the same media serve the culture of peace and the summons to genocide? And how does globalization remodel both the relationship with our subjectivities and our conceptions of the other within post-colonial states? Finally, what is the relationship between cultural and media diversity and the production of new spaces for sociability and meeting in Africa?

Diversity, transparency and responsibility

Media diversity and competition between messages in the public sphere raise an important problem. When the media are freed from state control, they are subject to economic constraint. This includes, among other imperatives, the requirement to produce ever more messages which become clichés, or even slogans, as soon as they are uttered. Then begins the dictatorship of transparency. A demand for transparency from the audience on the one hand and a supply of transparency in industrial quantities from the media on the other. In this transparency market the media no longer take sufficient time to investigate, question and test, because citizens, who are reduced to consumers of news, see their speech, that opaque medium signalling their nearly failed meeting with others and the real, turned into chatter. What is missing here, in this dictatorship of the immediate and instantaneous, is the question of mediation. The matter of mediation raised by the media is one of the essential issues in cultural diversity. How are mediations to be produced between competing symbolisms? How is that in-between to be spoken and described which both divides and unites cultures in their diversities? The media situation indicates to cultural diversity the urgency of not only taking account of the mediations within cultures but also re-examining the notion of responsibility. The great wish that everyone expresses in the social space is that the media should be responsible. By responsibility we often stop short at the legal sense alone. To information given the media should respond by supplying both the sources and the processes for verifying the information. Only that responsibility, understood as a response to a call and as a legal accusation, sometimes lacks ethical depth. Thus Ricoeur, following Levinas and many others, reminds us in his book on the *Juste II* that responsibility also means being responsible for the other. Answering for the weakest and the most fragile in the Latin sense of *sponsor*. How can we promote a responsibility today that takes account not only of the legal subject but of the other who is fragile, alien, strange and weak? Cultural diversity already has problems of composition, and added to those, problems of trust. Our societies and African societies cannot escape them; they

thought of the danger as coming from outside (the classical theory) but today the danger is internal; it is as if we were saying: children, watch your parents for when they are bathing you they may make an inappropriate gesture, parents, watch your children because they may take you to court, wife, watch your husband who may abuse you, husband, take legal precautions or else your savings will disappear So we are living in a suspicious world where intersubjective relations are potentially criminal. Therefore how should we promote a notion of responsibility that takes account of the other, the weak person who is potentially a plaintiff.

The fundamental misunderstanding

The relationship between the media or between cultures is made up of misunderstandings. We can borrow Claude Lefort's definition of democracy (1986: 25): in his view, breaking with the *ancien régime* where the body of the king guarantees the social order, the law and truth, 'democracy is seen as the historical society par excellence, a society that in its form welcomes and preserves indeterminacy so that what is happening remains suspended'. That indeterminacy, which is in part the basis of dissension in society, is translated in communication terms by the indeterminacy peculiar to misunderstanding. Since democracy prevents people seizing power and since it is continually shaking up the democratic game, so will misunderstanding do the same in the space of cultural diversity. Misunderstanding is in fact a chance and not an accident in understanding diversity. And as Jankélévitch says (1981: 211): 'Blessed be poor hearing, the welcome mishearing that helps partners in dialogue tolerate each other by making themselves hardly deafer than they are . . . Thanks to that lubricant of misunderstanding there will be less friction in interpersonal relations . . . it is an understatement to say misunderstanding has a social function, it is sociability itself. It stuffs the space between individuals with . . . the wadding of shock-absorbing lies.' In diversity misunderstanding is fundamental and structuring.

Recognition and the issue of contempt

In the context of cultural diversity there arises the problem of recognition. The public sphere, fraught with so much tension, often requires subjects in communicative situations to be able to engage in a process of recognition. This theme of recognition, as we have known since Fichte and Hegel, espouses the issue of struggle. It makes it possible to build bridges between a culture's various members and in particular between cultures – but, unlike Hegel and Habermas, Axel Honneth (1995, 2006) tells us that recognition is unlikely to succeed unless we take account of the forms of contempt and humiliation between individuals, cultures, generations, sexes and peoples. Honneth criticizes Habermas's theory of communicative action. For him the play of argument that ends in consensus in the conditions defined by Habermas does not take account of the affective side of language. Before being argument speech often occurs without the aim of demonstrating but in some cases with the purpose of humiliating. So then we must concern ourselves with the forms of contempt that

prevent recognition from occurring. This recognition has three levels which correspond to the relations with the self.

a) *The sphere of love* in which recognition gives the subject the *self-confidence* needed for good participation in public life.

b) *The politico-legal sphere*: it is because individuals are recognized as universal subjects with rights and duties that they can connect their acts with respect for their autonomy. Legal recognition gives the subject *self-respect*.

c) *The social sphere*. In order to establish an uninterrupted relationship with themselves human beings have to enjoy a social consideration related to their particular qualities, which gives them *social esteem*

These are the three stages through which healthy recognition must pass. The issue of the co-presence of various cultures in the public sphere can be viable only if the question of contempt is raised by the media, which more often than not tend to become dispensaries of depression and consolation and thus promote only biased forms of expression.

Expression: orality, cultural diversity and 'telling stories'

It is often thought that rumour spreading by word of mouth is one of the first media. Without looking at this belief from the conceptual point of view we can instead see how that opinion might be relevant to Africa. We can accept that the idea would indicate that in Africa we cannot leave out orality when we are dealing with media diversity.

Always suspected of occupying a secondary and almost usurped position on the scale of knowledge compared with what is thought to be its opposite – writing – orality emerges and slips into the ill-drawn furrows of the quest for meaning. Tracing both straight and broken lines, blurring the tracks and categories of thought of those who see it as the opposite of writing, it persists, indicating that it cannot be reduced solely to speech, since gesture and the whole bodily performance also contribute to orality. There is orality where there is *ex-expression* and not just communication or conceptualization. By *ex-expression* I mean that rising up that occurs with the meeting of speech, body, the Subject in the world, action and reaction. It is probably in Merleau-Ponty's work that this notion assumes its full weight when he calls *expression* an ontological structure in which speech, body and the world attain a diacritical dimension of signification. Orality as *ex-expression* is thus a *figure of coming together* which cannot be reduced either 1) to a *dualistic idea* – orality versus writing: science and precision being on the side of writing whereas tinkering and imprecision belong to orality – or 2) to a *monistic approach* – orality would be reduced to speech or rhythm – or even 3) to a *dialectical input* where orality would be simply a moment, a metaphor for writing or '*archi-écriture*' (Derrida), with these latter remaining its epistemological and ontological basis.

The German philosopher Walter Benjamin deplored what he called '*poverty of experience*'. In Germany following the First World War, where attempts at the democratic restoration of the short-lived Weimar Republic ended in failure, Benjamin (2000: 365) diagnosed, among other ills, the fact that *people did not know how to tell*

stories any more. 'Can people capable of telling a story still be found? Where do the dying still speak imperishable words that are passed on from generation to generation . . .? Who today can reach for the saying that will get him out of difficulty? [. . .] no, one thing is clear: the value of experience has slumped [. . .] What has poured out in the flood of books [. . .] had nothing to do with any sort of experience, because experience is passed on by word of mouth . . .' Orality as *ex-expression* has Speech as a compass. Among the components of orality speech *points the way* but is not the way, for the true mission of orality is to answer this question: how, while living experience, can we create, not a *narrow space restricted* to our little conceptual and political habits, but a *place of passage* that moves boundaries and reformulates projects? *Speech transmitted*, which tells the story of subjects and their community *putting on stage* and *giving form* to the conditions of its formulation and appropriation, *speech assumed*, which liberates a Subject or a group and allows them to articulate their sufferings and their joys, *the word (not) kept*, which, through promise or oath, *releases* and *binds* a before and an after, *diffuse speech* which is held back and suffocates, expressing itself only in the process of its own extinction, *mimed speech* which gives the body the task of participating and controlling the life of the performance (of the self, another and institutions), *speech forgotten or directed* which weaves the components of Memory, *ambiguous speech* which, displacing meanings by playing with both implicit and explicit, inflames the imagination and mobilizes hermeneutic ingenuity – speech will be *that through which* the historical experience of orality will pass. After the colonial denigration of orality and its doubtful rehabilitation, how can we re-evaluate it today in order to rethink our epistemological categories and schemes for action? To answer that question it is necessary to analyse how the different sites of orality operate.

At the present time, when new diseases bring new challenges to the issue of treatment, the narrative question re-emerges: is it possible to treat without taking account of the stories around disease? How should we update in Africa these relations between law, orality and institutions? Creating a public sphere for discussion and deliberation is today one of the democratic requirements, but how does orality get involved in forming opinion, in rumour and in debates and deliberations?

Media, diversity and terrorist violence

African (sub-Saharan) philosophical thinking did not really take account of the phenomenon of terrorism till the general mobilization by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) against the policy of apartheid, which was labelled terrorist by neighbouring states (Mozambique and the two Rhodesias). This lack of interest in the terrorist phenomenon can be partly explained by the relationship the newly independent states had with the notion of violence. Up to the 1970s or thereabouts African states focused their attention on colonial violence on the one hand – several countries, in particular Portuguese-speaking ones (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau), were still struggling against Portuguese colonial 'imperialism' – and on the other hand on the category 'coup d'état'.¹ African political vocabulary at that time – recycling both colonial administrations' terminology and Marxist rhetoric mixed

with third world jargon – only had these phrases: a) subversive, b) counter-revolutionary, c) traitor to the nation, d) *maquisard* (guerrilla), e) mercenary.² Terrorism, as the action of a person, group or even nation state whose ‘complexity is the source of difficulties around categorization’ (Gozzi, 2003: 70), did not really appear in the African political lexicon until the African states’ concerted struggle against apartheid. The then South Africa, a ‘terrorist state’, was not to have diplomatic relations with OAU members. Gradually the term ‘terrorist’ came to be widely used in Africa about Islamist groups in Sudan, Somalia, Mauritania, Kenya, Tanzania and the Comoros. Though in Africa the label ‘terrorism’ tends to indicate any violent act of an unknown nature – the attack on a French plane belonging to UTA, which exploded in mid-flight above the Ténéré desert in 1989,³ and the attacks on American interests in Tanzania and Kenya (1998) – terrorism already cohabits with longstanding concerns about coups d’états.⁴ The terrorist issue encourages us not only to look at the *robustness of post-colonial states* with respect to their ability to contain, prevent and circumscribe the phenomenon, but also to ask the question about victims. This area (state/victims) would itself be very restricted if we did not add questions of justification/legitimacy, group cohesion, survival, leadership, territory and hope. Beyond this, it is necessary to examine how cultural and media diversity might help to better contain the social fact of terrorism.

At this point the description of the current state of affairs mentions some significant dates of terrorist acts. The Horn of Africa has been a major site of terrorist activities, with the dislocation of the Somali state – Somalia has existed without a state structure for about 15 years – and the liberation struggles in an Eritrea wishing to free itself from Ethiopian colonization and relatively close to Yemen. On 12 September 1969 two members of the Eritrean Liberation Front hijacked an Ethiopian Airlines plane; they were overcome and killed. On 8 December 1972 some others took over another Ethiopian Airlines plane. A bit further south in Sudan, when the civil war was at its height, a Palestinian commando took two Saudi diplomats hostage and executed them on 2 March 1973. In southern Africa Uganda was also the theatre for terrorist operations. On 27 June 1976 an Air France flight from Tel Aviv was diverted on to Ugandan soil, on 30 June non-Jewish hostages were released, on 3 July in the famous Thunderball operation an Israeli commando freed the hostages. In neighbouring Tanzania in February 1982 a commando from the Tanzanian Revolutionary Movement diverted an Air Tanzania plane; on 7 August 1998 the country also experienced an attack from an explosive-filled truck on the American embassy in which 11 died. In Kenya another attack on the same day against the American embassy in Nairobi left 213 dead and 500 wounded. Other attacks – such as the explosion in mid-flight of a UTA DC10 on 19 September 1989 in the Ténéré desert in Niger – covered Africa with blood. But what interests us here is that, because of young states’ ‘weakness’, Africa today remains a favourable site for the proliferation of terrorist groups which could exploit the atmosphere of current conflicts:

- in Ivory Coast, with Liberia and Sierra Leone just emerging from civil wars
- in Sudan, with Chad as a neighbour, which also has a bone to pick with pockets of former northern uprisings from the 1970s
- in Congo, with various inter-ethnic massacres (Ituri) and in particular the Rwandan presence

– in Rwanda, which is tending the wounds from the genocide with unstable Burundi alongside it

– in Burundi, which is not helped by Rwanda, whose national unity is uncertain, and Uganda worn down by the thorn of a fundamentalist rebellion.

These conflicts, which also cause conflicts of interest, involve values, collective identities and religious elements as well. But in order to get to grips with the phenomenon of terrorism it is also necessary to understand it without explaining it away.

Resentment

Why do people agree to band together against something? Several objective reasons may justify the fact that an individual or group gets involved in terrorist acts in Africa. Resentment is one of those reasons. In the *Genealogy of Morality* (I, §10) Nietzsche defines it as the impression of being powerless in the face of evil, the feeling of always being taken advantage of and especially internalized anger that one day explodes. Indeed Nietzsche (1994) thinks resentment is a slave's morality: 'the insurrection of slaves in morality starts when resentment itself becomes creative and gives rise to values: the resentment of beings for whom the true reaction, the act, is forbidden, who can extricate themselves from it unharmed only through an imaginary vengeance'. Reality, for a Subject who is a victim of resentment, is binary (good/bad) and this binary character is fed by a kind of 'falsification' (of reality) that is brought about by internalized hatred, the vengeance of the powerless when it attacks its adversary.

In Nietzsche resentment is perhaps interpreted not only from the viewpoint of the weak wanting vengeance but as a ruse of the will to power. Freud (1959) adds that hatred itself enters into 'impulses of self-preservation'. In the context of resentment this preservation is itself accompanied by what Scheler (1994) calls 'psychic self-poisoning'. Resentment never develops alone, it needs precedents. The first is moral; a person feels unjustly treated. *The issue of the definition of the just* is certainly what is most fundamental in the question of resentment and precedes *the legal question*: 'the desire for vengeance implies a prior offence or insult'. Then resentment is a *stimulus to action* – which is not a simple reaction as Nietzsche thought – and *acts over the long term*. 'For there to be vengeance there must on one hand be a longer or shorter "time" during which the inclination to react immediately and the impulses of anger and hatred associated with it are held back and suspended; and on the other hand the act of riposte itself must be deferred for a more favourable moment or occasion.' Finally resentment is subject to envy; there is no resentment *without desire*: 'the German language renders the differences subtly. From rancour to malice (*Hämischkeit*) via discontent (*Groll*), jealousy (*Scheelsucht*), envy (*Neid*), there is as it were a progression of resentment strictly defined. But this is still in rancour and envy.'

Several types of resentment, the seedbed of terrorism, can be found in Africa. We can start with resentment against the state. Since independence the state has not found favour with civil society, which sees it as an instrument of injustice that covers up the deeds and misdeeds of minorities in power. Why do unpopular governments

remain in power? The people – especially the young – find an answer: those governments are the work of *foreigners* and even if they wanted to change them nothing would happen. Here we find the first stage of resentment, which is that *impression of powerlessness* and the *feeling of always being taken advantage of*. If the state is not only weak (becoming authoritarian simply because of that) but in addition does not play its regal part equitably, then informal responses emerge. Corruption, money-laundering and resourcefulness are a veritable constellation from which terrorist activities can spring at both local and international level: ‘so a criminal with funds from corruption and well-placed contacts finds a favourable environment’ (Hibou, 1997, quoted by Raufer, 1998: 10). And so, as Béatrice Hibou sees it, money-laundering is an everyday operation in Africa because it is closely linked to the informal economy: income from money-laundering is paid into that economy. That resentment against the state also comes from rebel movements. Thus, when Charles Taylor was in revolt against the Liberian government, once the diamond mines under his control were exhausted ‘he used the port of San Pedro in Ivory Coast to export the cannabis that grew in the areas occupied by his guerrilla forces’ (Raufer, 1998: 11). It has also been noted that the MFDC (a Casamance rebellion in Senegal) grew *yamba* (a drug) to finance the rebellion (Raufer, 1998). The most significant and best known example is the trade in *qa’* (a herbal drug) in Somalia.

Resentment is a suppressed hatred, a feeling of powerlessness that awaits ‘its time’ to express itself. Africa feels that powerlessness in various ways: a) the price of raw materials is fixed by international economic factors; b) countries’ debt keeps on growing; c) Africa has no permanent representation in the UN Security Council; d) diseases constantly proliferate and above all the population, which is 60% young people, knows it has to beg for its future from other countries. The poor African nations live with the torture of economic and hence political domination. The aid that is given to them (and quickly diverted by their elites) is resented as a humiliation and an obstacle to creativity. What Simmel (2001) says so pertinently about begging in the Middle Ages is applicable here: ‘The rise in begging in the Middle Ages, the crazy distribution of alms, the demoralization of the proletariat brought about by arbitrary donations . . . tended to undermine any creative work.’ Those beggar nations also contain populations who are *ashamed*. In the context of black Africa the particular relationships created between *shame*, *resentment* and *terrorist acts* have not been sufficiently studied. Studies often focus on *hatred* but not on *shame* as the catalyst for some terrorist acts. The exclusion of Africa leads people to see terrorism as a means by which the movements and aspirations of populations will at last be attended to. Unable to join the game of great international decisions in economics and politics, terrorism – to put it bluntly – will force the movers and shakers to take an interest in Africa. That is how the issue of the drugs trade in Africa has become important for all western research into terrorism. And so Nigeria has assumed significance because it is both a hub for the drugs trade and a hotbed of religious fundamentalism.

In the fact of terrorism the first solution is to *strengthen the rule of law in Africa*. Lack of guarantees for basic freedoms, impunity and illicit enrichment weaken the state. Structurally incapable of fulfilling its true ruling functions in Africa, the state has left the door open to various fundamentalisms. The issue of relations between religions

and states often concerns those who wish to understand the fundamentalist phenomenon, but in the case of sub-Saharan Africa we have to add in the ethnic factor, which may also play a crucial part. In the matter of the rule of law, setting up a *veritable public sphere for expression* and the issue of *social justice* are among the first priorities in Africa. In addition there is the challenge of *xenophobic nationalisms* – here I am thinking of ethno-nationalistic doctrines such as the famous *ivoirité* in Côte d’Ivoire, which is a half cultural, half biologizing symbol of exclusion – and the battles between religious law and essentially secular law (the example of Nigeria).

The role of the media is crucial here. They could give back to the public sphere the opportunity to bring a critical spirit to bear and not just *an ethos of consumption*. In particular communication policies could think up a kind of control that is not censorship. In what conditions is it possible to control information without censoring it? That may perhaps be the challenge the terrorist phenomenon presents to communication in Africa.

As regards legal means, international arrangements for combating terrorism should perhaps look for the universal moment in each particular case. In other words ensure that arrangements for combating terrorism are not seen as *colonization* or *repression*, but something relevant to the public good.

And finally, in the economic domain, it is necessary to take account of the informal economy, since all kinds of mafias are parasitical upon it. The informal economy gets more powerful when a state is economically weak; porous borders and gaps in administrative checks open a wide avenue to the parallel economy, which feeds terrorist sectarianism (Mentan, 2004: 174 *et seq.*)

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Notes

1. The ‘coup d’état’ should be understood here as a violent change in political regime by eliminating or sidelining the prince and his government. Coups d’états in French-speaking Africa were started in 1963 in Togo, where soldiers assassinated the elected president Sylvanus Olympio. In 1964 it was Gabon’s turn with the eviction of Léon Mba, who was reinstated by the French army. For a theoretical study of the coup d’état, see Naudé (2004).
2. *Subversive*: a term used by African political leaders who opted for the multiparty solution in their country after independence. The person opposed to that policy is a subversive. *Counter-revolutionary*: a term used several times by African Marxist regimes (Congo-Brazzaville from 1963 to the time of the Massamba regime) to indicate those opposed to central power. *Traitors to the nation*, *maquisards*: metaphors used during purges (the case of Sékou Toury in Guinea) to mark out those destined for state condemnation. *Mercenaries*: a catch-all term whose appearance and use go back to summer 1960, when Moïse Tsimbe proclaimed the Republic of Katanga, thus effecting a secession from the young Democratic Republic of Congo, led at the time by President Kassavubu, Prime Minister Lumumba and army Chief of Staff Joseph Désiré Mobutu. The word ‘mercenary’ was used during the secession of Biafra in 1967–70 and in particular for the many coups d’états in the Comoros.
3. An attack attributed to Libyan special services.
4. Here the issue is to know whether old surveillance techniques for coups d’états are adequate for the prevention of terrorist acts.

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