

conflicts emerged as a result of the arbitrary manner in which these tribal areas had been given to either India or Pakistan. The religious and linguistic characteristics of the tribal peoples inhabiting these areas did not coincide with those of their mother countries. The Tripura, Naga, Mizoram and Bodoland ethnic groups requested independence or a substantial degree of autonomy. Their forced inclusion into a larger political unit ultimately led to armed resistance against the perceived occupant's military forces. In the CHT area the issue was even more confusing when Bangladesh seceded from Pakistan. The dominant CHT tribe the Chakmas had initially opted for Indian citizenship in the aftermath of the Partition but this movement was crushed by the Pakistani military. In contrast some tribal leaders and their followers had sided with the Pakistani army during the Bangladeshi war of independence. Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the independence war the entire CHT tribal community was harassed by a joint Indian-Bangladeshi military force as a punitive exercise. The Indians intervened to destroy bases of the adjoining rebellious tribal communities in the Northeast of India. The geo-political location of these states on the crossroads between China, Laos, Myanmar, Bangladesh and India have made these tribal insurgencies a major security issue for India.

The Indian-Sri Lankan peace agreement allowed for the transfer of a substantial military force to the North of Sri Lanka in 1987. This period heralded India's role as a mediator in the conflict. Prior to the armed intervention by the so-called Indian Peace-Keeping Forces, India at least condoned the active support of the Tamil Nadu State in South India to their kinfolk on the Island. The complex internal political relationship between the Center and this Indian state played a major role in the changing attitude of India towards the internal conflict in Sri Lanka. The rise of the nationalist Dravida Munetra Kazhagam movement in Tamil Nadu was initially co-opted into the political system and it paid lip service to the dominant Congress party by providing electoral support. Later the changing attitude of this movement aroused fear among the Indian Congress Party elite that the Tamils from Sri Lanka would eventually export their violent secessionist movement across the Palk Straits back into India. A phase of covert political support by the DMK was therefore followed by the military involvement through the IPKF. However, relations between the Indian army and the Sri Lankan Tamil community quickly deteriorated into open warfare between the two parties. India became an active participant in the war between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan army. Indian involvement ended in the middle of 1990 when the IPKF was withdrawn. Indian involvement was motivated by the wish to control secessionist tendencies within the state of Tamil Nadu and simultaneously to demonstrate the Tamils that the Center was able to defend the interests of their kin effectively in the face of military repression by the majority in Sri Lanka. When this policy failed India simply disappeared from the scene. The Indian involvement, however, exacerbated the ethnic conflict and internationalized the conflict.

#### *Economic aspects*

Economic external intervention has had a very modest impact on the states in South Asia, with the possible exception of Bangladesh. For Sri Lanka the policies of the World Bank and the IMF influenced the macro-economic approach. During the 1980s economic reforms initiated by the various governments of the island led to cutbacks in government expenditure. External economic influence in India has remained fairly limited as the country has pursued a policy in which the state has played a key role in distributing revenues and controlling market incentives. However, the current wave of economic liberalization has resulted in the gradual erosion of state power. This tendency could compromise the state's ability to mediate between various groups in society and to redistribute resources in order to avoid ethno-nationalistic grievances. Furthermore, structural adjustment and macro-economic policies have a direct

bearing on subsidies and the pricing policies of the state. The latter tendency is likely to have a direct impact on the capacity to mitigate poverty.

The various economic elite groups in Pakistan have consistently been exempted from the obligation to pay taxes according to their real incomes. Instead, foreign capital was utilized to fill the gap between government income and expenses. This resulted in a growing collective capital burden by the accumulation of foreign debts. The share of foreign assistance grew to a staggering 58% in the funding of the Third Five-year Plan. A second burst of foreign assistance came in the wake of the Afghanistan crisis, when the United States gave considerable aid to Pakistan. When the Soviets withdrew Pakistan was left to its own devices and had to engage in various agreements with the WB/IMF (1988, 1994 and 1997). The cumulative effects of devaluation, liberalization of imports and privatization of public assets limited the government's capacity to stop the downward trend in macro-economic performance. Conditions were imposed to promote economic market liberalization whereas the major concerns of the country were related to the quality of state performance by enhancing its distributive capacity and its tax revenue collection in order to alleviate poverty and to promote economic growth. External economic interference in Bangladesh is enormous, yet very few pointers in relation to conflict can be identified. Whereas, for instance, WB and IMF induced the liberalization of fertilizer prices has led to social unrest and spontaneous violence, poverty alleviation on the local level implemented by a wide range of NGOs has edged off the worst effects of such direct economic interference. In the case of Bangladesh, the evidence on the effects of external economic interference is therefore inconclusive.

The overall and direct impact of economic policies on livelihood strategies and the economic performance of the majority of the region's inhabitants has been limited. However, Structural Adjustment Policies have led governments to economic reforms, visibly resulting in a loss of government jobs and cutbacks in food subsidies. Such measures have restrained state capacity to alleviate, to some extent, the worst effects of poverty and unequal access to resource distribution in the framework of a political economy that remains profoundly dual.

### *Conclusions*

As a regional superpower in the South Asian region, India's foreign policy objectives and strategies to a large extent determine the outcome of border issues and regional conflicts. The geo-strategic threat to its hegemony comes from China and Pakistan. In the aftermath of the Afghanistan imbroglio external political interference has diminished greatly, to the detriment of Pakistan. India has intervened directly in the affairs of Sri Lanka and covertly in the CHT issue in Bangladesh, but without much success. Nevertheless, the position of smaller countries in the sub-region is circumscribed by Delhi, and they will have to take the interests of the large neighbor into account. Afghanistan also provides a key to regional stability. Any solution to this conflict needs to take into account the contending interests of half a dozen regional powers. Finally, the controversy between India and Pakistan persists and there has been no clear sign that the Kashmir conflict could be resolved peacefully. The protracted character of most of the conflicts in the region has created new security concerns. New actors, leaders of secessionist nationalistic movements, those involved in illegal activities, have developed strategic interests to continue violent confrontations in a bid to acquire positions of power or financial profit.

## 3.2 West Africa

### 3.2.1 The political and military dimension

#### *State-Formation and Pluralism*

As in South Asia many of the conflicts in West Africa can, one way or another, be related to the fundamental issue of creating or sustaining states with plural ethnic, religious or cultural societies. Here again we need to focus on the trade-off between extraction and the provision of services and on the possibilities for participation in the decision-making process. Again, it is obvious that the problems are not just a heritage of the colonial period, but are also related to the policies of the post-independence governments.

In all West African states an attempt was made to develop a new framework for identification (nation building) as well as a new network for administrative structures (state building). These processes started often just around independence. In a historical perspective, these processes are still very recent. From a societal perspective, they are rather forced. In Senegal and Niger political parties identifying with an ethnic group, religion, language or region were prohibited in the Constitution, with the evident intention to protect the state against particularistic interests. In practice this boiled down to a severe limitation of the political process, since only one political party was allowed: President Senghor's *Parti Socialiste* in Senegal and the *Parti Unique* in Niger. This situation marginally changed in the 1970s when only parties with a specific political ideology were allowed. In the 1980s again an opening up of the political system took place, but again no regional, ethnic, or religious parties were allowed. In its attempt at ethnic management the Senegalese leadership furthermore introduced French as the official language and recognized six regional languages as national language. In spite of the fact that Islam was officially recognized as the main national religion, Senegal has always remained a secular state. As regards the integration of the identity groups in society, the Center adopted a policy of co-optation through a system of Muslim middlemen, who articulated and channeled popular demands towards the state.

Despite these attempts at creating a new framework for identification there still was a general perception of Wolof domination. This perception was not simply a result of the Wolof being the main ethnic group (though not a majority) in Senegal, but of the Center's decision to continue the process of state- and nation building that had started under the French and that had proven successful in the Wolof areas. This domination ran into strong resistance in the Casamance. The Casamance rebellion resulted from the cumulative effects of the application of the new constitution regarding land-rights, the selective economic exploitation of local resources by migrant groups backed by the state, as well as perceived cultural domination by Northern Wolof elite groups. In addition, the people (especially the leaders) in the Casamance believed that they historically did not belong to Senegal. The Casamance case shows that forced attempts at ethnic management and nation building at the state level may result in the destruction of a nation from the perspective of groups within society. Thus, in an attempt to prevent identity and ethnicity related politics and parties, the politics of suppressing traditional and regional identities incited just the opposite. It should, however, also be noted that the Senegalese state did succeed in integrating the other regions and groups, as well as in penetrating society at large.

Niger, a former French colony, followed a similar approach of creating a new, unitary state. Its ethnic characteristics, however, were different. On the one hand it had to deal with competition between two ethnic groups: the Hausa and the Songhai-Zarma. On the other hand

it had to deal with peripheral groups in society: the pastoral Tuareg and Tubu. The process of centralization and the creation of a new framework for identification seriously affected pastoral groups, a process already started during the French colonial period, who became marginalized socially and economically. The drought at the end of the 1960s forced them to move to neighboring Libya and Algeria, where they became acquainted with revolutionary ideas. Upon their return to Niger they tried to implement these ideas and demanded more autonomy in a federal state, and even secession. This sparked off strong repressive policies from the political Center that adhered to the idea of a strongly centralized and unitary state.

In the political Center in the meantime another 'battle' for state power took place between the Hausa and the Songhai-Zarma. The Hausa comprised the largest group of the country and felt they had the right to rule the country. In practice, however, they were marginalized by the Songhai-Zarma who dominated the Center and the military. The only change came during the period of democratization in the first part of the 1990s when the Hausa were able to turn their numerical advantage into an electoral victory.

Nigeria had a somewhat different approach. Here the British had already introduced politics of 'ethnic regionalism'. After independence, however, a fundamental change took place in the relationship between the regions. The North (Hausa and Fulani) represented more than 50% of the population and was mainly Muslim. As a result, no government could be formed at the federal level without participation of the North. The North thus had the advantage of representing an absolute majority that assured permanent access to the resources of the federal government. This mainly implied redistribution of the profits of the oil producing areas of the South, to the resource-poor North. In fact the North was able to capture the state and its resources. The 1966-coup and the attempt to end federalism (mainly Igbo-led) were seen by the North as threats to its position. The failure of the 1966 coup and the ensuing pattern of anti-Igbo tendencies resulted in an ultimate attempt of the Igbos to secede. This attempt finally failed and resulted in the Biafra War. The Biafra War made it clear to the Federal Government that in the future grievances had to be addressed in an earlier stage. The Federal Government thus introduced the policy of 'state creation'. Creating more and smaller political units was seen as the solution to redress group grievances, while at the same time consolidating the territorial and political unity of Nigeria as well as the power of the Federal Government over the states. The Federal Government's role in the redistribution of resources to the states, and in the development of the country as a whole increased as a result. Being in power in the Center became even more important than in the past. The politics of 'capturing' the state, in which the armed forces took the lead, consequently became a central feature of Nigerian politics.

In Ghana as well, the British had also deliberately promoted ethnic aspects of social and territorial organization. At independence the new leader (Nkrumah) used the powers of the center to embark on an ambitious state building project based on 'scientific socialism'. The implementation of this new framework depended completely on acceptance of the ideology. In this ideology there was no room for a plural society with special rights for specific ethnic groups, and in the process the government became increasingly centralist. The role of regional assemblies was reduced, and later abolished completely. Although Nkrumah's ideological approach failed, all later regimes and leaders continued to neglect the ethnic diversity of the country. This does not imply that there were no ethnic problems. The Ewe (striving for secession as of Ghana's independence), the Ga and the Ashanti (resisting their marginalization) are cases in point. The state succeeded, however, in crushing the resistance militarily or politically.

The general approach towards the problem of societal pluralism in the West African region has been to embark upon state building projects with the aim of creating new frameworks for identification. This approach implied the neglect of pre-existing identities and regional formations. In practice, therefore, this process of state formation implied the destruction of nations at a sub-state level. State formation was successful in Ghana, although at a price. In Senegal, it has resulted in violent opposition from the Casamance region. In the case of Niger, there are the attempts of the Tuareg and Tubu to increase their autonomy. The federal character of the state in Nigeria implied that the plural character of society needed a more sophisticated approach. The baseline for the Federal Government has always been to maintain the territorial integrity of the country. Biafra's attempt at secession thus resulted in a devastating war to keep this state in. After the Biafra War, the Center created smaller states to correspond more closely with ethnic and regional identities. This policy can only work as long as the Center is able to redistribute the resources in such a way that no state or group feels excluded or marginalized. States can only deal effectively with these issues if they have at least succeeded in reaching a sufficient level of institutional capacity.

#### *Institutional capacity and democratization*

The nature of the political authority and institutional capacity in the countries investigated could best be described as patrimonial or oligarchic. The system of *presidentialism*, as implemented in Senegal under Senghor, equals a typical patrimonial system, based on personal prestige and power. Senghor systematically concentrated political power in the Center, and asserted his personal control over the formal political structures. This, in fact, implied the disempowerment of formal institutions like Parliament. There was no formal functioning system of checks and balances. A system of co-optation or clientelism through middlemen and the participation of regional representatives in the government, however, provided the government with some legitimacy. During his twenty year reign, Senghor thus completely controlled and manipulated politics in the Center. The 'opening up' of the political system in 1974 and his succession were orchestrated events. From the point of view of democratic policies, the system had evident limitations, yet it should be noted that Senegal is one of the few countries where the opening up of the political system started well before it became a conditionality for international development aid. From the point of view of the state's right to rule, it could be said that there was no basis for legitimacy. However, the state proved able to provide a degree of political and societal stability (with the exception of the Casamance), and therefore to function as a structure for economic development. The state was also able to extract resources to rule the country, and was able to provide services and develop institutions. In addition, the state in Senegal succeeded in keeping the military out of politics, even during the most violent phases of its existence when it had to fight an internal conflict in the Casamance as well as conflicts with neighboring countries. No other country in the region was able to accomplish this. Neither the territorial integrity of the country nor its political system were in danger during its post-colonial history.

In Niger too a presidential system was introduced. However, the ethnic composition of Niger was less favorable than in Senegal. When in addition a Zarma was appointed as president, the Hausa majority found this hard to accept. As a result, politics in the Center were from the beginning strongly related to identity. During its first years of independence, however, the country succeeded in preventing violent internal conflict over identity issues. This was a result of successful politics of co-optation and clientelism. By entrusting ministerial posts to minorities, the Center ensured a minimum degree of legitimacy. In contrast to Senegal, however, the state in Niger was not able to keep the military out of politics. When the

political system appeared to derail in the first part of the 1970s, the military intervened and stayed in power for a period of 15 years. The military also adopted policies of clientelism and co-optation. The system of political rule under Kountché was in fact a presidential system, but now the higher ranks of the military profited upon the system as well. The system therefore resembled more or less a military oligarchy, although not of the kind of Nigeria. The military in Niger at least tried to create the impression of being a political and developmental institution through the creation of the MNSD. In practice, the MNSD, was a one-party system, since only one political movement was allowed to exist. The lack of legitimacy of the system became apparent when Kountché died and his succession had to be arranged and the position of the military consolidated. External factors (conditionalities by donor countries) as well as internal developments forced the military leadership to accept an opening up of the political system. A multi-party system and elections were introduced and consolidated in a new Constitution. The almost forceful introduction of the process of democratization in Niger was perceived by the Hausa as an opportunity to grab power in a legitimate way. This indicates that countries where a large section of the population belongs to one ethnic group, democratization actually increases polarization. In fact the Hausa started to privilege their own people. In addition, the new democratic leaders used their new positions for personal interests, just as the military had done before them. Democratization, consequently, did not mean a strengthening but a weakening of the state's legitimacy. The resulting chaotic political situation was reason enough for the military to move in and to take over power once again. Niger thus did not succeed in turning the state into a legitimate actor with an accepted right to rule and commanding loyalty. The role of the military furthermore indicates the weakness of the civilians in the political center. The state was not able to turn Niger's polity into a consensus-based community. Even the concept of the state is still contested by some groups (e.g. the Tuaregs and the Tubu). The state was not able to function as a structure of development either and to extract enough resources to provide services and develop institutions.

Nigeria had its own system of presidentialism. During most of its history as an independent state the military were the main actors in the Center. The political system, therefore, can best be described as a military oligarchy. The success of Nigeria, it could be concluded, is that it still exists as a country. Two factors were important for the state to survive. First the federal system and the decision to create a larger number of smaller states. This option, however, has its limits. Second, the oil revenues that enabled the state to finance its political system, while still excluding the main part of society. The negative effect of both these factors is the state's failure to become a structure for development that is capable of effectively ruling the country, to provide services and to develop the country economically. Instead the state has become a predator on its own resources. This certainly has not contributed to its legitimacy. Its only success up until now seems to be the capability to control violence within its borders. But this was only possible because the military were in power, and because they were willing and capable of violently crushing internal opposition. In addition to these problems the state also has to deal with the majority-issue of the North (i.e. the Hausa and Fulani). As long as the North represents the majority of the population, and as long as ethnicity plays a crucial role in politics, the introduction of democratic principles will not prove to be the solution to all problems. The same can be said for democratic experiences in the past. During these periods the elected governments displayed the same predatory behavior towards the state's resources as the military. Nigeria still has to make the concept of the state generally accepted, commanding loyalty and developing the state into a structure for development instead of depredation.

Ghana is often referred to as a success story in the (West) African context. Its success, however, lies not in the sphere of democratization. It developed from a presidential system under Nkrumah into a military oligarchy. In comparison to Nigeria the role of the military in Ghana is not perceived as negative. The military are seen as saviors of the nation, as the only ones who were capable of restraining the interethnic conflict in a country where democracy seemed to fail, and who were capable of turning the state into a structure for development. The special role of the military was consolidated under Acheampong when he introduced the Union Government mechanism (UNIGOV). He and Rawlings embarked upon a top-down approach that focused on a policy of exceptional political and economic discipline. According to the military leaders this approach was only possible in a non-democratic system. Despite the growing economic crises from the early 1970s onward, the military maintained a firm repressive grip on Ghanaian society. As a matter of fact many political opponents went in exile and many more people migrated to oil rich Nigeria and the West. Simultaneously, the growth of the informal sector, illegal trade activities and remittances from migrant workers acted as a safety valve for the military political regime. Although Ghana became a show-case for IMF and WB policies in the early 1980s, which gave external legitimacy to the Rawlings regime, the internal legitimacy was fairly weak. Nevertheless, the opposition remained fragmented and unable to compel the military to democratize the system. Finally, Rawlings transformed from a military ruler to a democratically elected president.

### *Conclusions*

Concluding it can be stated that after independence the leaders of the countries under investigation emphasized the importance of the state and insisted on national unity. In several cases this was done at the expense of sub-national ethnic and other identities. In some cases (Senegal and Niger) the combined processes of state building and the suppression of sub-state level nationalities resulted in violent conflicts. In one specific case the creation of states based on sub-national identities proved to be an answer (Nigeria). This process of state creation, however, had to take place within the territorial unit of the federation. Secession was, is and will not be accepted by any of the states investigated in this project.

Another tentative conclusion points in the direction of legitimacy. In order to command loyalty and obtain legitimacy states need to provide certain services. The most important service appears to be a structure for development. As long as the state is able to provide such a structure, it is also able to extract resources that can be redistributed and used to provide services. Both Senegal (a rudimentary multi-party democracy) and Ghana (oligarchic military structure) were able to provide these services. It is difficult to conclude which political regime is most appropriate under which circumstances. The political system preceding the multi-party democracy in Senegal showed resemblance with an autocratic system which gradually opened up. Niger and Nigeria, show that neither a military oligarchy nor a multi-party democracy provide foolproof solutions to the problems the states in West Africa are facing. Nigeria furthermore indicates that a state with a strong Center and enough resources to provide services and a structure for countrywide development, is no sufficient condition for its legitimacy. The predatory character of politics undermines the regime's legitimacy and maybe even the long-term survival of the federal state of Nigeria.

### **3.2.2. The socioeconomic dimension**

#### *Structural factors*

The countries involved in the study have a fragmented disarticulated economy. The majority of the people find their livelihoods in primary activities in the countryside and in informal service sector activities in the towns. The industrial sector comprises import substitution and assembly industries as well as primary product processing and exportation of raw products and semi-manufactures. The state bureaucracy is largely inefficient and non-productive but, often firmly in control of productive sectors through bureaucratic procedures and administrative regulations. The private sector remains embryonic and has a limited capacity to absorb labor. As a result of these structural characteristics West African states have a limited tax raising capacity and the state can only satisfy a limited amount of needs for a limited number of people. The state therefore lacks legitimacy in the eyes of the population and loyalty is vested in primordial identities. The state sector in itself has become a target for contending elites of various ethno-linguistic groups, as it is perceived widely as a predator state. Changing alliances and politics, co-optation and marginalization provide the breeding ground for conflicts among different groups in society.

#### *Poverty, inequality, state policies and dynamics of differentiation*

Poverty is a widespread and persistent characteristic of all the countries under study. However, within the states under study there is a huge gap between a small elite group (1-2% of population), an embryonic middle class (5-10%) and an impoverished mass of peasants and urban poor. With regard to poverty as an independent contributing factor to the outbreak of violent conflict one needs to take into account the predominant structural characteristics of resource allocation and wealth accumulation within states. Poverty as a class-based phenomenon does exist as exemplified by the existence of labor unions and a long history of strikes in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. The level of poverty in absolute terms, however, cannot be directly related to the emergence of violent conflict within these societies. However, once ethnicity and poverty can be linked, or a perception of discriminatory treatment can be discerned, the propensity towards violent opposition to the state or other groups becomes apparent. Poverty can be labeled as a mobilizing factor provided that it overlaps with either group identity or prevails in combination with specific class-based organizations such as labor unions. This is also the case when poverty is conceived as the end result of a political process by which specific groups are marginalized or deprived. Inequality between differentiated groups in West African societies has a stronger conflict potential than absolute poverty as such. In general, the mobilizing capacity of inter-group inequality is omnipresent in the West African context, although this does not inevitably lead to violent clashes between contending groups. The role of the state as a resource re-distributor may help to soothe some of such potential conflicts.

Economic development determines to a large extent the potential for state extraction of funds to be redistributed through various sectoral budgets. In the case of West Africa the economic performance of individual states has been strongly determined by the fluctuations of the international commodity markets. Other important events include the oil crises of the early 1970s and the recurrent droughts, of which those of 1973-1974 and 1984-1985 stand out prominently. Ghana and Nigeria have been less affected by these droughts than the Sahelian countries. Nevertheless substantial areas were struck during these years, impacting negatively on overall economic performance. The economies of Senegal and notably Niger are extremely dependent on one product, namely groundnuts and uranium respectively. Against the backdrop of the structural weaknesses already highlighted this vulnerability has led to budget

deficits and external indebtedness. Despite the substantial devaluation of the CFA currency the economies of both countries have not recovered from the crises in the 1980s. Ghana has a slightly more diversified economy, relying on cocoa, timber and gold. Nigeria depended on agricultural products such as cocoa, palm oil and groundnuts, but has gradually shifted to oil exploitation as a leading foreign exchange earning commodity. Being a producer of oil itself, it did not suffer from the oil crises in 1971. Despite this comparative advantage Nigeria failed to develop a diversified and stable economy. The agricultural sector has been systematically ignored and subsequently productive capacity declined, necessitating import of staple foods and an expensive system of food subsidies. The uranium boom of 1977-1981 did not help the central government in Niger to complete the build-up of a national infrastructure. Ghana experienced a downward economic trend since independence, at first during the forced collectivization of the productive sectors and after the demise of Nkrumah due to inefficient liberalization. The widespread mal-practices and black market activities further undermined the economy to expand and grow. Ghana's economy virtually collapsed in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

In comparison both the Jola and Tamajaq conflicts seem to have a lot in common. Both groups are marginalized from political power and constitute minorities within their respective countries. Whereas the deteriorating ecological circumstances directly impacted on the livelihood of the Tamajaq through the decimation of their herds, it impacted more subtly on the Jola community. In both cases the state has neglected or proved incapable to counter the negative impact of this deteriorating livelihood situation, even exacerbating tensions between the state and the regions by extracting scarce resources to the benefit of the central state. In Niger this mainly concerned a mineral resource, whereas in Senegal tourist revenues and hard currency from fish exports were at stake. For Eastern Nigeria a similar trend could be observed, two decades earlier, when most conflicts in the developing world were perceived in terms of proxy wars of super-power rivalry. The Igbo community constituted a sizeable minority in the Nigerian Federation as opposed to the Jola and Tamajaq in their respective countries. In this conflict control over the federal government was clearly at stake. Nonetheless, resource distribution among constituent units was at the heart of the issue. However, despite apparent overlap the Biafra war stands out against the other conflicts because it involved a power struggle between contending elites for the control of the entire state. When this proved unattainable secession became the second best alternative for the Igbo elites. The Biafra conflict involved the survival of the entire Nigerian state, whereas the Tamajac rebellion and the Jola uprising were less threatening to the survival of their respective states.

### *Conclusions*

In general conflicts in the West African region have strong ethno-linguistic and cultural roots. These identities form powerful mobilizing categories for political entrepreneurs to exploit. The case studies examined show that structural characteristics of the societies under study clearly resemble one another. The fragility of the urban-based export-oriented agricultural economies have created weak states. These states in turn have inherited the exploitative characteristics of colonial administrations based on coercive resource extraction by sheer military power. The legitimacy of states therefore has never been at the forefront of consideration by any political elite, instead mere survival has been a constant feature of such weak states. The lack of resources to a large extent accounts for the absence of social service provision to the majority of the people inhabiting these states. The dichotomy between a small powerful elite and a disenfranchised marginalized rural majority persists until today. Against these background conditions several violent conflicts have erupted throughout the post

independence period stemming largely from arbitrary exploitation of resources without due compensation for the people inhabiting the areas. Most states involved are based on a very rigid and highly centralized interpretation of the state. In this context groups, especially those in the more fragile semi-arid areas in West Africa, which experienced a gradual decline in their capacity to sustain livelihood, have been marginalized. The articulation of such basic socioeconomic grievances has found its corollary in the expression of a specific ethno-linguistic discourse. In the absence of an impartial and credible arbiter each resource conflict in this region is bound to take on partisan rhetoric. In the highly complicated ethno-linguistic fabric of the entire West African region this inevitably puts groups into clear opposition against each other. Moreover, a fragile ecological environment experiencing increased population pressure as a result of high birth rates, and a limited capacity to raise sufficient capital to allow for economic development may imply risks for the frail democratization process currently under way in some of the countries involved.

### **3.2.3 The external dimension**

#### *Military aspects*

The regional security setting in West Africa is first of all influenced by the colonial period during which the borders were drawn of new political-territorial units that hardly corresponded with the political areas of the pre-colonial period. These arbitrarily drawn borders, however, were accepted by the post-colonial states, and suggesting a redefinition of the borders was tantamount to sacrilege. The sanctity of the existing borders and the principle of territorial integrity were also emphasized in the charter of the OAU. This policy has strongly influenced inter-state relations during most of Africa's post-colonial history. An other influence of the colonial era concerns the competition between Francophone and Anglophone countries in the region. An example is the aspiration to hegemony within one of both language camps. During the post-colonial period West Africa has experienced a slumbering conflict between Senegal and Ivory Coast for hegemony in the Francophone countries and between Ghana and Nigeria for a leading role in the Anglophone states. The second was on the regional level between Francophone and Anglophone countries. At this level, the interference of the French (helping the secessionists) and the British (supporting the government) in the Biafra war in Nigeria is a case in point. This situation was the result of colonial partition and the predominance of two distinct colonial linguistic communities in the region. The Lusophone countries were relatively small and remained colonized during the 1960s. Until the mid 1970s the Anglophone countries were virtually excluded from participating in the existing regional organizations. The drive to maintain block solidarity was inspired by France and its allies, notably Ivory Coast. An attempt led by Senegal, Mali and Upper Volta to establish the Mali Federation was successfully checked by the so-called "Conseil de l'Entente", created by Houphouët-Boigny, the erstwhile president of Ivory Coast. This organization was set up as a move against Pan African ideals and radical socialist movements that proliferated in Guinea-Conakry and Ghana (Nkrumah). The predominance of the French bloc in the sub region was obvious and led to the creation of the "Communauté Economique de l'Afrique de l'Ouest" in 1973. This organization excluded the Anglophone countries, in an effort to check the potential influence of Nigeria. In the mid-1970s Nigeria succeeded in advocating a region wide organization; the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In the early years following independence the regional security setting was quite stable and peaceful. The Sawaba rebellion facing the Hamani Diori regime in Niger was successfully

contained and the short-lived border dispute over an island in the Niger river between Dahomey and Niger did not lead to violent conflict. In the wider regional context no violent political conflicts can be identified in this period. As a matter of fact, the Biafra civil war was the first large-scale violent internal conflict in West Africa. In the Biafra war the post-colonial state was challenged by the people inhabiting one of its constituent federal units in a bid for independence. The military defeat in 1970 demonstrates the will and ability of post-colonial governments in West Africa to counter secessionist aspirations. External interference had important repercussions for the duration of this intrastate conflict. England and the Soviet Union backed the federal government and provided arms, whereas France and Portugal sided with Biafra. This collusion between the former colonial powers in the sub-region centered on the perceived predominance of Nigeria in the West African context. France deliberately sought to dismember this huge state and England tried to preserve unity at all cost. From this period onward the various power elites in the region have tried to stabilize the region basically through the existing vertical linkages with erstwhile colonial powers.

During the 1970s few cases of violent conflict erupted in the sub-region. The external intervention by Portugal in 1971 can be characterized as a colonial interference in an effort to maintain its possessions in Guinea-Bissau and the Cape Verde archipelago. In 1974 a short inter-state war between Mali and Burkina Faso erupted over boundary disputes. These conflicts did not impact upon the region in the way the Biafra war did. The following decade witnessed the beginning of a number of protracted intrastate conflicts throughout the region. In the early 1980s a severe drought hit the region and stretched the capacity of local populations to face the ensuing hardship. Simultaneously, some countries collapsed economically leading to massive migration. Notably Ghana and Guinea-Conakry were severely affected. In 1982 the Casamance conflict in Senegal erupted following some violent incidents in the regional capital Ziguinchor. Later in 1985 the border dispute between Mali and Burkina Faso re-emerged, followed by the 1989 boundary disagreement between Senegal and Mauritania leading to persecution and slaughter of migrant communities living in the respective countries. That same year witnessed the beginning of the civil war in Liberia. These conflicts are a new phase in regional history: in 1991 Sierra Leone witnessed the beginning of a similar conflict, a raw power struggle between contending warlords.

If one takes a closer look at the security setting of the African countries involved in the study some additional elements need to be highlighted. Senegal has benefited from a stable security setting for a long period. Only from 1982, when the MFDC-led insurgency took shape, security became an important concern for the central government. The dismantling of the ill-fated Senegambian federation, the tensions with Mauritania over agricultural lands in the Senegal river basin and the short border war with neighboring Guinea Bissau, all in 1989, suddenly changed the situation. The insurgency movement in the Casamance region at once took advantage militarily and launched an attack on border posts and administrative structures in this region. The conflicts with the neighboring countries were quickly solved, leading in turn to isolation and military defeat of the MFDC movement, which continued its struggle in the form of a protracted guerrilla war. The relationship with Guinea-Bissau was greatly improved in the early 1990s as Senegal mediated admission of this poor West African state to the CFA monetary union. In return the government of Guinea-Bissau promised to end its tacit support to the insurgents. Currently a civil war has broken out within Guinea-Bissau between president Vieira and rebellious military, who resent being used as scapegoat for alleged arms and narcotics trafficking with the MFDC movement. The Senegalese army has intervened on behalf of the president, which in turn has fuelled nationalist sentiments among the military who have rallied behind the rebel cause. The Senegalese army has also tried to destroy