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Exiting From The State in Nigeria

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Recent literature on politics in Africa and the third world is replete with accounts of the rise of "mostly anti-system, mostly grassroots, movements with a variety of political social and economic goals ... which are often beyond the control of the state" (Haynes, 1997: vii, 3).[1] Another account refers to groups which interact with the state "by bypassing it ... by defining [themselves] in relation to economic, political or cultural systems which transcend the state, by submerging the state with its spectacular claims and mobilisations" (Bayart, 1991: 60; also Bayat,1997).

The phenomenon described in these accounts is referred to in the literature as *exit*, defined as disengagement or retreat from the state by disaffected segments of the citizenry into alternative and parallel social, cultural, economic and political systems which are constructed in civil society and which compete with those of the state (cf Azarya, 1988, 1994; Azarya and Chazan, 1987; Bratton, 1989; Young, 1994).[2] This is a deviation from the *marriage* between citizens and the state which is consumated in terms of reciprocal rights and duties. Exit is commonly regarded as a strategy for coping with "a domineering yet ineffective state" (cf du Toit, 1995: 31), but it also represents the resistance of weak and marginalised segments which in extreme cases can lead to separatist agitation or even secession. An analytical distinction can accordingly be made between *exit from the polity* and *exit from the state*.[3] The former involves bypassing or avoiding the organised civil order without necessarily disconnecting from the state. Such qualified exit which is more prevalent amongst the ordinary peoples, for whom exit is a matter of survival, results from the fact that however much they try to avoid the state, those organising the parallel systems continually need the state one way or another. Following the example of the "Black Market" in Ghana where two thirds of the annual cocoa export in the early 1980s was done illegally, it has been observed that

parallel systems operate with some measure of collusion from state officials (du Toit, 1995: 12). Also, voluntary ethnic and kinship self-help associations which have historically formed the bulk of exit sites in most parts of Africa have been the targets of the state's neo-paternalistic designs (as has been the experience of *Harambee* in Kenya) or have themselves been involved in the nepotistic and corrupt competition for state resources and patronage.

Exit from the state on the other hand, is more manifestly political and elite-driven and involves a high degree of, or aims ultimately at, disconnection from the state. This can take the form of emigration (or -voluntary- exile) which has increased with the intensification of globalisation and has been occasioned by the advent of so-called global citizenship, renunciation of citizenship and, at the level of the group, separatism and secession. But whether from the state or polity, exit amounts to a renunciation of the state's responsiblity for one's welfare and security and consequently a renunciation of its claim over the citizen's loyalty which proceeds simultaneously with a claim to ownership of the parallel sites of solidarity and self-governance. This is expressed in the cultivation and adoption of counter-state identities, notably ethnic or religious and deviant anti-system identities (such as secret cult identities adopted by students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria). Exit entails movement *away from* rather than *toward* the state; a transfer of identity, loyalty and support from the state to parallel sections of civil society by aggrieved, alienated or marginalised citizens and groups.

This paper is about exit from the state in Nigeria which reached a climax in the 1980s and 1990s with the extensive emigrations of citizens and an upsurge in the number, activities and significance of parallel and self-governing economic, socio-cultural and juridical systems. In the face of the increased inability of the state to provide expected public goods and services, and the authoritarian assault of personal military dictatorships which further alienated the citizenry, most ordinary people turned to various parallel groups – fundamentalist religious movements, ethnic self-help unions, Black Market networks, the streets, secret cults, exile, etc. – for survival, refuge, reproduction and empowerment. The high profile of shadow state activities[4] performed by social movements and voluntary self-help organisations in areas that traditionally belong to the state, such as provision of potable water and electricity, maintenance of public schools and security of life and property, tell the story of exit from the state.

But this is only the more obvious part of this process. Why, in the first place, is there such extensive exit? What forms does exit take and what are the parallel systems and groups that have developed? What identities have flowed from these groups and how are they constructed and sustained? Is exit a recent phenomenon? If not, what changes have taken place over the years? Why, for example, has emigration or exile become a popular form of exit in the recent past? How has the state responded to exit and its attendant withdrawal of support, which has further

compounded the chronic crises of legitimacy and national cohesion it has suffered since inception? What are the implications of exit for Nigerian nationalism? We will attempt to answer these and other questions by first examining the factors that predispose people towards and shape exit, as presented in different theoretical formulations. This appraisal will be done in very general terms, drawing comparisons with other African situations. We will then do a critical examination of the phenomenon of exit in the Nigerian context.

Exiting From The State: Theoretical Perspectives

The various explanations for exit can be summarised into three complementary "theories" of exit which explain why people exit from the state whether as individuals or groups, and the categories of people who are the more likely to exit. These are (i) the theory of indigenousness; (ii) the theory of marginalisation; and (iii) the theory of extraneousness or globalisation.

The theory of indigenousness attributes exit to the resilience of indigenous African norms of social organisation, namely the norms of (organic) group solidarity and mutual self-help which are expressed in the practices of sharing and community – as opposed to individual – welfare. Although these norms are often presented as "naturally" African, historical evidence suggests that they evolved and became a significant part of the social structure following the failure of pristine states of the pre-colonial era to protect the interests of their people, and defend them in times of adversity. The case of kinship which has remained a key organising principle of exit structures illustrates this historical fact. According to Ekeh (1990, 1995), kinship bonds rose to prominence in the era of the slave trade when pre-colonial states, many of them slaving states, were unable to protect their citizens from the ravages of slave raids and the dehumanising trade – many states in fact sold their very people into slavery! Spurned by states expected to protect them, th people were forced to rely on the (self) defence offered by parallel kinshi, solidarity networks they organised to fill the void created by the pristine states. The failure of the colonial and post-colonial states in crucial areas of citizen welfare and protection and, in particular, the violence and terrorism which they unleashed against their own citizens, reinforced the need for kinship-based self-help networks and structures in the contemporary era.

These networks have taken on various forms – hometown associations, ethnic solidarity movements, cultural organisations, community development associations, credit societies, burial societies, etc. They have been mainly engaged in shadow state activities through self-help efforts, although governments have also been lobbied to these ends. The main beneficiaries of these activities were and continue to be the hometowns and ethnic home areas of the unions, but in a number of cases where patterns of residence made for concentration of ethnic groups (such as the *sabon garis* or stranger quarters in northern cities in Nigeria) and/or where

strangers suffered structural discrimination, the cities of domicile also benefited (Osaghae, 1994).

Social change and modernisation have brought about immense diversity in the organisation of parallel structures beyond kinship and natural affinities. Networks of self-help, community welfare, solidarity and sharing have subsequently been organised around youth interests, religion, labour, gender, professions, the community and their like. These networks are particularly active in the informal economic sector where they have given rise to credit unions, cooperatives, and savings and loans associations. One point that emerges from all this is that exit is not an anomaly from the point of African social structure. It is in fact positive. The other point though, is that it is those who are excluded from state power and denied the resources, privileges and protection that flow from it, that are most likely to seek the comfort and defence provided by parallel structures.

This complements the explanation offered by the second theory which hinges on marginalisation. The premise of this theory is that exit, like voice and loyalty, is a product of state power relations that exists in a polity (cf Ake, 1985). Consequently, individuals and groups who are weak, oppressed, deprived, dominated, excluded, alienated, systematically discriminated against, and unable to influence the course of state action – in short, the marginalised – are the most likely to withdraw into parallel systems which offer alternative access to social reproduction, empowerment, self-worth. security and defence against the ineffective state. Conversely, those who wield or control state power or are its beneficiaries are the least likely to exit.

The question then arises, why would marginalised groups opt for exit rather than confront or challenge the state for redress? One answer is that exit is a form of protest which invariably calls for redress. The other, more practical, reason lies in the authoritarian character of the African state. Repression, intolerance of dissenting views and opposition; disregard for constitutional rule, human rights, accountability and consultation; and lack of accountability in public policy which define the state's actions towards its citizens, breed cynicism and alienation of the marginalised who gradually lose their sense of membership of the state and participation in public affairs. Where the perception that the state belongs to "others" is strong, the impetus to create "our" own "state" (read as *space*) becomes stronger. This is the logic of exit.[5]

The third theory, extraneousness, defines exit as the product of a constellation of global factors. The point of departure here is the view popularised by dependency and world system theorists that the peripheral position of African countries in the global (capitalist) system, subjects them to numerous global forces. Accordingly, some forms of exit may be explained as the effect of those global forces and trends. One aspect of this theory attributes the changes in state-society relations in general to the enduring effects of colonialism. Specifically, the fact that the

colonial state was an imposition whose *raison d'être* was at variance with the interests of the colonised, has been identified as one of the historical antecedents of exit from the post colonial state because it created the problem of ownership of the state (Osaghae, 1998a). This position has been criticised on grounds that the colonial state was not a wholly a colonial creation, and that at independence the African elites appropriated and reconstituted the colonial state to serve their own nationalist projects (Bayart, 1991). This criticism is valid but it tends to deny the primacy of colonialism in understanding post-colonial formations and processes (cf Ekeh, 1975). Admittedly colonialism was not a one-way traffic, but its effects on the colonized social formation were not mitigated by accession to political independence. In significant ways, the pathologies of the post-colonial state are a legacy of its colonial precursor.

The other strand of extraneousness analyses exit first, as a local variant of current global trends, and, second, as the consequence of certain global factors which encourage and facilitate exit. In terms of trends, studies in different parts of the world, including the advanced industrialised countries, suggest that large segments of mostly marginalised groups are exiting from the state owing not only to the growing inability of the state to satisfy the material and welfare aspirations of citizens, but also to the failure of the state to respond to the demands for inclusive, social and political democracy which have exploded all over the world with the rise of gender, labour, and youth movements and the ascendancy of issues of human rights and equality. Besides the retreats into criminal gangs, drug networks, parallel economies, and so on, there has also been a phenomenal increase in emigration, which has given rise to the concept of global citizenship. Brain-drain and exile are aspects of this form of exit.

The effect of globalisation is better understood if we consider how global factors facilitate various forms of exit. Black markets, smuggling rings, piracy and trade in pirated and fake goods, and scam syndicates cannot thrive without the collusion of powerful international networks which produce and purchase the goods and services put into circulation. Drug, pornographic, criminal and prostitution networks also owe a lot to supplies and patronage from their global networks, while the spread of popular music such as rap and reggae, fashion, and religious movements have been supportive of new, mostly deviant identities by youth and other social groups. For example, the rise of fundamentalist Moslem sects in Nigeria has been aided by generous external support, including awards of scholarships to students.

Also, the activities and support of various international non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations, including the World Bank, IMF and donor community who are promoting civil society as the engine of development, have contributed to the phenomenal increase of NGOs and shadow state activities in Africa. For example, the political forms of exit which involve

minorities and other marginalised groups demanding political autonomy and the right of self-determination have been boosted by the rise of international human rights organisations, and the oversight functions performed by the United Nations, European Union, Commonwealth and other international organisations which have become more interventionist in the domestic affairs of African countries, ostensibly in furtherance of good governance and democracy. Finally, the revolution in information technology that has produced electronic mail, cable and satellite communication systems and the internet has further opened up Africa society to the direct effect of global trends and forces of change.

Although globalisation plays a crucial role in deciding such forms of exit, any suggestion that Africa is a passive receptacle of pressure emanating from the rest of the world, or that domestic forces do not also shape those of globalisation is clearly untenable. This is precisely the point made in Bayart's critique of the theory of extraneousness. For example, the exit groups constructed around gay and lesbian identities in Western society have not been openly embraced in most parts of Africa because of cultural and social taboos of a country such as Nigeria for example. The dynamics of exit therefore need to be analysed with reference to the realities of the African situation. For this reason, the theory of extraneousness should be considered alongside those of indigenousness and marginalisation which emphasize domestic factors.

Having tried to explain why citizens exit from the state, we now examine the forms and character of exit from the state in Nigeria.

Forms of Exit from The State

We begin our analysis of the various forms of exit with a brief outline of the objective state of exit in Nigeria. From what has been said so far, it is clear that exit has characterised relations between the Nigerian state and important segments of the citizenry for quite a long time. But the 1980s and 1990s were remarkable for the unprecedented numbers and forms of retreat from the state. The construction of parallel economic systems; proliferation of ethnic and kinship organisations and scores of grassroots non-governmental organisations; expansion of the scope of "self-help" shadow state functions performed by these groups; the rise of secret cults and other deviant networks in institutions of higher learning, and of religious fundamentalism; the phenomenal emigration of Nigerians abroad into exile, all attest to the increased extent of exit. Based on the theoretical insights provided earlier, this can be attributed to the following factors.

(i) The rapid economic decline in the country, growing foreign debt, structural adjustment and wanton corruption which further reduced the capacity of the state to provide jobs, subsidise education and health care, maintain social services, protect lives and property, and even pay salaries to civil servants. This forced people to devise various coping strategies to fend for themselves

by all means, fair and foul. Some of the more popular coping strategies were practised by the underclass, and culminated in exit from the state.

(ii) There was an unprecedented extent of repression and personal dictatorship unleashed by the military governments of the period when existing and potential sources of opposition and counterhegemonic activities (independent media, grassroots organisations, labour unions, ethnic minority organisations, student organisations, professional associations, opposition parties, human rights and pro-democracy groups) were outlawed or suppressed. Political activists and opponents were harassed, detained or assassinated. The execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and other Ogoni minority rights activists, the assassinations of Dele Giwa a popular journalist; Alfred Rewane an old democrat, and Kudirat Abiola (wife of the late Bashorun Moshood Abiola, winner of the annulled 1993 presidential election), and the large numbers of political detentions and imprisonments, were some of the highlights of the reign of terror which, in defiance of condemnation and sanctions by the international community, alienated people from the state and destroyed the social and economic bases for survival for most Nigerians. The reign of terror drove many people into the safety of exile, or it drastically curtailed the vibrant culture of protest and resistance for which critical segments of civil society, notably the press, popular musicians and university students had become well known.

(iii) The capture of state power by regional and religious leaders and the marginalisation and virtual exclusion of others, notably southerners, ethnic minorities and non-muslims from enjoying the benefits of belonging to the state. For example, the annulment of the 1993 presidential election which was won by the late Bashorun Abiola – a Yoruba Southerner – was believed to be the culmination of a grand design by a powerful Northern cabal to keep Southerners out of power.

(iv) The high degree of insensitivity to the suffering of the masses of the people, as well as the blatant lack of accountability in public affairs nurtured a culture of cynicism on the part of most ordinary Nigerians.

(v) Corruption and the virtual collapse of governmental structures and agencies which further worsened the crisis of legitimacy afflicting the state. The police had been unable to keep pace with the explosive increase in violent crimes, due partly to poor funding and partly to the corruption of the force. The impartiality of the judiciary had been called into question because of pervasive corruption. Public utility boards, including oil refineries, were unable to provide amenities and services even with the phenomenal increases in the costs of such services which had taken them beyond the reach of most ordinary Nigerians. The civil service had been wrecked by all forms of corruption. The worsening crisis of confidence and credibility provoked by

the decay of public institutions encouraged and accelerated the construction of parallel economic, socio-cultural and political systems. In particular, it fed the rise of pseudo-criminal networks, syndicates and gangs of smugglers, drug dealers, and their like.

The various forms of exit we have discussed above may be distinguished by the extent to which they approximate complete renunciation of bonds with the state (degree of exit) or, in more qualitative terms, according to the character of exit which relates to the original impetus for that option. In our earlier discussion of degrees of exit, we distinguished between *exit from the polity* and *exit from the state*. In what follows, we use the latter approach to examine forms of exit in Nigeria under the following headings.

Political Exit

This involves the construction of parallel political structures typically autonomous political organisations (not including political parties), and aspirant local and state units within the federation, seeking varying degrees of autonomy from the state for reasons of disaffection with existing political structures and power relations. Political exit which often entails some degree of confrontation with the state and the construction of parallel political and judicial systems, can take on a wide variety of forms. The most extreme of these include demands for, or assertion of, local political autonomy, separatist agitation or secessionist movement, all of which directly challenge the unity of the state and invite countervailing measures of a repressive kind. The unsuccessful attempt by the Igbo-led Biafria Republic to secede from the Nigerian federation which led to civil war (1967-70); the declaration of a Niger Delta Republic by Adaka Boro and other aggrieved youths of the Niger Delta minorities in 1967; the loud demands in the 1980s for the abrogation of the federal system and its replacement by a confederate system by disaffected Southern – especially Yoruba – politicians; the threats of secession by aggrieved majority ethnic groups, including most recently those by some Yoruba leaders to secede as Oduduwa Republic on account of Northern domination; and the separatist agitations and assertion of local political autonomy by minorities of the oil-bearing Niger Delta and other minority groups. All these exemplify such extreme forms of exit.

So also do the politico-religious muslim fundamentalist sects and movements, notably Maitatsine, Izala, Shi'ite and, to some extent, the Muslim Students Society. Since the early 1980s one or the other of these groups have operated in various parts of the north of the country against the secular constitution of the Nigerian state. Their main goal is the establishment of an Ayattolah (Iran)-type Islamic state. Members of these movements have disconnected from the state and claim to be governed by their own laws *The Sharia* (amounting to a parallel judicial system); they refuse to subject themselves to (what they consider to be an unjust and illegal)

authority of the secular state, or to pay taxes (a parallel political system); and attack adherents of other faiths who they believe must be conquered, *jihad* style, as a prerequisite for the establishment of an Islamic state.

Next to these would be the assertion of cultural, linguistic and political rights and identities, often involving a drive for self-determination and self-governance by weak, marginalised, excluded and dominated groups – typically minorities. In such cases, milder forms of political exit would include civil disobedience, refusal to vote in elections (such as the decision by the Ogonis to boycott the 1993 presidential election) or to pay taxes, and the symbolic assertion of the autonomy of parallel political structures through the adoption of (alternative) "national" flags and anthems and the resuscitation of traditional political institutions. The declaration and celebration of "national days (and weeks)" by pan-ethnic organisations in several parts of the country, especially the Yoruba south-west, in the 1980s and 1990s, symbolise the articulation of such mild forms of exit – in this case by *retribalisation*.

The activities of a typical national day or week which is presided over by the traditional leader of the ethnic group, and during which flags of the group are hoisted and anthems sung, include the adoption of a development plan for the next year or longer, and cultural activities and rituals which reinforce the groups's identity, solidarity and autonomy. An interesting variant of exit by retribalisation is to be found in the emergence of what elsewhere I have called *migrant ethnic empires*. This involves the construction of "tribal authorities", headed by elected "kings", by Igbos and Yorubas in most cities in the north of the country. These "empires" perform a host of important parallel political, social, economic and judicial functions, ranging from traditional shadow state functions to cultural revivalism, political representation and mediation of disputes (Osaghae, 1994, 1998b).

Socio-Economic Exit

This is by far the most popular form of exit for most ordinary Nigerians (the urban poor, youth, students, women, unemployed, rural dwellers, the disabled or handicapped, street children) who feel neglected, marginalised, and unprotected; and have become cynical and distrustful of the ability of the state to discharge its responsibilities towards them. Most of these people consequently attach greater importance to the self-help associations, networks and social movements they organise and belong to, which give meaning to their lives, meet their socio-psychological needs, and perform shadow state functions which the state is unwilling and unable to perform. Many Nigerians, especially the youth have turned to ethnic and religious organisations for solace in the face of unemployment; women's and credit associations have become more significant for those lacking capital to start micro enterprises; traditional health care institutions have increased

in popularity as most ordinary people cannot afford the high costs of modern health care; parents who cannot afford exorbitant fees are withdrawing their children from primary and secondary schools to Ouaranic schools and informal sector training centres from where, on graduation, they become mechanics, traders, tailors, cobblers, carpenters, masons, drivers, etc.

The parallel structures of socio-economic exit can be classified into formal and informal.The formal have an organisational form, and include the various ethnic associations (hometown, village, lineage-extended family, and pan-ethnic associations) whose specialty is the broad spectrum of shadow state activities, market women's associations and credit *(esusu)* societies which give loans to their members to set up enterprises, and also to farmers associations; secret cults, religious and spiritualist organisations. Neighbourhood associations such as "landlords associations", for example, have virtually replaced the state in the provision of security and supply of water and electricity in their localities. There is also a host of traditional associations and movements such as age-grade societies, guilds, and women's societies. The number and variety of these organisations, especially associations based on ethnicity, student secret cults, fundamentalist muslim sects and born-again pentecostal churches have steadily increased since the 1980s, suggesting an upsurge in the number of ordinary people retreating from the modern sector controlled by the ailing state.

The informal structures on the other hand have a fleeting membership and organisation. They represent mostly the exit (read as *protest* or *resistance*) of the underclass – the unemployed, alienated youth, slum dwellers and their like. At one end of these structures are the relatively autonomous informal sector constituents – the associations and networks of street traders, hawkers, artisans, unskilled labourers, and so on – whose goal is to dominate or control the space claimed by their members and keep the authorities at bay as much as possible. There are also the social movements arising from religious practices such as faith healing, from popular music, such as "Fuji", "Afro-beat", and "Juju", and from popular fashion which express popular anti-system sentiments.

At the other end are pseudo-criminal networks and gangs of "area boys", prostitutes, drug addicts, drug cartels, fake documents syndicates, and urban street children and touts; economic pirates; smugglers and black market operators who control the illegal trade in foreign exchange, pirated goods, fake drugs, smuggled goods, and counterfeit currency. There are also the advance-fee fraud syndicates, popularly known in Nigeria as "419", which use local and international connections, including government officials and law-enforcement officers, to dupe rich people within and outside the country. While also emphasizing autonomy from the state in their day-to-day operations, the main interest of these networks lies in furthering the welfare of their members and protecting them from the law-enforcement agents of the state.

Exile

A third form of exit which straddles the political and socio-economic divide is exile, or emigration. This form of exile which has increased in popularity since the 1980s especially among the youth, academics and professionals, is highly individualistic, as the impetus for exit varies from one person to the other. Most people go into exile to escape political persecution or death from repressive governments. Others go for socio-economic reasons of material enhancement or better life ("greener pastures"), and self-actualisation. As it were, exiles prefer the status of (political or economic) refugees, legal and illegal immigrants and naturalised aliens to threats to their life or becoming wretched if they remained at home. The opportunities offered by the American visa lottery and illegal visa syndicates have further encouraged the exile traffic.

But exile is not altogether an individual matter. Exiles have formed various associations and movements abroad. Many of these are in fact external branches of popular (kinship, ethnic, religious, traditional, regional, gender, alumni) associations at home, and persist in various forms as self-help development networks some of whom aim their activities and programmes at constituencies back home. In the 1990s, exile organisations became radical in response to the repressive political situation and deteriorating economic conditions back home in Nigeria. Most of them, including the traditional' ethnic and religious organisations, became outspoken critics of the government at home, demanding one form of social justice or the other on behalf of their groups.

But this radical stage belonged to the manifestly political, sometimes revolutionary, pro-democracy, anti-military government movements. Notable among the new groups are the Association of Nigerians Abroad which has branches all over Europe and America; Nigerian Democratic Movement, National Democratic Coalition (NADECO-Abroad), and the National Liberation Council of Nigeria led by Wole Soyinka The activities of these groups have centred on exposing the atrocities of the military governments in Nigeria, mobilising the international community against them and, in concert with pro-democracy organisations at home, championing the cause of democratisation in the country. These groups have made elaborate use of high-tech information systems as the base of exit. For example, the internet and electronic mail have been used to stimulate debates on political issues, and to motivate and mobilize members of the exile community against the undemocratic governments at home. The groups are also believed to have set up Radio Kudirat, an international opposition radio station that has been used to further the cause of the opposition movement.

One interesting dimension of the political exit expressed in *Radio Kudirat* is the construction of a parallel political system outside the country, and rejection of the state as presently constituted. There is a tendency to use the old national anthem, "Nigeria we hail thee" in place of the current anthem, "Arise O compatriots" (a

practice associated with several student organisations within the country when demonstrating against the military governments). Another is the mobilisation and funding of non-governmental organisations within the country to oppose the state.

The other significance of exile lies in the fact that the composition of exiles show clearly the interface of power and exit. Where it involves large numbers of people from particular segments of the citizenry, exile becomes a good indicator of which groups suffer discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion, or whose members feel most aggrieved. The profile of those going into exile from Nigeria shows the following.

i. Youths, academics and professionals constitute the vast majority, with women making up a significant proportion;
ii. Most of the others are opposition elements – human rights and pro-democracy activists, leaders of separatist minority movements, retired military officers, fugitives and so on - who had to flee the country under threat of assassination, detention and repression;
iii. Roughly 90 percent of all exiles come from the south of the country.

Response of The State

We conclude this paper by examining the response of the state to exit as we have defined and analysed it in the preceding sections. What are the implications of exit by important segments of Nigerian society; and what dangers (or benefits) does it portend for the state? Although exit involves retreat from the state, it seriously challenges the state's legitimacy and nation-building projects. This is because at the core of exit is a process of *denationalisation*, that is a weakening of the individual's loyalty to and identification with the nation-state. In the opposite direction is the simultaneous strengthening of rival solidarities and identities opposing the rule of the state. In particular, the strengthening of groups of ethnic, religious and regional solidarity which attempt to rival the state, directly challenge the unity of the nation and the state's claim to the citizen's loyalty.

Above all, the politicisation and manipulation of these nation-challenging groups by mostly disaffected and displaced elites pose serious danger to the survival of the Nigerian state. Aggrieved and politically ambitious elites have easily mobilised exit constituencies against the state, thereby transforming exit into confrontation with the state. Indeed, anti-state mobilisation projects have been on the increase since the 1980s. Some of the more prominent examples include the activities of Islamic fundamentalist sects (Maitatsine, Shi'ite, for example) in various parts of the north who aim at establishing an Islamic state; the uprising of the Niger Delta oil minorities, notably the Ogoni, led by the late Saro-Wiwa and the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People to demand local political autonomy and adequate material compensation for damage and loss caused by the hazards of the oil industry; the rise of radical opposition movements within the

exile communities abroad; and the rise of ethno-regional leaders and separatists especially in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 1993 presidential election, which was regarded among the Yoruba as the height of an alleged grand design by Northern elites to monopolize federal power.

Besides these, the effects and implications of other exit sites and identities are equally foreboding for the state. Deviant and pseudo-criminal networks such as secret cults on campuses, black markets, smuggling rings and underground movements have been used for sabotage activities, and for other activities which generally represent defiance of and challenge to state authority. For example, smugglers and foreign exchange black market operators, sometimes with the backing of powerful elites and state officials, sabotage official policies and regulations on trade and currency.

Area boys, touts and members of criminal gangs have been responsible for the theft of electric cable wires which cause prolonged outages of power supply, and the theft of other materials which paralyse public amenities and services. The phenomenal increase in violent crimes, including assassination, armed robberies, and bomb attacks all over the country is partly attributed to elements within these exit groups. For example, the Edo state police command attributed the increase in armed robberies and other violent crimes in the state in the 1990s to students of institutions of higher learning in the state, especially those who belonged to secret cults. (Aspirant members of these cults are usually required to prove their bravado which is a condition of membership by leading or taking part in robberies, rape, drug use, or assaulting law-enforcement officers). Therefore the gravity of the challenges and threats posed to the state by the various forms of exit cannot be overemphasised. Accordingly, the state must be expected to react to them in defence of itself. Indeed, the typical African state is said to be hostile to grassroots and non-governmental organisations (World Bank, 1989). But the response of the Nigerian state to exit in general has been mixed. As long as the sites of exit do not constitute clear threat to the survival of the state, successive governments have often exploited them for political advantage. This has been the case with numerous exit groups, especially, ethnic associations which operate as self-help community development associations. Even informal structures such as *area boys networks* have been patronised by successive governments.

Even in the case of groups that openly challenge the unity of the nation and the legitimacy of the state – such as those seeking secession or autonomy – attempts have been made to co-opt them and address, at least, some of the underlying problems of marginalisation which give rise to political exit. The creation of more states and local government units; the introduction of such associative or power sharing devices as the federal principle which requires that the composition of government and its agencies should be reflective of the country's federal character; and rotational presidency are some of the more prominent of these attempts. But

they do not go far enough, because the fundamental disjunctures between the state and society which alienate large segments of the ordinary people and cause them to disclaim the state, remain unresolved.

On the other hand, the state has been more accommodating of the *positive* dimensions of exit especially those associated with shadow state activities of parallel structures. In fact, state power holders have capitalised on them for purposes of buying political support. The activities of such exit groups have helped to mitigate the shortcomings of the state and prevent the deepening of its legitimacy crisis, and consequently a cycle of confrontation with it. As the World Bank (1989: 60) puts it, "In self-defence individuals have built up personal networks of influence rather than hold the all-powerful state accountable for its systemic failures".

Thus, self-help development activities have received various forms of support from the federal and state governments. These have ranged from the encouragement given to groups to form community development associations and cooperatives, to the creation of special agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment which activated small and medium scale private enterprise, the People's and community banks which were expected to advance credit to grassroots organisations, and corporatist programmes like the Better Life (later Family Support) programme whose goals included poverty alleviation through partnership with and funding of parallel structures. Although these measures address some of the material problems that lead to exit, they do not address the more fundamental problems of cynicism and mistrust of the ability or willingness of the state to protect the interests of ordinary people.

Notes

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1. The use of the concept of the state has become so loose that one often has difficulty knowing when what is actually meant is government, ruling class, personal ruler, or regime. While all these relate to specific aspects of the state and can actually be regarded as its embodiment, it is important to specify the meaning of the concept. In this paper, state is used in its most inclusive sense.
2. Following Albert Hirschman's famous categories, relations between these movements and civil society at large, and the state, have been characterised as *exit* or disengagement, which involves retreat into parallel economic, socio-cultural and political systems; voice or confrontation, which involves resistance and opposition; and *loyalty* or collaboration, which entails partnership with the state (cf Azarya, 1988; Lemarchand, 1992). These categories are not however mutually exclusive and could in fact be seen as points on a graded continuum which begins from complete withdrawal (through secession, for

example) and opposition at one end, to complete acquiescence at the other. This way, exit may be perceived as a variant of voice or resistance, as is clear from Scott's (1985, 1990) characterisation of peasant and underclass retreat as the resistance of the weak.

3. I am grateful to Professor Ali Mazrui for drawing my attention to this important distinction.
4. By shadow state activities is meant the production of public and social goods by parallel non governmental organisations (NGOs). Such activities as the provision of credit and recreational facilities, building of schools, police posts, postal agencies and hospitals, construction or maintenance of roads, and award of scholarships undertaken by community development associations and other NGOs through self-help efforts constitute the core of shadow state activities.
5. However, as we noted above, exit does not preclude confrontation with the state in order to seek redress; in fact, exit as a matter of political expression, is not incompatible with confrontation as it also usually embodies some form of symbolic or silent protest and resistance on the part of the oppressed.

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