Chapter 3

Exiting from the Existing State in Nigeria

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Introduction

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..."[1] (Haynes, 1997:vii, 3). 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; Bayat, 1997).

The phenomenon described in these accounts is referred to in the literature as *exit/exiting*, 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 compete with those of the state (Azarya, 1988, 1994; Azarya & Chazan, 1987; Bratton, 1989; Young, 1994).[2] This is a deviation from the "*marriage*" between citizens and the state which is consummated in terms of reciprocal rights and duties. *Exit* is commonly regarded as a strategy for coping with "a domineering yet ineffective state" (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 a qualified exit—which is more prevalent amongst ordinary people, for whom *exiting* 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 in

some 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-patrimonialist designs (as has been the experience of *Harambee* in Kenya), or have themselves been involved in the nepotist and corrupt competition for state resources and patronage.

On the other hand, *exit* from the state itself 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 exile) which has increased with the intensification of globalisation and is, *inter alia*, 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 disclaimer of the state which proceeds simultaneously with a claim to ownership of the parallel sites of solidarity and self-governance. This resonates in the cultivation and adoption of counterstate identities, notably ethnic, religious and deviant antisystem identities (such as secret cult identities created by students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria). *Exit* therefore, entails movement *away from* rather than *toward* the state—a transfer of identity, loyalty and support from the state—to parallel sites in civil society, by aggrieved, alienated or marginalised citizens and groups.

This chapter is about *exit* from the state in Nigeria, which reached a crescendo in the 1980s and 1990s, with the massive emigrations of citizens abroad 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 identity sites—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 the story. Why, in the first place, is there such large-scale *exit*? What forms does *exit* take, and what are the parallel systems and identity sites that have developed? What identities have flowed from these sites, and how are they constructed and sustained? Is *exit* a recent phenomenon? If not, what changes have taken place over the years to incur it? Why, for example, has emigration abroad 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? Answers to these and other questions will be sought by first examining the factors that predispose and shape *exit*, as presented in different theoretical formulations. After this more general and comparative African discussion, the more empirical dimensions of *exit* in Nigeria will be analysed.

Exiting from the state: Theoretical perspectives

The various explanations for *exiting* can be summarised into three complementary "theories" of *exit* which explain *why* people exit from the state; *how* they exit, i.e. whether as individuals or groups, and *which categories* of people are the more likely to exit. These then are the *theory of indigeneity,* the *theory of marginalisation,* and the *theory of extraneity*, or *globalisation*.

The *theory of indigeneity* 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 significant following the failure of pristine states to protect the interests of ordinary people in the pre-colonial era and to 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 it fuelled—where many states in fact sold their very people into slavery! Disowned and spurned by states expected to protect them, the people were forced to rely on the (self) defence offered by parallel kinship solidarity networks which they organised to fill the void created by pristine states. The failures of the colonial and post-colonial states in crucial areas of citizen welfare and protection and, in particular, the violence and terrorism which underlay their operations, 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 towards these ends. The main beneficiaries of these activities were, and continue to be, the home towns and ethnic home areas of the unions, but in a number of cases where patterns of residence made for ethnic concentration (such as the *sabon gari*s 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, however, 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 perspective 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 the relations of, and state power that exist amongst, the various groups or categories of people in a polity (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 beyond the control of the state, and which offer alternative access to social reproduction, empower-ment, self-worth, security, and defence against the ineffectiveness of the state. Conversely, those who wield or control state power or are its beneficiaries are the least likely to exit, but are likely to exit and confront the state when displaced from power.

The question then arises, why would marginalised groups opt for *exit* rather than confronting or challenging the state to seek redress? One answer is that *exit* is a form of protest which inherently calls for redress. The other, more practical reason, lies in the authoritarian and terrorist character of the state—hallmarked by repression, intolerance of dissenting views and opposition, as well as scant regard for constitutional rule, human rights, accountability, consultation, and responsiveness in public policy. The entrenchment of these forms of state irresponsibility and discrimination, breeds cynicism and alienation of the marginalised, who then gradually lose the sense of ownership and participation necessary to make them engage with and influence the state in a meaningful way. As the state is perceived to belong to "others", the need is felt to create "our" own "state" (read as "space"). This is the *logic of exit.*[5]

The third theory, that of *extraneity*, sees *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 by the very nature of their inequitable integration into the global (capitalist) system, African countries have been at the receiving end of global forces elicited and formalised in the metropole. Accordingly, aspects or forms of *exit* may be

explained as part of the "susceptibility to global forces and trends" (as in the diffusion effect) or as responses to external impulses and conditions which enable local formations. One of the most established strands of the theory of extraneity, attributes the patterns of state-society relations in general to the enduring effects of colonialism. Specifically, the fact that the colonial state was an imposition whose *raison d'etre* was at variance with the interests of the colonised, who were thereby alienated, has been identified as one of the historical antecedents of *exit* from the post-colonial state, as it incurred and provoked the problem of "ownership" (Osaghae, 1998a). This strand of the theory has been criticised on the grounds that the colonial state was not a wholly colonial creation and that, even if this were the case, the post-colonial state has been reappropriated by Africans in significant ways (Bayart, 1991). The critique is valid to some extent, but it does not detract from the primacy of colonialism in understanding post-colonial formations (Ekeh, 1975). Admittedly colonialism was not only a one-way traffic, in that it was not a simple process of osmosis between coloniser and colonised, but its effects were not cancelled by the granting of political independence; so that in significant ways, the pathologies of the post-colonial state are a legacy of its colonial precursor. Institutional structures and the game-rules whereby they operate, even if now staffed by local people, carried the legacy "indirectly".

The other strand of extraneity firstly analyses *exit* as an *instance or local variant of current global trends*, and, secondly, 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. This is attributed not only to the growing incapacity of states to satisfy the material and welfare aspirations of citizens, but also the failure of the state to respond to the demands for inclusivity, différence, and 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. People have not only retreated from the state into criminal gangs, drug networks, parallel economies, and so on, but there has also been a phenomenal increase in emigration which has given rise to the

concept of "global citizenship". The popularity of "brain-drain" and "exile" as *exit* forms should be seen and analysed in this context.

The effect of globalisation is more directly apparent when we consider the conducive and facilitating roles of global factors for various forms of *exit*. Parallel economic systems—black markets, smuggling rings, piracy and trade in pirated and fake goods, and scam syndicates—cannot thrive without the collusion of international syndicates and networks which produce and purchase the goods. Drug, pornographic, criminal and prostitution networks also owe a lot to supplies and patronage from abroad, while the spread of popular music such as rap and reggae, fashion trends, and religious movements, have been supportive of the cultivation of new, mostly "deviant" identities by youth and other group categories. For example, the rise of fundamentalist Moslem sects in Nigeria has been aided by generous external support, including the awards of scholarships to students.

Furthermore, the activities and support of various transnational non-governmental organisations, as well as the World Bank, IMF and other members of the international donor community, which have ditched the pathological state in favour of civil society as the engine-room of development, have been crucial to the phenomenal increase of NGOs and other "shadow" state activities in Africa. The political forms of *exit* which involve minorities and other marginalised groups demanding local 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 democratisation. Finally, the revolution in information technology that has produced electronic mail, cable satellite systems and the internet, has further opened up the society in Africa to global trends and forces.

Although "globalisation" is crucial to analysis of *exit* in these terms, the temptation to assume that Africans are passively or uncritically receptive to the impulses it generates, or that domestic forces do not also shape those of globalisation, should be resisted, which is the point made in Bayart's critique

of the *theory of extraneity*. For example, *exit* constituencies 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. *Exit* therefore needs to be analysed within the context of the realities of the African situation, as resulting from a combination of *both* domestic *and* global forces. For this reason, *the theory of extraneity should be considered alongside those of indigeneity and marginalisation,* which emphasise domestic factors. It is in this sense that, as was indicated at the beginning of this section, the three theories are *complementary*.

Having attempted to explain *why* citizens exit from the state, we now turn to the more empirical aspects of this phenomenon: the particular forms and character of exit from the state in Nigeria.

Exiting from the state: Forms and character

To situate analysis of the various forms of *exit* in proper context, we shall begin with a brief outline of the empirical *state of exit* in Nigeria. From what has been said so far, it is clear that *exit* has characterised relations between the state and important segments of the citizenry for a considerable period of time, but the 1980s and 1990s were remarkable for unprecedented levels and dramatic forms of massive retreat from the state. The construction of parallel economic systems, proliferation of ethnic and kinship organisations and scores of grassroot 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, as well as of religious fundamentalism, and the phenomenal emigration of Nigerians abroad as exiles—all attest to heightened *levels of exit*. Based on the theoretical insights provided earlier, this can be attributed to the following empirical factors.

(i)   The *rapid economic decline* in the country, coupled with foreign debt and the demands of "structural adjustment", which further emasculated the capacity of the state to provide jobs, subsidise education and health care, maintain social services, protect lives and property, and even payment of salaries to civil servants. This forced people to devise

various coping strategies to fend for themselves by any means, fair and foul. Some of the more popular coping strategies, especially for the ordinary people and the *lumpenproletariat*, involved *exit* from the state.

(ii) The unprecedented *levels of violent repression* and personal dictatorship unleashed by the unpopular military governments of the period. Extant and potential sites of opposition and counter-hegemony (independent media, grassroots organisations, labour unions, ethnic minority organisations, student organisations, professional associations, opposition parties, human rights and pro-democracy groups) were outlawed and suppressed, while political activists and opponents were harassed, detained, and 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 detainees and prisoners, were some of the "highlights" of the reign of terror which, in defiance of condemnation and sanctions by the international community, decimated non-state political space, and effectively *destroyed the social basis of democracy* in Nigeria. The reign of terror drove many people into the safety of exile. It also drastically curtailed the vibrant culture of protest and resistance for which critical segments of civil society, notably the press, popular musicians and university students, were becoming well known, thereby making criticism or confrontation with the state a less likely or attractive option.

(iii) The *capture of state power* by regional and religious hegemonies and the *marginalisation and virtual exclusion of others*, notably southerners, ethnic minorities and non-muslims from enjoying the benefits of belonging to the state. 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 sufferings of the masses of the people*, as well as a *lack of responsiveness and accountability* by

successive military governments in their dealings with citizens during the period. These nurtured a culture of cynicism on the part of most ordinary people and organisations, which was conducive to the stepping up of *exit* structures.

(v) The *corruption and virtual collapse of governmental structures and agencies* which further worsened the crisis of legitimacy afflicting the state. The police have been unable to keep pace with the explosive levels of violent crimes, due partly to poor funding and partly to the corruption in the force itself; the impartiality of the judiciary has been called to question because of pervasive corruption; public utility boards, including oil refineries, which are unable to provide amenities and services even with the phenomenal increases in costs which have taken them beyond the reach of most ordinary people; and a civil service that has been ruined by all forms of corruption. The worsening crisis of confidence and credibility provoked by the decay of public institutions has encouraged and accelerated the construction of parallel economic, socio-cultural and political systems. In particular, it has fed the rise of pseudo-criminal networks, syndicates and gangs of smugglers, drug dealers, and the like.

We now turn to the *forms of exit*. The various forms of exit may be distinguished on the basis of *the extent to which they approximate complete disconnection from the state* (call this *degrees of exit*) or, in more qualitative terms, according to the *character of exit* which relates to the original impetus for that option. The latter approach is adopted here, *degrees of exit* having earlier been discussed in terms of the distinction between *exit from the polity* and *exit from the state*. Following the qualitative criterion, the *forms of exit* in Nigeria can be analysed according to the following sectoral categories:

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 extant political

structuration and power relations. Political exit, which often entails an element of confrontation with the state and the construction of parallel political and juridical 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 state and invite counter-mobilisation. The unsuccessful attempt by the Igbo-led Biafra 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 an abrogation of the federal system and its replacement with a confederal 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 oil-bearing minorities of the Niger Delta and other minority groups—all exemplify this extreme form of *exit*.

These forms of political *exit* are also exemplified through the politico-religious Muslim fundamentalist sects and movements, notably the Maitatsine, Izala, Shi'ite and, to some extent, the Muslim Students Society, which have since the early 1980s operated in various parts of the north of the country especially, to oppose the secularity of the Nigerian state and to demand the establishment of an Ayattolah (Iranian)-type Islamic state. Members of these movements have disconnected from the state and are governed by their own strict code of *sharia law* (parallel juridical system); refuse to subject themselves to the (supposedly unjust and illegal) authority of the secular state or to pay taxes (parallel political system); and attack adherents of other faiths who they believe must be conquered, *jihad* style, in order that their desired Islamic state be established.

Parallel to these manifestations of political *exit,* 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. Milder forms of political exit 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 southwest, in the 1980s and 1990s, were auspicious for the articulation of such *symbolic political 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 ethnic national flags 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 a group'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 people (the urban poor, youth, students, women, unemployed, rural dwellers, the disabled or handicapped, street children)—who feel alienated, neglected, marginalised, and unprotected, and have a basic distrust of the ability of the state to redeem 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 youths 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 begin 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 exhorbitant fees are withdrawing their children from primary and secondary schools to Quaranic *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*. *Formal structures* which have some or other form of *institutional organisation*, include the various *ethnic associations* (hometown, village, lineage-extended family), and *pan-ethnic associations*, whose speciality is the broad spectrum of shadow state activities; *market women's associations* and *credit* (*esusu*) *societies*, which advance loans to set up enterprises for members; *farmers associations*, *secret cults*, *religious and spiritualist organisations*, *neighbourhood associations* such as "land-lord associations" which have virtually replaced the state in the provision of security and supply of water and electricity in their localities, and 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 ethnic associations, 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 public sector controlled by the ailing state.

The *informal structures* on the other hand have *fleeting membership and organisation*. They mostly represent the *exit* (read as protest or resistance) of the *lumpenproletariat*: lower and under-classes, the unemployed, alienated youth, slum dwellers and the 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 of the spectrum, are *pseudo-criminal networks and gangs* of "area ('turf') boys", prostitutes, drug addicts, drug cartels, fake

documents syndicates, urban street children and touts; piracy, smuggling 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 emphasising autonomy from the state in their day-to-day operations, the main interest of these latter networks lies in furthering the welfare of 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 abroad. 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 by repressive governments, or for socio-economic reasons of material enhancement, better life ("greener pastures") and self-actualisation. Such exiles prefer the status of (political or economic) *refugees*, legal and illegal *immigrants* and naturalised *aliens*, to the threat to life and immiseration of remaining 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 resonate with, or are in fact external branches of, popular (kinship, ethnic, religious, traditional, regional, gender, alumni) associations at home, and persist in various forms of self-help development activities, some of which are targeted at constituencies back home. However, in the 1990s, with the suffocation of opposition groups at home, exile organisations underwent some form of radicalisation in response to the deteriorating political and economic conditions at home. Thus most of them, including the "traditional" ethnic and

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religious organisations, became outspoken critics of the government at home, demanding one form of social justice or the other on behalf of their groups.

The *radical* stage, however, belonged to the newly styled, manifestly political and sometimes revolutionary *pro-democracy* and *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* (NDM), *National Democratic Coalition* (NADECO-Abroad), and the *National Liberation Council of Nigeria* led by Wole Soyinka. The activities of these groups have centred around 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 information hi-tech as the *site of exit*. The internet and electronic mail have been used to stimulate debates on political issues, and to conscientise and mobilise members of the exile community against the undemocratic governments at home. These 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 which is symbolic of the construction of a parallel political system and rejection of the state as presently constituted, is the use of the old national anthem, "Nigeria we hail thee" in place of the current anthem, "Arise O compatriots" (several student organisations within the country do the same thing when demonstrating). Another is the mobilisation and funding of non-governmental organisations within the country to oppose the state.

The other significance of exile lies in how its composition reflects 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 indicates the following:

1. Youths, academics and professionals constitute the vast majority, with women making up a significant proportion;

2. 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;

3. Roughly 90% of all exiles come from the south of the country.

These details reveal a lot about the nature of marginalisation in Nigeria. They indicate that youths, academics and women form the bulk of the socially and economically marginalised, and that southerners are both economically and politically marginalised. With regard to the latter, it is not surprising that the activities of the opposition organisations and networks formed by political exiles, centre around southern opposition to northern domination of political power and control of the country's resources.

The response of the state

This chapter will conclude with an examination of *state response to exit* as we have analysed it. What are the implications of *exit* by important segments of the citizenry, and what dangers (or benefits) do they portend for the state? These questions need to be addressed before the response of the Nigerian state can be meaningfully analysed. Although *exit* involves retreat from the state, it *seriously challenges the state's totalising legitimacy and nation-building projects*. This is because at the core of *exit* lies a process of *denationalisation*, one that represents a weakening of the individual's loyalty to and identity with the nation-state, and a simultaneous strengthening of sites of counter-hegemonic and rival loyalties and identities. In particular, it represents the strengthening of sites of ethnic, religious and regional solidarity which are themselves claimants to rival statehood, directly challenging the state's first claim to the citizen's loyalty.

The politicisation and manipulation of these nation-challenging identities, by mostly disaffected and displaced *elites*, pose serious dangers to the survival of the Nigerian state. Being already aggrieved, it has been relatively easy for displaced and ambitious *elites* to mobilise exit constituencies against the state, thereby *transforming exit into confrontation*. Indeed, *counterstate mobilisation* has been on the increase since the 1980s.

Some of the more prominent examples include the violent eruptions of the Islamic-state seeking, fundamentalist Muslim sects (Maitatsine, Shi'ite) in various parts of the north; 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 the hasards of the oil industry; the rise of revolutionary opposition movements among the ranks of the exile communities abroad; and the rise of ethno-regional hegemonies and separatists, especially in the aftermath of the annulment of the June 1993 presidential election, which was regarded as the height of an alleged grand design by northern elites to exclusively control federal power.

Although resurgent *ethnicity*, r*eligious fundamentalism* and *regionalism* constitute the most potent threat to the state—because, as we have indicated, they involve and represent claims to rival statehood, the *effects and implications of other exit sites and identities* are equally foreboding for the state. Sites of "deviance" and pseudo-criminal networks such as secret cults on campuses, black markets, smuggling rings and underground movements, have been used for sabotage activities which represent the resistance of the oppressed, defiance, and other authority-challenging acts. For one, 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, as well as the theft of other materials which paralyse public amenities and services. The phenomenal rise of violent crimes, including assassinations, armed robberies, and mysterious explosions of bombs all over the country, are partly attributed to elements within these *exit* sites. 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 within the country, especially those who belonged to secret cults (where aspirant members of these cults are usually required to prove their loyalty through acts of bravado, which is a condition for membership,

by leading or taking part in robberies, rape, drug use, or assaulting law-enforcement officers).

The wide-ranging challenges and threats posed to the state by the various forms of *exit*, cannot therefore be overemphasised. In line with its authoritarian nature and totalising agenda, one would expect the state to suppress or eliminate, where possible, the bases for these threats—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 more mixed. As long as the sites of exit do not constitute any apparent danger, successive governments have embraced, manipulated and even supported them, to gain political support, as we discuss shortly. This has been the lot of associations, especially ethnic associations, which operate as self-help community development associations. Even informal structures such as area boys networks have also received rehabilitation support from government. In the case of exile, the state initially pursued a patriotism campaign, urging people to remain and "salvage" the country, until the political complexion and interests of exile constituents changed.

It is when exit sites cross the threshold of tolerance and become "out of control"—that is, once they become politicised against the state or are perceived to be so—that they attract proscription, intimidation and repression. The sites of political exit, in particular the manifestly political organisations and movements, have received such treatment, while their leaders and members have been subjected to the full force of state tyranny. But even so, attempts have been made at the political and constitutional levels to address some of the underlying problems of marginalisation which give rise to political exit. The creation of more states and local government units, introduction of such consociational or power-sharing devices such as the "federal character 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, and in a sense only heighten the "Father Christmas" conception of the state, which sustains neo-patronisation, because *the fundamental disjunctures between the state and*

society which alienates large segments of the ordinary people and causes them to disclaim it, remain unresolved.

On the other hand, the response of the state has been more embracing of the *positive* dimensions of *exit,* especially those embodied in the shadow state activities of parallel structures which, in a sense, have helped to paper over the failings of the state and prevent what could very well have been incessant confrontation with the state by aggrieved and disaffected masses of the people. 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." But the gains from these positive aspects of *exit* have not been lost on state power-holders, who have consequently capitalised on them, especially for purposes of buying political support.

Thus, self-help development activities have received various forms of support from federal and state governments. These have ranged from the encouragement given to groups to form community development associations and co-operatives, 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. However, although they address some of the material problems that lead to *exit*, these measures do not address the more fundamental problems of distrust and lack of confidence in the ability or willingness of the state to protect the interests of ordinary peoples and their resultant disclaimer to ownership of the state. Solutions to these problems would require *changes in the character and orientation of the state*, possibly through a type of democratisation that would *make accountability, consultation and popular participation key principles of governance*. These would hopefully reduce the high incidence of *exit* attributable to the pathologies of the post-colonial state, leaving intact the *positive forms of exit* which derive from indigenous traditions of solidarity and self-help.

Notes

[1] The use of the concept of the "state" has become so loose that one often has difficulty knowing when the intended meaning is actually "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 chapter, "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 (Azarya, 1988; Lemarchand, 1992). However, these categories are not mutually exclusive and could in fact be seen as points on a graded continuum which starts at "complete withdrawal" (through secession, for example) and "opposition" at one end, to "complete acquiescence" on 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 to seek redress; in fact, *exit* as a matter of *political expression*, is not inconsistent 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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