

Exclusive or inclusive political system: Who are the beneficiaries of state resources, jobs and goods?

Even with a multi-party system with regular elections, a country may still have a relatively exclusive and excluding political system. The commitment to promote an inclusive political system is not so much about the processes of party politics or elections, but a commitment to let citizens from all segments of society benefit from the goods that the state provides and from the opportunities that participating in political institutions such as the bureaucracy bring. If, for instance, members of the bureaucratic élite are recruited almost exclusively from one ethnic group, then other groups are cut off from the opportunity to develop and influence policy decisions from inside the state machinery. Similarly, if public goods such as clean water, hospitals and schools benefit certain regions rather than others, some groups will be given a lesser stake in their own society than justice in a democratic system would warrant. In other words, this commitment is about avoiding marginalisation and strengthening nation building.

Inclusion softens the effects of losing political power, making election results less of an existential issue.

An inclusive political system is an important element of a functioning democracy. Inclusion softens the effects of losing political power, thereby making election results or other aspects of the transfer of power less of an existential issue; regardless of the party in power, the state and its institutions are there to protect and assist all citizens. An inclusive system makes violence in connection with contests for power less likely

and therefore greatly enhances human security for opposition as well as government supporters among the populace.

This chapter will first look at the countries with relatively fewer problems of exclusion before it turns to those where an exclusive political system poses a real threat to human security. While the exclusion of women is a serious problem in all eight of the countries, this issue will not be touched upon here; instead, it will be dealt with in another AHSI monograph on civil society participation.

6.1 Relatively inclusive political systems

Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa are the more inclusive among the eight political systems under review. However, there are still problems of exclusion and marginalisation at play in all these countries. Factors impinging on inclusion, such as corruption, patronage, bias towards regime supporters when hiring for the public services or the uneven regional distribution of resources, still occur in these countries. They have nevertheless all come a long way in the last decade and the positive trend seems to be consolidating.

There has been something of an explosion in political participation in Ghana over the period under review. Voter turnout has been higher in the last three general elections than before, and civil society groups have flourished, both in terms of numbers and membership. Opinion leaders submit memoranda to parliament and its committees, and stakeholders review bills pending before parliament. An independent media, new research institutions and advocacy groups are keeping the newly politicised citizens better informed as well as providing some inputs into policy decisions.

There is also a real effort to include different regions and ethnic groups in governing structures. The directive *Principles of State Policy* requires the president to make appointments that reflect the “national character”, that is, the geographical and ethnic composition of the country. Government appointments, as well as nominations by political parties, tend to respect this directive. For instance, the 2000 elections saw both leading parties (NDC and NPP) put forward presidential candidates from the “south” and their running mates from the “north”. The selection of cabinet ministers also reflects regional diversities.

After winning the 2000 election, the ruling NPP government has attempted to enhance political inclusiveness by making both substantive and symbolic appointments of opposition party members to important positions. For instance, the government nominated and supported the appointment of NDC parliamentarian, Dr Ibn Chambas, as Executive Secretary of ECOWAS. While the members of the main opposition party have been included in this way, some minority groups seem marginalised, a factor that may be attributable to the Westminster political model of “winner takes it all”.

As in Ghana, there is no significant ethnic or political marginalisation in Senegal. The Senegalese state asserts its non-religious character and the constitution rejects all forms of discrimination, whether based on gender, ethnicity, religion or political orientation. More informally, the Senegalese authorities have a history of co-opting leaders from all ethnic and regional backgrounds. A number of biases nevertheless affect the inclusiveness of the political system.

The most serious examples of exclusion and discrimination in Senegal today take place in the troubled Lower Casamance province. After a separatist rebellion started in the early 1980s, the people of Lower Casamance have lived for 20 years in a situation of low-intensity armed conflict, which has killed a few thousand people and largely run down the local economy. As a result of this rebellion, members of the Diola ethnic group have frequently been targeted by the security forces, and human rights organisations have documented extra-judicial killings and other atrocities against civilians.

Senegal has long had an “urban bias”. Since colonial times, cities – and particularly the capital Dakar – have received the lion’s share of the authorities’ attention and spending. Agricultural surpluses have been used to pay high urban wages, subsidise food staples for city dwellers and generally to invest in public goods and infrastructure.⁸⁵ This, in turn, led to massive internal migrations.

Language is another potential exclusive factor. Senegal has one official language, French, and six “national languages”, the languages of the

⁸⁵ This inequality is evident in the 1999 Human Development Index. Dakar reached 0.61, while the Senegalese average was 0.43. In the same year, the Human Poverty Index was 29.77 for Dakar, against a Senegalese average of 43.83 (60.14 for the region of Kolda).

country's main ethnic groups (Diola, Malinké, Pular, Sérère, Soninké and Wolof). While there has long been the pretension of making efforts to use "national languages" in the public administration, French remains the formal language and that of all documents. This is a serious problem of potential exclusion (this time particularly touching the less educated) in a country where French is not widely spoken, and even less read. In the actual functioning of the public administration other languages, particularly Wolof, which has become Senegal's lingua franca, are used for communication. The position of the Wolof language is a sign of one group's privilege. Historically, the Senegalese state was closely associated with one ethno-religious group – the Wolof of central and coastal Senegal. However, the dominance of the Wolof has receded in recent years.

In Kenya, although improvements are taking place, corruption and some ethnic favouritism are hampering inclusion. The unequal size of voting constituencies gives some ethnic groups disproportionate representation in parliament. The value placed on age in Kenyan society also makes representation in public office elusive for youth.

The withdrawal of the public service staff list in 1978 made it difficult to assess the ethnic composition of the public service. While all Kenyans can hold posts in the civil service provided that they meet the basic qualifications, regime supporters and the politically well connected tended to be appointed both during the KANU era (up to 2002) and after.⁸⁶ Significant minorities such as Arabs, Asians and Europeans largely shun competition for elected public office. By their nature, local authorities tend to be ethnically homogenous, save for the ones in larger metropolitan centres such as Nairobi and Mombasa.

If looking at the distribution of public goods rather than jobs, the state has not done particularly well in delivering publicly valued goods to its citizens. Problems such as huge debt servicing commitments and low institutional capacity are part of the reason for this. However, corruption has also led to great amounts of public money ending in the pockets of members of the political élite.

South Africa's constitution forbids any sort of discrimination by the state on any grounds, "including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital

86 Ng'ethe *et al.*, *op cit*, p 8.

status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth”.⁸⁷ In practice, this provision is generally respected in public life (although race remains a sticky social problem), and South Africans pride themselves on having made a “rainbow nation” out of an apartheid state.

There are, however, two areas in which the political system has been accused of being skewed towards benefiting the ruling coalition or particular groups of society. The first is the government’s programme of affirmative action to address the historical injustices of apartheid (the so-called “black empowerment” policy). It is, however, difficult to argue strongly that this practice is discriminatory, considering the country’s obvious need to shift the (previously highly discriminatory) balance of power within the country. Second, various incidents of corruption and abuse of office (or accusations thereof) by individual senior members of the political establishment have led critics to argue that a sense of impunity is spreading among the political élite. However, such abuses are not considered to be widespread enough to be a true reflection of the political system.

Over time, the dominance of the ANC in South African politics and government may create problems of exclusion based on party membership. When the same party is likely to stay in power for the foreseeable future, it is a rational and prudent reaction of ambitious people to align themselves with this party, thereby contributing to perpetuating the party’s dominant position. This could increase the incidence of patron–client relationships in the future.

6.2 Politics of exclusion and marginalisation

Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda are facing relatively more serious problems of exclusion and marginalisation. In Ethiopia and Nigeria, part of this problem is connected to the sheer size of the countries’ populations and the great diversity of ethnic groups living within their borders.⁸⁸ While ethnicity and regional differences also play a part in Uganda and (more so)

⁸⁷ South Africa’s Constitution (1996), Act 108, section 9(3).

⁸⁸ See M Ottaway, J Herbst and G Mills, Africa’s big states: Towards a new realism, in *Policy Outlook*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 2004.

in Algeria, the bigger problem in these two countries (which also occur in Nigeria and Ethiopia) is closer related to the uneven distribution of public goods, positions and resources between regime members and close supporters and collaborators, on the one hand, and opposition groups and ordinary citizens with no political connections, on the other.

In Algeria, many of the country's political problems become clearer when seen from the point of view of (the lack of) political inclusion. An important reason behind the huge popularity of the FIS during the first multi-party elections in 1990 was the unresponsiveness of the one-party state to the needs of its citizens. The vast hydrocarbon wealth generated in the south of the country did not find its way to the central budget and did not lead to more employment or better quality jobs for ordinary Algerians. Meanwhile, the FLN party élite (before the introduction in 1989 of multi-party politics) enjoyed privileged access to foreign goods and benefited from their corrupt management of state-owned enterprises. Widespread reports continue to accuse a "secret mafia" of military leaders and government officials of hoarding oil and gas export revenues.

Apart from this abuse of state resources by a small political élite to the detriment of a poor population, there has been particular discrimination against Algeria's Berber population which makes up a quarter of the country's population. The situation has improved recently, when the Berbers were given official recognition as a minority group with special needs. Amazigh has become one of the official languages in Algeria, in addition to French and Arabic. In practice, however, Berbers still tend to be treated as second-class citizens.

The main fault line between included and excluded, and the biggest problem for the future of Algeria's democracy, is the continuation of military influence on politics. Although Algeria is a *de jure* multi-party democracy with a popularly elected executive and a formal separation of powers, a clan of military generals still have a strong hand in running the country.⁸⁹ They control political power in Algeria through control of the

89 See H Roberts, Algeria's contested elections in *Middle Eastern Report*, 1999; Sidhoum, *op cit*; J Garçon, Algeria: Les Ratés du Candidat Officiel. A quinze Jours de la Présidentielle Bouteflika Peine à s'Imposer, *Libération*, 29 March 1999. Human Rights Watch, *op cit*, reports that none of the military security agencies have any public accountability.

presidency and by ensuring that their preferred candidate gets voted into office.⁹⁰ The 1996 constitution gives the president extensive powers, including the right to pass laws when parliament is not sitting. The constitution also assigns the president the task of “Supreme Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic” and gives him the right to appoint the head of government, provincial administrators, magistrates, high officials of security bodies and the president of the Council of State.

The influence of an un-elected cabal of military leaders has led to voter apathy. Many potential voters do not believe that their votes will ever lead to a change in real power, no matter who holds “formal” power in the executive as a result of the outcome of elections. It is widely believed that the results of the 1997 legislative elections were “fixed” to create a balance between the different competing parties to give legitimacy to the system while ensuring that the government party, the RDN in this case, wins the majority of seats.⁹¹ As a result of such pervasive perceptions of manipulation and rigging, many Algerian voters decide to stay at home on election day. In 2004 the army announced its official neutrality in the presidential election. This no doubt contributed to the higher-than-usual voter turnout.

The Algerian electorate also tend to be cynical about the true intentions of political parties. They do not believe that the governing parties, the FLN and RDN, represent the interests of their constituents, since the manipulation of election results gives candidates little incentive to bother to compete for votes.⁹² This lack of representativeness can also be seen in the parties’ behaviour in parliament. Parliamentarians stay quiet on issues of real importance to most Algerians, such as the government’s failure to respond adequately to the October 2003 earthquake that hit parts of the country; the continued killings of Algerians in political violence; the crisis in Kabylie province; and the cases of 7,000 Algerians who have “disappeared” during the civil war. Improbably, the lower house of parliament did not propose one single law in 2003. Critics allege that the government is “buying” the silence of opposition parliamentarians on

90 M A Shaikh, No Surprises Expected in Algerian Presidential Elections, *Muslimedia*, 1–15 March 1999, www.muslimedia.com/archives/oaw99/alg-elect.htm (accessed 9 March 2004).

91 H Roberts, *op cit*.

92 For in-depth analysis see L Addi, Les partis politiques en Algérie et la crise du régime des “Grand Électeurs”, *Le Quotidien d’Oran*, 12–15 October 2003.

sensitive issues.⁹³ As a result of all these factors, most Algerians do not believe the holders of public office represent their views and votes, and they do not feel that they respond to the problems they face.

Ethiopia has a long history of marginalising important groups, notably peripheral peoples, pastoralists, and Muslims (the three coincide to a significant extent), while endowing privilege on others, notably Orthodox Christians, speakers of Amharic and to a lesser extent Tigrinya. Under the imperial government between 1889 and 1974, Amharic-speaking Orthodox Christians from the central province of Shoa were at a considerable advantage, and the aim of the imperial rulers was to assimilate the rest of the population under the same language and faith. When taking over power in 1991, the EPRDF government justified its introduction of a system of ethnic federalism as a means of rectifying this history of discrimination, and of assuring the different ethnic groups control over their local affairs and equal representation in central government. As a result, there has been a considerable increase in the level of representation by local peoples in their own regional government.

Despite the government's formal commitment to inclusion (through the division of the country into ethnic segments), the Tigray region and its people are widely perceived as privileged by the existing political regime. Tigrayans have a disproportionate number of the most sensitive positions within the current government. They are also often placed in positions of low formal status but high influence within the administrations of regional states. At the other side of the spectrum, the Oromo (the largest group in the country constituting about 32 per cent of the population) are generally perceived as the most marginalised. The Oromo are formally represented in government by the Oromo People's Democratic Organisation (OPDO), a party with little support in most parts of Oromiya. Individuals suspected of being involved with Oromo opposition groups are subject to harassment, imprisonment and sometimes death.

Tigrayans, the group with the strongest political position in Ethiopia today, come from an ecologically degraded and famine-prone area in the north. Thus, a significant element of Ethiopia's current political economy is the government's need to take revenues away from the principal

93 For details of payments made to parliamentarians, see: M Zeid, Parliament goes into recess: So what? *Algeria Interface*, 4 February 2003. www.algeria-interface.com/new/article.php?article_id=689&lng=e (accessed 9 March 2004).

producing areas and redistribute them in favour of its own home base in Tigray. There is a widespread popular perception, backed by very visible levels of infrastructure development in the regional capital, Mekele, that Tigray region is receiving preferential treatment. Government officials justify this on the grounds that Tigray was subject to exceptional levels of adverse discrimination under the previous Marxist-Leninist Derg regime. At that time, the Tigray region was a war zone, with high levels of destruction and bombing of the civilian population.

There are also discriminatory tendencies at regional levels. Citizens of each regional state have preferential access to civil service posts within their own region. As a result, regional governments (which in former times were heavily dominated by appointees from the central and privileged parts of the country) are now much more representative of the peoples and regions that they govern. However, this also means that better qualified civil servants from outside the region have been replaced by less qualified regional citizens. Regional outsiders have also been subject to varying degrees of informal discrimination, harassment, forcible ejection and, in some cases, killings. Some commentators are concerned that the “ethnicisation” of the Ethiopian state structures over the last decade has opened a Pandora’s box of ethnic rivalries and hostility that will be difficult to close again. The trends towards inclusion at regional levels of members of the “right” ethnic groups have led to a greater level of exclusion between the regions and ethnic groups that make up the state of Ethiopia.

Nigeria is a country of more than 250 distinct ethnic and language groups. Three groups make up more than 60 per cent of a population of 120 million: the Hausa-Fulani of the north; the Yoruba of the south-west; and the Igbo of the south-east. The rest are ethnic minorities, the biggest of which are the Ijaws of the southern Niger Delta who number between four and seven million people.

Nigeria’s constitution does not allow any form of discrimination. There is a constitutional principle of reflecting the “federal character” of the country in appointments to public office. A quota system for employment in the civil service and placements in educational institutions seek to ensure that all ethnic groups are accommodated.

Nevertheless, complaints of discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion are rampant in Nigeria. It is a generally held belief in Nigeria

that the ethnic or interest group that controls the government is in a position to distribute patronage, including civil service appointments and deciding where to spend government money. People in the south-east, including the oil-producing Niger Delta, often argue that they have the worst infrastructure in the country because they have little influence in the federal government, while the north and the south-west have better infrastructure due to their relative influence. “In Nigeria, control of government often represents virtually unaudited control over resources,” said New York-based Human Rights Watch in a recent report on Nigeria.⁹⁴

The Igbo and the Ijaw communities have been particularly vocal in their complaints about discrimination. In the case of the Igbo community, ever since their unsuccessful attempt at seceding as the Republic of Biafra in the civil war of 1967 to 1970, people in the region have complained of being systematically punished through denial of amenities; poor infrastructure; low general government spending; exclusion from top jobs in government; and political under-representation in the federal system due to incorrect census figures for the region.⁹⁵

In the case of the Ijaws of the Niger Delta, they inhabit a region that produces most of Nigeria’s oil while still remaining the country’s most impoverished region. A sense of being cheated out of the oil wealth of their land has fuelled restiveness, leading in the past decade to inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts and disruption of oil production by peaceful and violent protests. In Nigeria, then, exclusion and marginalisation of certain groups has had a strong impact on human insecurity.

In Uganda, the question of inclusion or exclusion is primarily a question of membership in the Movement. The previous chapter described some of the negative effects of Uganda’s Movement system. The monopoly of politics created by this system easily breeds intolerance and encourages unanimity of views. Inevitably, non-conformity tends to results in exclusion from political and public office. Appointments to positions such as Resident District Commissioners (RDC), presidential advisors, ambassadors and other foreign service posts; as well as membership of

94 Human Rights Watch, *The Warri crisis: Fuelling violence*, Human Rights Watch, New York, 2003.

95 B Egboka, The Yorubas, the Hausa-Fulani and Nigerian destiny, at www.nigerdeltacongress.com/warticles/yorubas_the_hausafulani_and_nige.htm (accessed 9 March 2004).

constitutional and *ad hoc* commissions, are based on patronage and political co-optation. The wide-ranging power granted to the president by the constitution has compounded the tendency towards patronage and personal rule.

The situation in Uganda was certainly not better before the introduction of the Movement system in 1986. However, while there was progress and optimism in the first years of Movement rule, and particularly around the time of the 1994 Constituent Assembly and the writing of a new constitution, this optimism began to wane after the presidential elections of 2001. Today, as the state and the Movement become increasingly synonymous, Ugandans who do not opt into the Movement benefit less from the protection and assistance of the state.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter on processes and practices of political inclusion and exclusion has highlighted the need to study some less visible and obvious aspects of democracy. Political exclusion and marginalisation is not just a human security issue for those forced to live a life of less opportunity and protection from the machinery of state authority; it is also a potential national security threat, when aggrieved sub-groups begin to express their complaints with violence (as, for instance, Islamist terrorists in Algeria and Ijaws in Nigeria have done).

As was the case with the commitments studied in previous chapters, there have been considerable improvements in building inclusive political systems in the eight countries under review. The process has come further in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal and South Africa. While Kenya's gains have been so recent as to warrant caution in making any conclusions, prospects for further improvement and consolidation look relatively good in Ghana, Senegal and South Africa. In Algeria, Ethiopia, Nigeria and Uganda, on the other hand, the opening up of the political system seems to have stagnated. There is a real danger that earlier gains may be lost again as the political élites that were behind establishing their countries' new and more democratic systems in the late 1980s and the 1990s begin to backtrack in attempts to stick to power.