

way into a marriage alliance with ‘gifts’ of cash, jewels, and consumer goods” for the in-laws, with the amount often rising with the groom’s apparent prospects. A groom who works for the privileged government bureaucracy, for instance, may be able to command a dowry worth \$100,000 or more.

In a typical dowry death, Mandelbaum says, a new bride is harassed by her husband and in-laws, who insist that the goods promised or delivered are insufficient. Often, it is the status they confer rather than the goods themselves that the husband and his family crave; sometimes, the conflicts are really not about the dowry at all but about underlying problems in the marriage too intimate for open discussion. Eventually, the harassment leads to the young woman’s death, often disguised as an accident.

In the mid-1980s, in response to pressure from feminist groups and the news media,

Parliament altered the criminal code, Mandelbaum writes, “plac[ing] the burden of proof on the accused in any situation where a bride dies unnaturally during the first seven years of marriage, if a history of dowry harassment can be shown.”

Yet dowry deaths have spread. Once “mostly confined to the corridor connecting Punjab, traditionally a very patriarchal and violent part of northwest India, to Delhi and, further east, Uttar Pradesh,” areas with a high incidence of such murders are now found in half the country, Mandelbaum notes.

Many Indians view divorce with alarm, and Hindu parents tell their married daughters not to return home. In a typical case of dowry death, Veena Das, a sociologist at Delhi University, told Mandelbaum, “The girl has gone to her parents repeatedly and says she wants to come back, but the parents refuse to take responsibility for her.”

## *Africa’s ‘Soft Authoritarianism’*

“Africa” by Marina Ottaway, in *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1999), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1779 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

A new generation of leaders has begun to emerge in Africa, but its members are not committed to democracy. Indeed, they are “extremely suspicious of popular participation and even more so of party politics,” writes Ottaway, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Instead, she says, these new leaders—including Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki, Ethiopian prime minister Meles Zenawi, and Rwandan vice president Paul Kagame, all of whom came to power by winning a civil war—are intent upon building a strong government, maintaining security and stability, and promoting economic development.

They believe, she says, “in a mixture of strong political control, limited popular participation, and economic liberalization that allows for a strong state role in regulating the market—South Korea, Taiwan, and even Singapore are viewed as models to be emulated.” In other words, what used to be described as “soft authoritarianism.”

The instability of Africa today, argues Ottaway, results from the weakness of the independent states left behind by the

European colonial powers, exacerbated in recent years by economic decline. “The authoritarianism of many African governments, coupled with their incapacity to project power throughout their [own] countries, has provided a fertile breeding ground for armed opposition movements” in such places as Angola, Somalia, Burundi, Chad, and Senegal.

It is appealing to think that the failed African states could revive themselves by embracing democracy and the free market, says Ottaway, but it is also unrealistic. “Elections and economic reform do not cause domestic armed movements to disappear, nor do they prevent conflicts in decaying neighboring states from spilling over borders.”

With the Cold War over and French influence in Africa waning, the political order imposed by the colonial powers is truly at an end, Ottaway observes. Determining a new balance of power among the states, one that can be sustained without outside intervention, will probably entail conflicts. “Conflict is probably an intrinsic part of an African renaissance and not necessarily a sign of the so-called coming anarchy.”