



Australasian Review of African Studies

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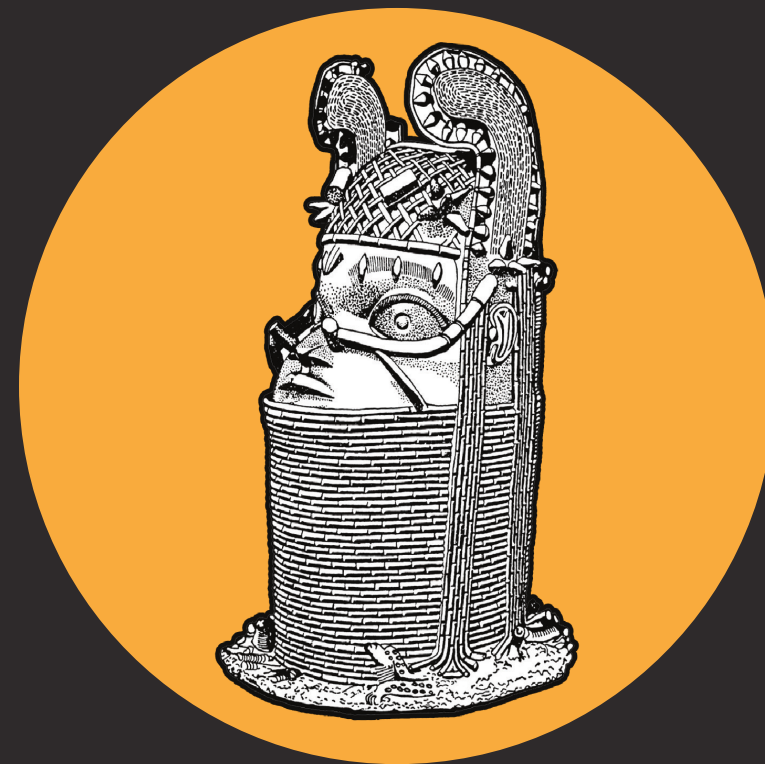
Book Review

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OF AUSTRALASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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ARTICLES

Special Issue: Governance in Africa

Introduction

Anne L. Bartlett

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What kind of entity is the State in Africa? Is it, as some would have us believe, an entity that simply needs to get better at fulfilling its functions, becoming more democratic, or becoming less corrupt? Is it an entity that would be more credible and legitimate if only it would step away from ethnic politics and become more like its western cousins? In many meetings these days, one is often asked to discuss the problems of African governance in toto, as if there is a meaningful democratisation recipe to be learnt, some counter-insurgency dynamic to be uncovered, and as if in discovering it, all will be well. But as Africanists, experience tells us that context, time, and engagement matters, and whatever the ‘problem’ is that afflicts African states, it is as much about the society that created it, and the international interlocutors who attempt to reform it, as it is about the State itself.

Given these points, trying to pin down what we mean by ‘governance’ is no mean feat. Sprinkled across policy papers and reports, the term ‘governance’ has become a ‘catch all’ to encompass the good, bad and downright ugly elements of government functioning. It certainly includes the political actors and process, but it may also encompass “democracy and representation; human rights; the rule of law; efficient and effective public management; transparency and accountability; development as an objective and a varying range of economic and political policies, programmes and institutions” (Ware 2018, 202). For international development agencies, governance might be more about what makes a country amenable to foreign capital and other forms of intervention. It also may be about the ‘C’ word: corruption.

Over recent decades, it is not hard to understand why external actors speak in worried tones about governance in Africa. There is, after all, a lot to be concerned about. ‘Big-man’ politics, authoritarian regimes, kleptocracy, term-limit extensions and electoral malfeasance all warrant attention. But so too do uprisings, forced migration, mass unemployment and ungovernable spaces. Some of these issues emanate from decisions taken by state actors, but others have come about as a result of structural adjustment policies, external intervention by foreign powers and extractionist policies brought on by the lure of natural resources.

The lens through which the ‘crisis’ of African governance is viewed needs adjustment. This adjustment is not only a matter of widening the scope of discussion about the challenges that the continent faces, but also about the response to them. It is not only about the despots and democratic leaders of Africa, but the assumptions embedded in adjustment programs from the IMF, World Bank and others who assume that templates can ‘fix’ things (Ferguson 2006). If anything is to be learned about the past few decades, it is that simple solutions to complex problems do not help. Invariably, they only make matters worse.

All too frequently, attempts to ‘reform’ governance in Africa involves the creation of an institutional casing of roles, rules and the appearance of functionality over the prevailing political logic of the country. On the surface then, it appears that learning has been achieved, institutions have been created, and the government now looks like any other. But under the surface, this assumption belies a different reality with political actors able to take advantage of such initiatives for their own interests (Byart 1989; Clapham 1996; Reno 1998; Mbembe 2001).

Mansour Khalid, the late and brilliant observer of Sudan’s turbulent history, once remarked that while the Islamist government may be the stuff of nightmares, it was wrong to ascribe to it some kind of independent birthright outside of “the polluted womb of Sudanese politics” (Khalid 2003, 199). This observation leads one to ask: what is it in the patterning of social relations in Africa that gives birth to the political dynamics we are seeing at the top? It also raises the question: what is it in Africa’s relations with others that is contributing to the pollution of the political sphere and its functioning?

The stuff of nightmares can indeed be found in the colonial history of Africa, the expropriation of land and resources, and the violence meted out by foreigners in pursuit of riches. It can be found in the practices of inclusion and exclusion—the intelligence reports, and forms of control—where some Africans were educated and given office to perpetuate the role of the colonisers, while others were relegated to closed districts. But

the seeds of the current situation can also be found in the vastness of Africa and in those who, on the periphery of state-society relations, then questioned why in a territory that purported to be one country, there were also vast differences in the ways people were treated. Given the size of the continent, it is little wonder that those excluded turned to their clan groupings and 'tribes' for answers to their problems.

The state of the State in Africa, and the governance mechanisms it uses, are perhaps not that surprising when viewed in this light. Neither are the uprisings, the forms of 'tribalism' on display, the patronage networks that disperse goods to ethnic groups and followers, or the religious movements that offer 'salvation' from these issues. What is surprising in contemporary Africa is the idea that generic forms of western governance and economic policy might provide the solution to reform these problems. Such approaches ignore the political logics that have emerged over time, as well as the idea that African states have more than a little utility to certain domestic and international actors.

Going forward, the most important issue facing the State in Africa, is not to try to change its form, but rather the dynamics that make it an object of capture. Of course, a significant part of the story here is access to economic capital in the form of loans, concessional aid or extractive resources which can be privatised for individual or group gain. But the lesser acknowledged part of the story is the history of structural adjustment into which governance was later inserted (more as an afterthought than anything else), and the international regulatory system that pushes extractives as a solution to a failing economy and escalating levels of debt. All of these issues have reduced the capacity of the state by either conducting an end around it, creating strictures that make service provision extremely difficult, or bypassing normal economic development to engage in 'quick money' extractive economies instead. Donors who step into the breach of service provision think in short-term project cycles, often duplicating services to create overflow in some areas and large gaps in others.

Once the state becomes the object of capture, capabilities go by the wayside in favour of familial lineage and who one knows. Similarly, getting one's ethnic group into power and keeping them there becomes a priority, since it is only by keeping and developing a shadow state (Reno 1998) that it becomes possible to hold onto money and power. This in turn feeds election violence and uprisings either to get a piece of the pie or, to use African terminology, to stop someone else 'eating' it. Peace talks frequently address first the thing that needs to be talked about last (i.e., wealth and power sharing), which privileges armed actors over the

population and long-term societal transformation. In this situation, the ubiquitous issue of identity (read, negative identification as a rationale for discrimination) becomes something worth fighting and dying for.

Under such circumstances, talk of democracy and legitimacy is challenging. Are we talking about rule by the people, or rule by an elected few on behalf of the people? If those people are ruling on behalf of, exactly whose needs are served in a situation of state capture and kleptocracy? Where legitimacy is concerned, is it concerned with family lineage, with holding office after securing an election, or perhaps with a semblance of legitimacy based on dissimulation? (Wedeen 1999). If the latter, where does politics go and how does opposition survive? Should we jettison the normative questions of democracy in favour of Popper's formulation that the state should be "constituted so that bad rulers can be got rid of without bloodshed, without violence?" (Popper 1988, 20). If so, and in the face of recent history, what process and exactly who, will call 'time' on such rulers?

In the essays that follow, many of these issues are examined. Looking at specific examples from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda, Sudan and from Africa in wider perspective, we dig beneath the surface of conventional politics to question the logics of governance. In the first essay, Ernest Mensah Akuamoah asks about the progress of democracy across the African continent. Drawing on public opinion surveys and secondary sources, he interrogates whether Africans favour democracy. Finding that they do, he looks at points of consolidation and weakness. Acknowledging that the continent is riddled with a myriad of challenges, ranging from 'big-man' politics and weak or ineffective institutions, to corruption and election violence, he emphasises the need for meaningful democratic processes that go beyond strengthening political institutions to include securing socio-economic rights and ensuring active citizens' engagement in the political system.

Following from here, Geoffrey Hawker turns to electoral malpractice in post-Mugabe Zimbabwe. Centring his analysis on the under-recognised problem of malapportionment in electoral constituencies, he notes that while this aspect of the electoral process is cloaked in the language of democracy, its potential to bring about the precise opposite is very real. While the issue is well known in Zimbabwe, Hawker contends that it has received little attention in scholarly literature. Analysing the 2018 elections, Hawker contends that malapportionment has become a significant issue, where ZANU-PF candidates managed to win seats despite having, on average, far fewer votes to win a seat than other candidates. This raises the question of delimitation and the role of the

Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), which, through lack of action, has enabled this situation to continue.

Anne Bartlett looks at the deep state in Sudan and the challenges of dismantling it in the wake of the 2019 revolution. She argues that while discussions about the deep state have become synonymous with kleptocracy and violence, a more fine-grained analysis is in fact needed to understand how it installed itself and continues to influence the government. This means going further than understanding corruption and theft alone. It needs an analysis of the ideologies, intelligence agencies, media centres, communication networks, operatives and outside lobbyists who facilitate a discursive regime that changes the very nature of what counts for truth. It also means a deeper understanding of the different forms of capital which provide legitimacy within the country and without. Following from this, she argues that change must go further than asset seizure and tracking of illicit financial flows alone—it must encompass a more fundamental and difficult transformation of systems of privilege, education, and connection that are at the heart of Sudan’s core-periphery relations.

James Dhizaala brings us to Uganda and the struggle to assert a credible opposition politics which is capable of bringing substantive change. Tracing the ways in which President Museveni has manipulated the political system, he argues that the concentration of power in one man has led to a situation where political space has now atrophied. In particular, the abolition of term and age limits has made Uganda less democratic and more amenable to authoritarian tendencies. This has, in turn, reduced opposition to something that can only operate through casual channels as a form of pop-up politics. The net result of this situation is that credible, open, institutional political organisations capable of building solid coalitions, is no longer possible in Uganda. Those who stand to oppose the president do so from the shadows—as a form of oppositional populist politics—knowing what they oppose but being unable to develop strong platforms that can ultimately bring change.

After Uganda, we turn to Zambia and the challenge of election monitoring. Highlighting the difference between the perception and reality of democracy in the country, Margaret O’Callaghan reminds us that observer missions should not only see something but say something. Taking us through the 2016 elections and their aftermath, O’Callaghan documents the rise of violent repression and human rights abuses leading to the conclusion that Zambia is moving ever closer to an authoritarian form of governance. As she points out, far from making strong

representations about election irregularities, observers gave wildly differing accounts of what had transpired during the elections, leading to questions about whether they had even been observing the same thing. Questioning what can be done, she concludes that quiet diplomacy may have some effect, but financial leverage may be more effective in preventing future appeals from falling on deaf ears.

Finally, we turn to West Africa through the work of Muhammad Dan Suleiman. In his piece, Suleiman argues that rebel movements are not events but, in fact, processes that are premised on contextual factors. Examining the rise of jihadist groups such as *Al-Shabaab*, *Boko Haram*, and *Jamā'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM), he shows how grievances, networks, legitimating ideologies and local contexts shape the growth of political extremism. Stressing the processual dimensions of their emergence, he suggests that west African countries might be categorised as 'those experiencing political extremism' and 'those yet to do so'. He concludes by arguing that current socio-political structures and processes, even in countries currently not experiencing extremist groups, may set countries on the road to producing extremist groups in the future.

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Democratic Governance and Political Development in Africa

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Abstract

Once a continent dominated by closed political systems, democratic political institutions are now common in many African countries—albeit with challenges. As we begin a new decade, it becomes imperative to take stock of Africa’s democratic journey thus far. Drawing on public opinion surveys and secondary sources, this paper discusses significant democratic progress and challenges, as well as highlights key areas that require urgent attention if the gains are to be consolidated and further democratic recession prevented. The available evidence points to a continent-wide consensus in favour of democracy. At the same time, however, the continent is riddled with myriad challenges, including ‘big-man’ politics, weak or ineffective institutions, corruption and election violence. I emphasise the need for meaningful democratic processes that go beyond strengthening political institutions to include securing socio-economic rights and ensuring active citizens’ engagement in the political system.

Introduction

From the 1950s through to the 1970s, 46 African countries gained independence via competitive elections. From Ghana to Kenya and to Zimbabwe, political parties of nationalist leaders or freedom fighters formed the first post-colonial governments. Citizens had high expectations of these ‘saviours’ and were optimistic about economic development and political stability. These expectations soon hit the rocks. Not only did many of the newly independent countries experience severe economic hardships¹ (Kaela 1996; N’Diaye 2007), but many African leaders sought to entrench their positions by adopting single-party

¹ The few exceptions were PDCI-Ivory Coast, US-Mali, and TANU-Tanzania (see Neuberger 1974, 177).

systems (Schachter 1961; Kilson 1963). To borrow the words of LaPalombara and Weimer (2015, 409), post-colonial leaders were “not themselves committed to the maintenance of representative government but participate[d] in competitive politics only in order to overthrow the system.” Edigheji was quick to note that “the history of the post-independent African states is that of monumental democratic and developmental failures” (Edigheji 2005, 1). The above descriptions perfectly fit a continent where the political space was closed, coup d’états were rife, and the economies of many countries were struggling.

Despite the variations in authoritarian regimes that emerged in post-colonial Africa, two commonalities are identified in the literature. First, these regimes were predicated on coercion and force (to ensure compliance), intolerance of dissenting views, and distaste for organised party activity (Robinson 1993). Second, patronage-networks determined the distribution of, and access to, state power and resources for powerful elites and their co-ethnic or regional groups (Berman 1998). Authoritarian rulers ranged from the despotic (Idi Amin in Uganda, Jean-Bédél Bokassa in the Central African Republic, Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo) to the relatively less repressive populist single-party regimes (in Ghana, Tanzania, and Zambia).² The closing of the political space in several African countries, and the absence of democratic avenues to change government, heightened tensions across the continent. Neuberger argues that “the one-party state ... contribute[d] to its own instability by forcing its opponents into illegal activities” (Neuberger 1974, 174). Indeed, Africa became a hotbed of coups, counter-coups, and aborted coups (McGowan 2005; Posner and Young 2007). Eventually, this militarisation of politics affected stability and hindered economic progress across the continent (Fosu 1992).

The 1990s was therefore a new dawn in Africa’s democratic experiment. Democracy spread like wildfire across the continent. Since then, Africa has witnessed several positive changes with respect to participatory politics, with the percentage of African countries conducting elections rising from 7 to 40 between 1990–2010 (International Peace Institute 2011, 1). The sad reality, however, is that recent evidence

² The idea of a one-party state seems to have been introduced into the continent by Francophone West African countries starting with Sekou Touré in Guinea (in 1958) and Houphouët-Boigny in Cote d’Ivoire (in 1960). In Anglophone West Africa, Ghana’s Nkrumah (in 1964) was the first to pioneer this agenda. Julius Nyerere in Tanzania (in 1965), Hastings Banda in Malawi (in 1966), and Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia (in 1972) were among the first to install one-party regimes in East Africa.

suggests democratic reversals, even among leading performers.³ Yet, the larger African public still support democracy despite the pervasiveness of corruption, the crisis of weak institutions, the recurrence of electoral conflicts, and the difficulty of taming Africa's 'big-men'.

Drawing on this evidence, this paper argues that while there is a continent-wide consensus in favour of democracy, the continent is riddled with myriad challenges, including 'big-man' politics, weak or ineffective institutions, corruption, and election violence. As a result, there is a need for meaningful democratic processes that go beyond strengthening political institutions to include securing socio-economic rights and citizen engagement. In the next section, I provide an historical and contemporary overview of Africa's democratisation process and discuss matters related to the executive, legislature and judiciary. I then focus on the return to multi-party politics in the early 1990s and the political changes thereafter. This is followed by a succinct overview of election violence—one of the major dark spots in Africa's relatively new democracies. Here, I limit my discussion to the factors that make electoral contests in Africa conflict-prone and the consequences thereof. The article ends with some recommendations in the concluding remarks.

The Democratisation Process in Africa: Historical & Contemporary Perspectives

According to Chazan (1979, 136), "elections in Africa, after the initial euphoria associated with political stability during decolonization quickly came to be viewed as meaningless political rites." For much of the post-independence era, most African states were ruled by autocrats, "civilian and military, capitalist and socialist" (Robinson 1993, 86). The late 1980s and early 1990s, however, were marked by a general trend towards multi-party democracy and competitive elections. Africanist scholars used catchy phrases such as the 'second independence' (Joseph 1990) and the 'rebirth of democracy' (Boafo-Arthur 2008) to describe this new phenomenon. At the time, scholarly analyses in Sub-Saharan Africa focused on 'elections', 'multipartyism', 'civil society', and 'democracy' (Adejumobi 2000, 64).

While some scholars were optimistic (Lindberg 2006) about the success of this new development, so too were there some naysayers or perhaps soothsayers (Ake 1996; Joseph 1997). For these pessimists, it was just a matter of time before African countries reverted to the old trend of

³ See Freedom House on Sub-Saharan Africa <https://freedomhouse.org/programs/sub-saharan-africa>

politics.⁴ According to Claude Ake (1996, 6), multi-party politics did not bring about genuine democracy in several African states because the democratisation process itself “is totally indifferent to the character of the state[s].” Kilson (1963) seems to suggest that African nationalists participated in pre-independence elections not because they were in support of multi-party politics per se, but because it was a requirement for decolonisation. It is fair to say that both the optimists and pessimists have been proven right. Regular elections are now common in Africa although the outcomes are often questionable.⁵ This notwithstanding, ‘big-man’ politics and its attendant characteristics of patron-client networks and corruption remain widespread on the continent (see Van de Walle 2002).

Despite the fact that North Africa was left out in the wave of democratisation that occurred in the 1990s, the speed at which the wind of democracy blew across the region was remarkable and unexpected. The Arab spring which begun in Tunisia in 2010—after Mohammed Bouazizi (an unemployed graduate) set himself ablaze—triggered democratic revolutions in the region and even had spill-over effects in the Middle East (Abushouk 2016). In the space of a year, three Northern African leaders were ousted in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya. It is right to say that most African countries have experienced some form of fairly competitive elections. Yet, problems still remain. Several countries have remained in a “gray zone of diverse forms of government where autocratic and democratic features are combined” (Miller et al. 2012, 17). These regimes are often characterised by widespread human rights abuses, disregard for civil liberties, and corrupt practices (Ekman 2009). In addition, the electoral arena is chaotic as political elites struggle to gain some form of legitimacy. Consequently, elections are often bitterly contested (Ekman 2009).

Several factors have been highlighted as explanations for the lack of trust in institutions. These include institutional performance and public perceptions of officials serving in political portfolios (Sall 2015). Other scholars like Miller and Lithaug (1990) have linked poor economic performance and perceptions of corruption in public offices (Anderson and Tverdova 2003) to low public trust in government. Nonetheless, corruption varies both across countries and public institutions on the continent (Boateng and Adjorlolo 2019). Yet, the deleterious impact of

⁴ Reference is made to ‘big-man’ politics, patron-client relations, and informalised and disordered structures that featured prominently in the past (Lindberg 2006, 4).

⁵ On average, a large majority of Africans support democracy (68%) and elections (75%). See Mattes (2019) and Bratton and Bhoojdhur (2019).

corruption on Africa's political and economic development is alarming (Lawal 2007). A recent survey by the Global Corruption Barometer (2019) indicates that a large majority of Africans share the view that corruption is pervasive on the continent. Most strikingly, 55% of respondents think corrupt practices in their country had increased in the previous 12 months and 59% were not satisfied with their governments' effort at tackling corruption.⁶ Nevertheless, we can take solace in the fact that majority of the respondents acknowledge that, "as citizens they could make a difference in the fight against corruption" (Global Corruption Barometer 2019, 3). The role of the ordinary citizen in strengthening democracy is less emphasised in the literature compared to that of institutions (Bratton 1998; Bogaards 2003). It is clear, however, that advancing democracy requires both strong institutions and citizens who are committed to the democratic process (Almond and Verba 1963). Citizens must demand greater accountability from public officials while conducting themselves in a manner consistent with the dictates of democracy. Such a political culture is necessary for not only sustaining democracy but also promoting economic development (Inglehart 1988).

The Executive: African Presidents

As rightly pointed out by Korzi "an executive with too much power is a threat to democracy and hence must be restrained, especially through the democratic vehicle of term limits or rotation" (Korzi 2011, 33). Regrettably, the continent is dominated by strong executives (Prempeh 2008; van Cranenburgh 2009) and term limit contravention is pervasive although not limited to Africa (Baturu 2014). According to Dulani (2011), almost 30 African countries have had discussions with respect to changing term limits since 1998. Yet, the larger African populace (75%) support two-term mandates (Dulani 2015). While some leaders have succeeded in either extending (for instance Senegal in 2012, Rwanda in 2015, Burundi in 2015) or abolishing term limits (e.g. Uganda in 2005, Cameroon in 2008), a few have failed (e.g. Zambia in 2001, Malawi in 2002, Nigeria in 2005). More broadly, the evidence suggests that incumbents have a successful track record when it comes to constitutional amendments (Prempeh 2008). Therefore, it come as no surprise that five of the ten longest-serving leaders in the world are found in Africa (Cheeseman and Fisher 2019). One explanation for the successful manipulation of term limits is that institutions vested with oversight

⁶ This survey was conducted in 35 African countries from September 2016–September 2018.

responsibilities are weak and often complicit in the evasion of term limits (Mckie 2019). Accordingly, Africa's 'big-men' face few restrictions in their use of power.

In recent years, attempts to alter constitutional term limits have been accompanied by political protests and violent repressions as exemplified in Senegal in 2012, Burkina Faso in 2014, Burundi in 2015, Togo in 2017/18, and more recently in Guinea. This trend not only poses a threat to democracy, but also affects peace and security in these countries. Sadly, continental and regional efforts to address unconstitutional changes in government are not commensurate with the size of the problem. At the continental level, at least three policy instruments are available⁷ with respect to dealing with unconstitutional changes of government. Other sub-regional bodies such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have adopted additional instruments⁸ to complement continental efforts. Yet, the application of these rules is rarely straightforward (Souaré 2009; Sturman 2011). As pointed out by Sturman, the problem the African Union (AU) faces is that "constitutional democracy is seldom firmly in place prior to the unconstitutional change" (Sturman 2011, 2). In these contexts, coup initiators may have a 'valid' reason for seeking alternation in power. The AU, however, insists that changes in government should only be done via competitive elections. The challenge then becomes "how to establish a democracy by democratic means if authoritarian rule will not allow a peaceful transfer of power" (Sturman 2011, 2). Whereas some leaders have been sanctioned for unconstitutional changes (especially coup d'états), it appears that term limit violators have largely been left off the hook.

On a brighter side, the dominant view about incumbency advantage in African elections was somewhat challenged in the last decade. A number of incumbent presidents lost elections. After being in power for over two decades (since his successful coup in 1994), Yahya Jammeh's tyrannical regime came to an end in January 2017, following his defeat in the December 2016 elections which he reluctantly accepted. It took collective regional efforts under the ECOWAS mandate "Operation Restore

⁷ Declaration on the Framework for an OAU Response to Unconstitutional Changes of Government (Lome Declaration) adopted in July 2000; the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (Addis Charter) adopted by the AU in January 2007; and the Constitutive Act of the AU.

⁸ In December 2001, ECOWAS adopted the additional Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

Democracy”⁹ to force him out. His successor, Adama Barrow, became Gambia’s third president. For some, Jammeh’s removal serves as a warning for Africa’s despotic rulers that no condition is permanent. Cheeseman and Fisher (2019, 20) argue that the collaborative efforts by regional bodies to ensure that the constitutionally elected president assumed office suggest a growing support for democratic norms and values among leaders on the continent. Other African countries that witnessed opposition victories include Ghana in 2016, Nigeria in 2015, Malawi in 2014, Senegal in 2012 and Zambia in 2011. These examples, although few, represent important democratic development and call into question the generalisation of incumbency advantage in contemporary Africa.

Rather than lumping all countries together, future research should explore specific dynamics that result in particular outcomes. Despite the problems associated with strong executives on the continent, the African populations trust their presidents more (57%) than the legislature (48%) and judiciary (53%) (Afrobarometer 2016). Given the wide appointment powers enjoyed by presidents and the neo-patrimonial tendencies that underlie African politics, future studies should probe further the nature of this trust.

The Legislature

Since the return to multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, international assistance to African countries have included legislative strengthening programmes as part of capacity building, although unevenly distributed (Nijzink, Mozzafar and Azevedo 2006). Whereas parliaments in South Africa and Malawi have received large support, others like those in Cameroon or Swaziland have not been fortunate in that regard (Nijzink et al. 2006, 314). Many studies point to the weakness of legislatures in Africa and how it affects their representational, policy-making, and oversight responsibilities (Burnell 2002; Thomas and Sissokho 2005). Explanations for the weakness of African parliaments cut across a wide range of issues. Whereas Alabi (2009) emphasises colonial and military legacies as explanations for Africa’s weak parliament, Prempeh (2008) argues that the constitutional design of presidential systems in Africa grants enormous powers to the executive branch, thereby contributing to weak horizontal accountability (O’Donnell 1998). Alabi (2009, 23) further argues that the legislatures have remained “the most junior in the tripartite arrangement in governmental powers, in

⁹ A joint West African army operation led by Senegalese forces.

Africa.” Yet, it is noteworthy that the dominance of the executive branch over the legislature is not an African problem as several studies point to a worldwide decline in parliamentary power (Tiesrky 1994; Allen 2002).

Until recently, many studies on the legislative institution in Africa focused on single countries. This raised questions about the uniform description of Africa’s parliaments as weak (Nijzink et al. 2006). A small but growing literature indicates that “not all African parliaments are equally weak; some have greater resources, powers and autonomy than others” (Nijzink et al. 2006, 314).¹⁰ Barkan, Ademolekun, Zhou, Laleye and Ng’ethe (2004), in their comparative study of parliaments in Benin, Ghana, Kenya and Senegal, find significant variations with respect to the strengths and weaknesses of the legislative institution in these countries. They classify Senegal’s legislature as very weak, that of Kenya as moderately strong, whereas the legislatures in Ghana and Benin fell somewhere in between.¹¹ Barkan et al. (2004) cite three factors as possible explanations for the variation: contextual factors related to societal structure; factors that relate to constitutional provisions and formal rules; and how legislatures are structured internally and the resources available to them. As it has become the case, these variables are important for cross-national studies on the institutional capacity of Africa’s legislatures. Nevertheless, an Afrobarometer survey in 36 African countries shows that less than half of the African populace trust their parliament (48%) and local government (46%). Overall, a majority of Africans have more confidence in informal institutions such as religious (72%) and traditional leaders (61%) than they have in the three branches of governmental powers; and among the three, trust in parliament is the lowest (Bratton and Gyimah-Boadi 2016).

The Judiciary

The judiciary has played, and continues to play, significant roles in promoting a democratic political culture and encouraging political participation on the continent. It has done so by resolving such important matters as election petitions, which have legitimacy implications for leaders (e.g. 2012 in Ghana, 2017 in Kenya; 2020 in Malawi) and the potential to plunge the countries into chaos. African courts in several

¹⁰ For a comprehensive discussion, see Mattes and Mozzafar (2016) on legislatures and development in Africa.

¹¹ The scholars conducted interviews with MPs, legislative staff or people working closely with parliament in these countries.

instances have also provided guidance on electoral reforms.¹² Yet, it is imperative to emphasise that the contributions of the courts to the health of democracies are not “uniformly and evenly distributed across the continent” (Boateng and Adjorlolo 2019, 1691). While countries like Ghana, Kenya and South Africa have performed significantly well when it comes to dispute resolution through the formal court system, others like the Central African Republic, Liberia, and South Sudan lag behind following many years of civil wars that have affected the development of formal legal systems in these countries (Boateng and Adjorlolo 2019).

More alarming is the fact that there seems to be a decline in public trust in the court system even among countries seen as democratic trailblazers on the continent. A recent survey by Afrobarometer, for instance, shows that 85% of Ghanaians perceive some judges and magistrates as corrupt, whereas 40% are of the view that ‘most’ or ‘all’ of these court officials are corrupt (Osse and Asiamah 2020).¹³ In addition, only 5% of Ghanaians used the formal judicial system in the previous year. The low patronisation of the court is due to the expensive cost (cited by 54% of respondents), perception of bias in favour of the rich and powerful (31%) and delays in the legal process (31%). Among the respondents who engaged the services of the court in the previous year, 52% classify the level of corruption in the judicial system as ‘high’ or ‘very high’. This notwithstanding, the majority (77%) of Ghanaians believe in the legitimacy of the judicial system. Overall, a slim majority of Africans (53%) trust the court system whereas the larger public (72%) endorse its legitimacy (Logan 2017). Yet, endorsing the legitimacy of courts is not enough given that legitimacy does not always correspond with compliance (Boateng and Adjorlolo 2019). Scholars examining the legitimacy-compliance linkage have argued that people who trust the court are more likely to accept its verdict (Gibson and Caldeira 2003). Accordingly, it is important to build public trust in the judicial system if democratic consolidation is the ultimate goal.

Despite the challenges that confront the judiciary on the continent, two verdicts on presidential petition deserve mention. Until 2017, all presidential election petitions in Africa had gone in favour of the incumbent. Telling examples include election petitions in Uganda (2001

12 See the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) on electoral law reform in Africa. <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/electoral-law-reform-in-africa.pdf>

13 The percentage of Ghanaians who trust the courts reduced from 54% in 2014 to 32% in 2019.

and 2006), Nigeria in 2011, Ghana in 2012, Kenya in 2013, and Zambia in 1996, 2001 and 2016. It is therefore not surprising that the landmark ruling by Kenya's Supreme Court, which invalidated the August 2017 elections, was much talked about. The court nullified the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta and ordered a re-run. The same happened in Malawi on 3 February 2020 when the country's constitutional court cancelled the results of the May 2019 elections, which was declared in favour of President Peter Mutharika, and ordered a fresh election. Taken together, these are positive signs of judicial independence, although far from being a continental phenomenon. Nonetheless, since democratisation is a process and not a one-off event, even the smallest of gains is noteworthy.

Multi-Party Politics and Political Overhaul in Africa

Prior to the 1990s, frequent elections in Africa were only seen in Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius, and Senegal (Mozaffar 2002)—and only Mauritius experienced an alternation in power during this period. Some countries, such as Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone witnessed intermittent democratic episodes between periods of military rule (Robinson 1993). It is undeniable that there has been some significant progress since the wave of democratisation featured prominently in African politics of the early 1990s. For example, the holding of competitive elections has become a necessary although “insufficient source of behavioral, if not attitudinal, legitimacy in Africa's new democracies” (Mozaffar 2002, 86). Van de Walle (2002) observed that the number of countries in Africa conducting regular multi-party elections by the end of 2000 had quadrupled from a decade before even though most elections flouted democratic principles and were mostly won by the incumbents.

Two main explanations account for the democratic changes that occurred in the 1990s. First, some scholars highlight the salience of internal factors (domestic forces) such as economic hardships or political protests (Bratton and Van de Walle 1997). This period was characterised by a surge in civil society activism (Newbury 1994).¹⁴ Second, the harsh

¹⁴ For example, the Ghana Bar Association (GBA), the Christian Council of Ghana (CCG), the Catholic Bishops Conference (CBG), and other civil society groups consistently mounted pressure on the Rawlings-led Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) “to return the country to a constitutional rule at a time when that subject was considered non-negotiable by the regime” (Gyimah-Boadi, Ocuquaye and Drah 2000, 11).

economic conditions on the continent between the 1970s–80s, fuelled agitations for political liberalisation (Lancaster 1991, 155). At the time, western donors had made liberal democracy a precondition for economic assistance (Oquaye 1995). Structural adjustment and economic recovery programs introduced in several African countries, however, increased public disenchantment. Reductions in public sector expenditure as part of the conditionalities by the Bretton Woods institutions led to high rate of retrenchment (see Konadu-Agyemang 2001). Under such desperate economic challenges, in closed political regimes, it was not surprising that the African public pushed for political opening. These external factors range from the end of the Cold War and the collapse of autocracies (Huntington 1993), to conditionalities associated with foreign aid (Nelson 1990; Resnick and Van de Walle 2013). Some are of the view that foreign aid kept autocrats in power by making more resources available for patronage (Rodrik 1996; Bräutigam 2000) whereas others like Gibson, Hoffman and Jablonski (2015) emphasise both the positive and negative effects of foreign aid in Africa.

By the early 1990s, it was clear that African leaders had failed to address the deterioration of the economic conditions in their countries. At the same time, the cold war was over, meaning that the assistance African countries previously received by aligning themselves with US or USSR, or even strategically shuttling between the two opposing blocs, was in short supply (see Griffin 1991). Democratic conditionalities, however, had come to stay and the Bretton Woods institutions increasingly applied stringent conditionalities for the continued flow of aid and economic assistance. The idea that ‘good governance’ was necessary for development entered the discourse (Mkandawire 2010). Respect for human rights and democracy was prioritised in the foreign policies of leading western democracies (Donnelly 1999) and the holding of elections was emphasised (Brown 2005).

Across the continent, many military leaders did not go back to the barracks, but metamorphosed into civilian political actors, formed parties, and contested elections. Unsurprisingly, the majority of these ‘reluctant democratisers’ won founding elections. Bratton (1998) observed that 54 elections took place in 29 countries between 1990–94. Of these, 30 were endorsed as free and fair by election observers. It is noteworthy, however, that the benchmark used in assessing founding elections was not stringent enough (Kelley 2009)—rightly so given the context within which elections took place. Democratic institutions were in their formative years. In such contexts, “flawed election may be preferable to no elections at all” (Anglin 1998, 474). Fraudulent elections are still common and

election monitors have sometimes endorsed these elections (Hyde, Gourevitch and Lake 2012; Dodsworth 2019). Also troubling is the fact that electoral fraud has been a major contributor to electoral violence in Africa (Salehyan and Linebarger 2015).

Elections and Violence in Africa

Scholars like Lindberg (2006) have long argued that regular elections, even when of low-quality, will contribute to democratic development in the long run. It has, however, been demonstrated time and again that electoral integrity should not be compromised if democracy is to thrive (Norris 2014). The credibility of elections is as important as its conduct. Thus, credible elections ensure fair political competition and increase the likelihood that losers will accept electoral results. For this reason, the endorsement of fraudulent elections by some election monitors (see Dodsworth 2019) cannot be democratically justified.

Elections take place in nearly all African countries, with the exception of a few outliers. Yet, progress has been uneven. Put differently, competitive elections in Africa have produced mixed results. For instance, multi-party elections held in countries like Benin, Cape Verde, Ghana, and Mauritius have opened up the political space for positive political contest despite some incidences of low-intensity violence. Also, countries such as Guinea, Liberia, Niger, and Sierra Leone have seen relative stability with the introduction of elections, following many years of despotic leadership and lengthy civil wars (International Peace Institute 2011). In the case of Angola, however, post-conflict elections in 1992 plunged the country back into civil war (von Borzyskowski 2019). Unfortunately, elections in Africa are highly contentious matters and, in some cases, have contributed to political instability instead of strengthening democracy.

More broadly, some form of violence plagues approximately 55% of elections in sub-Saharan Africa (Burchard 2015). This number does not include ‘nomination violence’ (Seeberg, Wahman and Skaaning 2018), which occurs during internal party competitions. A more common trend, however, has been that of low-level violence; extensive repression of both candidates and voters, including imprisonment and assassination; violent riots and clashes between supporters of competing parties or between party ‘militia’ groups; and attacks on party properties (Adolfo, Kovacs, Nystrom and Utas 2012). Moreover, election-related violence varies significantly between states, within states, and even from one poll to another (Straus and Taylor 2012). For instance, elections in some states have remained relatively peaceful with little or no incidents of violence,

while others have consistently experienced violence with worrying levels of fatalities (von Borzyskowski 2019). In recent times, high-intensity election violence in Kenya (2007/08), Zimbabwe (2000 and 2008), Nigeria (2007 and 2011) and Cote d'Ivoire (2010/11) have altogether claimed the lives of at least five thousand people and displaced hundreds of thousands.¹⁵ In almost 80% of elections marked by violence, incumbents are the initiators of violence (Straus and Taylor 2012). In addition, pre-electoral violence is more common than post-election violence (Straus and Taylor 2012) even though post-election violence has recorded some of the highest casualties as typified in the countries mentioned above. Whether low or high, election violence is inimical to the practice of democracy. The AU has set itself an ambitious task of 'silencing the guns in Africa' by 2020. To achieve this, the AU and other sub-regional bodies, inter alia, must pay particular attention to electoral disputes (and violence) given that violence in one country may have spill-over effects. Moreover, citizens' support for democracy tends to increase when elections are not characterised by violence (International Peace Institute 2011).

Risk Factors

While different contexts account for variations in the occurrence of electoral violence, there are certain common factors that make some countries more susceptible to electoral violence than others. Elections do not necessarily bring about conflict. Where, however, institutional frameworks are weak and the rules governing the process are perceived as unfair, elections can intensify political, ethno-regional, and religious tensions (Snyder 2000).

Moreover, poverty in Africa is high. Afrobarometer (2016) indicated unemployment, health, and education are three of Africa's priority problems. Since 2010, countries like Burkina Faso, Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Eritrea, Niger, and Sierra Leone have consistently appeared at the bottom of Human Development (HDI) rankings. All these countries have experienced or still experience intra-state conflicts. In addition, Africa's youth bulge is a notable cause for concern. According to the World Economic Forum (2019), 19 of the 20

¹⁵ The OHCHR fact-finding mission to Kenya reported over 1,200 deaths in the 2007–08 post-election violence. Human Rights Watch (2008) reported 36 people were killed in the 2000 Zimbabwean elections and two thousand cases of political violence were recorded during the 2008 elections. In Cote d'Ivoire, the 2010–11 post-election conflict resulted in the death of about three thousand people. In Nigeria, the 2011 post-election crisis resulted in the death of about eight hundred people.

youngest countries in the world are in Africa.¹⁶ Regrettably, the continent has failed to take advantage of the opportunities that such a youthful population can offer for economic development. Although mobilising youth to commit political violence is not exclusive to Africa, the high levels of unemployment on the continent compounds the problem. Many studies suggest that poor economic conditions increase the risk of conflicts (Collier and Hoeffler 2002; Urdal 2006). Africa's unemployed youth have provided politicians with a constant source of people to be recruited for violent acts. It is therefore not surprising that youth wings of political parties in Africa are among the regular perpetrators of political violence (e.g. Bob-Milliar 2014; Bjarnesen 2020). This has led to a culture of impunity and a cyclical pattern of violence that peaks during election periods.

Evidence also suggests that hybrid governments are more conflict-prone than democratic governments or autocratic regimes (Norris and Coma 2015). In these entities, institutions are weak or inchoate and therefore lack the capacity to deal with the pressures associated with competitive elections, political participation, or reform (Norris and Coma 2015). In addition, incumbent elites are more likely to manipulate election outcomes (Ekman 2009), which increases the risk of protests and violent repressions. Ekman cautions against conceiving of hybrid regimes as “poorly functioning democracies” but rather as “new forms of authoritarian regimes” (Ekman 2009, 8). This is a concern for Africa, where a significant number of countries are classified as hybrid regimes. For instance, the Economic Intelligent Unit (EIU) ranked 17 African countries as hybrid regimes in its 2019 report.¹⁷

In sum, violent elections are associated with high costs, even in situations where the casualties are low. Election violence undermines democracy, which should be regarded as an effective rule-based system for addressing political conflict in a non-violent manner. Beyond the democratic challenges, election violence can also have economic implications (Doctor and Bagwell 2020).

Conclusion

In a memorable speech delivered to Ghana's parliament on 11 July 2009, United States President Barack Obama stressed the need for Africa

¹⁶See <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/08/youngest-populations-africa>

¹⁷ See Democratic Index 2019: A year of democratic setbacks and popular protest, <http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy-Index-2019.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=democracyindex2019>

to build strong institutions instead of relying on strongmen. He further stressed that “strong parliaments; honest police forces; independent judges; an independent press; a vibrant private sector; [and] a civil society” are important in ensuring that governments “respect the will of their own people [and] govern by consent and coercion”.¹⁸

This statement is as true now as it was then. It is, however, also true that advancing democracy requires politically conscious citizens who are willing to commit to the political process through: active engagement with public actors; demanding accountability from public officials, as well as bringing their competencies to bear on policy formulation and implementation with the aim of promoting good governance; and ensuring economic development. For this reason, it is imperative to focus on a more-people centred approach as part of democracy-promotion efforts. Here, the role of the organisations of civil society in educating the African public about their civil and political rights becomes all-important. Accordingly, donors should support programs that are designed to raise public awareness of political processes, which in the long run will strengthen accountability mechanisms. It will be difficult for politicians to manipulate informed citizens to engage in acts that are detrimental to the health of democracy. Relatedly, a politically conscious citizenry can provide an enormous impetus to the fight against widespread corruption on the continent.

In addition, the high levels of poverty on a continent with a bulging youth population have affected democratisation and the prospects of consolidation. African governments and development partners must give much consideration to policies that will secure the socio-economic rights of the people. Increasing employment will reduce youth vulnerability and the likelihood of their recruitment by political elites to perpetrate violence.

Although the electoral arena is often chaotic, it appears that there is popular support for elections. At the same time, there are concerns about the transparency and fairness of this important democratic practice. Given the credibility challenges that have characterised electoral processes and the negative consequences thereof, democratic stakeholders must devise ways of improving the quality of elections, which is essential to reducing the occurrence of electoral violence. The positive impact of technical election assistance have been highlighted in the literature (von Borzyskowski 2019). In addition, a growing literature suggests that

¹⁸ See <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-ghanaian-parliament>

domestic observers, provided with the necessary training, will be more effective than international observers (e.g. Carothers 1997; Gyekye-Jandoh 2017). Going forward, there should be more partnership programs and coordination between these two groups for improved election monitoring.

In the end, the good news is that despite the challenges, the larger African populace prefer democracy to any other option. The consolidation of democracy, however, remains an elusive quest for many African countries. Achieving it will require addressing the pitfalls discussed above.

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Zimbabwe: Governance by Default

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Mugabe's Zimbabwe was internationally known and very largely condemned for the manipulation and violence that enabled his regime to remain in power for nearly 40 years until overthrown by a soft military coup in 2017. Malcolm Fraser (Australian prime minister 1975–83) was influential in supporting Zimbabwe's independence movements in the 1970s, but in 2008, he observed, almost offhandedly, that change in Zimbabwe could not come “from the ballot box, because the Mugabe government controls too many of the processes” (Fraser and Simons 2010, 516). Though Mugabe has gone, most of the apparatus of repression and manipulation that kept the dominant party, ZANU-PF, in power remains in place.

The malleable term “governance” sometimes refers to the ability of governments to deliver services efficiently, but that narrow focus can leave the requirements for democracy untouched (Ware 2019, 202–4). This article considers a specific aspect of the electoral process that is clothed in democratic rhetoric but actually plays a significant role in containing challenges to the regime, as shown in the election of 2018 examined below. It is not the only or the most important element required for Zimbabwean democracy, but, we argue, electoral processes are critical, and we focus on a necessary element within them.

This is the way in which electoral boundaries are drawn (termed ‘delimitation’ in Zimbabwe), supposedly giving every voter an equal say in electoral outcomes for the parliament (‘one person one value’, something more than ‘one person one vote’), but in practice valuing votes very differently (‘malapportionment’), especially across rural and urban locations. The critical factor, to make electorates as nearly as possible equal in voting numbers so that a vote in one electorate has the same potential value as a vote in another, is mandated in the Zimbabwean constitution, but those provisions have been comprehensively ignored

across Zimbabwe's history since independence. As one well-informed analyst of Zimbabwe (Handley 2007) has noted, malapportionment

does not have to be active. Simply avoiding the periodic redrawing of boundaries also produces malapportioned constituencies. This form of malapportionment—passive malapportionment—may be the result of an administrative decision (e.g., lack of funds), but it may also be sanctioned for political gain. (64)

To seek to give all votes an equal value is itself a political 'value' and one that can be contested on a number of grounds. Voters disadvantaged by, say, their rural location, entailing limited communications, and other costs with political and social consequences, might be protected by weighting their votes in a conscious and defensible way. The upper house of the Australian federal parliament is constituted by an equal number of senators from each state, thus effectively weighting the votes of the state with the fewest voters at more than 15 times the value of the most populous; that inequality was constitutionally entrenched at the time of federation as an acknowledged cost of forging unity. Other examples more clearly showing the impact of rural weighting are found in Australia and elsewhere, though such cases seem to be diminishing globally. In the absence of argued criteria for selective weighting, however, the term 'malapportionment' is justly applied, and it will be important to examine below the rationale (if any) for rural preference in Zimbabwe.

Malapportionment is a subject well studied by scholars, governments, and electoral authorities, though the term has little popular recognition. It is often confused or conflated with other electoral malpractices, especially perhaps "gerrymandering" (the drawing of boundaries to include favoured populations, without regard necessarily to the numbers of electors involved). Such is the case, we will see, in Zimbabwe. The study of both phenomena owes much to electoral experience in the USA, where both apportionment and gerrymandering continue to be rife even though the seminal work of Key (1949) is now some 70 years old and governments of all persuasions, in the USA and elsewhere, promise electoral rectitude (Rydon 1968; Johnston 2015). The United Nations' guide to electoral system design and reform warns against "the creation of excessive differences in constituency magnitude in terms of the proportion of elected representatives to the number of voters—or inhabitants/citizens—between constituencies" (United Nations 2013, 9).

Malapportionment is indeed technically outlawed in laws and constitutions the world over (which is not to say universally), including, as already noted, in Zimbabwe; a fact that owes much to the universality of charters of human rights which supposedly ensure that citizens are equal in substantive ways. African nations have shared fully in such proclamations, but, at the same time, it has been said that the practice is especially prevalent in Africa (Samuels and Snyder 2001, 653). Scholarly literature adds little to that generalisation, however, as there appears to be only a single well-drawn comparative study of malapportionment in African nations (Boone and Wahman 2015) and Zimbabwe was included only formally in that study because the violence of its elections precluded data being validated for the whole period covered for other nations in the survey (1990–2010). To that extent, the present paper offers an account of something missing, specifically for Zimbabwe and generally for Africa, even though its approach is not comparative or primarily quantitative, but historical and focussed on one polity.

Though the practice, or rather malpractice, in Zimbabwe has not gone unnoticed either within the country or abroad, it has received limited attention when other electoral problems seem more egregious and immediate and, no doubt, because malapportionment applies only to the constituencies of the Legislative Assembly. Other elements of the political architecture are elected in different ways. Thus, the presidency is determined by national ballot (subject to run-off if no candidate reaches the 50% +1 mark in the first round of voting), a more direct method than certain other presidential systems (including the American, where an electoral college strongly filters the primary vote and may allow a minority candidate to win—in itself a form of malapportionment). In addition, the Zimbabwean Assembly is augmented by 60 female members chosen from party lists that reflect proportional voting in the 10 provinces (a provision that will expire in 2023 unless renewed). The 80-member senate also follows a proportional system for 60 of its members, with a further 18 chiefs and 2 special members (for disability) elected indirectly; 100 directly elected provincial council seats are also elected through a proportional party-list system.

Table 1 summarises the results of the election of 2018 and serves as a point of reference for the discussion below. The election returned members to all elements of the political structures shown and additionally to local councils, and given the multiple choices for electors, is understandably referred to as a “harmonised election”. The complexity

Table 1. Harmonised Elections 2018 Summary Results

Presidency	Candidate	Party	Votes	%
	Mnangagwa	ZANU-PF	2,456,010	50.67
	Chamisa	MDC - Alliance	2,151,927	44.39
	Khupe	MDC-Tsvangirai	45,626	0.94
	Others		121,354	2.5
	Invalid/blank		72,316	1.5
	Total		4,847,233	100

Assembly	Votes	%	Seats	Women
ZANU-PF	2,477,708	52.35	145	35
MDC -A	1,624,875	34.33	63	24
MDC-T	161,824	3.42	0	1
Nat. Patriotic Front	49,103	1.04	1	0
Independent	238,179	5.03	1	0
Invalid/blank	181,162	3.83	–	–
Total	4,732,851	100	210	60

Senate	Seats
ZANU-PF	34
MDC -A	25
MDC - T	1
Chiefs	18
Disabled People	2
Total	80

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

facing the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), responsible for the day, is a factor to be considered in the analysis below. Note that the Assembly result shown below, unlike the other results, are nowhere shown in that summary form on the ZEC website or in its election report (ZEC 2020a), and no observer missions were able to show summary results. This is some indication that the parliamentary results are not intended for ease of analysis and this article depends on secondary analysis by the author and by Carr (2020).

The Assembly is only one part of the Zimbabwean political structure, and its role has undoubtedly diminished since Mugabe introduced an executive presidency in 1987 to replace the (“Westminster”) parliamentary system inherited at independence. As prime minister from independence, Mugabe had chafed at the restrictions that parliament seemed to place on him. He made no secret of his wish to exercise presidential powers in ways that followed the pattern across Africa where most former British colonies had moved to presidential systems (see e.g., van Cranenburgh 2008). Still, the parliament remained in place, and the close call of 2002, when a nascent Movement for Democratic Change (MDC; later MDC-A and MDC-Tsvangarai) came within a few seats of a majority in the Assembly, showed that the institution still had to be contended with—that is, controlled. Part of Mugabe’s story is the way in which he managed to hold a majority in the Assembly in the elections of 2005 and 2008, at the cost, for a time, of agreeing to a so-called government of national unity (GNU).

At the same time, Zimbabwean politics was animated by a desire for modernity and racial equality, taking shape in an emphasis on equal citizenship. Much the rhetoric of equality, however, was vitiated in practice. The Lancaster House Agreement, after all, burdened the newly independent Zimbabwe with an electoral system that had to be repudiated and replaced as soon as possible. The retention of 20 parliamentary seats reserved for white voters in an Assembly of 100 members might have been regarded as a severe form of malapportionment indeed, though that term was not used (Sachikonye 2002).

The 1987 restructuring of political institutions not only introduced an executive presidency but also amended the constitution and electoral law to create a number of institutions responsible for the different aspects of elections. The Delimitation Commission (boundaries), the Registrar General (enrolment and polling provision), the Electoral Supervisory Commission (supervision of the process), and the Election Directorate (coordination of government agencies) shared duties in complex and overlapping ways, united only by the fact that the president was in one

way or another in control of them all. The Delimitation Commission, for instance, began its deliberation on boundaries at presidential initiative and its reports were subject to his acceptance (Sachokonye 2002, 120–21). Important also for our purposes, the provision of ‘equality’ between electorates was introduced at this time, with the allowance of 20% either way made permissible; and those provisions have remained intact in substance until the present time, including through the constitutional changes of 2013.

The constitution of 2013 would not have emerged if grudging accommodations and compromises had not been made between ZANU-PF under Mugabe and the then united MDC under Tsvangarai in the GNU period, and hammered out in the national consultative process through the Parliamentary Select Committee on the Constitution in 2012 ([COPAC]; see Marumahoko 2018, 22–23). The terms of the constitution were, at least on the surface, agreed between the contending parties. An important change was the consolidation of the position of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission—the body created in 2004 to assume some of the functions of the four former bodies—partially in 2005 and then completely in 2013 (ZEC 2020b). Questions remained about its independence from the government, however. Presidential appointment of the eight commissioners and the chair “in consultation with Parliament”, the control of funding to the Commission by the executive, and the need for the Ministry of Justice to approve any regulations adopted by the Commission has led stakeholders and international election observers to express concern about its impartiality (Southall 2013, 2–4; International Foundation for Electoral Systems 2018). How much the changes of 2013 have detached elections in Zimbabwe from governmental control is a question we must answer below.

A desire to frame electoral politics not just in terms of ‘one person one vote’ but of ‘one person one value’ was certainly understood and was clearly manifested in the constitution adopted in 2013. The retention of the margin of 20% around the average number of electors was larger than some other nations have adopted but was not distinctly out of line with practice elsewhere, and the provisions for community of interest were drawn similarly to many others. A further constitutional requirement (s 161 (1)) required the ZEC to conduct a delimitation “as soon as possible after a population census”, thus effectively setting a date of 2012—when the census was indeed conducted as scheduled, though it was not followed by a delimitation. These were not controversial provisions. The COPAC did not call attention to them in its consultations around the country, summarising the choices to be made on electoral

matters only in terms of voting systems (first past the post [FPP], proportional, hybrid) (COPAC 2013, 8). Issues of delimitation were not raised in its forums as far as the public record reveals. When the report came to the Assembly, the minister responsible remarked about the heading “Delimitation” only that it “was a matter for the ZEC”—barely a sentence, and no other member in the debate made any mention of the matter at all (Parliament of Zimbabwe, 6 February 2013).

Until 2018, the ZEC could have argued that it was not responsible for initiating a delimitation, but in that year, shortly before the election and much too late for any delimitation to take place, the repeal of Section 37B of the Electoral Act removed the power of the President to set the date for the delimitation exercise to commence. Though an apparent enhancement of the autonomy of the ZEC, this change left open the question of what body had the statutory authority to initiate a delimitation of electoral boundaries. From around the time of Mugabe’s fall, the ZEC has seemed to imply in a number of its reports that it has not been and still is not fully empowered or funded to undertake its duties effectively, and there are reasons for accepting that view. Certain it is, however, that from 2008 until the election of 2018, no delimitation took place despite the availability of data from the 2012 census.

In 2008, the expansion of parliamentary Assembly membership from 120 to 210 required new boundaries to be drawn and the average number of electors in each electorate to be matched to the national average number of 26,715, with the margin of 20% above or below allowed (ZEC Delimitation report 2008). By 2018, the average number of electors had changed little: to 27,122. This is another way of saying that the number of electors had grown only slightly across the decade, as Table 2 shows, giving the detail of voting numbers for all 10 provinces. The distribution of voters across the country was another matter entirely.

The increase of enrolled electors from approximately 12.38 million to 14.44 million was barely 1.5%, against an increase of the general population in the same period of some 16% (World Bank 2020). To be sure, the linkages between total population and voting population are complex and dynamic, and the one is not linked to the other by any fixed formula. That complexity is an important issue for the ZEC in its efforts to encourage the registration of voters and to ensure that records of them are adequately maintained. There were many comments from observers in 2018 about inadequacies in those matters, in fact. But the task of delimitation is concerned with possible shifts of populations across boundaries, rather than with aggregate numbers, and the figures above show substantial and unequal shifts within and across the provinces.

Table 2. Enrolled Voters by Province 2008, 2018

Province	2008	2018	+ / –
Bulawayo	313,459	258,567	–54,892
Harare	766,478	900,728	134,250
Manicaland	709,664	733,370	23,706
Mashonaland Central	488,477	531,984	43,507
Mashonaland East	622,829	633,410	10,581
Mashonaland West	582,989	655,133	72,144
Masvingo	699,199	617,212	–81,987
Matabeleland North	345,264	339,135	–6,129
Matabeleland South	342,280	264,185	–78,095
Midlands	739,510	761,982	22,472
Totals	5,610,149	5,695,706	85,557
Notional quota	26,715	27,122	
Range +20%	32,058	32,547	
–20%	21,372	21,698	

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

By 2018, movements of voters (and implicitly, of non-voting populations) had changed the distribution across electorates markedly, as summarised in Table 3.

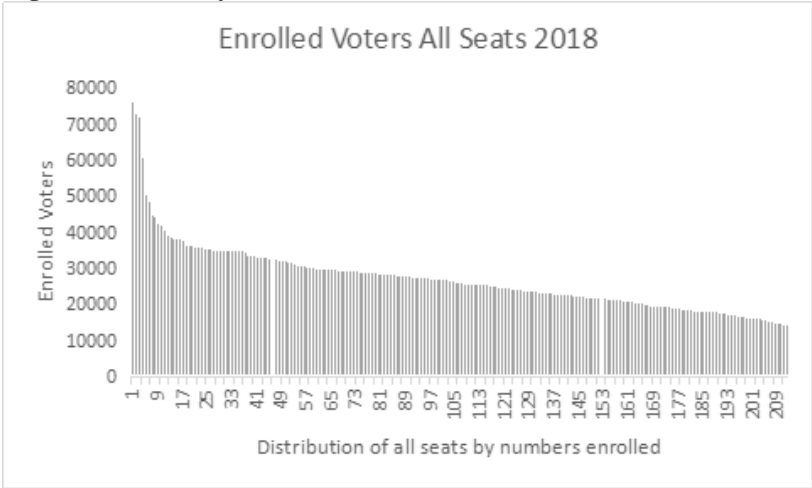
Table 3. Assembly Seats Over, Within, and Under Quota 2018

	2008		2018	
	n	%	n	%
Over Quota	0	0	44	28.6
Within Quota	210	100	106	50.5
Under Quota	0	0	60	21.0

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

Barely half of the Assembly constituencies remained within the ranges of the quota in 2018, a fact noted by the Election Observation Mission (EOM) of the European Union—one of three observer missions to offer sharp comment on malapportionment (EOM 2018, 9; Zimbabwe Election Support Network 2018, 21, 99; Reports of the Commonwealth Observer Groups 2018, ix, 19). Figure 1 shows the pattern in a graphic way: the vertical white lines separating the quota limits at the upper and lower boundaries. The figures shown for electorates are historical of course, and already, within two years of the election, the movements of population have undoubtedly continued and likely increased the disparities then apparent.

Figure 1. Assembly Seats Over, Within, and Under Quota 2018



The disparity between the parties across large and small electorates was also stark. ZANU-PF won almost a third of its seats in small constituencies and the Opposition a third of its lesser total in the constituencies over-quota, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Under, Within, and Over Quota by Party

	ZANU		MDC+	
	n	%	n	%
Over	14	9.7	21	32.3
Within	85	58.6	30	46.2
Under	46	31.7	14	21.5
	145	100	65	100

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

International and local observers alike questioned aspects of the run-up to the election and its management by the ZEC, but all concluded with varying degrees of reluctance that the voting on election day had been relatively peaceful and that the results should be accepted. The presidential poll received most attention from observers and media alike as the powers of the office relative to the parliament would make natural, but the way in which Mnangagwa had ascended to office made the vote compelling across the globe. The results of the presidential poll were indeed contentious within Zimbabwe and led to demonstrations, and to injuries and deaths for opposition supporters, in the days following the

poll. Subsequently the MDC-A candidate, Nelson Chamisa, challenged the presidential outcome but accepted the results for the Assembly.

Mnangagwa's vote for the presidency was narrow but sufficient for him to avoid the embarrassment and danger of a run-off; Mugabe's failure in 2008 to win a first round majority was the prelude to the intense violence that immediately followed and led Tsvangarai, then MDC leader, to withdraw from the contest and allow Mugabe to remain president uncontested. Mnangagwa might have been chastened to see his presidential vote run a little behind his party in the Assembly poll in numbers of votes (some 22,000), but in the Assembly, the MDC vote for both its factions was well below the combined total of its candidates in the presidential poll—more than 400,000 votes fewer, a loss of some 20%. Those differences reflected the different bases of the two polls: voters were aware that the presidential poll was a race between two major candidates, and many must have chosen not to 'waste' a vote on a minor candidate. The choices for the Assembly were different, for the range of candidates across hundreds of seats gave voters many choices and encouraged a greater spread of voting, reflected in the minor parties receiving almost three times the number of votes than their equivalents in the presidential poll.

Such differences between national (presidential) and constituency-based (parliamentary) polls are common throughout the world but have not always been well understood—as was the case in Zimbabwe in 2018. The usually well-informed *Africa Confidential*, for example, thought that ZANU-PF had done “far better” in the parliamentary elections “for reasons yet to be explained”, because it had won “over 66% of the [parliamentary] seats” (Africa Confidential 2018, 2). It was true that ZANU-PF won a large proportion of the Assembly seats (some 69% in the final count in fact) but its share of the vote, though slightly higher than in the presidential poll, was still not much greater than half the valid votes overall. The confusion turns on the malapportionment that is our focus. If the seats in the Assembly had been determined by a national allocation proportionate to the votes for the parties, akin to the presidential poll, then ZANU-PF would hold 110 seats and the opposition parties combined 100, a margin of 10 rather than 80—not far from the close results in the 2002 elections, 62–58 in a smaller parliament (excluding the 20 president-appointed members and the 10 members elected by chiefs, as applied at that time). On that basis, in 2018, a changed result in five seats would have delivered a “hung” parliament.

Of course, that is a fanciful proposition, and it is made not in advocacy but as an illustration of the impact of malapportionment on the 210

constituency seats decided in individual contests under rules that we are examining. Taking the parliamentary results as a whole, it is obvious that ZANU-PF candidates needed, on average, far fewer votes to win a seat than did other candidates. The 2,477,798 votes in total received by ZANU-PF candidates garnered 145 seats (17,088 on average) whilst the 2,073,981 votes for those in opposition generated 65 (31,907 average). The FPP voting system likely favours a party like ZANU-PF, running in all constituencies against opposition candidates that are fragmented to some degree, but still the differences are stark.

Zimbabwean politics remains polarised between urban and rural interests, as many observers have noted, especially over the past 20 years since the emergence of the MDC. That party, in its various manifestations following splits and reunions, has consistently drawn strength from the cities, principally Harare and Bulawayo. Table 5 illustrates this ongoing division by showing the outcomes for the 10 largest and the 10 smallest constituencies.

Table 5. Most and Least Populous Seats: Party Outcomes

Province	Constituency	ZANU/MDC	Voter Roll
Harare	Harare South	ZANU	76,425
Mash. East	Goromonzi South	MDC	73,155
Harare	Epworth	MDC	72,019
Manicaland	Dangamvura/Chik	MDC	60,726
Harare	Budiriro	MDC	50,478
Mash. Central	Bindura North	ZANU	48,759
Mash. East	Seke	ZANU	44,784
Masvingo	Chiredzi North	ZANU	44,233
Masvingo	Masvingo Urban	MDC	42,442
Midlands	Chiwundura	MDC	41,853
Masvingo	Zaka East	ZANU	15,996
Masvingo	Zaka West	ZANU	15,892
Midlands	Mberengwa West	ZANU	15,794
Mata.Sth	Mata. South	ZANU	15,356
Mata. Sth	Gweru South	ZANU	15,282
Bulawayo	Magwegwe	MDC	14,839
Mata. Sth	Insiza South	ZANU	14,736
Mash. East	Chikomba East	ZANU	14,556
Mash. East	Wedza South	ZANU	14,340
Masvingo	Gutu North	ZANU	14,198

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

The MDC won only one of the smaller constituencies but a majority of the larger; all of the larger constituencies are within major urban areas or on their outskirts, and the smaller are, without exception, relatively remote, rural areas with no major centres of population. The province of Mashonaland East exhibits both tendencies. The over-large constituencies of Goromonzi South and Seke, adjoining at the western boundary of the province, draw numbers from the Chitungwiza urban area near Harare; and the under-weight Chikomba East and Wedza South, also adjoining but at the eastern edge of the province, are not so very far from Harare, in truth, but linked only by slow roads and are well “in the bush”. The two large provinces, taken together, have doubled their voter enrolment since 2008 (58,644 to 117,939, or 201%) and the two smaller have reduced by more than a third (45,539 to 28,896, or 63%).

To be sure, the MDC did not win either the largest constituency, Harare South, or Seke just noted. That it did not win Harare South was due almost certainly to the split in the vote between MDC-A and MDC-T candidates. Their combined vote (25,382) was larger than the ZANU-PF candidate (24,503), who nevertheless won under the FPP system; we might also note that there were 12 other candidates in this heavily contested constituency (a further 13,530 votes). The situation in Seke was similar, if less extreme, with the ZANU-PF candidate taking 48.4% of the vote against 51.5% for the MDC-A candidate and seven others, but the plurality under FPP was again sufficient. The position in Magwege in Bulawayo was reversed for the MDC-A candidate, whose plurality of 46.7% prevailed against 22 other candidates.

It would be possible to take the analysis of seats much further. It might be important to explain, for example, why six of the twelve Bulawayo seats have shown a decline in enrolled voters since 2008: there has been controversy over the counting of population in the city, an MDC stronghold, and the consequential disbursement of government grants. But our purpose is not to invigilate the 2018 results in any detail, or to guess what a more equitable system (‘well apportioned’) might produce. The number and quality of candidates, the nature of an electoral campaign, and many other factors must influence results in a ‘playing field’, no matter how ‘level’. It is clear that any delimitation that revised boundaries and stabilised voting populations within the limits set in the constitution would have considerable impact on any future election, assuming, of course, that such an election was fairly run in other respects.

There has been no suggestion from ZANU-PF that the rural bias that protects its parliamentary numbers has any strong basis that can be publicly defended. The ability of the party across many years to reward

supporters and punish opponents has been well documented, and as Southall (2013, 7) noted of the 2013 elections, “especially [for] those in rural areas far away from the attention of the international media, voting ZANU-PF may have been as the most viable strategy of maintaining the peace.” The situation in 2018 was only marginally changed.

Periodic redistributions that aim to achieve ‘one person one value’ are seldom happy events for any political party involved, even in nations where the principle is fairly applied by independent agencies. Shifting voters across revised boundaries, even when the changes are quantitatively marginal, can have devastating impacts for sitting members, including senior ones. In Zimbabwe, the consequences of an imagined ‘delimitation’ that followed the constitutional provisions—as recommended by international and local observers—would undoubtedly bear heavily on ZANU-PF, though unintended consequences might also follow to some degree for opposition parties. One certain consequence would be the readjustment of the number of seats allocated to each province, since population and associated enrolment changes differ across the provinces. Table 6 shows a possible outcome for each province based on the 2018 figures (which as noted could be somewhat different by the time any actual redistribution is carried out—if one ever is).

Table 6. Hypothesised Gains/Losses of Seats 2008 & 2018 Populations

Province	2008	2018	Change
Bulawayo	12	10	-2/-3
Harare	29	33	+4/+5
Manicaland	26	27	+1
Mash. Cent	18	20	+2
Mash. East	23	23	0
Mash. West	22	24	+2
Masvingo	26	23	-3
Mata. North	13	13	0
Mata. South	13	10	-3
Midlands	28	28	0
	210	210	

Source: Carr 2020; ZEC 2020a

The changes could be seen as marginal but would certainly arouse tensions within ZANU-PF as the balance of membership shifted between provinces and influential members fought to retain their positions if they saw that their constituencies might be altered or even abolished. Inevitably, such pressures would also be found in the MDC-A, but

ZANU-PF members have more to lose. Such struggles are common in redistributions the world over, but the culture of politics in Zimbabwe, especially within the ruling party, would likely make such changes heated and dangerous.

Thus, the governing party has no obvious reason for addressing, let alone explaining, the failure to undertake a delimitation exercise; silence is to be expected. It might however be supposed that the opposition parties that are disadvantaged by the the practice, or rather its absence, would be more voluble. To some extent the MDC-A has been. Its policy document currently calls for the “disbanding” of the ZEC, the “dismissal of all” commissioners and the “retiring of all” other staff; and for “consensual, negotiated and agreed process on delimitation to avoid gerrymandering and manipulation of boundaries” (MDC 2020, 26–27). But this detail on “delimitation” does not specifically address malapportionment, though “gerrymandering” is probably used to mean much the same thing, even though it is not. The existence of other severe shortcomings in the processes and administration of elections, as noted, may explain a little shorthand.

Still, if malapportionment is now a well-known but still subsidiary fact in electoral politics in Zimbabwe, its salience seems certain to rise as time passes. That is one certain result of the inaction by the government. Urbanisation is increasing in Zimbabwe, though unevenly, and in recent years less strongly than in some other African nations, in part because of the policies of the Mugabe government that brutally dispossessed some urban dwellers of their locations and livelihoods (Potts 2006). But the long-term tendency is most unlikely to abate, and the tilting of the electoral system towards ZANU-PF will thus increase if not addressed through a “delimitation”. It will become increasingly obvious that the government maintains a majority in the Assembly to a substantial degree by virtue of its inaction. No one could be confident, given Zimbabwe’s history, that mere facts would move the government to action, least of all against its own perceived interests, but more than government will is involved.

The position of the ZEC is called into question by the current situation and will become ever more uncomfortable as time passes. In many accounts, it is a corrupted organisation that serves as the pliant tool of the dominant party, creating something only a little short of a one-party state. The ZEC has certainly been placed in a position of apparent power. Earlier bodies sharing some responsibility for electoral matters have been abandoned, and the power of the president in electoral matters has in some respects been reduced, specifically the power to initiate delimitations. The

result has been to expose the ZEC to all criticisms about electoral matters, though some no doubt arises from the intrinsic complexity of its work. A ‘harmonised election’ for presidential, bi-cameral parliamentary and provincial elections is no small undertaking. One measure of the ZEC’s challenge is its determination that polling booths should be available widely across Zimbabwe’s modest but scattered population, and should not exceed one thousand enrolled electors per booth, ensuring that the total number of polling stations to be staffed (and monitored) is large—10,985 for a voting population of less than six million (compared, for example, with Australia’s seven thousand stations in a federal election for a voting population of some 16 million in 2018).

Since at least the time of Mugabe’s fall, the ZEC has seemed to hint publicly that it is not to blame for the failure to delimit electorates. Thus, it has not sought to downplay its responsibilities for a redistribution but rather to state them prominently on its website and in its publications. “Delimitation” is one of the banners at the head of its web page, and the legal and constitutional requirements for redistribution, and the details of the 2008 exercise, are clearly set out. In its detailed report on the 2018 elections (ZEC 2018a) the Commission also set out the financial difficulties it faced in meeting its responsibilities: it was “allocated \$153.9 million out of a bid of \$272 million for the ... elections, representing 56% of the Commission budget” (xii), and so recommended that in future “all election funds [should] be released timeously [sic], and in sufficient amounts to enable it to adequately prepare for and conduct elections” (84). At the same time, it noted diplomatically that the financial departments “later availed further resources which enabled the Commission to fulfil all outstanding obligations related to the plebiscite ... [which was] quite commendable, marking a great improvement from past experience” (11, 84). As we might expect, there has been no public response from any section of the government to the comments and recommendations.

The Commission claimed virtue for running the 2018 elections successfully, but it exhibits signs of an organisation under stress. It must present itself as a competent organisation, and there is no prospect that Zimbabwe would be subjected to the indignity of a training exercise of the sort that the African Union organises for some other nations.¹ The next election is due in 2023 and the next census by late 2021. There is

¹ As for Somalia in 2018, for example, a training in “the process of electoral boundary delimitation ... crucial in contributing to the sustainability of democratic governance, peace and political stability” (African Union 2018).

probably insufficient time between those two dates for a thorough delimitation of boundaries, especially after years of neglect as documented above. The choice before the ZEC is to move swiftly or to delay and fall further behind. Neither choice is palatable and the choice, on every indication, is not the Commission's to make. Despite the law, Zimbabwean governance rests with the executive government alone.

As the next election approaches, it can be imagined that the gap between the Commission's responsibilities and performance will be questioned ever more, and the gap between it and the government will be seen for what it is—a conscious strategy of inactivity by the executive, hiding behind officials who receive material rewards from the state as compensation for their discomfort in the eyes of their nation and the world. This will be uncomfortable for many of the actors but gives opportunity for voice and critique for others. That remains essential for the shaping of democratic governance in Zimbabwe.

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Dismantling the 'Deep State' in Sudan

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Abstract

In the wake of the revolution in Sudan, there has been a significant amount of discussion about the deep state. These discussions emanate from other examples across the globe, where the deep state is perceived to be an interlocking system of shadowy interests that direct government actions in ways that undermine democratic principles. What kinds of interests control Sudan—a country that has been an authoritarian state until recently—need further analysis. This article unpacks the core elements of the deep state in the country, how it developed, and the areas in which influences exist. I argue that the deep state is more than kleptocracy or corruption alone. Rather, following the work of Bourdieu, I contend that there are four major types of capital that permeate the deep state and allow those involved to maintain control. Following from this, I argue that dismantling the deep state means more than asset seizure and tracking of illicit financial flows. It must encompass a more fundamental and difficult transformation of systems of privilege, education, and connection in Sudan that are at the heart of core-periphery relations.

Introduction

The concept of a deep state at the heart of government and politics has gained more traction over recent years (Filkins 2012; Lofgren 2014). The idea has been used to convey a government within a government or, as others have put it, a shadow state where the seat of real power lies. While the concept of the deep state is sometimes questioned, it seems particularly apt in the case of Sudan, where the government throws more shadow than light, and where stories of repression and exclusion are the leitmotif of the country's post-colonial existence. In a country where private networks matter and where they can be the difference between life or death, the deep state represents a certain strain of those interests built

over decades of authoritarian rule. Today, as Sudan is governed by a hybrid Sovereign Council in which key actors from the past are in powerful positions, there is good reason to suppose that those interests remain and are shaping the country in ways that may damage its future.

The deep state has been variously described as a ‘conspiratorial cabal’, “a set of agencies that are hiding in plain sight” (Lofgren 2014), or a network of like-minded individuals pursuing a particular agenda. Hailing from the Turkish term *derin devlet*, it has come to connote both the clandestine and destabilizing aspects of the intelligence state—a sense of deep power that has the ability to discipline even those at the helm of government (Filkins 2012). In Sudan, the term deep state has often been used to describe the issue of state capture and kleptocracy leading to corruption and the privatization of assets. As the Enough Project (2017, 2) contends: “Sudan’s government is a violent kleptocracy, a system of misrule characterized by state capture and co-opted institutions, where a small ruling group maintain power indefinitely through various forms of corruption and violence.” While this certainly describes part of the problem, it is, I contend, inadequate to explain why certain ideas prevail and why the interests of a few are able to so successfully inscribe tracks of power and behaviour into the landscape of Sudanese politics over time.

Trying to understand how a deep state installs itself at the heart of government and society needs an analysis that links micro level behaviours to macro level outcomes. It needs to explain how everyday decisions to appropriate resources are linked to a larger kleptocratic network. It also needs to understand the conditions of possibility that allow that to happen. Consequently, we need to go further than understanding corruption and theft alone. At the heart of these conditions are ideologies, intelligence agencies, media centres, communication networks, operatives, and outside lobbyists who facilitate a discursive regime that changes the very nature of what counts for truth. In Sudan, besides the intelligence agencies such as the National Intelligence and Security Services (NISS) and the Sudanese Media Centre (SMC) who were the recognisable face of this enterprise, there are a battery of regime officials and hangers-on who inhabit the world of representation about what Sudan is and what it claims to be. These Armani-suited individuals are the epitome of the reach of the deep state. They wear power on their bodies, in their educational credentials, and in their use of multiple languages to feign the kind of fake cosmopolitanism that lets them ‘pass’ in the international sphere. Dismantling this kind of privilege takes a long time—often a generation, or more, to remove.

Changing regimes changes the government and for the most part, it changes institutional office holders. Dismantling the deep state takes a lot longer. On taking power in 2019, Sudan's Transitional Government (STG) published a document entitled "General Framework for the Program of the Transitional Government" (STG 2019). It writes the immediate and urgent priorities to set Sudan on a different course. It deals with what is manageable now—the normative—in the belief that correcting the rest can come later. What it cannot do is deal with the status disparities, the ways of knowing, the connections, the ways of talking and being that buy credibility. In the shadowy world of power and realpolitik, it is these tools and the sense of certainty in who you are and who you know, that are the enduring aspects of absolute power.

This paper analyses the deep state in Sudan and asks what it might take to dismantle it. Looking at early roots, I analyse its composition and the areas through which it has been entrenched in modern day Sudan. I look at not only illicit financial flows and the restructuring of economy into a kleptocracy, but also the other agencies, public and private, that have created an enduring network of patronage and advantage. Using ideas of *habitus* and capital associated with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984), I also show how privilege is marked on the bodies and minds of the actors that constitute the deep state. Finally, I turn to the ways in which this can be dismantled to assist those who are now trying to make change.

Building the Deep State

"From where did those creatures emerge?"

Tayeb Salih (quoted in Khalid 2003)

On Friday morning, 30 June 1989, an Islamist military coup was carried out in Sudan. It ended a period of political turbulence overseen by the privileged families of colonial lineage in Sudan, but it also inserted something much more nefarious and difficult to dislodge into the political landscape of the country.

Led by Brigadier Omar Hassan al-Bashir, a relatively unknown military officer from the north of Khartoum, it was the brainchild of Hassan al-Turabi, the secretary of *al-Jabhah al-Islamiyah a-Qawmiyah* (The National Islamic Front). Besides al-Turabi, who was the intellectual author, there was also the planner, Ali Osman Muhammad Taha, the Deputy Secretary General of the NIF who masterminded the coup and how it unfolded. In order to throw some shadow about who the coup plotters were, Hassan al-Turabi, Ibrahim al Sanoussi, and Ahmad 'Abd al-Rahman, (two of al-Turabi's close colleagues), were arrested post-

coup and detained in Kober Prison (Gallab 2008). Imprisoning these Islamist leaders alongside a group of usual suspects such as trade unionists, opposition politicians, and lawyers was a portent of what was to come. It indicated a deep and coordinated level of subterfuge, where those at the helm of the Islamist movement could achieve their aims, while simultaneously disguising their role in attempting to reshape the power structure of the country.

Planning did not stop with subterfuge around the political structure; it also extended to the information architecture of the country. As the coup took place, non-religious news agencies, newspapers, and TV stations were closed. In their place, a new media agency—rather unimaginatively called The Sudan News Agency (SUNA)—was formed. As Gallab points out, this effectively created a new media clearing house which was the only authorised news agency for news production and dissemination. These actions also resulted in the removal of more than one thousand professional reporters and journalists (Gallab 2008). In their stead, other newspapers were created, which directly represented the regime's position (Gallab 2008).

These changes created a strange duality of internal and external representations which have shaped Sudan until today. At home, the domestic population was treated to a daily diet of localised state propaganda. As Lisa Wedeen (1999) has argued, this propaganda produced a politics of 'as-if' where in public, the population dissembled in the face of power and acted 'as if' they agreed with the regime. This surface compliance was at least guaranteed by the Sudan Penal Code (1991), which specified all kinds of punishments for those who were not good Islamic citizens. Those who did not comply could look forward to a public whipping for failing to ensure *al amr bil m'arouf wa al nahi 'an al munkar* (for enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil), or harassment from wandering bands of young NIF security agents who had no compunction whatsoever about beating those who were 'contrary to public morals' (Khalid 2003, 218).

If internal representations produced a politics of dissimulation, then external representations were a whole other story. Outside of Sudan, there was a battle to 'win the hearts and minds' of westerners that involved utilising deep understandings of western society and deploying them against diplomatic actors to reduce concerns about the Islamist agenda. Hassan al-Turabi was a master of this, since he was educated at the Sorbonne in Paris, but he was by no means alone. Adherents of the regime, and those in its security apparatus, were frequently sent to external universities to master the ways they could engage with western

counterparts. This training was not only a matter of language skills, but also an understanding of *libs al-shal wa istimal al-jawal*, as Gallab (2008, 149) puts it, i.e., how to wear a necktie and how to use a mobile phone.

All of these changes meant that post 1989, Sudan was starting to emerge as a completely transformed society. A key part of this transformation was the nature of politics, which, like the rest of the system was Janus-faced, having sharply contrasting forms of language and representation. In 1992, at the start of the revolution there was a 'sham' election of hand-picked parliamentarians. Yet, as Khalid points out, this action was to disguise what came to be known as the Council of Forty, which was an inner core of NIF adherents (Khalid 2003, 198). This group infiltrated and assimilated all sources of power and money in the country such as the "army, police, security agencies, banks, media, education, mosques and anything that was left of the civil society" (Khalid 2003, 198). The glue that held this project together was al-Turabi's system of governance, called *Shar'a Allah* (Laws of God).

What emerged was a system in which religious ideology, state security, media information and wealth were welded together into an all-encompassing system. That system became known as the *tamkiin* (consolidating) strategy. At the heart of this strategy was an economic operation, started much earlier by Hassan al-Turabi under Nimeiri's rule, to funnel resources through Islamic Banks. These banks, such as Faisal Islamic Bank, were in turn part of a strategy by the Muslim Brotherhood who were able to leverage contacts across the Gulf to pull money into Islamic countries using *zakat* (alms) principles. One of the factors that allowed this situation to occur in Sudan was the relationship between 'Abd al-Rahim Hamdi, the architect of Sudanese Islamic banking, and Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Faisal Al Saud, who had Islamic banking interests in many parts of the world.

These developments created a foundation for Sudan's government and the shadow state that lay within. Unaccountable to the people who had by this time lost self-respect through policies of "demoralization, intimidation and dehumanization" (Khalid 2003, 219), the deep state controlled Sudan from within and without with the help of a network of believers, cronies, and allies who saw authoritarianism as a better option than political instability. This authoritarian mafiocracy, to quote Khalid (2003, 216), met its own reckoning in October 1999, when al-Turabi introduced a bill that was perceived as an attempt to limit President al-Bashir's power. Al-Bashir seized the moment in December of that year to launch coup number two and remove al-Turabi from the Islamist structure he had created.

This second coup was truly a ‘night of the long knives’ where Islamist acolytes turned on their leader. This meant that Hassan al-Turabi was side-lined by those very allies such as Ali Osman Muhammad Taha and Omar al-Bashir who had helped him in the 1989 coup. As al-Turabi was excised from government core and removed to Kober Prison again, the core of the deep state remained. Deprived now of its religious ideologue and mercurial front man, it paired down al-Turabi’s *ingaz* (salvation) vision, to a more bureaucratised model instead. According to Gallab (2008), this created three groups at the core: bureaucrats, security, and military personnel. Each with its own interests and ‘tribal’ affiliations, the deep state was now consolidated around powerhouses that were increasingly entrenched, paranoid, and fearful of each other and what they might be planning.

The Deep State Core

Despite these issues, the deep state strengthened in the period from 1999 onwards on account of threats from without. One of them emanated from al-Turabi himself, whose disaffected followers now joined an uprising in Sudan’s west, in Darfur. This movement, known as the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), was undergirded by a publication called *al-kitab al-aswad* (The Black Book), which had started circulating in mosques in Khartoum since 2000. Using data that would only have come from those who had connections to power, the book carefully spelled out the economic and other inequities between the capital (usually referred to as the centre) and the peripheries. On top of this, the long running conflict with the peoples of Southern Sudan still raged on, consuming significant government resources to keep it going.

The core necessarily reflected these threats and the need to contain and destroy such uprisings across the country. What emerged was a highly developed intelligence state, a plethora of formal military and informal militia actors, and an economic model that was premised on an extractive mode of capital accumulation. Understanding how to dismantle such a system requires understanding how the technocratic, intelligence, and military elements knit together. Crucially, it also means dismantling the one thing that has continued and strengthened over time: the consolidation and interlocking forms of economic, human, cultural, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984).

Bourdieu, in his early work about why power and privilege persists over time, noted that there are four forms of capital. The first is *economic capital*, which can be classed as control over financial flows, resources, land, property, and other material goods. The second is *cultural capital*,

which encompasses educational qualifications and knowledge of how to move within the society and its elite groups. This includes knowing how to dress, how to carry yourself, how to talk and engage, what counts as acceptable behaviour, and so on. The third is *social capital*, which describes the network of connections a person has. These connections may be to others within a dominant group, and to those who have power through money or historical position in the society. The fourth is *symbolic capital*, which is about status. This is about reputation and honour and how one's perception of respectability within a group is perceived (Bourdieu 1984). All of these forms come together to create what is called 'wasta' in Arabic. This refers to the way that personal connections, patronage, and loyalty interlace to create desirable outcomes for an individual as they progress through their life course.

These ideas came together in Sudan through ideologies and social codes about how to live. At the heart of this system was the *al-harakat al-islamiyya* (Islamic movement) under al-Turabi, which welded economics, politics, religion, and society together. Thus, while wealth consolidation was one goal within the movement, it was also about acquiring and spreading certain ideas about what it meant to be Sudanese. What Hassan al-Turabi started after the 1989 coup was *al-Mashru' al-Hadari* (the Civilizational Project). These ideas about Sudanization linked the idea of a righteous society based on *shari'a* law as an instrument to a national regeneration project for the country as a whole (Khalid 2003).

What had changed after the departure of al-Turabi, was that power was less ideological and more routinised around repression of the population and strengthening of the vehicles for patronage inside the core. Now, inside the deep state, silos coalesced around major figures such as Ali Osman Taha, Omar al-Bashir, Nafie Ali Nafie, and Salah Gosh in what has been called 'Rentier Authoritarianism' (Musso 2017). Each had its own network and logic of power and control linked to the entities they controlled. The important vehicles through which patronage, wealth and advantage could be advanced were the economy, military, security, and social networks. By leveraging these areas, the regime could survive and, in doing so, prolong the interests of its core protagonists.

The Economy

From 1999 onwards, attention turned to the economy. At this point, there were good reasons to be concerned about the economic situation because real GDP was in negative territory and there was double digit inflation. In addition, tax revenues had dwindled by two thirds, corruption

had soared, foreign exchange earnings were primarily obtained through agricultural exports, and the United States had launched a trade embargo in response to the US Embassy bombings in 1998 in Nairobi.

In Sudan, the person at the helm of the strategy to drive the economy forward was Ali Osman Mohamed Taha (Verhoeven 2013). A central plank for achieving economic growth was the idea of agricultural intensification in the Hamdi triangle.¹ The problem, however, was that large-scale irrigated agriculture needs a lot of water and this had to come from the Nile. The solution was fairly predictable: the creation of a large-scale dam project at Merowe. Planned on the Nile at the 4th Cataract since the time of Nimeiri but initially lacking sufficient finance, the dam was now able to be signed off in 2002 and started in 2004. The cost was approximately three billion dollars with credit provided by China's Exim bank (Bosshard 2009, 45) and well as the Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

One of the reasons why loans could be underwritten for the Merowe Dam project was the inflow of capital in October 2000 from the start of oil production. The new Greater Nile Oil Pipeline, from Unity State in southern Sudan to Port Sudan on the Red Sea, meant that oil revenue grew from USD \$61 million in 1999 to USD \$572 million in 2000. By 2002, it had reached 805 million USD (HRW 2003). Between the years of 1998 and 2002, oil revenue as a share of government revenue had gone from zero to 45%. By 2008, it had reached 66% before falling back to 60% in 2011 (IMF 2020; Suliman 2012).

The money from oil was a windfall to those at the heart of the Sudanese deep state because it greased the wheels of patronage networks. As the International Crisis Group have shown, these patronage networks have removed huge sums from the Sudanese economy for personal use. From the early days of the NIF regime and a privatisation program developed by Abdel Rahim Hamdi in 1992, they argue that "Islamist capitalists took advantage of the restructuring of the financial and economic management system to buy most of the former state companies under the privatisation program" (ICG 2011, 17).

Across the life of both periods of government, those at the core of the state enriched themselves beyond all measure by acquiring plots of land, hotels, transport networks, telecommunication companies, and forms of

¹ This tool of economic engineering was so named after Abdel Rahim Hamdi, Minister of Finance under both al-Turabi and al-Bashir, who called for development of the triangle of land between Dongola, El-Obeid, and Sennar, where the most significant voting bloc of the country lay. See Verhoeven for more details.

manufacturing. As the ICG documents assert, these acquisitions include the Friendship Hotel in Khartoum at \$85 million bought by Ali Karti, premium building blocks in Khartoum North's industrial area bought by Nafie Ali Nafie and Abdel Haleem al-Mutaafi and thousands of acres of fertile farming land along the Nile. Inside the core, which according to ICG (2011) includes senior leadership, the intelligence services, military, and police, there are reportedly 164 companies that are owned or controlled by Sudan's deep state elite.

As the spiderweb of patronage links grew across regime officials, it thickened along key threads. Keeping things in the family, President al-Bashir funnelled wealth to his wives and siblings. His brothers, Ali and Abdellah Hassan al-Bashir who were major shareholders of High Tech—a business group with shares in 23 companies working in such sectors as petroleum, petro-chemicals, engineering, telecommunications, cement and railways—acquired spectacular wealth (ICG 2011). Following a decision by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) to expel aid INGOs and centralise aid provision within the country in 2009, his wives went into the aid business. Widad Babiker Omer, the second wife of the President, is the chairperson of the Board of Directors of Sanad Charitable Foundation, the biggest Government of Sudan funded NGO. Another charity, *Umm al-Moumenein* (mother of believers), was headed by his first wife, Fatima Khalid (Bartlett 2015).

Yet, a cloud was growing on the horizon. In 2011, the oil money, and the associated benefits that came with it, came to a grinding halt when a dispute over transit fees, and later conflict in Heglig and the Nuba Mountains, led to the shutdown of oil exportation through the Greater Nile Oil Pipeline. The shutdown “led to a loss of 75 percent of government oil revenue, half of Sudan's fiscal reserves, the shrinking of non-oil exports, and unsustainable external debts of more than 43 billion USD” (Bartlett 2016, 48). This also resulted in a frantic search for other natural resources that could fill the gaping hole in government revenue. The result was another valuable commodity that lay under Sudan's earth: gold.

Within one year of the oil shutdown, Sudan became the third largest gold producer on the African continent (Elbadawi 2018). The Government of Sudan increased its gold production through corporate and artisanal mining. Corporate mining was carried out through five major domestic companies (*Ariab, Rida, Hajajiyah, Hoka, and Al Sakhrat Al Hamra*) with, according to the IMF, seven more companies projected to come on-line (Bartlett 2016). IMF staff monitoring reports in 2013 show that while gold accounted for 1% of export earnings in 2008,

it became the single largest export for the country in 2012, accounting for over 40% of export earnings and a reported USD \$2.2 billion in revenue (Bartlett 2016). According to Mohamed Suliman Ibrahim (2015), a geologist working for Sudan's Ministry of Minerals, artisanal or informal unregulated mining accounts for 85% of the total gold extracted from 2010 to 2015.

The Military

The search for resources in Sudan, as well as the increasingly narrow range of actors involved, meant that wealth was concentrated in the hands of a few, with the majority of the population being excluded. The resources which became critical to the inner group—oil, gold and water—and especially those which give up their riches quickly, were soon protected by al-Bashir and a variety of military actors. As William Reno (1998) has pointed out, however, not all military actors are not created equal, and inside shadow states, the growth of informal military groups often outpaces the regular army.

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) is the conventional army in Sudan. The Commander-in-Chief of SAF prior to the revolution was Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who now remains in government as chairman of the Sovereignty Council. Over time, SAF, which has a reputation for being “ineffective, poorly-motivated, and politically unreliable” (HBSA 2010), have interfaced with quasi-military and proxy militia groups. This interface is in relation to three major issues: first, to create the foundation for scorched earth policies on Sudan's periphery; second, to recruit militia members to swell army numbers for military campaigns; and third, to engage in population suppression in the event of protests. These relationships were seen in Darfur, where Al-Burhan was instrumental in what has been called ‘preliminary cleaning’ prior to the onslaught against civilians (Radio Dabanga 2019). It was also the case in the recent campaign in Yemen, where militias were recruited to buttress a ten thousand strong force (Brookings Institution 2019), and finally in Khartoum where militias worked with the regular army to quell protests at the time of the revolution (HRW 2019).

In addition to regular forces, there are private forces such as those around key deep state insiders. An example of this is a group called the Precious Stones that protect members of the Ja'ali elite, particularly the President (ICG 2011, 14). Besides private forces, there are also numerous types of quasi military actors. The first and earliest of these groups was the Popular Defence Force (PDF), which is considered a military reserve because it is legislated in law and used as military backup in conflict areas

(Small Arms Survey 2011).² The Border Guards, created in 2003 as a vehicle to incorporate Janjaweed, were controlled by General Al Hadi Adam Hamid of Military Intelligence who, in turn, reported to Ahmed Haroun, Minister of State for the Interior (ICG 2005).

Many informal militias also exist, that operate under the auspices of *aktul al 'Abid bil 'abid* (kill the slave by the slave) where one ethnic group is utilised to kill another and loot their possessions. The two most notorious of these were the Janjaweed, led by Musa Hilal, and the Rapid Support Forces, led by Mohamed Hamdan 'Hemedti' Dagolo. The Janjaweed is an informal militia comprised of Abbala Rezeigat who, in the early days of the Darfur Conflict, funded themselves by destroying communities and appropriating property. In more recent times, they have gone into the business of goldmining (Bartlett 2016) and ivory trafficking from Central African Republic (Haenlein et al. 2016, 60). Hilal's arch nemesis, Hemedti, favoured by regime insiders such as al-Bashir and now a member of the Sovereign Council, also became heavily involved in gold mining in the Jebel Amer, developing holding companies to appropriate the funds:

Bashir gave Hemedti free rein to sell Sudan's most valuable natural resource through this family firm, Algunade. At times Algunade bypassed central bank controls over gold exports, at others it sold to the central bank for a preferential rate, half a dozen sources said. Airway bills and invoices ... show Algunade sent around \$30 million of gold bars to Dubai, around a ton in weight. (Reuters 2019)

These privileges, obtained as a result of coordinating military in Yemen and being the force responsible for the 3 June 2019 massacre in Khartoum, make Hemedti one of the most feared people in the country. He does not see eye-to-eye with Al-Burhan and the army, yet he is so powerful that he has even underwritten Sudan's economy after the revolution, by depositing \$1 billion in the Central Bank of Sudan (Global Witness 2019).

Security Services

At the heart of Sudan's deep state is the country's security services. The security services operate in conjunction with the military and the

² This unit was incorporated into the military in June 2020 and is now called the 'Reserve Department' (Radio Dabanga, 2020).

bureaucracy, but they are without doubt, the most powerful and unaccountable group in the country. Legally, the National Intelligence and Security (NISS) came into being shortly after the 1989 coup, but they were given stronger powers by the 1999 and 2010 National Security Forces Act. Members of the NISS have immunity from prosecution and disciplinary action in carrying out their work.³

The NISS in Sudan is a shadowy agency, with little known about its internal operation. The Director General role of NISS since the 1989 coup has been held by Nafie Ali Nafie, Salah Abdallah Mohamed Saleh, also known as Salah ‘Gosh’, and by Mohamed Atta al-Moula Abbas. Sudan’s security forces have long-standing links with Iranian Intelligence, with Nafie Ali Nafie spending time there in 1981 under the pre-text of studying agriculture (Khalid 2003, 219), before spending parts of the subsequent decade travelling the Middle East and working with extremist organisations.⁴

The NISS is responsible for detention, torture, and interrogation which is undertaken in a variety of locations across Khartoum (HRW 1996). In the past, those deemed to be ‘subversive’ would be treated to a stint in the Citibank Ghost House in Khartoum, an informal torture centre—so named, because one could see the sign of the former Citibank building while you were being tortured. More recently, entities such as the Al Talaja, or the ‘Refrigerator’ in Bahri, Khartoum, freeze victims of torture until they lose consciousness, while in Garden City, a green building owned by Interior Minister Abdel Rahim Muhammad Hussein has been donated to enhance the network of torture facilities (CNN 2019).

One of the major activities undertaken by the NISS, is media repression via the National Telecommunications Corporation (NTC) and entities such as the Sudan Media Centre (SMC). The NTC has been actively involved for years in spying on opposition, including journalists, politicians, and human rights activists (Reporters Without Borders 2014). The Cyber Jihad Unit’s role is to hack posts made on social media and to infiltrate online groups and undermine them. These entities, which are funded and fully under the control of NISS leadership, exist purely for the purpose of preventing both Sudanese and foreign nationals from releasing material that is detrimental to the deep state’s interest. In the years prior to the 2019 revolution, efforts were made to block social media services

3 After the revolution, the NISS has been given another acronym, the General Intelligence Service (GIS).

4 See Profile of Nafie Ali Nafie, Sudan Tribune.

such as Facebook and WhatsApp that have end-to-end encryption and are actively used by the opposition (Sudan Tribune 2014).

In the wake of 9/11, the NISS directors have made visits to the governments of France, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (US) with regard to ‘counter-terrorism’ intelligence in a bid to deflect attention away from human rights abuses inside Sudan. Both Nafie Ali Nafie’s connections in the Middle East, and Salah Gosh’s relationship with Osama bin Laden while he was staying in Khartoum (ASharq al-Awsat 2019), have been maximally leveraged to provide advantage to Sudan. The war in Yemen has also strengthened ties with Saudi Arabia and the so-called troika that includes the UAE and Egypt. All of these connections have assisted deep state officials in carrying out their work and, as shown below, continue to assist those who are still in power.

Social Networks

All of the relationships discussed above, create forms of economic capital that are protected by security and military elements of the deep state. This kind of material gain is now under investigation in the post-revolution Transitional Government (see following). As Bourdieu has pointed out, however, economic capital is but the tip of the iceberg, in understanding how privilege works in a society. Far more insidious and difficult to dismantle across time are social, cultural, and symbolic forms of capital because they are carried in the networks of the deep state and multiply over time.

One of the key mechanisms for transmitting this kind of advantage is education. For decades (and even before the 1989 coup), the elite have sent their children out of Sudan to be educated in the UK, US, and elsewhere. As Table 1 shows, major figures within the core and Islamist movements were educated in either military colleges, Khartoum University, or had the benefit of well-funded education in the international sphere. This contrasts with the education system in Sudan, which since the coup has been defunded, and in which new regime tolerant institutions have been built, and infiltration of top institutions has become rife. The deep state has become ‘deep’ because of the ability to control knowledge production at home, while allowing their followers to take advantage of institutions abroad that are not affected by censorship.

As sites of social change, Sudan’s universities have been at the forefront in the battle to cultivate a ‘regime mindset’. Those forced to learn inside Sudan have been disadvantaged by the fact that the curriculum is taught in Arabic, is peppered with religious doctrine irrespective of subject matter, and by the fact that military service is often

Table 1. Educational Affiliations of Prominent Islamists

Name	Alma Mater	Government Position
Hassan al Turabi	Kings College London; Sorbonne, Paris	Popular Congress Party
Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir	Sudan Military Academy	President
Ali Osman Mohamed Taha	University of Khartoum	Former VP
Nafie Ali Nafie	University of California, USA	Presidential Advisor
Mustafa Osman Ismail Elamin	University of Leeds/ Bristol, UK	Foreign Minister
Ibrahim Ahmed Omar	Cambridge University, UK	Speaker, National Assembly
Mahdi Ibrahim Mohamed	University of Michigan/California, USA	Minister/Ambassador/Intelligence
Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin	Queen Mary, London, UK	Minister/Ambassador
Ghazi Salah al Din al Atabani	University of Surrey, UK	Minister
Qutbi al-Mahdi	Mc Gill University, Canada	Presidential Adviser/Intelligence
Magzoub al Khalifa	University of Khartoum	Presidential Advisor/Negotiator
Awad Ahmad al-Jaz	University of Southern California, USA	Minister—Energy/Oil
Salah Abdallah Gosh	University of Khartoum	National Security Advisor/NISS
Ali Ahmed Karti	University of Khartoum	Minister/PDF
Bakri Hasan Saleh	Sudan Military Academy	Minister/Interior/special forces
Abdel Rahim Mohammed Hussein	Cranfield University, UK	Minister/Governor of Khartoum State

Source: Author

required as a pre-requisite for study (Bishai 2008). On top of this, the value of a university education inside Sudan has been diluted by the exponential growth of institutions of sceptical educational value and by institutions that promulgate Political Islam and the *weltanschauung* of government officials as the way to think (Bishai 2008).

The kinds of alliances that were cultivated through education placement carry forward into the core and are strengthened through economic forms of patronage. In particular, skills gained at the micro-interaction level enable deep state officials and their subordinates to gain advantage. Specifically, knowing how to talk and engage with outsiders and the Islamist cadre, builds advantage. Knowing how to dress in Sudan in particular ways (and being able to afford to do so), is a marker of political persuasion and insider status.⁵ Knowing how to engage deeply with westerners on a cultural level and being able to speak target languages becomes a valuable asset to intelligence agencies. These skills, connections, and forms of social and symbolic capital create opportunities to provide insider status within the government core.

In Arabic, the name for these kinds of connections is *wasta*, which is a form of 'personal intermediation' that can be described as something to pass onto others or something that is acquired (Mann 2014). In broad terms, *wasta* constitutes the forms of economic, social, and symbolic capital needed to advance, and is achieved by both loyalty and access to power. As Mann (2014) points out, under the policies of *tamkiin* and the later post-1999 marketisation policies in Sudan, *wasta* has been transformed from an institutionalised form of privilege, credentialed through universities and old elites, to a private, decentralized and transnational structure predicated on personal relationships with those in the know.

The upshot of this situation is that international credentials and connections, loyalty, and access to patronage becomes the major factor in success. For the regime who are not hampered by the situation inside Sudan, this presents no problem at all. Yet, for those who are dependent on impoverished educational systems and lack of contacts with regime insiders, their chance to move forward has all but stopped in its tracks.

⁵ Sudanese factions often wear their political affiliations on their bodies. For example, Umma and DUP wear the ubiquitous white jellabiya that is adapted with pockets on the front or the back, pointed hats, or standard immas (turbans). Communists often wear dirty jeans as a form of rebellion. Members of the Islamic cadres wear short trousers or in western circles, expensive suits. Many can be identified by the gura or prayer mark (often made by a specialist) on their foreheads (Bartlett 2015).

Dismantling the Deep State

Given the way that the deep state and its operating logic is now embedded at the heart of government and society in Sudan, considerable effort will be needed to strip away the kinds of privilege that have been built. While finance and corruption are clearly important aspects of this, they are not, in and of themselves, the conduits through which privilege and wealth pass. The conduits are connections—social and cultural—because these enable informalized and personalized privilege to be transmitted and stabilized over time without detection. If these kinds of connections are ignored, capital may be removed, but the system of advantage will remain intact.

Where finance is concerned, the Transitional Government has started the process of its retrieving assets that have been misappropriated. Notably, efforts are underway to enlist global forensic accounting and asset recovery firms so that public money can be recouped and thus far, approximately \$4 billion has been recovered from al-Bashir and family members assets alone. The ‘Funds Recovery Committee’, headed by Mohamed El Faki, is at work dismantling the *tamkiin* system and illicit flows of funds, but the problems are self-evident. The civilian government is today trying to accomplish this task but is doing so in full view of the very people that built the system in the first place.

The nub of the problem is that the civilians within the Sovereign Council are not operating on a level playing field with their military counterparts. As Gallopin (2020) has pointed out, the members who constitute the civilian wing have next to nothing at their disposal to make the transition to democracy. By contrast, the military wing has sprawling networks of water, mining, industry, aviation, engineering, and construction companies that are shared between the NISS and the Sudanese Armed Forces. The Rapid Support Forces under Hemedti have their own assets: the Algunade holding company, which controls mining, industry, car sales, metals, and other kinds of companies (Global Witness 2019). These parastatals are now strangling the Sudanese economy of life and funds, thereby preventing the transitional government from being able to progress.

Outside the country, money that has been misappropriated from the Sudanese people is still held in foreign banks. Following the Wikileaks data release in 2009, the former ICC Chief Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo suggested that \$9 billion was held in the UK with accusations being levelled at Lloyds Banking Group in particular (Independent 2010). Lloyds notoriety was also followed up with a lawsuit against Barclays for illicit dealings with Sudan, Iran, Libya, and Cuba resulting in a fine of

USD \$298 million (Guardian 2010). In France, *BNP Paribas* and *Societe Generale*, came under scrutiny from US authorities for sanctions busting with illicit money dealings involving Sudanese currency (Middle East Eye 2019). As Kar and Cartright-Smith (2010) have previously pointed out, the value of illicit financial flows from Sudan between 1970–2008 alone, were thought to be USD \$16.6 billion.

The sheer scale of these dealings and their inscrutability makes clear what the civilian Transitional Government is up against. Yet, despite what is evidently a deeply unequal struggle, support from the international community has been scarce. The struggle, for example, to remove Sudan from the US State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST) has been long and drawn out, with many hurdles in the political, judicial, and administrative spheres. The concerns are, of course, understandable, since those who have little compunction about supporting terror are still part of the military wing of the government. But to continue to hamper the efforts of the civilian government just draws Sudan into an ever more dangerous game of Catch-22. Failure to progress due to the SST designation will only embolden the military and militia leaders, leading to a reversal of the gains that have been made so far.

In the economy, demands being made by donors with regard to subsidies also threaten transitional government stability. Apparently suffering from amnesia, international donors are now demanding Washington Consensus style subsidy reductions, while failing to appreciate that it was the threat of subsidy removal that drove the revolution against al-Bashir in the first place. The IMF, at least, has learnt from past structural adjustment failures and is suggesting a social safety net before subsidies are removed (Kar and Cartright-Smith 2010).⁶ Despite recognition of the scale of the problem, however, little in the way of social safety net funding has been forthcoming.

Where social networks are concerned, the move away from educational institutions to personalised private networks of *wasta* must be changed if the country is to move forward. Yet, despite the damage this has caused, much remains to be done. The only way to combat the inequality and marginalisation that comes from lack of access to patronage networks, is to make sure that Sudan's educational sphere becomes a level playing field. This means a radical overhaul of educational standards and of institutions that promulgate ideology in

⁶ Anonymous interviews after the revolution indicate that members of the intelligence and military sector were attempting to bribe bakers not to produce bread post-revolution, in an attempt to bring about instability.

favour of knowledge. Teaching itself should be internationalised and English used as a medium of instruction so that Sudan's institutions can quickly incorporate advances in science, technology, and other academic disciplines worldwide.⁷ Although it is tempting to place this issue on the back burner in favour of other more pressing priorities, an ineffective education sector dilutes the human capital pool that drives the economy, government, and society forward. Failure to address this will stall the revolution in the long term.

Finally, a key issue in dismantling the deep state is the transitional government's ability to stop the expansion of militia resources and reverse the informalization of the army. At the moment, this seems to be a particularly distant prospect with shared military rule and the array of parastatals at the disposal of Hemedti. But the risk from this issue cannot be overstated. There is clear evidence following Hemedti's role in supplying militias to fight in Yemen that Sudan is being drawn further into the orbit of Saudi Arabia and its troika allies of the UAE and Egypt. In turn, they are positioning Hemedti to become the next leader of the country (Gallopini 2020). This has the potential to further inflame the internal conflict between Hemedti, who is from Darfur and the SAF leaders, most of whom are from Central Sudan. Even more concerning, the fact that money and arms have been funnelled to Hemedti from the UAE threatens the insertion of authoritarianism once more, backed by a powerful Gulf coalition. The potential ramifications of this situation, with Sudan at the gateway of the Sahelian region, should be a major source of concern.

Sudan's attempt to extract itself from the deep state apparatus that has controlled it for decades still has a long way to go. With the power of military and militia actors, it is difficult to see how the civilian government can achieve meaningful change without significant additional help. Today, Sudan is at a crossroads where external influences and competing internal threats have the potential to tear the country apart. The rosy glow of last year's revolution has now hit the hard reality of the power and reach of the deep state. The question is whether the country will be able to stand in its own right by bringing these influences under control, or whether it will find itself barely able to stay afloat. Sudan has called for help and needs it more than ever before. The question, as always, is who will be there to hear those calls.

⁷ This is not an attempt to recolonise Sudanese minds, but rather a recognition that 80% of articles in academia are published in peer reviewed English language journals.

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Presidential Politics in Uganda: Driving Democracy Underground

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Abstract

In Uganda, the restoration of multi-party electoral politics in 2005 came after 19 years of President Museveni's rule and chairmanship of the National Resistance Movement (NRM). Museveni won the previous presidential elections in 1996 and 2001, and was, at the time, constitutionally barred from standing for another term in 2006. Not satisfied with this situation, a bill was passed that lifted presidential term limits, leaving Museveni free to 'win' the 2006, 2011, and 2016 elections. Changing the rules further, Museveni drove the lifting of age limits for presidential candidates and is set to be re-elected at the age of 76, in 2021. In this paper, I argue that political manipulation of term and age limits and the centralisation of power has done more than make Uganda less democratic. It has reshaped the very nature of politics over the long term, reducing opposition to something that can only operate through casual channels as a form of 'pop-up' politics. The net result of this situation is that a credible, open, institutional political organisation capable of building solid coalitions is no longer possible in Uganda. Those who stand to oppose the president do so from the shadows, as a form of oppositional populist politics—knowing what they oppose but having undeveloped political structures and platforms to stand as an alternative. In the long term, this situation has emptied out Uganda's political space, leaving the disenfranchised unable to assert their voice effectively or openly participate in changing their own country.

Introduction

President Yoweri Museveni marked 33 years of rule in Uganda on 26 January 2019. He came to power in 1986 after his National Resistance Army (NRA) captured Uganda's capital city, Kampala, following five years of protracted guerrilla warfare. The fall of Kampala marked the end

of decades of anarchy, rapes, murders, kidnappings, and extra-judicial killings perpetrated by former presidents: Idi Amin, Milton Obote, and General Tito Okello Lutwa. It also marked the start of a new era of control by centralisation of power and heavy-handed eradication of open dissent.

Such an outcome is troubling in view of the fact that the promotion of democracy in place of authoritarianism was one of the defining characteristics of Museveni's campaign. While the post-independence regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote restricted the space of political engagement among Ugandans, the new National Resistance Movement (NRM) under Museveni promised wider opportunities for citizen engagement and participation in African politics. Allied to these changes was the reinstating of constitutional rule and insistence on term limits for presidents. At that time, Museveni was highly critical of African presidents who clung to power. His unforgettable inaugural speech in which he said that "the problem of Africa in general and Uganda in particular is not the people but leaders who overstay in power" (Museveni 1997) provided hope for a different kind of future. To a joyful nation, he warned: "No one should think that what is happening today is a mere change of guards; it is a fundamental change in the politics of our country." He assured Ugandans of his determination to overcome previous challenges of government corruption, lack of democracy, and unconstitutional rule.

At the beginning of his presidency, Museveni carefully articulated the problem of human rights abuses and corruption, where he focussed on former presidents. This resonated strongly with dissatisfied and marginalised Ugandans whose human rights were grossly abused by previous governments. The foundation of his presidency, however, was built on the very thing that later undermined his claims of democracy: a charismatic personality which emphasised exceptional, superhuman qualities and ability to save the country from authoritarian regimes.

This charismatic form of politics soon gave way to something else. In particular, using his charisma to bolster his power, he was able to eschew the continued approval of the people. Before long, he conceived plans to stop the vacillation between the two main political parties—the Democratic Party (DP) and Uganda Peoples' Congress (UPC)—under the guise of shoring up political stability. The way he went about this, however, was increasingly authoritarian, with a ban on political party activities and the establishment of a 'movement system of government' premised on the involvement of all Ugandans in the National Resistance Movement (NRM). The idea behind this move was that all Ugandans would belong to the 'movement', even if they opposed it. The net result

of this situation was that the ruling NRM became the only game in town, characterised as a movement, not a party, and therefore exempt from the rules of political party organisation.

The one-party system and the ban on party activities, reflected in electoral law, left the NRM enjoying a virtual monopoly on political organisation and power in Uganda for 10 years from 1986, and it effectively neutralised his opponents by reducing their ability to create an effective political opposition. These changes have fundamentally shaped the political landscape of Uganda, changing the very way in which political action manifests itself. In particular, such changes have reshaped politics over the long term, reducing opposition to something that can only operate through informal channels. This has, in turn, made it inordinately difficult to build credible institutional political opposition in Uganda. What is left in the political space is a form of ‘pop-up’ opposition where claims can be made, without the possibilities of developing effective structures and platforms. This situation has, in turn, hollowed out the ability to move beyond opposition to credible program for change, and has made it very difficult to identify with career politicians.

To understand these dynamics in more depth, I first focus on the changes wrought by Museveni’s NRM and the rise of movement politics, before turning to recent changes such as the lifting of presidential term limits and age caps. Here, I outline the ways in which they have shaped political space in Uganda and the ability to organise. I then turn to recent forms of resistance such as Bobi Wine’s People Power Movement and the way that this fits into the political limitations that have been imposed. I conclude by looking at what is needed to return Uganda to a democratic footing.

The Road to Authoritarian Politics

The wave of popularity that brought Museveni to power after the Bush War allowed him to usher in the ‘movement system of government’. The movement system of government placed the NRM at the centre of Ugandan politics. It also utilised Museveni’s popularity and charisma to justify constant changes to the kinds of policies that he wanted to usher in.

Only two years into government, discussions about a new constitution started. This conversation was part of a wider agreement by the NRM that democracy, constitutionalism, and rule of the law should be restored to the people. The form it took was a Constitutional Review Commission—a legal framework to review the existing constitution, consult with Ugandans, and make proposals for what kind of constitution was needed.

But before the commission could complete its task, Museveni changed his attitude. He demanded that the legislature—then called the National Resistance Council (NRC)—should extend his term of office. His point was that he needed another five years to complete the constitutional making process. Putting his control over that committee to work, his wish was soon granted.

Then, once Museveni was granted another five years in office, he did not lift the ban on multiparty democracy in Uganda. Instead Museveni and his National Resistance Movement continued with restrictions on multiparty politics, thinly justified by the position that Uganda's past political problems were due to the damage done by sectarian politics (Human Right Watch 1999). While the 'movement political system' allowed for election of resistance councils from the village level to the National Resistance Council (Parliament), it did not allow anyone to compete for the position of chairperson of the National Resistance Council, who also doubled as the president of the country. Unlike political parties in other countries that have a revolving door that allows for changes to leadership within the party, this is not the case for the NRM. Museveni has, since the inception of NRM, been the only party leader to hold that office.

The two elections that followed in 1996 and 2001 were also held under the 'movement political system', allowing Museveni to edge out his competitors. He hand-picked the seven Electoral Commissioners (EC) and secured the re-appointment of Stephen Besweri Akabway (formerly the Constituent Assembly [CA] Commissioner) as the new chairman of the EC. Suspicions of malfeasance and, allied to this, doubts about the neutrality of Akabway, were advanced by the opposition party leadership because of his partisan role in the CA election. While Museveni used government structures and resources to canvass for votes, the 'no party system' or the 'movement political system' law prohibited any candidate using political party colours or symbols, or political party, tribal, or religious affiliations or any other sectarian grounds as a basis for his or her candidature or in support of their candidature.

The specific effects of the Ugandan model of a no-party system on the election process have handicapped any presidential candidate competing against the governing NRM structure. Since political party activities were restricted and the movement political system was upheld in addition to incumbency advantage, the subsequent elections were unwinnable. Museveni therefore won with a comfortable majority of 74.2% in 1996 and 69.33% in 2001 (Sabiti 2010).

These developments set the tone for what was to come. Uganda continued to be ruled under the movement system for 19 years. During this period, real, sustained opposition shrank as Museveni's grip on power tightened. Yet, from the beginning of 2005, taste for the movement system began to wane among the populace and was no longer seen as legitimate. Also, by 2005, Museveni had already governed for the maximum length allowed by the new Uganda constitution—two five-year terms. His ineligibility and sustained internal and international campaigns to open space for multiparty politics started to ramp up the pressure for change. In a calculated move to deflate the pressure but still hold on to power, Museveni coupled a referendum vote on the re-introduction of multiparty politics with a lifting of presidential term limits.

The Limits of Term Limits

The gamble of moving to multiparty politics while also removing term limits required a particular kind of approach. It required patronage in spades. Although Museveni had the majority number (191 out of 284) in the national assembly, he had to bribe the legislators to vote in his favour (Tripp 2010). This came in the form of a payment to each Member of Parliament of 5 million Uganda shillings ([UGX] approximately USD \$3,000) just before the bill was voted on (Tripp 2010). Some 92.5% of voters agreed to open the political space to allow those willing to join other political parties or organisations to do so and to compete for political power (Tripp 2010). On 30 September 2005, the parliament repealed Article 105 (2) of the Constitution allowing Museveni to run for unlimited term for the Office of the President. Museveni was therefore able to amend the constitution without recourse to the populace. These constitutional amendments laid the foundations for Museveni's continued rule and furthered his grip on power. The legislative body has the power to reform Uganda's constitution, and it did so, effectively allowing Museveni to legally secure an unopposed autocracy.

Lifting the term limit was met with widespread protests and riots. At this point, Museveni changed gear to more coercive and oppressive measures to keep his regime in power. Museveni was quick to suppress protests using military support, police brutality, and security agencies alongside unofficial private NRM party militias that now keep the Ugandan population relatively subdued. Yet, to contain the increasing riots (for example the 2011–12 'Walk to Work') and contain the great influence of the Buganda and its cultural kingdom, he had to resort to other measures. Museveni's charismatic authority and populist leadership was reliant on the continued approval of the people, thereby pushing him

to conceive plans to consolidate his grip on power. To appease some sections of the population, the government tabled and passed several controversial bills: the 2007 'Land (Amendment) Bill', the 2009 'Kampala Capital City Bill', the 2009 'Cultural Leaders Bill' and the 2008 'Regional Governments Bill'. At the same time, the 2007 'Public Order Management Bill' was passed, allowing the government to take a hard-line approach to silencing protests.

From 2005, the political system has been highly restrictive, with all power residing in the dominant NRM party. After his ability to lift the presidential term limits, Museveni was set to rule for a long period. Putting this to work, he again subjected Ugandans to a shadow referendum to legitimise his hold on power. Using state resources, assets, political structures, and networks built during the 20 years of single party rule, Museveni ran on an NRM party ticket and won two consecutive elections in 2006 and 2010, beating his rival Dr. Kizza Besigye. After he was declared the winner of the 2016 election that was deemed fraudulent and declared so by international observers, people poured on the main city streets demanding a re-vote (Foundation for Human Rights Initiative [FHRI], 2016). The government responded with an iron fist in what was described as a preventive measure. The main opposition leader, Dr. Kizza Besigye, was arrested and police and military vehicles sent into the streets of Kampala. In the melee that ensued, live bullets and tear gas were fired into the rioting mobs, some people were killed; many arrested and imprisoned without trial, thereby denying their access to justice (FHRI 2016).

During this period, Museveni used his incumbency to his advantage. During the 2016 campaign and voting period, police and the army protected NRM party candidates and supporters, meanwhile arresting the opposition party candidates and their supporters. The European Union Election Observation Mission report noted how "state actors were instrumental in creating an intimidating atmosphere ... police used excessive force against opposition, media and the general public, justifying it as a 'preventive measure'" (EU 2016). As the report concludes, the "atmosphere of intimidation and ruling party control of state resources" played in favour of the incumbent (EU 2016). Museveni, who had ruled for 30 years and won five consecutive elections, had access to national resources, structures and public media, which his competitors did not. The NRM party, for example, generated a campaign budget of \$7 million in two months, which outstripped the funds raised by his competitors. Ex-Prime Minister Amama Mbabazi and Dr. Kizza Besigye, by contrast, spent \$951,000 and \$279,000 respectively (Winsor 2016).

Through the partisan regulatory body, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), Museveni repressed freedom of speech. He arbitrarily applied the law closing and seizing equipment from 13 radio stations, and on polling day, Ugandans found their mobile money services and social media networks blocked by UCC on the grounds that “there was information that people were using these to bribe voters” (EU 2016).

President for Life

As if lifting the presidential term limits was not bad enough, one year later, Museveni started another campaign: this time to change the age cap of 75 years for presidential candidates. This time around, however, despite his attempts to have everything his way, Museveni faced unforeseen challenges. When the rumour mill went into overdrive about his government’s intended tabling of a bill to cancel presidential age limits, it sparked a fierce debate in the media, social media, and in social gatherings.

In addition, when the constitutional amendment debate process started in parliament and even before the controversial motion was read, opposition MPs opposed it and tried to defeat its introduction by breaking into endless singing of the national anthem (ABC 2017). Moreover, moments before the controversial motion was read, legislators opposed to it donned red ribbons, stood up, and crowded around the podium, banging on it and on their benches (Reuters 2017). Tempers flared and lawmakers were seen brawling as they exchanged blows with some using microphone stands as crude weapons. In the chaos, at least two female lawmakers were carried out of the chamber after collapsing (Reuters 2017). Twenty-five MPs who were opposed to the constitutional amendment to prolong Museveni’s tenure were forcibly ejected from parliament on the orders of the Speaker for fighting, and six opposition MPs, including Bobi Wine, were suspended from Parliament for three sittings for protesting the bill (BBC 2017).

As the debate progressed, students and opposition activists protested outside the parliament and demonstrations against the amendment spread all over Kampala. Slogans held up throughout this campaign read: “If you dare and touch it, there will be a reckoning” and “Time Up At 75” to confirm that President Yoweri Museveni should serve his last term (Athumani 2017). Similar demonstrations were carried out in other major towns of Uganda. The government reacted by deploying police and military personnel around the parliament and in many parts of Kampala, surrounding suburbs, and other towns. Anti-government constitutional amendment demonstrations were dispersed by police and military using

tear gas and live bullets. Many demonstrators were badly beaten and others arrested (Athumani 2017). The leading opposition figure, Dr. Kizza Besigye, and DP opposition party leader, Norbert Mao, were arrested and detained incommunicado. Journalists were beaten, detained, and their equipment, including cameras, damaged or confiscated (Reuters 2017). To resolve the issue, Museveni's patronage went into overdrive immediately prior to voting: the government transferred about USD \$10,000 to the accounts of each Member of Parliament, ostensibly to enable them to monitor government programmes (CIPESA 2012).

Debating the age limit bill evoked reactions from the religious clerics weighing against Museveni's wish for life presidency. Archbishop John Baptist Odama, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference, was unequivocal in stating that: "Those who are planning to change the constitution are ruining the peace of Ugandans when we want a peaceful transition of power" (Martin 2017). In addition, The Rt. Rev. Reuben Kitembo, Bishop of Ruwenzori, argued that "lifting age limits would be synonymous with locking out other potential leaders ... Uganda has many qualified people who could be president, and therefore there was no pressing need to change the constitution" (Martin 2017). The political and security situation was so bad before the parliamentary sitting got underway that the military and police were deployed in full force inside the parliament (ABC 2017). In addition, when the debate started, opposition MPs walked out of parliament. Nevertheless, after three days of heated debate, the Parliament, controlled by Museveni's ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party, voted 317 in favour and 97 against the constitutional amendment (Observer 2017).

The removal of age limits was the last barricade against Museveni's life presidency rule in Uganda. While opposition MPs led by prominent lawyers filed a petition in the constitutional court challenging the legality of the Constitutional Amendment Act 2018 that scrapped the presidential age limits, their efforts were nullified by the court. After months of hearing, the Constitutional Court ruled in favour of government, upholding the amendments of Article 102 (b) of the constitution to remove the presidential age cap. Some religious leaders publicly criticised the bill and warned of a bleak future for the country. The Catholic Archbishop Cyprian Kizito Lwanga of the Kampala Archdiocese accused Museveni of "political dishonesty and urged Ugandans to resist the bad politics" prevailing under a president who had ruled the country since 1986 (Ngala 2018). Lwanga encouraged Ugandans to stand against life presidency: "Let us resist bad politics and promote national unity because

we are all interested in this country and also to build a strong future for this country” (Ngala 2018).

Ghetto Enters Political Mainstream

With politics looking like a one-man affair, it is difficult to envision how a rival will be able to unseat Museveni from power. The next opportunity to change the face of Ugandan politics may occur in the form of 2021 national general elections, although if current form is anything to go by, the odds are not good. In a bid to secure yet another term, Museveni is already focusing his energy and resources in his campaign. Rather than opening to new ideas, however, he has instituted a clampdown on opposition leaders’ efforts to challenge him. This is happening through a raft of human rights abuses including arrest, torture, and incommunicado detention of anyone who opposes him.

One outspoken representative voice for the disenfranchised is Mr. Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, otherwise known as Bobi Wine. A prominent Afrobeat popstar known for repertoires of catchy tunes that touch on poverty and social justice issues, Wine is also known as the Ghetto President because he grew up in Kamwokya—one of the Kampala slums (Kigambo 2017). Aiming to run for parliamentary politics in 2017, he cut off his dreadlocks, donned a suit and entered the political campaign fray (BBC 2018). Success followed when he defeated numerous established politicians in a by-election to become the Member of Parliament (MP) for Kyadondo West constituency. He then helped coordinate opposition to the constitutional amendment to scrap presidential age limits. He has since teamed up with other opposition MPs to continue the campaign against Museveni’s anti-democratic impulses, but it has come at a cost.

In a country where 60% of the population is under the age of 30, and most of them underemployed, Bobi Wine has demographics on his side. Aged 38, he has a lot in common with his supporters. He is a magnetic orator with the potential to galvanise the country’s youth to demand their democratic rights. While speaking to the BBC in 2017, he disclosed his urge to be the voice of the younger generation and to stand up for the voiceless (BBC 2017). Campaigning under the slogan “*People Power, Our Power*”, Wine has worked hard to upset the status quo.

His antics have also earned him the role of kingmaker. Since 2017, Wine backed four opposition candidates who won parliamentary seats in Jinja East, Bugiri, Rukungiri, and Arua by-elections. He was in the forefront of protests against a tax on social media such as a weekly charge for smartphone users and was joined by other activists who saw it as an

exorbitantly high tax for the majority of poor Ugandans. Because of the campaign, the government backtracked on this social media tax (Daily Monitor 2018). While the age cap is passed allowing Museveni to stand in the 2021 for presidency, Bobi Wine's popularity is seen by Museveni's camp as a threat to the upcoming 2021 presidential campaign.

Figure 1. Luyimbazi Nalukoola talks with musician and politician Hon. Kyagulanyi Ssentamu popularly known as Bobi Wine (R).



Source: [Wikimedia Commons](#), CC BY-SA 4.0

The presidential strategy to handle Wine is to make his organising ability a challenge, to personally harass and intimidate him, and to force him into a defensive position whenever possible. One example of this was when Wine and Museveni were in Arua municipality in the North-west of Uganda, canvassing votes for their respective campaigns for a parliamentary by-election. This area has traditionally been a stronghold of opposition politics and has strong support for Wine. Over the campaign, Museveni's candidate lost to Kassiano Wadri, the opposition candidate supported by Wine. Unfortunately, heightened tensions led to the presidential convoy being attacked with stones which, in turn, led to an accusation that Wine and his supporters were involved (The Atlantic 2018). This, in turn, led to Wine's driver being fatally shot.

The situation provided exactly what Museveni was looking for and led to Wine's arrest and detention, along with 30 opposition party leaders and supporters. They were subsequently charged with treason (BBC 2018). Bobi Wine was tortured and beaten while in custody and was denied medical treatment. Although he was initially subjected to the threat of court martial, national and international pressure weighed in and the charge of wrongful possession of firearms was dropped (Al Jazeera 2018). This is not the case for other charges, which he is still facing.

Driving Democracy Underground

The need to control rivals such as Bobi Wine and their supporters has resulted in politics being driven underground. One of the strategies and instruments being used to make this happen is colonial: the Stage Plays and Public Entertainment Act that was first introduced in 1949. This is an Act that has not been used since independence but has been resurrected in order to clamp down on artists critical of Museveni's life presidency project. The Act's two clauses—requiring songs and scripts for films and stage performances of artists to be examined by the authorities and for artists to request permission from the government before performing outside the country—aims to gag critical voices and censor freedom of speech. The Act targets Wine, whose concerts have recently been blocked because he poses a threat to Museveni's administration. The laws, according to Wine, are “trying to silence the hundreds of singers, producers, poets, comedians, cartoonists and other entertainers who are raising voices against the oppression, suppression and exploitation of the Ugandan, by a small clique of individuals who rule over us” (Flash 2019).

Violence is also increasing. The Uganda Human Rights Commission (UHRC) reports a surge in violent crime, particularly gruesome killings, torture, kidnappings, assaults, sexual crimes, and domestic violence (UHRC 2017). Most of the murders have not been investigated, and where investigation is undertaken, it is inconclusive with no final report. State violence is not new to Uganda. Previous governments have also murdered prominent individuals, such as Archbishop Janan Luwum, Ministers Erinayo Oryema and Oboth Ofumbi, Brigadier Pierino Okoya and Andrew Lutakome Kayiira, among others (Lubega 2018). The recent astonishing series of murder victims, however, includes prominent individuals like Hon. Ibrahim Abiriga, a Member of Parliament, two senior police officers (Assistant Inspector General of Police, Andrew Felix Kaweesi and Assistant Superintendent of Police, Muhammed Kirumira), Senior Principal State Attorney, Ms. Joan Kagezi, and a Senior Military Officer, Major Muhammed Kigundu. The other killings have targeted several Muslim sheiks and women between the ages of 18–36 years in the areas of Katabi town council, Kasenyi, Impala, and Nansaana municipality (UHRC 2017).

In Uganda, state sanctioned murder of senior officials who disagree and fall-out with the commander-in-chief appears to have few limits. The list includes senior army and police officers who happened to hold

dissenting views (Kalyegira 2017).¹ In all the recent murders, although suspects are arrested, the government failed to file credible evidence and the courts have dismissed most cases.

Understanding the role of social media in uprisings, Museveni's government intensified the clampdown on the use of various platforms. In 2018, under the disguise of increasing the tax base and tax collection, the UCC started to levy a social media tax "over-the-top". Every user of Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber and Instagram is forced to pay a surcharge of UGX 200 a day to access these social media sites. This has had a significant effect because opposition parties and civil society groups that are forced to operate in a repressive context often resort to these platforms to air their grievances and organise protests (Chatora 2012). So, in addition to the "over-the-top" tax, government has increased tax for airtime on cellular, landline and public payphones from 5% to 12%, and tax on mobile money transfers has been increased from 10% to 15% (Nanfuka 2018).

The accumulation of power in the executive has provided Museveni with the ability to censor and persecute those who have criticised or opposed his political agenda. Since 2008, Museveni has adopted additional amendments to the 2004 broadcasting law that further expand the government's ability to regulate the media and to harass and intimidate critical media outlets. The Uganda Communications Commission uses the 2010 media amendment Act to prohibit TV and radios to broadcast anti-government messages (Human Right Watch 2016) and demonstrates the lack of free media and thus free speech. In Uganda, the absolute control of the media and press lies in the hands of Museveni and his government.

All these challenges have driven democracy underground because Museveni has effectively neutralised the opposition. Like many leaders who have overstayed in power across the continent, he has perfected the art of holding elections to legitimise a grip on power and to appear democratic. While opposition politicians are routinely harassed, they are disorganised and uninspired (Svein and Lise 2016). They mobilise on

¹ Kalyegira cites examples that include Maj Gen James Kazini former army commander, Lt Dennis Bataringaya-Officer with Chieftaincy of Military Intelligence (CMI), Captain George Nkwanga the military commander of the Federal Democratic Movement of Uganda, Lt Michael Shalita an officer in the Internal Security Organisation (ISO), Mr. Apollo Byekwaso, former Inspector-General of Police, Elisa Karakire—Regional Police Commander for southern Uganda, and James Habuchiriro a Senior Superintendent of Police.

anti-regime questions, rather than alternative policies. They lack the capacity to mobilise resources and have no political structures across the county in all constituencies. In the 2006 general election, for example, the opposition focused its efforts on winning the presidency rather than gaining a majority of seats in parliament. Out of the 284 directly contested elected parliamentary seats, the opposition parties contested only around 140, and similarly they fielded candidates in less than two-thirds of over 20 by-elections that have been held since 2006 (Tangri and Mwenda 2010). The opposition parties have little financial resources in comparison to the ruling NRM to fund their political activities, especially during election time. In 2006, for example, the NRM spent about UGX 50 billion (\$26 million), compared to around UGX 1.7 billion (\$850,000) by the FDC (Tangri and Mwenda 2010). Internal wrangles and large numbers of party defections,² exacerbated by the NRM and due to the absence of a strong political coalition, have prevented opposition parties from being able to function properly. The electorate has increasingly become lethargic, with opposition sympathisers tired of trying to defeat Museveni through historical opposition parties and participating in sham elections.

Out of these frustrations, the only politicians who are able to gain any kind of traction are performers such as Bobi Wine, who are trying to use their music entertainment platform to generate political resistance. While they have significant popularity with the youth and poorer demographics in the country, they have very little political experience, no political party affiliation, or a well-defined alternative political agenda. Given this situation, a question remains about whether the kind of political program they have is viable in the short term, if they are called on to create change.

Trying to change this situation is inordinately difficult. Even the ability to organize and meet followers is hampered by constant police harassment. Large meetings are often blocked by police and smaller house-based meetings are raided by security agents. On the occasions where permits are issued, they are very often withdrawn at the last minute due to a 'technicality'. As a result, the only kind of political platform is through impromptu music and broadcasts which can be subject to disruption at any time. Even if Wine were to be elected, it is not clear that Museveni would leave voluntarily. As a result, Wine will ultimately need either a military support or a popular uprising to unseat the government.

2 See Michael Onyinge 2019: 'Over 300 opposition cross to NRM' *New Vision*, and John Semakula 2019: 'Meet the Opposition politicians who defected to NRM' *New Vision*.

Existing politicians such as Besigye, whose popularity is not as strong as Wine's, also face significant difficulties. Although they are more experienced in creating the kinds of platforms and programs for change that Uganda needs, they have previously failed to secure high office due to election malfeasance. Besigye is also subjected to periodic arrest, making the building of coalitions between experienced and inexperienced politicians very difficult. Nonetheless, at the time of writing, there is an effort underway to combine forces in the hope that something can change.

Conclusion

Uganda is moving quickly towards failure under Museveni's administration. Museveni's popularity grew from a strong resentment against previous regimes, thereby allowing him to sow the seeds for one-party culture. Museveni has been able to assiduously secure his grip on power, so that neither his opponents nor representative institutions have any opportunity to challenge his authority. His consolidation of power through authoritarian means of imprisoning political opponents, increased control over media, and extending his terms, has made it difficult for the opposition to participate in the political process.

In these circumstances, political opposition has been driven underground. Opposition movements such as Wine's People Power Movement now emanate from colourful personalities that are popular with the electorate, but the level of repression makes it difficult for them to organise.

The civil society organisation, the media, and human rights organisations are continuously raising international awareness of the government crackdown on freedoms. The media are, despite the clampdown, still fighting for pluralistic political discourse. Civil society is committed to the democratic process, pressing for an amendment to democratic electoral laws, independence of the Electoral Commission, balanced media coverage, and scrutiny of candidate campaign funding and expenditures. Even under strong censorship, the social media platforms remain an important medium of opposition mobilisation.

Under the umbrella of 'United Forces for Change', the People Power Movement led by Wine and the People's President led by Besigye have entered an alliance to rally opposition forces together for political change ahead of the 2021 national elections. Using the *No Nedda* (no! no!) slogan, they plan to galvanise support to win the upcoming election. Yet, given that none of the electoral reforms recommended by the international election observer report after the fraudulent 2016 elections have been implemented, the results are still likely to favour Museveni.

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The International Community and the 2016 Zambia Elections: An Expensive Charade?

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Abstract

Zambia has long been hailed as a model of good governance—at least by regional standards. Hopes were high that the 2016 presidential election was going to be undertaken in the true spirit of democracy and good governance. That was not to be the case, however, and the façade of democracy crumbled. This paper argues that there was a pretence of following international election standards, but the ruling party, often in plain sight, made multiple transgressions against accepted electoral standards and human rights norms. This paper analyses those transgressions and suggests why they occurred. It also analyses the roles of the international community and regional organisations who are supposed to be the promoters and guardians of democracy and human rights. This paper reveals a remarkable neglect of democratic principles by observer missions and suggests that another agenda was at play. It asks what role external agencies can reasonably play in such circumstances and what can be done to support disenfranchised voters who were unable to protest the results. These questions are especially pertinent given the forthcoming 2021 election, for which the ruling party is currently making preparations, in the midst of a global pandemic.

Introduction

Zambia has often, but somewhat optimistically, been described as a haven of peace in southern Africa, with some even referring to it as a ‘model’ for Africa (Townsend and Pugh 2016, 1). Smith (2016, 2) called the country “a beacon of hope for democracy enthusiasts and Africa optimists alike”, further elaborating that Zambia was “the only country in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) that has twice achieved a democratic transfer of power to an opposition party since

independence.” Perceptions and reality, however, do not match given that the events taking place during the 2016 election period were marred by many irregularities and infringements of democratic principles and human rights.

I argue that there are important lessons to be learnt from the performance of the international community (and regional agencies) during this election, and that Zambia’s performance was not exceptional in the region. By reviewing the events which took place before, during, and after the election, and the reactions of international observers and others, I present evidence to illustrate that the credibility of the international community and regional organizations is severely damaged. I conclude that their role requires a radical re-think of how future elections are monitored.

Since much has already been written about the election, this paper commences with a brief description of the many irregularities that took place before, during, and after voting day. It shows how the methods used by the ruling party had obviously been learnt from other African countries and attempts to explain why the ruling party acted in such a way. The paper discusses the role of the international community during the implementation of the election processes and how observers and reporters, and representatives of regional organisations, acted. I analyse the observer monitoring reports produced by the international representatives and regional agencies, and also compare them to the reports of various political commentators. The differences in their responses call into question the value of observer missions. Discussing why this situation might have arisen I also explain why citizens felt unable to challenge the behaviour of the ruling party. Finally, I turn to how the government set about signalling that they were following the rules and how this was received by the international community. I conclude by questioning how these dynamics might affect the upcoming 2021 elections.

The 2016 Presidential Elections

The results of the Zambian presidential election on 11 August 2016 were highly predictable. Edward Lungu representing the Patriotic Front (PF) party retained his position. He had held the post since the death of President Michael Sata in October 2014, after a questionable and low voter turn-out election in January 2015. The 2016 result was achieved despite an obvious wave of public sentiment that change was needed, and was evidenced by a much-increased voter turn-out of 56%, up from 32% in 2015 (Allison 2016a). The widespread popularity of the well-organised

major opposition party, the United Party for National Development (UPND), led by Hakainde Hichilema was another indicator of the prevailing atmosphere. There was also much media coverage, including many comments from alarmed citizens demanding change. But there was no way that the ruling party was going to risk losing and, as Allison (2016b, 2) said, it had already anticipated such a result in June “suggesting that the winner of August’s election was [always] intended to be a foregone conclusion.”

It was apparent from the methods used that the ruling party had ‘match fixed’ the election, and that lessons in how to do this were learnt from neighbouring countries. Mills has described how the PF team followed the election ‘text-book’ of authoritarian rulers such as Museveni of Uganda and Mugabe of Zimbabwe (Mills 2016). A former president, Banda, who had a vested interest in the incumbent maintaining his position, even led the African Union (AU) Observer Mission to the February 2016 Uganda elections, which offered a first-hand opportunity to learn from a ‘master’ (Banda 2016). The ruling party also reportedly learnt from the earlier Congolese, Kenyan, and Malawian election experiences, all of which were fraught with issues.

Those lessons included liberal use of government resources for electioneering purposes; muzzling the media; bribing cadres to intimidate voters and use violence against the opposition; preventing the opposition from campaigning freely; and interfering with voter registers ballot papers and election results. The Zambian ruling party followed all of those practices. Opposition campaigners were violently harassed and some shot, with about seven fatalities. Some two thousand opposition members were jailed. The voices of civil society and the independent media were muffled or shut down and the level of violence was reported to have increased closer to the election, according to numerous sources including the Catholic Archbishop (2017) and *Zambian Watchdog* (2016a). Additionally, ministers failed to vacate their positions during the elections. On top of these problems, UPND’s post-election appeal to the Constitutional Court about the illegalities was dealt with in ways which created “a gross miscarriage of justice” (Mills 2017, 3) and raised issues of a constitutional crisis. These infringements indicated abuse of police authority, the legal system, and the Public Order Act.

Among the more obvious signs of the approach being used by the ruling party, and clear evidence of the cash flowing freely from government coffers, was the presence on the streets of jack-booted police in swanky new uniforms. Some were even adorned, laughably, with jungle camouflage. Well equipped with new vehicles and weaponry, with

dark sunglasses adding to their grim appearance, they made a formidable presence on the streets. From their militaristic style, it appeared that Zambia was at war (many photographs were seen in online media). Such a presence was a long way from the much-touted image of Zambia as a peaceful, democratic nation.

In order to explain why such strong measures were put in place by the ruling party, the *Zambian Post* editorial hypothesised that PF's desperation to stay in power was due to fear—fear of loss of power. Paraphrasing Steinbeck, the *Post*'s editor wrote that “Power does not corrupt. Fear corrupts, fear of loss of power” (*Zambia Post* 2016b, 2). That fear was not just simply fear of loss of prestige and control, but undoubtedly included making sure that the excessive government borrowings and looting of public coffers for personal benefit would not be brought to justice. This risk included the prosecution of key PF players and their supporters if the party lost. Simutanyi, the Director of the Centre of Policy Dialogue, also pointed out that the reason for the ‘heavy handedness’ was the ruling party’s awareness that the opposition had strong support and its consequent need to scare people off from voting for or supporting the opposition (Townsend and Pugh 2016).

The result was the declaration on 15 August 2016 of the PF's candidate Lungu as winner with 50.35% of the votes. The narrow margin of 13,021 votes was, conveniently, just enough to prevent a ‘run-off’ and, not surprisingly, regarded as suspicious by the opposition. UPND alleged, with some evidence, that the delayed release of the results was to enable tampering with the ballot (Mills 2016). In addition, the voting pattern clearly split the country into two parts, with the North and Eastern provinces largely voting PF and the North West, Western and Southern provinces supporting UPND. This pattern clearly illustrated the extent of tribalism at play and which had been heavily promoted by PF.

Convoluting and controversial legal processes followed. The rejection of UPND's subsequent appeal to the new Constitutional Court against the processes was widely condemned by senior lawyers who called it a travesty of justice (Chongwe 2016; Hansungule 2016; Ndulo 2016a, 2016b; *Zambian Law Association* 2016). The outraged former Director of the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ), Danny Kalale, even felt compelled to write that “What is happening in Zambia is unprecedented”, naming three cardinal institutions of wrong-doing—the Electoral Commission, the Judiciary, and the Presidency (Kalale 2016, 1). There were also commentaries by many others, including Mills (2016a), Allison (2016b), and Townsend and Pugh (2016).

The following year, repression by the PF-led police reached another level. In April 2017, there was a much-publicised traffic incident involving Hichilema and the president. Shortly thereafter, the leader of the opposition was charged with treason. His home was then violently raided in the middle of the night and he was arrested and jailed for four months on spurious grounds. The latter event finally motivated both the Council of Churches (Council of Churches 2017) and the Catholic Church to speak out. The Archbishop released a lengthy statement which frankly said that “Zambia was now all, except in designation, a dictatorship”. He also lambasted the judiciary for the role it had played (Catholic Archbishop 2017). The *Mast* newspaper, however, was scathing that the Churches had been so slow to speak out on the issues (Mast 2017). Two months later, on 5 July 2017, a state of emergency was declared—always a classic tool of the dictator. In short, the noose was ever being tightened. Cheeseman (2017, 4) pointed out that the opposition leader’s continued refusal to recognize Lungu “as a legitimately elected leader” must have constituted a real thorn in his side, one which added fuel to his antagonism to Hichilema.

Table 1 lists the major events that occurred before, during, and after the elections.

Table 1. Timeline of Some Major Events Before, During, and After 2016 Elections

Date	Event
2015 onwards	On-going repressive/violent activities
20 February 2016	Opposition leader lunch with diplomats
4 March 2016	Election launch
21 June 2016	Closure of <i>Zambian Post</i> newspaper
28 June 2016	Editor and staff beaten and arrested
8 August 2016	Opposition submission to Constitutional Court
11 August 2016	Elections
15 August 2016	Announcement of results
5 September 2016	Opposition petition dismissed by Constitutional Court
13 September 2016	Inauguration
10/11 April 2017	Opposition leader motorcade episode and home violently raided, arrested
12 April–16 August 2017	Opposition leader jailed
23 April 2017	Bishops denounced government
5 July 2017	State of Emergency declared

International Involvement and Its Discontents

Members of the international community were important players in supporting aspects of the election, in line with their role as standard bearers for democratic practices and the maintenance of the rule of law. A key form of support was the considerable amount of funding provided. The main source was a USD \$7.7 million jointly funded project with funds coming from the European Union (EU), British aid, Irish aid and the NDP itself. An additional USD \$2.2 million was provided (seemingly from government) (Daily Nation 2016). This project was implemented by the UN Development Program (UNDP) with the support of the European Court of Justice. Funding was to be provided for community organisations and the media in election monitoring and voter education. ECZ received support for voter registration and related technical equipment and systems, uniforms, and supplies and the training of the Zambian Police Service in effective 'rights-based' policing. In addition, other international donors funded civil society groups, such as the Foundation for Democratic Process (FODEP), for involvement in voter education and the monitoring of results.

In the lead up to the election, the international community was active in commenting publicly on some happenings and especially about the many serious infringements of the freedom of the press, including the closing of the major independent newspaper, the Post, in June (Lusaka Times 2016a). This development also drew loud complaints from within Zambia as well as from broader Africa, including the AU, and internationally. Smith, for example, reported that the global watchdog, Freedom House, had already downgraded Zambia to its lowest 'Not Free' category in 2015. He also noted that "The first step will be putting the Lungu government on notice that the world is watching" (Smith 2016, 7). But while parts of the world were definitely watching, it was not at all clear that they were doing anything about what they were observing, apart from issuing the occasional media statement. One might have hoped that there was some 'quiet diplomacy' going on, but there was little evidence of any impact. Significantly, no donor withdrew their funding support.

In response to the many blatant infringements on democratic rights that were occurring in the lead up to the elections, an unusual and somewhat controversial event (in diplomatic terms) occurred in February 2016, when the UPND opposition party leader Hichilema invited the diplomatic corps to lunch at his home. Hichilema was reported to have said that the main purpose of the lunch was to share the opposition's serious concerns about state sponsored political violence and the suppression of the media, as well as the misuse of the Public Order Act

(Zambian Post 2016a, 2). While all missions were invited, not all attended. Much was made in the press about whether such a gathering was advisable. In response to the public furore, Foreign Affairs Minister Kalaba made light of the event, saying that it was normal for diplomats to want to meet with opposition leaders and that by allowing such an event the government was demonstrating its democratic nature (Kalaba 2016b). Whatever was said, it was an incident that would not have pleased the ruling party because it seemingly showed strong international support for the opposition leader who had a reputation for being honest and serious, both personally and in business matters.

The American Ambassador (2016) was particularly vocal during the lead-up to the elections. As early as February, he pointedly remarked that it would be difficult for people to accept the results if the elections were violent. But one cannot help questioning American sincerity when, in the same month “a delegation of new US admirals and generals from the US National Defence University” visited Lusaka. The leader, a retired admiral, was quoted in the Lusaka Times as saying that his team was “in the country to exchange notes with their Zambian counterparts”. He also said that “Zambia was one of the African countries with good ties with the US security forces” and that “Zambia and the US had common interests in ensuring peace and security, and that the delegation would today have more discussions with the Ministry of Defence in” (Lusaka Times 2016b, 1). The performance of the USA in Uganda (whose election preceded that of Zambia), however, also suggested a less than innocent approach to African countries (Epstein 2016).

As is common practice, representatives of the international community were also involved in election monitoring. This included a 124 member European Union (EU) team, 17 Commonwealth ‘eminent persons’ and four people from the US Carter Centre, while the US National Democratic Institute ran an extrapolated exit poll. Teams were also fielded by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), the SADC Parliamentary Forum, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa (EISA) and (with 55 members) the African Union (AU). Various civil society teams also participated.

Despite the many serious, often blatant, infringements of democratic practices and electoral malfeasance that occurred, the majority of reports were largely positive, although variable in the way their judgements were worded. Table 2 categorises these responses according to whether the parties involved saw the election as credible, or had reservations, or saw

it as fundamentally flawed. It shows that the Commonwealth, COMESA, AU, EISA, SADC, UN, and USA were all broadly satisfied that the elections were credible, but with COMESA, AU, and EISA having some reservations. The US also had reservations but, remarkably, flagged its concerns in terms of ‘future elections’. The EU seemed to have a bet both ways and so is also categorised as having reservations. By contrast, the Carter Centre, FODEP, the former Director of ECZ, as well as the Economist and all other knowledgeable political commentators, considered the elections to be significantly flawed. In December, *Africa Confidential* capped them all by including Zambia amongst its list of rigged elections in 2016 (Africa Confidential 2016). These wildly different assessments raised questions about whether the parties involved had been observing the same election.

A former Ambassador to the country was drawn to comment to this author about the many positive reports from the observer missions. Informed by his experience as an observer on the 2016 EU Ugandan elections monitoring mission, he asked why the observer missions, “especially the Commonwealth [and, we might add, regional bodies], feel obliged to pull their punches even in the face of clear bias or the misconduct, especially by the ECZ?”¹ He made the important point that the significant period in an election was not the election lead-up or voting but the tabulation and results-verification phase, crucial for ensuring the accuracy of processes and data. He felt that this phase was one that observers were unlikely to be able to monitor effectively and could be a crucial weakness for the capacity of monitoring teams to attest to the authenticity of electoral processes. There was certainly much evidence available from this election, despite its hundreds of observers, that current observer mission protocols leave much to be desired and are in urgent need of over-hauling. Mills (2016, 2) justifiably suggested that in such a blatantly obvious situation that “the presence of international observers may legitimate fraudulent outcomes.”

After the results were announced, ‘diplomatese’ came into full play as dozens of congratulatory responses were sent to government and then were enthusiastically publicised by the ruling party to help legitimise its position. Both the USA Embassy (USA Embassy 2016) and the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon (UN News Centre 2016) were quick to congratulate the incumbent on his re-election. But, appreciating the tense situation, they both also urged Zambians to maintain peaceful conduct and that if they had objections, to use approved legal mechanisms.

¹ Former Ambassador to Zambia, emailed letter to author, 20 September 2016.

The USA Embassy in Lusaka (2016) also noted that

the statements by many of the international observer missions which highlighted concerns with the pre-electoral environment, specifically increased violence and restrictions on press and assembly, and hoped that the government will address those concerns in the context of *future* [emphasis added] elections to strengthen Zambian democracy.

The final remark seems like an extraordinary thing to say, although such a position was pre-empted by the enthusiastic response to the (also problematic) January 2015 elections by another US representative (Thomas-Greenfield 2015). Perhaps the explanation can be found in the American's remarks in an interview on 'Voice of America Straight Talk, Africa' 12 days after the 2016 election (Thomas-Greenfield 2016). On that show, the representative was challenged by the Nigerian interviewer who quipped that instead of "government of the people, by the people, for the people", it was, in many African countries, actually "government of some people, by some people, for some people." Thomas-Greenfield agreed, but emphasised a number of times during the interview that, essentially, democracy was a work in progress and improving over the years. Is this the answer that explains the US position on the Zambian elections—or is it simply a cop out? Or were there some other motivations for accepting the status quo, as discussed elsewhere in this article?

SADC too contributed to the congratulatory atmosphere but spared any punches. The statements of its Executive Secretary, Stergomena Tax, is worthy of particular mention. Commending President Lungu and the Zambian government Dr. Tax congratulated those involved for "the peaceful, well managed and successful elections" and applauded the president for "the political tolerance and maturity displayed during the elections". She stated that the Zambian people had expressed their will in a way which would significantly contribute to consolidating democracy and political stability, not only in Zambia but also in the SADC region (Lusaka Times 2016c, 2). These comments represented an extraordinarily glossy view of events. The comments of other members of the international and regional community are summarised in Table Two.

Table 2. Categorizing Observers on the Zambian 2016 Elections

Credible	Reservations	Distinctly Flawed
<p>Commonwealth's interim report concluded: Our overall conclusion is that the voting, closing and counting ..., were credible and transparent'.</p>	<p>EU: 'Generally well-administered and peaceful but process was marred by systematic bias in state media, and by restrictions on the campaign.' 33 recommendations made.</p>	<p>Carter Centre: pre-election period was significantly flawed.' and that '... ECZ ineffectively managed the vote tabulation, verification and declaration of results, as well as public expectation surrounding these processes'</p>
<p>COMESA: ... were generally conducted in a free, peaceful and transparent environment and in accordance with the laws governing elections in Zambia.'</p>	<p>+ COMESA 'while noting some minor issues ...'</p>	<p>FODEP is of the view that the just-ended election failed to adhere to the republican Constitution, Electoral Process Act, regional and international standards for a free, fair and credible election.' *</p>
<p>AU: declared the polls 'peaceful and satisfactory' and 'commended the people of Zambia for the largely peaceful 2016 elections...'</p>	<p>+ AU: Also listed areas where matters needed to be improved next time, ... notwithstanding a few incidents of election-related violence'.</p>	<p>Economist: ... marred by the harassment of the opposition, the closure of the country's leading independent newspaper, accusations of vote-rigging and street protests. ...</p>
<p>EISA: elections have met the international, regional and local standards for credible elections.</p>	<p>+ EISA: ... but were conducted 'on an unlevelled playing field'.</p>	<p>Africa Confidential in end of the year wrap-up for the continent, it included Zambia in its list of rigged 2016 Africa elections.</p>
<p>SADC: peaceful, well managed and successful elections ... will significantly contribute to consolidating democracy and political stability not only in Zambia but also in the SADC region.</p>		<p>Kalele (former ECZ Director): Said "what was happening in Zambia was unprecedented", naming three cardinal institutions of wrong-doing: the Electoral Commission, the Judiciary and the Presidency."</p>
<p>USA: call for respect for results, encouraged maintenance of good conduct exhibited during the vote, and if objections, to use approved legal mechanisms.</p>	<p>+ USA: Noted concerns expressed by international observer missions about the pre-electoral environment. Hope these concerns addressed in future elections.</p>	<p>Journalists, political commentators and academics, including Mills, Allison, Smith, Cheeseman and Dijkstra</p>
<p>UN: UN Secretary General congratulated Zambia on peaceful/orderly elections.</p>	<p>+ UN: Reminded all parties to reject violence/refrain from inflammatory and incendiary language, to resolve differences thru constitutional means.</p>	<p>Noted many serious weaknesses. *NB. FODEP views were later retracted and the lead author removed from his position.</p>

All of the congratulatory rhetoric culminated in a photograph of the president standing with ‘Western’ members of the diplomatic corps and the international organisations on the steps at State House in October (Lusaka Times 2016d, 1). The occasion gave him the opportunity to publicly rub-in his position of power, as he pointedly thanked them for their support during the elections. He reportedly, and also pointedly, met separately with the African Heads of Mission. In October, he demonstrated a developing strong-arm approach, telling them to avoid conflict with his government, as he did the following year, after Hichelema had been jailed. He repeated his warning then: “I want diplomats to hear me loud and clear that they will not interfere with our sovereign matters here in Zambia” (Zambia Watchdog 2017b, 1–2).

In a final word about the role of international observer missions, the previously quoted former ambassador to Zambia noted that, “once the Zambian elections were over the observer mission ‘circus’ would have moved on. They would have forgotten about Zambia, with no one looking behind to see what happened afterwards, even when events became worse.” He also added that, as the ruling party well knows, the various observer groups and embassies can shout as much as they like from the sidelines but that “such bleatings are just ignored.”²

Appeals to the International Community and the Regional Response

Because of the obvious failure of their own legal system to address the problems which were occurring, some Zambian citizens themselves looked to the international community for help, including Hichelima himself, both before and after the elections. In August, he again “appealed to the international community to pay particular attention to our country’s deteriorating democratic standards, notably relating to press freedom and the rights and freedoms of opposition leaders and supporters” (Open Zambia 2016, 1–2).

Traditional chiefs—important players in Zambian society—were under significant pressure not to speak out because the ruling party had, during the pre-election period, increased their monthly allowances almost three-fold (Lusaka Times 2016e). Nonetheless, some bravely did so, three of whom referenced the international community. One was reported as saying that he wanted “to call upon all the international observers to also do a good job. They shouldn’t just observe and keep quiet ... We appreciate their presence and they shouldn’t fear to speak out where things are wrong” (Musungwa 2016, 1).

² Former Ambassador to Zambia, emailed letter to author, 20 September 2016.

Ordinary citizens also spoke out through the media, while one, knowing the author's former UN affiliation, said that the international community "should not wait until people start taking arms against each other ... prevention is better than cure. Let us do something about it now!" He later rightly pointed out that "Human rights are being trampled upon yet we have UN Offices in Zambia, but not even a word has come from them."³ Some months after the election he expressed his dismay again: "what surprises me is the silence of the International Community, and Observer Missions. Are they still studying all these events?"⁴ These concerns were surely legitimate.

Some recognised the similarity of the problems being experienced with those in neighbouring Zimbabwe. Another citizen said to this author during the pre-election period that "If, as a country we allow this to continue, that will be the end of democracy and we will go the Mugabe way!"⁵ The following year Tendai Biti, the former Zimbabwean Minister for Finance, also noted the similarities. Undoubtedly arising from his own precarious position, he too felt strongly about the failure of the international community to speak out, especially following the imprisonment of Hichilema in April, and said (Biti 2017) that

the consequences of the soft approach of observers and the international community following last year's contested elections in Zambia appears to be coming back to haunt them ... Their cautious approach and hesitancy to challenge leadership has been taken as near enough a blank check for the elite to step by step deconstruct the law. (4)

Biti criticised the international community for accepting that a country might be excused some election errors just because it was new to democracy and said that this could be a convenient smokescreen. He also went on to say that "it is also a testament of how the region and the international community missed a critical opportunity to stem a tide of poor governance by speaking out against this electoral sham" (Biti 2017, 4).

In allowing (or arranging) the charging of Hichilema for treason, the violent home invasion, and his arrest and jailing in 2017, the president had thrown off the kid gloves and all pretences of being a democratic

³ Zambian citizen, emailed letter to author, 11 July 2016, Lusaka.

⁴ Zambian citizen, emailed letter to author, 12 September 2016.

⁵ Zambian citizen, emailed letter to author, 5 May 2016.

leader. But the drama of these incidents only drew a weak international response. Odinga, the former Kenyan prime minister and opposition leader, and Obasanjo, the former Nigerian president, both spoke out, as did Biti, as described above. The regional superpower, South Africa, however, which was also in the grip of ‘Zuma-ism’ at the time, was described as being ‘deafeningly silent’. SADC, the AU, and other African presidents were similarly quiet, Allison (2017b) also noted that the failure of the diplomatic community to speak out meant that civil society and the political opposition were without any support.

Lack of Widespread Public Protests

Despite such blatant election-related malfeasance, there was surprisingly little public protest. The most obvious reason for this was that it was already clear that the ruling party had the physical resources to crack down hard on any protests. This behaviour was understandable, given that during the pre-election period, tear gas, physical attacks, and threats of shooting and incarceration were used. These too were the reasons for the silence from the usually out-spoken NGOs, mainstream churches, and respected elders, at least in the period before Hichilema was jailed.

Life is precarious in Zambia at the best of times, and the scary presence of well-equipped and undisciplined police together with gloating and violent young PF cadres in thrall to the ruling party were, for the average citizen, a serious dampener on any willingness to protest. It was apparent from reports in the press and conversations with Zambians that the citizens were, understandably, cowed into submission. A Bishop wrote in September 2016 about how a new culture of fear had come to permeate Zambian society, saying that “The Zambia we have known has suddenly changed, not only in the political landscape but also with great fear and anxieties in a cross-section of many people” (Chihana 2016). He added that the broken-down economy, skyrocketing prices and fear of joblessness contributed to the grim scenario. As Dulani and Bratton (2017, 1) noted, “Zambia has gone from a country where most people felt free to engage in open political debate to one where most people have begun to look over their shoulders to see who is listening.” So there were good reasons as to why the country did not erupt. To survive they had to lie low.

The ruling party knew the nature of their own people and counted on that—peace at any cost, that is, no large-scale shootings. As a Zambian citizen said to this author in late 2016: “thank God peace has prevailed. This has been another educative experience for this country, but anyway

... peace is what we need.”⁶ In a way, this last statement was similar to the approach being taken by the international community—seemingly governed by the belief that as long as there was no major outbreak of violence and multiple killings, the situation was acceptable.

What Could the International Community Have Done?

Dijkstra (2016, 4), in an article published three days after the elections, argued that the EU, with its considerable financial clout as the biggest aid donor and a major trade partner, could “exert a positive influence in what has been a tense and sometimes violent campaign.” He also raised the use of targeted restrictive measures, if diplomatic demarches failed. In other countries, such measures have included targeting key officials with travel bans and freezing international bank accounts. Sector specific trade and aid restrictions, and being removed from the Commonwealth have also been used. But there was no evidence of such measures being put into place at this time. Nor was there any evidence that the EU had been influential in improving the situation, even after its observers attended a briefing by three opposition party leaders on 21 August. UPND’s call for justice apparently fell on deaf ears (Zambia Watchdog 2016b, 2).

All of this said, it is possible that there was some quiet diplomacy taking place which motivated the ruling party to make some minimal changes, like reducing the pressure on the opposition, or not accelerating it. But such actions would hardly have been enough in the circumstances and as Dijkstra (2016) said, Lungu showed no signs of caring about what the international community said. In fact, in the months after the elections some donors did the opposite to instituting ‘targeted restrictive measures’. At least two donors announced new multi-million grants. These examples made it look as if nothing untoward had ever happened.

Conclusion

It was obvious that the 2016 Zambian presidential election was played out with the implementation of a strategic plan of action by the ruling party which guaranteed that the incumbent won, at any cost. All key guiding institutions—the Electoral Commission, the Judiciary, and the Presidency, as well as the security services—failed to follow the ‘rule of law’. It was also clear that the Zambian election was not exceptional on the continent for similar methods had been used in countries in the region, using the same or similar methods obviously directly taken from a ‘dictator’s hand-book’. As the Economist (2016, 2) reported, “African

⁶ Interview with Zambian citizen, 15 October 2016.

democracy had stalled—or even gone into reverse.” Disenfranchised voters were unable to protest, cowed into submission by the threats of violence.

What had happened was no secret. Much of the malfeasance had occurred in full view of the public and hundreds of regional and international observers, and the media which reported in detail on the happenings. These events also occurred despite donor agencies having invested millions of dollars of support in running a modern, democratic election, including training in rights-based policing. Clearly the donors had wasted their money—another reason for concern. And yet, most failed to wave a red flag—that duty being left largely to the opposition parties, international commentators, some former African leaders and a few brave individuals. Some of them only did so when Hichilema was jailed in 2017.

What was this very expensive charade all about? Paraphrasing Ware, it was apparent that the international rhetoric on good governance did not tie in with local realities (Ware 2018, 216). Klaas (2016) offers an explanation, that ‘Western’ priorities have changed. Now the goal was to promote regional security, stability and economic growth—even at the cost of democracy and the need to recognise known ‘despots’. That ‘security and stability’ does not seem to be anything to do with electoral niceties, human rights and the rule of law which those very same ‘Western’ countries have been righteously promoting for decades. Nyabola (2018, 3) described the situation as if the ‘gospel of good governance’ was now an old refrain which has been over-ridden by the ‘stability doctrine’ and where “foreign governments tip the political balance in favour of existing power and the state”—even if it is a dictatorship.

If the new goals are indeed ‘regional security, stability, and economic growth’ there is little evidence that they have been achieved—except perhaps that the number of dead bodies is far less than it might otherwise have been. Financially, corruption in the national treasury is hardly likely to have had a positive outcome, especially for the provision of social services and national debt levels. The result will surely be to drag the international community (or certain countries) into an even more expensive rescue mode, and, possibly, ‘fire-sales’ of Zambian assets to foreign interests. Additionally, the heavy expenditure on the repression of citizens by a militarised and undisciplined security forces and violent party cadres has resulted in a society ruled by fear, not law. The UN’s silence on these matters is particularly difficult to understand.

Playing such a false game, the presence of the international community lending ‘a veneer of respectability’ to proceedings, leads, as the Economist has pointed out, to supporting ‘counterfeit democracies’ (Economist 2016). It calls into question the role of all of those who support such processes. There needs to be a major re-think about their role, if any, in elections. Zambia’s former reputation as a model for the region was not just tarnished but ruined, as was the credibility of the international community. The question, then, is whether they are going to play the same charade in 2021? Would they do better, as Mills (2016, 8) said about 2016, “by not pretending, and just staying away.”

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Some of links given below from the media such as the *Zambian Post* and *Open Zambia* are now not available because of government interference with the independent press. The author, however, holds hard copies of most of these articles.

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Degrees of Political Extremism in West Africa

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Abstract

Political extremism and rebel movements are not events. They are, instead, the outcomes of long dynamic processes involving oppressive governance structures of symbolic and systemic violence against citizens and communities. These processes and structures are the political contexts from which jihadist groups such as *Al-Shabaab*, *Boko Haram*, and *Jamā'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* emerge. Against this background, this article reviews four constitutive elements of political extremism: grievances, networks, legitimating ideologies, and local contexts. It argues that we can, and should, think of the potential for political extremism within African countries in terms of the degree to which these elements are available to serve as motivation, justification, opportunity, and capacity for political extremism. I argue that West African countries might be categorised as those experiencing political extremism and those that may do so in the future. The article draws on the literature on political violence, and cases and examples from Nigeria and Ghana.

Introduction

A United Nations Development Program ([UNDP] 2017, 15) report titled *Journey to Extremism in Africa* concludes that “violent extremism can be expected to increasingly act as a brake on Africa’s development aspirations unless steps are taken now to address its drivers and enablers.” Noting this point, this article contends that the issue must not stop there: steps should also be taken to address the problem in countries that are not yet experiencing violent extremism. There are two immediate reasons for this approach. First, while extremism is not yet present in some West African countries, the ingredients that contribute to extremism and violent rebellion are already present and starting to coalesce across communities.

Second, and perhaps more important, extremist movements are processes, rather than events. They are the outcomes of long-standing dynamics of oppressive governance structures which produce exclusion and underdevelopment, as well as systemic violence against citizens and communities.

Across Africa, these processes and structures are the political contexts from which jihadist groups such as *Al-Shabaab*, *Boko Haram*, and *Jamā'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM) emerge. By understanding the political context of these movements, it may be possible to delineate how existing socio-political structures—including in countries or communities currently not experiencing political extremism—are, or could be, a part of the dynamics that create rebel groups. Understanding the context will provide a better understanding of the kinds of conditions that might motivate and justify rebellion against the state, its agents, and institutions. It will also help identify the extent to which sentiments favouring rebellion are held by communities, and the opportunities that exist to actualise such an outcome.

Discussing statehood, Clapham (1998) argues that instead of distinguishing between entities that are states and those that are not, we should regard statehood as a continuum. Citing Harris, Schmid (2004, 110) contends that “the difference between fundamentalists and moderates—and certainly the difference between all ‘extremists’ and moderates—is the degree to which they see political and military action to be intrinsic to the practice of their faith.” Applying this principle, this article contends that rather than distinguishing between African countries that are, and are not, experiencing political extremism, it is imperative to view the manifestation of extremism as a continuum and as a matter of degree. I identify four elements or factors that contribute to political extremism: 1) grievances and aggrieved individuals; 2) a supportive group or network; 3) a legitimising ideology; and 4) a conducive local and global environment. These factors traverse and interact with economic, political, cultural, historical, and territorial dynamics to produce political extremism. Rebellion in the sub-region must, therefore, be understood as manifesting in different degrees, commensurate with how many of these factors are present. In other words, while rebellion, extremism and terrorism are not particular to any one community, some societies may have more of these factors, hence higher degrees of the potential for extremism, than others.

All African countries have varying degrees of socio-economic and political grievances that motivate rebellion. Jihadist rebellions in countries such as Somalia, Nigeria, and Mali, however, contain additional

elements that provide the justification, opportunity, and capacity to rebel, rather than some innate predisposition to violence. These additional factors and elements serve as force multipliers in the motivation to use violence as a tool for change, both on the personal and communal levels. Following this argument, a full-blown violent extremist movement is possible even in countries without ongoing open rebellion, if there are additional constitutive elements to multiply persistent and widespread socio-economic and political grievances.

These ideas draw from some of the arguments contained in Political Opportunity Theory (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2003; Meyer 2004; Tarrow 2011). Relevant to our argument, the theory holds that the actions of change activists are dependent on the availability or otherwise of a political opportunity, defined by Tarrow (2011, 32) as the “consistent—but not necessarily formal or permanent—dimensions of the political struggle that encourage people to engage in contentious politics.” In terms of capacity, Buhaug et al. (2009, 544) note that “geographic factors (such as location, terrain, and natural resources) interact with rebel fighting capacity and together play a crucial role in determining the duration of conflict.”

In drawing on the wider political economy of West African societies, and the regional and global dynamics that affect their functioning, it is possible to illuminate how jihadist or other rebel movements have utilised certain opportunities. In countries without current violent rebellion, it is possible to analyse how extremist movements might occur given the right set of circumstances, or opportunities. Applying these ideas to communities within the sub-region and to problems in their formative stages, it becomes possible to suggest how they might, in the future, experience violent rebellion and threats to various levels of security.

This article follows Mildarsky (2011) in defining political extremism as

the will to power by a social movement in the service of a political program typically at variance with that supported by existing state authorities, and for which individual liberties are to be curtailed in the name of collective goals, including the mass murder of those who would actually or potentially disagree with that program. (Cited in Schmid 2014, 12)

This definition is adopted to encapsulate concepts such as political radicalism that may result in an insurgency, and the use of tactics such as terrorism, suicide bombings, kidnapping, and assassinations.

In the next section, I engage the literature on political violence, especially the pieces that offer processual nuances and disaggregate the constitutive elements of radicalisation, extremism, and political rebellion. Following this, I use the case study of Boko Haram in Nigeria to bring some empirical evidence to the above elements, and to illustrate the motivation behind and justification for Boko Haram, as well as the opportunity and capability deployed by the Nigerian insurgency. A final section offers general perspectives on political extremism in countries not experiencing open rebellion, such as Ghana.

Constitutive Elements of Political Extremism

From Ted Gurr (1970) in *Why Men Rebel*, to theories of greed or grievances in civil war (Collier and Hoeffler 2004) and new wars (Kaldor 2013), scholars have attempted to explain the motivation behind violent rebellion and conflicts. While one cannot do justice this exhaustive literature here, I identify four interrelated elements of political extremism relevant to our argument: the presence of grievances, a supportive group or network that socialises this grievance, a legitimising ideology, and a conducive local or global environment. Throughout much of the literature, these four elements reoccur in varying forms. My goal in this section is to outline these elements and then to use them to support examples in Nigeria and Ghana.

Louise Richardson (2007) argues that terrorism requires three conditions to occur: a disenfranchised and aggrieved set of individuals, a supportive group, and a legitimising ideology. Arie Kruglanski et al. (2014) identify three ingredients of individual radicalisation that roughly parallel Richardson's: a motivational element involving the quest for personal significance and defining the goal of one's activity; an ideology, which is a belief system identifying the means to that goal or the way of gaining that significance; and the social process (networking, group dynamics) which serves "as the vehicle whereby the individual comes in contact with the ideology." Elsewhere, Webber and Kruglanski (2018) simplify this in a "3N" approach, involving needs (individual motivation), narratives (the ideological justification of violence), and network (group processes).

The "phased explanation" of terrorism advanced by Doosje et al. (2016, 79) also refers to these elements. Phase one of their model "is characterized by a sensitivity to a radical ideology", phase two is where "an individual becomes a member of a radical group", and phase three is when a person may be "ready to act on behalf of the group's ideology". For their part, Silber and Bhatt (2007) explain homegrown jihadist

radicalisation as evolving through four stages, the pre-radicalisation phase, the self-identification phase, the indoctrination phase, and finally, the jihadisation phase. If the above constitutive aspects of extremism are on a horizontal plane, other studies, such as the “staircase to terrorism” model (Moghaddam 2005) and the pyramid model (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008), attempt to place them on a vertical gradient.

The “staircase to terrorism” model treats the process of radicalisation as a six-floor building, where the ground floor is the largest with the remaining floors becoming smaller at each climb until the fifth floor. Importantly, it notes that many “people, even when feeling deprived and unfairly treated, remain on the ground floor, [while] some individuals climb up and are eventually recruited into terrorist organisations” (Moghaddam 2005, 161). In this regard, McCauley and Moskaleiko opine that “one way of thinking about radicalisation is that it is the gradient that distinguishes terrorists from their base of sympathizers” (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008, 417). Their pyramid model maintains that the overwhelming majority of people who could be radicalised remain at the wider base, while a few progress upwards to the ever-narrowing tip of the pyramid (McCauley and Moskaleiko 2008).

In the broader field of violent conflict and civil war literature, other scholars identify a variety of factors. The Social Cubism framework (Byrne and Carter 1996) refers to six causal factors contributing to conflict: the socio-economic, the political, the geographical and/or environmental, the historical, the religious and/or ideological, and the psycho-cultural. Randy Borum notes that “violence is ‘caused’ by a complex interaction of biological, social/contextual, cognitive, and emotional factors that occur over time. Some causes will be more prominent than others for certain individuals and certain types of violence and aggression” (Borum 2004, 10). To Michael Brown (1996), there are four categories of the permissive and proximate causes of conflict (structural, political, socio-economic, and cultural). Acknowledging the interplay of the above factors, Zartman concludes that conflicts traverse multiple motivational levels of need, creed and greed. To him, the interesting questions “are how these factors relate to each other in causing and sustaining conflict, and how, not whether, conflict is related to these three factors” (Zartman 2019, 95).

These frameworks are applied mainly to extremism in Western societies. Despite potential ideological and normative premises inherent in these models, they nevertheless present conduits through which the arguments about degrees of political extremism in West Africa can be made. These factors and elements may also seem to create a “Kitchen

Sink” problem in trying to causally analyse the problem of political extremism. No single social phenomenon, least of all political violence, however, could be analysed through a monocausal lens (Higazi et al. 2018).

From these four constitutive elements, we can draw several key dynamics—socio-economic, political, psycho-cultural, historical, ideological, and geographical/territorial—in violent conflicts in Africa. While these variables are generic and overlap substantially, they are based on causal factors reflected in the literature above. I argue that political extremism should be understood as a continuum depending on the extent to which the above constitutive elements, along with these key dynamics, are present in any given country.

Boko Haram: A Case Study

Boko Haram is a Nigerian jihadist movement that started in the country’s north east around 2009. Translated as ‘education is forbidden’, it has engaged in a violent campaign in the name of establishing a form of political Islam. The group was born in the early 2000s, in the context of Nigeria’s post-1999 politics following decades of military rule. To Walker (2012), it was the August 2011 suicide attack on the United Nations headquarters in Abuja that brought the violent and ideological fortitude of the group to world news. Yet, in many respects, it was Boko Haram’s abduction of 276 schoolgirls in the northeastern town of Chibok in April 2014 that catapulted the group into global prominence, with “global leaders and celebrities leading ... a campaign for [their] immediate release” (Mickler et al. 2019, 273).

In recent times, this insurgency has come under some control, although it continues to pose significant threats to all levels of security. From its initial violent engagement with Nigeria’s security forces in 2009, the group has morphed into three factions:

- 1) The original group, usually referred to as Boko Haram, *Jama’atu Ahl al-Sunna lid Da’wati wa al-Jihad* (Followers of Prophetic Traditions on Peaching and Struggle or ASJ);
- 2) *Ansaru al-Musulmeen fi Bilad al-Sudan* (Helpers of the Muslims in the Land of the Black People or Ansaru); and
- 3) *Wilāyat Gharb Ifrīqīyyah* (Islamic State’s West Africa Province or ISWAP).

The last two groups came from splits in 2012 and 2016 respectively. Although they differ in terms of ideology and tactic—Ansaru, for

instance, broke away due to Shekau's indiscriminate killing of civilians, while ISWAP is beholden to ISIS' ideology as opposed to ASJ which follows al-Qaeda. Nonetheless, they are all situated within the political economy of (mis)governance within Nigeria and, by extension, Western Africa.

Much has been written on what led to, and sustained, what we now call Boko Haram. This literature includes many simplistic treatments of the Nigerian insurgency. Zenn (2017), for example, has been criticised by many scholars in that respect (Higazi et al. 2018). Some scholars of Boko Haram, and jihadist movements in Africa in general, use ideologically compromised and morally subjective language such as "Butchers of Nigeria" (Soyinka 2012) and "today we shall drink blood" (Cline 2011). Others conclude, in a thesis resembling Kaplan (1994), that "West Africa is becoming the home of a 21st century Islamist dystopia" and "Islamist activities in West Africa have prompted the possible emergence of a new 'Middle East' in that part of the world" (Sulemana and Azeez 2015, 52). Methodologically, others write on causes of Boko Haram consulting suspect data and/or by relying on data in locations far removed from the local context of rebellion: Pérouse de Montclos (2020), for example, criticises Comolli (2015) for writing a whole book based on interviewing people in Abuja, and not in Borno State.

A common denominator of these treatments of Boko Haram is that they tilt towards the tendency to outsource the cause of the African insurgency to the Middle East. They reify the global ideological, rather than the local material socio-economic and political, aspects of Boko Haram. The reality, however, is that Boko Haram was born and bred under oppressive political-economic structures in Nigeria. The insurgency is predominantly grievance-based, and international or global factors or connections became accessories to rebellion in relation to the justification and legitimising of rebellion (Dan Suleiman 2017a).

Boko Haram resulted from a long chronology of events across many decades (see Reinert and Garçon 2014 for example) which implicates pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial politics. Abdul Raufu Mustafa (2014) listed poverty and inequality, post-1999 politics, youth agency, religious ideology, and geography as the key elements in the emergence of Boko Haram. Accordingly, William Hansen (2017, 551) concludes that Boko Haram is "a reaction to more than a half century of corruption, venality, poverty, and abuse by the state predator class." Other scholars have pointed to Boko Haram's proximity to porous border regions of Borno State in Nigeria with Cameroon and Chad (geography), the local community grassroots support (hence social networks), and decades of

state failure to address endemic poverty, inequality, and the grievances of radicalised youth (Zenn, Barkindo and Heras 2013). Grievances, supportive networks, legitimising ideology, and favourable environment therefore render Boko Haram an attractive alternative. Thurston (2016) highlights this complexity:

it is misleading to treat Boko Haram as a socio-economic protest with an Islamic veneer, an ethnic revolt, a puppet of foreign jihadis, or a resurgence of an earlier religious movement. Rather, analysis should examine the interaction between structural factors, politics, and ideas in Northeastern Nigeria, and how this locality both redirected and diverged from broader global trends in militancy. (8)

We can safely assert, from the foregoing discussion, that Boko Haram (including all its factions), emerged from an interplay of socio-economic, political, psycho-cultural, historical, geographical, and ideological factors, with socio-economic factors appearing to play the major part. To support this argument, a veteran technocrat in the Nigerian security forces maintained that if someone (such as an jihadist intellectual entrepreneur) visits a place like a bank and asks people to burn their certificates and join ‘a jihad’, he or she may get one person out of a thousand to oblige. In a car park full of people with little or no source of income, however, he or she may get three hundred.¹ The point is that there would be more grievances and aggrieved individuals in the latter place, than in the former.

Socio-economic grievances become political, in a context of horizontal inequality, which Stewarts (2011, 3) describes as inequality “in economic, social or political dimensions or cultural status between culturally defined groups” located in the same country. He adds that where adverse socio-economic conditions coincide and cross-fertilise with real or perceived marginalisation of cultural and identity groups the potential for rebellion increases. The northeast of Nigeria is the poorest in the country, and northern Nigeria has a predominantly homogenous Muslim population. This is why Boko Haram is political: these factors enable it to challenge “Western values, challenge the secularity of the Nigerian state, and reveal the corruption of a ‘democracy’ that relies on a

¹ Interview with a serving military officer with operational experience in countering Boko Haram, 27 March 2018, Kaduna, Nigeria.

predatory ruling elite, the so-called ‘godfathers’” (Pérouse de Montclos 2014, 135).

The very existence of socio-economic and political grievances justifies a desire for alternative politics. Although post-colonial African countries, including Nigeria, have widespread socio-economic and political grievances, not all of them have experienced violent extremism within their borders. Apart from factors that spur rebellion on the material level, there should also be justification on the ideological and discursive level. It is on the ideological level that psycho-historical factors come in. According to Stewart (2009):

while all conflicts have several motives with political and or economic ones generally central, mobilisation frequently occurs on the basis of particular identities, and conflicts can then be classified as ‘ethnic’ or ‘religious’, or class or ideological, on the basis of how people are mobilised rather than with respect to the political or economic motives for such mobilisation. (5)

Boko Haram’s success as an insurgency is attributable to the availability of pre-existing emirates and caliphates in northern Nigeria. For instance, at the intersection of psycho-historical and geographical dynamics, the territories once controlled or traversed by the insurgency in the present-day Lake Chad Basin (LCB) area would fit almost perfectly with the map of the Kanem-Bornu Empire, which existed at varying degrees of strength from the ninth to the nineteenth centuries. Indeed, most Boko Haram leaders are of the Kanuri ethnic group, descendants of the Empire.

The pre-colonial Sahel region had also been home to Muslim imperial contestations, including the jihads of Usman dan Fodio in present-day Northern Nigeria (Kane 2008, 164). This history allows the “creation of a potent sense of victimhood based on re-invented or re-interpreted historical grievances” (Jackson and Dexter 2014, 17). The anger and rage given to the immediacy of these grievances can then become the basis for and justification of violence directed towards self-defence or righteous revenge. In short, across the Sahel, this religio-political history allows for easy justification of political extremism in ways that other regions or countries in Western Africa lack.

State repression is yet another political factor that led to the justification of violent extremism and facilitated Boko Haram. In 2019, Stig Hansen (2009) claimed the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf was not

crucial in the making of Boko Haram. Yet, “Boko Haram under Muhammad Yusuf was not violent prior to 2009” before the “unprovoked killing of its leader and continuous jailing of its members caused violent retaliation” (Hansen and Musa 2013, 286). Thurston lists “the brutality of the Nigerian government’s response” as one of the triggers of Boko Haram. A specialist in security strategy emphasised the role of the killing of Yusuf.² To him, that allowed the remaining members to filter out into neighbouring countries and the notorious Sambisa Forest to rebuild themselves and come out with the clear strategy of violence against the Nigerian state.

Many scholars highlight the role of geography in explaining Boko Haram (Mustafa 2014; Zenn et al. 2013). The reference to Sambisa Forest shows that the location of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria played a key role. Socio-economic and political grievances, active political history, and state repression could not, in and of themselves, have led to the Boko Haram we know today. The location of Borno State—hence of Boko Haram—provided a conducive local environment, and the presence of porous borders in the Lake Chad Basin countries of Chad, Cameroon, and Niger is yet another favourable geography. To two peace-building researchers, women were paid one hundred dollars to carry “stuff”—possibly weapons, cash or even drugs—across the Niger-Nigeria border, at the height of the Boko Haram insurgency.³ In this sense, geography offered both the opportunity and capability to rebel or expand the rebellion. The active political history discussed above provided a favourable local discursive and global environment.

Ideology serves as a force multiplier for all the above factors. There are local and global dimensions to the role of religious ideology. Locally, Nyang (1984, 21) pointed out that the jihad wars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Western Africa were declared on the invading European armies. Islamic resistance to colonialism insisted not just on the end of foreign rule but also the grant of cultural, socio-economic, and religious autonomy to the African (Muslim). Since de-colonisation failed to deliver this autonomy (wa Mutua 1995, 1116), there remains a deep-seated disavowal of Western systems of rule in predominantly Muslim societies. Boko Haram’s legitimising ideology, Salafi-Jihadism, draws on

² Interview with a retired Army General with leadership experience in UN and African Union peacekeeping, and a defence and security governance expert, 29 March 2018, Abuja, Nigeria.

³ Discussion with West African Network of Peace-building researchers, 20 February 2018, Accra, Ghana.

this deep-seated wish for an Islamic form of politics. This jihadist ideology helps in explaining, justifying and supporting alternative political governance structures and forms of insurgent action.

An interplay of socio-economic and political grievances, favourable local history, and geography and conducive global ideological environment, as a matter of course, create supportive groups and networks that socialises the motivation and justification for rebellion. Still, the connection to other groups came due to the endogenous ontology of northern Nigerian society. Here, one can hardly disagree with Thurston (2018, 3) that “Boko Haram represents the outcome of dynamic, locally grounded interactions between religion and politics.” Without endemic and persistent socio-economic and political grievances, and aggrieved individuals and communities, Nigeria and the LCB area would have experienced the violence and threat that Boko Haram has come to embody.

The Potential for Political Extremism: A Ghanaian Illustration

A body of literature challenges the causal relationship, or the nature of the relationship, between poverty and violent conflict, with some scholars pointing to an inverse relationship between economic health and ethnic rebellion (see Braithwaite et al. 2016; Olzak 2006, 145). Very few scholars, however, discuss rebellion or political extremism in Africa without underscoring socio-economic and political grievances. As an international relations and governance professor in Abuja explained, the deplorable socio-economic conditions help extremist ideologues to couch their ideology in the context of the hereafter: “you better fight now. If you succeed in taking over the State, fine. [But] if you do not succeed in taking over the State, there is a reward in the afterlife”.⁴

Unsurprisingly, an Afrobarometer survey found that, in the Lake Chad Basin countries, the desire for personal enrichment or power was a far more common motivation to join extremist groups than religious ideology (Buchanan-Clarke and Lekalake 2016, 3). We know from this evidence and from the short case study of Boko Haram that socio-economic and political grievances remain at the core of the problem of political extremism. For security and governance scholars and practitioners in African countries such as Ghana, where there is no full-fledged political extremist insurgency on the scale of Boko Haram, there are some key questions:

⁴ Interview with a professor of strategic studies, international security, and African politics, 29 March 2018, Abuja, Nigeria.

- 1) To what degree do conditions that motivate and justify rebellion against the state, its agents, and institutions exist among citizens and communities?
- 2) To what extent could groups and communities attain the opportunity and capability to actualise the motivation to rebel?
- 3) Why do some Western African communities experience jihadist violence while others do not, even though grievances are widespread and persistent?

Communities in Ghana—a country which is a beacon of peace and democracy in Africa—may lack the level of homogeneity that allows for the socialisation of the motivation, and justification for collective violence. Its communities may also lack favourable ideological and geographical opportunity and capacity. Yet, Ghana, like all African countries, has endemic socio-economic grievances and aggrieved individuals, most of whom are youth. Given this fact, there is potential for political extremism to grow.

A peace and security professor, Kwesi Aning, shared an interesting perspective. He echoed this article's argument in stating that extremism manifests in different shades and that even disobeying sanitation laws and vandalising (or stealing) public streetlights could all be extremist acts by citizens against the state for failures to provide the socio-economic needs of citizens. He emphasised the need to look at rebellion at the lower levels of society, noting that it would be important to know what ordinary citizens were willing to do to survive the harsh socio-economic conditions that confront them daily.⁵ The suggestion is that these lower-level, or 'soft', manifestations of rebellion could, if not checked, explode into full-blown, large scale violence.

Reinforcing this point, Ghana is dealing with a proliferation of militia groups with names such as 'Azorka Boys', 'Delta Force', 'Invincible Forces', 'Kandahar', and 'Bamba Boys' (Gyampo et al. 2017). These creations are used by political patrons affiliated with Ghana's two main political parties, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), for political advantage, and to disrupt law and order. In one instance, the Delta Force vigilante group "stormed the Kumasi Circuit Court and freed 13 members of their group who were facing charges for causing disturbances at the Ashanti Regional

⁵ Conversation with Professor Kwesi Aning, 17 February 2020, KAIPTC, Accra.

Coordinating Council. They vandalised some court properties and almost assaulted the Judge” (Gyampo et al. 2007, 124).

In early 2019, masked men said to be National Security operatives used live bullets at a polling station during a by-election, leading to many casualties, including an assault on a sitting MP. Some commentaries have since connected the masked men to one of the above militia groups associated with Ghana’s ruling government (GhanaWeb 2019). Attuquayefio and Darkwa (2017, 90) maintain that most of these extra-legal uses of force and violence by sub-state but politically affiliated groups have gone unpunished due to culture impunity which has resulted from “a systemic decapitation of the Police by the political elite.” Testifying before a Commission of Enquiry into the above election violence, Professor Aning submitted that violence in Ghana is “perceived to be extremely useful; it is beneficial; it transforms lives; it creates new identities and it gives access to power” (The Independent Ghana 2019). The Commission also heard that there is a growing “everydayness of political violence” and “extremist tendencies are beginning to grow in Ghanaian society.”⁶

The thought of comparing political violence in Ghana and Boko Haram in Nigeria may sound alarmist. Indeed, Ghana is not Nigeria, and the two countries have different socio-economic dynamics and geopolitical configurations. What we now call Boko Haram, however, morphed from a civil society group called ECOMOG, a group that was used by politicians to gain power. Modu Sheriff, the Governor of Borno State from 2003, used ECOMOG to wrestle power away from Mala Kachalla, the Governor from 1999 to 2003.⁷ As one respondent explained, when Modu Sheriff became Governor the organisation “metamorphosed from the ECOMOG to Boko Haram between 2003 to 2007”.⁸ Additionally, even the name of Boko Haram evolved, and “the word ‘jihad’ was not in its name until after the repression of July 2009” (Higazi 2013; Chouin, Reinert and Apard 2014, 217). Organised and collective violent rebellion is gradual and processual. In this vein, a governance and democratisation specialist narrated how he witnessed, first-hand, how Siaka Stevens of Sierra Leone ran a corrupt government which protected

6 Hearings of the Justice Emile Short Commission. Video available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bri31ffPKho>, retrieved 1 May 2020.

7 Interview with a professor of security and political science, 19 March 2018, Abuja, Nigeria.

8 *Ibid.*

political elites at the expense of citizens, and how in the 1980s, the politics of social neglect slowly introduced violence as a political alternative.⁹

In another respect, violent extremist tendencies—to quote an elite Ghanaian diplomat and academic—has “come too close for comfort” (Dan Suleiman 2017b, 320). Here, it pays to remember Mohammed Alema, a Ghanaian graduate from a prestigious Ghanaian university who joined ISIS in mid-2015, before his alleged death in Libya in 2016 (Dan Suleiman 2017b, 319). While the idea of “global jihad” was a motivating factor, local grievances could not be dismissed in the decision of Alema. Relatedly, according to a security specialist,¹⁰ 20 Ghanaians in Ghana’s conflict-prone northern region have been prevented from travelling to join ISIS. This specialist added that, in most cases, the ideological aspects of jihadist movements come later, after years of perpetual oppression and inequality.

In a sub-regional context, Ghana’s national security is under threat of a possible spiralling of jihadist violence into the country from Burkina Faso. The latter in recent years has come under threat from jihadist groups operating in the broader Sahel-Sahara. The 2019 West Africa Mining Security (WAMS) Conference in Accra heard that there are some 189 border crossings between Ghana and her neighbours, but only eight have approved border posts. Moreover, there is a recent resuscitation of separatist sentiments in the western border of Ghana with Togo where a movement, Members of the Homeland Study Group Foundation, is campaigning for the liberation of “Western Togoland”. In the context of these dynamics, the United Nations and the Small Arms Commission of Ghana disclosed that about 2.3 million unregistered arms are in circulation in the country (Dan Suleiman 2017b, 19). West Africa is a region riddled with geopolitical vulnerabilities, and Aning re-stated at the WAMS Conference (2019) that there were 2.1 million unregistered guns in Ghana.

These Ghanaian dynamics are not the same as Nigeria’s. Yet, it is essential to think about the possibility of a Ghanaian locality becoming redirected by regional or global trends in militancy. As noted above, Ghana (like other African countries) has endemic socio-economic and political grievances, although it does not have a full-blown political

⁹ Interview with governance and democratisation professor, 12 February 2018, Accra, Ghana.

¹⁰ Interview with the Executive Director of a security think tank in Ghana, 14 February 2018, Accra, Ghana.

extremist rebel movement—yet. This is because socio-economic and political grievances lack enough of the other ingredients (supportive groups or network, legitimising ideology, and conducive local and global environment) and factors (psycho-cultural-historical, ideological, and geographical). Under increasing globalisation, no one can tell how regional or global trends could influence the Ghanaian specificity. Whereas geography is rather a static concept, other elements and factors of rebellion could evolve in the future and, in the presence of persistent and widespread socio-economic and political grievances, complete the causal and factorial ingredient for political extremism in Ghana. The case of Burkina Faso and Ghana's porous borders with her neighbours highlights this possibility.

It is the possibility of resorting to violence under certain circumstances that brings Schmid (2014) to problematise a discourse that considers so-called quietist and reformist Salafists as non-violent, preferring, instead, the description “not (yet) violent”. Schmid concludes that depending on circumstances, violent extremism and non-violent extremism could be two sides of the same coin. The above suggests that in countries such as Ghana, under the right (or wrong) circumstances, organised violence could be justified and actualised. Silber and Bhatt's (2007) conception of cognitive opening is important here. Defined as the consequence of a trauma that makes the individual start questioning the values they previously believed in, four types of triggers may lead to cognitive opening: economic, such as job loss or blocked mobility; political, such as the international conflicts involving Muslims; social, including alienation, discrimination or racism, both real or perceived; and personal, for instance, the loss of a loved one (Silber and Bhatt 2007).

Returning to the primacy of socio-economic and political grievances, no one can predict when deprivation may push radicalisation of ideas (cognitive radicalisation) over the line to become radicalisation of behaviour (violent radicalisation) (McCauley and Moskalenko 2011), leading thereby to a full-blown rebellion in African countries, including those not currently experiencing political extremism. From the above discussion, there are numerous “cognitive openings” that could push individuals or collectives over the line, to violent radicalisation or political extremism.

Might we then consider West African societies in terms of those that are experiencing political extremism and those that are not yet so situated? In any case, it is important to remember that every individual or group of individuals is capable of violence “if sufficiently provoked Assault lies dormant within us all. It requires only circumstance to set it

in violent motion” (Smith 2004, 367). Under the wrong circumstance, ordinary people, too, can commit genocide and mass killing (Waller 2002).

Conclusion

I have argued that we can, and should, think of the potential to experience political extremism in African communities in terms of the degree to which causal factors and constitutive elements are present in any given country. These factors (socio-economic, political, psycho-cultural, historical, ideological, and geographical) and elements (aggrieved individuals and grievances, supportive group or network, legitimising ideology, and conducive local and global environment) determine the possibility or potential for a country to experience political extremism since they determine the degree to which there are the motivations, justifications, opportunity and capability to rebel.

There still exists persistent and widespread socio-political and economic grievances, and aggrieved individuals, in almost all African countries due to endemic governance challenges. Some countries, however, experience violent extremist movements while others do not because African communities are at varying stages regarding the existence of constitutive elements. Current socio-political structures and processes, even in countries currently not experiencing extremist groups, are therefore a part of the processes that could produce extremist groups in the future.

These arguments are exploratory in many respects. For a country already experiencing political extremism, knowing the emergent elements of an insurgency helps in countering it. For a country without political extremism, the article’s arguments are pre-emptive: they ask both scholars and practitioners to consider the making of political extremism before it is visible enough to threaten human, national, regional, and global security. The argument allows us to transcend the problem of simplistic presentations of jihadist extremism and to focus on what could be manifested in the future if preventive measures are not taken now. By showing the primacy of socio-economic and political factors in the emergence of political extremism, the article points to progressive de-radicalisation and counter-extremism dividends for relevant security actors in Africa where, due to endemic governance problems, many of the factors and elements of violent extremism and rebellion are present.

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ARTICLES ON LITERATURE AND ON THE DIASPORA

Witchcraft as a Cultural Phenomenon: African Philosophy in Phaswane Mpe's *Welcome to our Hillbrow*

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Abstract

Witchcraft, the use of magical or mystical powers to cause harm and influence people negatively, and African philosophy, an understanding of the attitudes behind the ways of thinking and actions in the life situations of African people, have long been discussed in African philosophical and socio-cultural discourses. Studies of Phaswane Mpe's novel *Welcome to Our Hillbrow* (2001) have focused on thematic preoccupations such as death, prostitution, betrayal, HIV/AIDS, violence, migration from rural to urban areas, and racism, without giving adequate attention to the cultural issue of witchcraft, as this article does. We adopt new historicism as a critical approach to understand the context of the novel as it addresses the cultural concerns of the society that produces it. The operations of witchcraft in South African society, Mpe's fictional setting, is exposed as the author shows that Refentsé, a character in the novel, dies through suicide, suspected to have been manipulated by his mother using witchcraft powers. Tshepo, another character, also dies through lightning suspected to have been manipulated by a witch. Thus, witchcraft persists as a cultural phenomenon in the socio-cultural context of post-apartheid South Africa, as fictionalised in Mpe's imagined Southern Africa.

Introduction

Phaswane Mpe was born into a South African family in 1970 during the oppressive peak of apartheid. He died in 2004. A highly talented literary artist who studied at the University of Witwatersrand, graduating in African literature and English, he later emerged as a novelist, poet, and

cultural activist, and was one of the novelists who came to prominence after the demise of apartheid in 1994. His scholarship focused on issues peculiar to post-apartheid South African society and his writing has helped to shape South African literature.

In an introduction to *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, Chirmai Negesh (2001) writes that Mpe's writing

is informed by an oral tradition particular to the communal life of the South African pastoral area of Limpopo. This in addition to his modern university liberal arts education; his experience of urban life in Johannesburg; and, ultimately, his artistic sensibility and ability to synthesize disparate elements, has marked him as a truly "homegrown" South African literary phenomenon. (xi–xii)

South African literature before independence in 1994 was one of confrontations and protests and struggles for emancipation from the shackles of apartheid. Nkosi (1981, 76), writing of that time, reminds us that "the literature of Southern Africa is wholly concerned with the theme of struggle and conflict", and "has always been a literature of protest and social commitment." Examples of such South African literary writings include Alex La Guma's fiction *A Walk in the Night* (1967), Dennis Brutus' collection of poems *A Simple Lust* (1973), and Athol Fugard's play *Sizwe Bansi is Dead* (1976). There was a shift in style, attitude, and thematic preoccupations as writers, especially emerging novelists, that pointed to a new critical focus in post-apartheid South Africa. This illustrated the hopes and aspirations of post-apartheid South African, as well as obvious xenophobia, fears around the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and the cultural influence of witchcraft as the cause of inexplicable phenomena. Phaswane Mpe handles the issue of witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon in the post-apartheid South African world view in an uncompromising manner in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*.

Culture has been defined as the "customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group ... The beliefs and attitudes about [something] that people in a particular group or organization share". 'Cultural' implies a connection "with the culture of a particular society or group, its customs [and] beliefs" (Hornby 2015, 357). Thus, culture includes a particular people's or group of persons' beliefs or customs that influence the understanding of their social and cultural relationships in their society. This is reflected in *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, which shows witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon in South

African society. In her examination of new historicism as a critical theory, Dobbie (2012, 176) theorises culture as referring to “the sum of the beliefs, institutions, arts, and behaviours of a particular people or time, ... cultural studies can be said to address an almost unthinkable broad body of knowledge: language, customs, legal systems, literature, and more.” She argues that the new historicist critic “seeks to understand a text by examining its cultural context—the anxieties, issues, struggles, politics (and more) of the era in which it was created”. These critics, she concludes, like “the Marxists who preceded them ... assume that literature addresses cultural concerns and can affect society’s attitudes and values” (Dobbie 2012, 181). We argue below that witchcraft is a cultural phenomenon in South African society, as it affects the attitudes and values of South Africans towards their fellows, and our analysis reveals that the cultural beliefs and practices of witchcraft can be considered an African way of thinking and understanding actions in the different circumstances of life.

The concept “African philosophy” originated as a variant of the general idea of the “primitive” philosophy which, in turn, is a part of the European attempts to understand the strange practices of “other peoples” (Urmson and Ree 1989, 3). Such a concept emphasises that a philosophy is an attempt by the European world to inquire into and understand the strange and incomprehensible ways of life of others. Mbiti (1969, 2), in contrast, defines African philosophy as “the understanding, attitude of mind, logic and perception behind the manner in which African peoples think, act or speak in different situations of life.” He attempts to give his view of philosophy from an African context.

Literature Review

Akin Omoyajowo (1983) sees a witch as a woman who

was supposed to have magic powers especially one who used these powers to do evil. Witches are said to be helped by devils or evil spirits ... It is generally believed in Africa for example traditional Yoruba belief shared also by the Shona people of South Africa is that witches are mostly women flying about at night through bird familiars especially the night jar; while the Nupe believe that although there are male witches, women witches are more dangerous. (317)

Thus, Omoyajowo concludes that witches are mainly women, and are usually more dangerous in their witchcraft operations than male witches. Mbiti (1969) reminds us that diviners “are concerned primarily with acts of divination” and that they are

the agents of unveiling mysteries of human life. This is done through the use of mediums, oracles being possessed, divination objects [such as bone used by the bone thrower in *Welcome to our Hillbrow*] common sense intuitive knowledge and insight, hypnotism and other secret knowledge. (177)

According to Orubu (2001, 116), “belief in witchcraft is worldwide. While this has disappeared in many countries, it still exists in some African territories. The fear of witchcraft has made dramatic changes in the lifestyles of many Africans.” Orubu contends that the practice has disappeared in many countries but persists in the African society. Such persistence informs our critical interest in Mpe’s *Welcome to our Hillbrow*.

The novel has attracted some critical attention. Pieterse (2014, 47–48) argues that in it, the reader “confronts a specifically urban context, ... which takes as its time frame the period of the interregnum in South African politics. However, this novel ... takes an African spiritual worldview as a central narrative principle.” Pieterse’s argument that the text focuses on African spiritual worldview is well justified. Barris’ (2009, 41) examination of the novel emphasises the author’s use of the second person narrative form and argues that “the novel is even more intensely destabilised by being written in the second person” as against the generally and often used third person or the first person narrative points of view. He notes that “the ‘you’ of this narration principally addresses the focaliser Refentsé” (41). Dass (2004, 168) concurs when he concludes that Refentsé “is the focaliser of the novel [as] we see the world through his eyes.” No wonder Dannenberg (2012, 46) concludes that at the heart of *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*’s innovative and original style “is the use of second-person narration ... ‘You’ narration challenges the traditional predominance of first-versus third-person narration and constructs a bridge between the two conventional discourses of narration which polarize character and narrator identities into ‘I’ or ‘he/she/they’ groups.” Barris (2009, 49), however, argues further that Mpe “reveals no ideological urgency to develop the community about which he writes. Instead, he focuses on the disintegration of communal values and on the

degradation and destruction of individuals trapped in colliding, hybridizing worlds.” This is apparent in a critical reading of the novel: it is an attempt to redefine the community, Barris concludes, as there is evidence of colliding physical and spiritual worlds within it.

Fai (2014, 157) comments on the novel that “prostitution, betrayal, rape and the contraction of HIV/AIDS are the *modus operandi* Broken relationships, rape and betrayal go along with the spread of HIV/AIDS and death.” Indeed, one finds incidents of rape, prostitution, betrayal, and HIV/AIDS, as observed by Fai, in the novel. Continuing this theme, Dass (2004, 171) concludes that the novel “is a response to the traditional South African novel in which a protagonist moves from the purity of peace of rural life to the corruption, degradation and squalor of the city.” This conclusion is observed in the novel as one finds the protagonist migrate from the rural to the urban or city centre. This gives the novel the shape of a migratory novel. But Rafapa and Mahori (2011) look at the novel differently, concluding that it is one that reconstructs the ordinary experiences of post-apartheid South Africans who are confronted with issues such as crime (159), HIV/AIDS (166–68), xenophobia, and prejudice (164). Trengrove (2015, 45), looking at lightning and fiction, argues that “Mpe’s story must be seen as a commentary or reflection on current beliefs regarding witchcraft in general and the link between witchcraft and lightning in particular.” He adds that the story itself “takes up the idea of lightning on different levels as a widely-held belief in rural societies, as a structural literary device, as a way of commenting on social issues and problems” (46). Trengrove’s view is critical as it links fiction with the science of lightning. By so doing, he tries to argue that, inasmuch as lightning is a scientific phenomenon, it is believed to have links with witchcraft in Mpe’s novel. The novel indeed focuses on these issues that confront the society of Mpe’s creation. But none of these critics has dared tackle the issue of witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon, as Mpe portrays in the novel.

Analysis

A critical study of the novel reveals that Mpe foregrounds two characters for whom witchcraft is an element in events important to them in the narrative. A context of witchcraft beliefs and practices in the novel surrounds the death of Refentsé and Tshepo, and belief in witchcraft is widespread in the fictional society Mpe creates. Similarly, Mpe’s witch character is a woman. Since witchcraft involves the use of magic powers, it thus means that the activities of the male bone thrower in Mpe’s novel is magical, as the author employs him to unravel the mystery behind the

frequent cases of sudden deaths either through lightning or disease (2001, 45). The bone thrower, by his activities, is a diviner who invokes magical powers to ascertain the unknown or to unravel perplexing issues. This is evident in the novelist's representation of his activities, as he is the one engaged to unravel the mystery behind the regular cases of "sudden deaths".

In narrating the death story of Refentsé, Mpe reveals that he died through suicide, manipulated by his mother, as the mother invokes the magical powers of witchcraft. The narrator tells us that us that Refilwe

rewrote large chunks of the story that Tiragalong had constructed about you, which was that you committed suicide because your mother had bewitched you ... Tiragalong's story was constructed when your mother slipped and fell into your grave on that hot Saturday morning of your burial. As Tiragalong believed, only witches could fall into a corpse's grave on burial. Medicine men had confirmed that, in the good old days, such things only happened to witches after they have bewitched the deceased. (42-43)

The novelist thus includes the South African belief in witchcraft as part of the cultural context of his spatial setting. A critical examination of the quotation reveals that witchcraft is a cultural phenomenon among South African people. Mpe says that in Tiragalong, a fictional locale in South Africa, only witches fall into a corpse's grave during burial.

Besides, Refentsé is presented as one who dies through suicide. Refentsé's suicide is claimed or believed to have been influenced through the use of mysterious powers by the witch. Thus, Refentsé's mother is accused of possessing the powers of a witch to cause harm and subsequently the death of her son. It is intriguing to note that the people of Tiragalong employed an unscientific mode of investigation of the unknown to ascertain the cause of the death of Refentsé. That they conclude in their investigation that Refentsé's mother is a witch, and she killed her son, shows that they have employed what Orubu (2001) calls divination. Orubu says that a witch or wizard

can be known through divination. In a simple sense, divination means the discovery of the unknown (events, circumstances) and the future through supernatural

techniques. Divination seeks to find out things which are otherwise hidden. Divination has existed for ages. (127)

Orubu's reminder authenticates what Mpe narrates as he, Mpe, confirms Refentsé's mother's guilt in Refentsé's bewitchment, through divination. The novelist, in his narration, shows that belief in witchcraft is very strong in his fictional South African setting. Some members of South African communities represented in Mpe's novel are seen to take seriously the issue of witchcraft wherever and whenever mentioned, or whoever is suspected to be a witch or wizard. Pieterse (2014) confirms this awareness and seriousness when he argues that people

tend to talk *around* witchcraft—it is not repressed but avoided. Everyone in the community is aware of it, but it is not treated as a topic that should be allowed a public space. By its very nature, it is occult, secret knowledge, the world of shade ... However, accounts of witchcraft can at times, paradoxically, be associated with a mixture of both secrecy and publicity and in contemporary South African life it attracts [both avoidance and attention]. (31)

When Mpe refers to his character who visits a bone thrower, he enlightens the reader on the mystical powers of the bone thrower by writing that he

went to visit the bone thrower. This bone thrower was one of the most famous—or notorious—in his region. He had a nose for witches that was truly impressive. He was the same bone thrower who had helped to sniff out the witch responsible for sending the lightening to strike Tshepo. It was only after the Comrades had burned her that it became apparent that they had burned the wrong person. (2001, 74)

Mpe makes a cogent point on the culture of witchcraft in South African society. That the suspect has been wrongly accused, is a miscarriage of justice. Pieterse (2014, 50) argues that “Mpe is at pains to show consistently how gossip and jealousy fuel accusations of witchcraft, how bone-throwers and medicine men exploit their intimate knowledge of village politics.” But Mpe's critical focus, this study reveals, is on the fact that belief in witchcraft is real in his imagined South Africa society. Hence the bone thrower (a diviner) is called upon to employ his mystic

powers to unravel the mysteries behind the death of Tshepo through lightning. Indeed, the bone thrower is famous in his community. But his divination in the case of the death of Tshepo is wrong as the community realises that he has divined falsely, having set a wrong person ablaze.

It is interesting to know the pain of the loss of Tshepo in death, which necessitates the invitation of a diviner to ascertain the cause of his death. Through this knowledge, it is intriguing to note that the South African in Mpe's imaginative novel sees any unfathomable phenomenon as having been caused by a witch. In *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*, the narrator tells us that

Tshepo, your friend and role model had been the first person in Tiragalong to go and study at the University of the Witwatersrand. Tshepo was the one who encouraged you to act on your dreams of higher education and writing success. You had never really got over his untimely death, after he was struck by lightening in January 1991, just after receiving his university degree. His mother on hearing the news of his calamity choked to death on her grief. ... Tshepo's neighbor, one of the oldest women in the village was accused of having sent the lightening to strike him ... A bone thrower confirmed that the woman was indeed a witch. She was even said to have bewitched her own husband ... Mysterious diseases, in Tiragalong's view, could only result from a mysterious cause: witchcraft. It was only after the witch had found her punishment by necklacing, that Tiragalong was given cause to realise its mistakes in concluding the book of her life in that manner. (2001, 45)

The excerpt above reveals painfully that Tshepo, a role model to Lerato, another suicide victim revealed in the novel, is struck by lightning immediately after receiving his university degree. His death is concluded to have been manipulated from the spirit realm through the mystic powers of a witch. In his critical essay, Trengrove (2015) concludes that

although the basic physics of lightning is well understood by scientists and engineers and has been confirmed by a variety of experiments, to many people lightning remains a mysterious phenomenon. Mpe's story is an important

source in understanding the belief that witches can control lightning. (47)

Trengrove's argument above concurs with the idea that many South Africans believe that witches can employ witchcraft to manipulate lightning, as Mpe fictionally enacts in his novel. In *Tiragalong*, it is also believed that any unexplainable disease is caused by a witch. Witchcraft is culturally important (a way of life, belief, attitude) in fictional South Africa. The novelist says that even mysterious diseases, in *Tiragalong*'s view, could only be caused by witchcraft. This is a very strong belief, the author suggests. No wonder, Orubu (2001) confirms this, saying

stories of lynching, maiming, beating and ostracising of persons suspected to be witches and wizards are very common in Africa. The belief in witchcraft rests on the assumption that spirits of living human beings (probably the etheric) can be sent out of the body to harm other persons. It is assumed that witches and wizards are next to the gods in terms of their capability to manipulate the future of members of the community. (117)

Orubu's conclusion confirms Mpe's preoccupation. The art of inquiring into the unknown through divination is part of the culture of the people as Mpe demonstrates in the novel. Indeed, Mpe helps the reader to understand that the result of a diviner's mystical inquiry into a phenomenon can be wrong as in the case of Refentsé's mother, and the accused in the death of Tshepo.

Mpe thus sees witchcraft as part of the context of his novel, and a cultural phenomenon. Looking at the circumstances surrounding the death of the two characters suspected to have been killed through witchcraft, one notes that the circumstances are most likely suicide in Refentés's case and unlucky but natural causes in Tshepo's case. In both instances, Mpe gives us an insight into the cultural norm of witchcraft in South Africa in particular, and Africa in general. Belief in witchcraft is part and parcel of the African way of life. Little wonder Mpe, writing on the punishment meted to Refentsé's mother for her supposed involvement with witchcraft, writes:

So the comrades of *Tiragalong*, in order to cleanse the village, had necklaced your mother to death. They put large tyres round her neck and poured generous quantity of petrol

onto them and onto her whole body [... and set her ablaze].
(2001, 43)

A critical examination of this event related to witchcraft suggests that Mpe artistically weaves it in to show the belief in witchcraft in this contemporary time of western education and enlightenment. Gilbert Hieghet (1962, 8), writing on the anatomy of satire, says that “everywhere one looks, every day we live, we see and experience evil. Pain and suffering seem to be built into the very structure of the universe.” He adds that a satirist tries to

describe a painful or absurd situation, or a foolish or wicked person or group, as vividly as possible. The satirical writer believes that most people are purblind, insensitive, perhaps anaesthetised by custom and dullness and resignation. He wishes to make them see the truth—at least that part of the truth which they habitually ignore. (18–19)

Indeed, the part of the truth of belief about witchcraft which Mpe’s created South African society tends to habitually ignore is that it is not possible to attribute all cases of inexplicable occurrence or sickness to witchcraft. While this study does not focus on satire, as Hieghet argues, in our human existence, there is evil and pain. There are situations necessitated by custom. This evil, pain, and situations “anaesthetised by custom”, to use Hieghet’s phrase, is the culture of witchcraft in fictional South African society, as Mpe demonstrates in his novel, attributing natural phenomenon or occurrences and unexplainable diseases to witchcraft induced causes.

Inasmuch as Mpe narrates the cultural phenomenon of witchcraft in his feigned South Africa, it must be noted that he tries to demonstrate the existence of, and belief in evil forces, and their abilities to unleash pains and losses in the affairs of man. In Africa, this is very prominent. In fact, Omoyajowo (1983) concludes that evil forces and mysterious beings and powers (witchcraft) exist in Africa. He does not deny

the existence of evil forces and mysteriously mischievous beings or powers whatever they are. To do that would mean being more unrealistic as an African. I recognize the fact that there are mysteries in the world. Science, in spite of its enormous successes has not unfolded all the mysteries.
(329–30)

A scholar like Omoyajowo strongly believes that the existence of evil forces and witchcraft is real in Africa. Mpe, our focus in this essay, deems it fit and sees it as a responsibility, as a member of his post-apartheid South African society, to fictionalise the belief in, and the potency of, the powers of a witch or a wizard as evident in the study so far. As a novelist, Mpe has strongly and convincingly carved out a niche for himself in post-apartheid South African literary expressions as he picks up an age-long sensitive issue, and presents it fresh in post-apartheid South Africa times as a reminder of the fact that in South Africa, witches and wizards are believed to exist, and are believed to cause inexplicable and mysterious circumstances that enmesh South Africans. Moreover, the author shows that witchcraft is a cultural phenomenon in South African communities. Thus, one can conclude that it is a socio-cultural phenomenon, and an important philosophy in Africa generally. Elechi Amadi (1982, 21), writing on witchcraft, argues that: “man has believed in and has practised witchcraft for nearly as long as he has been a thinking creature” and concludes that

witches and wizards were accused of a wide varieties of offences. Indeed, in societies in which belief in witchcraft was strong nearly the whole gamut of life’s misfortunes was blamed on them. Witches were believed to have the power of metamorphosis; that is, it was thought that they could change at will into nonhuman creatures like bats, leopards, mosquitoes, crocodiles. While in these guises, they could harm their neighbours. (22)

Onabamiro (1980, 151–52), writing on witches and witchcraft (European practice), concludes that witchcraft, “as understood by the Europeans died off about 260 years ago. Before that time, Europeans believed in witchcraft and their conception of it was conditioned by their Christian religion.” He adds that “among Europeans of modern times therefore there is no such things as witches or witchcraft” (155). Be that as it may in European society, Mpe’s post-apartheid South African society, his setting in his novel, still carries and bears the burden of unscientific belief in witchcraft. This is because, as Onabamiro (1980, 159) argues, “African witchcraft is ... an organised element in the traditional set-up of the African society. Its main purpose is to safeguard the stability of society by discouraging deviation from the normal.” In *Welcome to our Hillbrow*, Mpe imaginatively creates for us a South African society where the culture of witchcraft is prevalent. By so doing, he has been able to

realistically portray a South African world where witchcraft is part of the way of life of the people.

This South African setting, in terms of locale and cultural affiliation, strengthens Mpe's preoccupation with witchcraft as a cultural phenomenon, and an African philosophy. Setting, according to Abrams and Harpham (2012, 363) is "the general locale, historical time, and social circumstances in which [the] action of a literary work occurs." Mpe has artistically situated his narrative in South African socio-cultural environment where the culture of witchcraft is seen to have existed in times past and still persists until now. Ogungbesan (2004) reminds us that the writer

is a member of society and his sensibility is conditioned by the social and political happenings around him [witchcraft being one of them]. These issues will, therefore, perforce be present in his work, but they must be implicit than otherwise. (7)

He concludes that "if literature is relevant at all it is because we can obtain some pictures of society and of life from it" (26). No wonder Dobbie (2012, 181–82) concludes that "according to the new historicists, all texts are social documents and, as such, they both reflect and affect the world that produces them," and this surely applies to *Welcome to Our Hillbrow*. The issue of witchcraft, as Mpe demonstrates, reflects a South African world view, as well as affecting the people's attitudes in the South African socio-cultural context. Though witchcraft is a culture, it impinges on the people's socio-cultural well-being or otherwise. It is imperative to understand that Mpe's novelistic focus is influenced by his environment—rural and urban South Africa.

Conclusion

A critical reader of *Welcome to our Hillbrow* can obtain some picture of South African life from it as it pertains to the cultural phenomenon of witchcraft in the rural and urban communities. Mpe's art is timely, and of artistic relevance, not only in post-apartheid South African fiction, but also in post-colonial African novel generally as the author skilfully narrates witchcraft as a cultural, and an African, philosophy. This he does to show that as a cultural phenomenon and aspect of African philosophy, belief in and fear of witchcraft is still very strong as portrayed in his fictional South Africa.

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Ever Any ‘Light at the End of the Tunnel’? Asylum Seekers’ Coping Strategies

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Abstract

Asylum seekers in New Zealand traverse an elaborate and arduous immigration process to obtain official recognition as refugees or protected persons. Gaps in refugee policy compound their predicaments through forms of civic, social, and economic marginalisation. Successful asylum seekers do not have access to all government-funded resources available to their counterparts, the resettled (quota) refugees. In light of these challenges, our aim was to investigate how they cope.

We hypothesised (i) that asylum seekers are more likely to cope by endorsing maladaptive (negative) coping behaviours more than adaptive (positive) coping behaviours; and (ii) that coping behaviours differ significantly between those currently in the process of refugee status determination and those with approved or declined status.

A mixed methods research design was used. In the first phase, the Brief COPE scale was used to collect data about the coping strategies of 31 asylum seekers from Sub-Saharan Africa. In the second phase, semi-structured interviews were conducted with seven participants drawn from the first sample group to further investigate their perceptions and

experiences of the coping strategies. Data were analysed with SPSS in the first phase and manually in the second.

The findings indicate that (i) asylum seekers tended to endorse adaptive rather than maladaptive coping behaviours; and (ii) those still in the process of refugee status determination coped differently from those who had been approved or declined. We conclude that asylum seekers are endowed with strengths and resilience despite their challenges. These strengths could readily grow into assets with more timely interventions. Determination officers, lawyers, therapists, social and community support workers, and researchers could incorporate more of a strengths-based perspective to promote positive coping behaviours and to encourage change in areas of negative coping.

Introduction

This article investigates how asylum seekers cope with the process of refugee status determination (RSD) in New Zealand. Most refugees enter New Zealand from overseas via a systematic quota system (quota refugees). They are granted permanent residence visas on arrival and join a planned and supported resettlement process (Beaglehole 2013; Mortensen 2011). In contrast, asylum seekers flee persecution in their countries of origin and make their way to New Zealand. Once in the country, they must endure the official RSD process with minimal or no support. Despite the difficulties inherent in navigating the process, there is little relevant New Zealand-based literature. In addition, international research with this population group focuses largely on their negative experiences rather than their positive coping behaviours (Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010). There are no studies about Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers in New Zealand.

For the reasons outlined above, a strengths-based approach was taken in selecting the research question and studying how Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers cope with the RSD process in New Zealand. The first research question asked what coping strategies they use most during this process. We hypothesised that they use more maladaptive than adaptive coping behaviours. The second question investigated differences in their coping behaviours at different stages through RSD. We hypothesised that they use different coping behaviours depending on whether they are still in the RSD process, or had been approved, or declined.

Asylum Seekers in the Context of New Zealand

An asylum seeker in New Zealand is a person who has applied for refugee or protection status and is awaiting a decision on the application

(Immigration New Zealand [INZ] 2015). The RSD is the administrative or legal process through which government authorities establish whether a person who has applied for refugee or protection status, is eligible or not (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] 2005). Three international refugee/protection instruments are included in New Zealand legislation for establishing asylum applications: (i) the United Nations 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees; (ii) 1984 Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and (iii) 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

An application for asylum is made initially to the Refugee Status Unit of INZ. If successful, the individual is recognised officially as a refugee or protected person (INZ 2015) and is also known generally as a convention refugee (Human Rights Commission 2017). If unsuccessful, the individual can appeal to an independent authority, the Immigration and Protection Tribunal (IPT) of the Ministry of Justice. Unsuccessful asylum seekers at the IPT level are liable for deportation, except when they are pursuing a further appeal and/or judicial review at the High Court (Spiller 2019) or other higher appellate courts. The RSD process takes several months to a year or more, from the lodgement of the application to the release of the decision by the Refugee Status Unit (INZ 2015); and approximately seven months in 2018 and 2019 at the IPT (Spiller 2019).

In marked contrast to other Western countries which have seen an unprecedented increase of asylum seekers over the last decade (UNHCR 2015, 2019), New Zealand has experienced relatively low figures, averaging some three hundred asylum applications annually from 2005 to 2016, and approving approximately half (Human Rights Commission 2017). Although there has been an increase in annual numbers recently, reaching, for example, 510 applications in 2018/2019 (INZ 2019), this is still very low compared with other Western democracies. New Zealand's low figures are due to its distant location and an effective 'advance passenger processing' system at flight departure points to the country (Tan 2014). These prevent most potential asylum seekers from boarding flights to New Zealand.

Despite these low numbers, New Zealand's refugee policy marginalises asylum seekers, thereby exacerbating stress and hardship both during RSD, and after formal recognition as refugees or protected persons. In contrast to quota refugees, asylum seekers are not entitled to state housing, tertiary education (except English language courses), and full employment support before official recognition. Although asylum

seekers granted temporary visas are eligible for limited social welfare (emergency benefit), they continue to face challenges accessing this entitlement from the government department in charge (Human Rights Commission 2017). They do not receive general settlement support available to quota refugees even after official recognition as refugees or protected persons (Bloom and Udahehuka 2014; Marlowe and Humpage 2016).

Research About Asylum Seekers

The research about asylum seekers in New Zealand and overseas is not commensurate with the media coverage of the rapid growth in numbers, and the political grandstanding and debate. Some of the few scholars who have covered the moral panic and the political grandstanding on asylum seekers in New Zealand, and by extension overseas, include Bogen and Marlowe (2017); Sulaiman-Hill, Thompson, Afsar and Hodliffe (2011); and West-Newman (2015). Research and reports on this population group also tend to focus on the number of refugee/protection status applicants; countries of origin; destination countries; approval and decline rates (e.g., Eurostat 2019; Spiller 2019; UNHCR 2019); and how policy/legislation affects them (e.g., Bogen and Marlowe 2017; West-Newman 2015). Studies that have explored the experiences of asylum seekers have focused mainly on challenges such as pre-migration and post-migration stressors; experiences of passing through the RSD; accessibility of services in host countries; mental health problems; and social inclusion (e.g., Bloom and Udahehuka 2014; Douglas 2010; Essex 2013), rather than coping and resilience (Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010).

Negative Experiences

In New Zealand, asylum seekers live with great civic, social, and economic adversity, and face significant mental health challenges (Human Rights Commission 2017). They lack access to important information during the RSD, and experience exploitation in employment and discrimination in the social welfare sector (Bloom and Udahehuka 2014; Young and Mortensen 2003). Asylum seekers endure anxiety because of family members and loved ones left behind in the countries of origin, and difficulties reuniting with them during and even after a successful RSD (Poole et al. 2010; Uprety, Basnwt and Rimal 1999). In addition, the RSD process is stressful, and the interrogatory style of refugee status interviews by determination officials can be re-traumatising (Schock, Rosner and Knaevelsrud 2015; Uprety et al. 1999).

Asylum seekers in New Zealand live in uncertainty for long periods, waiting on the completion of the RSD (Bloom and Udahehuka 2014). Their psychological well-being can be extremely fragile during these times (Human Rights Commission 2017). The negative experiences reported in New Zealand mirror findings from studies with asylum seekers in other western countries (e.g., Douglas 2010; Essex 2013; Tribe 2002).

Positive Experiences

There is little literature about the positive characteristics and experiences of asylum seekers in New Zealand. In a study by the Department of Labour (DOL), it was found that on average, compared to quota or family re-unification refugees, successful asylum seekers can read and write more languages; have higher levels of education, and better English language ability on arrival; are more likely to have work experience and have found work; and rely more on friends and government agencies for help (DOL 2004). Although this study highlights some positive attributes of successful asylum seekers, it is over 15 years old, does not focus on any specific population group, or provide insights into how these outcomes came about, thus limiting its practical usefulness. Besides, the study did not include asylum seekers who were still in process or declined. Bloom and Udahehuka (2014), and the Human Rights Commission (2017), have observed that asylum seekers receive positive support from community members and refugee-oriented organisations. These experiences are not unique to New Zealand. International research describes a similar lack of focus on facilitating positive experiences for asylum seekers around the world (e.g., Hartley, Fleay and Tye 2017; Raghallaigh and Gilligan 2010; Shakespeare-Finch, Schweitzer, King and Brough 2014).

In sum, therefore, many of the studies on asylum seekers have not given broader consideration to their experiences and have tended to highlight mostly the negative experiences and challenges they face. Specifically, no study on asylum seekers in New Zealand has explored their experiences from a strengths-based perspective or focused on those from Sub-Saharan Africa. The few studies which have included positive experiences of asylum seekers do not focus on coping behaviours. There is also a dearth of literature overseas on the adaptive coping behaviours of asylum seekers. More generally, the dominant discourse on asylum seekers and refugees tends to conceptualise their adjustment process in non-coping terms (Pahud, Kirk, Gage and Hornblow 2009). Hence, this

research explores the coping strategies of asylum seekers, primarily from a strengths-based perspective.

Definition of Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are specific efforts, both psychological and behavioural, that humans use to endure, lessen, or minimise challenging events (Yusoff, Low and Yip 2010). They are said to have two primary functions: first, to manage problems that are causing stress to an individual; and, second, to govern the emotions that are related to these stressors (Lazarus and Folkman 1984). A coping response may be characterised as adaptive (positive) or maladaptive (negative). Adaptive coping response is when the behaviour aims to deal actively with the stressor or related emotions and leads to a greater likelihood of making more progress with the situation. Maladaptive coping responses aim to avoid stressful situations and are more likely to interfere with goal-directed behaviours, and subsequent levels of performance (Monzani et al. 2015).

Methodology

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design (Ivankova, Creswell and Stick 2006) was used in the study. The data were collected in 2016. The first phase (quantitative) entailed using the Brief COPE scale to collect data on the coping strategies of 31 asylum seekers from Sub-Saharan Africa in New Zealand. The objective of this phase was to describe the participants' major strategies for dealing with stress from the RSD. The second phase (qualitative) entailed semi-structured interviews with seven participants, drawn from the first phase sample group, to further investigate their perceptions and experiences of the coping strategies identified in phase one.

Numerous tools have been developed and used effectively over the years to assess coping strategies. The Brief COPE scale developed by Carver (1997) is one. It is a validated shortened version of the COPE Inventory (Carver, Scheier and Weintraub 1989), used when participants have little time (O'Brien and Leafman 2012). The scale has 28 items which assess 14 self-perceived coping concepts. The concepts are categorised generally into adaptive coping (active coping; planning; positive reframing; acceptance; humour; religion; use of emotional support; use of instrumental support), and maladaptive coping (self-distraction; denial; venting; substance use; behavioural disengagement; self-blame) (Monzani et al. 2015; O'Brien and Leafman 2012). In this study, however, we classified self-distraction as an adaptive coping

strategy for asylum seekers. Further explanation is provided in the qualitative results and discussion sections. Appendix 1 contains details of the Brief COPE scale, the sampling methods, and quantitative and qualitative data analysis.

Quantitative Results

Socio-Demographic Background

A total of 31 participants were recruited. Nine were from the Southern Africa region, eight from the Central African region, and seven each from the East and West African regions. They comprised mostly males ($n=20$). More than 80% were between the ages of 25 to 44 years. In terms of education and employment, 90% had at least a secondary school education, while approximately 50% were in some form of employment in New Zealand, which included full-time, part-time, and voluntary work. The number of participants who were still in the asylum process, those declined, and those approved, were nearly equal.

A Description of Patterns in Coping Strategies

The coping strategies most frequently reported by the participants were planning, active coping, positive reframing, religion, self-distraction, acceptance, use of instrumental support, and the use of emotional support. Each had mean scores greater than six out of a possible maximum of eight. These coping strategies are classified in this study as adaptive coping strategies. Venting, substance use, denial, and self-blame were reported at some moderate levels ($\text{mean}=5$). These coping strategies are classified as maladaptive coping. Behavioural disengagement ($\text{mean}=3.9$) and humour ($\text{mean}=3.2$) are the least reported coping strategies and are in the maladaptive and adaptive coping strategies, respectively. Substance use and religion have the most spread out scores with standard deviations of 2.8 and 2.1 respectively, demonstrating more variability in the sample than the other coping strategies. Table 1 shows the occurrence of the coping strategies. AC represents adaptive coping while MC is maladaptive coping strategies. It can thus be inferred from these descriptive statistics that, on average, the participants reported using more of the adaptive coping than maladaptive coping behaviours.

The Difference in Levels of Coping Among the Asylum Seekers

The participants were divided into three groups according to the status of their RSD (Group 1 = in process; Group 2 = declined; and Group 3 = approved). Kruskal-Wallis Tests were conducted for each coping strategy to evaluate the difference in coping levels between the three groups. The

results in Table 2 show that the ‘in process’ group was statistically significantly lower than the declined and approved groups in use of self-distraction, active coping, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, positive reframing, and planning. These results suggest that the asylum seekers who were still in the process of RSD tended to cope differently from those who had been declined or approved.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the 14 Coping Strategies

Coping strategies	Mean score	Standard deviation
Planning (AC)	6.84	1.51
Active coping (AC)	6.65	1.91
Positive reframing (AC)	6.61	1.84
Religion (AC)	6.61	2.11
Self-distraction (AC)	6.52	1.59
Acceptance (AC)	6.42	1.29
Instrumental support (AC)	6.32	1.89
Emotional support (AC)	6.29	1.70
Venting (MC)	5.23	1.65
Substance use (MC)	4.81	2.78
Denial (MC)	4.65	1.79
Self-blame (MC)	4.58	1.63
Behavioural disengagement (MC)	3.87	1.81
Humour (AC)	3.32	1.80

Qualitative Results

The qualitative results are presented in three broad themes: obstacles to adaptive coping behaviours; enhancers of adaptive coping behaviours; and changes in coping behaviours across the process of RSD.

Obstacles to Adaptive Coping Behaviours

Participants described having to go for many months (and in some cases more than two years) of the RSD process without a right to work and no social welfare, thereby being pushed to work illegally to survive, and being underpaid/exploited as a result. They experienced grave stress and anxieties from the determination process and were re-traumatised by the refugee status interview.

I was in the process for more than a year and was declined a work visa each time I applied. Before I finally got approved as a refugee, I was sleeping on couches and living as the beggar in my community. Before then, I was really helpless without the visa and sometimes I had no

Table 2. Kruskal-Wallis Test Results

Coping strategies	Groups	Number	Median	χ^2	P-value
Self-distraction (AC)	In Process	11	5.00	10.66	.01*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	7.50		
Active coping (AC)	In Process	11	6.00	13.90	.00*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	7.50		
Denial (MC)	In Process	11	5.00	1.64	.44
	Declined	10	4.50		
	Approved	10	4.00		
Substance use (MC)	In Process	11	2.00	8.19	.02*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	7.50		
Use of emotional support (AC)	In Process	11	5.00	14.49	.00*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	7.00		
Behaviour disengagement (MC)	In Process	11	5.00	4.35	.11
	Declined	10	3.00		
	Approved	10	2.00		
Venting (MC)	In Process	11	5.00	.43	.81
	Declined	10	5.50		
	Approved	10	5.50		
Use of instrumental support (AC)	In Process	11	5.00	11.47	.00*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	7.00		
Positive reframing (AC)	In Process	11	6.00	10.50	.01*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	8.00		
Self-blame (MC)	In Process	11	5.00	2.43	.30
	Declined	10	4.00		
	Approved	10	5.00		
Planning (AC)	In Process	11	6.00	13.60	.00*
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	8.00		
Humour (AC)	In Process	11	3.00	.67	.72
	Declined	10	2.00		
	Approved	10	3.00		
Acceptance (AC)	In Process	11	5.00	2.60	.27
	Declined	10	7.00		
	Approved	10	7.00		
Religion (AC)	In Process	11	8.00	.19	.91
	Declined	10	8.00		
	Approved	10	8.00		

choice but to do the odd jobs under the table [work illegally] for as little as a koha [a gift or donation] in order to survive. (Male)

The process was extremely stressful and very, very frustrating and nightmares. Those are the things, crying and you know, anger but my anger was not in words but in action. I just wanted to be alone. ... Always talking to myself and sometimes I forget I am with people. Walking up and down in the house and not knowing what I set out to do. Sometimes I was so scared the people around me will think I am not normal. (Female)

On a more alarming note, two male participants narrated that they regularly consumed alcohol to cope with the stress from the RSD. Likewise, two female participants described how they could not sleep even after taking antidepressants. Three participants recounted that the stress from the process became unbearable that they contemplated giving up on the application and/or actually gave up on the claim by attempting suicide. A couple of the participants recalled a friend, a failed asylum seeker, who committed suicide in New Zealand in 2016. Another participant stated that she would sometimes direct her anger and frustration from the process towards her children by yelling at them.

Other challenges asylum seekers face that hindered positive coping with the RSD included non-recognition of overseas qualifications; discrimination in job screening processes and in workplaces; language and cultural barriers; and not being able to drive. Difficulties assessing health care services, social welfare (emergency benefit), and accommodation, as well as separation from family, friends, and loved ones, also made it hard for them to cope in a positive way.

Enhancers of Adaptive Coping Behaviours

The participants with longer periods in New Zealand, initial and on-going instrumental support, social ties in the community, and some form of employment, tended to cope better than those without. More generally, social and community support workers, therapists, lawyers, and their friends were helpful and motivated them to work, suggested job opportunities, as well as liaised with potential employers and served as character referees. Notably, religious organisations (e.g., Christianity and Islam) served as centres for self-distraction, emotional and instrumental support, planning, positive reframing, meditation, and spirituality. Participants prayed regularly and participated actively in the choir,

groups, and conferences at church. This helped to keep them away from the stress from RSD.

My church members, those were the family. They were like family in the sense that apart from like providing and being of emotional support to me, they also supported me financially and materially. ... And in the church community, it is not only emotional support which is given to me, the spiritual side of it too, which I think is very important. When I cry, they are always there for me. (Female)

The asylum seekers who had lived at the hostel in Avondale, and the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre (MRRC), recounted benefitting significantly from the support and services of social and community workers of the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST), and the MRRC; and therapists of the 'Refugees As Survivors New Zealand' (RASNZ). They described taking up paid and/or voluntary work such as helping others in the community and taking up extra shifts at work to stay busy and to keep their minds off the stress from the RSD. The nature of paid employment included full-time or part-time work as kitchen hands, support workers, factory workers, and fruit pickers.

Participants also reported engaging in social gatherings in the community; listening to music, singing, watching television, going to movies, reading; and indulging in physical activities such as walks, football, yoga, cycling, swimming, cleaning in the house, and cooking to keep the mind busy and, in so doing, forgetting about the RSD stress for a while. They described to a significant degree spending long times with family, loved ones, and friends on the phone and social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Skype, Viber, and IMO, just to take their minds off the stress from RSD.

Hope emerged as one of the springboards of the participants' positive coping. Most of the asylum seekers recounted that the main thing that kept them going during the voyage to New Zealand, and through the entire process of RSD, was the hope of a positive outcome and the hope of a better life in New Zealand.

You gotta have hope, and I think human beings we move on, we do things, we take chances is because we are hopeful of something better. (Female)

While in New Zealand, their hope was sustained by successful stories from other former asylum seekers. Spirituality was also fundamental in keeping their hope alive.

*I just hold on something, and I believe it was my belief system that kept me. The God that I believe in kept me alive.
(Male)*

Hope was also described as a ‘candle in a dark room’ and a ‘light at the end of the tunnel’, which kept them alive through the arduous process of RSD in New Zealand.

*There was some hope in me, but that hope was only like a candle in a dark room somewhere but I held on to it. (Male)
Even though it is long and exhausting but I was hopeful there is like uh, you know, light at the end of the tunnel.
(Female)*

Changes in Coping Behaviours Across the Process of RSD

The participants described leaning towards different coping behaviours depending on where they were at in the journey of RSD (e.g., from the lodgement of the initial application for refugee status; through the refugee status interview; to responding to issues raised in the interview report; or a decision whether approved or declined; and appealing in the event of a decline). Factors which accounted heavily for the differences in their coping behaviours included: (i) emotional unawareness, lack of knowledge on instrumental support, and inadequate familiar emotional support in the early days of the claim; (ii) lack of familiarity with the Western notion of professional therapy; (iii) a false sense of resilience and mental preparedness on the journey to and while in New Zealand; (iv) a false sense of safeness and security upon arrival in New Zealand; (v) concealment of status as asylum seekers in the community; and (vi) feeling dispirited by self-stigma as asylum seekers/refugees.

Finally when I got here, I just felt relieved and I thought I was safe. I didn't go for counselling and anything like that. I didn't even think I will be needing emotional help. I thought I was strong and fine. It only dawned on me when it took a different turn and I wanted to kill myself. That's when the psychologist came in. (Female)

In sum, the participants' subjective description of their coping strategies assessed in the Brief COPE scale highlighted two general themes that supported as well as hindered their coping during the RSD. It also indicated that the participants used different coping behaviours depending on where they were in the journey through the RSD.

Discussion

The first hypothesis was that asylum seekers are more likely to cope by endorsing maladaptive coping behaviours than adaptive coping. This study demonstrates otherwise. It shows that they tend to use more of the adaptive coping strategies such as religion, self-distraction, acceptance, instrumental support, and emotional support, than the maladaptive such as venting, substance use, denial, self-blame, and behavioural disengagement.

The second hypothesis was that asylum seekers will use different coping behaviours depending on whether they are still in the process of RSD or refugee/protection status has been approved or declined. The findings confirm this hypothesis. The group 'still in process' scored significantly lower than the 'declined' or 'approved' in use of self-distraction, active coping, substance use, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, positive reframing, and planning. Interviews revealed further that their coping behaviours change depending on the stage in RSD, and the asylum seekers in the early stages of the RSD struggled to cope more than those who had been in the process longer (the approved or declined groups).

Adaptive and Maladaptive Coping Strategies

Results from this study suggest that the Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers tend to use more of the adaptive than maladaptive coping behaviours (refer to Table 1). The asylum seekers who had early contact with refugee lawyers, social and community workers of the ASST and MRRC, and the therapists of RASNZ, benefitted significantly from emotional and instrumental support from these environments. Those who connected with and participated in religious communities in New Zealand benefitted in many ways. Their religious belief also helped them to hold out hope on the tedious journey of RSD. This emphasis on the importance of social and support networks is consistent with studies with people from refugee backgrounds in Australia (e.g., Correa-Velez, Barnett and Gifford 2015).

This would suggest that asylum seekers tend to thrive in environments where there are existing resources and staffing to help them from the onset

and during the entire duration of the RSD. Unfortunately, the majority of the asylum seekers in the community do not currently have access to some of these basic services. There is a pressing need therefore, for service providers such as the ASST, RASNZ, the New Zealand Red Cross, and more importantly Immigration New Zealand, to deepen and broaden capacity especially regarding housing, employment, therapeutic professionals, and social work support for asylum seekers in New Zealand.

It should be pointed out that contrary to the general categorisation of self-distraction as a maladaptive coping behaviour (Meyer 2001; O'Brien and Leafman 2012), this study provides a new perspective on self-distraction as an adaptive coping behaviour. Self-distraction is considered a maladaptive coping strategy because it involves changing one's focus from the problem to something else (Carver et al. 1989). This is usually when the strategy is used for a long period (Meyer 2001; Monzani et al. 2015). The use of the strategy for a brief period, however, can be beneficial (O'Brien and Leafman 2012).

Self-distractive activities were endorsed at length and in-depth by the asylum seekers in this study. This was mostly when they were in limbo, waiting for the outcome of their asylum applications, some without the right to work, others with the right to work but no job, and some who were able to work. During such times, they predominantly relied on social media platforms to engage with family and community in their home countries. Marlowe (2019) similarly observes that refugees use social media to participate in political life in their countries of origin. We argue that the use of social media in this way, as well as extensive participation in housekeeping, religious and physical exercise (though for long-term for self-distractive purposes), is adaptive coping. Hence, despite the stressful nature of the RSD and the limited resources available to the asylum seekers, the study participants used more adaptive coping behaviours than maladaptive.

Insights drawn from other studies that have used the Brief COPE scale in refugee (not asylum seeking) populations provide further context for the findings of this study. The first is an honours research thesis that investigated the stressors, coping strategies, and meaning-making of Liberian refugees living in a refugee camp in Ghana. This indicated that the most frequently endorsed coping strategies were in the adaptive domain (Sarfo-Mensah 2009). Similar results were observed in a study that explored coping among Bhutanese refugees in Nepal (Chase et al. 2013). The endorsement of adaptive coping behaviours by the asylum seekers in this study is not surprising, therefore. It affirms a position

already emphasised by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UNHCR. Refugees are not just vulnerable people who only depend on hand-outs (WHO/UNHCR 1996). They are resilient, with many strengths and capabilities. If given appropriate interventions and opportunities, they will grow into assets to the country.

Even though the findings from this study seem promising, the results are not wholly optimistic. The incidence and form of maladaptive coping behaviours are concerning. For example, the asylum seekers frequently used venting, substance use, denial, self-blame, and behavioural disengagement (refer to Table 1). Participants' accounts of the RSD process echoed stress, re-traumatisation, forgetfulness, fear, uncertainty, helplessness, anxiety, anger, frustration, dependence on substance, suicidal ideation and attempts, and self-harm. The depth of endorsement of these negative coping behaviours raises concerns as to the emotional and mental health of the asylum seekers. It points toward the critical need for therapeutic professionals in RSD and an adoption of an early interventionist approach in service delivery.

One does not need to look far afield to see that mental and emotional problems are prevalent among asylum seekers and refugees globally (McColl, McKenzie and Bhui 2008), and there is a growing concern over the mental health of asylum seekers and refugees in New Zealand (Human Rights Commission 2017; Mortensen 2011). Asylum seekers in New Zealand have been noted to use emergency psychiatric teams frequently (Young and Mortensen 2003), and to experience some emotional problems during their first six months in the country (DOL 2004). Against this backdrop, we hold grave concerns over the mental health of asylum seekers, and the discontinuation of the free comprehensive public health screening for asylum seekers living in the community in Auckland. We strongly endorse the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission's (2017, 4) for the establishment of "an automatic and systematic mental health screening process for all asylum claimants." It is more important now more than ever for researchers to investigate how the primary health care sector in Auckland is responding to the health needs of asylum seekers. There has not been a study on the health needs of this population in New Zealand in the last two decades.

Further, it is unfortunate that some asylum seekers are left for unreasonably long periods without any type of a temporary visa during the RSD. It puts them outside the confines of lawful means of livelihood in New Zealand, with significant downstream implications. Lack of a temporary visa only serves to bolster negative coping and vulnerability in the community. It pushes those in this category to unorthodox means of

survival including working illegally, and exposure to underpayment and exploitation, in sum, life on the fringes of New Zealand's society. This has profoundly undesirable consequences on their coping behaviours and reputation as potential good citizens, as well as on their physical and mental wellbeing. It is essential that all asylum seekers are granted temporary visas (if not work visas, then interim visas in extreme cases) during the duration of the RSD, to augment positive coping.

The Difference in Levels of Coping Among the Asylum Seekers

Besides the results on adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, asylum seekers still in the process of RSD (mostly those in the early days of the application process) tended to cope differently from those declined or approved (that is, those who had been in the process longer) (refer to Table 2).

This knowledge of the differences in the levels of coping among the asylum seekers is important as it sheds light on how asylum seekers cope as they traverse the RSD. It suggests that the stress of asylum seekers' experience, and the coping strategies they use, fluctuate depending on the point they have reached in the journey through RSD. Asylum seekers may be stressed from the moment their initial application for refugee status is lodged, but the stress is likely to intensify at the time of their refugee status interviews. The stress is likely to increase further if their application for refugee status are declined and appeals have to be lodged. Hence, asylum seekers may tend towards different coping behaviours or different levels of coping depending on the level of stress they are encountering at the time. It is important for the determination officers, refugee lawyers, social workers, therapists, and helpers to understand the full impacts of the RSD, investigate asylum seekers' levels of stress and probable coping behaviours, and offer interventions accordingly.

Several explanations were gathered from the qualitative phase of the study to account for the differences in levels of coping. Some of the reasons included internalised stigma as asylum seekers, and being new to New Zealand and unaware about the avenues and benefits of professional therapeutic support. There was a lack of information, mostly at the initial stages of the application process at the Refugee Status Unit. It was observed, as well, that the Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers who were still in the early stage of their claim had, arguably, a false sense of mental preparedness and safeness; were unaware that the RSD was already having a severe impact on their mental wellbeing; and were either unaware of, or unfamiliar with, the Western notion of professional therapy. As newcomers, even if they had desired some familiar forms of

social support, it was not possible since most of them did not have their family and friends with them.

Against such an environment of no family and friends (simply, no one to easily trust), the newly arrived asylum seekers tended more towards concealing from their communities that they were asylum seekers than the others who had been in the process longer. It would also not be too daring to contemplate that the negative stigmatising and discriminatory language, which occasionally appears in the media and public discourse (as discussed in Bogen and Marlowe 2017; Sulaiman-Hill et al. 2011; West-Newman 2015), amplifies the need for the asylum seekers to be reserved in their communities. Further, some asylum seekers may have lived in refugee camps and environments with close communal spaces; hence they could be afraid that if they tell someone about their mental distress and other difficult experiences, everyone else in the community would hear about their problem (WHO/UNHCR 1996).

While, on the one hand, the reason why asylum seekers may want to conceal their status in the community is understandable, especially if one considers the sensitive nature of refugee and protection cases, on the other hand, it is somewhat concerning when that secrecy becomes a stumbling block to help-seeking behaviours. The implication of concealment of their status as asylum seekers could include, as observed in Young and Mortensen's (2003) study, that they may only seek help in the community at a later stage when things have become worse. Nevertheless, this should not be taken to mean asylum seekers overtly conceal their status. Researchers have observed that asylum seekers may even embellish emotional and traumatic experiences during interviews with determination professionals, lawyers, and concerned therapists, with the hope of attracting empathy and a positive outcome (Schock et al. 2015).

The fundamental question which remains to be answered from the foregoing is: how could the environment in New Zealand be made more welcoming so that asylum seekers feel free to seek help in the communities without the fear of being labelled or judged? We suggest a termination of the discrimination in policy in terms of resources available to convention refugees and quota refugees. It is equally important for lawmakers and journalists to limit or avoid negative discourse about asylum seekers and to use less stigmatising language. There is a need, as well, for the professionals who are in the business of first contact with asylum seekers, to build rapport and support them to seek medical help with early signs and symptoms of emotional and mental distress. It is helpful for the asylum seeker to be informed that in New Zealand and

Western civilisation, mental distress is not a curse or witchcraft, as is commonly perceived in indigenous societies.

Limitations

These results present an indication of the coping strategies of the asylum seekers, but cannot be generalised as the coping behaviours of Sub-Saharan African asylum seekers in New Zealand. The size of the sample was small, and the participants were not recruited from all over New Zealand where a representative sample would have been achieved. As discussed above, asylum seekers live in concealment of their status. They can be very sceptical about talking to anyone, including researchers in the community, about their status. Thus, it was extremely hard to recruit a representative sample.

Besides, the results from the qualitative phase may not have satisfactory transferability to all asylum seekers except those who meet the demographic characteristics of this study. In addition, the possibility of social desirability bias cannot completely be eliminated (Welte and Russell 1993). Given that the primary researcher is from the same cultural background as the asylum seekers, they might have withheld information on the coping behaviours that are generally seen as shameful in the African culture—for example, the smoking of cigarettes or cannabis by females or dependence on substance/drugs by males. That said, the depth and incidences of negative coping behaviours reported indicate that participants were honest in their response, and thus credibility may not have been compromised significantly.

It can also be argued that the Brief COPE scale might not have been an appropriate tool for assessing coping behaviours of asylum seekers as researchers have cautioned against using Western developed scales with non-Western populations (e.g., Mann and Fazil 2006; Shoeb, Weinstein and Mollica 2007). Sarfo-Mensah (2009) suggested that the most appropriate way to use a Western developed scale with refugees would be to translate and adapt the scale to the context of the given population. In the context of this study, the instrument was not translated. The breadth of the countries and languages that make up Sub-Saharan Africa made it practically impossible to translate the scale. Nevertheless, most of the participants in the study came from backgrounds where English is an official language, and Pidgin English is spoken extensively. The primary researcher is fluent in both languages. The Brief COPE scale was somewhat adapted by including social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, IMO, etc., to the list of self-distractive activities in it.

Social media is missing in the original scale. Future researchers may need to further validate this adaptation in a larger sample.

Even with the limitations above, the single most important factor that might have strengthened the results of this study was the use of triangulation. The use of both the quantitative and qualitative research methods has led to a broader and deeper understanding of the concepts of coping than would have been achieved if any one method was used alone.

Conclusion

This is the first New Zealand study to investigate the experience of asylum seekers from a strengths-based perspective, unlike the other studies that have focused largely on challenges. It is also the first study internationally that has used the Brief COPE scale to explore the coping strategies of asylum seekers. Results from the study indicate that the most frequently endorsed coping strategies are in the adaptive domain, although the frequency and nature of the use of maladaptive coping behaviours raise serious concerns as to the mental wellbeing of asylum seekers. The study further suggests that asylum seekers may lean towards different coping behaviours depending on whether they are still in the process of RSD or have been approved or declined. The implications of findings of the study for New Zealand are profound, even with its small scale. Notwithstanding the traumatic experiences that many asylum seekers have lived through, and the complex process that they must traverse to gain formal recognition as refugees or protected persons, they have learned to survive and cope with the deeply difficult situation. The professionals in this field could tap into their strengths to support them more effectively. There is a need for more broad research about strengths-based interventions to promote positive coping and encourage change in negative coping behaviours.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for the research was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)—Ethics Approval Number 16/119.

Appendix 1 The Brief COPE Scale, Sampling and Data Analysis

Each item on the Brief COPE was rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from one (“I’ve not been doing this at all”) to four (“I’ve been doing this a lot”). The total scores on each of the coping concepts were calculated by summing the appropriate items for the concept. No items were reverse scored. The total scores on each concept ranged from two

(minimum) to eight (maximum). Higher scores indicated increased utilisation of that specific coping concept. There was no overall total score.

The Brief COPE scale was developed in the United States of America. It has been translated into several languages and used in multiple settings with Western, non-Western, and immigrant populations (e.g., in Baumstarck et al., 2017; Kapsou, Panayiotou, Kokkinos & Demetriou, 2010). It has been used to assess coping in Ghanaian and Nepalese refugees (Chase, Welton-Mitchell and Bhattarai 2013; Sarfo-Mensah 2009), but not asylum seekers.

Sampling

Participants were recruited for phase one by advertising in community centres and word-of-mouth. Most were from communities in Auckland where asylum seekers have stronger social networks. For phase two, maximum variation sampling was used to select participants who had, in phase one, indicated a willingness to be interviewed individually. All of the participants had a personal lived experience of the RSD in New Zealand, were 18 years or older, and could communicate in English and/or Pidgin English.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences—IBM SPSS Statistics 23 (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were conducted to analyse the levels of coping reported by the participants and investigate whether they used more maladaptive or adaptive coping strategies. In addition, the Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to investigate differences in the utilisation of the coping strategies among the participants who were still in the process of seeking asylum as opposed to those who had been declined or approved.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed by the first author. The analysis was conducted in three parts. In the first part, abductive reasoning (Folger and Stein 2016) was used in conjunction with deductive reasoning (Burns and Grove 2005) to explore the participants' description of their lived experience of coping as assessed in the Brief COPE scale. In the second part, abductive reasoning was used in conjunction with inductive reasoning (Chinn and Kramer 1999) to explore the participants' descriptions of the statistically significant differences observed between those who were still in the process of

seeking asylum against those who had been declined or approved. In the third part, the conventional approach to content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005) was used to gain new insights from the data while avoiding the preconceived categories seen in the Brief COPE scale.

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Parenting in a New Environment: Implications for Raising Sub-Saharan African Children Within the Australian Child Protection Context

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Abstract

International migration shapes parenting styles for migrant groups, but in Australia very little is known about the interplay between sub-Saharan African migrant parenting practices and beliefs concerning child protection expectations in the host society. This study explores how sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers navigate parenting between the cultures that have shaped their lives and parenting expectations within the new environment. Data were gathered from focus group discussions and one-on-one interviews. Major themes to emerge from the analysis included the importance of culture and a sense of the collectivity; of parenting styles in moulding good children; of family functioning and relationships; and of perceptions of parenting in the Australian context. Findings show how the participants introduce new dimensions and/or try to maintain a balance in childrearing practices framed by traditional collectivist cultures when they adopt, incorporate,

resist, or reject individualist dimensions as they deem necessary. The study demonstrates how participants navigate stressors when the dictates of social and school environments are different from those of their traditional family norms. It provides evidence for the implementation of culturally appropriate strategies for sub-Saharan African migrant families who come to the attention of the child protection system while settling in Australia.

Introduction

The number of international migrants increased from 155 million in 2000 to 258 million in 2017, and people of African descent made up about 13.95% (36 million) of that population (United Nations 2017). Figures for Oceania—Australia and New Zealand—also show a significant surge in the number of African migrants, especially people from sub-Saharan Africa (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS] 2016; Stats NZ 2018). The impact of migration on parenting and its flow-on effects on families and communities is becoming a global issue specifically in Western societies where government involvement in family life is active (Sawrikar 2016; Yankuzo 2014), and the rise in migration has prompted increasing attention to the parenting practices of migrant communities.

Australia has been referred to as a multicultural country (ABS 2016). Data from the 2016 Australian census indicate that there has been an increase in the diversity of sub-Saharan African migration to Australia, with migrants coming from diverse cultural backgrounds where they maintain and observe cultural practices that influence their identities (Kaur 2012; Rasmussen, Akinsulure-Smith, Chu and Keatley 2012). Upon settling in Australia, sub-Saharan African migrants are faced with a foreign society built on a child protection system that monitors how children are cared for and raised. The questions to be answered are: how do sub-Saharan African pre-migration parenting practices fit within the Australian society and in particular within the child protection context? How do sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers negotiate cultural differences and conflicts as well as parenting expectations within the new cultural environment?

In Australia, child protection is institutionalised and governed by law (Australian Government 2014; “Children and Young Persons [Care and Protection] Act,” 1998) and vulnerable children are said to be protected from harm through intervention, investigation, and prevention strategies (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012). In some sub-Saharan African countries, however, while there are existing child protection laws, various factors overshadow the implementation of legal child protection

values and practices (Frank and Ehlers 2016). Political unrest, economic problems, poor legal frameworks, and cultural norms often take precedence (Lachman 1996; Ng'ondi 2015), and child protection is usually promoted through non-governmental organisations that do not have enforceable legal or political authority (Price-Robertson, Bromfield and Lamont 2014; Wessells and Edgerton 2008). From such backgrounds, some sub-Saharan African migrant families in Australia may become involved with child protection institutions during settlement (Sawrikar 2016). Given contextual differences in child protection practices, child protection professionals working with this cohort may face challenges in addressing cultural issues within the child protection framework (Raman and Hodes 2012; Rombo and Lutomia 2016).

A number of recent studies (Deng and Marlowe 2013; Rasmussen et al. 2012; Renzaho, Green, Mellor and Swinburn 2011a) have raised awareness of pre-migration parenting practices, cultural beliefs, norms, and the post migration adjustments of sub-Saharan African migrant families, but studies that examine the tensions that may arise between the parenting practices of such migrants and the Australian child protection system are scarce (Australian Institute of Family Studies 2016; McDonald, Higgins, Valentine and Lamont 2011). Broad child protection guidelines are in place to address culture related issues, but little is known about the extent to which the interventions in place meet the needs of sub-Saharan African migrant children. Thus, this study explores how sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers navigate parenting between the cultures that have shaped their lives and parenting expectations within the new environment. The findings provide evidence to inform the development and implementation of culturally appropriate and effective early intervention strategies for those working with such migrant families within the Australia child protection system.

Pre- and Post-Migration Experiences

Culture plays a major part in childrearing and development. According to Akilapa and Simkiss (2012) culture is

the social heritage of a group, organized community or society that develops ways of handling problems that, over time, are seen as the correct way to perceive, think, feel and act and are passed on to new members through immersion and teaching. (490)

Parenting and childrearing thus encompass a number of different aspects linked to culture such as beliefs, values, goals, and behaviours. The various cultural environments in which children are raised strongly influence their interactions within society (Welbourne and Dixon 2015). Cultural differences in childrearing shape children, who will in turn later shape their own children, perpetuating some cultural norms and values related to parenting through time (Raman and Hodes 2012). Hence, sub-Saharan African cultural identities influence various aspects of life including patterns of childrearing which may differ from host culture norms and expectations. Sub-Saharan African countries and their respective communities are, however, distinct and their cultural norms are specific to a people based on their kin and ethnic group (Idang 2015) and it would be misleading to argue that all sub-Saharan African cultures are the same. Nonetheless, what is evident within those cultures is that, pre-migration, sub-Saharan Africans have some connections—historical, social, economic, political, linguistic—and institutional similarities that allow for transferability on aspects pertaining to childrearing within the broader sub-Saharan African community (Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014).

Mostly sub-Saharan African communities raise their children within a collectivist worldview (Amos 2013; T'shaka 1995). These collectivist cultures value interdependence, tend to be more favourable towards promoting group harmony, entail an obligation to community members and an adherence to traditional values, coupled by an expectation that family and extended kin will fulfil their various roles within the group (Renzaho et al. 2011a). The family unit extends beyond the immediate family (Amos 2013) to an extended family system whereby grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, and kin contribute towards raising 'good children' and extend advice, nurturance, discipline, and even mentorship of parents and caregivers in their daily childrearing responsibilities (Deng and Marlowe 2013; Haagsman 2015). Within such an extended family system, mature older adults or community leaders are seen as custodians of tradition and 'elders' who are mainly wise and expert in decision-making (Amos 2013; Ndofirepi and Shumba 2014).

In contrast, child protection in Australia values parenting and childrearing within individualistic environments where relationships are more consultative and less hierarchically managed (Hofstede 2011). Individualistic cultures usually value independence, personal time, and some degree of freedom, as well as individual rights, self-determination, and self-sufficiency in pursuit of individual goals, interests, and achievements (Ferraro 2002). As children grow older, parent-child relationships allow individual accountability in decision making and

expect children to be more independent and to have their own lives, separate from, and not linked to, those of their parents or relatives at adulthood (Marcus and Gould 2000). Consequently, pre-migration parenting styles and practices of sub-Saharan African migrant families may be at odds with the mainstream parenting norms in Australia.

Upon settling in Australia, sub-Saharan African migrants undergo acculturation, and this may affect their childrearing practices. Acculturation refers to processes of cultural adjustments that occur due to prolonged contact between groups of people that are culturally different (Berry 1997). It was previously viewed as a one-way process where migrants abandoned their cultural beliefs and values and adopted those of their host country (Aronson and Brown 2013; Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga and Szapocznik 2010). Research has shown, however, that acquiring the beliefs, values, and practices of the host country does not automatically imply that migrants discard those of their country of origin (Schwartz et al. 2010), and a number of conceptual models of acculturation have been adopted in order to explain the changes that take place when different groups of people and individuals are interacting (Berry 1980; Kramer 2012).

Kramer (2012), for example, developed the theory of dimensional accrual and dissociation by combining the ideas of Jean Gebser (1949, 1984) and Lewis Mumford (1934) to explain cultural diversity as a form of expression. Based on structures of consciousness, the theory posits three distinct life-world dimensions—the magic (one-dimensional idolic), mythic (two-dimensional symbolic), and perspectival (three-dimensional signalic) worlds—to suggest that acculturation is not a simple linear process. As people become aware of the various life-world dimensions, they become more detached from other phenomena in the world. None of the life-world orientations are displaced or overshadowed; rather, all three are present in more complex orientations (Kramer 2012; Kramer and Ikeda 1998).

Similarly, Berry (1997, 2003) proposed a bi-dimensional model of acculturation which leads to four possible cultural orientations: (i) integration—incorporating both heritage and host cultures; (ii) assimilation—letting go of heritage culture in order to accept the host culture; (iii) separation—maintaining the heritage culture while rejecting the host culture; and (iv) marginalisation—being unable to maintain or embrace either cultures. It is this theoretical foundation that has informed our study.

Renzaho et al. (2011a) found that sub-Saharan African migrants acculturate differently according to their migrations status, age of

migration, and educational attainment. Refugees and humanitarian entrants varied significantly, with 38% integrating, 34% experiencing marginalisation, 15% remaining traditional, and only 12% assimilating, compared with skilled migrants who had language proficiency and were highly educated, and hence favoured integration and assimilation. It is with these differences in mind that we investigated the post-migration parenting practices among sub-Saharan African migrants and how they negotiate cultural differences and conflicts within the Australian child protection context.

Methodology

The study was carried out in the Greater Western Sydney local government areas due to their strong demographic representation of sub-Saharan African migrant communities (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011, 2016). A diversified sample was required, and the study focused on both skilled migrants and refugee entrant families. Study participants were recruited using a snowballing sampling technique (Sedgwick 2013; Sheu, Wei, Chen, Yu and Tang 2009) as a method suitable to reach geographically dispersed families in a new spatial reorganisation of social relations (Massey 1994; Renzaho et al. 2011a). The method also helps alleviate any worries that hesitant community members may have as they can be referred to participate by people whom they trust (Sadler, Lee, Lim and Fullerton 2010). Data were collected using focus group discussions (FGDs) and semi structured one-on-one interviews (Stuckey 2014).

For a detailed description of the methodology of the study, including a defence of the snowball technique and an explanation of the ways in which data were verified and analysed, see Appendix 1; for the interview schedule, see Appendix 2.

Results

A total of 46 sub-Saharan African migrant parents and carers from Nigeria, DRC, Ethiopia, Ghana, Eritrea, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Zimbabwe participated in the study. The results showed that while most sub-Saharan African migrant parents tend to find ways of preserving their parenting cultural beliefs and values, those who arrived as refugees and humanitarian entrants faced more challenges around acculturation than those who arrived as skilled migrants. Four major themes emerged from the analysis: (i) culture and collectivity; (ii) parenting styles—moulding good children; (iii) family functioning and relationships; and (iv) host context—perceptions of Australian parenting.

Theme 1: Culture and Collectivity

During discussions, four sub-themes emerged: (i) the child within its cultural community; (ii) traditional values grounded in religion and culture; (iii) respect for and obedience to parents and community elders; and (iv) the importance of family and the duty to contribute towards family life.

The Child Within its Cultural Community. Most sub-Saharan African parents and caregivers interpreted children's action within their cultural frames. Parents stated that their parenting views were influenced by their own childhood experiences. They were guided by their traditional beliefs and values in defining good parenting and these beliefs influenced the values they intended to pass onto their own children. Children were perceived as a symbol of a 'blessed' union between husband and wife, and were expected to contribute to household tasks. Common areas of agreement among the participants included the expectation that their children would remain within the values and relationships of their ethnic community, be mentored by the community elders, and meet religious and cultural expectations relating to respect for, and obedience to, parents and community elders. They believed that being a child within their homes was not simply determined by age or maturity.

People have adjusted to the western legal age of 18 and that's probably when they finish high school and go to university. But from my cultural point of view, a child remains a child, even when they become a parent themselves.

Traditional Values Grounded in Religion and Culture. Some parents stated that raising children involves an adherence to practices grounded in religion and culture. These parents also affirmed their religious beliefs as the basis for disciplinary measures. Such beliefs governed children's behaviours and parent's expectations, and some parents trained their children by explaining what God expects of them in order to be called 'good children'.

We do always, what God is saying ... what is written in the Bible is the law of our beliefs.

Respect for and Obedience to Parents and Community Elders. Findings from this study suggest that etiquette within most sub-Saharan

African communities is governed by cultural expectations and traditions. There are specific physical (body gestures) and verbal mannerisms with which children address adults and elders in the community—mannerisms around how to greet and relate with adults; how to speak to parents, adults, and elders; and how to behave while in the presence of elders. Absolute obedience is highly valued with little room for negotiation. Parents expect a child simply to do what they are told.

A child should be seen, not heard. The community expects a good child not to speak back to its elders. A good child should be ... subservient and non-argumentative.

Yes, we do allow children to express their views. To say what they want to say. But it has to be limited. They cannot express beyond certain expectations. They can express themselves based on something that the parent knows is good for them.

The Importance of Family and the Duty to Contribute Towards Family Life. Parents in our study believed that children are born in order to continue the family name. Children play vital roles within most sub-Saharan African homes and communities, and it is their responsibility to uphold the family name and status through positive community work, outstanding academic performances, and subsequently obtaining a good job. Additionally, children are expected to cater to their parents' needs as they grow old.

What it means to have a child is you are ensuring continuity of the community in general, of the family name in particular, and specifically the continuity of your own identity. So it's quite an issue to be childless in the community I come from, because people see it as a dead end to your identity. So there is a bit of pressure when there are complications in having a child.

Theme 2: Parenting Styles—Moulding Good Children

A strong sub-theme that emerged from our data is that of 'child nurturance and community responsibility'. Parents stated that they generally aim to provide their children with better opportunities, envisaging their children will imbibe good values and grow up to be respectful community members who can contribute to society. Some parents mentioned how the general community, including the extended

family, helps to raise good children who respect elders and uphold cultural values. They leaned towards authoritative parenting style as a way of deterring bad behaviour in children by closely monitoring and supervising their children's behaviours in line with pre-migration beliefs and values.

Parents emphasised that raising their children was a collective responsibility. Children are assured care and protection through various community channels established to observe the child's successful development. Parents expressed concerns regarding a lack of communal relationship within their Australian settings as compared to their countries of origin.

There is a saying within my community that a child belongs to the community. The way I grew up as a child is that every person the age of my mother, every person the age of my father in the community was a parent. So in that sense, you wouldn't let a child do something that's untoward because the child is not your own. You might not take the exact actions that the actual parents would, but you would still take responsibility.

Theme 3: Family Functioning and Relationships

Four sub-themes were identified: (i) family dynamics and expectations; (ii) loss of extended family support; (iii) difference in child behaviour; and (iv) gender roles.

Family Dynamics and Expectations. Most parents noted that sub-Saharan African families consist of family roles and established family dynamics. They emphasised that relocating to Australia meant that they lost the extended family and community support needed to raise children within culturally expected boundaries. Parents have tried making adjustments, however, by maintaining kin connections through community-based organisations like churches and associations that are culturally specific. Parents also related examples of how they use various ways to engage with their children, such as negotiating and reasoning. They maintained the view that the Australian laws give children power and control within the home environment and allow children to be assertive in their expectations of parents.

Most parents also expressed concerns around traditional family roles and dynamics being challenged. Prior to migration, the father is expected to be the breadwinner and final decision maker but, post-migration,

fathers expressed discontent based on their experiences regarding their role within the family in the Australian society. Some fathers felt that they had lost control over family matters and failed in their parenting role.

One of the problems we are facing is that the parent has become powerless in Australia. We don't have any power to control our families. Through our experiences in life, our best educators were our parents. Mum and Dad were the best. If I then expect the police to be the best educators of my child, I'm losing my culture and losing my credibility within the family.

Loss of Extended Family Support. Parents stated that raising children traditionally involves input from extended family and community members.

[Being a child] in my community, extends a little further than just your biological offspring within the immediate family. It goes to children as belonging to the extended family. We have a collective culture.

Parents also stated that raising children in Australia comes with ongoing struggles due to a lack of extended family support and inadequate understanding of the social systems.

Back home the family will be there, and extended family members will be there ... the church will be there, community, and religious leaders will be there. So those are the supports. But here, the difference is, even though you go to police, they would say that this is the right of the children. If you go to the community leaders, they would say this is just the law in this country.

Difference in Child Behaviour. Parents in this study acknowledged the effect of culture and tradition on parent-child relationships. They also acknowledged the difference in behaviour observed between children raised within and outside their home country. Some parents believe they are not raising their children in a manner that is satisfactory, and seem to face challenges in establishing a balance between their parenting role and their relationship with their children

[Back home] because of the culture and tradition, children, they listen more to their parents. And at the same time also, they are very respectful. But here in this country, there is a lot of choice ... They can't listen to the parents, they don't listen to the elders. And this is the biggest differences between back home, how we bring up children and what is here in Australia.

Gender Roles. While some fathers are trying to adjust to the shifts in gender roles, the general view remains that fathers who are seen attending to or assisting with household chores are contradicting cultural expectations.

In my culture some people say that I'm very soft. But it's not about being soft because even when I was back home I was the one cooking breakfast for my kids ... So it's good that sometimes as a father to be there and help around the home. And sometimes also you have to understand that there is resistance even from the females themselves because sometimes they're considered some of the roles are their own designated role that you don't need to touch but we have to help each other as a family.

Theme 4: Host Context—Perceptions of Australian Parenting

Five sub-themes merged: (i) parenting in a new culture; (ii) children's rights; (iii) Australian mainstream families; (iv) inter-generational and inter-societal conflicts; and (v) connection with country of origin.

Parenting in a New Culture. Some parents noted that Australian laws and policies restrict them from raising their children in a manner they deem suitable. They expressed their views on Australian parenting based on their observations of Anglo-Australian children within the society and they perceived that, in mainstream Australian families, children were too independent and commanding. Some sub-Saharan African parents reiterated that institutional systems like schools and the police interfere with effective child parenting, thus leading to family disruptions and exposing children to a way of thinking contrary to their traditional family values and expectations.

I think most of us when we meet as a community we talk about children. We are expecting the government to leave

us to train our kids in our own culture. We have our ways. So if the government would allow us to raise our own children in the way we want based on our culture it would be good even for the Australian system as this will decrease the pressure on us as well. Because the effect of this pressure is it brings up all kinds of mental health issues which cause family breakdown. Parents cannot cope with the pressures when directed on how to raise their children by the government. As a parent, I know that my love will help me raise my child well. So allow me, let me train my child the way I want so that in the future he will grow up to be a better person in society.

Children's Rights. Most parents acknowledged various child rights that are upheld within the home and community such as the right to life, education, and freedom from cruel and inhumane treatment. They were, however, of the view that children should be made aware of some of the responsibilities that are associated with rights.

The challenges I can see are that children are raised based on having rights but not really told of their responsibilities. This is one concern we have always. Because every right comes with responsibilities, and if you don't teach the child responsibilities and he only gets told this is your right, well they also need to understand that there are responsibilities. And this always contrasts with parent's values. When the parents come and tell the child you need to do this, the child can have an option and say I have right to say "NO!" The child has a large number of rights in our culture. ... but he has also the biggest responsibility on respecting family values The most of good family is the family where you have a child who is displaying the value of that family.

Australian Mainstream Families. Most parents considered that mainstream Australian parenting styles are influenced by nuclear and individualistic characteristics. In contrast to mainstream family structures, most sub-Saharan African parenting styles are influenced by their collective cultures.

Our definition of family reflects our view as a culture that the community comes first. By keeping identity, children

having to identify with more than one father, as their father, or with more than one mother as their mother, we are trying to make sure that the diversity is there, but it is within the collective identity. So you wouldn't want a family that is totally different from the rest of the community. In our culture you need that identity, whether it is for your clan or for your tribe or for your extended family to be maintained. And there has to be evident effort that that is happening.

Inter-Generational and Inter-Societal Conflicts. Some parents believe their children live in two societies. They observed a contrast between what children learn within the Australian society and what they are taught at home. Most parents stated that within the home environment, children are raised based on their cultural values which have been passed down through generations, but when they are exposed to the Australian society, especially within the education system, they are taught principles of independence and self-awareness. This led some parents to express concern that their children seem not to respect traditional parental authority.

When we come here we find that the children are confronted by two societies. So they have their family, their parents, and they have the school and the school [teaches] things that are different to what the family is teaching to them. Because here at school the children say OK, if your parents say this, you report to us. The school teaches them you can say no. But in our culture, the child must respect his parents, and doesn't have a right to say no. In our culture, when parents do something wrong, the child has the right to report to another parent, an aunt, uncle or another relative. This is how we as parents and adults understand that there is a problem and we try to solve it. But here, it's the police who step in. This is wrong, because they don't respect the authority of the parents within the family.

I remember that is in my community. It was on the eve of New Year, and one family they went to the shop and brought a present to their daughter. And then in the morning when this young girl opened the present, the dress that they bought was not her favourite colour. The child complained to the parents. From where I come from children should not complain. They should just accept whatever they get. But

here children have a choice. So the parents tried to convince this young girl, and she completely refused. Until they all went back to the shop and exchanged the dress for the favourite colour. After this the child was happy and everyone was happy.

Connection with Country of Origin. Most parents acknowledged that raising their children in Australia has been a challenge. They believed that maintaining their cultural beliefs whilst making the effort to ‘fit’ into the Australian society had consequences for their children. The effects were also observed when children visited their native country.

When children visit back home, they relate to their family and peers based on what the Australian society teaches them. The community back home then looks at them as Australian because [they are] different. If they are not part of that community then it means they are part of the Australian community. This is very challenging for them because in Australia they are also being looked at as different.

Discussion

This study explored how sub-Saharan African migrant parents and caregivers navigate parenting between the cultures that have shaped their lives and parenting expectations within the new environment. Consistent with acculturation theory, our findings suggest that some sub-Saharan African migrant values were maintained, in other cases, new dimensions were introduced and in others, the host values were rejected or resisted.

Sub-Saharan African migrant parents maintained some values and beliefs that shape childrearing practices. These values and beliefs included: (i) parents’ definition of children within their cultural context, traditional values grounded in religion, and culture; (ii) adherence to values of respect for, and obedience towards, elders within the community; (iii) adherence to the value of family and the expectations of children’s contribution towards family life; and (iv) practices of authoritarian parenting style while monitoring and regulating children’s behaviours. While our study is not representative of all sub-Saharan African migrant communities in Australia, and while some cultures and communities sampled have limited representation, our findings are consistent with studies conducted with similar sub-Saharan African migrant communities in other western countries, including New Zealand

(Deng and Marlowe, 2013), the United States of America (Rasmussen et al. 2012), and Canada (Ochocka and Janzen 2008).

Values and beliefs around childrearing practices that were resisted and not incorporated were closely associated with migration related challenges. Deng and Marlowe (2013) also observed that migrant populations are often faced with stressful negotiations upon living in different societies to their homeland. The participants highlighted challenges they faced around raising their children in Australia, particularly on matters of respect for parents or elders, inter-societal conflicts, and child disciplinary measures. Parents face challenges in raising their children because their parenting styles differ from the Australian mainstream expectations.

Where significant differences in parenting practices are observed, various migrant communities are often at a disadvantage during their involvement with service providers and in their day to day living with the greater Australian mainstream society (Križ and Skivenes 2010). Such disadvantages are the result of ongoing stereotypes which are influenced via media outlets and subsequently adversely affect targeted communities, including sub-Saharan African migrant people. The key issue is that the media, informed by individualistic values where childrearing is interpreted from independence and legal framework, tends to conceive childrearing practices governed by collectivist tendencies as inferior, oppressive, and breaching the right of the child (Sanson et al. 1998). Undoubtedly, parenting encompasses a number of different socio-political and cultural aspects, shaped within beliefs, values, goals, and behaviours prevalent in the macro system that influence how a child should be raised (Australian Human Rights Commission 2010). In turn, the micro-system is influenced by the political climate and policies of multiculturalism that help facilitate migrants' cultural adaptation (Harris 2016). Even though sub-Saharan African migrant parents raise their children with the objective of bringing up well-mannered children and good citizens, the rampant media reports of gang and crime related matters reinforce negative perceptions of how sub-Saharan African migrant children are parented (MacDonald 2017). These stereotypes may influence how child protection professionals relate to, and engage, sub-Saharan African families that come to the attention of the child protection system (Phillips 2011).

Another challenge faced by sub-Saharan African migrant parents is that family dynamics within sub-Saharan African homes are affected due to changing gender roles, with woman in some homes taking up full-time employment and subsequently becoming breadwinners. Sub-Saharan

African migrant parents expressed that the challenges they encountered were due to culture shock and a lack of extended family support while raising children in Australia. These challenges act as stressors that may impact family functioning within sub-Saharan African homes in the Greater Western Sydney area. While attempting to understand the 'Australian' way of living, sub-Saharan African migrant parents continue to raise their children in unfamiliar social settings. They have a desire to see their children flourish and 'fit in' while also preserving and respecting their cultural values (Rasmussen et al. 2012).

Values and beliefs around how children are disciplined are at the core of sub-Saharan African family functioning. Over time, western countries like Australia have put legal measures to regulate disciplinary practices which give leeway for various institutions like schools, day-care centres, and child protection organisations to monitor and report on disciplinary methods that are deemed abusive (Bernard and Gupta 2008; Rasmussen et al. 2012). Our participants highlighted that children are being taught different ways at school and these ways conflict with sub-Saharan African parenting styles. Differences in discipline and expectations between the school setting and the home setting, for example, may increase the chances of sub-Saharan African families coming to the attention of the child protection system due to children rejecting home discipline and reporting their parents to their teachers (Rasmussen et al. 2012; Rombo and Lutomia 2016). Consequently, the participants believed they have lost control of their children.

Some of the participants' anxieties are exacerbated by the fact that most of them come from countries where government's involvement with its citizens is centred on corruption, injustice, and human rights violations. Subsequently, Australian government regulations around parental discipline of children are likely to be foreign, misunderstood, and held with suspicion by sub-Saharan African migrant parents (Australian Government 2014; McDonald et al. 2011). If sub-Saharan African migrant parents regard Australian government interventions with wary, this may affect how they engage with service providers like schools and health services, thereby impacting educational and health outcomes for sub-Saharan African migrant children (Rasmussen et al. 2012).

Family migration research (Lewig, Arney and Salveron 2010; Renzaho et al. 2011a) suggest that migrant children tend to integrate much quicker into host societies than their parents, who often remain attached to traditional beliefs and values around parenting. Sub-Saharan African children's exposure to the school environment, and other social settings that raise awareness and encourage independence, appear to foster

attitudes that lead to conflicts between children and parents within the home environment (Renzaho et al. 2011a; Renzaho, McCabe and Sainsbury 2011b). These challenges may cause anxiety for parents who already feel they no longer have any authority over their children. Our study highlights that sub-Saharan African migrant parents were concerned that the Australian mainstream society gives power to the children, and existing institutional rules and policies adversely affect their parenting roles. For these reasons, our study participants generally maintained a negative view about some organisations—the police, schools—and constantly expressed fears around raising children under their watchful eye. Although our study found that some sub-Saharan African migrant parents reported a loss of parental control, there was evidence to suggest that some parents remain consistent in their parenting roles and employed discipline measures—time out, withholding privileges, grounding, and naughty corner [among others]—that were familiar to mainstream parenting expectations (Rombo and Lutomia 2016; Salami, Hirani, Meherali, Amodu and Chambers 2017).

Our research established that in observing and maintaining their cultural beliefs and practices that govern childrearing, sub-Saharan African migrant parents residing in the Greater Western Sydney area appeared to indirectly express their resistance towards policies and practices that were contrary to their cultural beliefs while simultaneously adjusting to a host environment that is defined by insecurity and vulnerability. Levitt (2004) emphasises that there is no need to have expectations on people residing in the diaspora to assimilate or completely integrate into the host society as people change and often shift attitudes depending on the context. While settling in host nations, migrants tend to reposition their identity of origin within their new context, which is a significant gesture towards understanding their losses and challenges (La Barbera 2015). In particular, sub-Saharan migrant families in Australia participate and engage in Australian socio-cultural, political, and economic activities, and also create spaces within their various communities as platforms to discuss experiences and reinforce specific cultural practices that form their identities (Merla 2015; Salami et al. 2017). Sub-Saharan African migrant parents participate in culturally specific gatherings like church attendance, sub-Saharan African community meetings, and the establishment of community structures like homeland specific organisations, including the appointment of sub-Saharan African community leaders and elders (Marlowe, Harris and Lyons 2014).

Implications

This research highlights that sub-Saharan African migrant parents continue to uphold their cultural beliefs and values while raising their children in Australia. If this is the position, will cultural traits erode over time or do cultural practices adapt within each context? We argue that culture is influenced by society and is responsive to the environment in which it is practised. Migration studies have established that when the process of migration begins, change is inevitable in host societies and so often traditional systems and policy frameworks are challenged (Levitt 2004; Mazzucato and Schans 2011). Sub-Saharan African migrants are thus active participants within social and legal processes in host nations.

It is important to emphasise that child protection professionals working with sub-Saharan African families need to understand sub-Saharan African migrant family backgrounds before engaging with them, as those that migrated for employment and educational reasons will face dissimilar challenges to those who were displaced from their country of origin. Child protection service providers should be aware of and sensitive to practices which embrace sub-Saharan African childrearing practices in order to obtain better outcomes for sub-Saharan African migrant children who come to the attention of the Australian child protection system.

Appendix 1: Methodology

While the snowball sampling technique has been criticised because participants know each other, have similar traits, and may lead to the data collected being biased (Leung 2015), this study mitigated bias by drawing on four methods to select participants and to analyse data (Naderifar, Goli and Ghaljaie 2017; Penrod, Preston, Cain and Starks 2003):

- (i) a precise definition of the study population which implemented specific inclusion and exclusion criteria—the definition determined the sampling frame;
- (ii) a sample size guided by emerging themes, data saturation and a defined study setting—this assisted to establish a reliable and adequate sample;
- (iii) the utilisation of participants knowledge and lived experiences—gaining entry and access to the targeted communities assisted with the quality and validity of the research; and

- (iv) ongoing monitoring of data collection—this assisted in determining when new themes emerged and when recruitment modifications became essential to obtain a more diverse sample.

At the first instance, eligible participants were identified through community structures such as community health centres, migrant resource centres, and some local sub-Saharan African churches. Identified families were asked to recommend other participants within the same area that met the inclusion criteria, and the process continued until the desired number of focus group members and interviews was reached (Sedgwick 2013; Sheu et al. 2009). The study was approved by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee (Reference: H11825).

Data Collection and Procedures

Focus groups are particularly useful when exploring multiple topics as they stimulate discussions through a diversity of ideas and spontaneity. Such groups enable verification—a process of corroboration—and a platform to explore differences in participants' responses (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe and Neville 2014). Additionally, one-on-one interviews were useful as the most suitable method for collecting data from geographically dispersed populations, and for discussing a sensitive and personal topic such as parenting practices (Lambert and Loiselle 2008; Macdonald 2006). One-on-one interviews allowed participants privacy to share their particular experiences and the flexibility to venture into salient matters (Lawton et al. 2016).

Focus groups were complemented by one-on-one interviews as part of the triangulation process (Carter et al. 2014). In order to increase the validity of the procedures and results, our study used two specific methods of triangulation—data triangulation and within-method triangulation (Bekhet and Zauszniewski 2012; Flick 2004). Data triangulation involved the use of different sources of information, at various times, in different places, and from varying participants while within-method triangulation involved the use of more than one qualitative methods to collect data, and in this case, the use of focus groups and interviews (Hargis, Cavanaugh, Kamali and Soto 2014)

In their analyses of focus groups, Guest, Namey and McKenna (2017, 18) found that “more than 80% of all themes were discoverable within two to three focus groups and 90% of themes could be discovered within three to six focus groups.” Guest et al. (2017) were also able to identify

the most prevalent themes within only three focus groups. A few years earlier, Coenen, Stamm, Stucki and Cieza (2012) had found that data saturation was reached after conducting five focus groups and eight individual one-on-one interviews. The benefits of one-on-one interviews are underscored by Galvin's study (2015), which found that the likelihood of discovering a theme among six individual participants is greater than 99% if the issue is similar among 55% of the broader study population.

Our study included five focus groups (N=40), varying from 6 to 11 participants aged between 26–78 years old; and six one-on-one interviews involving four males and two female participants aged between 38–52 years. The participants included skilled migrants from Zimbabwe, Ghana, and Nigeria, and refugees and humanitarian entrants from Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mixed gender groups were the preferred option for the focus groups as mixed gender groups tend to improve the quality of the discussion and its outcome (O Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee 2018). The participants arrived via various visa streams and have been residing in Australia for periods between 3 to 20 years.

The focus groups schedule and interview guide (Appendix 2) were informed by a robust systematic review by a peer reviewer, and by considering the Australian and the United Nations Children's Fund child protection systems (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2012; United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund 2009). The tools were also workshopped in meetings with the Migrant Review Panel—a de facto, community-owned, steering committee that had oversight of the implementation of the research. The study was conducted in English and participation took place in community-based venues, including migrant resources centres and churches. Data collection varied between one and a half to three hours, depending on what the participants had to say. All sessions were audio recorded with notetaking being essential for recording issues that required further clarification and follow-up. Prior to data analysis all the audio files were transcribed verbatim.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. For focus groups participants who did not fully comprehend the English language, bilingual workers were used (Lynn, Roona and Ruth 2011). All one-on-one interview participants were proficient in the English language. Information about the study was provided to target communities and church leaders prior to obtaining consent, and participating communities were engaged in discussion about the research through meetings within their local community gatherings. These gatherings offered an arena to

ask questions and provide clarity of the study expectations (Alaei, Pourshams, Altaha, Gogiani and Jafari 2013). Eligible individuals who consented to participate were asked to sign the consent forms. Those who could not write were allowed to sign their consent forms with the letter 'X' or use their initials where appropriate. Participants were assured privacy and confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms (Mendes, Snow and Baidawi 2014).

Data Synthesis and Analysis

Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) formed the basis for understanding the data captured from the participants. Thematic analysis aims to establish recurring themes that can lead to the development of a conceptual framework. In analysing the data, we developed a data coding system and categories using the NVIVO 11 Pro Software (Alyahmady and Al Abri 2013; Bazeley and Jackson 2013). These were developed through reading each transcript word-for-word, which assisted in summarising participant encounters. Once summarised, the data were merged to form a broader view of the collective experience of participants. All transcribed materials were imported into NVIVO prior to data analysis.

The synthesising process involved highlighting key phrases used by the participants with researcher comments written in NVIVO memos in order to record immediate thoughts to remarks made (Alyahmady and Al Abri 2013; Bazeley and Jackson 2013). In order to maintain transparency and minimise bias, themes were guided by the participants' direct words through constant reference to the original data (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Once the recurring themes became clear we developed concepts that were linked to the themes and which helped explain the data while constantly referring to participants' words in order to preserve and report accurate beliefs, values, attitudes, practices, and migration experiences of the participants. At all times, it remained important to understand what the participants were describing as this assisted in challenging researcher assumptions and biases at the various stages of data analysis, thus adding rigour to the research. This process allowed for a situation where participant descriptions were retained at the same time as we investigated connections between data collected, known theories, and established literature, thereby enhancing the validity of our findings.

Appendix 2: Interview Guide and Focus Group Schedule

Based on your cultural background, what is your understanding of:

- a. A child? [Probe: Who is responsible for child upbringing in your community?]*
 - b. Parent [Probe: How is a 'parent' defined in your community?]*
 - c. Family? [Probe: What constitutes a family within your community?]*
-
1. What cultural aspects of childrearing practices are essential to uphold? [Probe: what is a 'good' parent in child upbringing at the Family level? At the Community level?]
 2. How has relocation to Australia impacted on your family, particularly around childrearing? [Probe: what are the cultural challenges faced when raising children within the Australian community? How do you deal with these challenges?]
 3. How do your cultural expectations of raising children compare with the Australian way of raising children? [Probe: How do you know this?]
 4. How are children disciplined in your community? [Probe: What is the expected disciplinary routine of children within your community? Whose role is it to discipline children?]
 5. What are some of the Governmental expectations on childrearing practices you aware of? [Probe: How did/ do you know about this?]
 6. What is your understanding of Child's Rights? [Probe: What governs Child Rights (within your community)? Based on your understanding of children's rights, what constitutes child abuse within your community? What is Neglect? Violence? Exploitation? Harm? Suffering? Inadequate Care?]
 7. What is your understanding of Child Protection? [Probe: Can you please tell me how child protection is practised within your community? What community structures are in place for the protection of children? How effective are these community structure?]
 8. Is there anything you would like to add or discuss?

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BOOK REVIEW

Ulf Engel (Ed.), *Africa's Transregional Conflicts, Comparativ*, 28(6), Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2018. ISBN 09403566.

Comparativ, a journal for world history and comparative social research produced by the Centre for Area Studies at Leipzig University, is approaching its thirtieth year of publication. A glance at the editorial and advisory boards reveals some eminent names including Michael Mann, Konrad Jarausch, Michael Geyer, amongst others.

The issue under review continues its tradition of giving strong focus to African issues, in this case with a set of five articles (all in English) exploring the “challenge” of working “across the borders of commonly accepted ‘regions’ and the academic borders authoritatively dealing with them” (11). The editor, Ulf Engel, introduces the collection with a defence of the “transregional” approach, explicated in the following pages with studies of transregional conflicts in the Great Lakes region (N. B. Museka), the Lake Chad Basin (K. P. W. Döring), the Gulf of Guinea (J. Herpolsheimer) and the Horn of Africa (D. Yohannes and F. Gebresenbet).

Engel and the other authors share the perspective that the “nature of violent conflict as well as related African and external interventions on the continent” have changed since the Cold War ended (8). Their analyses centre on issues of security, though extend into considerations of development, governance and political theory. Engel reminds us that “transregional, rather than transnational, entanglements” are not new, but the term and its connotations have “got lost over the past decades” (22). He makes the case that the concept has both ontological and epistemological advantages. Thus, we might refer both to formal regions and established regional bodies, as well as to regions made up not of states but of shared imaginations; and we might use the concept to penetrate the vagueness of the overarching “global”. Then, epistemologically speaking, we might question the Eurocentrism that gives us world regions established “long ago”; and that might assist our understanding of the social processes involved in “making things transregional” (22–23). The

test of such propositions comes in the articles following, and all are of significant interest.

By no means do they suggest that “transregionalism” is an “answer” to Africa’s problems. Rather, it is an analytical approach that gives space for dissecting and explaining the “entanglements” of the contemporary scene. The International Conference of the Great Lakes Region and the UN Special Envoy for the region, for example, “are following contending agendas” (47). In the Chad Basin, a regional context is shaped by the Lake Chad Basin Commission, and a transregional context by the two engaged Economic Communities (of the West African and Central African States), but “neither of these two framings is a given”; the regions are “not pregiven but instead social artefacts that are ... made by actors over time” (50, 67). As the author of this contribution (Döring) states in the conclusion, the “article set out to caution against a naturalization of spatial imaginations of different regions” (66). In explaining attempts to support maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, the Yaounde Process—stemming from the Summit of 2013—is seen as a “process of re-spatialization around transregional conflicts” in which member states and external actors “(re-)construct—format and order—regional space(s) at sea” (89). The study of relations between the Horn and the states of the Gulf is especially interesting as a test of the transregional argument, as it involves regions in some senses near, in others remote, so that

security situations in the Gulf often bring the ... Horn ... into the mix. This is unique to the Horn. From the continent, it is only the Horn and North African states that are exposed to such permanent external non-African actor interests. (107)

This interesting article (Yohannes and Gebresenbet) draws on scholars from the ‘Copenhagen School’ of international security, namely Barry Buzan and Ole Waever.

These are detailed studies with strong empirical bases. They can stand individually as studies of conflict and attempted resolution, but they do also give support to the more general propositions advanced in the set. Overall, the collection gives a wide-ranging test of the transregional concept. It contains some impressive scholarship well presented in the journal’s compact format. Applications beyond the continent will test its usefulness further, and the ongoing conflicts in Syria and Iraq would no doubt be candidates for such study.

The issue includes a complement of book reviews (some in German) around issues of comparative politics broadly defined, and the index

of the contents of the journal for the year 2018. Here, one can peruse, for example, Matthias Middell's account, in English, of Roland Wenzlhuemer's *Globalgeschichte schreiben* (Writing Global History), or Sven Trakulhun's, in German, of Jürgen Osterhammel's *Unfabling the East: The Enlightenment's Encounter with Asia*. This is a wide-ranging and serious review section.

In summary, *Comparativ* is an informative scholarly journal that deserves to be read widely.

Geoffrey Hawker and Steve Wood
Macquarie University



The African Studies Association
of Australasia and the Pacific

Call for Papers

Promoting African Studies in the Australasia-Pacific region since 1978

Youthful Optimism for Africa

The 43rd AFSAAP Annual Conference

3–5 December 2020

University of New England,
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Call for Papers

The African Studies Association of Australasia and the Pacific (AFSAAP) calls for proposals for preorganised panels, roundtables, thematic conversations and individual papers for its 43rd annual meeting to be held at the University of New England (UNE), Armidale, NSW, Australia from 3–5 December 2020.

If COVID-19 permits, there will be a physical conference at the University of New England in Armidale, NSW. If not, and for anyone who is unable to travel, there will be a ZOOM facility for presenting your papers and receiving feedback (UNE has more experience with distance education than any other Australian University).

60% of the population of Africa is under 25. The theme for the 2020 conference, “Youthful Optimism for Africa”, aims to explore this. Whilst you are welcome to submit abstracts on any African topic you choose, we encourage you to think about youth and a brighter future.

The deadline for Abstracts is **1 September 2020**. Abstracts should be 300 words maximum and cover question, methodology, findings.

Paper presenters will be allowed 20 minutes for presentation plus 20 minutes for questions.

We welcome suggestions for panels. There will certainly be panels for peace and conflict, Afro-feminism and environmental issues.

AFSAAP Postgraduate Day

A special feature of AFSAAP Conferences is our work with postgraduate students. PhD and other post-graduate students who submit a thoughtful abstract and wish to participate in postgraduate day will be assigned a mentor—an AFSAAP member with experience in their area—to help them work on their paper. Postgraduate work on African topics in Australia can be a rather lonely experience and it is good to be able to turn to a friend who can give you advice on how to get your ideas into shape and where you should be heading. 3 December is postgraduate day and will be devoted to presentations in a warm and encouraging setting.

Those presenting their work on that day will also be encouraged to submit their finished papers to a special postgraduate ARAS edition. Details forthcoming.

Abstracts of proposed papers, panels, and roundtables should be sent to Professor Helen Ware at: hware@une.edu.au.

A preliminary program will be announced in October 2020. Registration and conference fees must be paid before the start of the conference.

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- Book reviews between 300–1000 words.
- Review Essays between 1000–2000 words.
- Short notes / news / comments on reports between 300–1000 words.

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