

Editorial: *Africa Spectrum* at 50

Africa Spectrum at 50: Reaching such an age is in itself an achievement for any academic journal, given the uncertainties involved regarding finding continuous funding and being able to rely on the personal commitment of those who “make” the journal: the editors, publishers and not least the editorial assistants and copyeditors – the backbone of a complex machinery. But age in itself may not be a merit. We’re not satisfied that we’ve managed to “hang on” – rather, we take pride in the progress our journal has made in terms of quality and international recognition. We think this anniversary justifies a short retrospective.

Africa Spectrum was launched in 1966 (as *Afrika Spectrum*) under the guidance of its first editor, Martin Krämer, who retained his post until 1969. At that time, it was mostly a German enterprise, in terms of both ownership and authorship. Until 1971, exclusively issues with one particular thematic focus were produced, the first entitled “The New States of Africa: Botswana and Lesotho” (translated here from the original German). Among these early issues, just one was published in English (Vol. 3/1969: “Law in East Africa”). Starting in the 1970s, the language policy became increasingly permissive, and the journal began to include articles not only in English but also in French.

Over time, *Afrika Spectrum*’s publisher underwent various changes in terms of its name and juridical status; certain political and policy shifts were behind this. The dominance of economic and geographic topics in the early years of the journal’s publication was a manifestation of the strong influence of the business community within the German Institute of African Studies in Hamburg. The institution was only later federated under the roof of the German Overseas Institute, providing space for greater autonomy and, as a result, more thematic diversity. One outstanding and continuous feature, however, has been the interdisciplinary orientation of the journal, including a section on continent-wide legal developments (a phenomenon which might seem somewhat exotic from today’s perspective). In fact, well into the 1980s the journal included North Africa but gradually came to concentrate on Africa south of the Sahara. We are planning to honour the strides made during the initial years by including a commissioned article on the journal’s development over time, set to be published in this year’s final issue.

While in the early years the editorship of the journal frequently changed hands, a heightened continuity of leadership at the top started with Harald Voss (1976–1991), who was succeeded by another long-term editor-in-chief, Dirk Kohnert (1991–2008). This cohesiveness was to the

benefit of the journal, which was able to develop a more distinctive profile. Kohnert managed to get *Afrika Spectrum* accepted into the Social Sciences Citation Index in 2006. The journal's link with the German African Studies Association was institutionalized. The last major modification took place in 2009, when the journal became "all-English" (and consequently adjusted its name, becoming *Africa Spectrum*) and turned fully open access (no author fees, all articles free of charge). Dirk Kohnert had already operated with an editorial team of devoted colleagues who served as the disciplinary guardians of quality. Those of us currently in charge expanded this idea by recruiting internationally renowned scholars into our editorial group. With this issue, we warmly welcome Gordon Crawford (University of Leeds) to our ranks.

Last year's Journal Citation Report (by Thomson Reuters) ranked us among the top ten journals in the area studies category (rank 9, reflecting the citation status in 2013) and as third among all African Studies journals – a first for us on both accounts. Without the commitment of our international advisory board, our objective and constructive reviewers, our colleagues on the editorial team and institute staff plus – last but not least – our competent authors and keen readers, we wouldn't have made it this far. Maintaining those achievements is an arduous task for a non-commercial journal, one that has also managed to publish all issues in recent years on schedule with no delay. We will do our best to continue to serve our readers and the global African Studies community and hope in return for your continued loyal support. Such recognition is the ultimate encouragement and reward.

■ Andreas Mehler and Henning Melber



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Tactical Communication: Mutiny as a Dialogue in West and Central Africa

Maggie Dwyer

Abstract: This article expands our understanding of the objectives of mutinies through an analysis of trends in tactics. It explores actions within mutinies through a review of 66 cases of mutiny from 1960 to 2012 in West and Central Africa. Despite wide variations in context among these mutinies, there are remarkable similarities in the tactics used by mutineers in the region and across time. These commonalities challenge the popular image of African mutinies as chaotic or devoid of strategy. The article demonstrates that the most common tactics used by mutineers in West and Central Africa all serve to open a dialogue with leadership and provide a platform for soldiers to vocalize their expectations in an environment that intentionally stifles the voices of the junior members. It suggests mutiny be viewed as an act of communication rather than merely a form of insubordination.

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Maggie Dwyer holds a Ph.D. in African Studies from the University of Edinburgh. She teaches courses related to politics and security in Africa at the University of St. Andrews and the University of Edinburgh. Her latest research project examines the role social media plays in documenting and driving (in)security in East and West Africa.

E-mail: <ukdwyer.maggie@gmail.com>

The media tends to portray mutinies as chaotic events that threaten public order and safety.¹ A sample of descriptors of African mutineers within international media include “ruthless”, “uncontrolled individuals”, “diehards”, “criminals” and “dangerous”, while the mutinies themselves have been characterized as “total anarchy”.² Military organizations have an equally negative reaction to mutinies, often handing out harsh penalties to those involved, including capital punishment. Elihu Rose (1982: 562-563) describes the way militaries generally view mutinies:

If governments abhor the word “mutiny”, the military does even more so, for the military’s ability to act effectively is founded upon the principle of discipline, and mutiny is the antithesis of discipline. To the military, mutiny is utterly unthinkable. It is more than a breach of regulations; it is a negation of the military essence.

Rose’s description is similar to other writings on mutinies, which regularly use emotive expressions such as “dishonour”, “disloyalty” and “moral weakness” to describe the actions of mutineers (James 1987: 4). While some of these adjectives commonly used to describe mutineers may apply to some individuals, the often-dramatic depiction obstructs the rationale and strategy of a mutiny.

Despite the strong reaction mutinies evoke, it is a topic that has been given little scholarly attention, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The few studies of mutinies on the continent are limited to individual case studies, such as the mutinies following independence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.³ This research breaks from the tendency to address mutinies as singular, exceptional events and instead looks at patterns across states and time.

The article addresses an issue that is absent in most discussions of mutinies: tactics. It asks a basic but important question: How do soldiers in West and Central Africa generally conduct a mutiny? However, the article serves as more than a playbook for mutinies. It aims to provide a more detailed understanding of the objectives of mutinies by analysing common tactics.

The research question is approached through a review of 66 cases of mutiny from 1960 to 2012 in West and Central Africa. Despite wide variations in context among these mutinies, there are remarkable similarities in the tactics used by mutineers in the region and across time. These commonalities challenge the popular image of African mutinies as im-

1 For example, see *West Africa*, 7 October 1991, 1675.

2 *West Africa*, 4 November 1961, 1 February 1964, 9 July 1966.

3 Examples include Parsons 2003; Luanda 1998; and Mazrui and Rothchild 1967.

pulsive or devoid of strategy. For example, they counter work by Geoffrey Parker and Guy Pedroncini, who each conclude that in the (Western) mutinies they studied, there were “few premeditated or purposeful acts of indiscipline. Instead, most mutineers acted out of despair, fatigue or momentary anger” (Parker 2001: viii). The analysis of mutinies in this article demonstrates that the most common tactics used by mutineers in West and Central Africa all serve to open a dialogue with leadership. Among the many potential ways for military members to express their discontent, mutineers regularly choose tactics that bring their complaints into the public realm. Their actions are showy and difficult for politicians or military hierarchy to ignore. This analysis suggests mutiny be viewed as an act of communication rather than merely a form of insubordination.

Identifying Mutinies

Data for this article is drawn from a wider study on mutinies in Africa (Dwyer 2014). The research defines mutiny as “an act of collective insubordination, in which troops revolt against lawfully constituted authority” (Rose 1982: 561) for primary goals other than political power. Using a range of sources, including a systematic review of *Africa South of the Sahara*, *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin* and *West Africa*, I identified incidents of mutiny in West and Central Africa from 1960 to 2012. Additional information about the mutinies came from academic writing, memoirs and other news outlets, as well as declassified and leaked intelligence reports. In reviewing these sources, I was looking for events which included a group of soldiers who 1) remain within the state’s military structure and 2) use mass insubordination to express stated grievances and goals beyond the desire for political power to higher political and military authorities. This is an intentionally conservative definition of mutinies that excludes other types of military indiscipline such as desertion. By limiting the scope of indiscipline, the analysis focuses specifically on acts in which soldiers attempt to work within the system rather than simply leave the organization. The definition also separates mutinies from coups. In practice, various forms of military indiscipline can often overlap or escalate, and some acts that have started as mutinies have ended in coups. However, within the 66 cases examined, there were only eight for which this pattern occurred. This counters the way mutinies have often been seen – namely, as the entry point of a coup (First 1970: 205; Luckham 1998: 23-24). Instead, the research looks at mutinies as a phenomenon with their own unique dynamics.

The study also involved qualitative field research in Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and the Gambia (2011–2012) during which former mutineers, military leadership, politicians, civil society leaders and journalists were interviewed in regards to incidents of mutiny. This allowed me to gain unique insight into the perspectives of the individuals who conducted or experienced the mutinies first-hand. Through this combination of primary and secondary research, I identified 66 cases of mutiny. A list of these mutinies can be found in Table 1. A file of available data on each of these incidents was created, and the qualitative-data-analysis computer software NVivo was used to help organize the data and identify patterns across time.⁴

The later sections will detail patterns of tactics used by mutineers as identified through the review of these revolts. It is important to note that in the vast majority of mutinies examined, the participants were rank-and-file soldiers. Occasionally, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) were involved – and, more rarely, junior officers – but the bulk of participants were at the lowest rank of the military hierarchy. This is consistent with studies of mutinies in a non-African context (Lammers 1969: 558). The low status of these individuals within their professional environment likely shapes the tactics they choose as well as the objectives of the mutiny, as will be further detailed.

Revised View of Mutinies

Mutineers typically make material demands, and in the context of West and Central Africa these usually include a combination of calls for increased pay and improved living conditions. However, often the analysis of mutinies is limited to these material demands. This can be seen in the way that mutinies in Africa are commonly referred to as simply “pay revolts” or “pay mutinies”.⁵ These terms are usually not followed with

4 The following countries are included in the dataset: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Congo-Brazzaville, São Tomé and Príncipe, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Due to the lack of detail in reporting on most mutinies, it was not possible to accurately count each unit within large-scale mutinies. Instead, mass mutinies (such as those in the CAR in 1996/1997 and Burkina Faso in 2011) were logged as separate incidents only when there was a clear pause (usually for negotiations) and later continuation of the mutiny.

5 Examples include First 1970: 436; Cornwell 2000: 81-93; Peters and Richards 1998: 184.

much explanation, as the cause and solution are both implied. As Christopher Ankersen (2006: 123) explains, “many regard the lower ranks as unsophisticated” and “it may be easier, therefore, for their grievances to be viewed as basic and immediate”.

Table 1: Incidents of Mutiny in West and Central Africa, 1960–2012

Country	Year	Country	Year	Country	Year
DRC	1960	Gambia	1992	Nigeria	2000
Ghana	1961	Niger	1992	Benin	2000
DRC	1961	CAR	1993	CAR	2001
Togo	1963	CAR	1993	Côte d’Ivoire	2002
Liberia	1963	DRC	1993	Niger	2002
Niger	1963	Côte d’Ivoire	1993	Burkina Faso	2003
Congo-Brazzaville	1966	Niger	1993	Côte d’Ivoire	2003
DRC	1966	CAR	1996	Guinea-Bissau	2004
Nigeria	1966	CAR	1996	Burkina Faso	2006
DRC	1967	CAR	1996	Burkina Faso	2007
Nigeria	1970	Congo-Brazzaville	1996	Guinea	2007
Benin	1972	Guinea	1996	Guinea	2007
Sierra Leone	1982	Congo-Brazzaville	1997	Guinea	2008
Burkina Faso	1983	Congo-Brazzaville	1997	Côte d’Ivoire	2008
Côte d’Ivoire	1990	Burkina Faso	1997	Nigeria	2008
Côte d’Ivoire	1990	Guinea-Bissau	1998	Guinea	2009
Chad	1991	Niger	1998	Guinea	2011
Gambia	1991	Côte d’Ivoire	1999	Burkina Faso	2011
DRC	1991	Niger	1999	Burkina Faso	2011
DRC	1991	Burkina Faso	1999	Burkina Faso	2011
Benin	1992	Côte d’Ivoire	2000	Guinea-Bissau	2011
Congo-Brazzaville	1992	Côte d’Ivoire	2000	Mali	2012

Source: Author’s compilation.

There is a growing consensus among mutiny scholars that we must look beyond “the mundane material grievances that have become cliché” in order to discover the less tangible motivations (Hathaway 2001: xv). One of these less tangible motives is a sense of injustice, which underlies most material grievances expressed through a mutiny. Mutinying soldiers usually draw on values concerning what they believe is unfair treatment and/or irresponsible behaviour by superiors within a military context. Their accusations against superiors often overlap with material demands. For example, soldiers demanding pay often specifically accuse their officers of having a hand in the delay and request their dismissal. Similarly, discrepancies in pay or opportunities between units are often attributed to wider issues of corruption and favouritism. While improvements to pay and living conditions often feature centrally in a list of mutineer demands, an important part of the revolt is the ability to reveal and discuss aspects of their conditions that they object to. The analysis in this research builds on works by scholars such as Craig Mantle (2004: 10),

who in observing Canadian mutinies commented that the acts “served as a means of communication that informed leaders that, for whatever reason, all was not well within their respective commands”.

The desire to use a mutiny to explain to leadership-specific faults in the system is exemplified in the excerpt below from an interview with a former mutineer in Sierra Leone. This soldier accused his officers of “seizing government funds” that were meant to go towards pay and equipment for junior soldiers:

Soldier: We just wanted to arrest those we [suspect] and hand them over. We wanted to expose them [senior officers].

Author: Expose them for what?

Soldier: For embezzlement of government money. They are just eating this money. We wanted to expose them, to expose them so others do not do the same. If you expose them, you bring them to justice, they punish them for that. (Interview with enlisted soldier, Sierra Leone, 2012)

This soldier’s explanation of the mutiny he was involved in is similar to rhetoric used by other mutineers in the region. For example, mutineers in 1993 in the DRC stated that their revolt aimed to “draw attention to the disgraceful situation” concerning soldiers’ pay (*Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1993, 10907). Salary was the key material complaint in both of the above examples, but the ability of soldiers to communicate and reveal the problems was another important objective of the action. By explaining where they find fault in the system, mutineers regularly attempt to effect longer-lasting changes than a simple pay-off. The soldier quoted above believed that “exposing” the senior officers would deter other superiors from committing similar alleged crimes in the future. The desire to draw attention to their cause and open a dialogue about their conditions is not only apparent in soldiers’ rhetoric, but also demonstrated in the tactics used by mutineers, as described below.

The Power of a Threat

In understanding how soldiers carry out a mutiny, it is important to note that while the *threat* of violence is an integral part of a mutiny, the *use* of violence is not. Of the 66 mutinies examined in this article, slightly less than half involved direct acts of violence. This data contradicts writings by other scholars researching militaries, such as Jimmy Kandeh (2004: 42), who argues that “mutinies are by definition violent acts of defiance”. However, the finding from the cases reviewed in West and Central Af-

rica is consistent with other studies of mutinies in a non-African setting, which have also shown that mutinies tend to be nonviolent (Rose 1982: 568; Hathaway 2001: xvi; Hamby 2002: 576).

An important aspect of mutineers' strategy is the ability to create and control instability. Unlike those in an industrial or agricultural occupation, soldiers do not have tangible goods to demonstrate or measure their worth. Instead, the value of the military rests in its ability to manage violence (Huntington 1957: 13). Within this context, it is perhaps not surprising that the threat of violence is a key tool for mutineers. Mutineers utilize their position in the military to threaten to create a situation of instability or escalate the instability they have already created. Their main bargaining chip is their ability to also control the situation and cause circumstances to return to the desired state of stability. Yet, this is often an overly ambitious claim, especially when the group lacks cohesion. Anger, aggression and indiscipline can overshadow strategy, and individuals often act on their own accord. Involving large numbers of participants is often both the strength and the downfall of mutinies. A large group quickly gathers the desired attention and can place pressure on the government, but it is also difficult to control during a mutiny, when the standard hierarchy is often inverted.

This article does not intend to downplay the violence that mutinies can cause. Even though the (slight) majority of mutinies in the region are not violent, there are several cases in which mutinies have led to high numbers of casualties. For example, in the mutinies in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 1996 estimates of fatalities range from 200 to 500 (Mehler 2009: 10). The Côte d'Ivoire mutinies in 2002 led to 270 deaths (*West Africa*, September 2002, 25), and mutinies in Guinea in 1996 resulted in 50 deaths with a further 300 wounded (*Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1998, 13014). Significantly, many, if not most, of these casualties were civilians. Therefore, although mutinies are usually seen as internal military matters, in West and Central Africa they have had severe consequences on civilian populations. It is important to develop a better understanding of mutinies, not just from a standpoint of political stability, but also from a humanitarian perspective.

While acknowledging the potential for violence in mutinies, this article aims to look beyond violent acts in order to demonstrate the wider strategy of mutinies. Mutineers generally want their conditions to improve; they do not want to be removed from the military. At times, mutineers recognize that violence will harm their cause and so they intentionally demonstrate that they are unarmed. However, even in cases when soldiers indicate that they are unarmed, their position in an organi-

zation that has often been responsible for much insecurity in the region implies a threat of violence or instability. As a result, governments usually act with more expediency towards a mutiny than they would if members of the civil service or a trade organization were presenting similar grievances (as is often the case when mutinies coincide with civilian demonstrations).

Attention-Seeking Tactics

An image that likely comes to mind of a mutiny in Africa is one of soldiers gathered in streets firing weapons into the air. This is a fairly accurate starting point for a mutiny. Discharging firearms and holding mass gatherings in a strategic location (military headquarters, state house, parliament building, and so on) are among the most common tactics used by mutineers. The firing of weapons is closely linked to another common tactic: breaking into the armory. In most parts of West and Central Africa, junior soldiers do not readily have access to firearms and therefore the first step for many mutineers is to seize weapons and ammunition from the armory. Brandishing or firing weapons can serve as both a symbol of power and a threat to those not involved in the mutiny.

While the image of mutineers as gun-wielding soldiers creating a chaotic atmosphere for their own benefit is partially true, it is also an incomplete picture. Mutineers are often strategic and creative in their tactics, gaining inspiration from their own military training as well as from successful actions used by other armed groups and civilian organizations.

One common tactic used by mutineers is hostage-taking. Of the 66 mutinies examined in this dataset, at least 15 incidents involved the taking of hostages. This tactic is not specific to a particular time period. It was used in Congo-Brazzaville in 1966 when mutineers captured the head of the army and gendarmerie (*West Africa*, 2 July 1966, 757). This tactic was also used in the CAR mutinies in 1996 when mutineers took hostage the Army Chief of Staff, Energy Minister and National Assembly Speaker (*West Africa*, 27 May 1996, 812). Nigerien soldiers appear to be the most keen on using hostages as a mutiny strategy and have done so during revolts in 1992, 1993, 1998, 1999 and 2002. Their abductees include the head of the parliament, ministers, military commanders and local authorities.

Hostage-taking is also a common strategy among non-state armed groups in Africa, having been used by, for example, criminals in the Niger Delta, Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Somali pirates. However, it is not a strategy that would commonly be used in a military context. In hos-

tage-taking by both armed groups and mutineers, the value of taking hostages lies in the ability of that act to pressure an exchange. For example, armed groups usually attempt to exchange hostages for the release of prisoners or for money, while mutineers exchange hostages for meetings with senior leadership or promises that their demands will be met. One important aspect that makes hostage-taking by mutineers different from other armed groups is that they often abduct individuals from their own organization, whereas armed groups regularly go for external targets. Furthermore, mutineers typically do not attempt to hide their identity or location (as terrorists and pirates do). Last, mutineers usually do not overtly threaten the lives of their hostages. In the cases of hostages taken by mutineers examined here, there were no incidents in which the hostages were killed. Mutineers want to make changes to the military system or desire material gains; they do not want to be excluded and removed from the system. Therefore, they must use caution when dealing with hostages, as an injured or dead hostage would not help their cause.

Mutineers also often take over strategic locations as a way to assert their power and threaten authority. The tactical value of the locations utilized by mutineers ranges from relatively minimal to extremely high. For example, mutineers in Nigeria in 2008 blocked traffic for several hours on a major road in order to draw attention to claims that they had not been paid their allowances (Sowole 2009). While the mutiny did bring attention to their complaints and likely inconvenienced many local people, it did not threaten the stability of the nation. Other mutineers have captured more valuable targets. Mutineers from the Air Force of the Côte d'Ivoire took over the control tower and terminals at the Abidjan Airport in 1990 (*West Africa*, 28 May 1990, 877-878). Similar incidents of mutineers holding airports have occurred in the DRC (1966, 1991) and Niger (1992).⁶ Mutineers in Congo-Brazzaville in 1997 held both the rail station and the power station, disrupting rail service and leaving local towns without electricity for several days (*Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1997, 12578).

Controlling public or strategically important locations is similar to hostage-taking in that it brings the grievances of the mutineers into a more public forum. Unlike hostage-taking, controlling locations affects not just key political or military personnel, but the general civilian population as well. Targeting transit infrastructure, especially airports, also has international implications when air traffic is diverted. The longer mutineers hold strategically important locations, the more fragile a govern-

6 *West Africa*, 30 July 1966, 869; *West Africa*, 7 October 1991, 1674-1675; *Africa Research Bulletin*, February 1992, 10471.

ment appears, which could affect international trade and investments. Furthermore, when actions taken by mutineers affect civilians, there is the threat that civilians will react, further destabilizing the situation. Civilians may criticize the way the government handles the situation, or, perhaps even worse for a government, they may even side with the mutineers. Both scenarios have occurred during separate mutinies in Burkina Faso, the former in 2011 and the latter in 1983.

In addition to its strategic value, the choice of targeting transportation infrastructure can also be seen as mutineers working within a domain they are familiar with. While militaries worldwide often have a primarily external focus, in West and Central Africa the military regularly take on an internal function, similar to policing. The protection of key infrastructure is often part of their responsibility. It is particularly common for the military to be active in transportation infrastructure, as evidenced by military-manned road checkpoints or military personnel acting as airport security.

Gathering publicly, firing weapons into the air, taking hostages and holding key infrastructure all serve the purpose of drawing attention to the cause of the mutineers. These tactics are not meant to be discreet; mutineers want people to know their mission. This is an important difference between coups and mutinies. Coups are generally intended to be exclusive (Kandeh 2004: 43), and “the conspiratorial strike is the secret to its success” (First 1970: 19). Mutineers typically want to include many participants and want both military and civilians to know about their cause. As I will describe later, soldiers often specifically threaten a mutiny before one is carried out. Whereas coups are meant to be a definitive action, mutinies are a step in a process of negotiations.

Media-Savvy Mutineers

The above-mentioned mutineer tactics have been used fairly consistently from the 1960s to the present. A relatively new tactic that has emerged since the 1990s is the incorporation of media into mutinies. Radio has been the most preferred media outlet for African mutineers, which mirrors radio’s popularity across the continent. This trend of soldiers utilizing the radio coincides with and has been enabled by increased media freedoms in the region from the 1990s onward. During the 1990s, more media freedoms allowed reporters (though not without risk) to “reveal what [was] going on behind the well-draped windows of public institutions” (Hyden and Leslie 2002: 12). There was increased public scrutiny of political figures and government procedures, with growing attention

towards corruption (Hyden and Okigbo 2002: 48). Many of the same themes were paralleled within militaries, which saw an unprecedented surge of mutinies in the 1990s (there were at least 28 in the region in that decade). Soldiers also publicly scrutinized their leaders and military procedures, often emphasizing corrupt practices.

During the 1990s, it was common for mutineers to take control of the radio waves during their revolts. Several examples of this include mutinies in Côte d'Ivoire in 1990, Niger in 1992 and the CAR in 1996. However, in recent years mutineers have often not needed to physically take over a station to be heard. Media outlets vying for unique access often approach soldiers for interviews, as was the case during mutinies in Burkina Faso in 2011 (Interview with Editorial Chief for Ouaga FM, 2012).

The desire for mutineers to grab the attention of government officials, and often a wider audience, makes the media a natural tool. Radio announcements allow soldiers to articulate their demands. For example, in 1996 mutineers in the CAR made the following announcement:

First, we demand the payment of overdue salaries for 1992, 1993 and 1994. Second, the unfreezing of salaries. Third, the restoration and improvement of the Central African Armed Forces [...]. Fourth, we demand that no legal proceedings should take place after the mutiny since we will stop today. (*West Africa*, 5 May 1996, 667)

As earlier noted, mutineers also seek to open a dialogue about the conditions under which they are working and often use radio announcements to provide detailed justifications for their actions. Radio statements by mutineers regularly provide an alternative narrative, one in which they are the victims of an unjust system rather than aggressors. For example, mutineers in the CAR stated the following in 1996:

Our living conditions are mediocre; we are treated badly and we are exposed to disease. This is why we have left the barracks. We made these demands from our barracks, but call to no avail. We have been forced to take to the streets. We have no intention of destabilizing the regime. (*West Africa*, 5 May 1996, 667)

The announcement serves to personalize the mutineers. They aim to portray themselves not as soldiers who are committing a military crime but rather as individuals who cannot provide for themselves or their families under their current salary. Additionally, they express that they used mutiny as a last resort and thus suggest that the blame is on their leadership for not responding to earlier complaints.

Mutineers commonly present their case pragmatically, with a heavy emphasis on numbers and facts. For example, in interviews with former

mutineers in West Africa they often went to great lengths to explain their salary in precise numbers (including how often they were paid) as well as listing other various costs such as rice, a pound of meat, transportation to visit family, uniforms and boots.⁷ This is apparent in media announcements by mutineers as well. For example, soldiers in the CAR announced, “We pay for our uniforms, which cost 25,000 francs [CFA]; a pair of boots costs 25,000 francs, and we get 29,041 francs and we have families and children” (*West Africa*, 5 May 1996, 667). The same group later explained on the radio, “We have continued to receive the salary of a second-class private, 29,041 francs, for 15 to 16 years” (*West Africa*, 5 May 1996, 667). Similarly, soldiers in Guinea in 2008 explained their pay grievances in relation to the cost of rice in order to show that a bag of rice costs roughly half of their monthly pay (*Agence France-Presse* 2008). In these cases, there seemed to be a strong desire to demonstrate in detail how their salaries could not cover the basic costs of living, and in doing so soldiers were making the point that their actions were driven by necessity. They provide a case for longer-term changes rather than a one-time pay-off. By providing the exact details of their salaries and expenses, soldiers also distinguished themselves from the officers whom they often accuse of economic irresponsibility. However, portraying themselves as sensible negotiators is likely to some degree a strategy in itself, and there are plenty of examples of behaviour within mutinies, such as looting, which cannot be justified by claims of necessity.

While the above examples used media during a mutiny, there is a recent trend of soldiers approaching the media with their complaints as a warning to the government of a pending mutiny. One such example involves Nigerian soldiers in 2012 during a deployment to Darfur as part of the United Nations/African Union mission. The soldiers told *Radio France International Hausa Service* that they would mutiny if they were not paid their owed allowances and airlifted back to Nigeria. In a related petition that they sent to the government, the soldiers stated:

Nobody seems to listen to us or the plight of our families back home. Even though it is against the ethics of the military to go to the press, we are pushed to the wall because nobody listens to our cries apart from the media. (Mukhtar and Bashir 2012)

In this case, the soldiers stress their desire to open a dialogue with their superiors and their willingness to take extreme measures to get attention for their concerns. Much like the examples from the CAR above, these

7 Author interviews with military sources in Sierra Leone, Burkina Faso and the Gambia in 2011 and 2012.

soldiers also acknowledge that their actions go against a military code of conduct but express that it was a measure of last resort. These examples further the notion that mutinies are often planned events rather than impulsive reactions.

Similarly, soldiers in Sierra Leone used the media to express their complaints on a weekend radio show in October of 2013. A Sierra Leonean soldier deployed as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) accused the government of “fraudulently” reducing the peacekeepers’ pay and claimed that soldiers have to bribe officers to go on the mission.⁸ Among other complaints, he alleged that Sierra Leonean soldiers are living “precariously” on deployment, without adequate supplies and food (Cham 2013). While the Minister of Defence responded that the claims were “unfounded” and “unprofessional” and questioned whether the caller was even a soldier, he still provided a detailed response to each of the claims (Awoko 2013). It is too early to tell if the peacekeepers will be satisfied with his response, but the soldiers’ strategy of approaching the media with their concerns succeeded in opening a dialogue between themselves and senior hierarchy. Senior leadership clearly felt compelled to respond to the allegations, and it is possible that the response may have diffused tensions that otherwise could have led to a revolt.

The rapid increase in internet use and particularly social media potentially allows the messages of mutineers to reach much farther than radio announcements. Whereas the Nigerian and Sierra Leonean soldiers’ grievances were announced first on the radio, the stories were also posted online and picked up by bloggers and reposted via Twitter, thus reaching an incalculable number of people throughout the world. In another example from Nigeria, in 2013 a letter from an anonymous group calling itself the Group for the Salvation of the Nigerian Army and the Motherland (GROSNAMM) was widely circulated on blogs, internet message boards and Facebook, followed by hundreds of reader comments. The report detailed the career paths of dozens of senior officers and accused the Nigerian military of nepotism and ethnic favouritism within recruitment and promotions (among other things). It cautioned of growing tensions in the military and warned of a pending mutiny.⁹ Similar to the other cases, the authors of this report turned to new forms of media to disseminate their perceptions of alleged crimes and threatened to mutiny to hammer in their point.

8 This was a common complaint I heard while interviewing Sierra Leonean soldiers in 2011 and 2012.

9 *iReports-NG.com* is one of the many sites that posted the report.

Considering mutinies often involve junior rank-and-file soldiers, many of whom will likely be of a more technologically advanced generation than their older peers, it is reasonable to assume that technology and media will be used even more pervasively in future mutinies. Today, soldiers see media as more interactive and as a way to circumvent their chain of command. It also allows soldiers to connect with the international community and the civilian population. Some military hierarchies appear aware of the new challenges posed by the spread of information via social media and have sought to limit its use. For example, in 2013 the Nigerian military leadership warned soldiers against posting sensitive information on social media and asked those who are technologically savvy to help monitor the social media activity of military personnel (*Premium Times* 2013).

The growing trend of soldiers utilizing the media poses new challenges to military leadership because it contradicts the standard chain of command and allows complaints to circulate quickly. Expanding the dialogue beyond soldiers and their superiors into the civilian realm can also create challenges for political leadership. For example, there was criticism within the media, civil society and political opposition when President Tandja of Niger declared a state of emergency following the mutinies in 2002. The state of emergency restricted civil liberties, particularly press freedoms, and journalists who reported on the story were arrested (*Africa Research Bulletin*, July 2002, 14972-14975; IRIN 2002). The Constitutional Court ruled against Tandja and declared that he did not have the authority to make the decree (*Africa Research Bulletin*, September 2002, 14999). Civilians stayed engaged with the mutineers' cause and staged a sit-in in front of the Congress Palace in Niamey, where a conference for the African Commission of Human and People's Rights was being held to protest that over 200 mutineers had been held in jail for nearly a year without trial (*Africa Research Bulletin*, May 2003, 15317). The mutiny concerned pay and living conditions, as well as complaints about particular officers; however, it took on larger proportions when civilian organizations used the government response to question the powers of the president and the state of civil liberties.

Mixed Results

The goals of the tactics described above are to gain attention and open a dialogue with leadership in an environment in which the hierarchy does not easily allow individuals to express their opinions. Channelling concerns up the chain of command, which would be the required procedure within a military hierarchy, is rife with complications. For one thing, the chain of

command is often the problem, particularly when soldiers accuse their direct superiors of having a hand in their overdue or low salaries. Another complication arises when the demands of mutineers are larger than can be addressed by their immediate superiors, which is frequently the case. For example, a junior officer or NCO is generally not able to raise soldiers' salaries or bring allegedly corrupt officers to justice.

Most often it appears mutineers prefer to deal with political leadership rather than military leadership. This is a trend that represents their general distrust of the military hierarchy. This preference can be seen in the way they often physically approach the state house or demand meetings with the president. Their desire to negotiate with political leadership is also represented in their preference for abducting civilian political hostages rather than military officers. In some ways, this may be counterintuitive. One could assume that rank-and-file soldiers would take hostage those that they blame for their problems, who tend to be military officers. However, junior soldiers abducting their senior officers and expecting the military hierarchy to respond confines the act to an internal military matter and, generally speaking, the mutineers do not trust the military hierarchy. By involving political representatives, mutineers work around their chain of command and bring their complaints into the political realm. Additionally, they draw wider attention to the perceived wrongdoings of their seniors.

The goal of many mutineers to engage with political leaders can also be seen as part of the history of militaries in the region. Here, militaries have long been intertwined with politics, as evidenced by the high number of coups and subsequently high number of military and former military heads of state. Armed forces have long been involved in dialogue with politicians, and mutinies can be seen as an extension of this. Furthermore, mutinies in West and Central Africa are generally successful in allowing soldiers the opportunity to directly engage with senior leaders. In most of the cases examined in this research, governments did not initially respond by attacking the mutineers; instead, they negotiated with the soldiers. In several cases, the mutineers were able to meet directly with the head of state, no small feat for junior soldiers.

However, having a conversation is only one aspect of the goal, and soldiers also want senior leadership to actively address the issues raised in the discussion. While mutineers make their campaigns public, the negotiations with senior leadership tend to be conducted in private, and it is difficult for researchers to determine what soldiers receive in the negotiations. It appears that West and Central African mutineers are often successful in accruing at least some immediate gains (usually pay

and occasionally the dismissal of officers that the mutineers objected to). Yet, there is less evidence to suggest that mutinies often result in long-term changes, such as major changes to the promotion system or significant action against the corruption that mutineers often allege. One indication of the lack of long-term changes resulting from mutinies is the high number of recurrences. Burkina Faso, the CAR, Guinea and Niger have all experienced numerous mutinies in a relative short amount of time. Furthermore, the mutineers' complaints are generally similar to those of previous mutinies, indicating that problems have not been adequately addressed from the perspective of the junior soldiers.

Conclusion

The analysis of the tactics used in the cases of mutiny in this research challenges the way in which mutinies are often referred to as spontaneous acts. While there are certainly incidents within mutinies that are unplanned, mutinies in West and Central Africa are usually not reckless reactions. Taking control of an airport, breaking into an armory, capturing hostages and strategic locations and making media announcements all require a degree of planning and coordination. The acts were often premeditated, with soldiers regularly warning leadership ahead of time of the possibility of a mutiny. Furthermore, their objectives demonstrate a desire for more than basic and immediate demands.

Through their public actions, they intentionally spread their message beyond the military realm. In doing so, they aim to open a dialogue with individuals outside their chain of command about the conditions under which they are working along with their grievances. This allows the soldiers to express their sense of injustice and at times to expose those that they hold responsible.

Understanding common goals in tactics also helps anticipate future actions of mutineers. As many of the tactics have been consistently used since the 1960s, it is likely they will continue to be favoured by mutineers. The research has proposed that media, and new forms of media in particular, will be used increasingly in future mutinies. While military commanders and political leaders will likely be dismayed that soldiers are publicly airing their grievances to the media, the examples above have demonstrated that the tactic can help open a dialogue before soldiers resort to more severe actions.

This article provides a broad look at mutinies and suggests a view of the actions that goes beyond acts of insubordination. It fills a gap in mutiny literature by analysing mutineers' tactics and how they have changed

over time. It should be noted that the available empirical data on mutinies is far from complete. This is due to difficulties in obtaining information such as the number of military personnel involved, fatalities amongst the mutineers and concessions given to mutineers, which are all usually matters of confidential military record. Yet, there is also work to be done with existing data. For example, future research could examine circumstances under which mutinies turn violent or study various government responses to mutinies. As mutinies have remained “one of the constants in the history of military organizations” (Callahan 2001: 119), research on the topic will likely remain valuable for our understanding of armed forces in the foreseeable future.

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Taktische Kommunikation: Meuterei als eine Form des Dialogs in West- und Zentralafrika

Zusammenfassung: Die Autorin analysiert den taktischen Verlauf und die Ziele von Meutereien in West- und Zentralafrika. Sie hat Aktionen von Meuterern in 66 Fällen von 1960 bis 2012 untersucht. Trotz erheblicher Unterschiede im Kontext konnte sie bemerkenswerte Ähnlichkeiten beim taktischen Verlauf feststellen, und zwar länderübergreifend und über den gesamten Zeitraum. Dieser Befund widerspricht der populären Vorstellung, Meutereien in Afrika verliefen chaotisch und strategisch unüberlegt. Die am häufigsten verfolgten Taktiken dienten dazu, einen Dialog mit der Führung zu eröffnen sowie eine Plattform für die Soldaten zu schaffen, damit sie ihre Erwartungen formulieren können – in einem Umfeld, in dem die Stimmen untergeordneter Dienstgrade gezielt unterdrückt werden. Aus Sicht der Autorin sollte Meuterei eher als ein kommunikativer Akt interpretiert werden und weniger als eine Form des Ungehorsams.

Schlagwörter: Westafrika, Zentralafrika, Militär, Aufstand/Revolte, Militär und Gesellschaft



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A Future beyond HIV/AIDS? Health as a Political Commodity in Botswana

Astrid Bochow

Abstract: Referencing scholarly debates on humanitarianism and specifically HIV interventions, this article analyses the commodification of health in Botswana's political arena throughout the HIV pandemic and beyond, contributing to a re-evaluation of the distribution of public wealth and international support in welfare states in Africa. The starting point of the analysis is a project to build a private hospital – a move to create a centre of excellence exclusive of international HIV/AIDS donations – and the staging of political responsibilities around it. Public investment into private health is an attempt to reform infrastructures built with HIV/AIDS money and to develop a market of high-paying jobs within the country. This process transforms the inalienable and indivisible condition of health and survival into a political commodity.

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Keywords: Botswana, humanitarian foreign aid, welfare state, political economy, public health policy, HIV/AIDS

Astrid Bochow is a lecturer of Social Anthropology at the Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. She has researched the anthropology of institutions and social mobility in Kumasi, Ghana (2004–06: youth, Pentecostalism, the family, schools), and Gaborone, Botswana (2009–11: elites, health, technology). Her work has appeared in national and international journals and edited volumes. Her monograph on youth, marriage and Pentecostalism was published by LIT Verlag in 2010.

E-mail: <a.bochow1@gmail.com>

In January 2010 the new Bokamoso Private Hospital opened near Gaborone, the capital of Botswana. *Mmegi*, the national newspaper, announced the opening enthusiastically with the headline “Towards a new era in health” (*Mmegi* 2010a). In Setswana, one of Botswana’s official languages, *bokamoso* means “future”; the construction of the private hospital symbolised the start of a healthy and prosperous future for Botswana. By November 2010, however, Bokamoso had already gone bankrupt, and the Botswanan government was called upon to assume financial responsibility for the sum of 250 million BWP (36 million USD) (*Mmegi* 2010b). The resulting public controversy and the staging of political responsibilities concerning the project (which was actually designed for private patients, not public health care) indicate that health has become a highly sensitive issue in Botswana’s national political arena.

The construction and planning of Bokamoso took place in the shadow of the country’s HIV pandemic. With an estimated 30 per cent HIV infection rate among the adult population, the country has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world. Furthermore, Botswana is one of the few middle-income countries in Africa. Since independence, successive governments have managed to build a welfare state, allowing many of the estimated 1.3 million citizens (Botswana Statistics 2011)¹ to benefit from the country’s sudden wealth, derived from mineral processing in the 1980s.

Over the past few decades, with the help of international donors and private domestic companies, the Botswanan government has dedicated significant effort to HIV/AIDS prevention and care, investing a large proportion of public spending in health care under the administration of President Festus Mogae in particular. This has won Botswana the recognition and admiration of international politicians, and the country is often pointed to as an example of good governance and good public health care in Africa. The construction of the Bokamoso Private Hospital took place a decade after the implementation of a nationwide programme for the distribution of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs and was made possible by financial support from the national health insurance system. In this way, Bokamoso indicates a move beyond the HIV/AIDS health care that has been sponsored in large part by international donors. As a project drawing upon national resources rather than foreign donations, it

1 According to official statistics, the population size was estimated to be 1.3 million in 1991 with continuous growth until 2012 (Botswana Statistics 2011). Other sources estimated the population to be 1.9 million in the 1990s. One problem with these estimates is that absent men are often not counted, and migrants from other African countries are likewise omitted.

might also be seen as a move towards a new future of high-quality health care. In the following sections, I will discuss the interplay between various domestic and international political forces in placing survival and health on the political agenda of the Botswanan welfare state and address the country's attempt to move beyond an HIV-related political economy.

My contribution is based on ethnographic fieldwork among educated professionals in Gaborone, Botswana: Many of my informants are civil servants, some in the fields of HIV/AIDS and health care. The topics of my research, which took place over several visits to Botswana between 2009 and 2011, were family planning, elite lifestyles and HIV/AIDS. In the course of my fieldwork, I conducted over 80 biographical interviews with educated professionals from three generations on reproductive matters, health, family planning, their careers and their visions for the future. In this contribution, I attempt to develop an argument concerning health as a political subject and the re-evaluation of life through national politics in the era of HIV/AIDS beyond local social practices related to HIV/AIDS and reproduction. My reasoning is primarily based on interviews with officials, newspaper articles, policy reports and other statistical materials that I obtained over the course of my research or that are available online.²

Humanitarian Politics and the Commodification of Survival: Concepts and Contexts

An entry point for the discussion of the importance of health in twenty-first-century politics is provided by scholarly debates on humanitarian aid. These debates have helped create an understanding of how “health” has been introduced to the agenda of national and international politics and offer a contextualisation and conceptualisation of the struggle for health in Botswana.

2 This contribution is based on a paper I wrote at the Department of Social Sciences at the University of Konstanz during my stay as a Junior Fellow at the Centre for Advanced Studies. I thank the Centre for its generous scholarship and inspiring atmosphere. This research was made possible by the support of the Fritz Thyssen Foundation and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle. It was conducted in affiliation with the Department of Social Sciences of the University of Botswana and with the permission of the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs and the Ministry of Health of Botswana, the Gaborone Private Hospital (Dr. Music and Dr. Eaton) and the Bokamoso Private Hospital (Dr. Abebe). I thank all the institutions and people involved who have supported my research both financially and intellectually.

Humanitarian aid is not exclusively focused on people's health; it also targets relief and life-saving measures in situations of man-made disasters (such as wars, genocides, environmental catastrophes or mass exoduses of refugees) and natural catastrophes (such as flooding, tsunamis, earthquakes or famines) in which the people affected have a limited capacity to react. Over the past century, humanitarianism has become a powerful tool in international politics. Its political role has been consolidated by the growing importance not only of international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and Caritas, which broadened their scope of action after World War II, but also of political organisations including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO), which gained influence in international politics in the post-war period (Fassin 2011; Bornstein and Redfield 2010). With strong roots in Christian and Enlightenment ethics of compassion, these interventions operate with an "emergency" mindset and are explicitly designed to ensure merely the survival of people (Fassin and Padolfi 2010) – often discussed under the keyword "politics of life". The politics of life, which includes HIV intervention, thus attributes a new political value to survival, as opposed to interventions that address the social value of life.

Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, health has been an important concern of humanitarian relief, primarily in war zones but also in refugee camps and other places where people have limited access to health care (Malkki 1996; Redfield 2005). By the turn of the millennium, health gained immense importance in international politics, as HIV/AIDS had become a priority for international health intervention programmes. The wave of death that fragmented the demographic composition of many affected societies, most of them in East and Southern Africa (Iliffe 2006), caught the attention of international politics and prompted calls for immediate action (Hardon and Dilger 2011). After the epidemic came to be perceived as a threat to national and international security,³ the US released 15 billion USD over a five-year period (2003–2008) for HIV/AIDS prevention and care through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief

3 The unclassified publication entitled *The Next Wave of HIV/AIDS: Nigeria, Ethiopia, Russia, India, and China*, commissioned by the Bush administration and released by the National Intelligence Council (2002), was influential in the founding of PEPFAR. This work was significant because it discussed the mortality that would be associated with a poorly controlled HIV pandemic across several decades and also predicted the impact of this excessive mortality on US national security interests.

(PEPFAR). In a similar vein, international organisations such as the UN and the World Bank joined the fight against HIV/AIDS, also employing the rhetoric of war. For instance, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan spoke about HIV/AIDS as a devastating disaster for many African societies:

By overwhelming the continent's health and social services, by creating millions of orphans, and by decimating health workers and teachers, AIDS is causing social and economic crises which in turn threaten political stability. (UNAIDS 2000, cited in Hardon and Dilger 2011: 144)

Subsequently, major sums of money were earmarked for HIV/AIDS prevention and care, especially for the purchase and distribution of antiretroviral drugs and medical expertise. These medications can significantly prolong the lives of HIV-infected people, but such therapies are cost-intensive, ranging between USD 300 and 1,200 for each patient per annum. Currently, HIV/AIDS support and research are entering a new period. The focus on HIV/AIDS has resulted in the neglect of other infectious diseases with equally deadly outcomes (such as onchocerciasis or schistosomiasis) that are most often found in resource-poor settings. With many African countries now able to provide ARV treatment to their citizens (UNAIDS 2013) – despite periodical stock-outs in some countries such as Uganda (Park 2012) – many programmes have responded to this critique by devoting support to other urgent health issues. This trend has been accompanied by a certain weariness on the part of the academic community with regard to HIV/AIDS. All these developments have come together in what I refer to as the post-HIV era. However, this does not mean that HIV/AIDS has vanished or even that infection rates are falling in places like Botswana.

The economic underpinnings of this politics of life have attracted scholarly criticism; in the case of HIV prevention and care, this has primarily revolved around the involvement of the pharmaceutical industry. For instance, the literature points to the ambivalent role of the state when signing contracts with pharmaceutical companies to enable the distribution of antiretroviral therapies (Biehl 2007), as well as at the “neoliberal world order” represented by the purchase of pharmaceuticals (Comaroff 2007).

A detailed analysis of economic exchange relations in the field of humanitarian aid is provided by the anthropologist Peter Redfield (2012), who shows that humanitarianism can involve an entire chain of market interactions. He describes a business model encompassing companies in the global North as well as the global South that is designed to bring humanitarian devices (such as Lifestraw, a portable, easy-to-use filter for contaminated water) to those in need. Companies invest in the marketing of

these devices and enable the implementation of humanitarian measures where governmental means and commitment to the well-being of citizens are lacking. Redfield describes how life-saving technologies are transformed by those marketing them into devices that look fashionable, thus appealing to potential consumers; one example of this is the aforementioned, easy-to-use water filter that looks and acts like a straw. These devices circulate within trading chains that stretch from countries where the advanced technology is developed and produced to places where it can save lives and is in high demand. These dynamics of the market effectively turn humanitarian technologies into humanitarian goods, Redfield argues. The market is transforming the ethics of survival and its related technologies into commodities, and turning those in need into customers and participants in the market exchange.

Redfield describes the commodification of humanitarian technology in and through global politics and corporations and in the shadow of weak states. By contrast, the case I seek to explore involves a strong welfare state and its collaborations with international donors, some being agents of foreign governments (such as PEPFAR), others of private enterprises (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). My contribution pursues the question of the commodification of health through welfare politics and thus offers a new perspective on the debates over humanitarian aid and health interventions in the context of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Botswana: Well-being after Independence

Botswana is one of the few middle-income countries in Africa. Its wealth derives from diamonds, an industry owned by the state, which has been processing the gems since the mid-1970s. To date, Botswana's economic growth is most visible in the city of Gaborone, where newly constructed shopping malls, fashionable restaurants, well-built roads and flashy cars dominate the cityscape. Soon after the Botswanan government started processing diamonds by sub-contracting South African mining firms, the country's public wealth soared. In the mid-1980s, the country had the fastest-growing gross domestic product (GDP) in the entire world (Werbner 2004).

Since then, the well-being of its citizens has been the top priority in Botswanan national politics. The former British protectorate had a poorly developed infrastructure when it gained independence in 1964; following its economic growth spurt, the Botswanan government invested heavily in the building of public infrastructure, specifically roads, schools and hospitals. Additionally, the government provided free education and public

health care for all citizens. Consequently, Botswana is now a comparatively high-functioning welfare state in which many profit from economic growth.

In addition, Botswana was praised for its peaceful move towards democracy under its first president, Seretse Khama (1966–1980), who managed to bring together the eight *kgosi* (Setswana: “chiefs”) of the eight principal ethnic groups to support a democratically elected parliament and create effective public services under his presidency. In fact, researchers have verified the redistribution of wealth and power since independence (Acemoglu et al. 2001). The government’s integrity in building a welfare state that is focused on the well-being of its citizens has been a surprise to many observers of African national politics; along this vein, Botswana has often been referred to as “the African miracle” (Cook and Sarkin 2010; Jerven 2010).

Recent developments, however, seem to dim Botswana’s bright prospects. The price of diamonds dropped nearly 90 per cent in 2008 (AEDI 2014). As a consequence, the country experienced a drastic cut in all areas of public spending. For instance, student admissions were halted in 2010, and salaries were not adapted to inflation, resulting in strikes of medical personnel in 2011 and 2012. In addition, the transparency of Botswana’s state bureaucracy has been contested in the country’s own public sphere (*Sunday Standard* 2011). The tense financial situation overall exacerbated Bokamoso’s financial troubles and fanned the flames of the public debate around the building.

Botswana’s dedication to welfare further manifested in the founding of national health insurance in the 1990s. As one of the first countries on the African continent to facilitate it, Botswana began its private health insurance scheme in 1969. The Botswana Medical Aid Society, BOMaid, is a not-for-profit society which drew its initial membership from audit firms, parastatals and banking organisations in Botswana. Two further health insurance schemes were founded in the 1990s: The Botswana Public Officers Medical Aid Scheme – BPOMAS, a health insurance programme covering all Botswanan governmental employees (junior and senior staff), their partners and children, and the Pula Medical Aid Fund, which offers medical aid to the employees of private companies and their families. Beyond this service, health insurances offer an additional tariff for “serious diseases”. With these health insurance schemes, people employed in Botswana have good access to health care even beyond the public health care system, the latter offering free primary care to all citizens of Botswana.

With the outbreak of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, health care advanced to being a prime priority in Botswana's domestic politics, as I will show in the following.

The Political Value of Life: HIV/AIDS, the Economy and Politics (1999–2008)

When I visited Botswana for the first time in 2009, HIV was already present in the public sphere, and many of my discussions with colleagues centred on the pandemic, prevention and health care. In brief, talking and thinking about HIV/AIDS had entered the public sphere in Botswana, and discussing the pandemic was accepted behaviour among academics. However, this does not mean that the stigma of HIV/AIDS had vanished or that people would openly speak about their own HIV infection status, at least not in these discussions.

Up until the mid-1990s, this was not the case. The first HIV infection was recorded in Botswana in 1985. Civil servants and public officials from the ages of 60 to 80 whom I interviewed in the course of my research appeared quite detached from the effects of HIV/AIDS in those years, even those who had worked in the health sector. HIV prevention programmes had been launched by the end of the 1980s; however, in those early years, public initiatives such as the advertising of safe sex and testing were mostly restricted to urban areas (Heald 2006). In rural areas, many people called HIV/AIDS the “radio disease”. In fact, observers attest that in academic circles, people still were reluctant to speak about HIV/AIDS in as late as 1997.

By that time, the pandemic's impact was already visible. HIV prevalence rates accelerated after the mid-1990s. By the end of the 1990s, the wave of death had shaped the demographic composition of Botswanan society, reducing the number of people in their reproductive and productive primes. “People were dying like flies”, said a colleague and friend of mine who returned to the country from a Ph.D. programme in the US in the mid-1990s. The death toll reached a peak in 2001, with an estimated 25,000 HIV/AIDS-related deaths in a population of approximately 1.7 million (Statistics Botswana 2011: 18). The life expectancy at birth was estimated to be between 42 and 47 years (Bulatao 2003: 78).

The social impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on affected societies such as Botswana is complex. Because the disease is deadly and leads to long and painful suffering if untreated, the pandemic has been described as creating tremendous physical as well as social hardships for the afflicted, especially in the 1990s before the development and proliferation

of ARVs (Fassin 2007). Some authors have also pointed to the associated economic impact resulting from the mass deaths of people in the prime of their lives, which left the elderly and children with nobody left to care for them (Iliffe 2006). The effects of HIV/AIDS were most visible at the household level, with new forms of households (with children or grandparents as heads) emerging (Ingstad 2004; Miller et al. 2007).

The first initiatives to obtain accurate information on the prevalence of HIV and, more important, to provide care for those affected by the virus were launched by mining companies. Merck & Co., a mining company in Botswana, conducted anonymous but obligatory testing among its labourers, which revealed a shocking HIV/AIDS prevalence of 59.1 per cent; as a result, the firm offered its labourers ARV treatment free of cost (Barnett et al. 2002: 19). The executives who initiated this programme expressed an economic rationale for its implementation. The treatment was intended to enhance staff productivity, as the company had begun to experience losses in productivity due to the frequent illnesses of workers and long sick-leave absences. Treatment was restricted to the labourers and explicitly excluded their families (interview with Tsele Fantan,⁴ September 2011).

Merck's treatment programme was designed to create "able bodies" – that is, people with healthy bodies who would be able to work and be productive. This echoes the historical experience through which perceptions of health and the body have been re-shaped by the integration of workers into wage labour (Livingston 2005).

Under the presidency of Festus Mogae (1998–2008), HIV entered the national political arena and subsequently the public sphere as well as the education system. Within Botswana's academic circles, President Mogae was seen as lacking political popularity at the beginning of his presidency, but his popularity grew as he instituted rigorous political action to combat the pandemic. In 2000, he made the following public declaration about the pandemic, telling reporters:

We really are in a national crisis. We are threatened with extinction [...]. People are dying in chillingly high numbers. We are losing the best of [our] young people [...]. It's a crisis of the first magnitude, it's a tragedy. (*The Telegraph* 2000)

These words reflected not only the national situation – as described above – but also the international rhetoric on HIV/AIDS as a disaster and a threat to security. In resonance with humanitarian ethics, Mogae initiated a na-

4 Tsele Fantan was the head of human resources at Merck and in charge of the introduction of the internal ARV-distribution programme.

tionwide programme that enabled every citizen to access ARVs free of charge. Botswana was the first African country to set up nationwide coverage for ARVs.

To his credit, President Mogae united the already-existing initiatives to provide the treatment programme begun by the mines with internal political support and international donors. Mogae initiated the foundation of private–public partnerships called ACHAP, or African Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Partnerships. These partnerships linked private initiatives which provided treatment with the government of Botswana and with a number of private and public foreign partners, among them the Gates Foundation, PEPFAR and the Harvard Institute. On its website, the Gates Foundation expresses a rationale for its support which is congruent with the mine’s interest in a healthy and productive population. The Foundation’s home page indicates that “health” is one of the important issues that Bill and Melinda Gates wish to address. The caption “We believe every person deserves the chance to live a healthy, productive life” appears next to a picture of “a Zambian man hold[ing] up his HIV-negative test results” (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2014). In other words, their project to improve health serves to advance personal capacity and productivity, and thus aligns itself with the neoliberal conviction that strengthening individuals’ capabilities to enhance their social position is to the benefit of the entire nation or community in question.

The mining company Merck provided the medical infrastructure for the ARV programme. In the 1980s and 1990s, the mines ran hospitals with excellent reputations: My informants reported that these hospitals offered high-quality medical care, the best in the country. Merck also agreed to donate antiretroviral medicines for the duration of the partnership. In addition, Merck, in cooperation with the Gates Foundation, donated large sums of money for the construction of medical infrastructure. In total, the Merck Company Foundation and the Gates Foundation donated 106.5 million USD to the partnership. Both foreign and private investment into the health of Botswana’s citizens has been enormous. This country, with its 1.7 million inhabitants, has received approximately 23 per cent of the total funding that the Gates Foundation has committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS worldwide – namely, 2.5 billion USD (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2006). This makes Botswana one of the main recipients of the Gates Foundation’s financial support. These sums are supplemented by donations from PEPFAR, which has contributed approximately 300 million USD since 2004, with a single-year peak of 93.2 million USD in 2008 (PEPFAR 2008: 15). These numbers and figures provide evidence of the international financial in-

vestments supporting the political will to create a healthy nation and to put an end to suffering and death.

The initial uptake of the ARV programme in Botswana was slow. In the first year of its implementation, the country hoped to enrol 19,000 people in ARV programmes, but only 3,200 were enrolled. The problem of low response continued until a new routine testing policy went into effect in 2005. This law mandates⁵ the testing of all patients admitted to the hospital as well as all pregnant women receiving prenatal care. The new policy marked a turning point, and the acceptance of ARVs has grown, despite the fact that outreach in rural and remote areas is still poor (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation 2006: 4). An analysis of the online documentation makes it clear that it was not the able, the infected or the healthy body but the treated body that was the focus of political attention in 2006; political success was measured by the number of people receiving ARV treatments.

ARVs have changed how people experience HIV/AIDS. Patients with symptoms of full-blown AIDS have reportedly recovered to the point where they look like normal, healthy people. Given the right medication and adherence to a particular regime of care, HIV-positive people who take ARVs can have the same life expectancy as healthy people. In addition, controlled therapies with ARVs reduce the infectiousness of HIV-positive individuals to a minimum (Vernazza et al. 2008). When prescribed to pregnant women, ARVs generally inhibit the virus's transmission from mother to child. This enables people infected with HIV not only to take part in life again, but also to form families and have children without running the risk of spreading the infection (Meinert et al. 2009). The fact that HIV-positive people can live an almost-normal life again has been met with much enthusiasm as well as scepticism and criticism. On the positive side, not only can the physical suffering from HIV/AIDS be reduced, but the social damages – exclusion and stigmatisation – may also be mitigated as HIV becomes a chronic (rather than fatal) disease. That means that HIV-positive people can be fully integrated into society. However, this positive effect on the patients has also been accepted only cautiously by many public health providers, as it contributes to the invisibility of HIV/AIDS.

By 2009, when I started my research, ARVs were a complete success in Botswana: 98 per cent of babies born to HIV-positive mothers were HIV-negative at birth. Population growth had picked up again, staying at

5 An opt-out clause does exist but is rarely communicated to patients. Pregnant women who reject testing can be held responsible if their babies test positive. They may also lose their right to treatment.

two million in 2011. This is an increase of 100,000 compared to 2001. Above all, treatment has led to what public health experts have called the “normalisation of HIV/AIDS” (Roura et al. 2009). Approximately 20 of 70 people I conducted biographical interviews with between 2009 and 2011 were HIV-positive.⁶ Many of them had experienced fertility problems but apart from this had led normal lives following their infection with HIV: They had good jobs, were active members of churches and participated in the social lives of their families and friends. Nothing external indicated that they were HIV-positive, and for the most part they had not disclosed their serostatus to their social network.

Scepticism surrounding the ARV programme – specifically, concerning the “sustainability of ARVs” – has come in the form of criticism by policymakers and public health specialists, some of whom have expressed doubts in informal conversations as to whether Botswana is still in a position to provide treatment for all of its citizens. The question of “sustainability” of treatment has gained urgency in view of the fact that international sponsorship was due to run out in 2010, though Merck decided to extend the programme until 2014, providing an additional 30 million USD towards that end (Developing World Health Partnerships Directory 2012). However, compared to the 106.5 billion USD donated before, this amount translates into a considerable cut in supporting HIV/AIDS medicine and care.

To sum up, in order to ensure the survival of its population, health became a top priority in Botswanan national politics, in collaboration with international organisations and private companies’ initiatives to provide treatment. President Mogae mobilised considerable resources, using rhetoric that depicted HIV/AIDS as a national disaster and stressing the necessity to save lives. Private–public partnerships such as ACHAP and individual donors such as the Gates Foundation formed the core of these initiatives, shifting the rhetoric by emphasising that individual “health” is the key to individual and national productivity and by measuring political success by the number of treated citizens. This important political moment not only indicates a shift from well-being to health but also provides an example of national HIV intervention. In the course of the past fourteen years, the political rhetoric has changed from saving lives to providing treatment as a means to enhance the productivity of Botswana’s citizens as well as the quality of life of HIV-positive people. Health represents the focus of political efforts, but it also gains

6 Either they indicated this themselves or I was able to deduce it from their medical symptoms.

new value as a public good validated through transactions involving enormous sums of money flowing into the construction of medical infrastructure and the provision of ARVs.

Investment in the Future: Health beyond Survival

In the context of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Botswana's health infrastructures were developed with national and international funding. Health also represents the largest public expenditure. By 2010, health services and maintenance received 40 per cent of public spending; HIV/AIDS and the high cost of ARV treatments contribute considerably to this high percentage. In fact, the public health care system is confronted with a number of other health problems, only some of which relate to HIV/AIDS.⁷ These, as I show in the following paragraph, have become pertinent in recent years.

When Ian Khama came to power in 2008, it was already expected that international sponsorship would be limited; most international programmes were planned to end in 2010 and subsequently extended only through 2014. Although the pandemic had contributed considerably to the building of the health care system, the new government was forced to handle its health costs with limited external support. Despite these conditions, the new government continued to prioritise health. This was indicated by Khama's opening speech before Parliament in December 2008. He announced that a "health hub is being established to identify projects and programmes that will make Botswana a centre of excellence in the provision of health services" (*Mmegi* 2008). In order to do so, the new government aimed to outsource health services to private operators, reasoning that this would allow the country to attract and retain specialists. One project designed for that purpose was Bokamoso Private Hospital (*ibid.*).

The Bokamoso project was intended to enhance health care, as the new centre of medical excellence would strengthen medical expertise within the country. In addition, the project's initiators hoped to attract patients from the entire Southern African region and thereby export health services beyond the borders of the national state. In an interview in 2010, Kabelo Ebineng, director of Botswana's sponsoring agencies,

7 An HIV infection heightens the risk of a number of other ailments, some of which can be assumed to be epidemiologically induced. Examples include cervical cancer (Livingston 2012: 43-46) and infertility.

pointed out the innovative role Bokamoso would come to play in Botswana's health care system, as it would offer certain medical services and technologies – for instance, in radiology and pathology – for the first time in the country (*Mmegi* 2010a).

Khama's programme marks a shift away from the sponsoring of HIV-related medicine and towards funding "health" in general, which is now receiving political attention, planning and financial support. The desire to invest in health facilities denotes changing political priorities. Health care beyond survival became the centre of political interest. The shift in political will and the re-evaluation of national health projects may be seen as a response to the cuts in international sponsorship on HIV/AIDS as well as to diversified health needs within the country.

As argued above, a large proportion of international and national HIV/AIDS money was invested into the building of medical infrastructure, including the training of qualified (medical) personnel and counsellors, formal education, and the development of educational programmes. International donations therefore not only facilitated the purchase of pharmaceuticals but also contributed greatly to building relevant medical infrastructures, all of which have bolstered the development of a market of high-paying jobs. Approximately half of my respondents were involved in HIV-related programmes or had acted as consultants on HIV/AIDS. This indicates that HIV/AIDS-related work is an important vocation for educated professionals. Broadening national expertise on health, as suggested by the new policy, would enable the country to maintain a market for highly qualified personnel of high-paying jobs in health facilities as well as in the Botswanan civil service. Considering that Bokamoso was scheduled to open in 2010, as the first period of ACHAP came to an end, its construction as a regional centre of medical excellence can be seen as a viable alternative to heavily funded HIV medicine.

In addition, the high demand on health services was also felt by patients in need. Access to ARVs and primary health care is free to all citizens of Botswana; however, many specialised services are not available within the public health care system. Patients have to be referred to specialised facilities. These can be private clinics or hospitals, the biggest of which used to be the Gaborone Private Hospital (GPH). Operational since the mid-1980s, the hospital offers patients a number of specialised health services, among them a gynaecology ward, a laboratory and three operation theatres for deliveries. For other services, such as radiology therapy, patients are referred to health facilities in South Africa or Zimbabwe and the costs are covered by the public health system. Radiology

therapy for cancer patients, for example, costs the government about 1,000 USD per treatment.

In a country the size of France but with a population of 1.5 to 2 million,⁸ developing health infrastructure that is accessible to everyone has always been a challenge. From 2009 to 2011, when I conducted my research, the need for more advanced medical technologies and services beyond primary public health care became clear to me. Princess Marina National Hospital has long waiting lists, and patients often feel that they do not receive appropriate care in a timely fashion. A good example is reproductive health. One woman told me that she had sought an examination for cervical cancer, but at Princess Marina she was put on a waiting list and given an appointment six months later. She felt uneasy about waiting such a long time for a consultation and went to a private health provider instead. This woman was only one case out of many. Whenever I visited the gynaecology station at GPH, the waiting room was filled with patients. Here, I had conversations with many patients who had travelled great distances in order to visit the gynaecologists in Gaborone. Some had even come from as far away as Francistown, situated approximately 450 kilometres north of Gaborone on the Zimbabwean border. These people usually take a day or even two off of work to receive specialised screenings and consultations on their personal issues.

A visit to a specialist requires expenditures far beyond average health costs. In addition to the cost of travel, patients have to pay the consultation fees themselves if they are unable to get a referral from the National Hospital (as was the case for the woman who thought she might have cervical cancer). However, the additional costs will be at least partly covered for a patient with private health insurance if they are referred by a general practitioner. A normal consultation costs between 200 and 500 USD and by far exceeds the average monthly spending on health care in households in urban areas (63.50 BWP, or about 8 USD; Central Statistics Office 2004: 23). Taken together, these circumstances demonstrate that, alongside public health care schemes focused on HIV/AIDS, a private health market supported by health insurance schemes has also been established in order to satisfy the health needs of those privileged groups able to afford it.

To sum up, with its 200 beds (to be expanded to 300), 20-bed intensive care unit, five operating theatres and 80 specialists, Bokamoso responded to the needs both of the public health care system to refer more patients into specialised care and of privileged groups – govern-

8 Estimates from 1985 to 2011 (Botswana Statistics 2011).

ment employees, civil servants and employees of other non-governmental institutions such as banks and insurance companies – who can afford private health care.

Only six months after opening, the hospital declared bankruptcy: The number of patients was below expectations, patients felt they had to wait too long to be seen and there were problems with the billing system as well as a number of other internal problems with management, the computer system, supplies and in other areas. In addition, observers noted that public health care patients were still referred to South African health providers rather than to Bokamoso. This demonstrates a lack of trust in this new private health facility by both the patients and the public health providers. When Botswana's medical health insurance for government employees, one of the institution's main sponsors, failed to cover the ever-increasing costs of the project, the government refused to fulfil requests from the hospital's management to cover the hospital's debt of 250 million BWP (about 36 million USD) and declined to respond to queries from the media as to the reasons it would not pay the debt (*Mmegi* 2010c). In November 2010 staff were cut, and those remaining were put on weekly contracts with considerably reduced salaries. That the hospital's management team was suddenly dismissed shortly afterwards suggests some internal tension between the government and those in charge of implementing the project (*The Monitor* 2011).

By 2011 a new sponsor from South Africa had been found. By then many of the specialists from the North had already left Bokamoso. It took the whole of 2011 to sort out Bokamoso's disastrous financial situation, and a report by an independent South African consultant revealed that the initial calculations had been too optimistic as they had assumed the hospital would run at full capacity from the start (*Mmegi* 2011). The hospital was taken over by the Lenmed Group in the first quarter of 2011.

Studying the financial structure is crucial to the analysis of a political system and its problems diversifying an internationally sponsored national health system built to treat HIV/AIDS and installing a domestically sponsored and self-sustaining centre of medical excellence. Bokamoso was intended to operate as a market-oriented enterprise, yet was a non-profit organisation according to its manager Kabelo Ebening (*Mmegi* 2010a). Its financing was secured through two main medical aid schemes in Botswana: BPOMAS, a closed medical scheme for government employees, and the Pula Medical Aid Fund, a private sector-oriented medical aid scheme. The government subsidises exactly 50 per cent of membership fees in both health schemes; therefore, commentators have speculated that the government has a strong interest in the project. Critics have pointed

out the contradictory financial interests that the hospital was subjected to in having health insurance companies as its primary sponsors. In fact, a factor in the hospital's financial disaster in November 2010 was the unpaid bills and doctors' wages owed by BPOMAS (*Mmegi* 2010d). Even though Bokamoso's services were open to all patients who could afford them and were supplemented by all health insurance schemes, because BPOMAS held an initial share of 80 per cent and was the main sponsor of the project, one can speculate that these health services were designed to provide for the health needs of government employees and those with capital, influence and power. On the other hand, it also suggests a strong public commitment to such an ambitious project and a political will to retain some of the country's past achievements in health services.⁹

Foreign involvement remained important for the project beyond international sponsorship. Bokamoso was planned in cooperation with two health institutions from the United States, which offered expertise in technology and management (*Mmegi* 2010d). Again, this was subject to public criticism as it employed many specialists from outside the country – among them, specialists from the US as well as other African countries – extracting qualified personnel from other health institutions. Medical personal was attracted (internationally and nationally) by high salaries, good working conditions and the promising prospects of being part of such an ambitious health project on the African continent. American staff were among the first to leave the country when an interim management team cut staff and adopted weekly contracts in November 2010.

To conclude, this ambitious project to build a centre of medical excellence on the African continent ushered in a new era in health in many respects. First, this turn towards viewing health as something beyond mere survival has brought about a diversification of health care services meant to respond better to the existing needs of those under the public health care system as well as those who can afford advanced private health services. It was this inability to both cater to public interests (for better and easy-to-access health care) and invest in private health care in order to capitalise on private health expenditure that led to internal friction and tension in Bokamoso. Although Bokamoso represents an attempt by Botswanan leaders to keep expertise and resources within the country, it will most likely strengthen already-existing health disparities between public and private health care.

9 The government's ambivalent position of sponsoring and supporting the project while rejecting requests for financial support after Bokamoso declared bankruptcy confused the public.

Second, the government's investments into private and specialised health care are in line with the norms of new forms of public–private partnerships. In the era of HIV/AIDS, international funding *and* expertise were brought to the country to support the construction of a health care system designed to ensure “survival”. Perceiving limits to international sponsorship, the new government as of 2008 took steps to keep the field of medicine a high-paying pursuit independent of international sponsorship by investing in ambitious projects such as Bokamoso. In public discourses, this step was saluted and welcomed as a step away from a dependency of the global South on the global North in terms of finance and knowledge. Being able to run an African-sponsored centre of excellence was seen as liberation from dependency on foreign capital.¹⁰

The initial failure of this new enterprise shows that realising the ambitious vision has come at a high cost. Many factors contributed to the bankruptcy, among them mismanagement, lack of trust in the hospital's services and strained public resources, all of which are not unique to Bokamoso or Botswana as a whole. However, the failure exposes both the paradoxes of this new public engagement with private health and the differing interests of various stakeholders playing out in this particular social and political environment of public–private partnerships that are creating a new sort of health economy.

Conclusion: Health as a Political Commodity

In a population in which an estimated one-third are infected with a deadly virus, health has to be actively produced. Referencing the debate on the economisation of aid politics, I have discussed the effective investment in the health of Botswanan citizens during the HIV/AIDS pandemic as well as the steps taken by the government in consideration of the future of health care in the post-HIV/AIDS era. At the beginning of the millennium, the political institutions of the welfare state in Botswana dedicated to the well-being of its citizens collaborated with international and national institutions to save lives. In the course of the implementation of HIV programmes, these institutions adopted the market-oriented rhetoric of productivity and recognised the national benefits of individual health. As has been shown, in the post-HIV era, health represents a commodity sought after by those who can afford private health care, and

10 This attempt was also met with scepticism, as “Africans” were believed to be “consumers”, as stated by a Botswanan reader in a Facebook thread on an article on Bokamoso's take over (*Mmegi* Facebook 2012).

some political initiatives have tried to reform existing infrastructures and launch ambitious health projects such as Bokamoso.

Here I would like to especially reference models of the commodification of humanitarian aid and link these with global political processes that have been observed since the beginning of the millennium: The construction of Bokamoso can be interpreted as an attempt to create a new health infrastructure in a public–private health economy, with the very product of its commodification being health.

Processes of commodification through and within politics have been observed in very different policy domains, often with respect to the study of armed conflicts. In their theory of “markets of violence”, Elwert and others suggest that armed conflicts are embedded in a cycle of violence that is motivated by the economic interests of the parties involved (Elwert 1999; Werthmann 2003; Schlee 2004). In relation to this theory, some scholars have shown that states or governments can engage in profit-oriented exchanges with, for instance, rebels or other powerful groups in society to ensure protection, security, peace or even human rights (Shah 2006; Raeymaekers 2010). In this way, individual rights and security may become elements in chains of profit-oriented exchanges, and governments may appear to commodify their citizens’ basic rights. With regard to HIV interventions in Botswana and elsewhere, we can add survival to the list of political commodities that drive certain political initiatives within and beyond the national state.

In theory, health care is an inalienable right. Public domestic spending on and international sponsorship of HIV/AIDS medicines turned the survival of Botswana’s population into a commodity. Public investment in private health care in Botswana is a politically supported attempt to reform existing infrastructures and maintain a market of high-paying jobs within the country independent of international sponsorship. This process transforms the inalienable and indivisible condition of health into a commodity, turning it into a subject of financial speculation. These processes contradict human rights discourses and theories about health as being in the “possession” of individuals and about individuals having the right to adequate access to health care independent of their social, religious or cultural background. In marketing health, the government of Botswana is creating a health-related political economy with new kinds of public–private partnerships that spans private consumption and political spending and augments not only the public benefit but also the private profits of the professional classes dedicated to health care.

The case of Botswana shows that at the beginning of the twenty-first century, some governments have turned into entrepreneurs and entered

into multi-layered exchange relations with parties representing global flows of capital, knowledge and ethics. Hereby, governments trade off the very product they are supposed to uphold according to their political mandate: the indivisible conditions of health, freedom and security of their citizens.

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Eine Zukunft jenseits von HIV/AIDS? Gesundheit als politische Ware in Botswana

Zusammenfassung: Mit Bezug auf die wissenschaftliche Debatte über humanitäre Hilfe, insbesondere im Zusammenhang mit HIV/AIDS, analysiert die Autorin die Ökonomisierung von Gesundheit in Botswana während und nach der HIV/AIDS-Pandemie. Damit trägt sie zu einer Wiederbelebung der Diskussion um die Verteilung öffentlicher Güter und die internationale Unterstützung für die öffentliche Fürsorge in afrikanischen Staaten bei. Ausgangspunkt ihrer Analyse ist ein Projekt zum Bau eines privaten Krankenhauses – eines regionalen Zentrums exzellenter Krankenversorgung, unabhängig von internationalen HIV/AIDS-Hilfsmitteln – und die damit verbundene politische Inszenierung. Über öffentliche Investitionen in die private Gesundheitsversorgung strebt die Regierung eine Reform der Institutionen an, die mithilfe von HIV/AIDS-Hilfsgeldern im Land aufgebaut wurden, sowie gleichzeitig die Schaffung hochbezahlter Arbeitsplätze. In diesem Prozess ist das unveräußerliche und unteilbare Recht auf Leben und körperliche Unversehrtheit zu einer politischen Ware geworden.

Schlagwörter: Botswana, Humanitäre Auslandshilfe, Wohlfahrtsstaat, Politische Ökonomie, Gesundheitspolitik, HIV/AIDS



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The “Protests against Charlie Hebdo” in Niger: A Background Analysis

Jannik Schritt

Abstract: In many Muslim countries in West Africa and beyond, “protests against Charlie Hebdo” occurred when citizens went out on the streets following Friday prayers on 16 January 2015. However, only in Niger did these protests turn extremely violent. This report analyses the social, political and religious workings behind the protests in Niger. In doing so, it shows that the so-called “protests against Charlie Hebdo” are only superficially linked to the Muhammad cartoons by the French satirical magazine. Similarly violent protests have occurred in Niger – often in the town of Zinder – for quite different reasons and on different occasions in recent years. The report therefore argues against simplistic notions of religious fundamentalism and shows that the protests can be explained more appropriately in terms of politics and socio-economic exclusion.

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Keywords: Niger, domestic political conflicts, religious fundamentalism, young people, political/societal mobilization, international relations, Boko Haram

Jannik Schritt is a Ph.D. student at the Institute for Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Göttingen. He is currently working on a research project entitled “Significations of Oil and Social Change in Niger and Chad”. He conducted thirteen months of fieldwork in Niger between 2011 and 2014.

E-mail: <jschrit@uni-goettingen.de>

On 16 January 2015 protests took place following Friday prayers in Zinder, Niger's former capital, situated in southeastern Hausaland, and Agadez, in Niger's uranium-rich North, and ended in massive violence, particularly those in Zinder. By 17 January, these protests had spread to Niger's capital, Niamey. One day later, on 18 January, a meeting of the political opposition in Niamey resulted in clashes between opposition supporters and police forces. During these three days of protests, ten people died (five in Zinder and five in Niamey), 177 were injured and 382 were arrested (including 90 members of the political opposition). In addition, 45 churches, 36 bars and restaurants and five hotels and hostels were burned and pillaged; streets, cars and schools were set on fire; the Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien (CCFN) in Zinder was burned down; and offices of the ruling party, Parti Nigérien pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme-Tarayya (PNDS-Tarayya), as well as several domiciles of PNDS party members were attacked. More than 300 Christians in Zinder were forced to seek refuge in military camps. The main protagonists of these protests were disaffected male youth. They built burning street barricades out of tyres and fuel, fought street battles with police forces, burned French flags and shouted slogans like "Je ne suis pas Charlie!"

According to public opinion in Niger, such violence had never occurred before, especially not against Christians. Although this is true for the extent of violence, similarly violent protests had occurred several times in Niger prior to the "protests against Charlie Hebdo", the most recent of which took place in the town of Zinder. The rise of a Salafi-oriented movement of reform called Yan Izala¹ in the early 1990s first triggered religious conflicts with the Tijaniyyah, the dominant Sufi order in West Africa, which turned particularly violent in 1992 and 1993 but calmed down by the early 2000s. Violence against Christians began in 1998, rose sharply in 1999 and again culminated in urban riots in Maradi and Niamey on 8 November 2000 "against the second annual International Festival of African Fashion", during which bars, churches and signs of Bori² spiritual culture were attacked and burned down. Whereas the riot in Maradi was mainly analysed in terms of religious fundamentalism (Cooper 2003), more recently – and going largely unnoticed by international media – protests have occurred on quite different occasions in the town of Zinder in response to various events not necessarily having exclusively religious con-

1 Yan Izala is a Hausa acronym meaning "the society for the elimination of heresy and the erection of the Sunnah".

2 Bori is a traditional Hausa religion. It came under attack, especially by the Yan Izala, for being "pagan" and "un-Islamic".

notations, such as the inauguration of the oil refinery in 2011, water shortages in 2012, International Workers’ Day in 2012 and the American anti-Islamic movie *Innocence of Muslims* in 2012. These protests occurred in the town of Zinder after Mahamadou Issoufou came to power in March 2011 and formed a coalition of PNDS-Tarayya with the Mouvement Démocratique Nigérien pour une Fédération Africaine-Lumana Africa (MODEN FA Lumana) of Hama Amadou, through which Zinder became the stronghold of the political opposition, represented largely by the Convention Démocratique et Sociale-Rahama (CDS-Rahama), with its party head Mahamane Ousmane, and the Mouvement National de la Société de Développement-Nassara (MNSD-Nassara), led by former president Mamadou Tandja.³ We should therefore be careful with mono-causal explanations such as “religious fundamentalism” and also focus on the socio-economic and political workings behind the protests.

What is striking about the “protests against Charlie Hebdo” and the previous protests in the town of Zinder is the similarity of the way they unfolded. The protests were not simply random violence but well-planned and carefully executed urban riots in which mainly disaffected male youth were mobilized through social media – especially text messages – and erected burning barricades in the streets out of tyres and fuel, attacked the police forces and pillaged and plundered stores, bars and churches. The protests thereby targeted not only religious symbols but also the Issoufou government, along with the governments of France, the United States and “the West” more generally.

In order to better understand these recurrent patterns of violence, we have to look closer into Nigerien politics, rhetorics of neocolonialism, and religion and religious coexistence, as well as the situation of youth in Niger. By doing so, I argue that the so-called “protests against Charlie Hebdo” are only superficially linked to the Muhammad cartoons and subsequent terrorist attacks on the French satirical magazine. Instead, they are primarily about politics and socio-economic exclusion. For one thing, what Western media mostly portrays as fundamentalist reactions of religious sentiments can be explained more appropriately by the notion of “politics by proxy”, whereby various topics or occasions are politically exploited in a context of political competition in multi-party systems that open new

3 The town council (conseil de ville) of Zinder was installed in June 2011 by universal suffrage and is composed of 23 elected councils. Five political parties are represented within the council. The CDS and MNSD have the lion’s share of the seats: CDS, 14; MNSD, 4; PNDS, 2; Alliance pour le Renouveau Démocratique-Adaltchi Mutunchi (ARD), 2; Lumana, 1.

public spheres where political debates take place by “proxy” (Kaarsholm 2005: 152, 2009: 416).⁴ In addition, the global capitalism that has produced enormous wealth in the West has rendered large parts of the Nigerien population redundant, thereby fuelling a general feeling of social exclusion, making youth prone to violence and turning them into easy targets for political machines and Islamist militant movements.

I start by describing the “protests against Charlie Hebdo” in more detail, then go on to explain the religious and political dimensions of these protests before finally analysing the situation of youth in Niger.

“Protests against Charlie Hebdo”

The “protests against Charlie Hebdo” first started in Zinder and Agadez before spreading to Niamey one day later. It was Zinder’s religious authorities who first called for peaceful demonstrations after the Friday prayers. However, their protest call was banned by the governor and the sultan of Zinder. Nevertheless, an informal mobilization via text message among the urban youth continued. Starting on Monday, 12 January 2015, the day after the solidarity march in Paris, text messages were sent to voice grievances and build a collective in an effort to mobilize others:

Shame on President Issoufou, who attended the demonstration that was held in Paris because the enemies of Mhamd (S.A.W.) had been killed. Please share this message with Muslim citizens.⁵
(Author’s translation)

Dear brother in ISLAM, charli hébdo again caricatured our PROPHET (S.A.W.) to insult ISLAM. Pray to ALLAH to protect ISLAM and to curse France, charli hébdo and all the presidents of the world who supported them. GOD is the strongest “ALLAH ya issa”. Please circulate this SMS.⁶ (Author’s translation)

4 I am grateful to Eva Riedke, who introduced me to the concept of “politics by proxy”.

5 “Honte au Presiden Issoufou ki a assistè a la marche ki se tenu a Paris parsk’on a tuè ls enemis du Mhamd (s.A.W). Partager ca svp o citoyens musulmans”.

6 “cher frère en ISLAM, charli hébdo a une fois d plus caricaturé notre PROPHETE (S.A.W) pr insulter L’ISLAM. prions ALLAH d protégé L’ISLAM et maudir la france,le charli hébdo et ts les présidents de ce monde qi les soutiennent.DIEU est le plus fort “ALLAH ya issa” faites circuler c sms svp”.

A close reading of their contents shows that a religious framing is only one element of these messages. The protests were also heavily directed against Issoufou and France. Youth shouted slogans like “À bas le régime!” and destroyed the party buildings of the PNDS-Tarayya. They also targeted French symbols – such as its national flag – and attacked French facilities Orange and Total in Niamey and the Centre Culturel Franco-Nigérien (CCFN) in Zinder.

During the violent protests in Zinder, messages were sent to add fuel to the fire.

The people of issoufou charlie are currently shooting at us in Zinder with live ammunition. That does not prevent us from fighting for the cause of the prophet (S.A.W.) because this is the real jihad. The protests continue today and all other days. Long live Islam. Peace and salute to our prophet. Send this SMS to every Muslim on Earth.⁷ (Author’s translation)

In an initial analysis of the protests, long-time political observer of Niger and social anthropologist Jean-Pierre Olivier de Sardan confirmed the organized and carefully prepared character of the event and pointed to the dangers posed by the Nigerien opposition, who were politically exploiting the happenings (Olivier de Sardan 2015). In addition, national newspapers point out that mobile troops distributed tyres and fuel to the rioters to build street barricades and burn selected locations of religious, political and Western symbolism. However, the protests also led to pillage and plunder. It is reported that protesters stole a substantial amount of equipment and goods.

In order to urge calm, President Mahamadou Issoufou addressed the population in a message to the nation on 17 January 2015 in which he justified his presence in Paris as a sign that Niger opposes terrorism, but at the same time he sharply distanced himself from the Muhammad caricatures and forbade the distribution of the latest issue of Charlie Hebdo in Niger (which is not widely read there anyway). As a consequence of the violence of 16 and 17 January, the Ministry of the Interior forbade the opposition march that was planned for 18 January from taking place. When the opposition showed up despite the ban, opposi-

7 “Les gens de issoufou charlie tir sur nou a bal reel presentmen a Zinder. sa nou empechera pas d lutter pour la cause du prophete SAW car c sa le vrai jihad. la marche continue orjud8 e tou ls otr jour. viv l’islam ,paix et salu a ntr prophete. circuler c sms a tou musulman sur terre”.

tion politicians and supporters as well as journalists who were present were met with police violence, and some of them were arrested.

The government blocked social networking sites and the short message service (texting) in Niger on 22 January and deployed the military in the cities to prevent disturbances around the Friday prayers the following day. The government further accused the political opposition of financing and orchestrating the demonstration by way of distributing tyres and fuel to the youth in order to overthrow the government. Nigerien Minister of the Interior Hassoumi Massaoudou also denounced the suspected presence of sergeants of Boko Haram at the protests in Zinder.⁸ The government finally announced a police investigation to uncover the puppet masters of the riots and started to arrest suspects and plunderers. On 24 January, three political opponents of the current government – Soumana Sanda, former Minister of Health and member of MODEN FA Lumana, Ousseïni Salatou, spokesperson for the political opposition L'Alliance pour la Réconciliation, la Démocratie et la République (ARDR) and Youba Diallo, member of MODEN FA Lumana and former Secretary of Education and former State Director of Customs – were arrested in Niamey for inciting a national uprising. In Zinder, several other members of the political opposition were also arrested. The ARDR gathered on 26 January 2015 to issue a press statement regarding the socio-political situation of Niger after the violent protests. In their declaration, the ARDR blamed “la gouvernance satanique de Issoufou Mahamadou, alias Charlie” and “son clan” for the violence in Niger.

Regional Identities, Political Machines and “Politics by Proxy” in Niger

The protests in Agadez and Zinder fit into the socio-economic and political situations of these regions. Since the initial French military conquest of Niger, the French presence was met with resistance in Zinder, and France started to systematically favour western Nigeriens and the Djerma ethnicity over eastern Nigeriens and other ethnic groups (Ibra-

8 A friend of mine who filmed the protests in Zinder reported that the black flag of Boko Haram appeared during the protests. After the protests, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau threatened Chadian President Idriss Déby, Nigerien President Mahamadou Issoufou and Cameroonian President Paul Biya, all three of whom had decided shortly before the protests to start a joint counter-terrorism operation against Boko Haram.

him 1994). The historical political marginalization of Zinder is vividly remembered in present-day narratives and contributed to the emergence of a rebellious Zinderois identity (Danda 2004). This marginalization also served as the ideological foundation of a strong Hausa nationalist political party in Zinder, the CDS-Rahama, which was designed as an “‘eastern region’ response to the historical ‘western dominance’” (Lund 2001: 848). Agadez – as the region of uranium extraction in Niger – is also a region in which there are long-standing grievances against both national politics in Niamey and French extractive industrial practices, which triggered three Tuareg rebellions.

The introduction of a multi-party system and electoral competition in Niger in the early 1990s seems to have led to the emergence of political machines (for more on the concept of political machines in Africa, see Bienen 1971).⁹ Political machines are characterized by urban reward networks in which particularistic, material rewards are used to extend control over personnel and to maximize electoral support, thereby favouring patronage, spoils and corruption (Scott 1969). Looking at the recurrent protests in Niger, it is striking that they mainly occurred in political opposition strongholds like Zinder and, more recently, Niamey. Niamey is the electoral stronghold of MODEN FA Lumana and Hama Amadou, who opted out of the government in 2013 when Issoufou called for a government of national unity that co-opted members of the political opposition into an enlarged governmental apparatus and thereby heavily weakened all political parties other than the PNDS-Tarayya. In addition, two of the political opponents who were arrested after the protests in Niamey (Soumana Sanda and Youba Diallo) had only recently been members of the Issoufou government but stepped down out of loyalty to Hama Amadou.

My fieldwork in 2011/2012 during the protests that occurred around the oil refinery’s inauguration ceremony in late 2011 helped me to understand how political machines function in Niger, as I witnessed how the protests in Zinder were organized by political opponents. A civil society association led by a rich businessman close to the former regime of Mamadou Tandja played a key role in the organization of the protests by assembling youth ahead of the refinery’s inauguration in so-called *comités de défense*. These committees were youth groupings in each neighbourhood of Zinder that were clandestinely attached to the civil society

9 I am grateful to Kurt Beck and Klaus Schlichte, who pointed me towards the concept of “political machines”.

association and installed to execute orders. The issuing of orders and the collective framing of the protests took place through texting. Places were renamed in these text messages after locations significant in the “Arab Spring”; meeting points were arranged and misinformation was spread to add fuel to the fire. The mobilization of youth was guaranteed in part by the distribution of material rewards to youth leaders and in part by the highly hierarchical structure of these groupings that allows youth leaders to mobilize their followers by command.

Looking at the periodical patterns of violence in Zinder further shows that with the emergence of democracy and new media spaces in Niger (TV, radio, newspapers, internet, mobile phones), new public spheres sprouted up after years of authoritarian silence in which the politicization of topics and events took place by “proxy” (Kaarsholm 2005: 152, 2009: 416). As the recurrent patterns of violence and political debate in Zinder have shown, various topics or occasions are politically exploited in a context of political competition in which opponents accuse each other of being responsible for sparking the protests. However, not every topic or event is suitable as a “proxy”. “Politics by proxy” does not mean that the topic in question can be replaced arbitrarily by any subject whatsoever. The topic needs to possess a powerful signification that is loaded with high aspirations and hope (such as oil), be inextricably entangled with personal identities (such as religion), have an existential dimension (such as a water shortage) or already be a well-established public holiday (such as International Workers Day on 1 May), where the population routinely gathers. Thus, the political debate follows the logic of “politics by proxy” in which speech acts of “naming, blaming and claiming” (Felstiner et al. 1980-1981) are put to use to question the legitimacy of political opponents. Just as the government accuses the political opposition of being behind the protests, the opposition accuses the government of being the root cause of the protests. Therefore, the political opposition cannot be expected to deploy conciliatory mechanisms in order to restore peace. It is part of the political game in Niger for the government to do so by political manoeuvres of patronage, bribery, corruption and co-optation. However, this is a highly dangerous game because the violence can cause ethnic, regional and religious cleavages and thus fuel the risk of Niger falling apart along these lines.

Françafrique, Rhetorics of Neocolonialism and Conspiracy Theories

The presence of the six African presidents (from Mali, Niger, Togo, Benin, Gabon and Senegal – all former colonies of France) at the “Je suis Charlie” demonstration in Paris on 11 January 2015 triggered forms of resistance in all these countries, attesting to the immediacy of the colonial history of *Françafrique* in the context of public national discourses in former French colonies. This is especially the case in Niger, for two reasons: First, the economy of Niger is closely tied to uranium production by AREVA/France in the North. Niger has been a uranium producer since 1968 and is currently the world’s fourth-largest producer of it, but the country is frequently ranked last in the Human Development Index. This incongruity is highly salient in the national public discourse and has triggered protests against AREVA and the “French neocolonial system”. Second, former Nigerien president Mamadou Tandja forcefully (re)produced the rhetoric of neocolonialism in Niger when his political project “Tazartché” (Hausa: “Continuation”) – which aimed to change the constitution in order that Tandja remain in power – incited the international community to enact sanctions against his regime. As a reaction, Tandja blamed “the West” and its meddling in Nigerien domestic politics for Niger’s underdevelopment, thereby portraying himself as a strong leader able to resist Western neo-colonial interference.

In social media outlets, such as in the Facebook group “15000 nigérien sur facebook”, users insulted President Issoufou, calling him a puppet of Western regimes. To give just one example, after Issoufou took part in the “Je suis Charlie” demonstration in Paris, a user posted a caricature of the French president, François Hollande, with a monkey on a leash who was drawn to look like Issoufou, who in turn had a baby monkey on his own back drawn with the likeness of Colonel Salou Djibo. Salou Djibo ousted Mamadou Tandja from power in a military coup in 2010. He claimed that his aim was to turn Niger into an example of democracy and good governance, and within one year of his reign he organized free elections that saw the former opposition party, PNDS-Tarayya, and its leader, Issoufou, come to power. The caricature thus signals the suspicion that France was deeply involved in the military coup of Djibo against Tandja in 2010, orchestrated in order to instal a president loyal to French interests. The same explanation of French involvement was (and still is) at work in the context of the Nigerien public national discourse about the 1974 military coup against Niger’s first post-independence president, Diori Hamani, although new archive material

confirms that France was not involved in that overthrow (Higgott and Fuglestad 1975; van Walraven 2014).

A closer look at the aforementioned Facebook group shows that beside posts from the websites of Nigerien press outlets and risqué or controversial posts, anti-imperialist and/or anti-Semitic conspiracy theories are plentiful in which “France”, “the USA”, “the West” or “the Jews” are said to be behind all evils in Africa and the world.¹⁰ From this, one can glean that many youth in Niger admire Islamist militant movements such as the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda. After 9/11, for example, Osama bin Laden became a kind of hero in Hausaland (Charlick 2007: 33). The high currency of these conspiracy theories needs to be situated in the context of a global capitalism that, on the one hand, produces enormous wealth and, on the other, renders large parts of the population in the Global South redundant, thus fuelling a general feeling of a global marginalization. In the specific context of Niger, this feeling of marginalization is entangled with historical precedents of French colonial intrusion and Tandja’s appropriation of neocolonial narratives in his political project “Tazarchté”. We might further call the admiration for Islamist militant movements a “romanticism of resistance from a distance”. Not having been exposed to the brutal rule of IS and Al Qaeda and having hardly any knowledge of life on the ground in Iraq and the Levant, many young Nigeriens admire these distant Islamist militant organizations for what they see as the latter’s resistance against “the West”, in contrast to their negative views of Boko Haram, whose terror in Northern Nigeria they have experienced more intimately. Concerning Boko Haram, conspiracy theories are circulating in social media that portray the organization as a creation of “the West” – or, more particularly, of Mossad, the CIA or France – to destabilize West Africa in order to secure natural resources.¹¹ These conspiracy theories show another important point: They connect regional identities (“the West” vs. the Global South) with religious ones (Christians/Jews vs. Muslims). Notions of Western imperialism thus become entangled with a general feeling of Christian and Jewish world domination against a marginalized

10 Many of these conspiracy theories involving colonialism, Zionism, superpowers, oil and the war on terror are theories from the Arab World that have travelled to Niger, perpetuated through channels such as Al Qaeda but also through media outlets such as Al Jazeera and various social media platforms (Gray 2010).

11 As alleged evidence, newspaper articles are posted that claim that white (Western) Boko Haram fighters have been arrested or that the United Nations has provided arms to Boko Haram.

Muslim world for which the Israel–Palestine conflict is often taken as the case of reference. Many Nigeriens shared the grievances against the caricatures by Charlie Hebdo but sharply distanced themselves from the rioters, who they denounced as “gangsters” and “hooligans”.

Islam, Islamic Movements of Reform and Religious Coexistence in Niger

Niger is a predominantly Muslim society but a politically secular nation with a largely invisible Christian minority subculture. Approximately 94 per cent of the population are Muslims whereas 6 per cent follow African religious traditions or Christianity. With the advent of democratization, a Salafi-oriented movement of reform called Yan Izala emerged in Niger which contested the “pagan”, “supernatural” and “unwritten” Islamic practices of the historically dominant strain of Sunni Islam in Niger – the Tijaniyyah. Robert Charlick has argued that the success of Yan Izala should not be chalked up to simply a backlash against globalization, but would be more correctly viewed as filling a need on the part of certain segments of the Nigerien population to form a particular identity that seeks to modernize on their own terms, rejecting both Western-dominated modernization and the “traditional” social and normative constructs of their own society (2007). The Yan Izala therefore were supported in great numbers by rich traders and powerful merchants such as the *albazai*,¹² for whom membership became a sign of social distinction (Grégoire 1992), and by youth, for whom membership was an opportunity to challenge tradition and customary authorities and for whom the ideology of Yan Izala matched best with their aspirations of upward mobility.

The spread of Salafism in Niger, however, does not necessarily indicate a heightened probability of support for terrorism (Elischer 2014). Nevertheless, due to the long and porous border between Nigeria and Niger, Boko Haram members regularly seek refuge on Nigerien territory, especially in Diffa (but also Zinder), in order to escape police persecution in Nigeria. However, the organization has also begun to successfully recruit members in Niger. In early 2015 Boko Haram operations, including bombings and assassinations, started to take place in Diffa in response to a joint counter-terrorism operation against the organization led by Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. However, Boko Haram’s

12 The Hausa term “albazai” refers to those who have gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca (“hajji”).

ability to recruit members in Diffa is mostly based on material incentives, not ideological ones.¹³ Journalist Thomas Fessy reported in April 2014 that Boko Haram members cross the border to Diffa looking for recruits especially among youth gangs, petty criminals and thugs. Boko Haram pays them for information, and they subsequently join terrorist training camps in Nigeria and help plan attacks and kidnappings (Fessy 2014). In contrast to their admiration of IS and Al Qaeda, the greatest part of the Nigerien population does not admire Boko Haram, the youth being particularly averse to implementing shari'a and leading a lifestyle of religious piety – rather, they tend to admire an “American way of life”. Whereas the Yan Izala movement, with its emphasis on written sources and reform, represents “development” in the Nigerien public imagination, Boko Haram, with its rejection of Western education, stands for “backwardness”. Moreover, Nigeriens living close to the border to Nigeria – who have traditionally had close social, cultural and economic ties with the Nigerian “Hausaland” – are well aware of the brutal role Boko Haram plays in Nigeria. Therefore, large protest marches against Boko Haram and in support of the Nigerien military were carried out in every major Nigerien town (even in Diffa) on 17 February 2015. In order to understand the seemingly contradictory stance of admiring IS and Al Qaeda while ideologically criticizing Boko Haram – despite the latter's successful recruitment of certain youth in Diffa based on material incentives – we have to focus more closely on the situation of youth in Niger.

The Situation of Youth and the Phenomenon of Youth Violence in Zinder

Niger has the highest birth rate of any country in the world, with 6.89 children born per woman. The median age is 15 years old. Of the Nigerien population, 70 per cent are under 25 years of age, and 63 per cent of the

13 According to the International Crisis Group report on Boko Haram violence in Nigeria, the Boko Haram border crossings benefit from Diffa's substantial Kanuri ethnicity, as Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau is also Kanuri (ICG 2014: 25). However, it seems to be first and foremost the proximity of Diffa to the Nigerian federal states of Yobe, Borno and Adamawa that explains Boko Haram's foothold in Diffa, thus an “ethnic reading” should not be overstated. As Mahamidou Aboubacar Attahirou, currently conducting his Ph.D. fieldwork with youth in Diffa, told me in a personal note, the dominant narratives among the youth in Diffa portray Boko Haram as a solely Nigerian affair and believe that recruitment is successful only because of the large amounts of money paid to recruits.

total population are said to live below the poverty line. Based on gender segregation which dictates that men dominate public life, the situation of male youth in Niger can be described as a “culture of masculine waiting” (Masquelier 2013: 473). Due to youth mass unemployment and low-paying jobs in Niger, young men are unable to marry, have families of their own and become contributing members of the community. Many of their grievances are directed against their own government and “the West”, which they blame for their lack of job opportunities.

A large part of the youth organize themselves into informal “conversation groups” called *fada* or *palais*.¹⁴ One is normally in a *fada/palais* with other young people from the same neighbourhood. The *fada*, which started in the 1990s with the democratization process and the rise of unemployment fuelled by Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) to produce meaningful temporalities in a situation of boredom (Masquelier 2013), centre around tea ceremonies. The *palais* are a more recent phenomenon, having started around 2007. According to a study on youth violence in Zinder, there are approximately 320 *fada* or *palais*, of which 72.5 per cent are strictly masculine, 10.3 per cent consist uniquely of women and 17.2 per cent declare themselves to be mixed (Souley 2012: 10). In contrast to *fada*, the activities of *palais* centre on drug consumption, street fights, crime, violence and sex. Their violence has been a matter of growing concern for several years, especially in Zinder. Whereas the *fada* are mostly non-hierarchically organized, affirming the spirit of egalitarianism and comradeship, the *palais* are highly hierarchical organizations in which a leader, often called *chef*, boss or *président*, is the head of the gang. Neighbourhoods that are particularly affected by poverty display an especially high number of violent *palais*.

Due to the country’s demography, the youth are increasingly becoming a force to be reckoned with in Nigerien politics, especially due to their performance of violent masculinity in protests. They are the “critical mass” that has to be governed and controlled. They have thus become targets of the different political machines that rally behind either the government or the opposition. The *palais* are particularly easy prey for political machines that reward youth leaders for mobilizing their followers.

14 “*Fada* literally means ‘the group of people attending the judgements at the leader’s palace’” (Lund 2009: 111; author’s translation). As the Hausa leader was traditionally the sultan, judgements took place in his palace. Therefore, *fada* is translated into French as *palais*. However, the usage of the two terms evinces a qualitative distinction.

Conclusion

Whereas many of the social, political and religious workings behind the protests can also be found in other (West) African countries where “protests against Charlie Hebdo” either did not occur or remained largely peaceful, the combination and coincidence of these factors seem to make the Nigerien case unique. It is probably the assemblage of heterogeneous elements like the presence of Mahamadou Issoufou in Paris, a strong rhetoric of neocolonialism in public debate, the emergence of political machines and “politics by proxy” after democratization, the spread of Salafism, historical political marginalization of eastern Nigeriens and the emergence of regional identities – such as a rebellious Zinderois identity and a culture of “masculine waiting” paired with increasing youth violence – that led to the riots in Niger. The religious workings are thus only one element behind the protests and should not be taken as their mono-causal explanation. Quite to the contrary, the fact that similar patterns of violence occurred in response to events that had no religious connotation – such as the inauguration of the oil refinery, water shortages or International Workers’ Day in Zinder – shows that the protests can be explained more appropriately in terms of politics and socio-economic exclusion. As long as the youth in Niger (and elsewhere) continue to be largely excluded from the riches of capitalism in a globalized world, political machines will find henchmen for their political projects and Islamist militant movements will find easy prey for their brutal war economies, not necessarily because of recruits’ ideological commitment but simply due to both the sharing of grievances and material incentives.

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Die “Proteste gegen Charlie Hebdo” in Niger: Eine Hintergrundanalyse

Zusammenfassung: Wie in vielen muslimischen Ländern nicht nur in Westafrika kam es auch in Niger zu „Protesten gegen Charlie Hebdo“; am 16. Januar 2015 gingen Menschen nach dem Freitagsgebet auf die Straße. Die Proteste verliefen jedoch nur in Niger extrem gewalttätig. Dieser Beitrag analysiert die sozialen, politischen und religiösen Hintergründe der Proteste in Niger. Der Autor legt dar, dass die sogenannten „Proteste gegen Charlie Hebdo“ nur oberflächlich gesehen auf die Mohammed-Karikaturen des französischen Satiremagazins zurückzuführen sind. Zu ähnlich gewalttätigen Protesten war es in Niger und insbesondere in der Stadt Zinder in den letzten Jahren wiederholt gekommen, und zwar aus ganz anderen Gründen und zu ganz unterschiedlichen Anlässen. Der Autor wendet sich daher gegen simplifizierende Vorstellungen eines islamistischen Fundamentalismus in Niger. Er belegt, dass die Proteste zutreffender mit politischen Dynamiken und sozioökonomischer Ausgrenzung erklärt werden können.

Schlagwörter: Niger, Innenpolitischer Konflikt, Religiöser Fundamentalismus, Jugendliche/Junge Menschen, Politische/Gesellschaftliche Mobilisierung, Internationale Beziehungen, Boko Haram



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What Is Nigeria? Unsettling the Myth of Exceptionalism

Aghogho Akpome

Abstract: This article explores perceptions and representations of Nigeria and Nigerians in the popular global imaginary. It analyses selected popular media narratives in order to foreground contradictions and paradoxes in the ways in which the country and people of Nigeria are discursively constructed. By doing so, it interrogates stereotypes of corruption and criminality as well as myths of exceptionalism about Nigeria and Nigerians originating from both within and outside the country. The analysis reveals that the generalised portrayal of Nigeria and Nigerians as exceptional social subjects is characterised by contradictions and inaccuracies in dominant representational practices and cannot be justified by the verifiable empirical information available on the country and its people.

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Keywords: Nigeria, world public opinion, image abroad, stereotypes, mass media impact, opinion formation, public debates, societal dialogue

Aghogho Akpome is a research fellow with the Centre for Africa Studies at the University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa. He is interested in representational strategies in literary narratives of identity and their socio-political underpinnings and implications. His areas of primary focus are Nigeria, South Africa and Rwanda.

E-mail: <aghoghoa@uj.ac.za>

In October 2012, I flew from London Gatwick airport to EuroAirport Basel Mulhouse Freiburg, located in the border area of Switzerland, Germany and France. On arrival, passengers entered an airside shuttle with limited sitting space. While I occupied a seat next to an elderly lady, I observed an elderly man approaching. Judging that he was the lady's companion, I offered him my seat so that he could sit by her. Both were visibly impressed, and the lady commented in a sweet, thankful voice, "You must be English!" I smiled and turned away.

I have thought repeatedly about this and wondered why she concluded I was English. Are there perhaps more black people in England than in Germany, France and Switzerland? Or in Africa, for that matter? Or were English people more likely than others to demonstrate this kind of courtesy? I still wonder how she would have reacted had I told her that I was in fact Nigerian.

If the courtesy I displayed that day suggested wrongly that I was English (for argument's sake), what behaviour would have suggested that I am Nigerian? Regarding the ways in which the country and people of Nigeria are discursively constructed, I interrogate some popular discourses of national dysfunction, stereotypes of corruption as well as myths of exceptionalism. This article adopts an investigative approach based largely on narrative enquiry and relies partly on notions of cultural representation/critique and to a lesser extent, on auto-ethnographic accounts. I conclude that the portrayal of Nigeria and Nigerians as exceptional social subjects is built upon inaccuracies in the dominant representations that are often riddled with contradictions.

"Why always us?": Discourses and Stereotypes of Corruption and Criminality

In March 2009, the late Dora Akunyili, Nigeria's former minister of information and communication, launched a "Rebranding Nigeria" campaign, asserting that "it is common knowledge that the world has a very negative perception of Nigeria" (Akunyili 2013).¹ This claim can be un-

1 This echoes the idea among some Nigerians that the country often gets undue negative press (see Nwaubani 2010), and it informs the first part of the subtitle of this section. The phrase is a play on "Why Always Me?", an inscription revealed on the inner shirt of Mario Balotelli, the flamboyant Italian football star who plays professional football in England, during a match in Manchester on 23 October 2011. He is often in the headlines for antics both on and off the pitch (see Manfred 2012). The tagline became the title of Balotelli's biography, which was published in 2013.

derstood against the backdrop of dominant international discourses on and measurements of public corruption. The most prominent of these is perhaps the yearly corruption surveys published by Transparency International (TI) since 1995. Nigeria has consistently ranked very low in these surveys; it was ranked the 33rd most corrupt country out of the 215 surveyed last year and was actually named the second most corrupt country in the world in 2002 (Kalu 2013). These surveys contribute strongly to popular perceptions about the country.

Related to this is the profile of the Nigerian political class in general, and of specific individuals in particular. In 1984 a film by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) documented the financial excesses of the political class that had been deposed by the military coup in the previous year. Titled *Nigeria: A Squandering of Riches*, it provided graphic details of the shocking extent to which the politicians in charge of the country's Third Republic (October 1979 – December 1993) had plundered the nation's treasuries and amassed great wealth which they spent in extravagant ways.²

After his death in June 1998, it emerged that the military dictator Sani Abacha had corruptly amassed a personal wealth of up to 4 billion USD, most of which was stashed in secret accounts in different parts of the world and which the government was still in the process of recovering at the end of 2014 (see Eboh 2014). Another high-profile case of brazen and massive theft is that of James Ibori, governor of the oil-rich Delta State from 1999 to 2007, who is currently serving a 13-year jail sentence in the United Kingdom for fraud and money laundering. Ibori had previously been convicted of theft and credit card fraud in the UK in the 1990s and was alleged to have embezzled over 150 million GBP while spending up to 125,000 GBP on monthly credit card bills (Glanfield 2014). Two other state governors, Joshua Dariye and Diepreye Alamieyeseigha, were also arrested in the UK in 2004 and 2005, respectively, after large sums of cash were reportedly found in their possession and following investigations into charges of money laundering. Both later jumped bail and escaped to Nigeria (BBC 2005).

Nigeria also receives negative publicity over issues of economic crimes due to relatively high incidences of what are commonly called

2 It is very important for the argument in this article to place the current image of Nigeria into a historical context. Prior to the mid-1980s, the country's economy was relatively stable, and Nigerians could travel to different parts of the world without stringent visa requirements and immigration restrictions.

“419 scams”.³ Most of these “transactions” are initiated by emails that solicit partners from almost anywhere in the world and from whom advance fees are invariably sought. There have also been reports about the relatively high number of Nigerians involved in internet-based identity theft and credit card fraud. A controversial CNN broadcast in 2006 titled “How to Rob a Bank” prominently featured a convicted Nigerian fraudster who made the contentious claim that 40 per cent of Nigerians in the United States of America are scammers.

Such negative portrayals of Nigerians have also occurred in fictional mediums, one of the most notable examples being Neil Blomkamp’s award-winning science fiction thriller *District 9*, released in 2009. The movie, set in Johannesburg, has a character who is a drug-dealing crime lord named Obesandjo, a definitive caricature of former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo. As Rebecca Fasselt (2012: 99) states, it “generally provides a derogatory and undifferentiated portrayal of Nigerians as criminal cannibals engaging in inter-species sex and thus as less human/humane than the film’s aliens”. It was banned in Nigeria as well as in Iran and China, and the Nigerian government lodged an official protest with its producers (Bloom 2009). Similarly, Fasselt (2014) observed that “the legendary figure of the Nigerian swindler permeates a significant number of novels and short stories by South African writers dating back to the very first years of the democratic dispensation”.⁴

In his memoir, respected South African writer Zakes Mda (2011) referred to Nigeria as a byword for state nepotism and corruption. Such sentiments were echoed recently by Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. While upbraiding his countrymen for the reported increases of corrupt practices in Zimbabwe, he wondered whether they were “now like Nigeria, where you have to reach [into] your pocket to get anything done” (*Vanguard* 2014). Of the major news outlets that reported on this incident, not many (like Mugabe himself) seemed to be aware of the fact that Zimbabwe was actually ranked lower than Nigeria in the much-cited index of TI (see Kalu 2013).

This leads to a largely undiscussed aspect of discourses and surveys such as that of TI – namely, that the attitudes towards corruption that they

3 “419 scams” are named after the section of the Nigerian criminal code prohibiting fraud. As Tive (2002: 10) explains, the term today refers to “a complex list of offences which in ordinary parlance are related to stealing, cheating, falsification, impersonation, counterfeiting, forgery and fraudulent representation of facts”.

4 The books examined by Fasselt are Zakes Mda’s *She Plays with the Darkness* (1995), Patricia Schonstein Pinnock’s *Banquet at Brabant* (2010), Niq Mhlongo’s *After Tears* (2007) and Andrew Brown’s *Refuge* (2009).

reflect are those of the citizens of the given countries, rather than those of researchers or of an outside, international public. In a commentary on the 2012 surveys, Alexander Hess and Michael Sauter (2013) noted that, for those identified as the most corrupt countries, “their people are largely opposed to corruption” and indeed that in “seven of the nine nations with the worst corruption, residents were at least slightly more likely to oppose corruption” than in the countries identified as the least corrupt. In other words, the people who come from the “least corrupt” countries are actually less resistant and opposed to corrupt practices than those from the “most corrupt” societies. While not fully exonerating the larger population from the perpetration of corruption in the country, Smith (2007: 8) echoes Hess’s point: “Even as Nigerians feel compelled, enticed, trapped and resigned to participate in Nigeria’s ubiquitous corruption, they also feel angry, frustrated, dismayed and betrayed.”

The opening lines of Daniel J. Smith’s (2007: 8) study on corruption in Nigeria sums up the dominant perception of the country in terms of corruption and crime in this way:

By the time I arrived in Nigeria in 1989 as an employee of an international development organisation, I was well aware of the country’s reputation for corruption. [...] The country’s image as a bastion of bribery, venality and deceit has remained constant over the years. Most recently, the global expansion of the Internet delivered evidence of Nigerian fraud to the e-mail in-boxes of millions of people around the world, in the form of scam letters seeking bank account numbers and advance fees in schemes that are premised on Nigeria’s worldwide reputation for corruption.

It is in light of this that Akunyili’s earlier-cited comment that “it is common knowledge that the world has a negative perception of Nigeria” can be better understood. Yet, Akunyili’s statement does not take into account the fact that among Nigerians themselves, there is a strong sense of disaffection with the state of the nation, especially in regard to political leadership, poor governance and economic crimes. Recalling Chinua Achebe’s (1984: 2) observation that “whenever two Nigerians meet, their conversation will sooner or later slide into a litany of our national deficiencies”,⁵ Smith explains how popular discontent and complaints have become

5 One good example of this is offered in Ken Wiwa’s biography of his father, the late Ken Saro-Wiwa. The writer recalls Saro-Wiwa’s description of Nigeria variously as “a society that ‘rewarded theft and penalised hard work’”; a place where “the only wrongdoers are those who do no wrong” and where “the usual laws of economics do not apply”.

dominant national discourses. He adds that the popular use of the expression “the Nigerian factor” “suggests that Nigerians have concluded that corruption is so endemic that it defines the nation” (Smith 2007: 99).

“The Nigerian Factor”: Narratives of Nigerian Exceptionalism

While the expression “the Nigerian factor” is almost exclusively used in a negative context to refer to what Achebe has called the nation’s deficiencies, it provides an instructive point of departure for the next point of this paper – namely, that notions of Nigeria’s exceptionalism⁶ (held by Nigerians and non-Nigerians alike) also relate paradoxically to the perceived strengths and abilities of the country and its peoples. This complicates Akunyili’s one-dimensional assertion as well as the basis upon which some of the dominant narratives and representations of dysfunction, corruption and criminality are founded. It is thus important to examine the ways in which these paradoxical perceptions intersect in the discursive construction of what “Nigeria/n” means today.

Ali Mazrui (n.d.) describes the 1914 amalgamation of the formerly separate British protectorates of Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria as the formation of “Mega-Nigeria, an enlargement of political scale”. He describes the country in terms of both its “exceptionalism” and its “typicality” in relation to other African countries. The attributes identified by Mazrui include its huge population and the combination of “immense human resources (youthful and potentially gifted population) with immense natural resources (led by oil and gas)”. This resounds with Smith’s (2007: 8) observations, during the time he lived in Nigeria, that

many people’s perceptions of the magnitude of oil wealth far exceed the reality. Even at my tennis club, where members are obviously educated and elite, some people spoke as if individual Nigerians would all be wealthy if only the government gave each citizen an equal share of the annual oil revenue – a fantasy belied by the numbers.

6 New Zealander economist Brian Easton (2007) provides the following general definition of exceptionalism as it relates to a country: “Exceptionalism is the notion that one nation’s story differs qualitatively from others, because of its unique origins, national credo, historical evolution, distinctive political and religious institutions, or whatever – that the experience of a nation is so different that its story can be told without reference or only in contrast to others.”

This narrative of extraordinary national wealth is at the centre of what can be called Nigeria's self-exceptionalism regarding its presumed status as the "giant of Africa" (see Ojukwu and Shopeju 2010). Yet, although the origin of this term is uncertain, Nigeria has indeed occupied, at different times in history, positions of leadership and prominence in both the West African region (see Adebajo and Landsberg 2003) and the continent as a whole. These include the role of Nigeria in both the formation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the intervention force of ECOWAS' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) to end the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as well as the part it played in the continent-wide effort to end Apartheid. Nigeria's Technical Aids Corps (TAC), a scheme by which the country's numerous experts provide developmental assistance to other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, was particularly effective in the 1980s. Other noteworthy initiatives are the country's troop contributions to international peacekeeping missions, and the formation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

The country's claims to leadership in Africa have been reinforced more recently by its emergence as Africa's largest economy following the "rebasings" of its GDP figures and consecutive years of impressive annual growth. This is on the back of the meteoric growth of some industries, notably the 5 billion USD movie industry (Nollywood) that, according to Adebajo (2014), is the continent's "first authentic cinema" and is currently the largest in the world in terms of the number of films produced per year. Leadership has also emerged in other fields including sports, literature and the arts. The national football team, the Super Eagles, won the coveted Africa Cup of Nations in 2013; Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Tope Folarin are among a set of young writers who have won major international awards in recent years, while Dapo Oyebanjo (a.k.a. D 'Banj) and the twin Okoye brothers (a.k.a. P. Square) continue to make waves in the international music scene. It is also worth mentioning that there are several Nigerian churches that command a large following across the continent and the African diaspora (see Fihlani 2010).

In an article for the *New York Times*, Chinua Achebe (2011) echoed his earlier assertion about Nigeria that the "vast human and material wealth with which she is endowed bestows on her a role in Africa and the world which no one else can assume or fulfil" (Achebe 1984: 99). With regard to African-American exceptionalism, Imani Perry (2011: 147) has observed that

exceptionalism is not simply something that is externally imposed. The practice of self-exceptionalism is common. And that self-

exceptionalism is not only a way for people to demand that their distinctiveness be acknowledged. It can also be a deliberate strategy to encourage an image of distinction.

Zainab Usman (2012) has argued that Nigerian self-exceptionalism can be understood as a way of rationalising the contradictions revealed by the country's many failures in spite of its natural wealth and potential. She argues in response to Achebe's controversial memoir (2012), in which he seems to explain the country's post-independence failures as direct consequences of ethnic conflicts. This, she contends,

disappointingly feeds into an increasingly disturbing trend in public discourse on national issues in Nigeria, of a perceived Nigerian *exceptionalism*, and the deployment of such to excuse the failures of nation-building, socio-economic development and social cohesion in Nigeria. Proponents of this view of Nigerian exceptionalism (defined as the perception that a country or society is unusual or extraordinary in some way and thus does not need to conform to normal rules or general principles) believe Nigeria occupies a unique place [on] the world stage because it is an artificial British creation, from an amalgamation of the Northern and Colony and Protectorate of Southern Nigeria for administrative purposes in 1914. This artificial creation is chiefly responsible for the present dysfunction of the Nigerian state, according to this view, and thus, social cohesion and national unity will forever remain elusive as Nigerians are "not one". (emphasis in original)

What, then, is Nigeria?

Knowledge production about the so-called "developing world" has historically been characterised by serious errors of fact and representation, some of which have had far-reaching implications for the way several peoples and territories are perceived and "known" all over the world. For example, a recent CNN news broadcast labelled Niger on a map as Nigeria. This reveals how easily the undiscerning public can be misinformed – even if unintentionally – by dominant and trusted purveyors of received knowledge.

In 2013 I visited a senior diplomat at the Nigerian Consulate-General in Johannesburg. I was in the company of two colleagues from the University of Johannesburg. I introduced myself before announcing that we were from an association of Nigerians. After I mentioned my name, the man asked what country I was from. Needless to say, my colleagues found it both funny and odd but it was hardly surprising for me.

Being from one of the country's many minority areas, it is not uncommon for me to meet Nigerians who are unaware that my name and the language I speak are Nigerian.

Similarly, I have come across several Nigerian names and languages I had never personally encountered previously. Also, I have often mistaken people from other West African countries (particularly Ghanaians, Cameroonians and Sierra Leoneans) to be Nigerians. A Nigerian doctoral researcher who visited the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg from a European university once reported meeting an asylum-seeker in Germany who claimed Nigerian citizenship (and residency in Abuja) but who could not demonstrate to this researcher any knowledge of the city and the country beyond what is superficial. Furthermore, a Somali friend of mine has told me in confidence that he once travelled to the Netherlands from South Africa to seek asylum with a bogus Nigerian passport he obtained from a Johannesburg-based syndicate run by people he identified as non-Nigerians.

It is no wonder, then, that several reliable reports have shown that while many scam "419" e-mail messages received by people in different parts of the world claim to originate from Nigeria, a considerable number of these messages have been traced to other locations. According to Eric Rosenberg (2007), a report on cases of internet fraud in the United States in 2006 reveals that "of the internet criminals who could be traced to their location, 61 per cent resided inside the United States, followed by criminals based in the United Kingdom at 16 per cent. Nigeria-based criminals were next at 6 per cent." Similarly revealing is an article by Michael Kassner (2012), who draws on the research of other IT security experts to demonstrate that a good percentage of scam e-mails purporting to originate from Nigeria may actually originate from other countries.⁷ In fact, one of the experts quoted by *The Economist* (2012) and invoked by Kassner (2012) makes the categorical claim (uncontested in these reports) that "there are more non-Nigerian scammers claiming [to be] Nigerian than ever reported".

Quite significantly, there are serious uncertainties about Nigeria's population, which is generally thought of as the largest in Africa. As recently as 2013, the head of the country's population commission, Festus Odimegwu, was quoted in a reliable news report as saying that "no census has been credible in Nigeria since 1863. Even the one conducted in 2006 is not credible. I have the records and evidence produced by

7 Kassner cites an article in *The Economist* (2012) as well as the work of Microsoft researcher Cormac Herley (n.d.), which is cited in the same article.

scholars and professors of repute” (Ndujihe 2013). The report went on to detail the controversies that have dogged census exercises and that render current figures questionable. Similarly, the country’s cultural make-up is largely an issue of perpetual (re)construction and conjecture, as most accounts provide only approximate figures – “250 or so ethnic groups” (Osaghae 1991: 238), “roughly 400 languages spoken within Nigeria” (Fardon and Furniss 1994: 26).

While these inaccuracies reflect the inherent slipperiness of cultural categories, they are also, in part, an illustration of what Harry Garuba (2014) describes as the “unremunerated” nature of the Nigerian polity. This situation ensures that any stereotypical and unequivocal representation of what (and who) is definitively and typically Nigeria/n is bound to be misleading regardless of whether such a determination is made within or outside the country’s territory. Interestingly, several stereotypes including those relating to physical appearance and criminality seem to proliferate in post-Apartheid South Africa in particular (see Adeagbo 2013; Khumalo 2014).⁸ This is significant because black immigrants in general have often been subject to violent xenophobic attacks by locals in that country in recent times. In a 2010 BBC report on the perceptions of Nigerians in six different African countries (Libya, Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya and South Africa), the section on South Africa includes the comment that Nigerians “tend to *stand out* in a crowd with their *big* flashy cars, *bold* dress and *lively* speech, for their ability to *keep their heads up* in the midst of great and often undue condemnation” (Fihlani 2010; author’s emphasis). This demonstrates one of the ways in which Nigerians are exceptionalised and constructed as objectified spectacles that both attract and repel their gazers in the South African context in particular.

Whether positively or otherwise, the popular and dominant representations by which Nigeria and Nigerians (as social and cultural subjects) are exceptionalised and/or exoticised – whether by design or not – are inevitably characterised by inherent contradictions and inaccuracies. And it is these narratives and discourses (both from Nigerians themselves and

8 The unique NGO, United Nigerian Wives in South Africa (UNIWSA) was formed to “combat the prejudice they and their husbands face” (Khumalo 2014). Perhaps one could argue that the belief in South African exceptionalism (see Mbembe 2012) is a critical contributing factor here. And the fact that discourses of exceptionalism (at least in the African context) are prominent in these two countries might be related to the subtle rivalry that has developed between them since South Africa emerged from Apartheid (see Adebajo 2014; Akpome 2013).

from sources external to the country), rather than any verifiable empirical information available about the country and its people, that constitute the beguiling basis of the simultaneously mystifying and reprehensible notion of Nigeria's exceptionalism.

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Was ist Nigeria? Wider den Mythos der Besonderheit

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag untersucht Wahrnehmung und Darstellung Nigerias und der Nigerianer in der populären globalen Vorstellungswelt. Der Autor analysiert ausgewählte Darstellungen in populären Medien. Er hinterfragt die Stereotype Korruption und Kriminalität, aber auch den Mythos der Besonderheit Nigerias und der Nigerianer, der sowohl innerhalb als auch außerhalb des Landes verwurzelt ist. Seine Analyse bringt zutage, dass die vorherrschende Sicht, nach der Nigeria und den Nigerianern ein Ausnahmestatus zukommt, auf widersprüchlichen Annahmen und Ungenauigkeiten beruht und der Analyse zugänglicher, verifizierbarer empirischer Daten zum nigerianischen Staat und seiner Bevölkerung nicht standhält.

Schlagwörter: Nigeria, Weltmeinung/Weltöffentlichkeit, Auslandsbild, Stereotype, Wirkung von Massenmedien, Meinungsbildung, Öffentliche Diskussion, Gesellschaftlicher Dialog



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The Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Elections in Malawi, May 2014

Nandini Patel and Michael Wahman

Abstract: On 20 May 2014, Malawi arranged tripartite elections for president, parliament and local councils. The elections were remarkable for several reasons, seen from both an African and a Malawian perspective. Despite an uneven electoral playing field, the elections were highly competitive, ultimately leading to the country's second turnover of power when opposition challenger Peter Mutharika defeated the incumbent president, Joyce Banda. The electoral results also show a return to regionalistic voting patterns and a continuing weakening of political parties, as independent candidates emerged as the largest group in parliament. Although the results were generally credible, the election remains controversial. Several stakeholders questioned the general integrity of the process, and significant logistical problems on election day might have harmed public trust in the electoral authorities.

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Keywords: Malawi, political systems, elections/voting, voting results

Nandini Patel is chairperson of the Institute for Policy Interaction (IPI) in Blantyre, Malawi. She previously taught at the University of Malawi and the Catholic University of Malawi. She is the co-editor of *Government and Politics in Malawi* (Kachere Books) and is currently co-editing a volume on the 2014 Malawi tripartite elections (with Michael Wahman).

E-mail: <np.mansadini@gmail.com>

Michael Wahman is Swedish Research Council Fellow at the London School of Economics and Political Science. As of September 2015 he will be an assistant professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia. His research on democratization, parties and elections has appeared in publications such as the *Journal of Peace Research*, *Electoral Studies* and *Democratization*.

E-mail: <m.wahman@lse.ac.uk>

Malawi held elections for president, the national assembly and local councils on 20 May 2014. This was the country's first ever tripartite election and the fifth set of general elections since the introduction of multipartyism in 1994. High levels of competition and uncertainty characterized both the presidential and parliamentary contests. For most of the campaign period, the presidential election was generally regarded a four-horse race contested by incumbent Dr. Joyce Banda of the ruling People's Party (PP), Professor Peter Mutharika of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Dr. Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Atupele Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Ultimately, the election led to a turnover in power as Banda was defeated by Mutharika. This is the second time in the history of the Malawian multiparty republic that an incumbent president has been voted out of office.¹ The turnover is remarkable given the high level of incumbent advantage enjoyed by sitting Malawian presidents (Smiddy and Young 2009; Rakner and Svåsand 2013). Parliamentary elections were highly fragmented and resulted in a hung parliament, with independent candidates winning more seats than any of the main parties. Both the parliamentary and presidential elections reveal a return to a highly regionalized party system where geography has resurfaced as a fundamental predictor of vote choice (Kaspin 1995; Ferree and Horowitz 2010). According to assessments by external election observers, such as the European Union (EU) and the African Union (AU), the final results for the parliamentary and presidential elections are generally credible. Nevertheless, the elections demonstrated several shortcomings in electoral management and revealed persistent problems of assuring a level electoral playing field. As a consequence, the elections remain controversial and were challenged by several stakeholders. Most notably, the defeated president, Joyce Banda, tried to declare the election results null and void but was overruled by the high court.²

Background

Malawi experienced a peaceful transition to multipartyism in 1994. The founding election led to a historic defeat of the ruling MCP party and its incumbent president, Kamuzu Banda, and to a victory for the opposition

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- 1 The first being the electoral defeat of Kamuzu Banda in the 1994 founding election.
 - 2 We are grateful to Daniel Chapman for his excellent research assistance. Michael Wahman wishes to thank the Swedish Research Council for its financial support (VR DNR 2012-6653).

UDF and its candidate, Bakili Muluzi. Whilst party dominance has been strong in relatively stable and prosperous countries like South Africa, Namibia and Botswana, Malawi has historically exhibited high levels of competition and electoral uncertainty. Nevertheless, political parties still lack institutionalization, and political coalitions are usually highly fluid, as manifested by, for example, party-switching in parliament, a high number of independent MPs and two governing parties created *ex nibilo* by presidents leaving their own parties (Hartmann 2014).

A stable, three-party system emerged from the two first general elections of 1994 and 1999, with the UDF, MCP and AFORD (Alliance for Democracy) each having its respective stronghold in one of the country's three different regions. However, the stability of the party system was clearly challenged in subsequent elections (Rakner et al. 2007). After a failed attempt by the then-president, Muluzi, to amend the Constitution and remove the presidential term limit, severe succession struggles rocked the ruling UDF party, resulting in important defections. Fragmentation of parties also occurred within the MCP and AFORD over whether to support the attempt to change the Constitution (Khembo 2005).

Since 2004 very little institutionalization of political parties has taken place. Lack of intra-party democracy, especially in the process of succession within political parties, has persisted (Magalowondo and Svásand 2009). The Malawian voter has shown low confidence in political parties by increasingly voting for independent parliamentary candidates. The 2004 election revealed high fragmentation, as Muluzi's successor, Bingu Mutharika, won with only 35 per cent of the vote. Mutharika's reform agenda began with his "zero tolerance for corruption" campaign, which was an implicit threat to his mentor, Muluzi. The gulf between Muluzi and Mutharika began to grow, and Mutharika's expulsion from the party seemed imminent. Before the party made any such move, Mutharika formed the DPP with members of parliament "poached" from the other parties (Patel and Tostensen 2006).

In the following elections in 2009, the DPP swept the polls on the basis of good economic performance, securing 112 seats in parliament and 60 per cent of the national vote in the presidential election. Mutharika won the 2009 election with Joyce Banda as his running mate. In 2011 Mutharika appointed his brother, Peter Mutharika, as president of the party, thereby sidelining Banda. As a result, Banda formed the PP. She, however, retained her constitutional right to remain in office as vice-president. When Bingu Mutharika passed away in April 2012 from cardiac arrest, Banda was set to take control of the presidential office. Bingu Mutharika's inner circle, led by Peter Mutharika, concealed the presi-

dent's death and allegedly plotted a coup to ascend to power.³ However, the alleged coup failed and constitutional order prevailed, paving the way for Joyce Banda to take over the presidency. The floor-crossing legacy continued with about 40 MPs from the DPP defecting to the PP, the new incumbent party (Young 2014).

Joyce Banda started on a positive note, trying to rectify the mistakes of the previous government. Her first moves were to address the problems of low fuel supply and an overvalued currency, repeal some of the draconian media laws put in place by the DPP government, and mend relations with traditional external partners, particularly the United Kingdom. However, this progress came to a halt with the surfacing of a grand corruption scandal, usually referred to as "Cashgate", involving several senior government officials. It was alleged that a number of officials accused in the Cashgate scandal were close to the president's party and made donations to the electoral campaign. The president's adamant refusal to declare her assets despite mounting public pressure worsened her public image at the 2014 polls.

According to the Constitution, local elections are supposed to be held every five years; yet, as of 2014, local elections had only been held once (in 2000). In 2010 the Mutharika government promised to hold local elections and the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) demarcated wards, reducing their number from 861 to 462. The government, however, abruptly reversed its own promise and unilaterally closed down the MEC based on allegations of fraud. The same year, a constitutional amendment was passed that severely curtailed the powers and role of the ward councillors.

Candidates, Parties and Campaigns

The 2014 presidential election was contested by 12 candidates, and 17 parties participated in the parliamentary election. However, only four candidates and parties were seen as nationally viable. Joyce Banda, the incumbent president, competed on the PP ticket, a party that, despite being in office since 2012, was still not clearly established and lacked the organizational capacity of earlier incumbent parties. Peter Mutharika, the brother of the late Bingu Mutharika, was the candidate for the DPP party. Although he distanced himself somewhat from his late brother's legacy, it is a com-

3 A Commission of Inquiry was set up to look into Mutharika's death and the alleged attempted coup to prevent the vice-president from taking over power. Full report available at <www.nyasatimes.com/2013/03/07>.

monly held view that Mutharika's campaign benefitted from some of the pro-agricultural policies set in place by the old DPP government, especially in rural areas. Mutharika remains a controversial figure due to the alleged conspiracy to unconstitutionally succeed Bingu Mutharika upon his death in 2012. Lazarus Chakwera, previously the president of the Malawi Assemblies of God, emerged somewhat surprisingly as the presidential candidate for the MCP. The selection of Chakwera, who was new to national politics, signalled a break with the past for the MCP and a chance to distance itself from its image as the old party of the one-party state. Lastly, the UDF nominated Aputele Muluzi, son of Bakili Muluzi, as their candidate. Aputele Muluzi was the youngest of the candidates and campaigned on a message of change.

The elections were not contested on a level playing field. Incumbent advantages remain substantial in Malawian elections (Smiddy and Young 2009). Results from the Malawi Election Monitor Survey verify that Banda and the PP routinely used state resources in campaigning. These resources benefitted not only the incumbent president but also PP parliamentary candidates, especially during presidential constituency visits. Furthermore, the national broadcaster, the Malawi Broadcasting Cooperation, remained biased in favour of the incumbent.

There is no consensus on why Malawians voted the way they did in the 2014 elections. The list of factors used to explain vote choice corresponds well with the general African politics literature (e.g. Bratton et al. 2012), and includes explanations such as ethnicity/regionalism, retrospective voting, issue-based voting and patronage. More research is needed to assess to what extent these different factors influenced vote choice. However, a common assessment of the 2014 election was that the campaign was more issue-based than earlier contests. One potential explanation for the increased emphasis on policies was the introduction of the first-ever televised presidential debate. All presidential candidates, with the exception of Joyce Banda,⁴ attended the debate. The themes were strengthening the rule of law, combatting corruption, restoring integrity in the civil service, securing economic self-sufficiency and normalizing relations with traditional external partners. The real emphasis was on the dire state of service delivery, especially in the health sector.

In parliamentary elections, the trend towards higher party fragmentation at the constituency level (Wahman 2014) endured, with an average of 6.7 parliamentary candidates contesting in each constituency. Similarly, the

4 Banda claimed to be busy with other campaign activities (*Daily Nation*, 30 April 2014).

proliferation of independent parliamentary candidates over time (Ishiyama et al. 2013) continued, with the average constituency having 2.2 independent candidates on the ballot.⁵ For the parliamentary elections, civil society organizations were instrumental in arranging local parliamentary debates where local candidates were able to interact with constituency voters.

The 2014 local elections were the first to be held concurrently with national elections. A recurrent problem in the 2014 election was that candidates standing for parliament frequently campaigned on issues mainly within the local councillors' control, such as creating boreholes and roads and providing services.

Results and Voting

Election day was marked by severe logistical problems, as the MEC failed to deliver election materials in time to a number of polling stations. As a consequence, according to a report by the Malawi Election Information Centre (2014), only approximately 30 per cent of all polling stations had opened at 6 a.m., when voting was supposed to start. Problems were especially severe in the Southern Region, particularly in Blantyre District. Poor election management ultimately harmed the credibility of the elections, and voters in some affected areas resorted to limited use of violence. To accommodate voters in affected areas, voting was extended to the next day at some centres. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised that voter turnout was affected, as voters deserted polling centres that were not open on time. Indeed, turnout dropped from 78 per cent in the 2009 election to 71 per cent in 2014. As totals were reported back from the centres, *ZodiaK* radio station reported preliminary results. The early announcement of results was controversial, as voting was still ongoing in some centres. The preliminary results soon revealed an early lead for Mutharika, with Chakwera as the runner-up and Banda performing surprisingly poorly, lagging considerably behind in third place.

As the MEC delayed the announcement of the official results, allegations of irregularities spread, especially as a few centres reported incidences of over-voting (the number of votes cast exceeding the number of registered voters). A dramatic turn of events occurred on 24 May, when President Banda made a public statement on national radio declaring the elections “null and void”, calling for new elections to be held within ninety days. In the statement, Banda referred to her presidential powers and cited

5 Calculations based on the official results presented by the Malawi Election Commission.

electoral irregularities as the reason for nullifying the election. She also guaranteed that she, herself, would not participate in the fresh elections. However, as the MEC took the issue to court, they received a court order confirming that the president had no legal ability to nullify the election through a presidential directive. Although Banda’s attempt to nullify the elections was legally dismissed, further controversy surrounded how to handle the issue of possible tabulation errors. The trailing MCP, PP and UDF demanded a manual recount of the vote, which would significantly delay the announcement of the official results. Several members of an apparently split MEC publically endorsed the demand for a recount. The recount was, however, effectively stopped by the High Court, which acknowledged the MEC’s authority to undertake a full recount but also referred to the MEC’s legal requirement to announce the official results within eight days of the election.

Table 1: Presidential Election Results

Candidate	Party	Votes	Vote share
Prof. Peter Mutharika	DPP	1,904,399	36.4
Dr. Lazarus Chakwera	MCP	1,455,880	27.8
Dr. Joyce Banda	PP	1,056,236	20.2
Atupule Muluzi	UDF	717,224	13.7
Others		94,844	1.9
<hr/>			
Registered voters	7,470,806		
Valid votes	5,228,583		
Null & void	56,695		
Turnout	70.7%		

Source: Malawi Electoral Commission 2014.

The final results for the presidential election were announced on 30 May 2014. The results confirmed Mutharika as the winner with 36.4 per cent of the vote; Chakwera came in second with 27.8 per cent, Banda came in third at 20.2 per cent and Muluzi fourth with 13.7 per cent. Despite all the controversy regarding vote tabulation, the final results closely matched the results from the independent Parallel Voting Tabulation exercise carried out by the Malawi Election Support Network and were also surprisingly close to the pre-election polls carried out by the *Afrobarometer*. The EU and the AU, as the main external monitors, have also expressed their confidence in the official election results. The election of Mutharika and the removal of Banda is a significant event in African politics, as incumbent defeat is still a relatively rare occurrence (Uddhammar et al. 2011). For Malawi, this is the second instance of a presidential turnover.

The partisan breakdown of the parliamentary results roughly resembled that of the presidential election, resulting in a hung parliament. The DPP emerged as the largest party in parliament with 50 out of 192 seats, and the MCP captured 48 seats after a strong showing in the Central Region. However, the most notable result of the 2014 parliamentary election was the general success of independent candidates. Independents emerged as the largest block in parliament, securing as many as 52 seats. The high number of independents can be interpreted as a general sign of the weak party system and in many constituencies reflects controversial local party nominations where popular parliamentary candidates lost nominations and contested the election on an independent ticket.

Table 2: Parliamentary Results

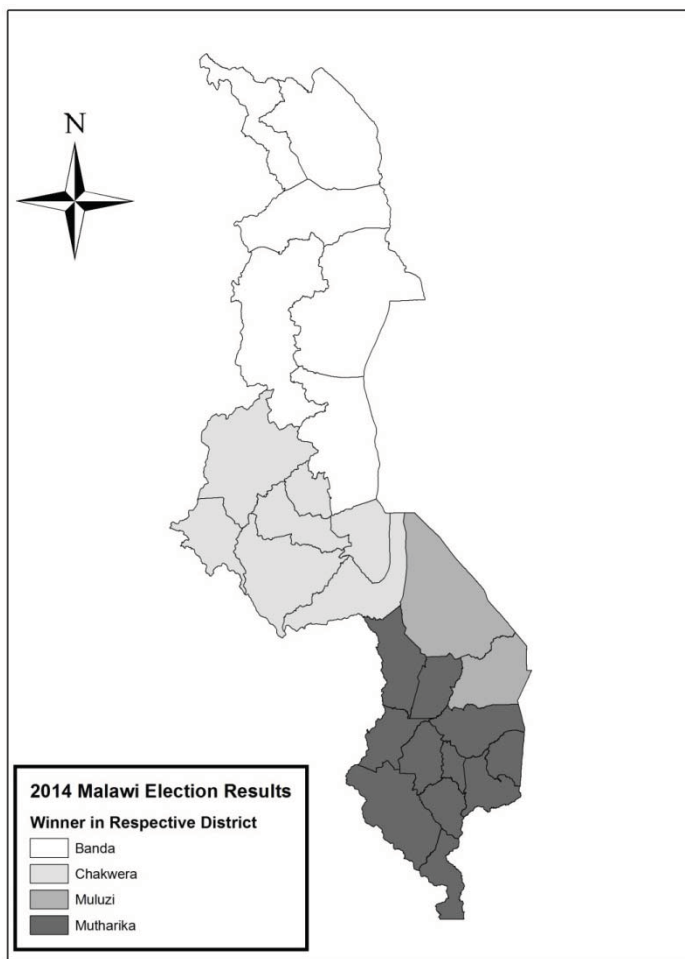
Party	Elected MPs
Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)	50
Malawi Congress Party (MCP)	48
People’s Party (PP)	26
United Democratic Front (UDF)	14
Chipani cha Pfuko	1
AFORD	1
Independents	52
Total	*192
Men elected	162
Women elected	30
Registered voters	7,470,806
Valid votes	5,159,872
Null & void	74,634
Turnout	70.1%

Source: Malawi Electoral Commission 2014.

* By-elections are to be held in the Blantyre North constituency, as one candidate passed away during the election campaign.

The 2014 election constituted a step backwards in terms of equal gender representation, as only thirty women were elected as members of parliament, compared to forty in the 2009 election. The decline in the number of female MPs is troubling, especially as an ambitious campaign with the aim to bring female representation in parliament up to 50 per cent was rolled out before the election. Several pundits have also questioned whether the incumbent president’s gender played a role in her poor performance at the polls, as voters subscribing to more traditional gender roles might have decided not to support a female candidate.

Figure 1: Malawi Presidential Elections 2014: District Winners



Source: Created by the authors, based on the official results presented by the Malawi Electoral Commission.

A second notable feature of the election results, for both the parliamentary and presidential election, is the re-emergence of highly regionalized voting patterns (Ferree and Horowitz 2010). Figure 1 shows a map of presidential election results by district, revealing how support in the 2014 election clustered. Mutharika won a strong majority in the South, which was not surprising, as the South is the DPP’s original home region. The Bingu Mutharika regime was also able to cultivate more nationwide ap-

peal and make major inroads outside the South. While strong support for the DPP in the South was anticipated, many analysts had expected a more fragmented Southern electorate, where the UDF and PP would also receive a significant percentage of the region's support. Ultimately, Peter Mutharika's victory can be attributed to his having a more nationwide appeal than the other candidates; Mutharika not only won the South, but also came in second in both the Northern and Central Regions. The MCP maintained its stronghold in the Central Region, a region that has remained loyal to the old dominant party since the introduction of multipartyism. Being the home region of Kamuzu Banda, the post-independence president, the Central Region was generally regarded the primary beneficiary of the long-lasting MCP rule (Kaspin 1995). The UDF received most of its support in the eastern part of the Southern Region; it is widely held that the fact that the UDF presidential candidate was a Muslim benefitted the party in that area, which is predominantly Muslim. Banda and the PP had their strongest showing in the North. Banda had been able to align with several important Northern politicians; she had also initiated several development projects in the region. Furthermore, her marriage to a Northern man might also have been a factor in the party's success there.

The local elections received much less attention from most major stakeholders than the parliamentary and presidential elections did. The election results broadly resemble those of the parliamentary election.

Aftermath

Peter Mutharika was inaugurated as the Malawian republic's fifth president on 2 June 2014. He will have to manoeuvre through a delicate political landscape, as he lacks a majority in parliament. It was made clear from the get-go of the new presidency that parliament intends to play an active role as opposition to the executive branch. The DPP's first heavy defeat in parliament came with the election of the speaker of the national assembly, as opposition candidate Richard Msowoya from the MCP defeated the DPP nominee. Since the defeat in the speaker's election, the DPP has made several attempts to improve its strength in parliament. Shortly following the event, 19 independent members of parliament crossed the floor to join the ruling party. This move shows a continuation of the highly controversial practice of floor-crossing, which has been embraced especially by independent members and those representing smaller parties (Young 2014). The defection to the ruling party

was often explained by defecting MPs as a strategy to increase development in their home constituency.

Table 3: Local Government Results

Party	Number of elected councillors
AFORD	1
CCP	2
DPP	165
MCP	131
NASAF	1
PP	65
UDF	57
Independent	35
Total	457
Remaining wards	5
Total wards	462

Source: Malawi Electoral Commission 2014.

In his campaign, Mutharika had pledged to announce a “lean” government, thereby ending the patronage politics of his predecessors. In keeping with this promise, only 25 ministers were included in the initially announced government. However, the government later came under heavy criticism for the appointment of several special advisors, with critics arguing that these advisors have replaced the role of ministers in order to mask the real size of the administration. The most notable appointment in the new Mutharika government was the naming of the UDF’s Atupule Muluzi to head the Ministry of Energy and Mining. The inclusion of a former rival presidential candidate in the government can be seen as a strategy to increase the government’s standing in parliament. However, the UDF has insisted that they are not in coalition with the DPP.

The practice of firing, suspending or transferring loyalists of the previous government continues under the Mutharika government. An important case in point is that of the chief of the army, Commander Henry Odillo, who was much applauded for the role he played in the 2012 constitutional crisis where an attempt was made to cover up the death of Bingu Mutharika in order to stop Joyce Banda from taking over the presidency. One of the first moves of the Peter Mutharika government was to fire Commander Odillo on the basis of his involvement in the Cashgate scandal.

A total of twenty parliamentary election petitions were submitted to the High Court. The most controversial case was that of Lilongwe City South East, where a defeated MCP candidate had challenged the victory

of the candidate standing for the DPP. After a court order, a full recount of the constituency's election results was due, but was ultimately made impossible after a suspicious fire occurred in the MEC warehouse that housed all the constituency's ballots.

Potential Reforms

The election has sparked several debates on possible changes to Malawi's electoral institutions and electoral law. Serious criticism has been levelled against the organization of the MEC, and there have been calls for a complete overhaul of the Commission. Since 1999, there has been little consistency in the MEC in terms of its personnel and its operations. As of early 2012, the MEC chairperson was the only appointed member of the commission; several commissioners whose terms had expired had not been replaced. The MEC relies mainly on apportionments by parliament and aid from development partners. The funds allotted by parliament are channelled through the Ministry of Finance. This is contrary to the Electoral Commission Act's stipulation that the MEC shall control its own funds.

There has also been an important debate on corruption in electoral campaigning. With the exposure of massive corruption and embezzlement of public funds in the last two governments, demands for increased campaign-funding regulation have been getting stronger. Another oft-repeated demand is for better enforcement of laws regulating handouts of money and goods during election campaigns, a strategy that was used systematically in the 2014 election (European Union 2014).

Finally, the electoral outcomes have intensified debates on possible changes to the electoral system. The fact that the president was elected with the support of only 36 per cent of the vote has renewed calls to adopt a two-round system for presidential elections, where a simple majority would be needed to secure a victory. For the parliamentary elections, calls have also been made to consider other electoral formulas that would more efficiently break down the regional voting patterns.

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Die Präsidentschafts-, Parlaments- und Kommunalwahlen in Malawi im Mai 2014

Zusammenfassung: Am 20. Mai 2014 wurden in Malawi gleichzeitig Präsidentschafts-, Parlaments- und Gemeinderatswahlen abgehalten. Der Wahlausgang war bemerkenswert, und zwar sowohl aus nationaler als auch aus kontinentaler Perspektive. Trotz ungleicher Ausgangsbedingungen für die Kandidaten waren die Wahlen hochkompetitiv und führten im Ergebnis zum zweiten Machtwechsel in der Geschichte des Landes: Der Herausforderer der Opposition, Peter Mutharika, konnte der amtierenden Präsidentin Joyce Banda eine Niederlage bereiten. Die Wahlergebnisse zeigten zudem eine Rückwendung zu regionalistischem Wahlverhalten und die weitere Schwächung der politischen Parteien: Nach der Wahl stellten unabhängige Abgeordnete die größte Gruppe im Parlament. Im Großen und Ganzen verliefen die Wahlen glaubwürdig, dennoch wurden sie kontrovers beurteilt. Einige Interessengruppen stellten die Integrität des Wahlprozesses infrage, und die Tatsache, dass es am Wahltag zu erheblichen logistischen Problemen kam, könnte das Vertrauen der Öffentlichkeit in die verantwortlichen Institutionen beschädigt haben.

Schlagwörter: Malawi, Politisches System, Wahl/Abstimmung, Wahlergebnis/Abstimmungsergebnis



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Obituary

Gerhard Grohs, 24 June 1929 – 18 February 2015

With the death of Gerhard Grohs, we have lost one of Germany's pioneers in the field of African Studies. Grohs earned a doctorate in law in Heidelberg in 1959, before changing tack and completing a German *Diplom* (equivalent to a master's degree) in sociology in Berlin in 1961. It was at this time that he developed an interest in African Studies, and he went on to shape African Studies in Germany for many decades. He spent time studying in Paris and Pisa and took up visiting professorships at the universities of Leicester and Dar es Salaam, as well as at the New School in New York. Thus, Gerhard Grohs' work was embedded in an international context from the beginning and reflected the influence of both Anglophone and Francophone scholarship. This international network shaped his work as a professor of Sociology at the Free University of Berlin (1969–75) and at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz (1975–94). He published extensively in the field of interdisciplinary African Studies, of which he was one of the founders in Germany. His habilitation thesis, *Stufen afrikanischer Emanzipation. Studien zum Selbstverständnis westafrikanischer Eliten* ("Stages of African Emancipation: Studies on the Self-Image of West African Elites") (Stuttgart 1967), opened up a field of study still relevant today and demonstrated an empirical approach that took into account the perspectives of the African actors, which was unusual at the time; the thesis was also significant for its critical approach to the consequences of colonialism. Two edited volumes, *Zur Soziologie der Dekolonisation in Afrika* ("On the Sociology of Decolonization in Africa") (co-edited with Bassam Tibi, Berlin 1973) and *Theoretische Probleme des Sozialismus in Afrika. Negritude und Arusha-Deklaration* ("Theoretical Problems of Socialism in Africa: Negritude and the Arusha Declaration") (Hamburg 1972), bear witness to his lively interest in political and social processes in Africa. Early on in his career, Gerhard Grohs concerned himself with issues relating to human rights in Africa, and he retained this concern throughout his entire scholarly career. He was one of the first scholars in Germany to carry out research on Lusophone Africa. His scholarly publications, numbering nearly 200, can only partially reflect his influence on African Studies in Germany. Gerhard Grohs was one of the first members of the African Studies Association in Germany (Vereinigung für Afrikawissenschaften in Deutschland, VAD; formerly the Vereinigung von Afrikanisten in Deutschland), which

since its foundation in 1969 has stood for the establishment of African Studies as a modern interdisciplinary and politically and socially engaged field of study in Germany. Even though he was the VAD's chairman for only two years, Grohs' dedicated support shaped the work of the association from the beginning. He helped to organize several VAD conferences: in 1975, the Janheinz Jahn Memorial Conference on Neo-African Literature; in 1982, a conference on the differentiation of African elites twenty years after independence; and in 1993, one on the processes and institutions of self-organization. Gerhard Grohs played an important role in the development of the VAD's scholarly and political profile by contributing to the formulation of critical political statements. Particularly significant was the memorandum entitled *Südafrika zum Frieden zwingen* ("Forcing Peace upon South Africa"), published in 1986, which demanded more rigorous political efforts to combat the Apartheid regime in South Africa. He was also able to combine sound empirical scholarship with practical (development) politics as a committed member of the Protestant Church in Germany and the World Council of Churches, also influencing the Africa-related and development policies of the Protestant Church over a long period. With his work, Gerhard Grohs made a significant contribution to the establishment of critical African Studies in Germany, and he taught and inspired more than one generation of Africanists.¹

■ Dieter Neubert

Dieter Neubert is a professor of Sociology of Development at the Faculty for Cultural Studies at the University of Bayreuth.

1 This text was translated into English by Ruth Schubert.

Book Reviews

Chris Alden and Sergio Chichava (eds) (2014), *China and Mozambique: From Comrades to Capitalists*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media, ISBN 9781920196943, 240 pp.

Giles Mohan, Ben Lampert, May Tan-Mullins and Daphne Chang (2014), *Chinese Migrants and Africa's Development: New Imperialists or Agents of Change?*, London: Zed Books, ISBN 9781780329178, 192 pp.

For decades, China's intensified relations with Africa have counted among the continent's most significant developments; China is now Africa's top trading partner and one of its main sources of foreign direct investment. This phenomenon has inspired many analyses and a plethora of publications on "China–Africa". Among the works published on this subject in 2014, these two books – the first tackling the very specific case of Mozambique and the second examining individual Chinese migrants – have attracted our attention. Their respective subtitles – "From Comrades to Capitalists" and "New Imperialists or Agents of Change?" – make use of antonyms, as if the Chinese state and Chinese individuals exhibit only two behavioural extremes, of good and evil, good guys and bad guys. The subtitles convey the current dichotomous take on Chinese policies regarding Africa – that China respects its African interlocutors and that it is practising a new form of imperialism.

These two works present two distinct ways of broaching the phenomenon of China in Africa. The first book presents a classical analysis of the Chinese presence in terms of its principal economic sectors and also discusses its "win-win" policy in the seldom-studied case of war-torn Mozambique, while the second book seeks to understand how this presence affects individual migrants in the context of changing mobilities and global influences.

Like many editions that focus on China in Africa, the multi-author volume edited by Chris Alden and Sergio Chichava begins with an overview of the Chinese presence in Africa. A brief review of works published on the subject since the early 2000s is followed by a quick report of China's opening to forms of market capitalism and the observation that China has become one of Africa's most important commercial partners. Although African resources exported to China still dominate the balance of trade, China is well established on the continent, where it is more or less harmonizing its discourse with its interests whilst also looking out for the

interests of its partners. China should be able to maintain this powerful position for the long term in a security environment that favours business, despite the challenges it faces due to the re-awakening of Western powers' interests in Africa and those that crop up in conjunction with its adherence to the policy of non-interference in African domestic affairs. To safeguard its strategic positions on the continent in terms of access to resources, China must also invest in key sectors.

The first chapter of this collective work – summed up by the phrase “Comrades to Capitalists” – concerns China's relations with Mozambique, the latter having been the former's privileged partner since the FRELIMO era in the 1960s. The partnership is best illustrated by the extent to which Mozambique has profited from being China's gateway to, and hub from which to branch out to, landlocked countries in Southern Africa in recent years.

The volume deals with Southern Africa in addition to Angola, Nigeria, Sudan and the DRC, focusing on the interests of those countries' leaders in the Asian giant. It bears repeating that the authors emphasize the Chinese discourse regarding Africa – respect for African sovereignty, political equality, solidarity with African interests and Chinese–African relations from the Ming Dynasty – which helps to promote agreement on bilateral projects (xiv). Yet the authors also touch upon the complexity of these relations, as demonstrated by the reactions of local populations. China admits that not all economic actors have been able to respect the terms of its win-win policy. The Chinese government cannot control all the small Chinese enterprises in Africa (xv).

The authors then cover the usual issues in ten separate chapters, pointing out the complexity of China's presence given its diverse (economic, financial and agricultural) investments. They use an ethnographic approach to examine the large enterprises and small Chinese entrepreneurs. One chapter focuses on the role of Chinese migration to Africa and the status of the migrants, who are generally poor. They describe the problems faced by the many Chinese who are trying to survive in under-capitalized businesses in an environment that is less competitive than that of China (xvi) – problems which the Chinese government could not anticipate.

The focus on Mozambique is particularly interesting. The authors show how this emblematic case could both serve as a model for true South–South cooperation and light a promising new path towards Africa's future – despite the complexities and contradictions.

In addition to studies on whether African–Chinese relations contribute to the continent's development or are actually a new form of

imperialism, the authors of *Chinese Migrants and Africa's Development: New Imperialists or Agents of Change?* focus on the Chinese who migrated to Africa unconnected to policies and contracts signed between their country and African states. The authors ponder what brought those Chinese to Africa, examine the consequences of their presence and describe the Chinese migrants' interactions with local Africans. The authors look at the migrants through the prism of development, which they define as "social transformation", as used by Castle in writing about migration and development (2009 and 2010). These studies suggest that the Chinese in Africa do not really mix with local people, something that the authors criticize in the context of some sectors (9).

On one hand, the authors begin with the West's failure to develop Africa, which caused it to open to other – Asian – actors, as well as to Brazil, Russia and some Arab states. On the other hand, the authors use the concept of "migration and development" to study specific Chinese migrants in a certain number of African countries. They elaborate the history and chronology of the migrations along with geopolitical aspects (Chapters 2 and 3). Then they study the migrants' geographic origins and social characteristics, before addressing the context that shapes their conduct towards local African communities.

The authors are well aware of the challenge of their undertaking: They are not dealing with one group of migrants or with homogeneous destinations, and the situation is constantly evolving. They use concepts often neglected in social science, such as cosmopolitanism, conviviality and intersectionality, which they consider more helpful. They also emphasize certain vectors for transformation – such as mobility and the particularly Chinese approach to capitalism – that result from how the Chinese organize businesses. In order to comprehend anxieties and social interactions, the volume further analyses the social organization and resistance of local populations (15).

The authors begin by ideologically deconstructing what they consider *a priori* negative perceptions of China (and of the Chinese) and of Chinese enterprises, which they view as not unrelated to discourse and strategies employed by Western countries to defend their own interests by means of vilifying China. Their thorough knowledge of the literature and their own empirical studies (in Nigeria, Ghana, Tanzania and Angola) and their use of specific methods and objectives described in the book's introduction come together to create a pluridisciplinary analysis of day-to-day Chinese–African relations. China is also viewed as displacing globalization's Western bias in order to act with Africa – within the spatial reorganization of global capitalism. The authors make evident

the “multiple types of globalization” that constitute “globalization”. Ultimately, the study, which focuses on Chinese migrants in Africa and their motivations, is about both China *and* Africa because the actors’ interactions are so entwined. It is not possible to describe the multifunctional and multifactorial development of homogeneous groups such as “the Chinese” and/or “the Africans”. The Chinese and African actors’ mobility is central to the social changes and developments.

Each study concludes with its own analytical progressions, regarding the beginnings and social transformations where the Chinese/China present obvious potential for Africa’s social and economic development. The actors’ mobility is key. In any case, beyond semantic issues regarding the nature of these migrants, the definitions in both books of “reorganization” and the “multiple types” of globalization should be revised.

- Laurence Marfaing

Kjetil Tronvoll and Daniel R. Mekonnen (2014), *The African Garrison State: Human Rights and Political Development in Eritrea*, Rochester, NY: James Currey, ISBN-10: 1847010695, 223 pp.

Andebrhan Welde Giorgis (2014), *Eritrea at a Crossroads: A Narrative of Triumph, Betrayal and Hope*, Houston, TX: Strategic Book Publishing, ISBN-10: 1628573317, 692 pp.

Eritrea will soon commemorate, much less than celebrate, the 24th anniversary of its independence. Its de facto birth against all odds in 1991 evoked not only international admiration, but also hopes that its war-time discipline and steadfastness would make a miracle of postwar nation-building.

These books are a requiem for those buried hopes, critically lamenting the disastrous path Eritrea has since travelled. They are an autopsy of policies that rendered Eritrea the fresh epitome of African state tragedy. Tronvoll and Mekonnen lucidly examine pretensions for a transition to democracy, capped by a brutal crackdown on dissent in 2001, and the politico-legal ramifications of a “garrison state”: a thoroughly militarized society, “rule of law(lessness)” and grotesque human rights abuses “amounting to crimes against humanity” (187). A disillusioned former freedom fighter, Giorgis presents a sweeping history of Eritrea’s quest for freedom and a dispassionate account of betrayed promises, a glaring “disconnect in policy and practice” in purported nation-building (325), and utter failures in matters ranging from economic self-reliance (196) and political openness (272) to a dismal diplomacy that caused the country to become embroiled in regional conflicts (516) and brought it into the fold of Security Council sanctions. The authors of both books insightfully scrutinize major post-liberation policy instruments, as well as the contradictions in the ruling EPLF/PFDJ’s prophesied commitment to democracy versus its deeply engrained authoritarian values, which left Eritrea “neither democratic nor developmental”.

At the backdrop of this dynamic lay an indelible legacy: the EPLF/PFDJ’s anti-democratic political culture and the autocratic leadership style of its sole post-independence leader, Isaias Afworki. Liberation-era principles of the front – democratic centralism, secrecy and discipline – that heavily characterized the postwar political arena are profoundly inimical to democratic ideals. Contrary to liberal theory, for instance, the Charter defines democracy in terms of “patriotism, national unity, secularism and social justice” (Tronvoll and Mekonnen, 62), and cautions against seeing it relative to “the number of political parties” (ibid., 59), regular elections and basic freedoms. The transition period was beset by

these contradictions; deep beneath a rhetoric of democracy, authoritarian impulses were taking root and structures of social control were being systematically embedded (ibid., 72). This insidious historical baggage was exacerbated by Isaias's own lust for absolute power, aversion to institutional constraints, and brute force against any dissent. Corresponding to the de-democratization process during the transition was a consolidation of Isaias's personal power, paralysing formal state institutions and supplanting them with shadowy organizations and power centres answerable to a single person.

The state that was moulded in this process was a far cry from what was envisioned, but more complex than the authors' theoretical approaches. Tronvoll and Mekonnen's concept of a "garrison state" underscores the state's militaristic aspect – a militarized society and foreign policy. Giorgis captures its other feature, neopatrimonialism: a "big man" ruling by decree, a state treated as his private property, extensive patronage and bureaucratic inefficiency. Giorgis laudably casts Eritrea in a broader historical context of the postcolonial African state that was marked by the centralization of power and rise of personal rule. The personalization of power is so consummate that Eritrea today lacks even the most "rudimentary principles" of rule of law and publicly accountable institutions (Tronvoll and Mekonnen, 15). A constitution ratified in 1997 has never been implemented, the National Assembly last convened in 2002 to rubber-stamp a presidential decree to shelve the constitution and a draft electoral law (40), while the judiciary exists as a mere "instrument of control" (47). Although the PFDJ has been the sole legal party, Isaias allowed the liberation front and its collective leadership to atrophy, turning it into an effective tool of oppression. Ironically, it convened its last congress in 1994 and has existed since 2001 without its central and executive organs following the crackdown on a reformist faction known as the G-15. A one-time liberation hero but widely and deeply despised today, Isaias runs the tiny nation as his personal fiefdom with a degree of fear that earned him the infamous appellation of *eti diablos* (Tigrigna for the "devil"). He rules not only by brute force but also through a Mobutu-style breeding of ceaseless instability and power struggles among his subordinates blended with Félix Houphouët-Boigny's art of buying legitimacy by granting privileged access and clientelistic distribution of state resources to the *tegadelti* (former freedom fighters) and a few civilian supporters. Isaias mercilessly punishes disloyalty by liquidation and temporary "freezing" – dishonourable dismissal of officials from active duty.

Giorgis's *Eritrea at a Crossroads* offers an insider's view – the author was a top diplomat before his fallout with Isaias in 2005 – of the policy that failed to avoid an “avoidable” war with Ethiopia and lost out in the subsequent diplomatic wrangling over a legal verdict by the UN Border Commission. Yet he does not sufficiently reveal the true source and conduct of a foreign policy dictated by Isaias's whims, communicated to the world by the Ministry of Information and executed by his close aide and party official, Yemane Gebreab. Tronvoll and Mekonnen have gone to great lengths to debunk the government's “no peace no war” rationale for its ceaseless militarization, violations of fundamental rights and the deferral of national elections (174). The pretext behind which the government hides is indeed unjustified, yet much of the criticism discounts the role of the international community in creating the excuse in the first place – appeasing Ethiopia's indiscipline and punishing Eritrea for charges of abetting regional instability and terrorism. Eritrea's behaviour is in part a function of international failure to censure Ethiopia's refusal to unconditionally accept the Algiers Peace Agreement. Eritrea's interference in regional affairs is not an exception in the region, nor is it more adverse to regional peace than the actions taken by other countries. Yet the discriminate treatment has only helped to revive Eritrea's historic mistrust of the international community and fears of major-power hostility (particularly from the United States) to its existence. The sanctions imposed in 2009 would have carried more political and moral weight if the target was the government's increasing repression and reluctance to return to a democratic process. Further and imminent sanctions following the ongoing investigations by the UN Commission of Inquiry on human rights violations will only help to alienate it and exacerbate the people's suffering. Absolving the international community from the current crisis and calling for further sanctions is ill conceived and reckless. Isaias's obstinacy knows no bounds and the international community's track record is lamentable. It should mend its ways and accommodate Eritrea by offering carrots rather than just wielding hostile sticks. It is high time to both pressure Ethiopia to end its occupation of Eritrean territories and engage Eritrea to capitalize on Isaias's talk of drafting a new constitution, however tactical and insincere his intentions might be.

Despite its late “accession to independence” and an auspicious start, Eritrea's laudable, but far less consequential, achievements in areas such as infrastructure, gender equality and combating malaria are eclipsed by the bigger shadow it projects – closed, indigent and isolated. The prelude to the current regime is reminiscent of the dismantling of liberal institutions inherited during Africa's decolonization in the early 1960s and

the subsequent personalization of power in the hands of “big men” and hegemony of single parties over national life. Centralization of state power and the subordination of “peripheral” state institutions to the core executive sealed the path to personal rule. This, coupled with economic malaise, resulted in the double “crisis of accumulation” and “governance” that hit neopatrimonial regimes hard after the mid-1970s. Nevertheless, Eritrea’s woes seem unprecedented, spurring acrimonious cyber-discourse among Eritrean nationalists and their opponents – political wars fought from the trenches of the liberation-era debate over the character of Eritrea as a colonial versus a national entity. Puzzled by the paradox of the liberation that subjected them to a new form of tyranny, the nationalists see their misfortunes as an “enigma shrouded in mystery” (Giorgis, 323) or a divine curse with Isaias as its messenger. To their detractors, who disparage the struggle as a “march of folly”, the crisis is an inescapable outcome of an ill-conceived project. Far from representing the unravelling of an elusive dream, however, the crisis is a quintessential failure of nation-building in Africa, only with its means and ends pronounced by adverse circumstances in Eritrea. Seeing Eritrea from this proper historical perspective helps us to both fathom its present predicament and draw the contours of future change. Authoritarian rule and economic hardships have worsened due to Isaias’s iron grip and political callousness, a “coupon economy” serving as a “weapon of repression” (Giorgis, 229) and the excruciating effects of indefinite national service. As the authors show, the uniqueness and genesis of Eritrea’s state crisis stem from the national service that turned – with the declaration of the Warsay-Yikealo Development Campaign in 2002 – into “service for life” and an effective instrument of state repression. The ramifications of the project are so extensive and far-reaching that any attempt to understand post-liberation Eritrea is untenable without due emphasis on it. Nor will future reforms be meaningful or rule of law fully redeemed unless the programme is redefined and repurposed to give it a human face.

Despite a few limitations, the authors draw a comprehensive picture of post-liberation Eritrea and its current quandaries. These books are critical for anyone concerned with Eritrea and its future. A peaceful transition to multi-party politics is unlikely under Isaias’s watch. However, if anything, it will follow a familiar pattern of transitions from neopatrimonial regimes that are very protracted and unfavourable to democratic consolidation. More often, such transitions result in semi-authoritarian regimes or even new autocracies. This could be further compounded by the elite cohesion, organizational resilience and propensity to violent force that characterize former liberation fronts. Giorgis overlooks both of these

setbacks and, in his calls to reform the PFDJ, downplays the challenges posed by the very political culture and “war machinery” that previously botched the transition. He fails to recognize that a Chinese-style reform path would simply entail market liberalization without democracy and that a developmental state inherently relegates political development and, at worst, is hostile to democracy. Nevertheless, Giorgis’s impressive synthesis of theory and experience offers a unique outlook on real policy challenges. Yet, as Giorgis was socialized in an EPLF culture that proscribes sensitive national issues and as he apparently harbours some sympathy for the front, his work suffers from the complete omission of the adverse impact of its policies on national unity.

Devoting two chapters to these issues, *Garrison State* will certainly stimulate the debate on the national identity and constitutional future of Eritrea. It elucidates the discontents of minority groups and the danger of national fragmentation inherent in the country’s body politic. The participation and representation of ethnic minorities amounted to little more than a “dance-democracy” in national holidays and cultural festivals (130), with their most crucial rights being “brutally crushed”. The official stance against attitudes evoking subnational identity rendered ethnic and religious minorities vulnerable to discrimination and majority domination. The regime’s land policy, native education and marginalization of minorities have left a fragile unity forged in the crucible of a protracted revolutionary war fraying at the edges. Minorities view the projection of Tigrigna as a *de facto* national language and the expansion of Christian Tigrigna highlanders to areas outside their historical homeland (particularly the Western lowlands) as a systematic Tigrignanization and dispossession of their native land, analogous to the Amharization and *neftegna* settler-colonization of southern lands in expansionist Abyssinia. The ramifications are widespread and far-reaching, sowing the seeds of future discord along ethnic and regional lines – a fragmentation that is pervasive among the opposition and in the diasporic cybersphere.

Thus, Eritrea’s future hangs in a precarious balance. A healthy transition will require not only rebuilding shattered state and democratic institutions, but also a full recognition of minority grievances and institutions guaranteeing their representation, participation and equitable share of national wealth. Only a system of proportional representation devolving power and cultural autonomy to minorities can ensure this.

- Salih O. Nur

Camara, Mohamed Saliou (2014), *Political History of Guinea since World War Two*, New York: Peter Lang, ISBN 9781433122439, 531 pp.

Research that addresses socio-political issues in the context of Guinea has been largely neglected, especially outside of French-speaking academia. However, Anglophone scholars have taken increasing interest in the history and politics of Francophone African countries. As Mohamed Saliou Camara, who has published in both French and English, correctly notes (1), no detailed English overview of Guinea's recent past has been written. Therefore, this book, which successfully tackles the task of discussing Guinea's political history since World War Two, is most welcome. Camara started his academic career in Guinea, his country of origin, before gaining a Ph.D. in history from Northwestern University (United States). He is currently a professor of history and international relations at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (United States).

This volume is clearly structured into three parts. The first part covers the local, regional and global context of decolonization, emphasizing French West Africa, particularly Guinea. The second part scrutinizes the period of the First Republic (1958–1984) under Guinea's independence hero, Ahmed Sékou Touré. It discusses how the ideologies of this era influenced the country on political, administrative, economic, social and cultural levels. Here, Camara successfully sets out to correct the studies and accounts of personally involved authors on the Touré period, which are sometimes biased and politicized. The third part looks at the military rule of General Lansana Conté (1984–2008) and its immediate aftermath. It highlights the economic and (partial) political opening and illustrates the power struggles within the regime, the system of personal rule and the tumultuous period at the end of Conté's regime, which was marked by nationwide protests. A further chapter within the last part explores the transitional period after Conté's death that finally led to the election of Alpha Condé as the new president in 2010.

A laudable feature of the book is the inclusion of two sub-chapters on women's participation in Guinean politics. The author's emphasis on the international context and the foreign policy of each regime makes it possible to analyse Guinea's political history in a broader light. Thus, Guinea is shown in Camara's words as "an integral piece of the African puzzle and a product of the struggle for global hegemony" (464).

Camara's principal aim is to examine Guinea's past in its multi-layered social, economic and political context. To this end, he focuses on decolonization and nation-building, bringing together national, regional

and international events. One of the key characteristics and strengths of the book is that it recounts Guinea's history through the lens of ethnicity. The author clarifies that "ethnicity is a social construct which, over time, becomes a legitimate and viable framework of identity, whereas ethnocentrism is the offspring of corruption and immature politics" (466). Further, Camara raises the question of why the country's population is poor despite its rich natural resources. He identifies patronage systems and personified politics as Guinea's main problems and argues that "the principal endogenous catalyst for the failure of governance, crisis of state authority, and lack of national development has been the consistent absence of rule of law" (464).

Political History of Guinea is very well written. It provides an index, pictures of crucial moments in Guinea's history and a helpful list of abbreviations. However, readers are not made aware of the criteria Camara chose for integrating the references into his "selected" bibliography. The bibliography is incomplete, lacking some major recent contributions to Guinea's political history, such as those by the historians Odile Goerg and Elisabeth Schmidt and the anthropologists Mike McGovern and Jay Straker. Nevertheless, the data in Camara's book includes a variety of sources, including newspapers, online media, personal papers, autobiographies and reports. Importantly, it also references numerous interviews, including some with current and former politicians and members of the military and the administrative apparatus, but also with ordinary people such as market women.

The book is most compelling when the author reproduces authentic and detailed narrations and perceptions of people who were directly involved. For example, Camara sheds light on the (imagined and real) plots against Touré by successfully giving room to the different and often conflicting views, without taking sides. By extracting "solid information" from the sometimes "emotionally charged narratives" of his interlocutors (5), Camara follows the methodological approach of Jan Vansina (one of the important early figures within the area of African oral history). Unfortunately, Camara neither elaborates on current debates on oral history nor specifies how he tackles the challenges of this method. In addition, he fails to provide further theoretical background and his own understanding of largely debated and politicized concepts such as "development", "democracy", "reconciliation", "good governance" and "rule of law". Moreover, Camara uses essentialist notions such as "African values" and "African culture" rather uncritically.

In the conclusion, the author only partly summarizes his findings. Instead, he positions himself politically and gives his personal view on

why Guinea lacks “development”. According to Camara, Guinea should strengthen “decentralization”, enforce “rule of law” and bring “justice” to “victims” of “political violence” through a “truth and reconciliation commission”. Finally, the author raises the question of whether a “democracy” inspired by Western ideals is the appropriate political system for African countries like Guinea. He calls for a “dyamacracy” – a middle way between a single-party system and a multi-party democracy – albeit without specifying what this “dyamacracy” should concretely look like (466).

All in all, Camara’s clearly written volume is recommendable for scholars from various disciplines working on Guinea and will be equally accessible to a non-academic audience interested in the subject. It is a vivid account that provides a nuanced and well-balanced overview of Guinea’s contested political history from 1945 to 2012.

- Carole Ammann

Meredith Terretta (2013), *Nation of Outlaws, State of Violence: Nationalism, Grassfields Tradition, and State Building in Cameroon*, Athens: Ohio University Press, ISBN 978-0-8214-2069-0, 368 pp.

Terretta's monograph offers an in-depth historical analysis of the rise of Cameroon's independent movement, the Union des Populations du Cameroun (UPC), and its increasingly violent struggle against French colonialism. Her central claim is that the UPC's fight for freedom derived its strength and meaning from political processes that unfolded at the local and international level. Drawing on previously unknown archival material, she charts the local, transregional and global trajectories of the UPC and its effect on ordinary citizens.

Terretta begins her analysis at the local levels in the Bamileke region and shows how the leitmotifs of the independence struggle ("freedom" and "nation") were deeply engrained in spiritual Bamileke traditions. The economic successes of the Bamileke led to the emergence of a political consciousness that was winning over an increasing number of Africans. Changes in French labour laws allowed Africans to form independent trade unions for the first time. Many union activists subsequently helped form the UPC in 1948. Between its formation and its ban in 1955, the UPC emerged as the largest political force in pre-independence Cameroon. Stressing the commonalities between the country's nascent literate black elite and ordinary citizens, the UPC provided an entry point to political participation for a much broader constituency than any other party. The cosmopolitan make-up of the UPC leadership deserves particular attention. Many local UPC leaders had grown up far from their birthplaces. The experience of crossing communal boundaries allowed them to communicate their ideas across diverse audiences and afforded the movement additional legitimacy in the eyes of the population.

Cameroon's status as a UN Trust Territory provided an equally important impetus to the UPC project. UPC leader Um Nyobé and his followers justified the goals of the UPC by linking them to the normative imperatives of international law and by raising awareness of Cameroon's legal predicament. Article 76 of the UN Charter foresaw eventual autonomy for the Trust Territories, thus giving added legitimacy to the goal of an independent Cameroon. The appearances of the UPC leadership before the UN General Assembly also featured prominently in the speeches of local UPC representatives. Thousands of Cameroonians began to petition the UN in protest of France's brutal colonial conduct. Between 1946 and 1960, more than fifty thousand petitions reached the Trusteeship Council in New York.

Despite its local support and international visibility, the colonial government banned the UPC in 1955 and deposed those Bamileke chiefs who had been UPC sympathizers. Governmental interference in the selection process of traditional leaders subsequently became a major source of the ruthless violence which characterized Cameroon in the 1960s. Terretta illustrates that “far from being a civil war launched by commoners against chiefs and notables, violence [...] trailed in the wake of a series of politically unthinkable deposition of chiefs and notables from their legitimate rule” (156). The UPC reacted by starting a violent campaign against those chieftaincies where traditional leaders were sympathetic to the government. The armed wing of the UPC, the *Armée de Liberation Nationale du Kamerun* (ALNK), turned large sections of the Bamileke region into no-go areas. Following the declaration of a permanent state of emergency by the Ahidjo government, violence became endemic and spiralled out of control: “Like those of the UPC soldiers, the tactics of state security forces quickly metamorphosed from a controlled fight against the rebels into disorganized, undisciplined and often criminal attacks on civilians, thus contributing to a culture of violence” (220).

For the UPC and its armed wing, there was no happy ending. Despite initial support by the Nkrumah government, the UPC proved too weak to withstand the military might of the Ahidjo government. International support by communist parties, the UN Trusteeship Council and the pan-African movement fizzled out. There was no happy ending for the people of Cameroon, either. The extreme brutality of the ALNK provided the government with a pretext to crack down on any potential regime opponent. Torture and executions thus became a regular feature of the political landscape. Eventually, an autocratic government became firmly entrenched in power. Advocates of political pluralism and peaceful coexistence were forced to exit the political arena for good.

Terretta has written a well-researched addition to the growing literature on African nationalism(s). Her book is part of a series of monographs that re-examine African independence movements. Her study contains hitherto unknown material about the social origins of the UPC. The most innovative contribution of the book is the international dimension of the UPC's anti-colonial struggle: the effect of the United Nations, the Nkrumah government and the pan-African movement on the UPC. Finally, Terretta provides Cameroonians with a history that the country's various postcolonial governments tried to hide.

However, historians are likely to be disappointed by the author's insufficient engagement with previous historical accounts. In her analysis, Terretta rightly touches upon the works of Richard Joseph and Achille

Mbembe – two giants in the debate about the UPC’s struggle for freedom. How does her work relate to theirs? Unfortunately, those who are less well versed in the historical details of Cameroon’s struggle for independence are left wondering about the wider implications of her findings for the study of Cameroonian nationalism and of African nationalism in general. The conclusion is too abrupt and raises the unresolved question about the country’s current predicament. While Terretta’s study is the work of a historian, offering some thoughts on the political implications of the UPC struggle for the future of Cameroon would have been a better way of ending the book.

- Sebastian Elischer

Devan Pillay, Gilbert M. Khadiagala, Prishani Naidoo and Roger Southall (eds) (2014), *New South African Review 4: A Fragile Democracy – Twenty Years On*, Johannesburg: Wits University Press, ISBN 9781868147632, 380 pp.

This edition is the fourth in the annual assessment of South Africa assembled by the Department of Sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand and published by the same university's press. It sees the addition to the editorial team of the noted international relations scholar Gilbert Khadiagala. The genealogy of the review can be traced back to the annual *State of the Nation* series published by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), South Africa's statutory research agency. This series was edited by John Daniel, former professor of political science at the University of Durban-Westville, and Roger Southall, professor of sociology at the University of the Witwatersrand. The four volumes that appeared between 2003 and 2007 were of exceptional quality and provided a much-needed appraisal of post-Apartheid South Africa's journey. Of course, this series followed on from the *South African Review*, which was published between 1983 and 1994. That review was noted for its hard-hitting critical stance on events in what was then Apartheid South Africa and was one of the key sites for critical scholars to publish work. The *New South African Review* is consciously within this tradition.

The current editors may have had a harder time putting this volume together. During the *South African Review* days, there was little doubt as to who was on The Dark Side (and I don't mean the *swart gevaar*!). In post-liberation South Africa, criticism of the African National Congress is often unwelcome and can lead to all sorts of weird and wonderful accusations ranging from racism to treachery. It is a testimony to the editors' commitment to critical scholarship that a volume such as the *New South African Review* is eagerly awaited by scholars interested in the country and refuses to bow down to such anti-intellectual disciplinary moves by party hacks and their followers. This is particularly important given that the fourth edition coincides with the twentieth anniversary of the 1994 non-racial elections.

Each of the four editors introduces one of the four sections of the book ("Ecology, Economy and Labour", "Power, Politics and Participation", "Public Policy and Social Practice" and "South Africa at Large"). There are twenty chapters in total, all authored by South African-based academics and activists, with a good selection from the best universities in the country. Many of the issues addressed are key to the current state of the country. The introduction, by Devan Pillay and Roger Southall,

sets the scene and asks many pointed questions, not least of which is whether Zimbabwe represents South Africa's future. Currently, the answer to that question is not at all clear, although indications of ruling-party arrogance, corruption and untouchability are exposed on an almost weekly basis. Here, one is tempted to quote the exchange between a BBC reporter and Robert Mugabe. The reporter asked, "Mr. Mugabe, you have been president for 32 years; when are you going to say goodbye to the people of Zimbabwe?" Mugabe replied, "Why, where are they going?" One gets the impression of similar disdain from the ruling party for the people of South Africa: the useful (once every five years) voting fodder for a parasitic and corrupt political class that has taken over the ANC, root and branch.

The volume's contents provide an excellent overview of current developments in the country. I found the first and fourth sections of particular interest. The first is essentially a collection of essays examining various aspects of the political economy of contemporary South Africa, whilst the fourth section looks at South Africa's place in the world and the country's international relations. The idea of Pretoria "muddling through" as it claims some sort of continental leadership – as Khadiagala puts it – is spot-on and has both bemused and frustrated observers who had hoped for a more coherent foreign policy post-Apartheid. Mopeli Moshoeshe's chapter on the (often dire) leadership qualities in the region is excellent and certainly squarely presents us with the challenges facing the sub-continent and South Africa, which, if not in a "bad neighbourhood", could certainly do with some of its neighbours cleaning up their act. However, Justin van der Merwe's chapter on regional parastatals shows us that profits and capital accumulation by South Africa-based corporations continues and the issue of governance is perhaps not as important for the capitalist class as it may be for other less profit-oriented actors.

Overall, with the twentieth anniversary in mind, the latest volume of the *New South African Review* reminds us that the struggle continues, only now against a broader array of social forces, sadly including many who formerly cast themselves as the country's liberators.

- Ian Taylor

Joseph Patrick Ganahl (2013), *Corruption, Good Governance, and the African State: A Critical Analysis of the Political-Economic Foundations of Corruption in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Potsdam: Potsdam University Press, ISBN 9783869562483, 300 pp.

For more than two decades, corruption and good governance have been well-worn staple subjects of both analysis and development cooperation. In this book, Joseph Ganahl has sought to add to this sizeable literature by assessing the dominant discourse on corruption and good governance upon which the standard fix of the World Bank is based. He has countered this discourse with an attempt to start from the real conditions upon which, in his view, “African” politics and state structures are based. It is from these, rather than from a transfer of “Western” concepts and structures, that Ganahl believes a salubrious perspective for Africa’s future can best be constructed. As his empirical frame of reference, the author takes “Africa” wholesale, in the sense of “Africa south of the Sahara”, but excludes South Africa.

One may say that Ganahl does a good job in summarizing (for the umpteenth time) the approach of the World Bank in its various phases and critiquing its technocratic and abstract tenets, as well as the destructive consequences of programmes ordained by the Bank and by the IMF. When turning to the “Logic of African Politics” (ch. 5), the author has little more in the way of surprises. He summarizes the equally well-worn concept of neopatrimonialism and underscores how development assistance has, in many cases, worked as a functional equivalent for rents that were not forthcoming due to a lack of natural resources or their crises. Also in keeping with this discussion and basically in the vein of economic neo-institutionalism, Ganahl harps on about the many defects that African states and polities display when confronted with the “Western model”. The latter is presented not only as the means by which, in the “West”, functioning nation-states could be built but also, by silent implication, as the empirical reality of these states. This is bolstered by repeated but unsubstantiated assertions that corruption in “Africa” is on a completely different and much larger scale than in the “West”. One may wonder how this claim jibes with recent large-scale scandals within the top brass of Siemens and Deutsche Bank – to mention just two German instances, with the level of tax evasion in the “West” or with the ruling to uphold the Citizens United decision in the United States Supreme Court, which effectively allows corporations to “buy” elections. Social scientists who fail to read the daily papers run the risk of losing touch with such realities. Awareness of these realities would lead to the insight

that large-scale corruption cases in the “West” actually easily exceed the budget of many smaller states in “Africa”. Nevertheless, corruption does of course pose a very serious problem, and Ganahl relates this to the issue of the “public” or “national interest”, which, in the “West” is working towards a readiness of citizens to pay taxes and of officials not to be bribed, while in “Africa” it is splintered by sectional interests, clientelism, regionalism and patronage. Again, the daily papers would inform Ganahl that, also in the “West”, deputies are evaluated largely according to what they deliver to their constituencies, and that the metaphor of the “cake” (137, 228) from which each strives to take a piece is present in public discourse, not only in “Africa” but also in countries such as Germany. This is not meant to deny the problems Ganahl seeks to address. However, his perspective is distorted by his dichotomous vision, which views the “West” largely through the rose-tinted glasses of ideal-type constructions. Ganahl, as well as others, mistakes such constructs for reality, while actually they were conceptualized as functional relationships, as Max Weber – the originator of the notion – has expounded at length.

Such distortion is not helped much by accounts of state formation in the “West” and the well-known argument about the generation of a state economically based on taxes by the exigencies of war-related debt burdens. Here and there, Ganahl also notes the internal violence involved in such state-making and concomitant homogenization drives. Taken seriously, such insights might have prompted a more general question about the consequences of the imposition of the modern state in its various guises. In fact, critique of the World Bank discourse might have led to such a turn. Ganahl has chosen a different approach. As he posits, state formation in the “West” ultimately produced a relationship of “mutually advantageous dependence” between states and citizenry, while this did not happen in “Africa”. The reason Ganahl gives for this is basically the weak economic basis of states in “Africa”. Again, this is a rather wholesale argument when Ganahl points elsewhere to rents based on natural resource exploitation. One culprit he identifies is smallholder agriculture. In this, he disregards early independence drives and conflicts around the use of quite effective and productive sectors – such as cocoa in Ghana – for foreign exchange earnings in the interests of industrialization. Another pointer to much more complex issues is the well-known undercutting of effective agricultural production in many parts of “Africa” by the combined effects of crisis relief and subsidized food exports from North America and Western Europe.

Ganahl also offers solutions. Significantly, he does this in language that refers to what “we” might do, thereby casting himself and his readers into a kind of social engineering subject. One of his proposed solutions is to increase financial aid in order to compensate for economic weakness and foster an entrepreneurial class. Another avenue would be to “tap” the potential of “African” institutions, which he largely equates with chieftdom. As an example of both harnessing traditional institutions *and* marginalizing chiefs politically, Ganahl draws on the more optimistic strand of Botswana-related literature. Whatever its actual merits, the question remains as to how this experience might be applied to the quite incomparable complexity of “Nigeria” (244). Again, despite the indiscriminate talk about “Africa” throughout most of his argument, the author ultimately takes note of pervasive contingency and the need for a case-by-case approach. The obvious contradiction is left for the reader to detect. One might be reminded of the work by Ulrich Menzel and Dieter Senghaas in the 1980s in an array of case studies on “developmental history”. Significantly, these instructive studies did not endorse the idea apparently inherent in Ganahl’s reasoning that “development” is something that can be universalized around the world.

Ganahl has clearly undertaken to do far too much in this book – to analyse state structures in a very complex “subcontinent” (as he calls it), to contrast this with the advent of the modern state in the “West” and to find solutions that go beyond the usual fix informed by World Bank approaches. Such an overstretch is also apparent in quite mundane inadequacies, such as major omissions in the bibliography, including works to which entire special sections are devoted. The lack of care and thoughtfulness is also betrayed by the appearance of the “common man” and “his” concern (220, 238) in a day and age when some of us hope to have moved beyond such androcentric thinking and talking.

■ Reinhart Kößler

Ian Taylor (2014), *Africa Rising?: BRICS – Diversifying Dependency*, Woodbridge, U.K. & Rochester, NY: James Currey, ISBN 9781847010964, 208 pp.

Ian Taylor tackles two hot topics in recent debates on Africa. One is the “Africa rising” trope, largely derived from recent growth records across a variety of African nations; the other is the engagement in Africa of the emerging economies – namely, Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC). As the two themes are clearly interrelated, it makes sense to treat them in a single monograph. In fact, the book’s greatest value is its laying out of the extent to which the trends interrelate. Taylor shows how the growth in African economies has coincided with a boom in commodity prices over the past decade, which in turn can largely be attributed to growing resource hunger in China and, to a lesser degree, in India and Brazil. As the lack of diversification in African economies has intensified (127-129), the BRIC states – as trading partners – have not helped African economies in structural terms. Thus, Taylor argues that the BRIC states’ efforts in Africa essentially reify the continent’s historical dependence on resource extraction, which has resulted in the “jobless growth” of the past decade and deindustrialization (139-141), and which has – presumably – contributed to the further entrenchment of neopatrimonial modes of government within African regimes. Taylor’s pessimistic claims are backed by helpful individual analyses of Brazil, Russia, India and China in Africa, in which he delineates their differences with regard to style, interest and strategy (South Africa, the “S” in “BRICS”, is not regarded as an emerging economy by Taylor and is therefore not included in his analysis).

Yet, one wonders whether Taylor took the “noise” around a rising Africa a bit too seriously. After all, few commentators aside from investment gurus and consultant firms portray Africa in such a rosy light. Most prominently, *The Economist* made a U-turn in its headline assessment (from “a hopeless continent” in 2000 to a “hopeful” one in 2013), but the 2013 special report also recognized the elephant in the room: the fact that much of the recent growth resulted from a natural-resource bonanza. Independent economists have been cautious with regard to the “Africa rising” thesis, although government representatives, investment managers and the World Economic Forum, all quoted by Taylor, do not share their scepticism. The “rising Africa” trope was also partly a reaction to the Afro-pessimism of the 1990s and its postcolonial undertones.

Similarly, by exposing the fact that emerging economies are not proposing an “alternative economic paradigm” in Africa, Taylor chose a particularly weak straw man. Most academic commentators highlight the

BRIC states' ambiguous effects in Africa. At least in the Western sphere, there is a pronounced scepticism *vis-à-vis* the BRIC states and their intentions in Africa. China has long been struggling with its dismal reputation as a mere resource extractor unwilling to employ locals. In Mozambique, for instance, accusations of Chinese illegal logging and the view that Chinese-built infrastructure is of poor quality are more widespread than the belief that China or the other BRIC countries are at the vanguard of an alternative economic paradigm. More recently, investments in mining by the Brazilian company Vale aroused considerable protest from displaced locals, and projects by two Indian companies – Rites and Ircon, contracted to reconstruct a vital rail link between the port in Beira and landlocked coal mines – were delayed to the point that authorities cancelled their contracts in 2011. All of this happened against the backdrop of extensive investments in resource extraction from Brazil, India and South Africa (among others) and a public debate around the shortcomings of resource-based growth in terms of poverty alleviation and employment. Thus, the celebration of South–South solidarity as a panacea for African development seems to be confined to BRIC and IBSA statements.

Taylor's claim that BRIC states are merely diversifying African dependency is based on his description of the BRIC states as almost exclusively focused on resource extraction and as "rigidly doctrinaire" in both their "application of neoliberal policies" and the principle of non-interference in dealing with African governments. Their rhetoric notwithstanding, the impact of the emerging economies in Africa, according to Taylor, was structurally similar to that of the established powers. Taylor also writes that the BRIC states had nothing in common with each other beyond their rhetoric and significantly rising GDPs. These assertions are debatable at best: While relevant differences between emerging economies in Africa and their Northern competitors persist, the fact that African states remain relatively less powerful *vis-à-vis* both groups does not alter that. Consider, for instance, the prominent role played by the state both within BRIC countries and in their relations towards Africa, which is markedly different from the role the state generally plays in Western-style capitalism. The development bank that the BRIC states are envisioning and the effective coalition-building they have been undertaking amongst themselves in various global negotiations since the turn of the millennium are noteworthy, too. Moreover, aid from BRIC states has at least some characteristics that distinguish it from Western countries' modes of development cooperation. Taylor notes the export of medicine from India to Africa and successes in overcoming rigid patent laws upheld by Western countries in the fight against HIV/AIDS. These are

pertinent differences, which brings me to other lines of argumentation I disagree with: Taylor's overly negative portrayal of emerging economies as partners in trade and aid along with his dismissal of *any* positive developments in the wake of Africa's recent growth records.

First, competition in trade bolsters the negotiating position held by African governments. Take, for instance, India's unilateral opening towards least developed countries, noted by Taylor. This is surely a positive step from an African perspective, as it precipitated the OECD countries' opening markets in some areas in order to remain competitive. More fundamentally, having a more diverse group of potential customers decreases the dependency inherent to resource-based economies, albeit insufficiently. And if we decry African states' lack of power and influence on the global stage, then the emergence of new and diverse partners willing to ally with African governments – out of whatever strategic interests – appears to be a rather favourable political development, as well. Take Brasília's two-faced identity manifested in the claim to global status, on the one hand, and its historical preference for multilateralism (42-43), on the other. In fact, Brazil is highly unlikely to achieve the kind of global status it seeks anytime soon. Thus, no matter what the rationale behind its approach to international politics is, middle-power characteristics are unlikely to dissipate (not least because of recent poor growth figures), and multilateralism is as deeply engrained into the foreign policy establishment as is the demand for global status. Thus, underscoring multilateralism while belittling the characteristics of middle powers when debating Brazil's relations with Africa is somewhat unfair.

Likewise, the increasing engagement of emerging economies in foreign aid, as Taylor notes, may have positive effects. OECD donors in many countries have harmonized their development policies since the Paris Declaration in 2005. New donors do not want to be part of these alliances. On the one hand, this undermines Western attempts to improve governance, democratic standards and the rule of law by conditionality (whose effectiveness is debatable). On the other hand, it gives African regimes a choice where they had (almost) none before. Moreover, Taylor does admit that “technology, advice and professional assistance from a country such as Brazil that already practises policies domestically in a developmental setting may be more useful to recipient countries' needs than that offered by the traditional donors” (51). Consider the hugely successful Brazilian social assistance scheme as a model for (much less developed) African countries. Yet, concrete examples with the potential to shed a more benign light on the presence of emerging economies in Africa, such as Brazilian aid towards democracy promotion in Guinea-Bissau, go un-

mentioned. Or consider Brazil's "ethanol diplomacy", which seeks to establish a global market for biofuels based on Brazilian technology. This, Taylor suggests, was exemplary of the replacement of one dependency (oil) with another (biofuels). The "ethanol diplomacy" is a fascinating aspect of Brasília's foreign policy, and its effects in Africa are surely noteworthy. Yet, Taylor fails to mention both potential benefits of the production of biofuels for developing countries and the fact that the high level of attention it enjoyed under President Lula da Silva has effectively come to an end as a result of an ailing domestic ethanol industry. Future research should look in more detail into the forms of cooperation between new donors and African states before dismissing such cooperation as a mere tool of power politics or as detrimental to Western aid efforts, or both.

Second, the "rising Africa" trope was essentially based on the claim that a middle class was emerging where there was none before, this claim sometimes being augmented by references to new technology such as mobile banking. Taylor questions these claims convincingly (24), yet one wonders whether there wasn't a kernel of truth in the argument that a larger (though comparatively small in a global context), more urbanized and better-educated middle class did make a difference in some African countries. Surely, the issue merits a more detailed treatment – by reference to either macro-indicators (health, education) or individual cases.

Third, the book deserved a more thorough edit. Some quotes are difficult to read and, in certain cases, quoted authors seem to contradict each other (for example, on the principles underlying Russian foreign policy, 64-68). In other instances, the text becomes somewhat declaratory when quotes are not backed by empirical information. For instance, Taylor quotes a source stating that support for Brazilian foreign policy was a *de facto* requirement for being granted assistance from Brasília (51). This is surely an important piece of information, yet no further explanation is given with regard to what kind of support Brasília asked for and in what instances such informal conditionality was applied. The same is true with regard to Indian conditionality and Taylor's critique that Brazilian businesses did not provide employment opportunities for locals (48). With fewer quotes and less repetition, Taylor would have had the space to include examples from some of those countries with particularly close relationships with BRIC states, which could have both backed his overall claim ("diversifying dependency") and increased our understanding of the actual differences among emerging economies and/or between BRIC states and the established powers.

■ Johannes Plagemann