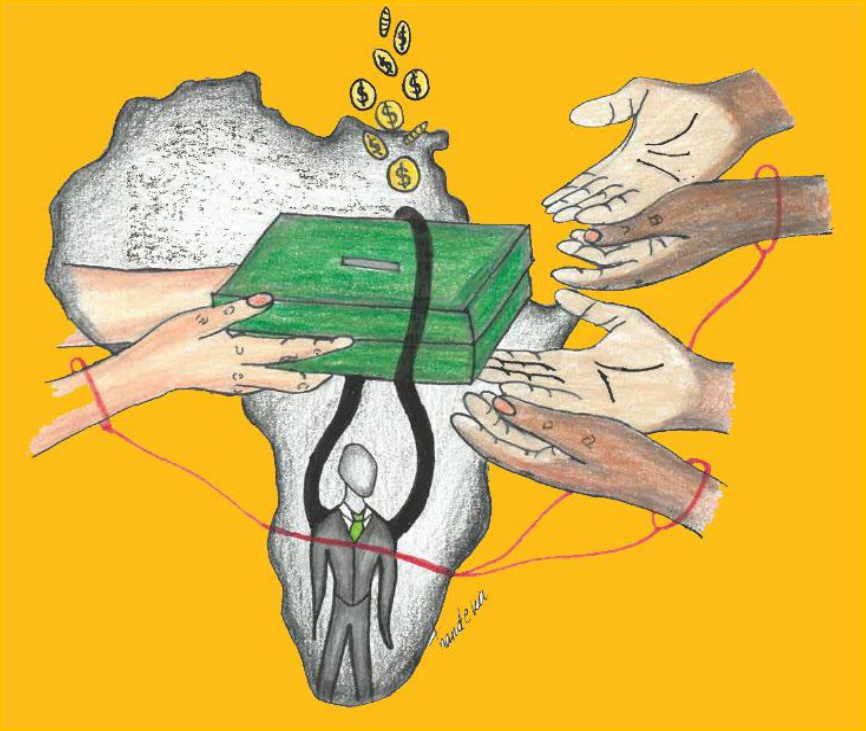
Critical Perspectives on Governance, Religion and Humanitarian Aid in Africa



Edited by
S.R. Kumalo, C. Lynch,
A.B. Bangirana & C. Kemedjio

*Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series #06

The cover art work

The cover art work by Ms. Thandeka N. Moyo illustrates the reality of humanitarian aid in Africa. Aid comes from Western donor institutions mainly in the form of money shown in $s and the green box for the greenback. The white hands from the west give aid which is received by agents in the form of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs). The faceless man in a suit represents the African agents who are the main beneficiaries of humanitarian aid. They are faceless and with ropes that trap the money before it reaches the ideal intended beneficiaries. The agents have jobs and consume the bulk of the aid with crumbs reaching the intended beneficiaries illustrated by the many black African hands receiving the 'money'. The aid comes with strings attached shown by the red string. The recipients lose their agency as they have to use the money according to the will of the donors. Africa has remained darkest, despite the aid, as it direct funding towards sustainable development projects in Africa because the intermediary agents, and the strings attached, to the aid. Hence the black Africa in the art work, remains underdeveloped. The artwork suggests that the current *modus operandi* in respect of donor aid to Arica, around humanitarian aid, cannot develop Africa and Africans, because it is not by, for, with and in support of Africans and their own African initiatives and African agency.

Artwork by Thandeka N. Moyo
Than25deka@gmail.com

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Email: cssall123@gmail.com
Editor-in-Chief: Prof J.A. Smit
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Email: smitj@ukzn.ac.za

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Preface

For their speech and writing, intellectuals develop and use inter-related lenses from specific, epistemically positioned, time-historical, socio-demographic points of view. This is especially true for the transatlantic Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA) blog, and its contributors.

Affirming cultural identities as well as diversity, the CIHA blog has been a major source for critically engaging humanitarian projects in Africa since its inception in January 2009. It is a source and resource for both analytically and constructively focused contributions, which also provide opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration and networking. Analytically, contributors do not shy away from asking difficult questions concerning the power relations in humanitarian aid, especially as these articulate with governance for peace and socio-economic wellbeing, not only from outside the African continent, but also from inside Africa. This includes raising problematic questions in the present, on the continued legacy of colonialism and imperialism, but also with regard to constricting African cultural formations. Complex questions related to the continuation of systems that do not optimally serve and advance the aspirations of a new generation of young, energetic, pro-active and passionate thinkers and scholars are being asked, and constructive answers, strategies and tactics, sought and activated.

Resourceful home-grown African initiatives, projects and enterprises are given space for increased mobilization, activation and impact. Time-historically, authors and researchers seek to untangle complex historical developments, relations, systems and interactions. In view of visions and aspirations for a vibrant and prosperous African future, humanitarian engagements from within Africa are sought. If past-historical criticisms focused primarily on political formations, then present-future plans and projects need to fully affirm and enable the collective imaginative engagement of societies, inclusive of dynamic equal gender relations and socio-economic differences. Transformative societal engagements with, for and on behalf of the poor in our cities as well as in rural areas, need full consideration. This also triggers the recognition and affirmation and enabling of healthy, caring and helpful traditional cultural assumptions and practices. Viewed from a diversity of vantage points on the African continent, with the generation of the full complexities of associated data for humanitarian engagements for self-sufficient and sustainable occupations

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and livelihoods, relevant capacity and capabilities are sought to serve the aspirations of the people.

The conferences CIHA have organized have been important platforms for developing helpful discourse and discursive formations for the improvement of the quality of life of the people of our continent. This is especially true of the conference organized by the Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), in late 2016. This volume of the *Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS) is a representative sample of papers read at the conference, the incisive questions raised and the perceptive insights and ideas from relevant studies shared. These have not only analysed and sought improved comprehension of the problematising of humanitarianism and religion in contemporary Africa. They have also charted trajectories for action that will enhance the people's quality of life.

I wish to endorse and recommend both the CIHA blog project, and this closely related book, *Critical Perspectives on Governance, Religion and Humanitarian Aid in Africa*. They are raising important questions on humanitarianism, both past and present, and seek to chart ways and means through which humanitarian agencies can affirm and enable indigenous initiatives of, for, by and with Africa. As said – and which I highly appreciate amongst ourselves as Africans – it is done with the full recognition and affirmation of the inter-related epistemic lenses intellectuals seek to construct and deploy from specific time-historical socio-demographic points of view. As such, this volume makes a significant contribution to African humanitarian scholarship, as well as enabling future world-historical humanitarian initiatives in global perspective. In this respect, there is much scope for gratitude and appreciation of the international incentives around this vital topic for Africa's upscaling of its efforts for fostering the optimal collective wellbeing of our people.

Prof Johannes A. (Jannie) Smit
Chair: Humanities Institute
University of KwaZulu-Natal

Contents

Contributors

Albert Billy Bangirana is a researcher in the areas of gender, religion and health with interests in institution-based health policies as well as students' well-being in higher education teaching and learning. His ongoing Doctoral research focuses on critical perspectives on Catholic teaching on sexual morality, HIV prevention and students' sexual agency in higher education context. His teaching experience is in transformational leadership for ministry and mission. He currently works with the academic development office in the college of humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is a Luce graduate fellow and serves as the Editorial Assistant for the CIHA Blog, www.cihablog.com at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
BangiranaA@ukzn.ac.za https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9939-8770

Professor Cilas Kemedjio, Frederic Douglass Professor, is a Professor of French and Francophone studies whose contributions in the fields of Caribbean and African literature and culture, postcolonial theory and transnational black studies have earned him both national and international recognition. He is the author of two monographs, one edited volume, and over 60 articles. His first book, *Maryse Condé, Édouard Glissant et la malediction de la théorie*, broke new ground analyzing the relationship between Western literary theory and non-Eurocentric texts in the works of renowned Caribbean writers Édouard Glissant and Maryse Condé. His second book, *Mongo Beti: le combattant fatigue. Une biographie intellectuelle*, is the most authoritative study to date of the Cameroon writer, intellectual and activist Mongo Beti, one of the most prominent figures in Francophone literature. He also published a bilingual edition of the white papers of students' strike at the University of Yaoundé, *Mémoires des années de braise. La grève estudiantine de 1991 expliquée/ Remember the Flame: White Papers from the 1990 Yaoundé University Strikes*. Professor Kemedjio's current project seeks to unearth the genealogies of humanitarian interventions in Africa, and their attendant uneasy connections with the multi-layered sites of power. The provisional title of this project is 'Ota Benga and the Fictions of Humanitarianism'.

Professor Kemedjio has served on the Executive Board of the Association of African Literature, chaired the Executive Board of the Division of Francophone Cultures and Literatures of the MLA. Kemedjio is

also Director of the Frederick Douglass Institute for African and African-American Studies at the University of Rochester and the President of the African Literature Association. He also serves as the Co-Editor for the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA Blog), www.cihablog.com. cilaskemedjio@rochester.edu https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7220-7025

Dr. Gyaviira Kisitu is a Lecturer at Kyambogo University in the department of religious studies and Philosophy. His area of interest includes studies in African theology, Sexualities, Environment and Pastoral Theology. He has recently published works focusing on gender and sexualities, pastoral theology, Human rights and leadership, governance and development. kgyaviira@kyu.ac.ug/ kisitudavis@yahoo.com https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1084-7638

Prof. R.S. Kumalo is Professor of Religion and Governance: School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal. He is the Director: Centre for Constructive Theology (CCT). He is a Fellow: Wesley House College, University of Cambridge, UK. Co-Editor: Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA). He served as President: Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary 2016-2018 and Director: Ujamaa center for biblical and theological community development and research, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Pietermaritzburg, South Africa from January 2012. He also served as the Academic leader: Religion, Theology and applied Ethics school of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, university of Kwa-Zulu Natal in 2015 and Academic Leader: Re-search and Postgraduate Studies, School of Religion, Philosophy and Clas-sics, University of KwaZulu-Natal 2012-2014. Coordinator of National and International Partnerships of the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2012. He currently serves as the Acting Head of the School of Religion Philosophy and Classics, University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. KumaloR@ukzn.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2098-3281

Prof. Cecelia Lynch is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Irvine, and Co-Editor of the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA) blog (www.cihablog.com). She specializes in interrelated themes of religion (including indigeneity), the ethics and problems of humanitarian aid, and international relations broadly conceived,

including its racialized and gendered character. She works from what she calls a "critical interpretivist" approach to all of the above. She is currently writing a book on tensions in religious (especially Christian and Islamic) humanitarian ethics, based on research in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the U.S. For a list of publications, grants, and awards, see https://www.cecelialynch.net; clynch@uci.edu; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7043-3990

Dr. Emmanuel Matambo serves as the Research Director at the University of Johannesburg's Centre for Africa-China Studies. He studied philosophy at St Joseph's Theological Institute and later went to the University of KwaZulu-Natal for his graduate studies. He holds a PhD in political science. He has published academic articles on a range of topics including conflict resolution, contemporary terrorism, educational theory, African agency and the growing Africa-China relationship. In addition to journal articles and book chapters, he has edited two books: Xenophobia, Nativism and Pan-Africanism in 21st Century Africa 2021, Springer (coedited with Sabella Abidde) and Interrogating Xenophobia and Nativism in Twenty-First Century Africa, 2022, Lexington Books. ematambo@yahoo.com / ematambo@uj.ac.za; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3941-6105

Dr. Sunday Paul C. Onwuegbuchulam is a Research Fellow at the Center for Gender and Africa Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein South Africa. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and a Bachelor of Theology degree from St Joseph's Institute, Cedara, South Africa. Dr Onwuegbuchulam obtained his master's degree in Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies and doctorate in Political Science from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. He has taught and published research in the areas of African studies, democracy and governance in Africa, religion and politics, political theory and philosophy, conflict transformation and peacebuilding, civil society and faith-based organisations.
sage1_ugoh@yahoo.com;
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3170-8266

Dr. K.J. Pali is a Senior Lecturer at the University of the Free State. He is also a researcher in Leadership and Congregations Studies. In the last five years, his research focused more on the Leadership and Congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Free State. Recently he is doing research on leadership and congregations in the townships within the Man-

gaung Municipal Metro, in the Free State. palikj@ufs.ac.za; ORCID No.: https://Orcid.org/0000-0001-5105-2650.

Dr. Stephen Phiri is currently a Research fellow with the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I also serve as an executive member and voluntary researcher of Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute (KNII); and am an Alumni of the National Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS), and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). stephenworld@gamil.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1336-1628

Dr. Lukong Stella Shulika is a conflict transformation and peace-building specialist with experience in research, teaching, knowledge management, project supervision, and consulting. Her research interests and publications are broadly focused on African conflict dynamics and management; post-conflict reconstruction and development; women and peace-building; gender and the politics of representation in Africa; African leadership, governance, and political transformation; and human rights and human security. She is currently a post-doctoral fellow and research integrity officer at Durban University of Technology. Lukonstella@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9880-5306

Dr. Margret Ssebunya is a lecturer at Kisubi University in the department of Ethics and Human rights and a visiting lecturer at Kyambogo University. Her main area of interest includes environmental and professional ethics and African indigenous knowledge systems. She has recently published and co-published works focusing on environmental preservation, Leadership, and gender. smaggie2012@gmail.com; https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1206-8083

Editorial
Critical Perspectives on Governance, Religion and Humanitarian Aid in Africa

R.S. Kumalo
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2098-3281

C. Lynch
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7043-3990

A.B. Bangirana
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9939-8770

C. Kemedjio
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7220-7025

Religion is a major force in the governance of countries in contemporary Africa. At the same time, religion is a major motivating factor for the growth of humanitarianism, be it directed at Africa by other people of goodwill and organizations from other continents, or by Africans at one another and outsiders. Given that religion plays an important part in the lives, including the physical as well as mental wellbeing of the people of the continent, any serious study concerned with the continent cannot avoid its impact on many aspects of African life, including development, humanitarianism, and governance. As a result, the 'Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa' (CIHA) Blog (www.cihablog.com) held a conference in fall 2016 at Seth Mokitimi Methodist Seminary (SMMS), Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, to explore these issues. Jointly organized by CIHA, the SMMS, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), the conference theme 'Religion, Governance and Hu-

manitarianism in Africa' was structured around the question: 'How does Humanitarianism Interface with Religion in Contemporary Africa?'

This theme intersects with the mission of the CIHA Blog[1]. The CIHA Blog's focus on humanitarianism in Africa draws particular attention to critical and religious voices, in seeking 'to transform the phenomenon of aid to Africa into egalitarian and respectful relationships that challenge unequal power relations, paternalism and victimization' (from the CIHA Mission Statement).

Professor Cheryl Potgieter, the then Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, highlighted in her opening conference address the role that religion plays in governance in Africa and interrogated the consequences of this collaboration. However, she also emphasized the need for governance to be free of narrow-minded religious and sectarian influences. This potential paradox – how to acknowledge and respect religious influences in a deeply pluralist way without allowing exclusivist forms of sectarianism – is one of the key issues that runs through several chapters of this volume, including those on the history of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa; religion, governance and restrictions on homosexuality; and religion in Eswatini, among others.

Other key issues include the role of African religions and progressive African values in both humanitarian governance and leadership disputes across the continent. The role of Christian and Muslim groups are examined in reference to governance for peace in Liberia as well as governance of socio-economic welfare in South Africa. However, it is also critical to examine the relative impact of religious activism versus that of women's organisations in the Liberian conflict, and the importance of leadership by shack-dwellers in South Africa instead of faith-based groups in working for the shack-dwellers' emancipation, instead of following 'top-down' strategies designed by both government and faith-based agencies. In each of these cases, religious identities became subservient to those of gender and/or class, raising broader inter-sectional issues for ongoing research. Methodologically, the contributions to this volume represent a range of approaches and theoretical orientations, from strongly postcolonial critiques of humanitarianism to orientations that accept the need for humanitarian aid and that query the forms and motivations of

[1] Like the conference itself, the CIHA Blog draws scholars from a variety of fields, including Politics, African Studies, Gender Studies, History, Religion and Theology, and Comparative Literature, among others.

paternalistic interventions. Geographically, while a plurality of contributions focus on South Africa in particular, others engage debates about humanitarianism and religion in Uganda, Liberia, DRC, and the continent as a whole.

All of the contributions, however, address the multifaceted contributions and tensions involved in the nexus between religion and governance. Because they also represent extremely significant approaches to the debates in question, the Editorial team of CIHABlog.com decided to share papers presented at the conference, as well as others by scholars who could not attend, with the readers of the *Alter*nation African Scholarship Book Series (AASBS). All contributions in this volume were peer-reviewed.

The Editorial Team is convinced that this volume captures robust and productive conversations that advance knowledge about the multifarious intersections among religion, governance and humanitarianism in Africa. These conversations, as described in the chapter previews below, reveal both convergences and divergences among initiatives emanating from religion, governance and humanitarian intersections.

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K.J. Pali's contribution, '**The Legacy of White Imperialist Forces in the Leadership of the DRCA FS'**, opens the volume, explaining that the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Free State (DRCA FS, for Black Africans) is a product of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC, for the Afrikaners) mission and one of the DRC family of churches established in South Africa in 1910 for African Christians. Pali uses internalised oppression theory to analyse how the legacy of white imperialist forces influenced the leadership of the DRCA FS over the years, and continues to do so today. For many years, the DRCA FS was under the dominant leadership of white missionaries and dependent on the financial support of the DRC in the Free State. The DRCA FS members, as part of the South African community, were adversely affected by white imperialist forces of oppression, including slavery, colonialism and apartheid, in addition to the DRC's mission policy during the apartheid era. At present, the leadership of the DRCA FS faces the challenge of responding appropriately to this legacy as well as confronting dependency, division, violence and declining mission, in numbers, and influence. Pali argues that the failure of the DRCA FS leadership to fully acknowledge the historical context of the above

problems makes it difficult to effectively address them and prepare for a better future.

Gyaviira Kisitu and Margaret Ssebunya, in the second chapter titled '**Governance and Egalitarianism in Africa: Exploring a Leadership Battle between the Young and Old Political Leaders'**, zero in on the fact that, despite decades of independence, many African countries still wrestle with the consequences of poor service delivery as well as the unconstitutional hold onto power by some political leaders, leading to serious differences between 'old' or elderly, vs. 'young' leaders across the entire continent. Most of the challenges that arise from this disregard of the law have been pinned on the flaws of the older generation of political leaders, often by a new wave of young political leaders. The latter, advertising themselves as a brand of alternative leaders, have been clamouring for entry into the political landscape. This demand has met the resistance of incumbents, most of whom belong to the older generation. The dynamics that emerged have played a role in creating a generational conflict among political leaders. The political battlefield, mired in its power games, has not been able to respond to humanitarian concerns. Drawing from selected cases in African countries, the chapter argues that competition for political leadership between the young and old generations, and the grip on power of the latter constitute a critical problem that hampers the realization of democracy, service delivery and peace on the continent. While 'religion' is not foregrounded in this chapter, Kisitu and Ssebunya do articulate a more constructive leadership model for the continent that is based on African values of communitarianism, service, accountability, relationship-building, connectedness and participation, which are (implicitly at least) drawn from African cultural and religious traditions that predate and transcend colonialism.

Sunday Paul Chinazo Onwuegbuchulam, in **'A Capability Approach Assessment of FBOs' Role and Strategies in Poverty Alleviation and Human Development in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa'**, describes how post-apartheid governments in South Africa have tried to curb poverty and underdevelopment in the country, with some successes but also many failures. In the KwaZulu-Natal Province, poverty, inequality, unemployment and decrepit social services systems constitute the main challenges that the government has to tackle. But when state agents fall short in delivering poverty alleviation and development interventions, there is evidence that non-state actors like faith-

based organizations (FBOs) have assumed the position of providing the necessary public goods to society. The role that FBOs play in liberal democracies, including to what degree their contributions to poverty alleviation and human development are paternalistic or constructive, have taken centre stage in scholarly discussions on the politics of the state. Against this backdrop, Onwuegbuchulam adopts Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to evaluate the impact of one Christian and one Muslim organization in specific communities. He finds that, despite challenges and some paternalistic tendencies, each uses constructive strategies for poverty alleviation and human development in the KwaZulu-Natal Province that go beyond conventional explanations of economic 'progress'.

In '**Top-Down Advocacy as an Antithesis of Emancipatory Politics: A Brief Review of the Politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo'**, **Stephen Phiri** and **Emmanuel Matambo** provide a much different and more critical view of humanitarian attempts at poverty alleviation. Phiri and Matambo show how top-down social and political advocacy becomes a vehicle used or encouraged by the powerful to unwittingly depoliticize any effort by the poor to emancipate themselves. Thus, established advocacy outside the locale of those it seeks to emancipate, becomes 'an erroneous' helping hand, which keeps the poor in their 'place' while the *status quo* remains untouched. In unmasking the *hypocrisy* of 'advocacy generosity', this chapter looks at the thinking and politics of the shack-dwellers' movement, Abahlali base-Mjondolo, around Durban, South Africa. It fundamentally questions the nature of help that is essentially related to advocacy on behalf of marginalized societies. Advocacy 'on behalf of' the poor, which prevents them from acting as the driving force behind the process of emancipation, becomes the *opium of the poor*. This Chapter therefore argues that an emancipatory perspective does not spare non-state actors and agencies from critique, including individuals as well as faith-based organisations. Such individuals and organizations may seem 'innocent', but their advocacy in fact works to support the established order and occludes agency on the part of the poor.

Lukong Stella Shulika, in her chapter, **'Women's Agency for Peace in Conflict Times: Case study of women's organisations in Liberia'**, discusses the fact that in conflict situations, women bear the brunt of their devastating effects. As such, the recognition and advancement of gender-inclusive conflict

intervention and peacebuilding have become a norm, grounded in the notion that women are vital contributors to and stakeholders in peace processes. Focusing on the lived experiences of women's organisations in Liberia (using focus-group discussions and interview information gathered from women's organisations in Liberia in July 2015), Shulika also engages Maxine Molyneux's organisational theory to provide a qualitative appraisal of women's role as agents and architects of peace. The chapter also implicitly shows that acting *as women* was more significant in compelling the government and rebels to make peace than acting as religious humanitarians. Still, it was important that women also organised across religious lines, bringing (generally male) religious leaders along with them. The chapter argues that collective agency by women's organisations creates the necessary environment for women's empowerment and a platform that allows them to contribute to peacebuilding.

Gyaviira Kisitu, in'**The 'Haunting Shadow' of the 2014 Anti-Homosexuality Law in Uganda'**, argues that, although attempts to [re]criminalize homosexuality in Uganda in 2014 failed, the effects and influence of this attempt linger on. The Constitutional Court ruling against the 2014 anti-homosexual law (2014 AHL) was made on technical grounds rather than on its substance. Therefore, the perception of the defeat of anti-homosexuality activism is misleading. Such a ruling also keeps the possibility of [re]criminalization open, abetted by religious (primarily Christian) leaders. This is despite the fact that biblical passages can be interpreted differently: some use the bible to condemn homosexuality and LGBTIQA+[2]; others use it to challenge such condemnations. The overall result is that social, political and religious factors that influenced the 2014 AHL remain contextually unchallenged and continue to shape public rhetoric on same sex practices and how the general public relates to LGBTIQA+ communities. Violence, discrimination, evictions, and arbitrary arrests of LGBTIQA+ people are not confined to the past, but continue to prevail in the present. As a counter response, LGBTIQA+ communities have resorted to creating safe[r] spaces. These sanctuaries, nevertheless, seem to attract more hostile surveillance. This chapter, then, argues that the court

[2] In this article, LGBTIQA+ is used in reference to the communities of people or individuals identifying themselves as lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, queer, asexual, and other identities not mentioned, who do not consider themselves heterosexuals.

ruling on the 2014 AHL had little impact on the public perception of same sex in Uganda. As a consequence, surveillance over homosexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities, abetted by certain religious actors and claims, continues in the aftermath of the ruling in an attempt to silence gender and sexual minorities in the country.

R. Simangaliso Kumalo argues that the role of religion in the governance of society appears ambiguous and complicated. In view of this complexity, it should never be ignored but instead studied and analysed carefully, so that what is good from it, can be gleaned for the benefit of good governance, and what is bad, can be discarded. In '**Royalty, Religion and Residency: The Swati Experience of Governance with Special Reference to the Period 1968 – 2018'** Kumalo looks at Eswatini, where, on the one hand, African Traditional Religion and African Instituted Christianity are seen largely as responsible for the theological justification and support for the absolute monarchy. On the other hand, progressive mainline denominations and evangelicals have been seen as responsible for the call to change the system to participatory democracy. Religion is therefore both a key pillar that instituted and supports the absolute monarchy, and a catalyst for change, resistance and inspiration for people seeking to contribute to the development of democracy and good governance. In examining the relationship between religion and the monarchy, however, the chapter also seeks to determine the relationship between religion and the ordinary citizenry of the country. In critically analysing the political significance of religion for both the royal family, which effectively constitutes the ruling class, and residents, which comprise ordinary citizens, Kumalo disentangles its complexity. In particular, he argues that, while on the one hand religion provides theological justification and affirmation for the dominance of the royal family in the governing of the country, on the other it relegates citizens to the margins, as subjects. Even so, religion can still be used as a catalyst to encourage the residents to stand up and transform the political system to one that is democratic and participatory for the benefit of all citizens.

Cecelia Lynch, in 'Interrogating the Place of African Religions in Humanitarian Governance', argues that religious humanitarian governance through faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Africa has historically side-lined and condemned African religions, with ongoing echoes of that side-lining in religious, as well as secular forms of humanitarian governance today. Lynch

draws on the development of humanitarian ethics in the midst of the spread of other 'world religions' such as Christianity and Islam, across the continent, also highlighting several debates about religious humanitarian governance that arose in two conferences sponsored by the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA) Blog. She argues in favour of recapturing the fullness of the African religious landscape in humanitarian governance as well as within all religious traditions with roots on the continent. It is important however, she cautions, that such inclusion of African religions on the part of transnational humanitarian actors avoid both the romanticization of these religions and their institutional appropriation.

In sum, the contributions in this volume address numerous significant intersections between religious traditions, religious leaders, and forms of power in humanitarian, state, and transnational forms of governance. At the same time, they gesture towards the necessity for intersectional analysis of gender, sexuality and class along with religion. While always present in one form or another, religious factors sometimes have primary and sometimes secondary roles in governance. We hope that this publication will continue to inspire dialogue and debate by scholars of governance, and especially theologians who are engaged in governance studies. The topics are not only relevant with regard to perspectives on the past, but also with regard to constructive engagement on the present and future development of governance systems in Africa.

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Professor R.S. Kumalo
Director: Centre for Constructive Theology
Fellow: Wesley House College, University of Cambridge
Co-Editor: Critical Investigation on Humanitarian Aid in Africa
School of Religion Philosophy and Classics
University of KwaZulu Natal
Pietermaritzburg
South Africa
KumaloR@ukzn.ac.za

Professor Cecelia Lynch
Political Science; and
Co-Editor of the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA Blog)
University of California
Irvine
clynch@uci.edu

Rev. A.B. Bangirana
Academic Development;
Editorial Assistant for the CIHA Blog
School of Religion Philosophy and Classics
University of KwaZulu Natal
Pietermaritzburg
South Africa
BangiranaA@ukzn.ac.za

Professor C. Kemedjio
Director of the Frederick Douglass Institute
African and African-American Studies; and
Co-Editor for the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA Blog)
University of Rochester
cilaskemedjio@rochester.edu

The Legacy of White Imperialist Forces in the Leadership of the DRCA FS

K.J. Pali
ORCID iD: https://Orcid.org/0000-0001-5105-2650.

Abstract

The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the Free State (DRCA FS, for Black Africans) is a product of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC, for the Afrikaners) mission and one of the DRC family of churches established in South Africa for African Christians. The DRC racial mission policy stipulated that established churches by the DRC should be separated according to racial categories hence the DRC family of churches consisted of the Afrikaners (DRC), Mixed-race (DRMC), Blacks (DRCA) and Indians (RCA). For many years, the DRCA FS was under the dominant leadership of white missionaries and dependent on the financial support of the DRC in the Free State. The DRCA FS members, as part of the South African community, suffered not only from White imperialist forces such as slavery, colonialism and apartheid, but also from the DRC's racial mission policy during the apartheid era. At present, the leadership of the DRCA FS is struggling to respond appropriately to this legacy of dependency, division, violence and declining mission. However, the failure of the DRCA FS's leadership to recognize the historical context of the above problems makes it difficult to engage with them appropriately and prepare for a better future. This article analyses how the legacy of white imperialist forces influenced the leadership of the DRCA FS, using internalised oppression theory to highlight the impact of White imperialist forces on the leadership of the DRCA FS.

Keywords: White imperialist forces, Internal oppression, Leadership, Dependency, DRCA FS

Introduction

This article focuses on leadership in the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa, Free State (DRCA FS), where leadership includes ministers, elders and deacons. Most of the emphasis will be on the ministers. Currently, the DRCA FS is one of four regional synods of the DRCA, and has congregations mainly in the Free State, as well as in other provinces such as KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, and North West. The membership of the DRCA FS is predominantly Black. The main languages are Sesotho and Afrikaans, as well as Tswana, Zulu and Xhosa. At present, there are 121 congregations, with 34 ministers, four of whom are part-time ministers in their congregations, two of whom are White, and the remaining 28 are full-time Black ministers (DRCA FS Synod 2019:46).

The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has strongly influenced and dominated the DRCA FS. White missionaries assumed the role of ministers, with the right to lead the church council meetings, the presbytery, the synod, and the commissions in various church structures. Furthermore, members of the DRCA (including the DRCA FS) were part of the Black South African community subjected to White imperialist forces manifested in slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. During the formal institution of these White imperialist forces, especially during apartheid, Black Africans were the lowest on the social hierarchy that classified races as Whites first, then mixed-race, Indians, and finally Black Africans (Omond 1986:23).

This article defines imperialism as economic, political, and cultural expansion, the subjugation of others, or dominance in whatever form (Smith 1999:21). White imperialism is a malicious system that invades all the societal structures, and adversely affects the whole human being; that is, psychologically, spiritually, and physically. Various types of professionals implemented the White imperialist ideology. According to Kane (1978:247), the first type was the political leaders of the imperial government, tasked with instituting White imperialism through legislations and domination. Second, the capitalist, representing the business interests of the imperial government, was tasked with exploiting human and material resources at the expense of the colonised. The capitalist employed the cheap labour of the vanquished people to achieve imperialist business interests. Third, the White missionary, influenced by White imperialist ideology, was tasked with manipulating the thinking, morality, and belief systems of the colonised.

The legacy of White imperialist forces still lingers on in contemporary

South African society. Their impact is felt more in the leadership problems in various sectors of society. Leadership features mostly as a malicious factor to be blamed for most of the social problems, whether political, economic or religious (Konneh 2002:1). Post-apartheid South Africa is described as violent, unequal, and racially divided (Woermann 2012:89). Churches in South Africa are meant to be transforming agents of a society guided by the ordinances of the gospel. This means church members need to live out values of the gospel like integrity, honesty, caring, and courage to confront injustices in their own context. However, most churches are oblivious to their gospel mandate. They tend to conform to the power of social pressure by compromising the values of the gospel. This we encounter by acts of violence, conflicts, and sexual misconduct that happen in the churches, to such an extent that churches are a mirror of their society, instead of the society being a mirror of the church as a Christian community (De Gruchy 2004:8, 9).

The DRCA FS has experienced a gradual decline in a social ministry characterised by conflicts, from mere personal disagreements to litigation and violence, and the relationship among those in leadership is one of mistrust and suspicion (Pali 2017:2, 6, 8). The ~~l~~eadership is blamed for the unhealthy situation in the DRCA FS congregations. Furthermore, the moderamen of the DRCA FS (i.e., the executive committee of the Synod of the DRCA FS) raised its concerns that, due to these conflicts, the church has lost its integrity to proclaim the gospel to society (DRCA FS 2015:32, 33). In light of the above, this article aims to critically analyse how the legacy of White imperialist forces has influenced the leadership of the DRCA FS. The reason for this research is that White imperialist forces have adversely affected Black Africans, and the consequences thereof are evident in the ministry of the DRCA FS.

The next section analyses the situation in the DRCA FS, as well as the ramifications and the nature of slavery, colonialism and apartheid, with reflection on the ministry of the DRCA FS. I then discuss the impact of the legacy of these White imperialist forces on the DRCA FS and its leadership, using internalised oppression theory to explicate the DRCA FS's muted response to apartheid governance, and its continuing dependence on the DRC.

Historical-situational Analysis of the DRCA FS

Prior to 1994, the DRC (for White Afrikaners), through its racial mission policy, established the following churches according to ethnic groups: the

Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC, for the Mixed-race), the DRCA (for Black Africans), and the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA, for Indians) (DRCA FS 2003:7, Article 2). Amongst the Black Africans the DRC established churches according to their different ethnic groups. According to Crafford (1982:149, 158, 173, 245, 564), prior to 1994, the DRCA had eight regional synods, namely the DRCA FS (initially for the South Sotho speaking, established on 9 March 1910 in Bloemfontein); the DRCA in Transvaal (established on 2 March1932 in Johannesburg), which was later on 27 April 1964 divided into the DRCA in Northern Transvaal (for the Black African ethnic groups like Venda, Pedi, and others living in the Northern Transvaal) and the DRCA in Southern Transvaal (for the Black African ethnic groups living in the Southern Transvaal) ; the Dutch Reformed Bantu[1] Church in South Africa (initially for the Black Africans ethnic groups living in the Western Cape, established on 7 November 1951 in Molteno, Western Cape); the DRCA in Natal (initially for the Zulu speaking Black Africans, established on 30 October 1952 in Ladysmith); the DRCA *Phororo*[2] Synod (initially for the Tswana speaking Black Africans, established on 15 March 1966 in Mafikeng); the DRCA Eastern Cape (initially for the Xhosa speaking Black Africans, established in 1973), and the DRCA Transkei Synod (initially for the Xhosa speaking Black Africans, established on 29 August 1978 in Umtata).

This article will focus more on the DRCA FS, as the first Black African church of the DRC established 9 March 1910 in Bloemfontein. Initially, it was called the DRMC FS (for the South Sotho speaking Black Africans). Prior to 1910, some of the Black African congregations had already been established as a product of White missionary activities of the 19th century (Corrie 2013:43). The White imperialist forces influenced the social pressure of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This affected the relationships between the majority of the Black Africans and Whites in both the church and society.

According to Odendaal (1970:485-521), already in the 19th century, Black nationalism was becoming stronger and more opposed to the practices of slavery and colonialism, and this continued into the 20th century against

[1] Bantu was a name used in the Apartheid era to refer to the Black Africans in South Africa.

[2] *Phororo* is a Tswana name for the waterfall, and the synod of the DRCA Phororo is situated in what is now called North-West and Northern Cape provinces in South Africa.

apartheid. In society, this took the form of opposition to the following: White dominance, oppression of the Black Africans (who were denied political rights), invasion of land by the colonial government, and manipulation of Black Africans to be involved in both the Anglo-Boer War and the World Wars. These socially oppressive practices adversely affected the relationship between Black Africans and White missionaries in the congregations. Odendaal (485-521) notes that, in the DRMC (for the Black Africans) congergations, some of the White ministers were suspected of supporting the colonial government and its practices of racial discrimination. Some of the White ministers also undermined African culture and propagated the ideology of associating Christianity with Western civilisation. Some of the White missionaries were also reluctant to affirm Black leadership in the congregations.

The Ethiopian movement inspired opposition to these practices. The consequence of this increasing tension between White ministers and Black leadership in the congregations led to a schism in some Black African congregations (Odendaal 1970:517, 518). To avoid further damage to the congregations, Odendaal (1970:551) mentions that White ministers, together with the Mission Commission from the DRC, formally established separate churches for Black Africans, with the intention of allowing them to ultimately govern themselves. The DRMC in the Free State (for Black Africans) was the first to be established in 1910 for the South Sotho-speaking Black Africans. Other DRMC (for other Black African ethnic groups) regional synods were later established in other provinces of South Africa. However, even after the establishment of separate Black African churches, the missionaries were still reluctant to acknowledge the readiness of this mission church to govern itself (Elphick 2012:225). Some of their arguments were that the mission church was neither sufficiently ready, financially strong, fully developed, nor ecclesiastically organised to stand on its own (Odendaal 1970:551). As a result, the DRMC regional synods including DRMC FS were subjected to a period of guardianship. The synods, constitution, articles, and laws were subjected to the DRC approval, and the DRC officials had the right to attend the DRMC meetings (Crafford 1982:175).

The name of the newly established church for Black Africans was similar to an already existing DRMC for 'Mixed race' peoples. On 7 May 1963 and thereafter, all Black African DRMC churches held a general synod in Kroonstad and adopted the new name, the DRCA. Crafford (1982:564) argues that the prefix 'Dutch Reformed' was adopted to revere and remember the

mother church, the White DRC. The suffix 'in Africa' was to open the doors to other churches in the DRC family and elsewhere in Africa to join them with the intention to unite. By contrast, Lebone (2002:277, 278) states that the purpose of uniting the DRCA churches in 1963 was to bring together Blacks, avoid alienation of the synods in different regions, and start a process of integrating with other DRC mission churches from other African countries. Regrettably, this has not yet been achieved, as the DRCA and others from the DRC family of churches are still struggling to unite.

From its first General Synod in 1963, held during the prime days of apartheid, the DRCA became one of the first DRC family of churches to oppose the establishment of separate churches based on ethnicity (Crafford 1982:573-575). It must be noted that during the apartheid era, the mission within the DRC was driven by the ideology of apartheid that required the paternalistic approach and the segregation of churches based on race (Mohlamme & Qakisa 1992:231; Van der Watt 2010:2, 3). The racially influenced mission policy of the DRC had implications within and far beyond the ecclesiastical realms. It affected the process of unification within the DRC family of churches and promoted the Afrikaner Nationalist policy of separate development beyond the church.

During the apartheid era, the DRC was reluctant to engage in unity talks with its DRC family of churches. The DRCA nevertheless initiated unity talks with the DRMC, from which the RCA (for Indians) was excluded, due to its view that it would only engage in unity talks if all the DRC family members were willing to participate. This unity process started in the early 1970s and was achieved in 1994. Both the DRMC and the DRCA were disbanded and a new church was inaugurated in 1994 as the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa (URCSA). However, after this formal unification, some ministers and their congregations from the DRCA FS and the DRCA Phororo withdrew from the URCSA to remain as the DRCA. The leadership of these two DRCA regional synods accused their previous moderamen of the general synod of the DRCA of deviating from the protocol of the church order to disband and unite churches and accept the Belhar[3] Confession (DRCA FS 1995:16, 17; 1999:9; General synod of the DRCA 1999:9). The remaining DRCA regional synods described the Belhar Confession as political, and the confession of the URCSA. More importantly, on the Belhar Confession, the

[3] Belhar Confession is a faith statement document from URCSA.

DRCA ministers felt excluded by the DRMC (for the Mixed-race) leadership when they decided, on their own, without inviting other DRC family churches, to participate in the writing of the Belhar Confession (Corrie 2013:44). The withdrawal from the URCSA caused a great deal of physical conflict and litigations between the URCSA and the then DRCA, especially in the Free State.

The DRCA FS and DRCA Phororo withdrew from the URCSA, also because of the influence of some of the conservative Black ministers who were opposed to the Belhar Confession and in favour of the unity of all the DRC family of churches. Moreover, the withdrawal from the URCSA was ascribed to the influence of some conservative White ministers in both the DRC and the DRCA who were not in favour of the Belhar Confession and formation of the URCSA. One of the White ministers in the DRCA (Phororo regional synod) mentioned that "[d]uring the 1980s, when the DRMC started the process of adopting the Belhar Confession, we [DRCA] still had not reached the point where we felt that it gave rise to a *status confessions"* (Corrie 2013:44). Concerning the unity process, it is strange and preposterous that the leadership of the DRCA, including the DRCA FS, after withdrawing from URCSA, applied for the disbandment of the remaining DRCA regional synods and membership of all its congregations and leadership at the DRC Synod (Corrie 2013:43; DRCA General Synod 2003:12). Does this mean that the DRCA General Synod was willing to allow the unity of the DRCA with the DRC rather than with other members of the DRC family of churches? Further research is required for a better understanding of the issue.

In relation to its external ministry, the DRCA made selective efforts to engage with apartheid critically and practically. For instance, the DRCA General Synod (1975:175 – 205) opposed the practice of apartheid in its document entitled *The Bible and the relationships between races and people*. In addition, Masuku (2014:160) argues that, during apartheid, some Black ministers in the DRCA joined the Black African Ministers' Caucus or Confessing Circle in order to oppose apartheid and the racial policies that hampered the internal and external ministry of the church. However, their views often did not as such represent the views of the DRCA as a whole. Kritzinger (2013:2, 10) explains this, arguing that in the fight against apartheid, some of the leadership, including White ministers from both the DRCA and the DRC, were reluctant to radically engage in apartheid; they preferred to use cautious criticism against apartheid. Cautious criticism implies that the

brutality and racial policy of the apartheid government that harassed, impoverished, and oppressed black people were not openly and radically criticised. This was to maintain relationship between the DRC and the apartheid government and sustain as long as possible the existence of the relations between the DRC and the apartheid government. Therefore, these ministers intimidated those aligned with the Confessing Circle against apartheid. During the apartheid era, Black ministers from other denominations viewed the DRCA ministers with suspicion when they made statements against apartheid, because of their association with the DRC, (Masuku 2014:160). This suspicion was confirmed by the report of the Financial Administrator of the DRCA FS (2019:41), who agreed that the DRCA, especially the DRCA FS, was severely criticised during apartheid. Even now, other churches view the DRCA with suspicion because of its relationship with, and dependency on the DRC, and its relative silence vis-à-vis apartheid policies. As Corrie (2013:44), one of the White ministers in the DRCA (Phororo Regional Synod), stated in his view of the critical role of the DRCA General Synod of 1963 against apartheid,

> At our commencement in 1963, we as a church did not have a problematic relationship with the apartheid government on any official level. Certain individuals did raise a lot of opposition against the [apartheid] government on the general synodical level, but that was not entertained by the majority of representatives.

Corrie's statement confirms that the DRCA was silent and uncritical in the context of many of the injustices of apartheid. The leadership of the DRCA General Synod was in general very cautious about their criticism of the apartheid government.

For a long time, including during the apartheid era, the DRCA, including the DRCA FS with Black ministers as leaders, was under the spell of the White ministers' influence. However, it must be noted that not all White or Black ministers in the DRCA, especially the DRCA FS, were supportive of and silent against the apartheid government. However, the DRCA FS was one of the regional synods of the DRCA that was initially mostly dominated by conservative White ministers. Even some of its Black African leadership were described as mainly conservative, supporting only cautious criticism of apartheid. According to Kritzinger (2011:118; 2013:2, 9, 10), the DRCA

inherited a silent and uncritical stance against apartheid from the DRC. Hence, the DRCA FS' (2011:153-156) approach to the injustices of apartheid was mostly silent, or at most addressed internally through its commission reports. Kritzinger further mentions that the DRCA inherited pietistic theology from the DRC and its White ministers. A pietistic theology is a theology that emphasised personal piety at the expense of radical and responsible societal engagement. A church or individual embedded in pietistic theology may pray to God and read the Bible every day and remain oblivious to social injustices. This weakened the critical social involvement of the DRCA. It is no wonder, at present, that the DRCA FS mission and *diaconia* are experiencing a serious decline.

The other issue that affected the contemporary situation of the DRCA FS is related to its lack of financial independence. Kritzinger mentions that the DRCA is financially and theologically dependent on the DRC and that this adversely affects the critical role of the DRCA in society. The consequence of this dependence was evident when some of the ministers who joined the Confessing Circle were marginalised and labelled as liberal. Today, when the DRCA FS experiences ministerial or financial crises, it begs the DRC for assistance. Again, there is a great deal of mistrust among those in the leadership, to such an extent that some of the ministers would like a return of the White missionaries or disbandment and integration of the DRCA into the DRC.

The Ramifications of Slavery, Colonisation, and Apartheid

These conflicts in the DRCA FS mirror the violent, divided and unequal society of which it is a part, and which results from the legacy of White imperialist forces. These forces and the violence they perpetuated include slavery, colonialism, and apartheid.

There are mixed feelings from former White imperialists when discussing slavery, colonialism, and apartheid. There are those who still see nothing wrong with White imperialist forces and regard them as necessary to facilitate civilisation, racial order and peace (Konneh 2002:12; Jansen 2011:38-42). By contrast there are those who regard White imperialist forces as terrible and wrong; these people are willing to confess the injustices they committed (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:157; Jansen 2011:38 - 42). From my perspective, it is appropriate to open a public debate on the injustices

perpetuated under White imperialist governments in order to help the victims and their descendants understand what happened and start the process of healing and reconciliation with the perpetrators. It is also imperative to note that the process of reconciliation and forgiveness starts with the victim (Schreiter 1998:14). The following section briefly discusses slavery, colonialism, and apartheid, and analyses their nature and effect.

Slavery is one of the inhumane White imperialist forces that subjugated Africans to foreign oppression by Europeans (Lovejoy 1981:11). Morton (1994:1) maintains that, on their arrival in South Africa in 1652, the Dutch settlers introduced slavery. This was later perpetuated by other White settlers such as the British and later the Afrikaners in the Western Cape. Nimako and Willemsen (2011:173-183) argue that, from the enslavers' perspective, slavery was an episode in human history and a stain on countries' characters that should be forgotten. But they also argue that academic discussions on slavery underrate its impact on the descendants of the enslaved who are still struggling with memory, commemoration, and the emancipation process (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:173-183). In my observation within the context of South Africa, there is a limited academic discussion on the practice of slavery and its consequences, while the families of the descendants of the perpetrators are oblivious to the impact of slavery on its victims. As a result, emancipation today is a continuing process, because issues of legacy and reparations must still be addressed.

Colonialism in South Africa is complex and lasted much longer than in other African countries. Loubser (1987:3) contends that the modern colonisation of South Africa by European powers started in 1652, when the first Dutch settlers occupied the former Cape Colony. This was followed by the British in 1800, and the Afrikaners from 1924 to 1994. It should be noted that the colonisation of Africa implies that Africa was conquered, subjected to European imperialism, and colonised against its will. Parrat (2004:3, 4) explains colonisation as a practice by a few European countries who dominated and controlled the destiny of the vast majority of the world populations, including not only Africa, but also most of Asia and the Americas. Parrat argues that colonisation was a total system that deprived the colonised of their political structures, and subjected their economies, cultural and social life to the needs of the Western countries of the world. It was maintained through violence and perpetuated by racism (Nimako & Willemsen 2011:152).

Besides slavery and colonialism, Black Africans also suffered because

of apartheid, which can be viewed as the twentieth-century climax of White imperialist governance in South Africa. Apartheid, as perpetuated by Whites, involves elements of segregation, racism, and imperialism. Apartheid is a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that is not easy to define. Loubser (1987:xiii, xiv) describes apartheid as an extreme form of racial segregation on all levels of society. To White Afrikaners, apartheid was a system used to create a pure Afrikaner nation; hence, the prevention of mixed marriages and the practice of racial discrimination and inequality were relevant to achieving this goal. Apartheid was also used to classify nations according to race and build the infrastructure according to the status of their race. In summary, Apartheid was a form of violent paternalism, designed to undermine African culture and control African population growth. The majority of the Afrikaners and their churches were ardent proponents of the apartheid ideology as a system of government in South Africa. Afrikaners of Dutch, German, and French origin (Loubser 1987:125) were associated with Afrikaans churches such as the Dutch Reformed Church, the Afrikaanse Protestante Kerk, the Gereformeerde Kerk, and the Hervormde Kerk.

The Nature of White Imperialist Forces

In order to analyse the nature and effect of these White imperialist forces on Africans, I will briefly use ideas of Konneh (2002:10-13). White imperialist forces denied Africans the right to participate in their future destiny; they used legislations and structures, and appointed their own officials to dominate Africans (Konneh 2002:12). Again, White imperialists used authoritarian bureaucracy to control resources and subjugate their subjects (Konneh 2002:11). Authoritarian bureaucracy refers to police, army, courts, tax collectors, labour law officials, and sometimes White missionaries. These representatives of authoritarian bureaucracy used legislation and punitive measures to implement the White imperialists' laws. Furthermore, the goal of White imperialism was not nation building, but fragmentation of people according to the boundaries of ethnicity, geography, or social status (Konneh 2002:10). Moreover, the White imperialist legislation enforced exclusion by favouring the White imperialist and undermining the rights of the indigenous people; hence, there was no equality before the law (Dooling 2007:16). Lastly, White imperialism used the strategy of divide and rule to ensure its political and economic hegemony (Konneh 2002:11). This was achieved by dividing

Africans according to their tribes, planting mistrust amongst the African tribes and appointing African tribal chiefs who will serve interests of the white imperialists.

The Influence of White Imperialist Forces on the Leadership of the DRCA FS

White imperialist forces had a devastating impact on societal structures and conceptions of humanity. They infiltrated African institutions such as the family, churches and the traditional leadership systems. White imperialist forces affected African leadership and, in particular, the DRCA FS leadership and its ministry. According to Thesnaar (2010:93), apartheid deeply affected both African and White communities as 'victims' and 'offenders'. In this instance, 'victims' refers to mainly the African community, and 'offenders' to the perpetrators and bystanders who took part in the injustices of apartheid or who benefited from the system, the majority of them being Whites. Thesnaar (2010:94) maintains that the vast majority of South Africans affected by apartheid tend to remain in their comfort zone of 'victim' and 'offender'. This is realised when most of the African communities depend on the state and turn it into a welfare state, whereas the White community keeps away from the African community and government out of shame or to avoid conflict (Woermann 2012:90). In the context of the DRC family of churches, the DRCA FS tends to play the role of victim of the White imperialist forces. This often happens when the DRCA FS experiences financial or ministerial challenges; it always begs the DRC for assistance.

Internalised oppression theory helps to illustrate how rhe 'victim'/ 'offender' legacy of White imperialism is perpetuated in the DRCA FS. David and Derthick (2014:23) define internalised oppression as uncritical devaluation of one's own group members and valuation of another. David and Derthick (2014:8) note that long exposure to oppression, violence or injustices tends to influence one to perpetuate that situation to which one has been exposed, although it may be in a different context and in varying degrees. For example, prior to coming to Africa in the 19th and 20th centuries, most of the White settlers suffered violence and injustice from their European compatriots. Under British rule in South Africa, Afrikaners suffered acts of violence and injustices, especially during the Anglo-Boer War. Yet, these White settlers, including the Afrikaners, perpetuated what they had suffered by doing the same to Africans.

Some of the African leadership perpetuated injustices they had suffered by doing the same to other Africans.

Members of the DRCA FS have long been exposed to the DRC mission policy influenced by White imperialist ideology; moreover, as members of South African society, they were also subjected to its White imperialist forces. The present leadership of the DRCA FS reflects internalised oppression due to a long exposure to White imperialist forces. For example, in its early days, the DRCA FS was placed under the guardianship of the DRC, institutionalising an unequal relationship. For a long time the DRC provided financial and human resources to help sustain the DRCA FS. Now, in the post-apartheid South Africa, the DRCA FS is viewed as independent and capable to sustain itself. Therefore, the relationship between it and the DRC should now be of partners in ministry. Despite these new developments, the DRCA FS still acts like a victim of the previous White imperialist forces and shows low self-esteem and dependency upon the DRC. For example, in the DRCA FS, some ministers still believe that mission is from White to Black people and therefore that the DRC has the responsibility to fund DRCA FS mission projects (Pali & Verster 2013:227–253). Again, I often observe times when the DRCA FS has challenges to fund mission projects or deal with its internal conflicts, as it does not trust its own people to come with creative solutions, but is only too ready to run to the DRC to seek assistance.

Internalised oppression perpetuates unhealthy relationships (David & Derthick 2014:9). Leadership involves a quality relationship of influence with the other. Traditional African leadership values relationship with life, connection to nature, relationship with other human beings, and relationship with God (Mutabazi 2002:207). Unfortunately, with their strategy of divide and rule and of planting mistrust and suspicion among Africans, White imperialists contaminated the practice of maintaining quality relationships between the African leader and the follower. As discussed earlier, in the early years of the DRCA, Africans mistrusted the White missionaries because they suspected them of supporting White imperialist forces. During the apartheid era, other denominations viewed DRCA ministers with suspicion and mistrust because of their association with the DRC and their muted criticism of apartheid. In the DRCA FS, conflicts cause unhealthy relationships among those in leadership, thus reflecting envy, mistrust, and suspicion (DRCA General Synod 2019:28, 29; DRCA FS 2019:24, 29). In the present DRCA FS, in 2020, a faction of ministers decided to separate themselves from the DRCA

FS to form the DRCA Eastern Free State synod. In my research, I have observed that these factions do not talk to each other, rather they insult each other. Those ministers who belong to the opposing faction are often suspected of being informers.

Internalised oppression leads to domination and autocratic bureaucracy, which is discouraged in modern leadership studies. Domination and autocratic bureaucracy in leadership generate both resistance and passive followers, and can eventually lead to violence, including domestic violence and violent crime (David & Derthick 2014:21). In the context of the DRCA FS, Pali (2016:117) discovered that ministers who prefer a domineering kind of leadership tend to refuse to listen to the members of their congregations, and insist on controlling the administration and ministry of the church. They use church bureaucracy and tradition to resist change. According to Pali (2018:10), conflicts in the DRCA FS are shifting from mere personal disagreement to litigation and violence, due to a leadership that prefers domination and hides behind the bureaucracy of the church. Violence takes the form of physical threats and disruption of the DRCA FS assemblies and worship services as well as synodical and presbytery meetings (Pali 2018:5).

Long-term oppression leads to a distorted view of oneself and others (David & Derthick 2014:14). The manner in which a leader interacts with and views the followers impacts on the results of leadership. White imperialists viewed their victims as less human and lacking in creative thinking. Hence, they believed that their victims could not produce anything of value. It is not surprising that some of the Whites in South Africa still use derogatory words against Black Africans (Geldenhuys & Kelly-Louw 2020:2). As discussed earlier, in the early years of the DRCA OFS, some White missionaries were not ready to affirm African leadership in the newly established Black African church, due to doubts about their competence and readiness to lead the church towards a self-governing and propagating church. According to Pali (2016:48, 102), some ministers in the DRCA FS view their congregants as lazy, ignorant, rebellious, and lacking in vision. By contrast, some members in the congergations of the DRCA FS describe their ministers as arrogant, controlling, and unapproachable. Regrettably, such a negative view of others in the congregations of the DRCA FS has led to passive members and arrogant and unapproachable ministers.

Internalised oppression manifests itself in discrimination, hierarchy and control to sustain dominance (David & Derthick 2014:10). During the era

of White imperialist forces, the emphasis on master-servant relationship, the distinction between male and female, and the emphasis on superiority-inferiority were common and were used to highlight differences and increase inequality. One can say the DRCA FS discriminates against ministers from Uniting Reformed Church in South Africa (URCSA), for the reason that it does not recognise ordination of its ministers because of the Belhar Confession. This is despite URCSA being a member of the DRC family of churches. In the DRCA FS Church Order (2003:8), even though the practice of leadership emphasises servanthood and collegiality, some ministers tend to emphasise hierarchy and control in order to assert their leadership. During my teenage years, one of the senior ministers told his congregation with pride and arrogance, "I found you poor and with nothing and I built all these buildings. If no one is ready to listen and obey my orders, the door is open for you to leave this congregation. I am the pastor here; I will not tolerate anyone to disobey my authority". This kind of leadership is autocratic and not open to alternative views.

Internalised oppression leads to identity crises that contribute to individual and group moral failure and loss of identity (David & Derthick 2014:8). White imperialists contributed to the loss of identity of African leadership by undermining African languages and cultural practices. Leadership in the DRCA FS is Christian, Reformed and African. Unfortunately, the DRCA FS used its Reformed identity for exclusion and resistance to change, as noted in its reluctance to take part in the unity of the DRC family of churches, due to the adoption of the Belhar Confession. In terms of African identity, the vast majority of the DRCA FS ministers are Africans who, for a long time, resisted the introduction of African practices such as African musical instruments and liturgical dance in the church. Many of the members left the church, as they found the church and its ministry to be foreign and therefore irrelevant.

Internalised oppression not only affects external behaviour but also the inner person. For example, in his first article under I Write what I Like in the SASO Newsletter of August 1970, titled, 'Black Souls in White Skins?', Biko (1978:28, 29) argues that White imperialist forces left Africans with a tarnished personality and angry, with emotions of vengeance that are often vented against a fellow Black man and his property. Ramphele (2008:14) raised concerns about the quality of human capital inherited from apartheid. Parrat (2004:5) notes that, from colonialism, we inherited human beings suffering

from spiritual, psychological and physical poverty. This is an indication of the extreme effect of White imperialism on humanity, both as victim and offender. It proves that the inner being of an African is deeply hurt, traumatised and disoriented from the true values of *Ubuntu*, integrity and love for one another.

The scourge of conflicts has caused the DRCA FS to lose its integrity. It is experiencing an increase in sexual immorality, financial mismanagement, and internal violence (Pali 2018:5, 8, 10). Due to conflicts among themselves, some ministers are suffering from depression (DRCA FS 2007:8).

Internalised oppression promotes underdevelopment and lack of initiative. Leadership is tasked with human development, empowerment and enablement. White imperialists hindered human development by enacting laws to impose their own development on Africans, in order to shape their destiny as servile servants. To achieve this, White imperialist education inculcated the superiority of Whites, thus making Africans aspire to the fallible wisdom of the Europeans. It made African elites think in European terms and imitate European practices as far as planning the future of their own people was concerned (Van der Walt 2003:15). It led to Africans remaining in positions as cheap labourers, producing nothing creative. In the DRCA FS, holistic development and empowerment of the laity are also hindered by the shortage of ministers (Pali 2016:107). The majority of the ministers who do lay empowerment limit it to internal aspects of ministry with less emphasis on the external aspect of ministry. This kind of practice limits the church' impact to its own context.

Internalised oppression, in turn, instills fear and the lack of passion to engage social injustices. White imperialist forces disempowered Africans to engage effectively with their own context. This was done through use of fear and punitive measures to discourage initiatives to deal with social injustices. Fear refers to fear of God or fear of the violent nature of the White imperialist forces. By punitive measures I refer to the use of armed forces, imprisonment, or legislation to discourage Africans from protesting against injustices of the White imperialist government. For example, during the apartheid era, the mission of the DRCA FS in the industrial, mining, and farming areas was suspected of making Africans yield to tyrannical employers and ignore injustices in the workplace (Pali 2019:213). Furthermore, fear of losing a salary subsidised by the DRC and the violent nature of the White imperialist government discouraged some ministers of the DRCA FS from taking part in social activism against apartheid.

Conclusion

The practices of slavery, colonialism, and apartheid in South Africa have a common thread that binds them together. These White imperialist forces were implemented against the will of the victims. They exposed victims to perpetual violence, racism, inequality and exploitation, and influenced every aspect of social life to serve the interests of White imperialists. White imperialist forces were ruthlessly paternalistic, to such an extent that they left many Africans in a state of spiritual, psychological and physical poverty, whereby they cannot produce anything of value, but glorify the western models of doing science, ministry, and living (Parrat 2004:4). The situation of the DRCA FS indicates that it needs to be liberated from the legacy of the White imperialist forces, because it is still financially and theologically dependent on the DRC. Due to its long exposure to White imperialist forces, the DRCA FS suffers from internalised oppression. Signs of internalised oppression include physical acts of violence, disruption of DRCA FS assemblies, unhealthy relationships among those in leadership, poor social engagement with their context, dependency on the DRC, lack of initiative in ministry, and increasing immorality. The leadership of the DRCA FS needs to reflect on the legacy of White imperialist forces in its ministry and context. It needs to empower its membership to develop a strategy to deal with this legacy and in particular the internalised oppression that is perpetuated amongst its leadership and ministry in the congregations. If the situation is not addressed, the DRCA FS may experience a slow death or will gradually be absorbed into the DRC FS, as has consistently been proposed in the DRCA FS' assemblies since 1994. The DRCA FS is in dire need of a leadership that will facilitate healing and liberation from the legacy of White imperialist forces, so that the DRCA FS can begin a new narrative of its well-being in the ministry of the Kingdom of God.

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Dr. K.J. Pali
Practical and Missional Theology
Faculty of Theology and Religion
University of the Free State
palikj@ufs.ac.za

Governance and Egalitarianism in Africa: Exploring a Leadership Battle between the Young and Old Political Leaders

Gyaviira Kisitu
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1084-7638

Margaret Ssebunya
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1206-8083

Abstract

Despite decades into independence, many African countries still wrestle with the consequences of poor service delivery as well as an unconstitutional hold onto power. Most of these setbacks have been pinned on the flaws of the old generation of political leaders, often by a new wave of young political leaders. The latter have thus penetrated political leadership spaces to assert themselves as alternative leaders for the African continent. However, this has been vigorously challenged by the incumbents, most of whom belong to the older generation. This development has played more a role in creating a generational conflict among political leaders than in responding to humanitarian concerns. Drawing from selected cases in some African countries, the paper sheds light on the current state of political leadership on the continent. It argues that competition for political leadership between the young and old generations, and the grip on power of the latter are some of the critical problems hampering the realization of democracy, service delivery and peace on the continent.

Keywords: Africa, Democracy, Egalitarianism, Generational conflict, Governance, Humanitarianism, Old generation political leaders, Political leadership, Young political leaders.

Introduction

According to the Africa Union Commission Agenda 2063 (2015), the 'Africa we Want', seeks to be characterized by,

> inclusive growth and sustainable development, integration, unity based on the ideals of Pan Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance, good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, peace and security, strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics, people-driven development and reliance on the potential of the African people.

Despite this set of 'imaginations' and 'ambitions', many African countries continue to be marred by challenges, many of which are catastrophic and life threatening. The deteriorating healthcare systems, rampant civil conflicts, hunger, corruption, military coups, election violence and extrajudicial killings are part of the many challenges that continue to threaten the peace and development of many African societies. The perpetuation of these challenges has led to loss of human life and the destruction of the environment across the African continent, even though the magnitude differs from one context to the other. The chapter notes that such situations have succeeded in undermining the attainment of peace and development in many African societies. They have further led to an emergence of a generational conflict between young political leaders and the old generation of leaders[1] who still control much of political power. Citing the increasing failure of the current political leadership in responding to humanitarian challenges in society today, the YPL have penetrated political landscapes to assert themselves as capable alternative leaders and thus destabilized their traditionally constructed identity – *leaders of tomorrow*.

The penetration of the YPL into spaces predominantly occupied by the OGL has not been well received by the latter who happen to control the poli-

[1] The term 'old generation of leaders' (OGL) is used with reference to political leaders who have remained in power for long. The terms 'young political leaders' and 'young generation of leaders' (YPL) are used interchangeably with reference to political activists/ politicians below the age of 40 who attempt to persuade the older generation of leaders to relinquish power.

tical space. The YPL have often been seen as less competent to assume the highest leadership positions, such as being presidents of political parties, ministers or heads of state. They are deemed unruly, mercenary and less knowledgeable about liberation histories, a development which has ignited protests and defiance in young people's camps. Although young people have been absorbed in political leadership and administration in some countries, there is a certain limit they can go, and this is not evenly spread across the continent. The conflict between the YPL and OGL has not been constructive for issues of humanitarianism. Resources that would aid the provision of healthcare services, infrastructural development, mitigation of environmental threats, and basic education are channelled elsewhere to guarantee power to long-time political leaders and to suppress political opposition, civil unrest, and resisting pressure groups. The YPL on the other hand, have formed pressure groups and political movements and seem determined to oust their political grandparents. Whether the struggles are merited or not, in some instances they have led to loss of life, destruction of property, unlawful imprisonment and torture, or what Claude Ake (1993:240) rightly describes as 'vicious circle of coercion, and alienation leading to tragic consequences'. The question is, how does this state of conflict between the YPL and the old generation of political leaders contribute to the well-being of a local person whose only interest is to have basic healthcare services, food, shelter, and children attending school? How will this contribute to the achievement of Africa's golden aspiration – Agenda 2063? This paper raises questions about the attainment of these aspirations, given the nature and magnitude of the prevailing political leadership challenges that African countries continue to experience.

Through the democratic egalitarianism conceptual framework, the paper attempts to expose the grip on power of the OGL, its conflict with the YPL, and how these developments impede the realization of constitutional democracy on the continent. Drawing from Ronald Dworkin (2000), egalitarianism can be understood as a doctrine of political philosophy advocating equality, where all people ought to be treated the same and enjoy equal social status. Egalitarianism could be understood with reference to fundamental underpinnings of democracy. From a philosophical perspective, Bernard Matolino (2018:96) states, 'democracy is about the people', but not the will and aspirations of the rulers. In this way, the people's uncompromised participation, their consent to decision making and public accountability of

those in power is fundamental to democracy (Ake 1991:34). Further, democracy would dictate that leadership upholds dignified existence. Democracy should be cautious of fulfilling 'political imperatives such as freedom of the individual, equal and fair treatment before the law, and freedom from being victimised by the State' (Matolino 2018:xi). Democratic egalitarianism is a dictation of a justice code, holding that society is just if, and only if, its practices and institutions are in accord with the shared values of a constitutional democracy. According to this framework, the current state of political leadership in Africa is responsible for conflicts related to issues of leadership and governance between the OGL and the emerging YPL on the continent.

The chapter argues that the conflict of leadership interests between the YPL and OGL is part of a critical problem hampering the realization of democracy, development and peace on the continent. From the egalitarian perspective, it is crucial for leaders to act in accordance with the needs and aspirations of the people. This would involve, among other factors, enabling job creation environments, access to proper healthcare, good education systems, justice, transparency and accountability, free and fair elections, as well as the attainment of long-lasting peaceful existence and the development of all people. Egalitarian principles would imply that countries choose actions according to impartial standards, treating all citizens impartially with equal concern and respect, regardless of their status in society. The paper argues that embracing egalitarian principles in accordance with African values on leadership may respond to the generational conflict regarding leadership and governance and thus promote constitutional democracy on the African continent.

Political Leadership Landscape and Challenges in Africa: A Brief Overview

It is important to ask ourselves, 'Where is Africa today and how would Africa describe herself should she get an opportunity?' Of course, this triggers a plethora of responses, depending on the respondent's standpoint. For Heather Deegan (2009:14), 'Africa' is almost used as a 'brand name' to identify, market, promote, condemn, herald, or indeed call attention to any facet of the continent that may concern the international and globalized environment. If it is not violence, conflict, poverty, rape or HIV/AIDS that is grabbing the head-

lines, it is political mismanagement, arms dealing, corruption or terror. Noting from a leadership perspective, John Igue (2010:115) holds that many African societies are identified with poor rational management of people and public affairs. He argues that many of these societies are characterised by failed attempts to embrace foreign economic models championed by liberal economics, and as such they are bogged down in misery, being victims of poor political management. Scholars such as Patrick Bond (2000) view as unsuccessful the story of liberal and neoliberal economics in Africa in the early 2000s, while a comparable experience seems to embody Africa's economic development even today. This is mainly because, as African states continue to embrace the spirit of liberal and neoliberal economics, societies continue to be overburdened by ills of economic biases where social economic development is virtually controlled by the elite, and African governments continue being suffocated by decades old debts, while accumulated wealth continues to be concentrated among the few at the expense of the majority (Coulibaly *et al*. 2019).

Yet it is also true that the African continent, through its leaders, at various continental and regional levels, does acknowledge the existence of the above complex challenges, which are at the same time exacerbated by issues of governance and growing terror attacks. Africa is a continent that sobs with experiences of terror attacks whose target is to intimidate a particular community or destabilize politico- economic systems (Cilliers 2003:92). Most prominently, two terrorist groups are internationally known to be based and operational in Africa. These are Boko Haram of Nigeria and Al-Shabaab of Somalia. In recent years, the presence and operation of these groups, along with their allies across the continent, have been destructive, especially to hu-man life and property, causing huge setbacks to development. They have con-tributed to many deaths through suicide bombings, abductions of civilians, targeting places of worship, entertainment, hotels, shopping malls and villages (Falode 2016; Anderson & McKnight 2015). Further, these attacks have given rise to abductions and the displacement of people, both internally and across borders. Such are the experiences of terrorism that have been experienced in countries like Nigeria, Somalia, Egypt, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Sudan, Kenya, Mali, and Niger[2].

[2] There have been other incidents of terrorist attacks in other African countries but only these have been mentioned here given their top rankings on the global measurement of terrorist impact by the Global Terrorism Index 2018.

According to the Global Terrorism Index (2018:3), Nigeria and Somalia rank third and sixth, respectively on the global measurement of terrorist impact. Acts of terrorism do not seem to occur without possible explanations. Studies on terrorism have indicated that conflict remains the primary driver of terrorism in most countries throughout the world with other incidents related to issues of social alienation, lack of economic opportunity and involvement in an external conflict (Krieger & Meierrieks 2011; Feldman 2009).

The African countries ranking the highest on the scale of terrorist attacks are also known to face soaring levels of conflicts. This is the case in countries such as Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. In these countries, internal conflicts play a big role in fuelling acts of terrorism within the respective states and on the continent.

African leaders today still grapple with economic growth, which in many sub-Saharan African states is still recorded as slower. African leaders such as Yoweri Museveni of Uganda have long discussed this aspect. Museveni (cited in Deegan, 2009) has argued that economic growth on the continent has been hindered by 'underdevelopment in productive forces such as science, technology, managerial capacity and skilled labour'. However, the question of economic growth is far more complex. Lack of transparency and accountability in administering public goods can be argued to be a hindrance to economic development in Africa. These defects tend to be promoted by personal interests and short-term focus on the control of resources, rather than paying attention to the needs of the country. This is demonstrable in the high rates of corruption cases exhibited in many African states today. It is almost a daily experience that accessing public goods and services calls for some sort of bribery. While launching the African Union theme of the year 2018 on fighting corruption on the continent, President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria (2018:1) rightly recognised 'corruption as indeed one of the greatest evils of our time as it compromises the efficiency of governmental institutions, rewards those who do not play by the rules and also creates a system of distortion and diversion thereby destroying all efforts at constructive, just and fair governance'. According to Coralie Pring and Jon Vrushi (2019:4), a survey on 47 000 citizens in 35 countries across Africa indicates that 'more than half of all citizens think corruption is getting worse in their country and that their government is doing a bad job at tackling corruption'. It would therefore be very difficult to contemplate development in a situation where public goods and services such as education opportunities, food, water, and health are accessed by paying bribes.

African leaders' attempts to develop their economies are further stifled by the threat of drought, floods and desertification. Case studies on drought and desertification in Africa show that livelihoods of millions of people in Africa are threatened due to the effects of climate change. Regions such as the Sahel of northern Africa, Southern Africa, West Africa and the area covering the horn of Africa have experienced droughts in recent decades. Although some efforts have been made by African countries in tackling drought and desertification, these efforts are hampered by high levels of poverty, weak institutional capacities, and challenges in resource mobilization, weak information bases, and inadequate access to affordable, appropriate technology (Economic Commission for Africa 2007:45 - 47).

The question as to whether political leaders in Africa adhere to democracy and have respect for human rights and freedoms are contested, as many of them have been found to be totalitarian and abusive of human rights. In cases where freedom of expression, inclusiveness and acknowledgment of political opponents have been undermined, the extent of democratic rule in particular African countries has been questioned. This has been the case in countries such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Angola, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where political leaders have autocratically stayed in power ranging between 30 to 41years.The same has happened in Angola, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda, where repression has been used on dissenting political voices (Amnesty International 2018; Felter 2020).

The meaning of 'democracy' and its lenses of analysis raise contextual challenges in Africa. Debates as to whether solutions to Africa's problems could be met under majoritarian, consensus or deliberative forms of democracy continue to unsettle many African thinkers (Matolino 2018; Carew 2004). Yet, this is not surprising, especially when it comes to achieving a mutual understanding of what constitutes democracy. Moreover, the term, 'democracy' from its sixth-century BC birth and usage remains contested and complex. In fact, in Athens where democracy is said to have been born, women and slaves were excluded. Additionally, some of the great philosophers have expressed their doubts on the effectiveness of democratic governance. For instance, the ancient Greek philosopher Plato held that the idea of democracy was worse and chaotic for government and therefore he preferred aristocratic rule by a philosopher king. Similarly, for Winston Churchill, cited in Samuel Huntington (1996:9), it is difficult to categorically assert whether 'democracy is perfect

or all-otherwise [as] it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time'. Therefore, one often wonders whether what is deemed 'democratic' in a given state equally applies to another. For example, some countries argue grievously against the recognition of homosexuality as a sexual orientation, while others have gone ahead to legitimise it. The irony is that all these countries claim to be democratic and defenders of human rights and many of them have ratified and signed international treaties and conventions that advocate democracy, the rule of law and upholding human rights.

The above encounters are only a tip of the iceberg of the challenges faced by the contemporary African political leaders, and which this paper cannot claim to exhaust. However, it is the argument of this paper that these challenges are interlinked with the state of political leadership many African states have faced historically and in the present. The political leadership in many African countries is part and parcel of the problem faced by the continent, given its continuous failure to respond appropriately to the needs of citizens. The danger equally seems to lie firstly in the choices these leaders make; secondly, in the nature and philosophy of their leadership; thirdly, in leadership-related conflicts between the young and old generations; and lastly, the failure to navigate between private/personal and public/national interests. In the cases analysed for this paper, it has been found that in countries where leaders have stayed in power for long there exists a related chain of the contestations enumerated above.

Staying in power for long has earned many leaders certain identities such as 'Africa's leaders for life', or 'African leaders addicted to power' (Felter 2020). These identities are constructed in the face of a growing opposition to the OGL. This antagonism, which is mostly championed by the generation of YPL, attempts to cast doubts on purported ideals and efficacy of the present leadership styles and philosophies of the OGL, who do not seem to want to relinquish power in their respective countries. This wave of opposition is experienced in instances where the young people have fronted themselves to become leaders of major political parties where they publicly denounce the once revered fathers and grandfathers of independence. This has been the case in countries such as South Africa where young leaders such as Julius Sello Malema of the Economic Freedom Fighters and Mmusi Maimane, a former leader of the Democratic Alliance (South Africa's main opposition party), have entered into the political arena, which has traditionally been occupied by their

elders. In other sub-Saharan African countries such as Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana and Malawi, the major opposition is led by men in their thirties and forties. In Uganda, a 37-year-old musician and recently turned politician Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu, *alias Bobi Wine*, crafted a resistance movement 'People Power, our Power'. Primarily, this movement seeks to unite Ugandans on issues such as ending human rights abuses, corruption, over taxation, improved service delivery and redefining the rule of law, with a focus on the young people. The evolution of young political leaders in African states shows that there is an attempt to redefine the notion of leadership and more so to challenge the status quo that simply identifies young people as 'leaders of tomorrow', even though the so-called 'tomorrow' never comes. In a state of defiance, young people seem to argue, 'We are leaders of today'. Also, there is a sense of a long-lived dissatisfaction with post-independence experiences in many African states, especially where the ruling elite seems to have turned into oppressive regiments to their fellow citizens. The effect of these experiences is what Ake (1993:240) describes as 'a demand for a second independence, this time from indigenous leadership whose economic mismanagement, together with brutal repression have made mere survival all but impossible'. Current evidence of young people's ambitions for high-profile political positions represents a generational wave attempting to break 'the monopoly of power enjoyed by this failed leadership … in order that power can be transferred to the people who have little to lose and much to gain' (Ake 1993:240). However, this has not been received the by the OGL, even though there is evidence that the present leadership in many African states has gradually recorded little progress in economic development, security, inclusive government, human rights, and respect for constitutional democracy. In this paper, the African political landscape shows evidence of what is termed as a generational conflict for leadership and governance in Africa.

Generational Conflict for Leadership and Governance in Africa

As noted in the section above, there is a generational conflict for leadership and governance in many African countries. Generational conflict comes about whenever the interests or ideals of one generation conflict openly with those of another generation. Seemingly motivated by how young people have taken up high-profile leadership positions in countries such as France, Ukraine,

North Korea, Georgia, San Marino, New Zealand, Austria and Costa Rica (Eliza Relman 2017), and in view of the endemic problems facing the African continent, young generation leaders have embarked on public scrutiny and criticism of the old generation of African leaders. For several reasons, the older generation is blamed for lacking the capability and capacity to fully comprehend the problems facing their citizenry and the competence to provide sustainable solutions. The young generation of leaders believe they are better placed to steer Africa from the vicious circles of endemic problems and also re-spond to the challenges and opportunities of globalization. As Mohiddin (2007:28) notes, the old generation of leaders in a number of African countries is blamed for the failure 'to create an environment that would enable the continuous evolution of succeeding generations of young African leaders with competence, integrity, vision and commitment'. In many African countries, no specific measures are taken to prepare the young generation for leadership. Even though there are many young people with the potential for leadership, the socio-political and economic environments in many African countries, are such that it is practically impossible for youthful and knowledgeable leaders with more productive visions different from those of the older incumbents.

The age hierarchy encapsulated and handed on from generation to generation, in African culture, has meant that there are fewer chances and opportunities for young people to express themselves and to participate significantly and meaningfully in the national social and political discourse of their countries. While some of the old-generation leaders acknowledge the challenges confronting their nations and the failure to address them, they are suspicious of the emerging young generation of leaders and are hostile towards them. The new wave of young leaders seems to have also been instrumental in creating fear and insecurity among the older generation who, in their daily exercise of power, appear to oblivious to the needs, fears and aspirations of the electorate. In Uganda, for instance, a group of 26 young people (including Members of Parliament) were reportedly arrested and tortured during the Arua Municipality by-election in August 2018 – an election won by the opposition. The report of the Ad Hoc Committee on the investigations into the condition of MPs indicated that they were severely tortured – presumable by security personnel supportive of the existing leadership. The Committee demanded the prosecution of those involved (Amule Doreen *et al*. 2018), but no action was taken on the agents. The victims were released several months later after all charges had been dropped.

Another generational conflict on the African continent emerges from a poor general acceptance, support and grounding of constitutionalism[3]. In some cases, there appear to be a lack of respect for the constitution and, or the amendment of the Constitution in favour of old-generation leaders. As a result, leadership succession in a number of African countries has tended to be a product of crude political manipulations, rebellions or military coups rather than the peaceful application of the constitutional process. In the last decade alone, Africa has experienced six successful coups d'état (most recent being in Mali on 18-19August 2020), and 27 coup attempts (Harding 2019; Birikolang 2013). In some countries like Uganda there has been political manipulation of the Constitution to remove the presidential term and age limit against the wishes of the citizenry – a move hurtling towards establishing a life presidency. With reference to the Ugandan case, critics have noted that a constitutional amendment to remove the upper age limit for presidential candidates[4] sought to safeguard the incumbent president in power (Kaheru 2017). Prior to the passing of the law, Members of Parliament, mainly young-generation leaders, hurled punches and clambered over benches in defiance of the Bill. The removal of the presidential age limit was met with a lot of resistance and opposition not only from the young opposition leaders, but also from civil rights activists, religious leaders and members of the public. It is also noted that the country has never seen a peaceful transition of political power since attaining independence from the British in 1962 (Aljazeera 2018). This and many examples elsewhere in Africa indicate that politics is personalized and transformed into a means of acquiring power. Those in positions of leadership would seem to do all they can to keep others out. They would easily ignore the democratic principles, norms and conventions to which their countries are signatories, even to the point of changing the highest law of the land.

Additionally, non-delivery of services in several post-independence African countries plays an important role towards the creation of a generational

[3] Constitutions can be manipulated, and the mere existence of a Constitution is not a sufficient ground to claim democracy in a state. Our reference to and elaboration on constitutional democracy is within the limits that political leaders seek no manipulation of their country's constitution to serve their political ambitions.

[4] The Ugandan Constitution, enacted in 1995, previously prohibited anyone younger than 35 or older than 75 from serving as president.

conflict for leadership and governance on the continent. Some studies have noted that nearly 60% of Africa's population are young people between 15 and 24 years of age (Ighobor 2017; Goal Keepers Report 2018:9) a majority of whom are not actively integrated into the economies of their respective countries. Other studies indicate that while young people comprise about 37% of Africa's labour force, they account for 60% of the unemployed on the continent (Gyimah-Brempong & Kimenyi 2013). This experience could be used to argue that the majority of young people struggle to afford basic services, given their economic situations, while those who can afford such services are scarce in many African states. It would be important to recognise that under these circumstances, the creation of a large gap between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' is most probable. This can lead to resentment and anger among the young people towards the OGL whom they accuse of not doing enough to address their problems. It is not surprising therefore that emerging young leaders have become outspoken about the issues affecting young people via social media and other forums, thereby strengthening their ability to challenge state authority, creating tension and exacerbating conflict for leadership and governance. This has been observed in countries such as South Africa and Uganda among others where young leaders are using their positions to gain media attention and a fast-growing base of dedicated grassroots followers. Vocal YPL such as Malema and Kyagulanyi have attracted scorn and mockery from the OGL, but at the same time they are gaining fame and popularity among the young people (Chikane 2018; Osiebe 2020). For many of the young people struggling to survive, emerging YPL seem to be a source of hope amidst frustrations, and many are beginning to question the legitimacy of a system that keeps them down.

Young people have gradually become disillusioned and embittered with voracious leaders and ineffectual governance structures on the continent. Consequently, there has been a build-up of youth activism questioning the authenticity of popular slogans such as *young people are the leaders of tomorrow as* today's experience seems to offer no guarantee for a hopeful *tomorrow*. Associating young people with 'the tomorrow' rather than 'the present' is commonly used in schools and youth gatherings as a motivational ideology to inspire young people to prepare for the future. While the ideology is inspirational to some extent, it is also political by nature. It attempts to restrict the political business 'of today' to the old generation and it seems to tactfully exclude young people from any responsibility of today's political business.

However, the evolution of young people's involvement in today's political business is ironical to the ideology.

The young people are also demanding the deconstruction of authoritarian features and bellowing for more direct input in their own governance. In Senegal for example, unemployment among young people was one of the main issues that drove the country's youths into the streets and to the voting stations to press for a change of government during the 2012 general elections, which saw the defeat of the incumbent President (Ighobor 2013). In Uganda, Kyagulanyi Ssentamu has managed to rally the youth and media behind him. He seems to offer new ideas, new horizons, new suggestions, new hopes and pro-youth ideologies. The youths back him up on all his political endeavours, and this has politically destabilized the status quo. Elsewhere in Tunisia, Mohammed Bouazizi, a young street vendor ,set himself ablaze in 2010, in a defiance demonstration against the socio-economic injustices in his country. His actions as Chloe Mulderig (2013:3) argues are widely 'recognized to have motivated the peoples of the Arab world to seek social change in the collection of demonstrations, rebellions, and armed conflicts stretching from Morocco to the Gulf'. In spite of these political revolutions led by the young generation, the existence of youth-led activism in many African countries has been misinterpreted by the OGL. It is viewed as a demonstration of irrational and obsessive behaviour that must be contained and corrected by the instruments of adult and state authority (Maclure & Denov 2006), rather than as a sign of young people's agency and of their pursuit for emancipation as an inherent and fundamental part of achieving adulthood social status with all its rights and obligations. As such, the OGL in Africa has sought to strengthen its hold on power through a number of strategies, some of which are discussed in the next section.

The Enduring Strategies of the Old Generation of Leaders

It is important to note that many African leaders who have long stayed in power were once revered as liberators and champions of democracy, irrespective of how they came to power. Some of these leaders, like the late Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan, Mobutu SeseSeko of former Zaire, and Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea assumed power by means of coups d'état, although they tried to claim identities of liberators and revolutionaries. Many of them, such as Al-Bashir, emerged on claims to reinstate the stability of their respective governments and the rule

of law. In the case of Equatorial Guinea, Nguema Mbasogo captured power amidst a deteriorating state of human rights abuse at the hands of his uncle, Francisco Macias Nguema, the then President. Nguema's new government accused the former President of dictatorship, and found him guilty of mass murder and torture (Baynham 1980:65). However, 40 years after seizing power, Nguema and his government have been linked to,

> unlawful killings by security forces; government-sanctioned kidnappings; systematic torture of prisoners and detainees by security forces; life-threatening conditions in prisons and detention facilities; impunity; arbitrary arrests, detention, and incommunicado detention (Human Rights Watch 2019).

Mohiddin (1998:4) advances an argument that many of the first generation of leaders were most interested in capturing power and assuming leadership so much so that 'for many of them, personal greed and the impulse to maintain themselves in power, and not the fulfilment of the electoral promises, influenced their vision and future'. Although Mohiddin writes more than two decades ago, his observation resonates with contemporary experiences, where the rule of law and constitutionalism have been manipulated and used as tools to legitimize oppressive regimes (Massaudo 2020).

In contemporary Africa, political leaders are used to manipulating the electorate. It seems many of them disagree with democratic practices such as a peaceful transition of power to new leaders. In 1986, when Museveni of Uganda took over the power, he opined that political leaders who overstayed their term in office were at the root of Africa's problems. Yet, his long stay in power and his attempts to justify it have succeeded in contrasting his earlier version and perception of power and political leadership. Gyaviira Kisitu (2016:3) observes that,

> in 2015 during a joint press conference, in which President Museveni and his Kenyan counterpart Uhuru Kenyatta sought to address the crucial issues facing the East African region, the Ugandan leader demonstrated a complete change of tone. He declared that 'what Africa lacks is not who [is in the leadership], but what is to be done.
>
> Further, limits to both the presidential terms as well as the age limits

have since been scrapped from the Constitution. By successfully scrapping presidential term and age limits, Uganda joined a league of 14 other African nations that have either overturned or defied term limits in their countries (Stremlau 2016:23). In constitutional democracy, term limits have been argued to play a crucial role that entails regulating leadership succession and to counteract leaders' temptation to overstay their mandate. In countries like Namibia, Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania Senegal, Zambia, Botswana, Ghana and Mauritius, leaders have gracefully vacated office at the end of their terms. However, Uganda's case is not isolated, as similar cases have prevailed elsewhere on the continent. In Zimbabwe, the late Robert Mugabe's government held power under similar circumstances. At 93 years of age, before being ousted from power in 2017, Mugabe was Africa's oldest head of State. Mugabe, who had initially been elected Prime Minister in 1980 and seven years later became President, had been in power for 37 years. It should be noted that even though Zimbabwe had been in a socio-economic turmoil, this did not prevent the ruling ZANU PF party from endorsing Mugabe for re-election following the 2013 referendum. In Equatorial Guinea, Obiang who has been in power since 1979, made various constitutional changes (in 1982, 1991 and 2011) and has had the age limit of 75 years removed.

In other cases, the issue has not been limited to term limits but to other systems of governance such as the single-party leadership system. In such a system, multiparty democracy is repressed. A good example to this is the nature of leadership in countries such as such as Angola, Togo, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. These countries are *de facto* one-party states where political leadership rotates within the party. It suffices to claim that in such countries resignation, retirement and term limits are meaningless, since political leadership is virtually controlled by a single political party. In such a political setup, the exercise of constitutional democracy in which government institutions operate uncompromised is rare. This is because such political setups often tend to exercise absolute power with limited legitimate opposition authority, insufficient to call government to account. Experience has shown that in states that lack a proper balance of power or where political power is vested in one party or leader, cases of human rights abuse tend to be rampant. For instance, in Eswatini, formerly Swaziland, King Mswati III holds supreme executive power over the Parliament and Judiciary by virtue of a 1973 State of Emergency Decree. According to Human Rights Watch (2018) the country is engulfed in continuous abuses of freedom of association and assembly and

forced evictions. In Equatorial Guinea where the President has recently marked 40 years in power, the situation regarding human rights violations is widely noted. Amnesty International (2018) reports that 'human rights defenders and activists in Equatorial Guinea are regularly harassed, intimidated, arbitrarily arrested and detained simply for the work they do …. The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly are unduly restricted'.

In some African countries, transfer of political leadership through democratic elections has been successful. The Economic Commission for Africa (2005:22) notes that 'leadership succession and change through the electoral process, especially on a multiparty basis, are significant steps towards democratic renewal and a new culture of governance in Africa'. This has been experienced in countries such as Tanzania, Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, and Zambia, and it demonstrates trends towards emerging democratic leadership in Africa. It is important to recognize that changing leadership democratically and allowing this change to take effect peacefully is a sign of accountable leadership. It is a kind of leadership that has trust in the people who put it into office.

The rhetoric of 'free and fair' elections in several African countries has also managed to strengthen the long stay in power of some leaders. The aspect of changing political leadership in an attempt to practise democratic elections in Africa has been marred by electoral fraud and violence to some extent. The practice of justice under the principle of egalitarianism would require of leaders to respect institutions that tend to protect the wishes and rights of citizens, such as Electoral Commissions. However, some African leaders find it difficult to honour electoral laws and reforms that help to deliver free and fair elections. This has contributed to injustices, including electoral violence, in which human life and property have been destroyed. This is true, even though many African leaders seem to claim free and fair elections before media outlets and the international community. The outcome of many of these elections such as Kenya's 2007 and 2017 elections, or Zimbabwe's 2009 and 2013 presidential elections has controversially cast doubt on the interpretation and understanding of the concept 'free and fair elections' on the African continent. This is because many of the claimed free and fair elections have at the same time recorded experiences of violence targeting opposition parties, information flow obstruction and claims of flawed elections.

A common assumption implied by describing political elections as free and fair is that they serve justice as one of the ways to depict egalitarian leadership. Kisitu (2016) rightly holds that 'while the means and end of the

principle of justice are to serve a common good, it remains contestable whether the elections described as 'free and fair' are always in the interest of the masses'. Autocratic leaders have manipulated the concept for their own ends, and oftentimes institutions under their influence use the phrase insofar as the implications suit the governing authority. The phrase 'free and fair' appears ambiguously used, politicized, ritualized and at times merely uttered for the sake of it. It may not matter that an 'independent' Electoral Commission of a country can both admit that electoral violence occurred, yet at the same time declare the outcome of the same election 'free and fair' (Kisitu 2016). On the one hand, some observers may declare a certain election as a true reflection of the peoples' will while others see the same election far less of the sort. Samuel Atuobi (2008:15) argues that 'in most cases, elections declared as free and fair by some observer groups are called a sham by other observer groups'.

It is obvious that in many electoral processes little attention is given to the seemingly ritualized usage of the term 'free and fair' by the leadership in power. There is little critical reflection on questions such as,

> Is the election management body truly independent and free from the influence of the ruling party or opposition parties beyond constitutional provisions? Or, does the election management body have the necessary resources and capacity to deliver on its constitutional mandate? (Atuobi 2008:12).

During the 2013 presidential elections in Zimbabwe, for instance, the world received contradictory messages concerning the authenticity of the presidential election results. While the results were disputed by the main challenger, Morgan Tsvangirai, and some local observers, the same results were recognized as 'free and fair' by the African Union (AU) observers as well as the Zimbabwean Supreme Court. This played a considerable role in legitimizing the outcome of the elections in favour of the ruling party. An almost a similar experience happened in Uganda during the 2016 presidential elections. Although Museveni was the declared winner with 60,75% of the vote, significantly beating his immediate rival, Kiiza Besigye, who managed to receive 35,37% of the vote, the conditions that characterized the voting showed the use of state power to consolidate victory for the incumbent leader Museveni. The 2016 presidential elections were marred by continuous arrests of opposition leaders and restrictions on their movements. This created a space

for the incumbent to consolidate his influence with the electorate. The opposition was depicted as barbaric and lawless and therefore needed to be prevented from committing a crime. The incumbent and his camp, on the other hand, were depicted as the noble class capable of offering to the state the only genuine leadership. For many local observers, such as the Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC), the Inter-religious Council as well as the Elders Forum, this implied a defeat for the cause of justice and fair play (Anglican Communion News Service 2016).

The above cases are merely examples of many related experiences in African governments whose leaders have held on to power for long. These cases have a profound impact on the way how the citizens view their governments or even act towards them. Such cases have been at the forefront in influencing the young generation to challenge the existing political leadership of the old generation. They have also raised questions on how to navigate challenges facing leadership and governance on the continent. This is the point of discussion in the next section.

Navigating Challenges Facing Leaders in Governance

While the young generation seems to be rising up uncompromisingly, it is critical to remember that political leadership must be informed by a desire to serve, restoration of justice, dialogue, political tolerance, development, and all other factors leading to constitutional democracy. There is no doubt that the young generation seems determined to persuade the old generation to relinquish power at all costs. While this is true of the young generation, it can also be asked, to what extent can a complete exit of the old generation of political leaders be implemented? It is not the point of this paper to either argue for the exit of the old generation of political leaders or for the ushering in of the young generation of leaders into governance positions. However, it is the position of this paper that the conflict between these camps is real in Africa and its continuity has not helped to bring forth democratic governance, which is much desired in Africa. This conflict has limited tolerance, increased aggressive attacks from either side, while paying little attention to mitigating the challenges obscuring Africa's progress and development. In fact, as discussed earlier, the determination of the old generation of leaders to cling to power versus the aggressive approach of the young generation of leaders to undermine the old, has contributed more to perpetuating autocracy in Africa. The old generation

continuously seems to use all available mechanisms to safeguard their spaces, including a possible support of traditional philosophies associating old age with wisdom and a perception that leaders such as 'kings were believed to possess certain divine and/or supernatural powers' (Van Wyk 2007:6). Africa's long-serving leaders seem to make an appeal to such beliefs, but fall short of considering that the traditional concept of leadership in many African societies enforced accountability; and if it happened that a leader failed to serve the community appropriately, such a leader would be dethroned accordingly, irrespective of his age or the time he has spent serving (Van Wyk 2007).

It can be argued that the egalitarian model of governance is dependent on the nature of leadership envisaged and practised by incumbents. It is important to ask ourselves which model of leadership does the long serving African Heads of State follow? The understanding of leadership is varied and cannot be restricted to one model, given the diversity of societies. However, it could be argued that leadership involves the exercise of power, which may result in either good, ineffective, or destructive qualities. Given the experiences of repression and revolts in some African states, one wonders if traditional African ethos on leadership can offer any tools to mitigate today's challenges related to leadership failure on the continent. Even though we cannot speak of a generalized understanding of leadership in Africa, given the factors of time, space and people, Africans believed in leadership as a key necessity for societal posterity (Masango 2003). Good leadership guaranteed service delivery, maintenance and restoration of relationships and positive influence in society. This remains the case, even though the understanding and evolution of leadership over the years continue to be influenced by religion, politics, culture, globalization and time amongst other factors. Masango (2003:313) notes, 'in Africa a leader is viewed as someone who is servant to the clan, tribe, community or group …. People treat a leader by virtue of being a king, priest, a ruler chosen by virtue of the office in order to serve the nation'. In many African societies, high-level leadership positions and abilities have been vested in the old who are mostly expected to lead with wisdom and justice. In traditional African leadership, elders were expected not only to lead, but also to teach and delegate authority as a means of preparing future leaders. This means traditional leaders were not expected to perceive upcoming leaders as competitors, to the extent of suppressing leadership abilities of the young as often experienced in today's African politics of succession. Even though the young were equally not expected to rebel against the directions and advice of

their elders, the latter were expected to listen to the voices of their subjects and act for the good of the community. This helped those in authority to keep in touch with the challenges faced by their subjects. For instance, it was not uncommon for community members to have different opinions over a certain matter. The African leadership philosophy of *Ubuntu* would in fact recognize the varying opinions. It was upon such experiences that it emphasized values such as respect, compassion, mutual relationships and the need to recognize the 'Other', whose 'being' qualifies the essence (humaneness) of the leader on the principle that to be human is 'by recognizing the humanity of others in its infinite variety of content and form' (Van der Merwe 1996:76). Any problems arising from diverging voices would be settled by establishment of a consensus or agreement between parties other than dictatorship. This was due to a belief that each member's opinion was worth listening to, and respect despite the hierarchy (Ncube 2010:79; Louw 2001:19).This notion of leadership is almost non-existent, given the way leadership authority is understood and exercised from a dictatorial perspective. Van Wyk (2007:22) makes an interesting observation when she observes that many African leaders exercise leadership authority, 'often backed by coercive power' and demand unquestionable submission to a leader's 'moral authority, knowledge authority, reputational authority, issue-specific authority and affiliative authority'.

Far from an unquestionable authoritarian leadership model which seems to be detached from 'feelings' of society, a model based on an African worldview is a group phenomenon (Nahavandi 2000). Leaders in this case do not consider themselves as isolated from society, and have the authority to lead insofar as their leadership style exhibits 'interpersonal influence'. Secondly, leaders use influence to guide groups or people towards the achievements of certain goals. It is therefore important to note that the idea of 'goals-orientated' leadership discourages leadership styles built on personal interest or that which benefits a few individuals, as this does not represent the goals and aspirations of a community (Nahavandi 2000). Hierarchism as a character of leadership should not be on the basis of suppression, but on proper execution of duty while contributing effectively to the 'life of a group, tribe or community' (Masango, 2003:314). From this perspective we can speak of a leadership style that is not detached from the society. To emphasize this attachment, John Mbiti (1977:12) describes the role of leadership in pre-colonial Africa saying, 'they [leaders] formulated religious beliefs, they observed religious ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myths which carried religious meanings, and they

evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual[s] and community or villagers'.

Although the above model of African heritage has undergone change, it is not lost and it can be embraced. This can be partly done by putting into practice the resolutions made from time to time by regional and continental bodies such as the African Union, East African Community, Economic Community of West African States, and the Southern Africa Development Community which attempt to offer guidelines towards the realization of democratic governance and development in Africa. These bodies advocate democracy, good governance, conflict resolutions and zero tolerance for corruption, transparency and African empowerment, amongst other calls. However, it is important for leaders to keep in mind that even though they may disregard the unwavering voices of the young generation and choose to hold on power, nature eventually takes its course with them. However, this may not be a democratic solution that Africa would want. This is because the shadow of these autocratic leaders such as economic bankruptcy, political repression, and abuse of human rights would continue to haunt the African states, even though such leaders would be long gone. A good example to illustrate this is the effect of the 1884 partition of Africa at the Berlin Conference and the subsequent declaration of colonialism in Africa. Even though this happened in 1884, it continues to have a significant effect on the formerly colonized African nations beyond the postcolonial period (Ocheni & Nwankwo, 2012). During the colonial period, colonial governments undermined the African social fabric, economic development, and cultural progress. An African leadership model was simply used as a vehicle to install colonial administration and later dumped as non-progressive and uncivilized. The cultural fabric that held communities together and promoted cultural identities was demonized as barbaric. Even though many African countries have since been handed independence and self-determination, they are still grappling with the effects of colonialism, including but not limited to authoritarianism, exploitation, and colonial administration treaties that continue to indirectly hold African societies captive of the former colonial master (Blundo & Olivier de Sardan 2006).

Conclusion

It has been noted that the old generation of leaders has failed to create a succession strategy that would see young people taking up higher political

leadership positions. This is a serious leadership problem. Nevertheless, the long stay in power of the OGL has not helped to respond to the challenges facing the African continent, as it has become a critical problem in itself. The highlighted cases of long-serving leaders are a good illustration of this setback. Solving this problem is key for the African continent in responding to other associated challenges such as political repression, poor socio-economic development, corruption, growing terror attacks, service non-delivery and human rights abuses, among others. A generational conflict as discussed in this paper does not seem counterproductive to solving the continent's challenges. As such, it has not been the position of this paper to endorse the young-generation-led political defiance against the old generation of leaders, but called for a return to an egalitarian leadership model informed by progressive African values that are associated with leadership values such as communitarian, service, accountability, relationship, connectedness and participation. In exercising this model of leadership, it is important for leaders and those aspiring for leadership to be informed by the contextual realities of society.

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Dr. Gyaviira Kisitu
Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy
Kyambogo University
Uganda
kisitudavis@yahooo.com

Dr. Margaret Ssebunya
Lecturer, Ethics and Human Rights
Kisubi University
Uganda
smaggie2012@gmail.com

A Capability Approach Assessment of FBOs' Role and Strategies in Poverty Alleviation and Human Development in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Sunday Paul Chinazo Onwuegbuchulam
RCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3170-8266

Abstract

Post-apartheid governments in South Africa have, through many strategies, tried to curb poverty and underdevelopment in the country. Despite some success stories, certain areas of the country still experience serious cases of poverty and underdevelopment. In the KwaZulu-Natal Province, poverty, inequality, unemployment and decrepit social services system constitute the main challenges to be tackled by the government. When state agents fall short in delivering poverty alleviation and development measures, non-state actors like FBOs sometimes assume the position of providing the necessary public goods to society. Hence, the role that FBOs play in liberal democracies, and how they can possibly help in poverty alleviation and human development, have taken centre stage in scholarly discussions on the politics of the state. Against this backdrop, this study adopts qualitative empirical methods and Sen's Capability Approach as an evaluative framework to assess the role that two FBOs, one Muslim and one Christian, play and the strategies they use in poverty alleviation and human development in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The study's analysis finds that these two FBOs do benefit aid recipients, but that they also (like other NGOs) practice varying forms of paternalism. Further research on these and other FBOs is necessary for a more sustained analysis of the whether and how the CA approach can provide a complete picture of aid recipients' well-being.

Keywords: Faith-based Organisations, Poverty Alleviation, Human Development, Capability Approach, Agency, Paternalism.

Introduction

Prior to democracy in 1994, South Africa was ruled under the apartheid political system based on the policy of the segregation of races through legislation (Deane 2005:7). Through the apartheid policies, the majority of African people were systematically denied social and economic opportunities on the grounds of race. The post-apartheid governments have in many ways tried to redress the apartheid injustices and their effects on the people. Different strategies have been employed to tackle the problems experienced by South Africans living in different areas, especially rural communities and townships of the former Homelands, including the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Province. Regarding this, the report by the KZN Provincial Planning Commission (KZN PPC 2011) notes that KZN has experienced some degree of success in its growth and development efforts. However, despite these successes, it is known that KZN still experiences serious cases of poverty and developmental challenges. In addition, inequality, unemployment, the prevalence of diseases (for example, HIV/AIDS) and a poor social services system remain issues to be tackled by the Provincial government (KZN PPC 2011; Onwuegbuchulam 2018).

Often, when state agents fall short of delivering social services to the people, non-state actors and civil society organisations (CSOs), including Faith-based Organisations (FBOs), have assumed the role of providing and delivering public goods to the people (Posner 2004). Hence, the role that FBOs play in liberal democracies, and how they can possibly help in alleviating poverty in the chosen context of this study, have taken centre stage in scholarly discussions on the politics of the state. According to Johnson (2008:21), 'proponents of faith-based initiatives feel strongly that faith-based programs are effective providers of many different kinds of social services'. Considering that faith-based actors have been active in delivering the goods needed by society, it is also important to assess the effectiveness of their agency in development. Against this backdrop, this study adopts qualitative empirical methods and Sen's Capability Approach (CA) as an evaluative framework to specifically assess the role that two purposefully selected FBOs play and the strategies they use in poverty alleviation and human development in KZN. The CA approach is adopted considering that it provides a credible framework that moves the development discourse beyond the utilitarian notion of 'economic progress' to one that prioritises aid recipients' well-being.

FBOs in Development and Poverty Alleviation

As used in this study, FBO refers to a,

> formal organisation whose identity and mission are self-consciously derived from the teachings of one or more religious or spiritual traditions and which operates on a non-profit, independent, voluntary basis to promote and realize collectively articulated ideas about the public good and at the national and international level (Berger 2003: 16).

This study seeks to contribute to extant literature on the possible role that religion (its institutions and affiliates, especially FBOs) can play in development and poverty alleviation. The role that religion and indeed faith-based networks play in development has been neglected in modernisation theories which, following the thoughts of social thinkers like Comte, Durkheim, Weber, Freud, etc., conceptualised development and industry-alisation as going *in pari passu* with secularisation. It was thought that as societies develop, the role that religion plays in such societies diminishes. Hence, secularisation theories, which assume that religion would lose its meaning in the public sphere due to modernisation, became prevalent in modern social science discourse (Boender, Dwarswaard & Westendor 2011:8). Because of the view that religion and development are mutually exclusive, religion and the possible role it can play in modernised societies were thought to be irrelevant and 'in some cases viewed as obstacles to economic growth' (Landmark 2013:14). In justifying this view, Colombatto (2006) and Landmark (2013) base their arguments on the conceptualisation of develop-ment from a utilitarian point of view that understands development in terms of economic progress embedded in modernisation theories. Notably, in this understanding, religion and its networks become redundant and are not seen to be able to play a role, since the envisaged development is supposed to go together with secularisation.

However, the recent reality of the resurgence of religion has greatly discredited the prophecy of the death of religion and the increased realisation of the potential role that religion can play in development. In 1980, the World Development, in a special issue titled *Religion and Development* recognised the possible role religion can play in development and 'called for a re-evaluation of the relationship between religion and development, questioning the validity of secularism for development' (Landmark 2013:14). Since that

assertion, there has been an increase in literature on emerging alternative theories and trends on the topic of religion in development, including the role of faith in humanitarian efforts in needy communities (Ager & Ager 2015; Lynch & Schwarz 2016). One of the trends that has consequences for the new interest in religion within development academics is the increased recognition of the work of FBOs (Olarinmoye 2012; Landmark 2013; Lynch & Schwarz 2016).

Against this backdrop, scholars have looked at the increasing role that faith, faith-based networks and FBOs play in development and poverty alleviation. Marshall and Van Saanen (2007) looked at the issue of global poverty and observed that in the efforts so far aimed at ameliorating this situation, the possible contributions and impacts that faith actors could have made are not acknowledged (2007:xi). This is a problem for the authors who advocate greater partnerships between development and faith institutions. Brennan (2007:1) tries to understand whether faith is an obstacle or an element that helps to foster development. The author observes that, 'given the increasing reference to faith and God in politics it is clear that faith and spirituality are beginning to play a more prominent and public role in people lives'. Hence, he concludes that,

> whether one calls for development to be secularised or says that no development can take place without taking into account people's spirituality, it would seem that either way faith is a significant player in the development context (2007:11).

Whetho and Uzodike (2009) affirm the significant role of faith-based networks in development in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The study was situated in the broader research on the role that religion and FBOs play in post-conflict states. Its conclusion suggests that the participation of faith-based networks as agents of development or as facilitators of peace building in post-conflict DRC is positive.

Additionally, there are other notable studies (Campbell 2011; Olarinmoye 2012; Reeves 2010; Ager & Ager 2015; Lynch & Schwarz 2016; Benthal 2016; Islam 2018) that have explored and in various ways affirmed the positive role that FBOs play in development and poverty alleviation. The current study builds on these studies and interrogates the issues further as they play out in the context of the study. As such, this study aims at contributing to

the advancement of the extant body of knowledge on the possible role that FBOs play in responding to the issues of poverty and underdevelopment among those living in townships and rural areas of KZN.

This study questions, the conception of development as used by modernist theorists who understand development as utilitarian by nature and measured in terms of economic progress. Arguably, it is this understanding that necessitated the exclusion of religion and faith-based networks in their theorysation of development in modern liberal democracies. Contrarily, the current study in its analysis adopts a conception of development (based on the Capability Approach) that goes beyond the utilitarian measure of development. Taking this route will help lay the foundation for the analysis of the role of FBOs in human development and poverty alleviation in KZN as this study envisages.

Theoretical Perspective

This chapter adopts Amatyr Sen's Capability Approach (CA) specifically to assess the role played by two FBOs in addressing the issues of poverty and human development. Sen (1993:30) conceptualises the CA as concerned with evaluating an individual's quality of life 'in terms of his or her actual ability to achieve various valuable functioning as a part of living'. Important concepts clearly define the CA and include Functioning, Capability, Values and Agency. According to Robeyns (2011), functionings are 'beings and doings' – the various states and activities individuals can assume. 'Capability' is associated with functioning; it refers to an individual's real freedom/opportunity to achieve functionings. The concept of 'Value' is a condition linked to Capability and Functioning (Onwuegbuchulam 2018). In this, the CA 'is based on a view of living as a combination of various 'doings and beings', with the quality of life to be assessed in terms of the capability to achieve valuable functionings' (Sen 1993:31). 'Agency', as conceptualised by the CA, refers to 'someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values …' (Sen 1999:19).

Adopting the CA in this study offers leeway to assess the 'agency' role that FBOs play towards realising poverty alleviation and human development. In particular, the present author is more concerned with the aspect of agency related to the concept of 'paternalism.' According to Archard (1990:36) 'paternalism is essentially the usurpation of one person's choice of their own good by another person'. The appropriation of an individual's choice thereby

restricts it, which has obvious negative implications. It also goes against the CA view of the need to ensure individual freedom regarding the things valued by individuals (Sen 1999). On the other hand, paternalism can be positive as it focuses on the motive of the agent to realise the welfare of beneficiaries (and not that of the agent) without restricting their autonomy (Salvat 2014; Dworkin 2015). This study will interrogate the theme of paternalism to determine whether (or not) the paternalistic agency of FBOs can be regarded as positive. On this, this researcher is also interested specifically in whether or not the FBOs and the community can arrive together at shared values despite apparent paternalistic tendencies in FBO agency.

Adopting the CA is also relevant because, in the face of failures of state apparatuses to realise the Modernist theorists' conception of development (economic progress) in liberal democracies, there is need to adopt other paradigms that conceptualise development and poverty alleviation differently. For Sen (1993) development is not just about economic progress. Development should rather be seen as a process geared towards realising and extending people's freedoms. The CA understands poverty as 'the lack of basic capabilities needed to achieve a minimally tolerable life such as being well nourished, avoiding preventable morbidity' (Fukuda-Parr 2007:9-10). Correspondingly, poverty alleviation, according to the CA, is any effort aimed at helping people to realise those capabilities of which they have been deprived. This study agrees with these conceptualisations and hence adopts the CA to evaluate poverty alleviation strategies of agents (in this instance FBOs). The aim is to assess how the policies and strategies of the selected FBOs in the study, meet the different value functionings of people and their capabilities.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative research methodology used in 'the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1278). Qualitative methodology is,

> suited when what is being studied is complex, social and is not subject to a quantitative methodology (Liebscher 1998:669). The study is also case-study based, which is an approach used towards a holistic and in-depth investigation of a phenomenon within its real-life context (Rubin

& Babbie 1997; Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg 1991).

KZN is the geographical context of this study. The justification for selecting this area is the high incidence of poverty in the Province as established in the introduction.

Additionally, through a purposive sampling method, the researcher chose two FBOs out of others operating in the Province. The organisations are the Islamic, faith-based Gift of the Givers (GOG) and the Christian, faith-based Pietermaritzburg Agency for Community Social Action (PACSA). PACSA was founded by Peter Kerchhoff in 1979, primarily to 'draw white Christians into the struggle against apartheid' (Levine 2002:3). The organisation has worked for over 30 years in the areas of human rights, social justice, social development and poverty alleviation in uMgungundlovu District. Similarly, GOG has in many ways contributed to social development and humanitarian aid in KZN, the country and abroad. The organisation was founded in 1992 by Imtiaz Sooliman, a South African medical doctor, following a spiritual call to serve humanity (Desai 2010; Morton 2014). According to Schutt (2006:155), 'in purposive sampling method, each sample element is selected for a purpose, usually because of the unique position of the sample elements'. Hence, the FBOs chosen for study are not arbitrary; the researcher chose them because of their prominence as FBOs and the perceived pervasiveness of their efforts in humanitarian aid and human social development (Simbi 2013; Morton 2014). The researcher also considered both an Islamic and a Christian organisation to get a balanced perception of how these two prominent religions within the context of the study participate in development and humanitarianism.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher utilised semi-structured interviews in the empirical primary data collection and this is because this method allows open-ended questions to be posed to the interviewees. The researcher conducted 27 semi-structured interviews with different participants; including five (5) key informers from GOG, nine (9) beneficiaries of the GOG site, five (5) key informers from PACSA, and eight (8 beneficiaries from the PACSA site. In order to abide by ethical demands of protection of participants, the researcher used pseudonyms to represent participants in the data report.

The researcher analysed semi-structured interview data using thematic

methods, suitable 'for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke 2006:6). The researcher systematically analysed interview data, identifying themes or patterns guided by the theoretical framework while paying attention to new themes and findings that emerged.

Gift of the Givers Poverty Alleviation and Human Development Strategies

In analysing the interviews of GOG respondents, this researcher first outlines two approaches the organisation uses to alleviate poverty. Then the researcher looks at members' own evaluations of their work, and compare them to evaluations by recipients in order to assess the degree and impact of the organisation's work.

General responses of both the key informers from GOG and the community participants reveal that, the FBO has strategies put in place to tackle poverty and underdevelopment. Two main approaches can be inferred from the different descriptions and narratives of the participants. The first main approach focuses on the management of disasters while the second approach is an integration of different strategies aimed at sustainable and capability building poverty alleviation and human development.

Disaster Management Projects

Consistent with views from extant literature (Maharaj et al. 2008; Desai 2010; Morton 2014) responses of key informers in GOG affirm that the primary strategy of this organisation that emanates from their vocation is disaster relief:

> Firstly, we have disaster management projects that are established to help in issues of real disaster … secondly we have other projects that are geared towards sustainable poverty alleviation and development in communities both in this Province and all of South Africa and internationally (Ladia from GOG).

> Basically, we are primarily a disaster response organisation. We do provide bare necessities which can be instantaneous relief projects to help alleviate sufferings of people as much as possible especially those hit by different disasters … (Aaisha from GOG).

> When it comes to the projects we run … people may not be in a disaster but to that person poverty is a disaster to him, unemployment is a disaster to him. So, we got to find a way of helping this man survive … (Pamir from GOG).

From the above responses, it is apparent that in the first strategy, disaster management, the organisation's aim is to respond to needs of people who are hit by disasters impacting negatively on livelihood, health, shelter and human development. The responses also indicate that the organisation has also developed ways of tackling poverty (also seen as a disaster) in communities. This point meaningfully indicates that GOG is open to broader definitions of 'disaster relief' based on participants' experiences.

Sustainable Poverty Alleviation Projects (Operation Dignity)

Secondly, responses of some of the key informers indicate that GOG, after years of its founding and based on its experience from working with communities hit by disasters, has seen the need to engage in sustainable poverty alleviation and human development projects.

> Our project in the area of poverty alleviation and development goes from establishing community garden projects to bursary funds … I call it operation dignity meaning that we want to bring back dignity to the people who have lost it … we look at what the people are capable of doing and help them to … achieve that (Pamir from GOG).

> All our projects are based on improving values in the communities … all our projects [provide] skills to help them stay away from drugs and other social ills. Also, we give bursaries to get them [get] educated in order to learn how to make their own living and improve their lives. (Pamir from GOG).

The above responses indicate that the organisation has responded to people's needs, by developing sustainable development strategies aimed at helping people to achieve functioning and capabilities. It can also be inferred that these projects and strategies are geared towards improving values in the communities by helping people to stay away from crime.

Impact of GOG Strategies

General responses of the key informers at GOG reveal that they are optimistic that their strategies do help people in (especially rural) communities to realise substantive freedom to achieve real capabilities. They are positive that their strategies are successful and do help a lot in poverty alleviation and human development in this context,

> Our work is relevant to the society. We do local projects to help people in real need. This is part of our calling as an FBO and we do our best in realising this (Ladia from GOG).

> Our community projects envisage more sustainable ways of helping the community in terms of poverty alleviation (Aadam from GOG).

However, GOG also experiences some constraints in the work that they do in the area of poverty alleviation and human development. One major constraint is scarcity of resources to cater for the increasing demand for help from communities: 'We cannot really reach everybody … number of people who need help keeps increasing and there are not enough funds and materials sometimes to reach to an ever-increasing number of people who need help' (Aaisha from GOG).

Community participants' assessments of the impact of GOG's poverty alleviation and development strategies also reveal apparent general satisfaction with the effectiveness of these strategies in improving people's capabilities:

> … the work [GOG] does is not a quick fix thing; it helps provide food and some income for the community for a possible long time … (Sammy from Northdale Community).

> The community garden project has been very helpful. For a poor community like this, food security becomes a big issue. People are relying on grants … but it is not worth it … [GOG] helps people to empower themselves to produce their own food (Haaris from Bombay Heights Community).

Some participants affirm the successes of GOG strategies in human development and improving values in the communities,

> The work the organisation is doing helps people to overcome social ills as they are able to provide them what they need to sustain themselves instead of engaging in crimes and other social ills (Buhle from Sweetwaters Community).

> Poverty creates a situation where there is less stress on values. It is one of the efforts of [GOG] as I have seen, to work in this area … the projects help to change the mindset of the people … It brings back Ubuntu … It helps values and improves society (Haaris from Bombay Heights Community).

Additionally, some respondents who work in both the carpentry and auto-mechanic repair projects established and run under Operation Dignity, underscore that these projects provide employment for them thereby serving as a means through which they can realise their capabilities: 'It helps me to have a form [of] employment and in doing this I stay out of crime and other temptations. This organisation is really helping through this kind of project in order to improve people's lives' (Sithole from Willowton).

From the above presentation, it can be concluded that several views substantiate that the poverty alleviation and human development strategies of GOG have helped in building real capabilities and have made real positive impact on the lives of the people. Their narratives demonstrate participants' view that the strategies are quite practical and geared towards a sustainable and capability building approach to addressing poverty and underdevelopment. These projects as described by participants show that the organisation understands poverty and development not just as economic issues but as issues comprising of multidimensional aspects to be combated using different capability building tactics. The disaster management projects, community gardens, Operation Dignity projects can be taken as aimed at realising various functionings (doings and beings) for the communities.

The strategies utilised by GOG thus far agree with Sen's (1993; 1997) conceptualisation of 'value'. Here the FBO focuses on what people are capable of doing and the kind of lives people value which agree with the CA vision. However, as established in literature (Robeyns 2005; Çakmak 2010), the CA has been criticised for being too individualistic and thus unable to deal with shared values. Hence, in this established role of the FBO in relation to the values of the host community the question remains: what is the process through

which the FBO and the community arrive at shared values? Deneulin and McGregor (2010) argue for a deliberative route to shared values and living well together. The data here hence contributes to the debates on the CA and shared values[1].

Furthermore, the data contribute to the understanding of GOG's paternalistic agency in poverty alleviation and human development. Paternalism in this sense is conceptualised based on motives versus reasons behind the act of an agent. The responses from GOG's key informers allow us to see that the motive behind the agency of the FBO is towards the welfare and improving the functioning and capabilities of the people, hence their agency could thus be described as paternalistic. However, the question would be whether GOG's agency is enabling and not constricting the autonomy and decision-making power of the beneficiaries. This in the view of the present researcher will require further research.

PACSA's Poverty Alleviation and Human Development Strategies

In the analysis of the interviews of PACSA respondents, the researcher outlines two approaches the organisation uses to alleviate poverty. Then the researcher explores members' own evaluations of their work and compare them to evaluations by recipients to assess the degree and impact of their strategies.

The narratives of the key informers in PACSA and their community beneficiaries indicate that the FBO has established two main strategies to tackle poverty and underdevelopment; Accompaniment of Self-organised Community Based Organisations and PACSA's Research and Advocacy Strategies.

Accompaniment of Self-Organised Community Based Groups

Responses to questions posed to both key informers in PACSA and community participants first reveal that the facilitation of the developmental objectives of

[1] One of the questions that come up from the presented data is how do FBOs and host communities move from different values to shared values. Notably, FBOs can impose their values simply because they have resources, or they can engage the communities in a dialogue in order to arrive at shared values.

CBOs is the first strategy that PACSA uses in its effort at poverty alleviation and human development:

> Basically, we work with groups in struggle, who are autonomous, and we support them in their own struggles. And the struggles are obviously around socio-economic issues; principally around justice and dignity and equity … (Stephanie from PACSA)[2].

> We accompany self-organised community-based groups … organised around a particular aspect dealing with questions of inequality and poverty in their surrounding … (Trevor from PACSA).

Notably, the objectives of the CBOs around the uMgungundlovu District are centred on issues pertaining to poverty alleviation and human development. Accompaniment of the self-organised CBOs is mainly in the form of process facilitation aimed at certain issues which the communities face, including youth development, unemployment and poor service delivery. The key informers describe how PACSA's process facilitation and accompaniment of CBOs around certain poverty and development issues are done:

> The community members raise these issues and we ask the deeper questions in order to find solutions to these challenges … asking the necessary questions leads to a sit down with the community members to draw up plans what to do in the face of the challenges and who to go to (Thokozani from PACSA).

Tackling some of the issues raised by community members also leads PACSA agents to devise tactics of human development which envisage the empowering of communities:

> For us human development is about supporting groups to build their own capacity … the idea basically is that struggle can only be maintained and sustained if these organisations and the people involved themselves are able to critically analyse what is going on in their

[2] In this response, there is an allusion to the CA theme of the lives that people have reason to value.

> context … (Stephanie from PACSA).
>
> Empowerment is a self-action ... think PACSA's contribution is about asking deeply, and also understanding the context so that you can get [people] to use what they already have but don't realise that (Marceline from PACSA).

The above responses allude to the agency theme and role which the organisation has undertaken towards improving the lives of the people. Here again, paternalism as an aspect of PACSA's agency in poverty alleviation and human development may be inferred. But this apparent paternalism is not illegitimate and negative since it 'does not act under false pretences to satisfy the interest of the agent it does not violate the individual autonomy of the people' (Salvat 2014:1). Rather, the organisation's strategy of accompanying self-organised groups and engaging them in process facilitation, empowering them to tackle the problem of poverty and underdevelopment, can be said to be positive.

PACSA's Research and Advocacy Strategies

Responses further reveal that PACSA's second broad strategy is an introspective one which the organisation does in its own name, in order to tackle inequality and poverty in the society. Under this main strategy there are two important approaches: PACSA's engagement in poverty and livelihood research and PACSA's Advocacy and building of public social consciousness.

PACSA's Poverty and Livelihood Research

PACSA's research focuses on getting to the root causes of inequality and social injustice, poor service delivery, poverty and underdevelopment in the society. Through their research, they are able to identify and actively engage in addressing these causes through different means:

> We do a lot of research level work … we've done lots of research around municipal services and affordability … and we've just started shaping consistent research based view around wages and in particular minimum wage for South Africa (Trevor from PACSA).

> In terms of poverty alleviation … what we do, we talk about politics of poverty; in terms of asking why are people experiencing poverty and unemployment…So most of our contribution as PACSA is to make research for example the Basic Food Basket research which focus on what people can or cannot afford to buy (Dlomo from PACSA).

PACSA's Advocacy and Building of Public Social Consciousness

Responses also reveal that PACSA's research helps in their advocacy strategy. Firstly, they make available their research findings to government in order to help inform policy on issues of poverty and development. Secondly, through research they are informed to engage in other forms of advocacy to build public social consciousness on the said issues:

> [Our] research and publication feeds into advocacy … and part of our advocacy role is build public consciousness around these issues … sometimes we will put out statements into the media … (Trevor from PACSA).
>
> … our role is to conscientise people as regards what they are supposed to get from the government. Ours is to do research … we do also point out some issues common to the people in communities and get people to start talking about them … (Dlomo from PACSA).

Further, responses affirm the above and reveal that the organisation engages in creating awareness in communities through campaigns, marches, rallies, film shows, etc. These events are particularly geared to do one of two things, either to shift [people's] understanding of the root causes of inequality [and] poverty … or to kind of build a cadre of people who would support social justice activities (Trevor from PACSA).

The preceding views agree with insights from literature (Reese & Clamp 2000; Bunting 2005; Graddy & Ye 2006; Day 2010; Maharaj *et al.* 2008) that underscore the important role of advocacy that CSOs and indeed FBOs play in liberal democracies. Also, some efforts are made by PACSA to create spaces for government agents and community members to meet to discuss issues of poverty and failed service delivery in the communities. Notably,

the organisation has set itself the task of examining the state's poverty alleviation and development efforts, to determine whether they are effective towards eradicating poverty and realising human development. This further affirms views from literature (Kobia 1995; Robinson & White 1997) that emphasise the role of CSOs especially as credible watchdog to government efforts.

The Impact of PACSA's Strategies

Responses of key informers in PACSA reveal that in spite of some constraints, to do with the sometimes unwillingness of government to respond positively to their advocacy agenda on behalf of the poor people in the communities, the organisation's strategies have met with great amount of successes:

> … part of the success is as a result of the fact that we do not just raise the questions, rather we help the communities as advocate voice … this has yielded positive action coming from government … to address issues of service delivery (Thokozani from PACSA).

Additional responses reveal that despite the quantifiable achievements which the organisation has recorded, other forms of successes are unquantifiable. One of these successes is recorded in the organisation's ability to change the mindset of people with regards to the causes of poverty:

> I think successes are often around joint consciousness and around structural issues … in terms of a quantifiable things? I would say it is not quantifiable (Stephanie from PACSA).

> Our primary understanding is that poverty and inequality is not the fault of the people … poverty is as a result of the fact that some people are taking too much … we conscientise the people to begin to organise themselves to speak (Trevor from PACSA).

In summary, the key informers are generally of the view that these strategies have helped to address the issues of poverty and underdevelopment in the communities, confirming views from extant literature (Kobia 1995; Robinson & White 1997; Whetho & Uzodike 2009) on the effectiveness of strategies used by FBOs in the development agenda. In addition, the responses

agree with the views of Taylor (1995); Ghosh (1998); Roberts (2000); KZN EC (2006) and Onwuegbuchulam (2018) on the multidimensional and structural nature of the poverty existing within the chosen research context and hence the need to look for multidimensional and capability building approaches to addressing the situation. Conversely, the key informers' responses also reveal that PACSA is aware of some constraints to their strategies. Some of the constraints have to do with reluctance of government to address some of the issues of development and poor service delivery raised by community members:

> One of our major constraints is that we have to deal with the government who are most times reluctant to address the concern we raise (Thokozani from PACSA).

> Constraints are more at the level of … when people … have been bashed a lot by the system, then a sense of powerlessness sets in … And then having to reignite with those people that actually they can, they are agents of their own change; that is an area of great difficulty (Trevor from PACSA).

On the part of PACSA beneficiaries, a common thread through their various narratives indicate their implicit and explicit confirmation of the positive impact and success of the strategies employed by PACSA to tackle poverty issues in the communities:

> … they fund and help us in whatever project we are doing ... we do a collective garden project, which produces food and supplies to the members of the community … in Kwampumuza, PACSA is involved with the community gardens all over that area … (Nomvula from Edendale Community).

The responses of members of the different CBOs that work with PACSA in the communities also indicate that the accompaniment and facilitation offered by PACSA agents have helped in realising their various objectives and aims in human development:

> … there is a programme mentored by PACSA called parental care

> programme … another programme is community dialogue on how to deal with, crime prevention, child abuse, alcohol abuse … (Baba from France Community).

These narratives demonstrate participants' view that the work PACSA does through its facilitators is successful. Notably, activities are chosen and directed with community partners' participation. This agrees with a CA understanding (Kallhoff & Schlick 2001; Sen 2003; Robeyns 2005; Mooney 2005) of involving recipients of developmental aid in the strategies established by agents. In this, capability building efforts become a communitarian project and there is no incidence of violating individual autonomy, which is a negative aspect of paternalist agency (Salvat 2014). Additionally, some of the participants are of the view that PACSA's efforts have helped in developing the youth and to enable them to engage in long term enterprises that will capacitate them. This falls under PACSA's strategy aimed at building of social consciousness. The youth are taught to think and imagine differently with regards to the root causes of poverty and youth underdevelopment and to work towards overcoming these. They are also taught to be aware of the issues of justice and equality and to work towards realising their rights to human development and to participate in governance in a democratic South Africa.

> It basically gets the young people involved in solving their problems in particular situations and improve their lives … (Mabaso from Edendale Community).

> With the help of PACSA … we were trained to understand our rights and how we can participate fully to improve ourselves … (Nkosinathi from Sweetwaters Community).

Conversely, some of the participants indicate that the inability of PACSA to remunerate CBO leaders, who help to facilitate and implement PACSA's strategies, constitutes a constraint. This can also be seen as another form of paternalism which has demotivated some of these leaders:

> So, in a way it does have constraints … PACSA people get paid … I don't get paid for what I do. This hinders the way that we work (Sphelele from Mkhabhatini Community).

From other responses, it can be deduced that PACSA is in a way invisible in the communities since they mostly work through CBOs. Some of the participants identify this as a constraint and will want PACSA to visibly involve them in the communities instead of through CBOs:

> I think for me, an area of improvement maybe them [PACSA], going out more to communities and be seen; they should work more with the people (Nondumiso from Edendale Community).

Concludingly, it could be credibly argued that PACSA as an FBO working in KZN has established strategies which, as confirmed by participants, have had a positive impact on the lives of the people. The organisation's efforts have in many ways confirmed extant literature's views (Ferris 2005; Maharaj et al. 2008, Habib, Maharaj & Nyar 2008; Bercovitch & Kadayifci-Orellana 2009) that FBOs, through their different strategies, influenced by their vocation and faith, do make a positive impact in poverty alleviation, human development and service delivery. There seems to be a conscientious effort by PACSA to help fill in the gap left by government in its role of improving the lives of the people. The themes of improving functioning and capabilities, negotiation of values between the organisation and the host communities, also emerge. The organisation has apparently helped in realising these in KZN. Also, the paternalistic tendencies of the FBO as an agent of poverty alleviation and human development could be seen and this has mostly been positive.

Conclusion

The study has endeavoured to assess the role that two purposefully selected FBOs play and the strategies they use in poverty alleviation and human development in the KZN Province of South Africa. On the side of GOG, findings reveal key informers' optimism that despite some constraints (mostly financial), their strategies are (and have been) quite effective. Also, the assessment by the beneficiaries of GOG's interventions reveal that the poverty alleviation and human development strategies of this organisation are making real positive impact on the lives of the people in these communities. On PACSA's side, key informers are very positive that their strategies are effective in helping to ameliorate the failures of the state in poverty alleviation and human development in the province. They also acknowledge some constraints

to their efforts. The findings also reveal that PACSA's beneficiaries are generally happy that the organisation through its strategies has transformed their lives.

Summarily, the assessments have been generally positive as regards the role the two FBOs play and the effectiveness of their strategies. This study concludes that the two FBOs, despite some constraints, have been effective in realising the basic functioning and capabilities of people and thus constitute credible agents in the arena of poverty alleviation and human development in the study's chosen context of KZN. However, despite the reality that the organisations are relatively successful in providing needed social services for poverty alleviation, filling in for the state in important ways, and that they also appear to avoid much of the criticisms of paternalism, they each fall short in different ways. This study begs additional questions for future research on the relationship between CA, paternalism and these organisations and indeed other FBOs in other contexts. Some of the questions may include: How does FBO agency enable and not constrict the autonomy and decision-making power of beneficiaries? How can FBOs and their beneficiaries positively engage each other towards a deliberative route to shared values? Finally, further research on these and other FBOs is necessary for a more sustained analysis of the whether and how the CA approach can provide a complete picture of aid recipients' well-being.

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Dr. Sunday Paul C. Onwuegbuchulam
Centre for Gender and Africa Studies
University of the Free State
South Africa
sage1_ugoh@yahoo.com

Top-Down Advocacy as an Antithesis of Emancipatory Politics: A Brief Review of the Politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo

Stephen Phiri
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/000-0002-1336-1628

Emmanuel Matambo
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3941-6105

Abstract

This chapter critically views top-down social and political advocacy as a vehicle used or encouraged by the powerful to unwittingly depoliticize any effort by the poor to emancipate themselves. Thus, established advocacy outside the locale of those it seeks to emancipate, becomes 'an erroneous' helping hand, which keeps the poor in their 'place' while an oppressive status quo remains untouched. Using Marxist terminology, advocacy on behalf of the poor without them being principal actors for their own emancipation, becomes the *opium of the poor*. For this reason, this paper argues that an emancipatory perspective does not spare non-state actors and agencies such as individuals or faith-based organisations that seem 'innocent' because, without deferring to the leading role of those they seek to help, their advocacy is inherently top-down and works well within an established order. By offering top-down intervention to the poor, advocacy groups occlude the incentive for agency on the part of the poor. In the effort of unmasking the hypocrisy of 'advocacy generosity', this chapter looks at the thinking and politics of the shack-dwellers' movement, Abahlali baseMjondolo, near Durban, South Africa. This movement demonstrates that if the goal of political, social and economic activism is to emancipate the poor in society, then the poor should be integral participants in such activism and advocacy, rather than merely represented by others.

Keywords: Socio-political advocacy, Emancipatory politics, Living politics, Abahlali baseMjondolo

Introduction

Once advocacy and activism on behalf of the poor are normalised as permanent constitutive elements of the (hegemonic) status quo, they become impediments to the sustainable development of the grassroots and impoverished communities. This article presents how one grassroots social movement (which consists of shack-dwellers), through its day-to-day political thinking, challenges acts of advocacy and activism that (directly or indirectly) seek to support the very structures that keep low-income communities in continuous impoverishment. The article is divided into four sections. The first section will focus on socio-political activism and advocacy. The second and third will look at emancipatory politics and seek to show that this type of politics is synonymous with what Abahlali baseMjondolo (henceforth simply called Abahlali) calls 'living politics', despite current challenges in the movement. The fourth section will focus on Top-down Advocacy, the emancipatory politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo, and ongoing challengesIt is important from the onset to highlight that the information regarding Abahlali was not just obtained from text but also from one focus group discussion that we conducted in 2017.

Socio-political Advocacy

Social and political activism and advocacy are important in understanding how power politics play out in society, at the state, non-state and subnational levels, especially in contexts such as South Africa that have glaring inequalities. Social and political advocates come in various forms (ranging from individuals to non-governmental organisations [NGOs] including faith-based organisations) with various areas of emphasis, from seeking economic and political reform to the pursuit of social justice (Lee, Smith & Henry 2013:70). Socio-political advocates, such as those discussed in this article, have become more active in seeking to dismantle structural impediments that keep the impoverished in their condition.

Faith-based organizations usually combine activism with humanitarianism. Such advocacy is usually altruistic and done for benign purposes. The manner of social engagement, also usually takes a relatively pacifist and compromising approach, i.e., one that is not militant when it comes to protesting against injustice (Pommier 2011; Byrstorm 2014:406). This puts actors who are not militant at variance with more militant disadvantaged groups, whose

methods of protest occasionally move into what they see as 'redemptive' forms of violence.

Africa's struggle with poverty, disease and armed conflict have become Sisyphean, to the extent that advocacy and humanitarian intervention have become a need. While the moral intent of advocacy and humanitarianism in general cannot be impugned, the possibility that its specific manifestations or methods can be self-serving cannot be ignored, either. Some advocacy groups are seen by governments primarily as political instruments that promote certain political agendas. In Africa, non-state activism, especially when it caters to non-state actors, can be seen by governments as interference in internal affairs. However, even when it caters to the impoverished and marginalized, it fails to achieve longstanding positive results if its approach does not consider the primacy of the people and communities it seeks to support. This chapter will illustrate how those in Abahlali strives to have their context as the defining and most prominent feature of their advocacy.

While African governments have been willing recipients of monetary aid and food relief, for example, they look askance at humanitarian advocacy when it is aimed at citizens who are perceived as victims of their governments. Uganda, for example, lashed out at what described as donor meddling when foreign donors looked askance at Uganda's multiparty pretences and Museveni's unwillingness to engage the Lord's Resistance Army in negotiations rather than force (Wallis 2005). This is a result of a conflation of advocacy with alleged political activism that could radicalize the marginalized against their governments. By providing material relief and intangible help in the form of advice on legal entitlements, for example, advocacy groups can politicize their interventions in ways that cause governments to accuse them of having a political agenda. If advocacy groups offering help to marginalized groups come from foreign (for example, Western) countries, governments are likely to suspect countries from which such groups come of politicizing interference. Despite this, external aid, irrespective of its agency, can be of help to 'citizens of the target state from flagrant violation of their fundamental human rights usually by agents of the state' (Ayoob 2002:81). Abahlali considers itself as victim of the South African government's failure to cater for the historically disadvantaged citizenry. In this case, it is easy to defend individuals and agencies that offer help. However, as the chapter will reiterate, this help sometimes takes away the agency that the disadvantaged need to emancipate themselves. Advocacy that comes as tutelage to disadvantaged communities misses the

target for emancipation and unwittingly perpetuates the same power politics it seeks to dismantle between the poor and those who keep them in that state.

Alongside the expectation of Western (or other foreign) involvement in African affairs is the delicate line of where and when outside involvement, in both tangible and intangible ways, could continue to be seen as humanitarian or morph into disruptive intervention or interference. The colonial 'toga' is often ascribed to Western intervention, even to non-state actors from the West, when African governments are uncomfortable with it, irrespective of whether or not it could be to the advantage of ordinary African citizens. This paper uses the analogizes Western involvement in African affairs to the involvement of advocacy groups in the affairs of marginalized and impoverished communities in Africa. The following section of the article probes the concept of emancipatory politics and why it is germane for the current study. The main difference between what has been said thus far and what ensues is that while many traditional forms of advocacy seem to stem from grand narratives, pushed by the developed world, emancipatory politics localizes agency and liberation; the affected masses are the chief architects of the change they seek to engender in their communities, and other powers may only supplement the activism that is already available.

Emancipatory Politics

The failure of institutional or representative politics in Africa has prompted scholars like Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (as early as 1994) to proclaim African politics as facing an insurmountable crisis. This crisis can be traced to the adoption of 'dominant historical modes of politics which have organised political processes since the nineteenth century' (Wamba-dia-Wamba 1994:249). The reason for giving this brief historical background of the failure of institutional politics is that he wants to propose a political route that he deems operative, most possibly efficient, revolutionary or progressive. This is a brand of politics that does not serve the masses but one in which the masses are the agents. Such people-driven politics he calls emancipatory politics. It is a politics 'rooted in the fundamental masses of the people – workers and the poor peasants – is no longer incarnated by existing dominant historical modes of politics' (Wamba-dia-Wamba 1994:249).

Paulo Freire (1970) understands emancipatory politics as cultural action developed in opposition to the elites that wield power. Such an action

'constitutes the means whereby the oppressed acquire consciousness of themselves as a political force' (Mayo 1995:363). Frantz Fanon (1963) blames the failure of the colonial struggle on the nature of politics which excluded the people/ masses and sought to think and work on their behalf. Fanon was critical of the domestication of the masses because he believed that their full involvement was tantamount to a true emancipatory victory over colonial hegemony. Fanon (1963:155–156, 159) argues that:

> In Algeria, we have realized that the masses are equal to the problems which confront them. In an under-developed country, experience proves that the important thing is not that three hundred people form a plan and decide upon carrying it out, but that the whole people plan and decide even if it takes them twice the time taken up by explaining, the time 'lost' in treating the workers as a human being, will be caught up in the execution of the plan. People must know where they are going and why … (because) everything depends on them; … if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and … if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.

Emancipatory politics is not imposed from outside, but it is inherently a constitutive product of people's real experiences. It is an inherent response which people exhibit when confronted by any form of injustice or an attitude that undermines their humanity. An emphasis on the agency of the people in their emancipation can be witnessed in the writings of Celestin Monga (1994) and Achille Mbembe (1992) among others. Theorists like Monga (1994) assert that there has always been an element of protest against unfair practices exercised by the dominant groups over the masses in African indigenous communities. Monga's main argument is that there has been always a quest for freedom in Africa which is deeply embedded in the grassroots. The driving force behind this quest is 'anger'. People get angry when they are systematically oppressed; they develop ways to escape repression, necessitated by the need for an inclusive democratic process. Inasmuch as Monga focuses on Africa, protests against injustice are not confined to Africa; they are noticeable in other regions where inequality is present. John Holloway (2010) uses the

word 'scream' to describe the masses' response to neoliberal capitalism around the world. Ted Robert Gurr (1970) tries to explain the underlying factors behind the 'anger' (as highlighted by Monga) or the 'scream' (as pointed out by Holloway). He uses the term 'relative deprivation' as having the potential 'for action'. This understanding is useful for conceiving how frustration can make individuals participate in political protest. According to Gurr, the relationship between deprivation and action serves as the fundamental basis for understanding civil strife, where deprivation is proportional to discontent.

James C. Scott (1990) shows that oppression is never tolerated and the will to 'scream' or express 'anger' can never be suppressed. He uses the word 'infrapolitics' of the subordinate group, by which he means 'a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance which dare not speak in their own name' (Scott 1990:19). Infrapolitics is the social space where the oppressed develop their own discourse and their own norms. This is the place where the forbidden is permissible. It is a safe space for the subordinate, but an uncomfortable domain for those who dominate. Bringing this back to Africa, Mbembe (1992:6) shows how this kind of 'infrapolitics' played itself out in the way the people of Togo identified the French as the 'sound of faecal matter dropping into the sceptic tank'. Instead of directly confronting the oppressor, the oppressed used language in the form of imagery of pervasive filth to challenge colonial hegemony.

One of the most important current theorists of emancipatory politics is Michael Neocosmos, who argues that emancipatory politics is, first and foremostly, about thought. He concludes that 'politics is thought, thought is real and people think' (Neocosmos 2016:26). Central to this politics is an emphasis on the ability of the people to think for themselves, and hence, the agency of the people is of paramount importance in their quest for emancipation. People are thus always capable of thinking beyond the status quo and imagining a world other than the one that they are experiencing. According to Neocosmos, everyone thinks, although their thinking may not be political thought. By contrast, emancipatory political thought is always collective, not individual. It is the thinking of people, together; it is also always practical; it is about acting in the world. Thus, emancipatory politics is collective thought practice but, critically, it is the collective thought practice of the universal. This brand of emancipation is not limited to those who advocate it; but is rather seen as a better way of living that everyone deserves. It can be better understood within the framework of prefigurative politics (Tornberg 2021:

83). In current hegemonic understandings, politics is considered the representtation of different interests, identities or markers, for example, ethnicity, sex, race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and so on. However, these are modes of exclusive politics. In contrast, to continue with Neocosmos' view, 'there exists, at certain times in certain sites, a politics beyond interests and … this politics is the core idea behind a politics of emancipation, as emancipation is always "for all", and never for "some"' (Neocosmos 2016:22). Thus, emancipatory politics transcends the interests of either a group or a segment of the population and it rests on the radical assumption that there is only one human race, an important point that will be illustrated later.

Emancipatory politics might seem abstract and unfeasible because of the dominance of conventional liberal politics, including interest group politics noted above, which seems to be the only option possible. Unfortunately, the prevalence of emancipatory acts that we witness every day goes unnoticed, because the *status quo* usually governs our definition of politics. As expressed earlier, these acts are expressed daily through 'anger' or 'screams' of the oppressed. This 'anger' or 'screams' are not just a mere emotional expression but a genuine manifestation of counter-hegemonic acts. These acts are not meant only to express the lack of material goods but an uncompromising quest for human dignity. They are not asking for unsustainable handouts that make them more dependent, but for an egalitarian world, where institution-driven advocacy is not the overriding factor for the impoverished and marginalised. Emancipatory politics does not deny the need for material goods which the poor really need, but it further seeks to create a world where deprivation has no place. It is important to note that the deprivation of materiality is intimately related to that of one's dignity. The expansion of humanitarianism in a neoliberal world where resources are in abundance is a clear sign that something is wrong. The next section will highlight emancipatory acts in post-apartheid South Africa, with a specific focus on Abahlali. This group will give us a better insight into what poor people really want through their politics and philosophy.

Abahlali baseMjondolo: Emancipatory Politics as Living Politics

Abahlali is a South African shack-dwellers' movement. The movement was founded out of people's 'anger' or 'scream' due to the way the government

took them and their grievances for granted. It consists of people who have tried to be in the mainstream of economic activities but were always relegated to the economic, political and social margins by longstanding inequalities. Some of them come from rural areas looking for greener pastures and found themselves homeless and in deplorable conditions. Early in 2005, they decided to block Kennedy Road, which passes through their shack settlement to Durban. This became the first known widely written about protest the social movement embarked upon (Pithouse 2006). After this event this social movement started to be an organized force with a formidable philosophy and politics, which haunted top-down structures like the government and some NGOs.

Kerry Ryan Chance (2018) points out that it was in 2014 that Abahlali consolidated themselves as a militant group. She further highlights that this was in response to the emergence of leftist parties such as the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). What distinguishes Abahlali is that they do not subscribe to identitarian militancy espoused by organisations such as the EFF. Moreover, they also do not seek to capture state power. Today Abahlali stands as one of the biggest shack-dwellers' organisations in South Africa. The organisation also has branches in both Pietermaritzburg and Cape Town.

The movement has been involved in many activities. One of its major demands is the prioritization of the social value of land against its commercial value (Tshabalala 2014). Social value is people-centred, while the latter in most cases serves capitalist endeavours. Abahlali is prominently known for campaigning against land evictions and public housing. In addition, it is also known for refusing to be affiliated with any political parties, and it even boycotts elections. In order to frustrate the ruling party (which it considers as undermining its existence? and humanity), the organisation at one point supported the opposition (Tshabalala 2014), the Democratic Alliance (DA). This support was not permanent, but rather a temporary act calculated to threaten the ruling African National Congress (ANC), which seemed to be impervious to the plight of shack-dwellers (Tshabalala 2014). The movement described its way of doing things as entirely based on a kind of homemade politics accessible to everyone (Pithouse 2006). Such politics is not limited to what the poor think of their situation but in the actions that are informed by their everyday experiences. This people's politics was derived not from theories or books but from people's existential experiences and circumstances. Sbu Zikode, the leader of Abahlali, commenting in the foreword of Gibson's book, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa* (2011: v) emphasizes,

> we did not know about Paulo Freire or Fanon when we began our struggle. This we learnt on the way .... Every struggle must begin at the point where the people who have decided to rebel find themselves, with the resources that they have, on the basis of the experiences that they have had, in the face of limits and dangers they encounter and with the understanding that they have.

Zikode describes their politics as a force that enables the poor to move out of the places where oppression has assigned them. By contrast he describes conventional, state or institutional politics as 'dead politics', because it is designed to control the poor and make them be satisfied with their predicament (CLP 2013). For him, Abahlali's politics is a politics from below. He calls such a politics living politics, which is a politics for 'everyday life, thinking, language and struggle of the people – it is a politics of dignity. And it is grounded on what is happening and what needs to happen to achieve real change in the world' (CLP 2013:5). Chance (2018) describes living politics in relation to the way the state brutalises those who follow such politics. He also adds that such a politics is not confined to one race but cuts across races.

Chance's book, *Living Politics in South Africa's Urban Shacklands,* argues that living politics is fundamentally based on the actual language and humanity of poor people as well as their everyday practices and interactions with the state agents in South Africa's shack settlements. Living politics constitutes a collective group of poor people whose identity is beyond racial categorisation and classifications (Chance 2018). These are people whose lives and struggles are defined by their everyday activities. The state considers militant protests and unplanned erections of housing structures by shack dwellers to be illegal. To the shack dwellers, however, these actions are seen as necessary for desperate people who demand to be heard by the state. Lack of unemployment compels job-seeking citizens to erect shacks close to urban areas in search of employment opportunities.

Living politics has two main aspects, namely: it is fundamentally based on the experience of the poor, as highlighted earlier, and its thinking is collective. These two elements strongly resonate with Neocosmos' understanding of emancipatory politics and reflect emancipatory acts highlighted by Mbembe, Monga and others. As highlighted by the former, this politics is essentially shaped by the experiences of the people. Again, it begins not with theory, but is instead experientially grounded. It is important to note that living

politics is not against theory, as the organisation is acquainted with many theoretical frameworks. What theory does, however, is not to determine the organisation's politics, but rather to confirm what its people experience daily.

The second element of living politics is that it takes place within a strictly democratic space. People's politics, like living politics, differs from party politics in that the latter is top-down and works from a professional representation model. The former (living politics), on the other hand, refuses representation but opts for popular democracy, which defies financial rewards (Selmeczi 2010). Zikode highlighted that:

> The power of our organising comes when we reject this individualist understanding of liberation and accept collective responsibility for society, from the level of families, to neighbourhood, cities and the entire society. A progressive, democratic and just society in which everyone can participate in decision making and in which the land and wealth are shared cannot be built by individual endeavour …. When organising in Abahlali we do not encourage individual membership. In order to encourage the culture of collectivity, Abahlali reminds all its members of the importance of their families and neighbourhoods (Gibson 2011: vii-viii).

Abahlali is clear that their goal is not limited to land and housing, but they further seek respect and dignity because houses and land can be used to silence and keep them comfortable in oppressive places. When they blocked Kennedy Road, they were not just doing this to get houses, but they realised that the government's listening ear is more inclined to the needs of the rich and powerful than the genuine needs of the poor. This selective attitude reveals that the poor do not matter and their needs can be met on condition that they 'behave' in line with the dictates of the status quo, a status quo that has not substantially changed longstanding social and economic inequalities, and seeks to speak on behalf of the marginalised rather than allow their voice to dictate how they want to overcome persistent marginalisation. Abahlali's protests cannot be reduced to service delivery, but to the quest for human respect and dignity.

What is important to Abahlali is empowerment and sustainable livelihood of the poor. As a result, when offered help, they usually question the underlying implications of such help. The movement has realised that the

nature of help that has been given to them was designed to keep them rooted to their deplorable conditions. In a focus-group discussion that was conducted with them in March 2018, they expressed how manipulative not only political parties are, but NGOs as well. According to them, some of these organisations offer sponsorship in order to control them and their activities. For them, the poor are a means for the privileged to get what they want. They expressed the concern that these organisations are not concerned about the wellbeing of poor communities, but that they use communities to enhance their images. The poor become merely a steppingstone towards their anticipated goals. Some NGOs seek to neutralise the struggle by using money to control the activities of grassroots organisations:

> We used to work with a certain NGO before. They had the perception that the movement, they have to report to them all, they wanted to tell us what to do, and they have specific ideas on how we conduct ourselves, and whenever we address some of the issues. They also wanted to be in control of the movement (AbM[1] focus group, 2017).

In support of what the Abahlali focus group said, literature has also shown the way NGOs, especially international ones, operate. A magazine called BINGOS[2], *The Big Charity Bonanza*, explores the works of charity international NGOs. In the magazine, Ransom (2005) sees these powerful NGOs as having an escapable effect of undermining agency of the people who are supposed to benefit from them. He further points out that these NGOs are powerful, self-righteous institutions, whose revenues and assets run into hundreds of thousands or even millions of dollars. With so much economic influence, Ransom (2005) tries to show that BINGOS are indirectly major players on the political stage. Moreover, for him, instead of being 'charitable' they can actually promote starvation. In other words, these NGOs are playing an ambulance role, bandaging the wounds instead of challenging and precluding the chief causes of disasters.

Ransom (2005) talks about people being force-fed 'the poisonous brew of free market economics and fake democracy that is concocted by corporate globalisation and neoliberal politics. The brew is homemade in the

[1] Abahlali baseMjondolo is abbreviated as AbM.

[2] BINGOS means Big International Non-Governmental Organisations.

countries, where almost all BINGOS live'. Organisations that usually buy into neo-liberal orthodoxy sponsor such ideas among the people they seek to 'help', irrespective of their different circumstances (Ransom 2005:5). Ransom argues that NGOs can be complicit in maintaining established inequalities between political and socio-economic institutions and the marginalised, whether consciously or unconsciously. He highlights the fact that even if NGOs claim to be working outside the state, the state also wields some influence over them, and/or they share the logic of state politics.

Nevertheless, the focus group discussions that we had with Abahlali revealed that they are open to partnership with other organisations; moreover, they do not shy away from support if these organisations respect them as thinking beings rather than as a means to an end. They even indicated that they work closely with certain NGOs, especially the Church Land Programme (CLP). The CLP respects Abahlali as an independent organisation whose thinking is a brainchild of the shack-dwellers. Apart from CLP, other organisations (such as KZNCC and CCS) and the government seek either to interfere with their struggle or to neutralise it. During the focus-group discussions with members of Abahlali, they expressed how CLP was genuinely supportive as follows:

> CLP was not that kind of organisation that wanted to impose things to us, but they came to us to support …. Because whenever we are facing challenges, we are asking for their support; they would be there even physically, not just financial support. They come to our struggles. If we are going to court, they used to be there. CLP does not control what we do. But they always support our decisions (AbM 2017).

As has been shown, Abahlali's politics is inseparable from emancipatory politics as articulated by Neocosmos above. This is so because Abahlali's politics is a product of the people's thinking and their experiences. It does not subscribe to individualism but is a collective product of the people. Lastly and more importantly, this politics is universal. What this means is that it does not seek to emancipate merely those who are fighting oppression, but seeks a free humanity. This was demonstrated by Abahlali in its statement against the 2008 xenophobic attacks, in which it condemned those South African poor communities that attacked foreigners. Part of the statement that

the movement presented read:

> There is only one race. Our struggle and every struggle is to put the human being at the centre of society, starting with the worst off. An action can be illegal. A person cannot be illegal wherever they may find themselves. If you live in the settlement you are a neighbour and a comrade in that settlement. We condemn the attacks, the beatings, rape and murder in Johannesburg (subjected) on people born in other countries. We will fight left and right to ensure that this does not happen here in KwaZulu-Natal … Let's us be clear, neither poverty nor oppression justifies one poor person turning on another. A poor man who turns on his wife or a poor family that turns on their neighbour must be opposed, stopped and brought to justice (AbM 2008).

The following section discusses how emancipatory politics, in the form of living politics, is an antithesis of top-down advocacy on behalf of the marginalised.

Top-down Advocacy, the Emancipatory Politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo, and Ongoing Challenges

Abahlali operates in a South Africa that is highly capitalised, to the detriment of those on the economic fringes of society. To address past injustices, the South African government embarked on an extensive social welfare system that was ideally pro-poor. However, just as international humanitarianism could be used as a tool to further the preferences of those sponsoring it, locally bred intervention, driven by certain interest groups, carries the potential to do the same. Interest groups advocating issues that specifically pertain to their mission can run the risk of pushing their agendas which, without insight and direction from those they want to support, might be at variance with a people-driven, bottom-up, emancipatory politics.

It is commendable that Abahlali is demanding more than just land and other material provisions which the state can dispense. At the heart of their activism resides a desire to claim 'the dignity of the poor in South Africa' as Bandile Mdlalose (2014:346), the former General Secretary of the movement puts it. Socio-political activists who want to help in this respect will thus be

more appealing to Abahlali, though such activists should not lose sight of the fact that Abahlali comprises the principal actors. The CLP has been hailed by Abahlali because of its acknowledgement of the primacy of Abahlali's activism in agitating for a better life. The movement's diplomatic victory after a legal battle with government over resettlements and eradication of slums, demonstrated just how social movements, while largely operating from established systems, can nevertheless use established structures, in this case the courts, to reinforce their activism (Huchzermeyer 2014). Firoze Manji and Carl O'Coill (2002:568) argue that the work of NGOs 'contributes nothing marginally to the relief of poverty, but significantly to undermining the struggle of African people to emancipate themselves from economic, social and political oppression'. They argue, in Gramscian terms, that even organisations that operate formally outside the state could inadvertently help to reinforce state institutions, hence supporting the status quo instead of uplifting the masses and support their struggle for emancipation and development. With the collapse of the colonial system and the retreat of missionary institutions that also supported Western structures, NGOs seemed to have assumed the role of the missionaries; they tend to pay cursory attention to the insights of those, like Abahlali, whom they claim to represent. Alain Badiou (2005:73) talks about the 'politics of the masses that sets itself the task of involving the people's consciousness in its process, and of taking directly into consideration the real lives of the dominated'. Our argument goes beyond 'involvement' of the masses; it advocates 'pre-eminence' wherein the masses are not a supplement or an addendum to advocacy but are the primary actors.

Despite the stellar work that Abahlali has done to shine light on the plight of the poor, any appraisal of the organisation would be remiss if it did not touch on challenges to this and potentially other similar movements. The first is charting the formula for activism. Movements such as Abahlali are more likely to attract attention through disruptive protests that block traffic, for example. The risk for this formula of protesting is that it could be hijacked by people or organisations with selfish interests against the ruling establishment. In fact, Mdlalose (2014:347) reports that Abahlali has lost its initial mandate and lustre, and that members 'became willing captives of outsiders' with mainstream political ambitions. The movement could be well counselled to guard against vested interests of those who might come to its aid, financially or otherwise, with outward demonstrations of solidarity but in fact pursuing their own interests.

Conclusion

South Africa has admirably entrenched the tenets of democracy through relatively free media spaces that allow for opposing voices to co-exist, a fiercely independent judiciary, a robust legislature and some spaces that also allow for protests. These conditions embolden social movements such as Abahlali not to pare down their demands for human decency through only focusing on social service delivery. The equivocal efficacy of socio-political advocacy offers a salutary lesson for social movements that might have immediate needs for resources that some advocacy agencies have in abundance. However, the synergy that might ensue between advocacy agencies and social movements should not undermine the primacy of grassroots movements in championing their demands. This research has argued that, while some of the intentions of socio-political intervention cannot be besmirched, inadvertently such intervention has fallen into the pitfalls of top-down strategies that speak for those they intend to help rather than supporting them in their quest for a just and egalitarian society. What is needed is a nexus between advocacy activists and community movements, but one that respects that the principal players are the people enduring the politics of deprivation.

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Stephen Phiri
School of Education
University of KwaZulu-Natal
phiris@ukzn.ac.za

Emmanuel Matambo
Centre for Africa-China Studies,
University of Johannesburg
ematambo@yahoo.com/ ematambo@uj.ac.za

Women's Agency for Peace in Conflict Times: Case Study of Liberian Women Organisations

Lukong Stella Shulika
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9880-5306

Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that women suffer disproportionately from conflicts. As a result, gender-inclusive conflict intervention and peacebuilding has become a norm grounded in the idea that women are equally significant contributors and stakeholders in peace processes. This chapter discusses the lived experiences of women's organisations in Liberia to provide a qualitative appraisal of their actions as agents and architects of peace in times of conflict. Drawing insights from Maxine Molyneux's organisational theory, this chapter argues that collective agency by women's organisations creates the appropriate environment for women's empowerment and a platform that allows them to contribute to peacebuilding. Moreover, women's collective agency transcended religious and ethnic lines. Acting together *as women* was more important than doing so along other categories of identity, demonstrating that in this case, religious identity was subservient to gender identity in identifying the mechanisms of governance to bring about peace. The chapter contributes to the women, peace, and security discourses by highlighting the instrumental role women's organisations play in enabling peace through different forms of nonviolent activism. The research builds on focus-group discussions and interview information gathered from women's organisations in Liberia in July 2015.

Keywords: Liberia, Molyneux's organisational theory, Women's agency, Women's organisations, Conflict times, Peace processes

Introduction

Conflicts are generally associated with tensions and dissonances common with human relations and the everyday functionality of society. Usually, humanity and societies' disastrous encounters with violent conflicts have seen both

women and men disproportionately affected as they face different forms of indescribable suffering (United Nations 2002; Massaquoi 2007). Studies that assert this view commonly accentuate that the variance of the effects of conflicts on women and men owes to the gender roles and identities attributed to their maleness or femaleness in their specific social orders.[1] As different as women and men's experiences of conflict are, so too are their political and socio-economic experiences (Medie 2019).

Joyce P. Kaufman and Kristen P. Williams (2013) assert that one noticeable effect of armed conflicts and civil wars on women is their ability to change their gender roles and relations in society by creating an arena for a shift from their traditionally conceived responsibilities to others which are more public and unconventional. That is, the different kinds of encumbrances that conflict imposes on women propel them to embrace diverse roles: as breadwinners for their families and communities, combatants, and most importantly harbingers and architects of peace initiatives that have often influenced the resolution of conflicts (USAID 2007; Kaufman & Williams 2013). Examples of women's changing roles through peace advocacy, politicking, and peace movements abound in South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, just to mention a few.

Focusing on Liberia as the case in point, this study articulates how Liberia's peace story involved multitudes of women, especially following the self-realisation of their ability to change not only the conflict situation, but the consequences of the conflict for them and for society (Shulika 2016). In more ways than one, women's interventions in the Liberian conflict curtailed to a certain degree its impact on families, communities, and society at large (Alaga 2011; Ouellet 2013). As such, narratives of women's agency for peace in Liberia depict their activism as transcending bottom-up to top-down levels of society and vice versa, with noticeable influence that set into motion the peace talks that led to the resolution of the Liberian conflict.

This chapter advances the discourse of women's agency in times of conflict by appraising the instrumentality of the roles of women's organisations in the pursuit of peace during Liberia's first civil war in 1989 through to the end of the second civil war in 2003. It uses Maxine Molyneux's organisational

[1] See for instance: Rehn and Sirleaf (2001); Puechguirbal (2004); Massaquoi (2007); Alaga (2010); McCarthy (2011); AusAID (2006); Chang *et al.* (2015).

theory to probe the 'how and what' motivates women and the agency of women's organisations for peace with the view of contributing to the literature on non-violent activism as well as to the current debates on women, peace, and security in Africa. Questioning how Liberian women commanded such an influence to change the narratives from that of conflict to peace, this paper particularises their rise to the forefront of peace activism as being shaped by their individual and shared experiences of conflict. These experiences, as identified in this paper, inform their approaches to advocacy campaigns, peaceful demonstrations, and dialoguing for the cause of peace.

This paper develops from primary information that was gathered from focus-group discussions and interviews with a purposefully selected number of women's organisations, government, media, and international entities in Liberia in 2015 by the researcher to complete her doctoral project. The overall research population for the project constituted 16 individual participants for the semi-structured interviews, and four focus-group discussions consisting of 45 participants. However, for this paper, only the data from the women's organisations is used. These include primary data from focus-group discussions and interviews with members and representatives of Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL); the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCAL); the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding and Women in Peacebuilding Network (WANEP/ WIPNET); Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA); Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET); Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET at grassroots level); and Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women). It also includes an interview conducted with a prominent peace activist, Mother Mary Brownell, a founding member of Liberian Women Initiative (LWI). The choice of the organisations owed to their visibly active roles during and in the aftermath of the conflicts in Liberia, as well as to their knowledge of the context and content of women's agency.

This chapter is also enriched by secondary data, which mostly comprises desktop reviews of journal articles, books, research papers, newspaper and magazine articles and media reports, and policy briefs, theses, and reliable and verifiable information available on the internet. Moreover, and for the purpose of providing a nuanced perspective of women's experiences and agency for peace during the Liberian conflicts and beyond, this paper relies on information from documentaries like *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*. Likewise, it draws upon insights on the experiences of Liberian women from seminar talks and discus-

sions delivered by peace activist Leymah Gbowee, and from the scholarly works of authors like Erica Sewell (2007), Ilzina Lelde (2011), and Ali Mari Tripp (2015).

Both the primary and secondary data were analysed using the methods of content analysis and narrative/discourse analysis of the role of women as agents and architects of peace in conflict times. Content analysis constitutes a very important part of the qualitative research approach and is used to construe meaning from the context of the data text, be it primary or secondary (Hsieh & Shannon 2005:1277). Thus, this data analysis method was distinctly used to appraise existing literature and the information gathered from the focus groups and interviews focusing on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. Narrative and discourse analyses were also used to recount the experiences of women in building agency. In presenting the data, participants are cited using their organisations' acronyms, except for Mary Brownell who is mentioned by name. Participants from focus group discussions are simply cited as Focus-Group participants.

Molyneux's Organisational Perspective and Women's Organisations in Liberia

Molyneux's organisational theory on women's movements and collective actions provides a useful framework for understanding what instigates women's agency and the formation of women's organisations, including in conflict times. Generally, women's organisations, whether grassroots, national or regional, are voluntary by nature and are often established with the purpose of promoting, piloting, and overseeing issues pertaining to women's welfare and gender equality (Kumar 2000). The formation of women's organisations during and especially in the aftermath of conflicts owes to several factors, including, among others:

i. The consequences of conflicts often destabilise and transform the order of socio-economic, political and security functioning of society, and in turn enhance and foster the participation of women in public affairs;

ii. Women's need to promote feminist agendas because of their disenchantment with political leaders and parties that promise to support gender equal policies and opportunities, yet fail to deliver;

iii. Peacebuilding processes by governments taking on democratic principles often create public platforms for the autonomous materialisation, establishment, and exemplification of women's organisations; and

iv. The operationalisation of international bodies through NGOs to foster policies on women's empowerment and gender equality, and promote the establishment of efficient civil society institutions, which in turn inspire the development of women's organisations (Kumar 2000: v).

Peacebuilding, especially in societies transitioning from war to peace, tends to unlock unique windows of opportunity for the establishment of women's organisations. Theorizing this, Molyneux (2001:3) asserts that women's movements or organisations entail the exercise of collective action in search of socio-political goals and rejoinders to common challenges, especially in the milieu of modern state emergence and economic change. Through collective action, women generally can mandate political, social, and economic transformation, as well as demand accountability from public institutions. In view thereof, Maria Butler, Abigail Ruane and Madhuri Sastry (2015:17) aver that, given women's agency for sustainable peace, justice and equality, the processes of peace and averting conflicts necessitate the contributions of women's organisations. More so, the display of women's agency through women's movements is significant in impacting and advancing women's rights in the realm of state affairs (Molyneux 2000).

In the case of Liberia, women's collective agency was comprised of approaches and initiatives that targeted direct and indirect management of the drivers of civil wars and their enabling factors. It also transcended women's individual agency and organised women's resolve to emasculate the gendered nature of the Liberian conflicts for the purpose of peace, with women's organisations rising to the task. For example, NAWOCOL and LWI were among the first women's organisations to be founded in the early years of Liberia's conflict in 1991 and 1994, respectively (NAWOCOL 2015; Mother Mary Brownell 2015). Mother Brownell, a founding member of LWI as agreed by most of the research participants, states that the establishment of LWI represented a historic context for the upsurge of women's organisations and women rising for peace in Liberia following the outbreak of the first civil war. This view has also been asserted, for instance, in the works of Ali Mari Tripp (2015), Robert Press (2010), Erica Sewell (2007) and William Massaquoi (2007). To

this end, the founding of LWI was fundamental in remodelling women for carving new political agency as peace advocates and architects through the fora of women's movements in the latter years of the conflict in Liberia.

The outbreak of the second civil war in Liberia proved the above perspective to be correct. Apparently, the undesirable ramifications of the first civil war, which pulled women together, also provided the basis for women's mobilisation for the cause of peace during the second civil war (WANEP/ WIPENT 2015). Once again, the flip side and irony of conflict, which Kumar (2000) identifies as one of the many reasons for women organising, was that it provided women with the opportunity to embrace and further expand their agency for peace. Developing the motivational platform that had been initiated by LWI for women to unremittingly unite and work for peace at every level of society, a regional women's organisation, MARWOPNET, was founded by women from Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea in 2000 (MARWOPNET 2015). Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Liberia was also launched in 2001 by a regional peacebuilding organisation known as West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) and through joint efforts, WANEP facilitates most of its initiatives through its WIPNET program Under the coordination of Leymah Gbowee, WIPNET (2015) consists of women from all walks, classes, groups, ethnic and religious backgrounds – Christians and Muslims alike.

This collective of Liberian women in pursuit of peace developed from women's experiences of conflict. In Molyneux's (1985; 2001) writings on women's movements, allusion is made to the importance of women's specific experiences as well as their gender interests/goals as strategic in the exercise of their agency and the formation of movements. Thus, Molyneux (2001) emphasizes that women's movements and their interests are best addressed through collective efforts or actions. In concurrence, Butler *et al.* (2015) maintain that the involvement of women's movements or organisations is an unquestionable element in the construction of women's agency and efforts to prevent/resolve conflicts and contribute to sustainable peace processes.

Women's Agency for Peace in Liberia: Narratives and Strategies

Using analytical narratives, this section discusses the contribution of women's organisations to Liberia's peace history as it unfolded from the outbreak of the

first conflict in 1989 through to 2003 when the second civil war ended. The section begins with an understanding of the term agency. Agency, according to the World Bank Report (2011), refers to either an individual or a group's proclivity to make effective decisions, undertake operative actions, and transform them into expected or desirable outcomes. Anne Marie Goetz and Rob Jenkins (2016) broadly perceive women's agency as another form of empowerment, whereby women are inclined to make choices and use resources to achieve desired outcomes.

Women's agency in the context of this paper is demarcated as their ability to take advantage of the challenges and opportunities presented by conflict (and even post-conflict) situations to position themselves as decision-makers, participants, contributors, and architects of change. There is quite substantive evidence on the brunt of conflict that women bear and how their conflict experiences inform their agency for peace. Within a shifting landscape of conflict, women are often propelled to rethink their roles and build their collective agency in efforts to meaningfully influence an end to conflict and bring about peace. The construction of women's agency and strategies during the conflict years in Liberia embodied the formulae of non-violence resistance (NAWOCOL, WONGOSOL, LIFLEA 2015). Some of the strategies included peaceful demonstrations; advocacy campaigns and protests; addressing the humanitarian needs of the displaced people and the communities; lobbying and networking with other civil society institutions and organisations; keeping vigils and praying for peace; community awareness initiatives; attending conferences and peace talks; negotiating platforms for peace talks; sex strikes; and entreating rebels to surrender their arms.

Interestingly, Erica K. Sewell (2007) and Press (2010) also assert in their studies that women used non-violent public demonstrations, civil disobedience, and gathering for vigils and prayer crusades as strategies to amplify their quest for peace during conflict times in Liberia. According to Lindora Howard-Diawara and Lena Cummings (2006) and Tavaana Institute (2014), other approaches used by women include empowering grassroots and marginalized women and initiating platforms for conversations between rebel groups and divided conflicting communities, among others. Noting that these strategies employed by women's organisations tend to overlap and intersect across the different organisations, this paper delimits them under the three categorisations of advocacy campaigns; peaceful demonstrations; and attending conferences/dialogues and peace talks.

Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy is an expansive term involving diverse activities that are undertaken either by an individual or organisation(s) in representation of a person or a cause (CAFOD 2014:2). It also entails actions to communicate opinions with the aim of influencing transformation or outcomes from the situation or people at which the action is directed. Interviews with participants in the women's organisations show that most of their agency for peace and activism started with mobilising for an end to the Liberian conflicts and the restoration of peace.

In most conflict societies where women especially seek a permanent role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, advocacy as well as practical interventions have been prime strategies. Advocacy, in other words, is a kind of action in conflict situations and on conflict issues. Conflict-sensitive advocacy can also be adopted as an approach to manage and prevent the causes and consequences of conflict, while capitalizing on the end goal of peace (CAFOD 2014). To attain this goal, Liberian women's organisations at national, grassroots, and regional levels had to engage in multi-tiered advocacy campaigns (WANEP/ WIPENT, LIFLEA, Mary Brownell, NAWACOL 2015). These, among others, included raising awareness, networking with both faith-based and civil society organisations, and lobbying and entreating leaders and rebels to dialogue and disarm. Recapping from discussions with WIPNET and Ganta Concern Women Focus Group participants (2015) at grassroots levels, a generic point belaboured in their narratives was,

> As rural women of Liberia, we felt that at the beginning of the conflicts there was quietness on the situation, especially seeing as Bong County and Nimba County were not only the entry points of the insurgents in the outbreak of the first civil war, but also borne the severe brunt of both conflicts. We saw first-hand the horrific effects of the conflicts in our lives and on our families and people. We became conscious of the need to advocate around the issues and effects of the conflicts. Being concerned women and mothers, we created awareness by grouping, visiting households and talking to men and women, and boys and girls alike to rise and protect their own, especially from sexually violations. Having lost our livelihoods, we would come together informally as women and discuss how we could feed and sustain our families. Ideas about establishing and empowering small business initiatives emerged from informal chats.

The agency of women's organisations was also characterised by collaborative advocacy. This form of advocacy, especially at the national level, entailed networking with religious institutions and other civil society organisations in Liberia – like the Council of Chiefs, the Inter-Faith Mediation Council, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Muslim Women Federation. These bodies, as noted by Mary Brownell and other research participants, were concerned with the future of Liberia as the challenges of conflict mounted. They were also engaged in various efforts to minimise the conflict and drive negotiations to peace processes. Therefore, engaging in collaborative advocacy was for Brownell (as the then leader of LWI) a prioritisation of their advocacy for peace endeavours to magnetise a massive support base, develop, and coordinate strategies that would better influence affirmative and constructive responses for their cause. Furthermore, complementing advocacy campaigns were accomplished through NAWOCOL's community awareness programmes, as highlighted below (NAWOCOL 2015),

> Using the emergency arm of our organisation, 'Women in Action for Good Will', we identified women who were most affected by the war and had lost all or almost everything. Given the tribal inclination of the war, our activities involved bringing women from different tribal groupings, especially women whose tribes were primary targets of the conflicts, like the Krahn tribe from which the assassinated President Samuel K. Doe hailed, the Gio, Mano and Mandingo tribes. We rallied around individuals and institutions, advocating, and raising consciousness to support and provide relief and basic services for these women. We held several formal and informal gatherings and sermonized the message of forgiveness and reconciliation, and our target was working with women from communities where tensions and strained relationships were high. Our awareness messages echoed 'let bygones be bygones, let's work on forgetting and forgiving, let's pull our energy together to live as sisters and brothers and move ahead in building our communities ...'. As women seeking to empower women and to build peace, urging this consciousness for individuals and the communities to reconcile was and remain for us the only way through which peace and progress could occur.

Molyneux's organisational theory underlines the importance of col-

lective actions for a shared goal, while also noting the diversity of experiences and interests that propel organisations to engage in activism. Hence, understanding women's organised agency in conflict times requires examining both the cause and the people that their strategizing aims to influence, as well as the desired outcome. While there may be a common goal, it is important to note that the goal is achieved using distinctive components of the same or different approaches. NAWOCOL (2015) specifies that the ability of most Liberian women's organisations to advocate their cause and reach a broad spectrum of the society during the conflict times, is owed to mechanisms for placing women at the centre and valuing them as vital instruments of positive transformation.

Across the continuum of participants interviewed, it was noticeable that the precise use of lobbying to influence political leaders was one of the important advocacy strategies employed by women's organisations during the conflict. With specific reference to the second civil war and its dire national and regional impacts, MARWOPNET lobbied and got the presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea to convene since some factors triggering the conflict in Liberia were rooted in these participating countries (MARWOPNET 2015). Inspired by this strategy, women realised that the only way to peace was through petitioning and influencing the positions of the leaders to resolve the cross-border crisis. Viewing this strategy as a joint regional effort, MARWOPNET referred to the organisation's records and explained,

> The lobbying exercise was led by Mother Mary Brownell and Ruth Perry, who presented the women's concerns about the plight of the children and citizenry of Liberia suffering because of the gruesome conflict. We petitioned with the leaders to give heed to them as their mothers and sisters, and finally convinced the presidents of these three countries to attend the regional peace dialogues that convened in Rabat, Morocco in March 2002.

It is important to acknowledge that women's ability to sway the perception of their leaders is also indicative of their resolve to communicate their cause in a manner that captures the attention of some of the decision makers. This lobbying agency is described by Christopher E. Miller (2011:6) as a 'communicative process', which may or may not trigger political or policy

considerations in every circumstance. In the case of Liberia, the lobbying by MARWOPNET indubitably propelled the platform for dialogue. Furthermore, participants from women's organisations enunciated that their exercise of the lobbying mechanism also included soliciting and entreating rebels, since ensuring inclusivity in conflict resolution processes was for them an imperative for the ultimate outcome of peace. Recapitulating her experience of the first civil war, Mother Mary Brownell recounted,

> In our numerous efforts for peace, we tried to and, in some instances, solicited the audience of militants and leaders alike. For example, about ninety of us women of LWI gathered at some point and travelled to Bomi County to dialogue with the warlords. More than halfway to the Bomi Hills, we were stopped by armed militants at the Po River Bridge who refused us further entry to the militant camps. However, this did not derail our purpose for peace because we continued to plot the course to engage conflict parties to dialogue and to end the hostilities for the sake of peace.

Ali Mari Tripp (2015) also captures women's struggles for peace and shared experiences in Liberia to include their joint efforts with community leaders to entreat combatants. As stated by Tripp (2015:97-98),

> Women talked to their brothers and sons fighting in the conflict in their various languages to put down the guns. They took food to warring factions and made attempts to persuade them from fighting. They carried to them different items, including white chickens – which was a replacement of white doves, an emblem of peace; kola nuts, which reminded the fighters that women gave them life; and palm branches, which embodied the welcoming of Jesus to Jericho, meaning they are welcome to disarm and return home.

From the above discussion, it is understood that advocacy around the Liberian conflict situations was a strategy rooted in the establishment of women's organisations and within their everyday works. In effect, women were committed to exposing the devastating effects of the conflicts on women and society at large, advocating change, and ensuring that women's voices were heard. In addition to taking on the responsibility for maintaining peace,

women's agency also included the strategy of peaceful demonstrations, as evidenced by primary and secondary literature.

Peaceful Demonstrations

Demonstrations can either be non-violent or violent. While largely regarded as a public activity, they can also be private, depending on the intended cause or target group to be influenced. Focusing on the element of peaceful demonstrations, this study underscores that they are a form of non-violent resistance activism by a group or groups of people asserting a standpoint on public issues, and in the context of this study, a method of popular politicking especially in situations of conflict. Explaining this exercise, Eric J. Hobsbawm (2003:73) defines mass demonstration as 'participation in a collective activity involving bodily experience, intense emotion, and physical action – like marching, chanting slogans, singing – through which the merger of the individual in the mass, which is the essence of the collective experience, finds expression at a time of great public exaltation'. Drawing responses from the two focus-group discussions, participants affirmed that peaceful demonstrations were one of the widely used mechanisms associated with women's organised agency for peace to navigate the conflict space, negotiate an environment of peace and stability, and address the victimization and marginalization of women caused by the conflict situation. Speaking of this approach in the light of LWI activism, Brownell (2015) articulates,

> In deliberating strategies to end the Liberian conflict, we the women demonstrated peacefully. Engaging this action, we paraded, rallied, and demonstrated in front of embassies, government offices and on streets to ensure our predicaments as women fighting for peace echoed to all parties concerned. Also, we were always at the picketing lines with placards and banners that carried different messages for peace. Our voices echoed even as we marched up to the stations and the quarters of the warlords chanting 'we want peace not war; we are your mothers and sisters; stop the fighting, the rape of our girls, the killing of our children, sisters, brothers and husbands and let peace reign'.

Generally, the act of demonstration can include sit-in strikes, picketing, sex strikes, marches, stripping naked to protest, and rallies. These forms

of popular activism are not ephemeral and are often employed in the fight for different causes, spanning the political, economic, social, and developmental. Analysis of women's agency and approaches in relation to their search for peace in Liberia draw attention to the narratives orchestrated by women, including that of overcoming religious differences, while they peacefully demonstrated during the civil wars in Liberia. For example, WIPNET's strategy capitalized on the numerical potency of women (WANEP/ WIPENT 2015). Diawara and Cummings (2006) and the Tavaana Institute (2014) state that this numeric advantage had an enormous empowering impact. Accordingly, recognition of their numerical advantage also assisted interreligious mobilizing, and served as a dependable conduit through which women could partake and influence peace and decision-making to end the civil war (WANEP/ WIPENT 2015). For example, Marshall *et al.* (2011:7) note that one of WIPNET's appealing catchphrases that was used during their demonstrations and gatherings was, 'Does the bullet know a Christian from a Muslim?' According to WANEP/ WIPENT (2015), these distinctive slogans were used by many women in protests and demonstrations to promote their togetherness for a cause that transcended religious differences.

Do non-violent demonstrations entice warring factions to consider mediation and activate women's access in peace processes? Both historic and contemporary perspectives hold that this assertion is to a degree true, in that such strategies, when used by women to navigate the conflict space at informal levels, have in many instances served as the blueprint for finding the middle ground in conflict resolution processes (Amedzrator 2014:3). Drawing from women's experiences in Liberia, the narratives hold that after the successful lobbying and meeting of leaders in Morocco in 2002, the conflict landscape in Liberia worsened by 2003. Not only did this drive women to further marshal and strengthen their struggle for peace, but also resulted in the launch of the non-violent campaign for peace in March 2003 under the WIPNET Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace[2] movement. Drawing from Molyneux's organisational theory, the exercise of collective action to address common challenges and interests (Molyneux 2001; 1985) can in this case be taken to

[2] The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace was a combination of different groups like WIPNET-WANEP, LWI, MARWOPNET, the Muslim Women Association and the Christian Women Association, and the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL), among others (Alaga 2011:23).

mean that the debut of the Mass Action for Peace Movement represents significant women's agency in seeking the shared goal of peace. This sentiment is captured as follows in Leymah Gbowee (2011),

> By 2003, we were fade up with the war, the abuse, our daughters being raped, our children being recruited as child soldiers and the ills of Taylor. So, a group of community women gathered and decided enough is enough. For us, the price of seating was getting higher than the price of getting involved. We had been pushed so far back that we had to decide to step out and leave a legacy. We had seen the worst that awaken the power in us. Daily we protested at embassies, picketing, sending letters, using media forums to fight for peace, gathering at the marketplace to demonstrate and pray. In desperation, we added the sex strike…and uttered severally 'if I should get killed, just remember that I was fighting for peace.'

From the participants' responses, it is also important to note that praying as a method of peaceful demonstration was and remains an active form of protest. According to WIPNET (2015) and WANEP/ WIPENT (2015), praying paved the way for women to further define their identity as religious? holders of human and civil rights, and as architects of peace. It also brought together women and men as well as people from numerous backgrounds to actively participate in praying and fasting for peace.

Moreover, the Mass Action for Peace activism heightened the empowerment of women at all levels of society. At the grassroots level, to be specific, Focus Group participants discussed how the Mass Action kindled women's agency to seize the opportunity and unwaveringly partake in the struggle for peace. This assertion was in line with one of Gbowee's (2013) session narratives which attest that,

> Women from the grassroots rose to the struggle and in three months of our campaign, we had over ten thousand women in fifteen locations in Liberia supporting the cause and saying, 'No to war and Yes to peace'. The power we saw in ourselves as women from all backgrounds of life, especially from the rural and grassroots setting – 'the market women and the peace women in white T-shirt' as we were popularly known; is something – an experience and a benefaction that

> cannot be described. With this massive support base, we were also able to send some of our women to Ghana to rally our fellow refugee women residing in there. This was just before the 2003 defining peace talks. And when the talks eventually commenced, we the women with the support of other women from the region held our placards and chanted outside the meeting venue.

There is a significant body of literature on the wide range of strategies employed by women's organisations in Liberia (Tripp 2015; Gbowee 2011, Alaga 2011; Massaquoi 2007). Focusing on the sex strike as one of the demonstration mechanisms, Disney and Reticker (2009) in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, elucidate that it was an exercise of power and reason whereby Christian and Muslim women alike agreed to refuse their men sexual pleasure. This exercise served to authenticate women's seriousness for the peace cause and appeal to the men to also take responsibility for their part in the conflict and join the struggle for peace. As others have noted, the sex boycott is a form of nonviolent protest and resistance that dates to ancient times (De Romilly 1985:87). Women, most especially, have continued to use it in the contemporary era to bring about an end to social injustices; advocate their cause; and propel decision makers and leaders to take seriously addressing political, socio-economic and security challenges that confront women and often society at large. The Liberian experience indicates that this strike did encourage men to join alongside women in the struggle for peace, as they were cognizant that an end to the conflict also meant an end to the abstinence (Disney & Reticker 2009).

A convergence of considerations from participating women's organisations indicates that the act of stripping naked also constituted another form of peaceful demonstration by Liberian women. Stripping naked is a non-violent mechanism where nakedness is used as an unlikely instrument of power to protest perceptible injustices (Tamale 2016; Prasch 2015). What is more, the body of a woman is said to signify motherhood as a 'producer and reproducer' of both genders in society, as well as a caregiver and upholder of culture and nationhood (Tamale 2016:20). Therefore, for men to publicly see the naked-ness that symbolized motherhood was/is to repudiate that life (Prasch 2015: 195-196). Narratives of the Liberian experience convey that during one of the impasses at the 2003 peace negotiations in Accra, Ghana, Liberian women threatened to strip bare if a negotiated settlement for peace was not achieved.

Moreover, undressing as an act denoted that the women were willing to sacrifice their own dignity to humiliate the delegates, if delegates did not bow to the weightiness of their request for peace (*Pray the Devil Back to Hell*). In Liberia, as in other African cultures, tradition dictates that a mother or an elder woman's deliberate stripping in public as a sign of protest in front of men, especially those young enough to be their sons, was/is purportedly a curse to the men (Prasch 2015; Tamale 2016).

It is noteworthy that non-violent protests and peaceful demonstrations, particularly those organised by women groups in Liberia, gained widespread support and prominence on a national, regional, and international levels. While such movements and rallies against wars are often said to begin in small peace activist groups, the phenomenon was quite different in the case of the Liberian second civil war because of the mass action by women. In conjunction with other conflict situations, women's agency for peace in Liberia also took on the strategy of attending conferences and peace talks.

Attending Conferences/ Dialogues and Peace Talks

Historical as well as contemporary conflict and peace discourse recognises the strategy of organised caucuses as one of the mechanisms used by women to create an empowering environment for their engagement and participation in influencing efforts at peace negotiations. Across the spectrum of research participants in Liberia, narratives of advocating meetings and dialogues, attending conference and peace talks, were recounted as being part of the recurring strategies used by women in their organisations' struggle for peace. Women secured and shaped the dynamics of peace negotiation processes to end the Liberian civil wars as per several participants' narratives. Accounts by NAWACOL and Brownell (2015) summarize that, in efforts to navigate the conflict space and influence an arena of peace, the women of Liberia developed a culture of consensus building, organised meetings, and attending peace negotiations even under observers' status. Elaborating on this, Brownell recounts,

> One of our many strategies for peace and for our voices to be heard as women of Liberia, involved efforts to attend conferences and peace talks. Hence, each time conferences that focused on Liberia in any African region were organised, we mobilized and sought support to purchase travel tickets and attend the talks, even though we were

> never invited. Encouragingly, our support came from men and women alike. In one incident, we the women of LWI arrived Accra, Ghana in 1994 for one of such conferences and were told – 'this war is not for women', and our response was … but we bear the brunt of it … so it is also women's war. We were not deterred and at last were allowed entry under the status observers only. According to the warlords, we were supposed to remain quiet, but then they kept referring to us, asking our opinions on the deliberations and decisions of the meeting. This was remarkable and most signified that we the women of Liberia were making progress in our quest for peace. Following from this, we made our presence felt in all the peace conferences … and this was irrespective of the fact that we received no official invitations to attend these events. Our mission was not to relent in our peace efforts until the guns were silent.

Assembling for conferences and dialogues is one of the many ways through which women's involvement in peace processes occur (LIFLEA 2015). Speaking of the importance of conferences and dialogues WONGOSOL (2015) asserts that the 1995 United Nations Women Conference in Beijing gave the Liberian Women a voice of motivation, and a consciousness to strive on and work as a united force. The medium of meetings as a necessary approach used by women builds on the fact that through such fora, women could brainstorm; share and analyse their experiences; draw on different propositions; and work together to accomplish the peace cause. Lelde (2011:18) acknowledges that women's activism for peace in Liberia also includes requests to engage President Charles Taylor in dialogue and streaming to the parliament with demands for a space for conversation to be granted. Accordingly, the audience with President Taylor in April 2003 was noted by participants as a significant moment in women's struggle for peace in Liberia. Women came out in their numbers, dressed in white for the meeting, and in the statement presented through their leader Leymah Gbowee, they patently stated,

> We, the women of Liberia, including the IDPs, are tired of war, we are tired of running, tired of begging for bulgur wheat, we are tired of our children being raped. We are now taking this stand to secure the future of our children because we believe we are custodians of our society and tomorrow our children will ask us: 'Mama, what was your

role during the crisis' (*Pray the Devil Back to Hell* 2009).

Tripp (2015:99) describes this pronouncement as market women's open and justifiable demand for the immediate ceasefire and peaceful dialogue between the government and warring factions. Several reports and documents detail how President Taylor challenged the women to locate rebels and bring them on board to dialogue, as his precondition to participate in peace talks and ceasefire agreements. Research by Sewell (2007:17), Lelde (2011:18), and the Tavaana Institute (2014:10) maintains that women took on this challenge, went across borders to Sierra Leone, and convinced the rebels to come on board. This was the breakthrough in women's activism for the resolution of the conflict and peace that set the space for the Accra-Ghana peace talks that commenced on 4 June 2003. As observed by this study, the strategy of women meeting with Taylor and the warlords served as an indicator to the world that there is power in the voices of women, which not even the gendered nature of the conflict and patriarchal display of society could suppress. This also reverberated the message that the women of Liberian were indeed tired of the killings and unrest; and having taken these significant strides to do the inconceivable simply meant they would do it again. This position was severally reasserted by the research participants and by Gbowee (2011; and 2013) as articulated in these data excerpts:

> WIPNET attended peace talks in Accra, Ghana in June 2003. The talks which were to last for two weeks, lasted for 3 months. We the women remained resolute in our mission to ensure the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Liberia, despite President Charles Taylor abandoning the peace dialogue and his delegation in Ghana to return to Liberia. We collaborated with our women counterparts in Ghana and other women organisations like MARWOPNET and WONGOSOL. The impasse of the peace dialogues coupled with the news that the conflict had taken a turn for the worst, and a missile had landed in the American compound in Liberia where the displaced people were being housed, was the defining moment for us WIPNET women. Provoked by this news, Leymah articulates – 'I went into the hall and told the women to lock arms for we are putting this venue under siege and must ensure that no food or water is served, and no factions, mediators and negotiators live until a peace agreement is

> reached and signed. Accused of impeding justice, the security forces came to arrest me and threatened to make it easy for them, ready to strip naked. But as I pulled off my scarf, they immediately retreated.' What followed two weeks later was the pronouncement and the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) on 18 August 2003, and the appointment of Gyde Bryant to chair the Transitional Government of Liberia.

From the extract, it is worth noting that the intersection of women's organised strategies in their pursuit of peace was strategic and extremely significant for the eventual resolution of the conflict. More so, their peace advocacies and crusades were backed by clergy and Imams alike and broadcast by the Catholic radio station – Radio Veritas, the BBC and CNN news outlets (Tavaana Institute 2014:9; Tripp 2015:99). As was the case with LWI, WIPNET was accorded an observer status during the peace negotiations in Accra in 2003. However, some of the outcomes of women's activism during the first civil war include the appointment of one of the women's Muslim activists – Ruth Sando Perry – in 1996 to oversee the National Transitional Government's legislative and presidential elections that took place in 1997. Apparently, this success was symptomatic of the significant strides that women's organisational agency and strategies were contributing towards ending the conflict.

It should be noted that earlier actions and resolve to influence peace negotiations provided LWI the platform to collaborate with organisations in the ECOWAS region (Brownell 2015). Through their collaboration, they laid the groundwork for women's agency by advocating for their involvement and participation at formal peace dialogues and decision-making at all levels. One of the conspicuous yields of this endeavour, as stated by Massaquoi (2007:78-79) and Tripp (2015:100) was that women delegates selected from the Liberian subdivision of MARWOPNET and headed by Sando Perry and Theresa Leigh-Sherman to honour ECOWAS' invitation were able to secure seats at the Accra negotiating tables. As representatives of the wider women body during the peace dialogues, MARWOPNET was ultimately endorsed as an official signatory to the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreements (Marshall & Hayward 2011:7; Tripp 2015:100). For its interventionist strategies, acclaimed regional peacebuilding role at all levels of society and agents of socio-political change, MARWOPNET received the distinguished United Nations Award for Human

Rights in 2003 (Sewell 2007:18; Massaquoi 2007:73).

The Accra peace agreement signalled the official end of Liberia's 14 years of civil war and was welcomed as a milestone achievement by many, especially women. The agreement happened just a few months into WIPNET's non-violent mass campaign for peace, and the message 'we want peace', which had resonated throughout women's pursuit of peace in Liberia, was achieved. Following the 2003 peace deal, therefore, women did not just settle for the sheer ideology of peace as the absence of war but took upon themselves the responsibility of consulting with the stakeholders on their various roles in the implementation of the Accra agreement (Alaga 2011). To this end, women sustained their activities, conceived operationalisation time frames, and encouraged fellow women, especially from the grassroots and rural Liberia, not to relent in their efforts at ensuring the sustainability of the peace they had worked so hard to achieve.

Conclusion

The excerpts and analyses of women's organisations' agency and strategies in this paper contextualise the role of women's organisations as indispensable in the resolution of the Liberian conflict. The review of primary and secondary data established that women's roles as peace agents and architects often build from their experiences of conflict. Women's groups, as stated previously, crossed religious divides, such that both (male) Christian and Muslim religious leaders and religious news, radio, and television outlets followed the lead of the women. As such, women's experiences during the Liberian conflicts went beyond accounts of war and their plight therewith to embody actions for positive change in the conflict situations. Likewise, women's experiences transcended their individual agency and displayed organised resolve towards exercising and showing collective agency for peace under different networks of women's organisations. Further appraising women's agency and approaches to peace, the paper drew insights from Maxine Molyneux's organisational theoretical perspective. Drawing insight from this theory, it was established that the proliferation of women's organisations in conflict areas is strategically important for ensuring that women's voices are heard as they promote peace and coming together under the aegis of women's organisations creates an ideal environment for women's empowerment and platform to engage in collective actions. In the case of Liberia, this collective action by women's organisations

signified a struggle for the rights of women to take up leading roles, to become politically active and participate in decision-making processes. On whether women's agency for equal seats at the decision-making table and as political leaders has been attained in the event of post-conflict, is a topic for another research study that is currently in progress. However, scholarship as well as narratives from research participants indicate that unequal power relations in the conduct and participation in decision-making processes between men and women remain a sore reality for women, despite the visibly influential roles they played in bringing about peace in Liberia.

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Lukong Stella Shulika
Durban University of Technology
Durban
South Africa.
lukongstella@gmail.com

The 'Haunting Shadow' of the 2014 Anti-Homosexuality Law of Uganda

Gyaviira Kisitu
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1084-7638

Abstract

Although attempts to [re]criminalize homosexuality in Uganda in 2014 failed, the effects and influence of this attempt linger on. The Constitutional Court ruling against the 2014 anti-homosexual law (2014 AHL), made on technical grounds other than on its substance, not only paints a misleading perception on the defeat of anti-homosexuality activism but also keeps the possibility of [re]criminalization of homosexuality alive in the country. Factors that influenced the 2014 AHL remain contextually unchallenged and continue to shape public rhetoric on homosexuality, including how the general public speaks of homosexuality and relates to LGBTIQA+[1] communities. Violence, discrimination, evictions, and arbitrary arrests of LGBTIQA+ people are not experiences of the past, but continue to prevail in the present. As a counter response, LGBTIQA+ communities have resorted to creating safe[r] spaces, which seem to attract more hostile surveillance. Through a critical paradigm, this paper argues that the 2014 AHL was annulled only on paper but not in the perception of the public. As a consequence, surveillance over homosexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities continues in an attempt to silence gender and sexual minorities in the country.

Keywords: 2014 Anti-homosexuality law, homosexuality, LGBTIQA+, surveillance, safe[r] spaces, Uganda.

[1] In this paper LGBTIQA+ is used in reference to the communities of people or individuals identifying themselves as lesbians, gays, bisexual, trans-gender, intersexual, queer, asexual, and other unmentioned identities who do not consider themselves heterosexuals.

Introduction

The 2014 Anti-Homosexuality Law (AHL) in Uganda has triggered new evolutions of homosexuality surveillance in the country, even though the law failed to pass. The Constitutional Court ruling against the 2014 anti-homosexual law (2014 AHL) on technical grounds rather than on its substance not only paints a misleading perception on the defeat of anti-homosexuality activism, but also keeps the possibility of greater homosexuality [re]criminalization alive in the country. In fact, homosexuality is still a crime in Uganda. It is criminalized in Section 145 (a) of the Penal Code Act, Cap 120, which provides that '[a]ny person who has carnal knowledge of any persons against the order of nature commits a crime and is liable to imprisonment for life'. Homosexuality is further pushed to the periphery by section 31(3) of the Constitution of Uganda (1995), which establishes that 'marriage shall be entered into with the free consent of the man and woman intending to marry'. The mostly heterosexual public domain considers section 31(3) as consistent with the 'order of nature' provision in the same law. The expression 'order of nature' is ambiguous, but is taken for granted while being used to redefine the notion of sexuality to the exclusion of homosexuality. Although this situation has existed for decades, as Uganda's anti-homosexuality laws were inherited from the colonial penal code, recent attempts to [re]criminalize homosexuality with harsher punishments brought to the fore new developments. Among these is the heightened polarization of discourses around homosexuality as a component of human sexual identity.

As a controversial discourse in Uganda, homosexuality generates assertive advocates as well as opponents. Human rights advocates, along with sexual and gender minorities' advocate groups, have on various occasions protested against anti-homosexual activism organized by state agents, religious leaders, and conservative politicians. LGBTIQA+ supporters have protested the arrest of LGBTIQA+ persons, the disruption of LGBTIQA+ gatherings, the failure to decriminalize homosexuality, state restrictions on the activities of LGBTIQA+ advocacy, ill-treatment, including humiliation, and physical and sexual assault, including forced anal sex. Although attempts to [re]criminalize homosexuality in the country failed, factors that led to proposing the law remain unrestrained. Such factors can be observed in the ongoing evictions and arbitrary arrests of LGBTIQA+ people, as well as other types of violence and discrimination against them. Reports by sexual and gender minorities in

Uganda continue to highlight their public harassment and victimization, especially those who attempt to disclose their homosexual identity publicly.

The creation of safe[r] spaces by sexual and gender minorities both responds to and exposes the increasing surveillance over homosexuality and homosexuals within the public space. This and other activism in support of LGBTIQA+ persons, in turn, results in still more surveillance. Instead of silencing the voices that seek the [re]criminalization of homosexuality, the conflict between opposing camps on the issue ensures that calls to recriminalize homosexuality remain in the public space. It is the argument of this chapter that a plethora of factors that influenced parliamentary and public deliberations over homosexuality in 2014 remain in place or have been enhanced, with the ability to trigger further attempts to recriminalize homosexuality. Through a critical paradigm, the chapter examines various trends regarding the surveillance of homosexuality that are operative in Uganda and argues that the 2014 AHL was annulled only on paper, but not in the perception of the public. Ongoing surveillance over homosexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities represents an attempt to silence gender and sexual minorities.

The paper uses the term 'surveillance' with certain limitations. The current debates on homosexuality, whether they concern scholarship, non-governmental organizations, court deliberations, media, street talk, or in instances where cultural traditions and religious beliefs are invoked to discourage homosexuality constitute what this paper describes as a homosexuality surveillance system. In the first part, the paper acknowledges the controversial nature of the homosexuality discourse in contexts and time, and with regard to human rights as well as freedoms of sexual and gender minorities. In the second part, the paper draws attention to the Ugandan context focusing on the 2014 AHL. This section discusses how the 2014 AHL continues to be a tool of surveillance, irrespective of its annulment. In the third part, the paper contends that public surveillance on homosexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities is also influenced by politics of dominance and resistance. In its fourth part, the paper argues that even though LGBTIQA+ communities seem to resort to creating safe[r] spaces, the notion of safe[r] spaces is itself suspicious.

Positioning the Concept of Homosexuality

While in this paper we opted for the concept of 'homosexuality', we take note that homosexuality in many African societies is a contested concept not only

in terms of usage or association, but also its meaning and original. Thabo Msibi (2011:56), for instance, argues that the term 'evolve[s] out of a specific cultural history, and [it] cannot be assumed to mean the same thing to everyone in the same way'. For some individuals the concept is associated with taboo, violence and contamination, while for others it simply refers to a particular sexual orientation. Even within a single community of people, the concept has different interpretations. For instance, Tabona Shoko's (2010:635-636) study among the Shona people of Zimbabwe reveals divergent definitions of homosexuality and its relationship to same-sex practices. He indicates that among the Shona, some people believe 'that homosexuality is a foreign phenomenon … caused by the influence of westernization, others maintain that homosexuality existed in Shona culture even before the coming of the White people'. Therefore, as Msibi (2011:56) holds, the use of concepts such as homosexuality needs a sense of clarity, taking into consideration its various associated meanings and contextual relevance. In this paper, the concept 'homosexuality' is used in reference to discussions on same-sex relationships in Uganda. The concept is also a prevailing keyword that featured in Uganda's parliamentary debates of 2009, in the Anti-homosexuality Bill (AHB) as well as in the final 2014 AHL.

Whilst the paper focuses on the Ugandan context, it takes cognizance of the fact that homosexuality is a contentious discourse attracting both tolerant and intolerant voices across the globe. In these debates, homosexuality as a subject of interest has not escaped being framed in an effort to express particular points of view, including in international reports, documentaries, scholarship, media outlets both local and international, and religious teachings.

In Africa, as in other continents, the subject of homosexuality is controversial, prompting conflicting perspectives that cut across social, moral, political, religious and cultural issues. These play a key role in the framing of homosexuality. In Zimbabwe, for instance, Shoko (2010:634) claims that 'politicians call them [homosexuals] the festering finger endangering the body of the nation while churchmen say God wants them dead'. Shoko (2010:635) further states that in Zimbabwe, homosexuality is generally seen as 'a result of moral decadence that has gripped society and [originates from] promiscuous sexual behaviour'. The question of human rights has also been used to frame homosexuality as either acceptable or denounced in African societies. While to some the acceptance of homosexuality would be regarded a human right, to others its rejection would be equally a human right. Stella Nyanzi and Andrew

Karamagi (2015:35) point out that in Uganda, homosexuality has become a political weapon used by politicians to campaign against their political opponents or to woo votes.

Theological perspectives on homosexuality also diverge. For instance, although the bible is used as a tool to interpret Christian basic teachings on homosexuality (depending on who does the interpretation and the informing worldview), interpreters often come to different conclusions. While in some instances the Christian bible is used to condemn homosexuality, in others it is used to challenge the same condemnation (Punt 2006; Gunda 2010; Chitando & Van Klinken 2016). This brief overview helps to shed light on how the subject of homosexuality is contested across African societies. As such, it can be understood and acted upon differently from one society to another, depending on how it is framed by dominant discourses and actors.

Surveillance of Homosexuality under the Law

Very recently, the African continent and the world at large have come to terms with two paradoxical High Court rulings over homosexuality in two African countries, Kenya and Botswana. The High Court in both these countries had been tasked to deliberate on the decriminalization of homosexuality. Although in both courts, the colonial-era anti-homosexuality laws were the main subjects of contention, with a similar approach to the practice of homosexuality, these courts reached different conclusions. The High Court in Kenya ruled in favour of colonial era anti-homosexuality laws. The court rejected the petitioners' submission that LGBTIQA+ rights were a violation by the country's laws on homosexuality. It thus stated that the provisions in the law pertaining homosexuality were not discriminatory, and that the 'constitutional rights to privacy and dignity are not absolute' (Human Rights Watch 2019a). Botswana's High Court, on the other hand, ruled against these laws. The court in Botswana argued that 'the laws were discriminatory toward gay people and violated Botswana's Constitution, and that overturning them was a matter of protecting human rights' (Human Rights Watch 2019b). Following this judgment in Botswana and those made in other countries like Mozambique, Angola and Lesotho, homosexuality, especially gay sex, is no longer as widely criminalized as it used to be in past decades. Recent statistics indicate that the number of countries that still criminalize homosexuality has dropped to 72 globally (Stewart 2020). However, this does not mean that in all the 123 UN member

state countries same-sex relations are free from discrimination. In fact, studies continue to show high cases of social intolerance to homosexuality. Where intolerance and discrimination still surround the notion of homo-sexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities, homosexuality is still scrutinized, marginalized and isolated in public debates and demonized as a centre of confrontation.

Andrew Scheibe *et al.* (2017) for instance, hold that while in South Africa the Constitution provides legal recognition to homosexuality, anti-homosexual activism still persists within communities. According to Scheibe *et al.* (2017:220), many people who do not conform to heterosexual norms experience stigma, discrimination and exclusion. In other cases, discrimination against homosexuality is partly motivated by some perceptions that it is contagious and related to evil spirits. Cases of intolerance of homosexuality still persist in many African countries as noted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR 2014 Resolution 275). As equally noted by Kapya Kaoma (2016:16), cases of violence including 'corrective' rape, physical assaults, torture, murder, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extra-judicial killings and executions, forced disappearances, extortion and blackmail are still widely experienced by sexual minorities in Africa.

During the decade that preceded the 2014 criminalization of homosexuality in Uganda, other countries such as South Sudan, Burundi, Liberia and Nigeria were also considering enacting anti-homosexuality laws (Amnesty International 2013:1). Aegus Carrol and Lucas Mendos (2017:88) observe that on 25 August 2014, Gambia's Parliament approved the Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, which punishes aggravated homosexuality with imprisonment for life. Elsewhere in Mauritania, Sudan, the northern region of Nigeria and the southern parts of Somalia, *Sharia* laws are often employed in administering punishment on those convicted of homosexuality offenses. The above observations simply bring to the fore that homosexual practices and the whole notion of homosexuality remain under scrutiny, irrespective of whether the practice of homosexuality is legal or illegal. Moreover, public perception on the subject can easily change from one society to the other. In fact, inasmuch as some African countries are gradually becoming tolerant of homosexuality, others are nevertheless increasingly intolerant.

Like in many other former British colonies, the history of the criminalization of homosexuality in Uganda is traceable back to the arrival of the British colonialists, and most specifically when Uganda adopted the 1950 Panel Code that criminalized 'acts against the order of nature' (Jjuuko

2013:390). It is not surprising that in his address during the signing of the 2014 AHA into law, the President of Uganda, Yoweri Museveni, maintained that homosexuality had already been outlawed in the republic by British colonial law. According to this position, the 2014 AHL was essentially a [re]criminalization of homosexuality. It was a [re]criminalization because the 1950 Penal Code Act Cap 106, under which the practice of homosexuality is outlawed, has been in place even prior to the country's independence in 1962. This law, which codifies criminal offenses and procedures in Uganda, commenced on 15 June 1950. The history of Penal Codes in Africa indicates that Uganda was not the only country introduced to Penal Codes, but also most of the former British colonies such as Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Kenya. Simon Coldharm (2000:220) notes that 'while Penal Codes embodied Western concepts of criminality, criminal procedure acts introduced rules relating to arrest, detention and trial ...'. From a legal perspective, the 2014 AHL intended to discourage homosexual behaviour by criminalizing any act deemed inconsistent with heterosexuality. Homosexuality was described in the 2014 AHL as sexual acts or relations performed between persons of the same sex. The major objective of the 2014 AHL was to 'prohibit any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex; prohibit the promotion or recognition of such relations and to provide for other related matters' (Preliminary section Part 1 of the 2014 AHL). The illustration below shows a summary of Uganda's 2014 AHL as adopted from Uganda's 2014 anti-homosexuality Act.

Offense	**Section**	**Penalty upon Conviction**
The offense of homosexuality	2	Imprisonment for life
Aggravated homosexuality	3	Imprisonment for life and HIV status medical Examination
Attempting to commit the offense of homosexuality (Felony)	4 (1)	Imprisonment for 7 years
Attempting to commit the offense of aggravated homosexuality	4(2)	Imprisonment for life

Contravention of confidentiality	6	Fine not more than 5 000 000 Uganda Shillings (Approximate to 1373 65 US$).
Aiding and abetting homosexuality	7	Imprisonment for life
Conspiracy to engage in homosexuality	8	Imprisonment for 7 years
Procuring homosexuality	9	Imprisonment for 7 years
Detention with intent to commit homosexuality	10	Imprisonment for 7 years
Looking after, a space or house (brothels) for purposes of homosexuality	11 (1)	Imprisonment for 7 years
Being the owner, assist, act, control the space or house (brothels) where the offense of homosexuality is committed	11(2)	Imprisonment for 5 years
Contracting marriage with another person of the same sex	12 (1)	Imprisonment for life
Conducting marriage of same sex persons (individual)	12 (2)	7 years' maximum imprisonment
Conducting marriage of same sex persons (institution)	12 (2)	Cancellation of license.
Promotion of homosexuality (offender is a person)	13 (1)	Fine of 100 000 000 Uganda shillings (Approximate to 27 473,00 US$) or imprisonment between 5 to 7 years or both

Promotion of homosexuality (offender is a corporate body)	13 (2)	Cancellation of certificate of registration, 7 years; imprisonment for the director, promoter, director

A major difference with the 2014 AHL is that it employs the term 'homosexuality' and not that of 'unnatural acts', as was the case with the 1950 Penal code. This unambiguously shows its object of attack. In addition, the law is more descriptive and comprehensive in terms of offenses and penalties, which can result in more familiarity from the public than the previous code. Thus, although the 2014 AHL was repealed, its substance remains intact and remains potentially forceful within the public sphere. This comes as a consequence of its previous long-term campaign in the public domain, and due to the implications of its expectations as well as what transpired at the annulment judgment. Even though human rights advocates as well as sexual and gender minorities' groups had challenged the law in its entirety, the judges did not invalidate the law on its substance, but instead did so on technical grounds. They sighted an insufficient quorum of the legislators who were present when the law was passed as the basis for the judgment. In its judgment, the Constitutional Court concluded,

> We have therefore no hesitation in holding that there was no quorum in Parliament when the Act was passed, that the Speaker acted illegally in neglecting to address the issue of lack of quorum. We come to the conclusion …. That the act of the 9th Parliament in enact-ing the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014 on 20 December 2013 without quorum in the House is inconsistent with and in contravention of Articles 2(1) and (2) and 88 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda 1995 and Rule 23 of the Parliamentary Rules of Procedure and thus null and void (Oloka-Onyango and 9 Others v. Attorney General [2014] UGCC 14, Constitutional Petition No. 8 of 2014 Uganda, Constitutional Court).

The ruling, according to Frank Mugisha, who was at the time the director of Sexual Minorities in Uganda, had both a positive and a negative impact on sexual minorities in the country. Mugisha, according to David Smith (2014), notes,

> We welcome this ruling and [LGBTIQA+ communities] can celebrate a small victory against oppression. However, we are disappointed that the case was not heard on its true merits … Until the Act has been dismissed on the substance of our arguments, we cannot rest easy[ly].

Given the Constitutional Court's silence on the substance of the 2014 AHL during its ruling, the question remains whether the contents of the law and its linguistic articulations remained valid. to an unsuspecting populace, impressions can possess the power to order how reality is perceived and acted upon. It is not surprising that even though the Ugandan Constitutional Court had nullified the 2014 AHL, there seemed no public intention to stop, or even to put on hold human rights violations against LGBTIQA+ persons. Events targeting the repression of homosexuality practices, homosexual activism and other violations of human rights based on sexual and gender minorities' identities continue to occur in the country. For instance, according to the 2016 SMUG report, 264 cases of human rights violations against sexual and gender minorities were recorded between August 2014 and December 2015. Most recently, a 2019 Human Rights Watch report notes that on 17 May, police and the Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Simon Lokodo, shut down a celebration of the international day against homophobia, biphobia and transphobia organized by the NGO Sexual Minorities Uganda. In May 2019, Lokodo vowed to block the Health Ministry's first Annual Conference on key and priority populations, arguing it would promote 'homosexuality and other dirty things' (Human Rights Watch 2019c). Public surveillance of homosexuality and homosexuals is also rooted in the politics of dominance and resistance between global interventions and local Ugandan resistance, which continues to resurface whenever the debates on homosexuality arise in Uganda. This is further discussed and analysed below.

Politics of Dominance and Resistance

Dominant public views on homosexuality and how the public generally relate with LGBTIQA+ communities cannot be understood without acknowledging the framework under which homosexuality is analysed. From a mainstream Ugandan perspective, homosexuality seems to be analysed under the umbrella of domination (of foreign influence) and resistance (by Uganda); i.e., practising and tolerating homosexuality is a public abomination, must be

resisted, and its influx in the country is due to foreign influence. This backdrop is supported by a general perception of homosexuality as analysed in Uganda over recent years. Merran Hulse's (2018:24) study indicates that majority of Ugandans have considerable reservations about acceptance of homosexuals and would easily support homosexuality criminalization. While in recent years the growth of homosexuality activism in Uganda has attracted many international voices, the 2014 AHL in particular increased attention to LGBTIQA+ activism. These international voices expressed humanitarian concerns for the violation of sexual minorities' rights, which they challenged as draconic measures to criminalize homosexuality, and as a response, warranted measures to redeem the suppressed voices of sexual minorities.

The international community's response was spearheaded notably by international human rights organizations and sexual minority bodies. International human rights groups took to the frontline in the struggle to help their local counterparts in Uganda, who seemed to them as losing the battle to the Ugandan government in the fight for sexual minority rights. However, more remarkable also was the intervention of foreign governments from which the Ugandan government drew aid (Wahab 2016). Such governments included the United States of America, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, all of which became very vocal in criticizing the government over the law while supporting anti-homosexuality law activism. These countries threatened to cut aid to the Ugandan government, a threat that was widely reported in both international and local media channels (Aljazeera America 2014).

Irrespective of the threats to cut foreign aid by the donor countries, the move created a precedent that homosexuality is not only a human rights issue but also a political one. As Laura Edmondson (2019) notes, politically motivated reactions by Ugandan authorities to the international community have not been withdrawn, even though years have passed since the 2014 AHL was nullified. Edmondson (2019:10) rightly observes that,

> Ugandan conservative politicians and clergy have successfully positioned LGBTIQA+ practices and identities as a kind of Trojan horse of Western imperialism that threatens to eradicate Africa cultural practices and beliefs regarding kinship, sexual reproduction and modes of community formation.

This is not surprising, because homosexuality has always been ana-

lysed along these lines. Views that seek to challenge such position of thought are quickly dismissed as foreign interference. Besides, homosexuality and the response towards it seem to be understood simply as a contextual issue, subject to the dominant heterosexual rule. This is evidenced in statements by the political elite that show contempt for what was felt to be Western imperialism. Notable is a response of the Ugandan Head of state in protest against what he seems to call western interference:

> Western societies do not appreciate our culture; we have been disappointed for a long time by the conduct of the West. But we just keep quiet … If the West doesn't want to work with us because of homosexuals, then we have enough space here to live by ourselves, and do business with other people' (Presidential Statements 2014).

In a similar way, the Speaker of parliament (by the time the 2014 AHL was constituted), Rebecca Kadaga, while attending the 127th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Assembly in Quebec Canada in 2012, attempted to remind the Canadian foreign minister and the international community why Uganda's position on homosexuality demonstrated its sovereignty against perceived colonialism. She asserted that,

> When we came for this Assembly, to which we were invited, we expected respect for our sovereignty, our values and our country … I, therefore, on behalf of the Ugandan delegation, and, indeed, the people of Uganda, protest in the strongest terms the arrogance exhibited by the Foreign Minister of Canada, who spent most of his time attacking Uganda and promoting homosexuality …. If homosexuality is a value for the people of Canada they should not seek to force Uganda to embrace it. We are not a colony or a protectorate of Canada (Kadaga, as quoted by Mugerwa 2012).

From a socio-cultural perspective, homosexuality is viewed as a danger to the young generation whose ability to form heterosexual families and bear children is viewed as a guarantee of the survival of future generations. The danger mostly lies in the belief that the growth of homosexual communities and pro-homosexuality public advocacy in the country implies an eminent extinction of the society, since homosexuality is believed not to support

childbearing. Some even believe that homosexuals support the growth of a homosexual society by recruiting new members. Thus, there is a feeling of a sociocultural competition for survival. During the debates that preceded the 2014 AHL, the process of recruitment was believed to target young people in schools. Views that advanced recruitment also suggested the aspect of economic influence employed by the recruiting agents over their targeted group. It is claimed that recruiters use money as a tool of power to lure members of heterosexual communities. Money is believed to play a big role such as silencing homosexuality opponents, promoting and financing pro-homosexual gatherings, which in many anti-homosexual camps has been regarded as homosexuality promotion. Given these beliefs, calls for criminalizing homosexuality have been reinforced after the 2014 AHL was nullified. In a State House press release, President Museveni emphasized this issue,

> In my role as a strategist and a responsible leader for our country, there is no debate regarding the promotion of homosexuality. That one I totally agree with everybody that anybody who is promoting homosexuality we must stop him … this must be stopped by law and harshly. Secondly, I do not accept those who become homosexuals for mercenary reasons. Thirdly, I cannot accept exhibitionism of homosexual behaviour that must be stopped and stopped harshly … (*State House - Uganda Press Release* 2014).

Minister Lokodo describes homosexuality as a human disorder, a sickness and a dangerous addiction. According to Rose Buchanan (2014), Lokodo holds, 'It [homosexuality] is like drug addiction … So, we are saying anybody found committing this incredible and abominable act should be checked and isolated from society ... If you are found practising it, we shall take you to a cell'. Both the President and his Minister of Ethics and Integrity are speaking as political leaders attempting to provide a government position with regard to homosexuality. These voices of political leaders play in harmony with the religious-based views that have been prevalent in recent years.

Moreover, when it comes to the debates on homosexuality, religion in Uganda plays a critical role. Here the Christian religion can be pointed out, given its predominant anti-homosexuality approach, and the fact that it is the major religious tradition to which the majority of the population subscribes. Data from the 2014 Ugandan census put Christianity in a position of

dominance with 84% of the total population (National Population and Housing Census 2014 main report 2014). Not only is the dominance of Christianity a key factor in influencing public view on homosexuality, but also its leadership, which has been mostly anti-homosexual, focusing on what is commonly described as a restoration of biblical values of human sexuality.[2]. In 2014, when Uganda drew a global outcry for its AHL, the Anglican Church in Uganda, through its leadership, threatened to break away if the Church of England puts Uganda under pressure over its support for homosexuality criminalization. The then Anglican Archbishop of Uganda, Stanley Ntagali, both argued and warned,

> The issue here is respect for our views on homosexuality, same sex marriage as a country and church. If they are not willing to listen to us, we shall consider being on our own … Homosexual practice is incompatible with scripture, and no one in the leadership of the church can say, legitimise same sex unions or homosexuality … governing bodies of the Church of England should not take the path advocated by the West … If they do we shall have no choice but to be on our own (*The Telegraph* 2014).

Archbishop Ntagali's predecessor, Archbishop Luke Orombi, had also previously distanced the Anglican Communion in Uganda from the acceptance of homosexuality. The prelate, as affirmed by Peter Nyanzi (2012), vigorously described the embracing of homosexuality as a turn to 'darkness', with the calls for rights of homosexual persons simply leading the church to a crisis. Orombi would later write to the Archbishop of Canterbury that, 'Many of us are in a state of resignation as we see how the Communion is moving away further and further into darkness' (Nyanzi 2012). His intent to convince the Ugandan Christian community to distance itself from pro-homosexuality activism is reported in the *Sunday Vision* of 4 June 2006,

[2] This limitation does not take blind awareness to the fact that other religious organizations such as the Moslem community is part of the religious block in Uganda that has strong views over homosexuality in the country. However, a restriction is done here based on the critical role that Christianity has played in shaping debates on homosexuality in recent years and most vividly the 2014 criminalization of homosexuality in Uganda.

> We strongly and unequivocally deplore all activities linked to the encouragement or promotion of the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism condemned in the Bible and which constitutes a perversion of human sexuality. We call upon the clergy, parents and people of goodwill to design programmes aimed at teaching people the dangers associated with homosexuality and lesbianism (Mubiru 2012:202).

The evangelical and Pentecostal communion in Uganda has also in the past shown little sympathy towards homosexuality. Through some of its vocal leaders such as Martin Ssempa and Steven Langa, anti-homosexuality activism within the evangelical and Pentecostal spaces has been revived in recent years. The anti-homosexual Pentecostal revivalism describes homosexuality as 'a stray' from the biblical truth. As a self-made campaigner of Ugandan morals, the outspoken Ssempa described homosexuality as a dirty practice that involves the eating of human waste by those practising it (Van Klinken & Zebracki 2016). He therefore advocates conversion and a return to the authority of biblical teachings if homosexuality is to be defeated. Whether or not sexual minorities and human rights advocates continue to challenge the preceding views, their implication in influencing public perception over homosexuality cannot be underestimated. The implication and authority of the anti-homosexuality views are also effected by the nature of their source, in this case, the religious leaders. As religious leaders, their positionality offers authority to their voice and thus capable of soliciting the society's approval and continuous surveillance on homosexuality.

Religious spaces have not waived their anti-homosexuality rhetoric and sometimes secure support from cultural leaders and politicians, who have developed a relationship of convenience. While religious leaders present themselves as the moral guardians of society, politicians present themselves as political defenders of societal values. Political actors seek grounds from religious and cultural gate-keepers upon which to debate and deliberate on the subject of homosexuality, while the religious and cultural actors attempt to be credible informants on political decisions over homosexuality. As religious leaders seek to perform their task through religious crusades, religious vigils and at Sunday pulpits, politicians pursue a similar cause in public rallies, media channels and through enacting anti-homosexuality laws. These activities and discourses continue, despite volumes of scholarly works and human rights activism which, especially in recent decades, have insistently called upon

religious leaders and anti-homosexuality cultural gatekeepers to reconsider their anti-homosexuality positions for the sake of inclusivity, justice and love of neighbour.

Reclaiming Legitimacy, Struggle for Public Space

Many in the mainstream international media assert that Uganda 'could be more dangerous than ever for the gay community, despite the annulment of the 2014 AHL' (Stack 2018). Such claims are based on statistics showing that Uganda has produced an increased number of LGBTIQA+ refugees in recent years and that between 2014 and 2016 more than 1 800 LGBTIQA+ individuals were assisted by the US-based Quakers Association to escape Uganda (Banning-Lover 2017). Uganda is accordingly listed among the most infamous countries to accommodate LGBTIQA+ communities along with others such as Egypt, Nigeria, Mauritania, Sudan, Russia, Honduras, Iran, and Iraq. Another factor that may be responsible for securing Uganda's position in the above category is the ongoing fear that the government plans to reintroduce the 2014 AHL before parliament in further contemplation of homosexuality [re]criminalization. It is important to note that despite this environment, LGBTIQA+ communities continue to live along with the majority members of the community who are heterosexuals. The space for recognition and right to acknowledgement nevertheless continues to be demanded by the LGBTIQA+ communities, irrespective of state authorities and warnings of open anti-homosexual activists. In the light of this, safe[r] spaces have been formed by LGBTIQA+ communities in the country, especially since 2015.

For example, the Rainbow Riots (a politically and religiously independent non-profit organization advocating for human rights of the LGBTIQA+ people) championed a project to found an LGBTIQA+ Community Centre to act as their safe[r] space. Among the motivations is the argument that,

> Queer people live in fear of being arrested or getting beaten up or killed. There is no safe space. The Centre will be safe space to welcome queer people, encourage and support them … We will provide opportunities to learn, relax, socialize and will also advance on health and safety which is much needed, it will, in essence be a support system (Wallenberg 2018).

However, despite an attempt to establish what could be described as safe[r] space, its very existence presupposes an existing pressure of surveillance from which LGBTIQA+ persons need to escape. One then might ask, 'how safe is the safe[r] space by virtue of its identity, existence, and naming?' Can we therefore contemplate that the LGBTIQA+ persons are safe in the so-called safe[r] spaces? What do such spaces imply for the progress made in securing public recognition and acceptance of LGBTIQA+ persons following the annulled 2014 AHL? I assert that even though established, the so-called safe[r] spaces are not essentially a manifestation of progress insofar as LGBTIQA+ rights and acceptance are concerned. In fact, the confrontations and pressures that circumnavigate these spaces are well exposed by the opposition to them. For instance, on learning of the *Rainbow Riots'* intention to establish a safe space for the LGBTIQA+ communities, the Minister for Ethics and Integrity spoke against such developments,

> They will have to take it somewhere else. They cannot open a centre of LGBT[IQA+] activity here. Homosexuality is not allowed and completely unacceptable in Uganda … We do not, and cannot allow it. LGBT[IQA+] activities are already banned and criminalized in this country. So, popularizing it is only committing a crime (DeBarros 2018).

But how can we understand the implications of LGBTIQA+ safe spaces better? One of the implications is that the dominant attempt to deny public legitimacy to homosexuality has not succeeded in wiping off sexual minorities' identities. On the other hand, this dominant attempt confirms ongoing speculations that sexual and gender minorities are isolated, causing many of their local advocates to resort to new ways of acquiring public legitimacy. The new ways are aimed at speaking back to the dominant anti-homosexuality public sphere. Apart from the establishment of the LGBTIQA+ community centre, members of the LGBTIQA+ communities have also utilized social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp as alternative safe spaces. But their existence also confirms that homosexuality and LGBTIQA+ communities continue to be under siege by the continued fear of the Other. The creation of safe[r] environments establishes a sense of independence, the kind which is open to self-expression with no fear of victimization and intimidation by the authorities, and demonstrates a deliberate

defiance of sexual minorities from the prevailing dominant control aimed at sexual and gender minorities. But it is equally important to note that the creation of safe[r] spaces follows perceptions and fears that anti-homosexuality activists (who happen to be more acceptable in the public domain), pose a risk to LGBTIQA+ persons' wellbeing.

Conversely, the anti-homosexuality activists imagine that any progress towards an unconditional public recognition of the rights of sexual and gender minorities is a danger to the same public from which this recognition is sought. It is from this understanding that the sexual minorities' activists police their constructed safe spaces, both virtual and physical. In the virtual spaces such as Facebook accounts, administrators are very strict at inviting and letting in new members. Austin Bryan (2015:96) points out that account administrators and members of these virtual spaces take on the task to 'regulate groups and ensure that homophobic users are not permitted into the safe space'. Even though these precautionary measures exist to discourage prospective intruders, they do not eliminate the concern that intruders can still find their way into these safe spaces. To counteract and limit such possibilities, 'members create multiple accounts, change and exchange photos of themselves frequently and make sure they use stock photos as profiles' (Bryan 2018:96).

The Surveillance Tool of Fear and Threat

The possibility of blackmail also creates fear for sexual and gender minorities as they attempt to reclaim legitimacy and public space. According to Bryan (2018)'s findings, LGBTIQA+ persons have been threatened with being reported to the authorities unless the targeted individual pays money. Further,

> most *Kuchus* who work outside of activism live in the closet at their workplace, and risk being ousted by co-workers or blackmailed by individuals who use their identities as leverage to extort money. Blackmailing also occurs from peers within the LGBTIQA+ communities who do not have access to income and resort to blackmailing other LGBTIQA+ persons especially those known to be with photographs or videos (Bryan 2018:98).

Blackmailing is therefore a tool of surveillance from within and without LGBTIQA+ communities that keeps them in fear, which also shapes

the constructions and defence systems of safe[r] spaces. Given the experiences of blackmailing and possible victimization of sexual and gender minorities, the identity of these spaces is also altered. It becomes a point of argument as to whether and to what extent such spaces would continue to be classified as safe[r] zones or spaces under which sexual and gender minorities would claim freedom from intimidation.

McKay, Misra and Lindquist (2017:7) contend that the fear, especially of being victimized, is well known for shaping LGBTIQA+ individuals' life choices and chances. The scholars further argue, '[a]lthough evidence suggests that direct victimization experiences are not uncommon for LGBTIQA+ indivi-duals, fears of victimization may be even more pervasive – and thus, even broader in their impact' (2017:48). Blackmailers are therefore most aware that their victims are fearful of being arrested; that they are fearful of being exposed to further abuse and mob justice, should their identity be known. Blackmailers seem to be convinced that sexual and gender minorities will easily give in to their demands since they would never willingly let themselves be exposed to the authorities, should they be offered an alternative. In addition to blackmail, studies have shown that LGBTIQA+ communities are often concerned about 'secondary victimization from police bias and violence, public ousting, and skepticism about whether perpetrators would be punished' (McKay *et al.* 2017:41).

Such fear is not merely abstract. According to Amnesty International (2014), the aftermath of the 2014 AHL was characterised by hostility and discrimination against LGBTIQA+ persons; including an increase in arbitrary arrests, police abuse, extortion, loss of employment, evictions, homelessness and flight from the country. Moreover, because sexual minorities, especially men who have sex with other men (MSM), fear public disclosure, their access to health services without being exposed to prejudice and judgment is compromised. Rachel King et al. (2019) hold that many MSM prefer concealing their sexual identity. A recent study done by Joseph Matovu et al. (2019) on health providers' experiences, perceptions, and readiness to provide HIV services to MSM and female sex workers (FSW) in Uganda, reveals that some health workers are still uncomfortable with providing health services, especially to MSM. This is further shown in the responses given by some health practitioners when probed to share their willingness and openness in administering health services to homosexual persons without prejudice. One respondent in this study asserted,

> Honestly, I am a conservative person. I wouldn't encourage men to have sex with men, so if I had a chance, I would just encourage them to leave the act. I do not think I need to design strategies for them to continue with their act, but if they are encouraged to seek HIV, Syphilis, Hepatitis testing and seeking help from psychologists or counselors, there will be good strategies for them (Matovu *et al.* 2019:5).

In the same study, another respondent similarly reiterates:

> I would be quite uncomfortable. I don't see why a man should go with a man when there are women. Women are there and besides; this is a culture imported into our country … it would be a bit uncomfortable for me to tell a man not to sleep with fellow men when he is already used to it. I see these things on TV [Television] the homosexuals in Kampala, but not this end in the village (Matovu et al. 2019:5).

Although the above voices may not necessarily represent a general position of health practitioners in Uganda, they nevertheless confirm certain fears and experiences of homosexual persons with regard to accessing health services. King et al.'s (2019:736) study reports of a related experience of an HIV positive homosexual who asserts that,

> some trans fear to go and get treatment. The health workers ask a lot of questions concerning their gender identity. If I go to the hospital dressed like a woman no health worker will handle me. Someone can move to almost three rooms being tossed about because they can't tell whether she is a man or woman. They do not understand you.

Another respondent in King *et al.* (2019:736) further claims that 'some health providers cannot give you the same care as the others he takes to be normal'. It is also important to note that fear is not only experienced in general public spaces, but also within neighbourhoods and within family circles. This has led some members in the sexual minorities group to lead a double life for fear of hostility from close family members and neighbours the moment they openly disclose their sexual identity. A 22-year-old HIV-negative, college student told King *et al.* (2019:732),

> At times I am like (speaking while lowering the tone) I cannot open to my family now. I live as two persons: the one of Henry, and the one of Sophia. I have to behave the way parents want me to behave. I try so much but the other side gives me a lot of difficult and my family really constrains me.'

Similarly, an 18-year-old, HIV-negative, secondary school pupil told King *et al.* (2019:733):

> There is no way you can tell someone about your gender identity. Even when someone comes to know about it they cannot accept you as you are. They try to avoid you and even tell others not to interact with you.

The above experiences shed light on why some sexual minorities prefer to keep their sexual identities underground. However, a continuous resort to keeping sexual identities underground, proves that fear on the other hand legitimizes threat. It gives life to the threat of surveillance without which it would not exist. It further gives life to an historical motif in human society that has over the decades and centuries divided human societies into uncompromising dichotomies: 'Us' vs. 'Them,' 'Us' against 'Them,' or 'Them' against 'Us'.

Conclusion

The 2014 AHL, even in its state of annulment, remains an active tool of surveillance, victimization, discrimination and classification between those it favours and those it punishes. At the moment, the 2014 AHL may not be supported by law to enact specific powers over LGBTIQA+ communities, but its agenda is still very much alive in the public domain, maintained by anti-homosexuality sentiments in the guise of culture, religion and political sovereignty. This is why LGBTIQA+ communities construct safe[r] spaces. The question as to whether the annulment of the 2014 AHL ought to be celebrated as a milestone towards inclusiveness remains contentious. I have argued in this paper that the 2014 AHL and its subsequent annulment remains a source of conflict, uncertainty and fear. It also remains a tool of division in which the 'Us vs. Them' dichotomy endures to characterize the daily relationship be-

tween those subscribing to the dominant heterosexual community and those identifying themselves as part of LGBTIQA+ communities.

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Dr. Gyaviira Kisitu
Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy
Kyambogo University
Uganda
kgyaviira@kyu.ac.ug/
kisitudavis@yahoo.com

Royalty, Religion and Residency: The Swati Experience of Governance with Special Reference to the Period 1968 - 2018

R. Simangaliso Kumalo
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2098-3281

Abstract

The role of religion in the governance of society is ambiguous and complicated. Therefore, it should never be ignored but instead be studied and analysed carefully so that what is good from it can be gleaned for the benefit of good governance and what is bad can be discarded. In Eswatini for instance, on the one hand African Traditional Religion and African Instituted Christianity are seen largely as responsible for the theological justification and support for the absolute monarchy. On the other hand, progressive mainline denominations and evangelicals have been seen as largely responsible for call for change of the system to participatory democracy. In some cases, religion has been cited as a key pillar that instituted and supports the absolute monarchy. While in other cases religion has been a catalyst for change, resistance and inspiration for people seeking to contribute to the development of democracy and good governance. This paper seeks to establish the role that is played by religion in the governance of Eswatini. It also seeks to establish the relationship between religion and the monarchy, as well as the relationship between religion and ordinary citizens of the country. It critically examines the political role that is played by religion. It seeks to critically analyse the political significance of religion for both the royal family, which forms the ruling class, and residents, which comprises of all ordinary citizens of the country. The paper's main argument is that while on the one hand religion gives theological justification for the dominance of the royal family in the governing of the country by affirming it whilst relegating citizens to the margins as subjects, on the other hand, religion can still be used as a catalyst to encourage the residents to stand up and transform the political system to one that is democratic and participatory for the benefit of all citizens.

Keywords: Royalty, Monarch, Religion, Tinkhundla, Governance, Eswatini, Church

Introduction

Eswatini (formally Swaziland) remains the only country in Africa that is ruled by an absolute and benevolent monarchy (Dlamini 2016:4). This traditional system of governance has integrated royalty into the political and institutional pluralism in the democratic dispensation. Its persistence and continued survival as well as its role in a postcolonial era have been entrenched through religion and culture. This affects the residents (citizens) in particular who, whilst aspiring to reside in a free and democratic society, continue to be trapped in a country run through a traditional and undemocratic system. Eswatini is located between the borders of South Africa and Mozambique. It is a small nation with a population of just over one million people. It has experienced divergent political developments starting with a diarchy, then colonialism, King's Decree and 'Tinkhundlacracy', which is a system of political control of the people through and for the benefit of the monarchy. This essay will illustrate the religious and cultural frameworks in Eswatini since colonialism.

Eswatini has been ruled by an absolute monarchy from the Dlamini dynasty for over 150 years. The Dlamini dynasty is referred to as *Emalangeni,* 'those of the sun'. King Sobhuza II marshalled his tiny nation to independence in 1968, after a long struggle since his ascent to the throne in 1921. During colonization, the monarchy was seen as the rightful leader by the people and when the country gained independence, the King regained more power from being a mere paramount chief to a king of his people free from the supervision of the British. Surprising enough, instead of losing power during independence as was the case with other monarchies on the continent, he gained more power. Chistian Potholm (2008:219) observes that, 'unlike most of his traditional counterparts in Africa Sobhuza II gained, not lost power during the decolonization period: and in fact he expanded his control far beyond the Swazi nation …'. The question that has to be asked is, how did the monarchy manage not only to hold onto power but to increase its grip? How is it that the Kingdom of Eswatini has survived the political changes that took place in other parts of the continent and changed monarchs into democratic systems of government? How has the monarchy only survived the calls for democratic change but in fact seems to have become even stronger? Does this mean that Emaswati (the

Swati people) do not want participatory democracy, one they can shape and influence? Political analysts and academics have attempted to reflect on these questions from different perspectives. Factors such as economy, class structure, cultural structuralism and others have been blamed for the perpetuation of the monarchy (Sihlongonyane 2003:155).

There are a number of answers to this question, but one of them, which is the subject of this paper, is the role played by religion and culture in the entrenchment of the power and dominance of the monarchy over the citizens of Eswatini. Very little has been done to look at the role of religion in the foundational motivation and sustenance of the dominance of the monarchy in Eswatini. Therefore, the hypothesis of this paper is that royalty and religion are complicit in keeping residents of a country, commonly referred to as citizens, on the margins of political leadership, as they are deemed to be inferior to members of the royal family and those they have adopted to be part of the aristocracy. Such religio-cultural and anachronistic practices that emanate from both African Traditional Religions and Christianity make it extremely difficult for residents of Eswatini or ordinary citizens to participate fully in the political leadership of the country. The same sentiments are echoed by Bongi Radipati (1992:243), who argues that 'the monarchy under the direction of King Sobhuza II, succeeded in reinforcing its power considerably and in constituting an original political system essentially based on systematization of tradition'. Emile Durkheim (1965:47) defines religion as,

> a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – *beliefs* and practices which unite into a single moral community called church or those who adhere to them.

Peter Kasenene (1993:24) defines culture as 'the man-made [sic] symbols, language and material things which are neither instinctively acquired no genetically transmitted'. Charles Valentine (1968:3) takes the definition further by noting that culture consists of 'all socially standardized ways of seeing and thinking about the world, of understanding relationships among people, things, and events; of establishing preferences and purposes of carrying out actions and pursuing goals'.

The political rights of citizens have been a subject of discussion, with scholars and political analysts raising many contentious issues with a majority

of them being in general agreement that they have been marginalized as far as full participation in the political life and governance of the country is concerned. Amongst the key written works on religion, monarchy and the role of citizens in Eswatini, Joshua Bhekinkosi Mzizi's stands out. His primary work on this subject is titled: *The Dominance of the Swazi Monarchy and the Moral Dynamics of Democratization of the Swazi State* (in Kumalo 2013:83). In this article Mzizi analyses the monarchy's efforts to entrench its dominance whilst limiting the rights of citizens in Eswatini. He argues that religion and culture have been used in the legitimization of the dominance of the monarchy whilst marginalizing ordinary citizens. He asserted that,

> Judeo-Christian beliefs underscored the centrality of royal authority and the notion of the divine appointment of kings. Royal absolutism, therefore, implied that kings were God's representatives amongst nations. They commanded unsurpassed authority and respect for them was demanded, not earned (Mzizi 1995, in Kumalo 2013:83).

Hilda Kuper (1978) gives a full, detailed history of the rise of the Swazi nation, noting that there is inherent loyalty between the monarchy and the citizens which withstood the interference of the British colonizers. James Shadrack Matsebula (2000) writes about the developments of the history of the country, including the place of the monarchy and the loyalty of citizens. Mzizi (2005) also analyses the dream of Somhlolo, which is the bedrock of Christianity's relationship and sense of subjections to the royal family in Swaziland. He then calls for Christianity to offer a prophetic critique to the monarchy and empower citizens to resist the undemocratic system of leadership in the country. Whilst this work is aware of the essays that have been written on royalty, religion and the role of citizens in the governance of the country it seeks to respond to the question: how does religion contribute to the monarch's dominance of the political leadership in Eswatini?

Therefore, this essay focuses on the role played by religion to undergird and support the dominance of the monarchy. It focuses on the role of religion in the relegation of residents to the margins of political leadership. It seeks to do this by critically examining the complicity between royalty and religion in the marginalization of residents in political leadership. Royalty represents the royal family and the monarchy who form the ruling aristocracy in Eswatini. These include the Their Majesties (King and Queen mother),

princes and princesses and citizens they adopted by appointing to positions of power. Religion represents religio-cultural beliefs, tradition and practices mainly from African Traditional Religions and Christianity. In Swati tradition there is no separation between religion and culture; the two go together. Kasenene (1993:93) notes that '[r]eligion manifests a holistic approach to the world and to existence'. Residency represents those who stay in the country, in other words the citizens either by birth or naturalization. The methodology used to achieve the goals of this study include the examination of the role of the royal family and the residents of Eswatini in the political system and how these are undergirded by religio-cultural assumptions and beliefs. This is done through critically analysing archival material, papers and reports on the state of politics in the country. The essay has four sections. In the first section, it examines the historical background to the study of citizenry and politics in Eswatini by discussing the relationship between the monarchy and the residents. Then it explores the use of religion and culture in the marginalization of citizens in the public sphere and their participation in earlier epochs. This is followed by a section that discusses the involvement of citizens in politics and religion and analyses the areas of contestation. Next, it proposes the way in which religion can be used to empower citizens to participate meaningfully in the development of democratic governance in Eswatini.

Royalty and Residency in Eswatini

In the monarchic system of Eswatini, the King, who is also referred to as the 'lion', *Ingwenyama,* rules with the help of *Indlovukati,* the she-elephant, his mother or, if she is deceased, one of the senior wives. The King is the head and symbol of the nation *sive*. Not everyone can become a king in the Swazi society. For one to be King he/she must first come from the children of the King and then they must be chosen by the King and endorsed by elders of the royal house *bantfwabenkhosi or Emalangeni* (Kuper 1965:65). The King and the Queen are by principle accountable to *Indlunkhulu yasebukhosini*, the royal household or family, a council made up of the princes and princesses, *bantfwabenkhosi,* also known as *Emalangeni*. The royalty belongs to the *Nkhosi Dlamini* clan and they produce the King who is the absolute monarch, having power over all aspects of life in the country, controlling, for example, the economy, social rules, culture, religion and even education. Politically, he controls Parliament, Cabinet and chooses the Prime Minister. Under the royal

family or *Emalangeni* there is the Swazi National Council (SNC), *liqoqo*, which includes princes, chiefs and commoners who are appointed by the King. The Council is led by a Traditional Prime Minister, *Indvuna Yase Ludzidzini* (Governor of the main palace, which is the seat of the King and the Queen). This Council advises the King on a number of issues, especially traditional ones, related to the governance of the country. Politically, the country maintains a dual system of government with a modern government led by the Prime Minister, who also comes from the Dlamini dynasty with a cabinet that is hand-picked by his Majesty on one hand. On the other hand, the traditional system of governance is run by chiefs who report to the King. As a result, in Swaziland the monarch is still the absolute ruler; he opens and dissolves Parliament; signs and repeals laws; appoints and dismisses the Prime Minister; and he is the Supreme holder of the land, the culture, customs and traditional religion of the country (Kasenene 1993:90). All the subsidiary structures such as Cabinet, African traditional religious leaders, the leaders of churches are guided and influenced deeply by the monarchy through its complex system of patronage.

This makes Swaziland a unique place in terms of the interface between African traditional systems of leadership, modern politics and religion. This system entrenches the clear divisions between leaders and those that are led and is incapable of inculcating a culture of equality in society. Kasenene (1993:88) further observed that,

> The distinction between those who govern and those who are governed in Swaziland is clear because of the monarchical system of government, with the Dlamini royal family as the ruling group and the rest of the Swazis as subjects, except the few who are adopted into the ruling class.

Thus, residents are limited in the role they can play in the governance of the country. They also live in a country where equality is an impossibility according to this system. On the top of the structure is the royal family, which is a class of rulers. Then one has the ruling elite, which is adopted by the ruling class. On the next level are all the ordinary citizens. Sipho Simelane (2006) correctly observes that 'for anyone to survive or make it to the top in the political structures, one has to conform to the standards laid by the royal family and at times even compromise their principles'.

Residents, Royalty and Religions: The Intersection

Swazi traditional religion permeates all aspects of life including the various institutions. Kasenene (1993:92) notes that 'it is impossible to separate religion from any other aspect of culture. As a result, religious beliefs and practices help to sanction political power …'. This it does through promoting obedience to power and discouraging resistance to those in power, in this case the Dlamini dynasty. The proposal of this essay is that culture and religion encourage residents or citizens to pay absolute loyalty to the royal family as good followers and subjects. Kasenene (1993:90) observes the significant role played by culture and religion in keeping citizens submissive to authority in the Swazi context,

> For example, cultural values facilitate obedience to rulers. The most fundamental value in Swazi culture is respect for one's seniors. All human relationships are controlled by this value. It regulates relationships between parent and child, husband and wife, king and subject, royalty and ordinary people … subject and any ordinary Swazi is expected to be humble, soft spoken and submissive to the dominant partner. To question one's senior is condemned as unSwazi.

As a result, what is the unwritten but dominant rule is to have a member of the royal family close or distant, or just someone with the surname Dlamini as a leader, while the rest are followers even if they are more qualified educationally and with experience. This denies residents space to define and exercise their political abilities or prowess to the fullest.

As far as religion is concerned there are two important components that have been used; Swazi Traditional Religion and Christianity. Swazi Traditional religion is embedded in the belief in ancestors of the nation, who are consulted through rituals, sacrifices and national ceremonies such as *incwala*, also known as a national prayer. Incwala is 'a national religio-political ritual …' (Kasenene 1993:96). The King is the central player during *incwala* and there is no *incwala* without the King. Through this ceremony religious practices and beliefs are entrenched through the performing of rituals, sharing of common identity propaganda and doctoring through the use of traditional herbs and animal sacrifices with the purposes of building unity and enhancing the rule of the King and the royal family.

Christianity, which happens to be the majority religion in the country,

has also been used to entrench the power of the monarchy. For instance, a literary reading of the Bible gives justification for the King to exercise absolute power over the citizens including dispossessing them of their fields, taking of their daughters as his wives and sons as his guards and soldiers (1 Samuel 8:1–22). Where residents are mentioned next to the king, they are servants, expected to offer undivided loyalty to the king or queen. there is hardly any king who is depicted as offering service to his subjects. The Bible also calls for citizens to obey those in authority, for they have been given authority by God (Romans 13:1–10). In fact, the Bible especially, the Old Testament, is the king or queen's book for, in most parts, residents or subjects are called to offer full submission and servanthood to the rulers and never have ambitions to rise to position of leadership on their own and for their benefit. Even if they rise it must be to the benefit of the King or royal family.

When it comes to the question of citizens rising to the position of kings the Bible has a record of only two ordinary citizens who rose into the position of kings from the margins of society. The first is Saul and the second is David. Saul was picked up by God (1 Samuel 10:1-27). Then David, another ordinary citizen, was picked up and became one of the most respected kings (1 Samuel 16:1–13). In spite of failures and sins, he is said to have been loved by God, who declared him a man after his own heart. However, the stories of these two men remain rare ones, considering that no ordinary resident rose to the position of king after that. Kings were then chosen through hereditary processes from within the royal dynasties. Therefore, the Bible portrays kings as appointed by God within the royal family than through a democratic representative process. John Pobee (1991:23) notes that this is 'the point for political pseudo-religion of the divine ruler-cult'. Therefore, it is not surprising that even in modern-day Christianity there is no mention or place of an ordinary resident who rose to become king or an ordinary family member who became royal. This entrenches the position of those who in the royal families are seen as belonging to an upper, privileged and ruling class, whilst keeping those without royal blood in perpetual servitude.

Residents in Politics: A Religio-cultural Perspective in Eswatini

In the case of Eswatini, the Bible is not the only tool that is used to entrench the marginalization of residents from political ascendency. Swati cosmology,

a phenomenon created by the synergy between religion and cultural values also relegates residents or ordinary citizens to the margins of political power. In Eswatini, the King summons the nation to the royal kraal for consultative meetings. However, those meetings have no decision-making powers. Only members of the royal family, together with those they have adopted by appointing them to positions of responsibility, make decisions. Residents can only rise to the positions of headmen, army generals, deputy Prime Minister and heads of regional offices. They can also be elected to positions of power such as parliamentarians and councillors, but those positions are not influential, because they are subjected to royal decree that runs the country. Parliamentarians have limited power of decision making and those powers are not above the King's powers. So, residents can participate in the lower structures of the system of governance. However, these roles do not elevate them to political leadership, nor do they give them political influence. In these positions they are just serving the monarchic system and are not leaders in their own right. Therefore, they have no power by themselves to exercise in the governance of the country.

Generally, little is recorded of the residents' participation in political processes in the history of the country, except in the period running up to independence and the late 1990s. During the run-up to the elections there was the emergence of Swati educated elites such as Ambrose Zwane, Dr Samketi, JJ Nquku, Prince Dumisa Dlamini and others who entered the political arena, formed political organizations and provided leadership that contested for seats in Parliament as the new Constitution allowed them. Whilst the citizens were involved in the political campaigns and mass mobilization of people during the run-up to the elections, after 1968, they were again relegated to subjects, whose role is to support the monarchy, more as cronies than leaders following their own ideas and convictions. In the half a century of independence no resident or ordinary citizen from outside the Dlamini clan has been appointed to the position of Prime Minister, which is the highest position any civilian can hold in the country as only that of the King is above it. In most instances in the country, political leadership is expressed in clan terms, the domain of the elders, *labadzala, emalangeni* royalty. Even discussing politics in public is forbidden unless one has permission from *labadzala*.

In most cases residents are elevated to positions of assistant or deputy *lisekela.* Mzizi (2004) argues that the Tinkhundla system would ultimately destroy the country because of its failure to include all the citizens of the country in political leadership. He blames the late King Sobhuza II who in

1973, suspended the democratic constitution that was adopted at independence in 1968 and instituted the Tinkhundla system, which Mzizi calls poisonous. He blames Sobhuza II's fear of political parties, which led to him 'doing everything in his power to discredit political parties blaming them for being divisive and foreign elements' (Mzizi 2004 in Kumalo 2013:107). Political parties would have ensured the participation of the residents in the political system, but they were banned through the Constitution by the King, who then declared the Royal Decree as the way of running the country. On the 12th of April 1973, Sobhuza II suspended the Constitution. He blamed the disunity of the people on the 'Westminster Model Constitution' of 1968. He argued that it was 'the cause of growing unrest, insecurity and dissatisfaction' (Mzizi 2004:99). He continues to say that,

> The Constitution has permitted the importation into our country of highly undesirable political practices alien to, and incompatible with the way of life in our society and designed to disrupt and destroy our own peaceful and constructive and essentially democratic methods of political activity; increasingly this element engenders hostility, bitterness and unrest in our peaceful society (Maseko 2007:4).

The King replaced the constitution with the famous royal decree known as the '1973 Decree', in which he said,

> Now therefore I, Sobhuza II, King of Swaziland, hereby declare that, in collaboration with my cabinet ministers and supported by the whole nation, I have assumed supreme power in the Kingdom of Swaziland and that all legislative, executive and judicial power is now vested in myself and shall, for the meantime, be exercised in collaboration with my cabinet ministers. I further declare that to ensure the continued maintenance of peace, order and good government, my armed forces have been posted to all strategic places and have taken charge of all government places and public services. All *political parties* and similar bodies that cultivate and bring disturbances and ill-feelings within the nation are hereby dissolved and prohibited (Kings Proclamation 1973:2).

Speaking about these changes in 1980, the King said,

> There is a need to allow representation of people. People must be able to participate in decision-making processes over and above their representative. That is why we threw out the white men's book (Westminster Constitution), which emphasised representation by others. We chose our own way (*kwakitsi*) of electing leaders through the *Tinkhundla* constituencies, that is what we know it is from the Swazi way of doing things. Over and above that people are still allowed to come to the royal Kraal to listen for themselves and participate in decision-making processes (King's Proclamation, 1973:2).

From that day, the only mechanism that ensured people's participation in political systems, e.g. political parties and subsidiary organizations were banned in Eswatini. They were replaced by Tinkhundla a patrimonial system through which the monarch exercises full control and power of the nation. *Tinkhundla* is a Swati name which means gathering place. Mzizi (1995:195) blames this system for being the tool of manipulation of ordinary people by the royal house. He says that,

> I am uncomfortable to call the Swazi system *Tinkhundlacracy* because I do not know what it is. There is unquestionable royal manipulation of the masses ... and the silent declaration that only the King is right in political matters, social, economic, cultural, etc. This, for me, is a violation of the human right of self-determination of the masses.

That means for about 33 years, the country was led by the decree without a proper constitution. During this time there was no clear mechanism of how people could climb the political ladder but depended on being hand-picked by royalty to serve. In 2006, a new constitution was promulgated. It was drawn through a process that refused the participation of organized groups such as political parties and other civil society groups, but rather residents organized through the pro-monarchy Tinkhundla system meant to serve the agenda of the monarchy.

Ultimately, as much as ordinary citizens tried to play a role in politics, their avenue was through the systems sanctioned by the monarchy and even their contributions remained insignificant. Of course, this should not be construed as an attempt to undermine the role that was played by some leaders in the body politic of the country over the decades of independence. Some

residents worked their way up to high-profile political positions using the Swazi way of subtlety – *kulala phansi*. In other cultures, this would be interpreted, for instance, as cunning, sucking to power and bootlicking. However, in Eswatini that is almost the only way one can work one's way up to political power, by showing extra approval and respect of royalty and the system. Once in power a number of these residents demonstrated their unparalleled skills and prowess. Looking at the record of these leaders and many others there is just no basis for thinking that leadership must be reserved for those from the royal family. In the 1960s, a considerable number of residents formed political organizations of their own and demonstrated leadership qualities beyond that of some members of the royal family. These are people like Sishayi Nxumalo, who started the Swaziland Democratic Party, Ambrose Zwane, who started the Ngwane National Liberator Congress, JJ Nqutu's Swaziland Progressive Party who led their political organizations with excellence. Looking at these men's profiles and contributions, the validity of the claim that they are incapable of leading and their loyalty to the country questionable simply because they do not have royal blood remains disingenuous.

The doctrine of royal superiority that undergirds the politics of the country is brutal to a point that even those from the royal family who dare to push for political reforms that would open up the system to other citizens are discarded by the royal family and may even pay an ultimate price. An example of this, as Nomvula Ntjangase (2020) narrates, is the story of Prince Clement Dumisa Dlamini, who was amongst the first Swazis to graduate with a university degree, maybe even the first from the royal family. Dumisa was a progressive who joined Dr Nqutu's Swaziland Progressive Party and later co-founded the Ngwane National Liberatory Congress with Dr Zwane. He became General Secretary and organized people for membership and marches to fight against the exploitation of the citizens. His party contested the elections and contributed immensely to the attaining of independence in 1968. After that, he went to the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (US) to further his education. He qualified with a string of degrees, ranging from science, economics and politics. By the time he came back to Eswatini he held two master's and two PhDs, all from reputable institutions such as the University of Sussex in the UK and Princeton University in the US. He came back to Swaziland in 1975, hoping to contribute to the leadership of the country for which he was more than qualified. However, it was not to be as he was shunned by his fellow royalty for having formed the NNLC, which had

contested elections with the King's party known as Imbokodvo. Ultimately, he was imprisoned under the 60 Days decree, a law that had been promulgated by King Sobhuza in 1973 when he abrogated the constitution. He was imprisoned from 1977–1980 by the King and ultimately released and advised to leave the country and refrain from practising politics. He went overseas where he worked for four years and returned to Swaziland. In 1984 he was then expelled from his country and sent to the United Kingdom to live in exile where he ultimately died a lonely and broken man 17 years later.

From Prince Dumisa Dlamini's story we glean how resolute and brutal the system is to those who oppose it, even if they are connected with the royal family and have a string of degrees and incredible record of political leadership. If they dare to open it up for residents to participate in it, they are likely to pay the ultimate price. Other residents organized themselves to form the People's United Democratic Movement under the leadership of Mario Masuku and the strong federation of Trade Unions formed by the late Jan Sithole, but all these have not been able to make progress. Mario Masuku has been in and out of prison most of his life. Most of his organization's (PUDEMO) leadership are exiled in South Africa. Emaswati are both strong in tradition and religion and this is working in favour of the system. Both religion and culture expect residents to be respectful, submissive and stay out of progressive politics, unless they are invited or appointed to serve in a position of influence, also known as *kubulawa*. Kubulawa in Swati literally means 'killed' (Vilakati 2015:15). In this context it means one's own will and aspirations have been killed as one is now to serve the King and royalty with all that one has. In reality, it means the opposite. It means patronage by the King and in return one gives one's undivided loyalty in service to the monarchy.

Residency, Royalty and Religion in Eswatini

I have already demonstrated above that it can safely be concluded that due to traditional religion and culture, political leadership in both the pre-independent and post-independent Eswatini were reserved for the dominance of the royal family and those connected to it. This is because Swati culture is highly structured and each person knows their place in society. The political leadership of the country is understood to be for the selected few who belong to the Dlamini dynasty because of the blood that runs through their veins that

comes with it. This has led to the failure of progressive movements and leaders to bring about change in the country, in spite of the many efforts that have been tried over the decades. To support political groups or even be associated with them can lead to one being ostracized and stigmatized by the leadership, leading to one not being able to access basic services and opportunities. As a result, to get into progressive politics takes bravery and the commitment to sacrifice, for residents are not supposed to harbour political ambitions in Eswatini, but rather to serve at the behest of the elders, *labadzala.*

It is noteworthy that although citizens have remained largely on the margins of society, there has been a number of them who were committed Christians and climbed the political ladder. Most of these leaders held faith and culture together in a creative tension and used it to justify their loyalty to the powers that be. Among these are people like JLF Simelane who served as Minister of Finance and diplomat; MB Nsibandze, Arthur Khoza and Albert Shabangu, Constance Simelane, all who were committed Christians and adherents of Swazi culture, but served at the highest levels any ordinary citizen can reach with excellence and merit. There has been an increase in the number of ordinary citizens and women serving in the cabinet. There are a number of reasons for this development. The first is the pressure that has been coming from progressive groups from within and outside the country who have been campaigning for these changes to take place. There has also been the call for women to be included in leadership positions in the world and that has forced the king to consider women when appointing members of the cabinet, parliament and other positions of influence to appease the world and be seen to be responding to the call for the democratization of the system.

Laws, however, do not tamper with the King's rights to choose people from the royal family for any position, nor do they temper with his right to appoint only a person from the Dlamini Dynasty for the position of Prime Minister. There have been developments in the accessibility of political power by citizens during the years 2006–2018 and the number of those who are literate politically continue to climb, meaning more pressure is exerted to the system to open up for them. For instance, during the last elections for parliamenttarians, women comprised 14% of the contestants (Maziya 2018:1). Still low, but considering the history of their participation in the country, this is a significant increase. Running for parliamentary elections has also become a big project for most citizens, for this is the only way that those with political ambitions can have their dreams realized. People go to the extent of bribing the

electorate with food parcels, T-shirts and other resources just for them to get votes. In a country where job opportunities and economic prospects remain minimal, joining the race for parliament remains a viable and important option. However, the inclusion of residents in the Tinkhundla and parliamentary system does not necessarily guarantee transformation of the political system and ultimately the country. This is because parliamentarians do not actually have any power; they may discuss laws, but these have to be signed by the King, who holds executive power and can veto parliamentary decisions. A case in hand that showed the lack of power by parliament was the Marwick Khumalo saga. Marwick Khumalo was elected as speaker of the house of Parliament. The King did not want him in that position. He simply refused to endorse him by signing the papers; Marwick was withdrawn by Parliament, in spite of the fact that he had been elected by the majority members of Parliament.

From the above observation then it means one needs to be critical when residents are appointed in positions of power in the Eswatini government. Then one needs to ask the question: whether this is done genuinely or is it so that the government of their Majesties can be seen to be democratic by its global critics? There is a need for the laws – both written and unwritten – that entrench the dominance of leadership by the monarchy to be changed, so that all citizens can contest for leadership positions equally.

Challenges Faced by Residents in Political Office: Religion and Culture as Obstacles

Religion and culture also present a few obstacles for residents to play active roles in the politics of the country. Firstly, culture and religion both have negative effects on people's attitudes towards politics and governance; this is because they have been manipulated into believing that political leadership belongs to royalty not ordinary citizens. This made many residents to have apathy towards participating in politics. Kasenene (1993:89) asserts that,

> There are two main methods which dominant groups use to gain or maintain power, namely physical force or mind control …. It is mind control which was used by the Dlamini clan to consolidate its power and have itself accepted by the people. The main tool which was used in mind control was culture which is rooted in Religion.

Kasenene's observation leads to an awareness of the effects that citizens have from cultural commitment, which promotes loyalty to the status quo. There-fore, it is reasonable to argue that Swazi Traditional Religion, Christianity and culture have not been helpful in encouraging citizens of the country to be engaged in political activities and processes in order to transform the situation in the country. Second, is the attitude of some Christians towards religio-cultural practices associated with political leadership. The influence of Christianity on ordinary citizens and their attitudes towards African religio-cultural practices were felt soon after it had produced a sizable number of mission school-educated elites. Most of these came from ordinary citizens without royal connections. Christianity also tended to disrupt traditional cultural practices that socialized residents to Swati forms and structures of leadership. It entrenched the rejection of Swazi culture and ultimately politics for most residents who concerned themselves with the kingdom of heaven, rather than of this earth (Mzizi 2013:284).

A number of able and educated Emaswati turned their backs from the monarchy, culture and political system after they had accepted Christ, believing the system to be sinful because it was connected with ancestor veneration and unchristian rituals such as annual national prayer *Incwala,* and reed dance *umhlanga.* Thus, a number of educated and Christian Emaswati shun political leadership roles in the country because of the lack of free spaces for exercising political leadership. The other reason is that there are not enough opportunities or structures that people can join, that encourage political education and activism. The paucity of these structures is due to the fact that political parties are banned and political activities are monitored by the security agencies and can easily lend one into prison. Linked to that is the bad economic system in the country, which means that there are no resources to fund political activism. It is difficult for political bodies to raise funds. Even non-governmental organizations are struggling to get funding for their humanitarian work of feeding the poor and providing access to health and food. Royalty is embedded in most of the cultural and religious traditions. This means that as long as Emaswati are influenced and shaped by culture and religion in all spheres of their lives, then royalty is going to continue dominating leadership and residents being regarded as mere followers. It will take a new attitude towards Swazi culture especially towards the monarchy to change the attitudes toward the poor participation of citizens to the leadership of the country.

Religion as a Catalyst for Participating in Governance of Eswatini

In as much as we have seen that religion can be an obstacle for political activism and progress as Karl Marx once asserted, especially when it is used to control the thinking of the oppressed, it can also be a catalyst for their resistance. Hans Kung (1992) observed that 'To the disappointment of many Marxists in Africa, who believed that religion is a sleeping pill for the oppressed masses, religion has proven that it is more complex than that'. Asserting this point even firmer, Kung (1992:13) continued, '[r]eligion has proven that it can be not only a means of social appeasement and consolation but also … a catalyst of social liberation: and this without that revolutionary use of force which results in a vicious circle of ever-new violence'. Of significance in Kung's assertions is the fact that religion in Africa is also playing a positive role of encouraging positive political activism, which encourages citizens to take their political destinies into their own hands which is yielding positive results already in some countries, this without resorting to violence.

In 2004 during the writing of the constitution, there was an unprecedented move when church leaders, both pastors and lay grumbled against the exclusion of the Christian clause which declared Swaziland, a Christian country from the new Constitution. They organized themselves through the Swaziland Christian Churches United in Christ (SCCUC) and marched to present a petition to the Constitution Review Commission that 'Christianity should be enshrined in the Kingdoms' Constitution as Swaziland's official religion' (Mzizi 2013:242). The move by the Christian leaders under the united banner of the SCCUC reached the King and he then invited them to the palace where he explained to them the reason behind the removal of the Christian Clause in the new constitution, the main reason being that Swaziland was in a modern society which is more inclusive than exclusive.

The role played by the church leaders in protesting against a political matter of concern to them because it touches on their faith is a typical example of the power of religion in mobilizing citizens for political action. It had been unprecedented in Eswatini that members of the clergy would organize a march across denominational lines and stand to contribute towards the drawing up of the constitution. During this protest most, church leaders were clad in their clerical regalia, e.g. dog collars, preaching gowns, albs and cassocks. For a

moment the church had left the comfort of the sanctuary and entered the public space in order to participate in the drafting of a new constitution for the country. The image of the church leaders marching to confront a political structure gave legitimacy to other residents of Eswatini who are adherents of the Christian faith that they can take part in political protests, which they were not sure they could do as Christians. So, it gave legitimacy to the political endeavour and ambitions of a number of committed Christians.

As already noted above, a number of committed Christians had been participating in the political leadership of the country. The idea of a committed Christian becoming a political leader brings with it a sense that the leader possesses qualities depicting loyalty, love, honesty, work ethic, service and integrity. This gives politics a good image from the predominant one where politicians are depicted as liars and thieves. Due to the fact that people tend to trust the church more than any other institution in the country, then they are likely to trust politicians who come through the church.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sought to make a case by arguing that the dominance of the monarchy in Eswatini is accounted for by the influence of religio-cultural factors manipulated by the monarchy and cherished by the residents. In conclusion we can assert that from the discussion above we have observed that in Eswatini issues of governance such as leadership, holding of political and cultural office, occupancy of positions in strategic institutions are generally associated with the royal family, because they have royal blood and those they choose to work with (Kasenene 1993:93). This essay has demonstrated that the role of religion and culture in the shaping of politics in Eswatini is ambiguous. On the one hand it has been used to entrench the dominance of politics by the royal family by spreading a pro-monarchy system of governance at the expense of the residents. On the other hand, religion especially Christianity can be used to rally citizens to participate in transformative political developments of the country at all levels of society. For it to do this, it has to be changed from being a tool of domination of ordinary citizens into a catalyst that inspires them to see politics as another avenue of appreciating the inalienable rights of every human person. It has to create a conducive environment for all members of society to participate in politics including challenging those holding the levers of power to open the doors for others to participate. As they stand, the three

points: royalty, religion and residents, seem incompatible in Eswatini. However, religion can be used to bring the other two (royalty and residency) together, because all of them adhere to it. Instead of being used as a reason to justify the superiority of those who belong to royalty it can also campaign for equality of all people in the political realm of the country.

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Prof. Simangaliso R. Kumalo
Academic Leader: Theology & Ethics
Co-Editor: Critical Investigation on Humanitarian Aid in Africa
School of Religion Philosophy and Classics
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Pietermaritzburg
kumalor@ukzn.ac.za

Interrogating the Place of African Religions in Humanitarian Governance

Cecelia Lynch
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7043-3990

Abstract

Religious humanitarian governance through faith-based organizations (FBOs) in Africa has historically sidelined and condemned African religions, with ongoing echoes of that sidelining in religious as well as secular forms of humanitarian governance today. In this contribution, I draw on the development of humanitarian ethics in the midst of the spread of other 'world religions' (in Max Weber's terminology[1]) such as Christianity and Islam across the continent, also highlighting several debates about religious humanitarian governance that arose in two conferences sponsored by the Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa (CIHA) Blog. I argue in favour of recapturing the fullness of the African religious landscape in humanitarian governance as well as within all religious traditions with roots on the continent. It is important, however, that such inclusion of African religions on the part of transnational humanitarian actors avoid both romanticization and appropriation.

Keywords: Africa, African religions, Religious humanitarian, Faith Based Organizations, Governance.

Introduction

Much of the debate about whether religion is a positive or negative phenomenon in humanitarian governance in Africa ignores or downplays the impact

[1] According to Weber, as noted by Hans Gerth and Wright Mills (1946:267), 'world religions are the religiously determined systems of life-regulation which have known how to gather multitudes of confessors around them, and include Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam'.

and ongoing role of African religious traditions. For example, some Christian, Muslim and humanitarian programs and organizations compartmentalize African religions as 'culture', diminishing the religiosity and spirituality of their forms of knowledge and practices.[2] In this contribution, I discuss the different historical trajectories of Christianity and Islam on the continent layered over and through the power and practice of African religions. Tracing the overall FBO landscape in Africa to Christian missionizing of the colonial era and Islamic practices of charity around mosques, I also pay attention to how Christian and Muslim actors have at times incorporated and at other times condemned African religious practices and beliefs. In addressing the continuing relevance and influence of African religions on the continent, I assert that the debate within the humanitarian literature about whether or not FBOs are a positive or negative force misses the important contributions of African religions. Because of their contributions, ongoing presence, and potential in addressing humanitarian issues, I argue in favour of incorporating the fullness of the African religious landscape in the future of religious humanitarian governance into the continent.

Humanitarian Governance in Africa and the Place of Religious Groups, or Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)

Numerous scholars have noted that external humanitarian governance plays an outsized role in many parts of Africa. Tim Murithi (2009) coined the term 'aid colonialism' to explicate this role. See also Ake (1996) on the problems of 'development'; De Waal (1997) on the politics of famine in East Africa; Landau (2008) on Tanzania and the intersection of refugees and aid; Autesserre (2012) on simplistic narratives of how to 'help' the Congo; Hagmann and Reyntjens (2016) on the relationship between aid and authoritarian states; and Branch (2011) on the role of NGOs in assisting the militarization of northern Uganda. 'Humanitarian governance' – defined here as encompassing both emergency and developmentalist forms of aid and their intersections with the state – has different trajectories in different countries, but it also has common characteristics. First, and perhaps ironically, it understands itself not as

[2] The University of KwaZulu-Natal's Institute for Religion, Governance and the Environment in Southern Africa (IRGESA), as well as the Ujamaa Centre, appears to be important exceptions to this rule.

governance at all, but instead as apolitical assistance, according to the primary code of conduct drawn up by transnational humanitarian networks (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement 1994). Secondly, humanitarian governance has historically made significant inroads in health and education and, more recently, in the development of legal as well as informal mechanisms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Thirdly, it tends to value particular kinds of transnationally developed knowledge and devalue others (Cornwall & Anyidoho 2010; wa Thiong'o 2009; Kalu 2001). Fourthly, humanitarian governance has increasingly tended to seek 'root causes' of poverty and conflict. However, more often than not, humanitarians trace such 'roots' to domestic sources, overlooking power relations and historical inequities between African societies and colonizers established during colonialism and reinforced in economic extraction and political deal-making in the postcolonial era (Wakesho & Gutbi 2018).

Each of these factors is important to recognize, but together they reinforce neoliberal forms of governance, as noted by both African scholars and others outside the continent (Mutua 2009; Bond 2005; Ferguson 2006; Bernal & Grewal 2014). This form of governance privatizes the delivery channels of social welfare; it also locates centres of control for those channels in transnational NGO and INGO networks of aid and their donors, including external governments and foundations (Aina & Moyo 2013; Akua Anyidoho 2012; Kanyinga 2009; Ngondi-Houghton 2009). As a result, 'partnerships' with African actors are most often inegalitarian, with 'local' (read 'African') actors 'too often left to implement instead of conceptualize and lead programs that are supposed to address injustices in their own societies' (Lynch 2017; Basu & Confortini 2017).

Religious organizations have been a prominent, if not predominant, component of this network of humanitarian governance in Africa, both in the past and in the present. They have frequently displayed characteristics outlined above, although sometimes they try to work against them, similar to their actions during the colonial period. For example, Christian missionary organizations, paralleling and often working with colonial authorities, created denominational networks of medical clinics, hospitals, and schools that crisscrossed African societies. Anglicans, Baptists, Anabaptists, Catholics, Presbyterians, Reformed Churches, and Methodists travelled to overlapping parts of the continent, primarily south of the Sahara. French Catholic missionaries followed Portuguese Catholics into Africa in the 18th century, moving into the

Sahel and other present-day Francophone parts of the continent (Congo, Cameroon, the Great Lakes region).[3] Basle missionaries (both Lutheran and Presbyterian) proselytized in Cameroon and Ghana; Baptists in Congo and Cameroon; and Methodists in Southern Africa (Kumalo 2020). The mostly Congregational London Missionary Society (LMS) focused on Southern Africa and Madagascar; Anglicans targeted British colonies in East and West Africa, as well as Southern Africa and parts of Central Africa (Isichei 1995:53, 57-61, 75-76). Much of the educational infrastructure began in the first half of the 20th century, although there were regional and denominational variations; some mission schools were founded earlier, in the late 19th century. Nevertheless, most education for African (as opposed to European settler) children was limited to the primary grades and preparation for low-level jobs in various colonial bureaucracies. As the 20th century progressed, Christian denominations also created networks of health clinics, such that today, for example, networks of Catholic, Presbyterian, Anglican, and Methodist clinics and hospitals (among others) exist across much of the continent.

As missions and the 'developmental' sector became increasingly separate in Christian denominational work after decolonization, the latter developed new forms of educational, health, and infrastructural programs that relied on forms of knowledge, measurement, and auditing created and controlled by external states, transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs), and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs). Several transnational Christian organizations, including Caritas and Lutheran World Relief, were also instrumental, along with the ICRC, in creating the humanitarian codes of the early 1990s that were designed to promote neutral action in the midst of warring sides in conflicts. Such codes of conduct also moved away from the proselytizing of the past, instead promoting 'respect for culture and custom' (Lynch & Schwarz 2016).

Islam developed different forms of humanitarian governance that preceded Christian schools and clinics. Islam spread into North Africa soon after its founding in the 7th century; then from North Africa into the Savannah region through trade as early as the 9th century, becoming established during the following centuries in West Africa as well (Kane 2016; Bari 2009:116-119). By the mid-to-late 15th century, major centres of Islamic learning include-

[3] Christians in Egypt and Ethiopia, however, date from the 1st century BCE and 4th century BCE, respectively.

ed Timbuktu in northwest Mali (Kane 2016). East African Muslim societies began early in coastal areas, although in Uganda and Kenya (as well as Southern Africa), South Asian Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus were also brought as forced labourers for British infrastructure projects in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Muslim-majority communities also integrated with African religious beliefs, customs and practices in most parts of the continent. In each of these contexts, however, the primary form of humanitarian governance centred on the mosque as a primary site of both education and social welfare. In Muslim-majority African regions, Sunni traditions also integrated with regional religious traditions, including in Ghana, Cameroon, Kenya, Senegal, and Mali. Thus, Islamic governance initiatives ranged from providing Islamic education, from the Koranic schools for children through prestigious institutes of higher learning, to acts of charitable giving at mosques. Today, Islamic clinics and hospitals, as well as schools teaching a wide range of subjects, exist in numerous parts of the continent (Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Mali, Libya, and South Africa, as well as of course Egypt). Many are both founded and funded domestically, while others come from abroad. For example, both the Turkish government and the Hizmet movement have funded schools in Senegal, and 'reformists' from Egypt and Saudi Arabia have funded programs to promote Salafi rules and norms.

The Endurance of African Religious Traditions

In the midst of these developments, however, African religious practices, expressions, beliefs, and commitments never went away. One common manifestation concerns the numerous forms of integration of African commitments with Christian and Muslim rites and teaching that occurred all over the continent. Rituals regarding birth, adulthood, marriage and death, as well as practices around health and illness, remain essential and dynamic aspects of life for many who otherwise belong to Christian or Muslim religious communities. In some traditions and places, such rituals and associated beliefs are integrated into Christianity or Islam. For example, the network of African Initiated Churches (AICs, also called African Independent, Indigenous, or Instituted Churches; Chitando & Manyonganise 2011: 79) began during the colonial period as a partial protest against missionaries' exhortations against African traditions. AICs took root primarily in East, Central and Southern Africa. Numerous Muslim communities across the Sahel as well as in northern

Ghana, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and other Sub-Saharan countries also have generations-old syncretic traditions. These include the Lamidat system of governance in Central and parts of Northern Cameroon, and the syncretic 'traditional'/Islamic sultanates of the Bamum area of West and Northwest Cameroon (Mane 2017).

'Mainline' Christian denominations also appeal to African religious ideas and practices, but they tend to use terms such as 'culture' to describe them. Debates about whether Christianity should engage in 'inculturation' in Africa, i.e., base its concepts and understandings on African beliefs, practices and traditions (Martey 2009) have existed since the colonial era. In addition, both Southern African 'contextual theology' and African feminist theology draw heavily on articulations of indigenous African 'lived realities', incurporating African 'culture' into Christian meanings and practices, while also incorporating liberationist themes. The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, often known simply as 'the Circle', was founded in the 1980s in West Africa by African feminist Christians, but grew to include feminist Muslim as well as Christian thinkers and scholars from Southern, East and Central Africa as well (Jenkins 2006:163; Phiri & Nadar 2006). In each of these cases, African spiritual resources are seen as critical for articulating demands for emancipation and growth as well as promoting health. The theologians of the Circle, for example, put considerable emphasis on examining African women healers across the continent (Phiri 2006; Dube 2006; Akitunde 2006).

Overall, however, mainline Christian efforts to incorporate African spiritual concepts and practices still prioritize Christian teachings. The purpose remains to contextualize Christian meanings in African contexts, highlighting Christian precepts – stripped of the 'false universality' of European missionary Christianity – in order to demonstrate their life and salience on the continent. This would allow African Christians to transcend 'moribund Constantinian Christianity,' as Jean-Marc Ela put it (Ela, in Katongole 2017: 102).

Some concepts and principles that are seen as traditionally African both merge with and move beyond Christian or Islamic boundaries and have become broadly known and deployed across the continent. For example, numerous leaders and groups claim the idea of *Ubuntu* (encapsulated by the translation, 'I am because you are') and *Ujamaa* (the notion of family or 'brotherhood') as essential guiding principles for the continent as a whole. Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa popularized *Ubuntu* for an

international audience (Metz 2017), while *Ujamaa* became known in the 1960s as Julius Nyerere's shorthand term for Tanzanian socialism (in the 1967 Arusha Declaration). Similarly, notions of obligatory hospitality and extending welcome to the stranger have many forms, one of which is *teranga* in Senegal and the Sahel. While it is important not to romanticize such principles, they remain potent reminders of African ethical dispositions, practices, and traditions of care and humanitarianism (Murove 2009), often in contrast to the exploitative incursions of colonialism and its legacies.

Nevertheless, the integration of African religious principles and practices with Christianity and Islam, or with postcolonial concepts that guide notions of relationality on the continent, is not always an organic process. Burial rituals are one site of debate for African Christians and a number of respective churches. Disputes between religious leaders and families, and within families themselves, about whether and how to incorporate traditional herbs, veneration of ancestors, and other practices to honour the dead have been evident in both formal interviews and casual conversations that I have conducted in Cameroon and Kenya. For Muslims, the 'reformist' wave of Sunni Islam from Saudi Arabia targets Sahelian universities among other sites to refute alleged African deviations from perceptions of purity. As a result, today there is considerable push-back on the part of Sunni Brotherhoods and other long-standing African Muslim communities against what they see as disruptive and dangerous incursions into their ways of life and forms of governance, including practices of charity and community support, by Boko Haram and Wahabi reformists. Such a constellation of practices has led to a Foucauldian 'heterotopia' of forms of Islam in countries such as Senegal, for Seck, Ba and Yassine (2017).

Yet there are also many people in Africa who never converted to a non-indigenous religion at all, or who have reverted to it after they or previous generations of their family converted to Christianity or Islam. Indigenous religions themselves – without turning into hybrid forms of Christianity or Islam – remain critical components of life on the continent, and include their own ontologies of knowledge and ritual practices. Healing rituals in Africa, and indeed all over the world, for example, are known for ontologies that accord importance to interconnections (rather than distinctions) between body and mind; earth and soul. Both individuals and communities, in this perspective, are part of a cosmology that also connects other living beings and non-living elements.

Today the signposts of 'traditional healers' remain part of the fabric of both urban and rural life across the continent. At our December 2017 CIHA conference in Senegal (on Gender, Religion, Health and Healing in Africa), we travelled to Fatick, the home of CEMETRA, the Senegalese headquarters of PROMETRA (the Promotion of Traditional Medicine, https://prometra.org/), a worldwide body of healers. In Fatick, we met with healers who were also spiritual guides, insisting on the connection between spirituality and bodily health. In other interviews, I also visited the offices of a prominent leader in traditional healing in Cameroon, who not only showed me his garden full of medicinal plants and described some of their specific uses, but also took care to emphasize the interconnections between his roles as healer and priest to take care of the wellbeing of mind as well as body. And I was invited to observe a day-long festival organized by PROMETRA in Kilifi, Kenya, in which teams of healers from the surrounding area drummed and danced from the outskirts to the centre of town to display their methods and discuss their herbs and medicines with participants and passers-by. Once again, the mind-body connection was pre-eminent, showing how movement and sound prepare bodies for healing.

Colonial and Post-Colonial Religious Suppressions and Extractions

Despite the ongoing presence – and power – of 'traditional' African religions on the continent, I assert that humanitarian governance especially that which emanates from the west, does not take sufficient account of African religious ontologies, practices, and commitments. This is the case for governance emanating from FBOs, UN agencies, INGOs, and 'secular' NGOs. Moreover, when humanitarian governance does take account of indigenous presence and power, it tends to be for selective and/or extractive purposes.

This comes from a colonial legacy of both suppression and appropriation. For example, during our Senegal CIHA conference, we toured part of the archives of the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar. The French colonists began a vast collection of medicinal plants from all over the continent that are carefully 'named' and categorized in the university archives. This very process of naming and categorizing, of course, is a form of governance and control. Even as colonialists sought new kinds of knowledge, they did so in the service of appropriation and extraction. At the university archives, for

example, the plants and herbs are marked with notations about their uses and advantages for the French to deploy.

Colonizers also employed intentionally violent tactics of cultural genocide to suppress African languages, music, spirituality, and religious tenets and commitments. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2012) describes the punishments awaiting him and his peers in colonial Kenya for speaking their language, Gikuyu, a physical as well as epistemological form of suppression that has become inscribed in the memories of his generation across the continent. Wa Thiong'o uses numerous examples to demonstrate how British colonizers engaged in intentional material and epistemic/ spiritual violence against African populations. One particularly inhumane example concerns how political, spiritual, and anticolonial resistance leaders were not only brutally murdered, but their bodies desecrated by dismemberment while their sacred burial grounds were also defiled (Wa Thiong'o 2009:3-4). Missionaries were frequently part of such violence, as Mhoze Chikowero also points out in discussing repression in Madzimbabwe. The mbira, as well as other musical instruments with spiritual properties, were banned by Christian missionaries who labelled them satanic.

> [T]the colonial state and missionary bodies crusaded against African spiritualities and musical traditions expressed through such instruments as the mbira, ngoma, etc., banning indigenous music … The *mission* was to alienate Africans from themselves, their cultures and histories, and to thus disinherit them as a people who would then need to look unto and admire European cultures; a conquered people ... (Chikowero 2018).

These examples show that it took a great deal of effort to suppress African religious practices and commitments, even though those efforts were never completely successful. As Chikowero points out, '[t]he survival of Africans and their cultures today therefore say a lot about the resilience of the people and their cultures in the face of such unparalleled adversity' (Chikowero 2018). The mbira, for example, never became extinct, and is experiencing an intentional renaissance that is part of broader resistance movements. Wa Thiong'o's lifelong work to preserve African (and other indigenous) languages is also part of such movements.

Today, the dominant strategy of humanitarian governance appears to

be a revision of past policies of suppression and selective appropriation. One can indeed easily find outright suppression and condemnation of tradition, linked to 'witchcraft' and 'sorcery' in newspaper advertisements for Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. NGOs and FBOs also tend to highlight exoticized campaigns against practices such as female cutting (termed FGM, or female genital mutilation), early marriage, and polygamy. In this way, FBOs participate in distinguishing themselves from 'harmful traditional practices', contributing to the longstanding anthropological re-labelling of African religious traditions as 'culture' (see, for example, the discussion in the report of the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith & Local Communities on 'harmful traditional practices' (Le Roux & Bartelink, 2017).

At the same time, international organizations (IGOs) such as the World Health Organization and UNAIDS have engaged selectively with traditional healers in Africa in order to understand medicinal sources (e.g. herbs) used to strengthen immunity to disease. Such efforts, for example, were part of the fight against HIV/AIDS on the continent (UNAIDS 2006). This type of outreach can be productive, especially if research is co-produced by both parties. Nevertheless, it is necessary to guard against the appropriation of the tangible tools of healing excised from the knowledge and cosmologies of which they are part.

Rather than strategies of exclusion and appropriation, African cosmologies that respect the power of both human and non-human forms of life, integrate them with nature, and allow for interlocking linguistic, spiritual and bodily expression of health, healing and social life in general provide important contributions to and potential reworking of the humanitarian landscape. Taken seriously, such cosmologies, and the practices that have become inculcated to express them, link people to places and communities. These linkages, in turn, provide important alternative interpretations as well as active engagements for conventional humanitarian language concerning 'relief', 'assistance', and 'development'. They open up paths to well-being – the core of humanitarian objectives – that do not rely on externally imposed hierarchies of knowledge (Phiri & Nadar 2006; Ogunnaike 2020).

The holistic cosmologies of African religious commitments also emphasize environmental stewardship. African thinkers, African populations, and African healers have long been leaders in such stewardship, although external groups have not recognized them as such. However, there is evidence of a new emphasis on seeking traditional knowledge in attempts to conserve

and preserve ecosystems. For example, movements to counter land grabs, resource destruction, food insecurity, drought and climate change increasingly highlight practices rooted in African religious traditions (Nyari 2017).

Revisiting and Redefining Debates about Religion and Humanitarianism in Africa

My discussion thus far has outlined, a) the prevalence of humanitarianism in African governance in general, particularly in the provision of social welfare, health and education; b) the historical outlines and colonial legacies that shape the role of churches and mosques in humanitarian governance, and their metamorphosis into Christian and Islamic FBOs today; c) the perseverance of African religion on the continent; and d) the techniques of both suppression of African religion and related components (linguistic, musical expression; plants and herbs used in its healing) and their extraction for use by colonial and post-colonial authorities. Despite these issues and legacies, however, the contemporary debate about what the role of religion in humanitarian governance in Africa *should be* tends to avoid questions of traditional or indigenous religions. Christian groups, in particular, tend to be caught up in defending themselves against providing aid under the guise of ongoing proselytizing and missionizing.

I agree with those who have challenged the argument that contemporary Christians mostly provide aid to proselytize (Ager & Ager 2015; Paras 2012). Indeed, Tanya Schwarz and I have tried to add both nuance to the debate and recast the notion of proselytism to include both religious and secular actors. We do so by showing that the very growth of humanitarian governance – both self-described religious and self-described secular – has created its own marketized and monetized strings, which we call 'donor proselytism' (Lynch & Schwarz 2016).

The requirements of donors that recipients must observe – devising and meeting imperfect metrics, achieving quick (even if not lasting) results, 'partnerships' with 'local' organizations that are usually partners in name only – are all characteristics of donor proselytism. While I assert that these kinds of paternalism, imperialism, and neo-colonialism in aid provision is unacceptable and harmful, my focus in this article was on the kinds of religious commitments, traditions, practices and expressions that *both* secular and religious humanitarians tend to ignore or attempt to discipline.

Conclusion

It is essential for humanitarian efforts to be fully inclusive of African spiritualities, cosmologies, and ontologies. Such efforts should not denigrate these traditions, and they should also avoid either romanticizing or appropriating and/or expropriating them. Instead, humanitarian actors and scholars, especially those in the west, need to open humanitarian ontologies and practices to the communal and ecological understandings of health and well-being that comprise the knowledge bases and experiences of African healers and religious leaders. Such understanding and openness, ideally, would learn from holistic eco-cosmologies while respecting different understandings of temporality and healing. Such active openness is required for any project of decolonizing humanitarianism, development, and peacebuilding. It is also required for understanding the interrelatedness of the earth, its resources, and its peoples, in attempts by humanitarians to address the effects of climate change. In short, the large gaps in recognizing the role of African spiritualities and religiosities is a major hindrance to meaningful and egalitarian humanitarian work, be it 'faith-based' or 'secular', but such gaps can be addressed through intentional openness and action.

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Cecelia Lynch
International Relations, Religion and Ethics
School of Social Sciences
University of California
Irvine
clynch@uci.edu

Acknowledgement of Reviewers

We wish to acknowledge the participation of the following reviewers in the production of AASBS Volume #06.

Prof. Akosua Adomako Ampofo – Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon – Ghana; adomako@staff.ug.edu.gh
Prof. Penda Ba – Department of Political Science, Gaston Berger University, Saint Louis – Senegal; mame-penda.ba@ugb.edu.sn
Prof. Cilas Kemedjio – Frederick Douglas Institute for African American Studies, University of Rochester – USA; cilas.kemedjio@rochester.edu
Dr. Davis Kisitu - Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, Kyambogo University, Kampala – Uganda; kgyaviira@kyu.ac.ug
Prof. Raymond Simangaliso Kumalo - School of Religion Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu Natal – South Africa; KumaloR@ukzn.ac.za
Prof. Cecelia Lynch – Department of Political Science, University of California, Irvine - USA; clynch@uci.edu
Dr. Elias O. Opongo, SJ – Hekima Institute of Peace Studies and International Relations (HIPSIR), Nairobi – Kenya; elias.opongo@hekima.ac.ke
Dr. Honoured Kudzai Taruona - School of Religion Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu Natal – South Africa; TaruonaH@ukzn.ac.za