

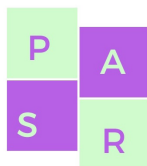


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African Social Research Volume2

# The Struggle for Democracy in Africa: Elections, Coups and Popular Opinion

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# Introduction: The Struggle for Democracy in Africa: Elections, Coups and Popular Opinion

Marc Lynch, Hisham Aidi and Zachariah Mampilly

Democracy is under challenge globally, with declining commitment to the peaceful transition of power on display from Washington to Mali. Democratic retrenchment is particularly acute across the African continent. In contrast to the Middle East, where few democracies existed in the first place, Africa's struggles have manifested within consolidated democracies. Since 2020, there have been four successful and several failed coup attempts in West Africa, putting the stability of these democracies into considerable doubt. Insurgencies rage across multiple countries spanning the continent, spreading violence, insecurity and fear. Already fragile economies have suffered crushing blows from the COVID-19 pandemic, and by the disruption of food supplies and soaring energy prices caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Can African democracy survive these challenges?

In June 2022, the Program on African Social Research (PASIRI) convened a workshop in Accra, Ghana with the support of Afrobarometer. Nearly twenty young scholars from sixteen different African countries participated in the discussions, allowing for direct and broad comparative analysis of individual countries and regional trends. Many of the papers drew on Afrobarometer data for fine-grained analysis of trends in popular attitudes and for testing hypotheses about the effects of variables such as economic crisis, Presidential popularity, or exposure to violence. We are proud to now publish those papers as the second issue of *African Social Research*.

Among the most immediate and urgent challenges to democracy across the African continent is the resurgence of military coups. The rash of military interventions to overturn the democratic process, and the popular acceptance of at least some of those coups, represents one of the most potent threats to democracy. This does not necessarily imply a

collapse in popular support for democracy as a form of government. As **Sulley Ibrahim** points out in his contribution, Afrobarometer data from countries which experienced military coups typically continue to show high support for democracy: 62% and 75% of Burkinabe and Malians respectively reject military rule, while 57% of Guineans are satisfied with democracy as a form of government.

Ibrahim looks closely at the wave of military coups sweeping West Africa and offers a novel explanation which does not rely on popular dissatisfaction with democracy. In his analysis, the coups have more to do with patterns of civil-military relations and the internal dynamics of military systems. He finds a close link between mutinies and coups, suggesting that the real impetus lies within the dissatisfaction of sections of the officer corps. He argues that the key to pushing back against military coups is to separate the military from politics, which means that civilian elites need to avoid polarizing initiatives which spur unrest and a sense of injustice among the military.

Looking particularly at Mali, **Mahamadou Bassirou Tangara** and **Moumouni Diallo** find evidence for the importance of economic performance in driving popular support for military takeovers. They note, like other essays, the continuing popular support for democracy, with over 60% of Malians expressing support in Afrobarometer surveys. But that rate did change over time, falling almost thirteen points from its 2014-15 peak of almost 75% by the 2019-20 eve of the coup. Throughout the democratic experience, electoral turnout has consistently been low (never breaking 50% in Presidential elections), and many Malians welcomed the series of military coups. They account for the paradox of general support for democracy with the popular welcome for coups by identifying discontent with democracy primarily among the poor – those who were not well served

materially the democratic regime and who did not feel represented in its functioning. Their analysis shows clearly that “the class of the population that complains about their living conditions (feeling disappointed) registers the highest score of dissatisfaction with democracy. In contrast, those who find their living conditions acceptable are satisfied with democracy.” Tangara and Diallo reframe democracy from a set of institutions to a process of democratization in which the credibility of the electoral process, economic performance and accountability all determine its legitimacy. In his study of the full Afrobarometer round 8 dataset, **Louis Tomavo** similarly finds that the poor are more likely to believe that a nondemocratic government might improve their economic conditions, but that overall satisfaction with Presidential performance is correlated with support for democracy more broadly.

**Yousra Hamdaoui** moves beyond Mali to trace the arc of jihadist insurgency across the Sahel and its effects on regional support for democratic governance. In contrast to Isbell and Tangara and Diallo, Hamdaoui focuses not on popular attitudes but on the effects of international involvement on democratic practice. The securitization and militarization of politics, she argues, pushes politics away from the norms of democratic routine and creates the conditions under which militaries can seize the initiative. The negative effects on democracy are not only exclusively caused by the jihadist insurgents then, but also by the militarized responses encouraged by France and others in the international community.

**Thomas Isbell** offers an alternative explanation for the rising acceptance of military coups: pervasive insecurity associated with endemic insurgencies and violence which increases acceptance of a military-led government. It is often assumed that exposure to violence can both reduce support for democracy and increase support for non-democratic forms of government. Isbell’s examination of Afrobarometer data in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria, along with ACLED geospatially located conflict data, surprisingly shows that citizens living in less violent areas tend to have more trust in the military and are thus more likely to accept a military coup.

Citizens experiencing violent effects, on the other hand, seem to demonstrate a “rally around the flag” effect and show greater support for the government and the military. Isbell adapts Afrobarometer’s measure of “demand for democracy” to separate out surface level normative preference for democracy with active commitment to democracy. While the index shows broad demand for democracy, it also reveals greater acceptance (support for?) of military rule than of one-party rule. In other words, violent insurgencies may not be undermining support for democracy, broadly construed, but they do increase demand for military regimes.

Moving beyond the Sahel, **Matthew Benson** looks to South Sudan to observe the nexus between taxation, coercion and civiness. Despite its vast oil reserves and economic potential, Benson argues that “South Sudan’s conflicts suggest that war made rebels and those rebels turned the state into a vehicle for self-enrichment.” Taxation, rather than forging links of representation and accountability, evolved from the British colonial state as a system of marginalization and domination which eroded rather than built the legitimacy of the state. His historical analysis helps to explain the distancing of many South Sudanese citizens from the state, regardless of elections or democratic forms, as well as the connection between ongoing insurgency and coercive extraction.

Malawi offers a contrast to this broad democratic gloom. As **Hangala Siachiwena** shows in his contribution, the alternation of power between parties helps to increase accountability and responsiveness to citizen concerns. Remarkably, Malawi was the only African country besides the Seychelles to see an alternation in power through elections since 2020. Broad cross-ethnic and cross-regional coalitions made this peaceful alternation of power possible, in contrast to the winner-take-all stakes which have marred so many African elections. Siachiwena’s close look at Afrobarometer data reveals subtle distinctions in how Malawian citizens evaluate governments and the democratic system more broadly, but show no greater support for democracy than in other African countries less fortunate in their electoral outcomes. The requirement of 50% plus 1 for victory required

these coalitions, in an institutional design which other African countries might emulate.

Several essays in the collection focus on one critically important case: the repeated rounds of electoral violence in Kenya, ostensibly one of the most consolidated democracies on the continent since its transition from one party rule in 1992. Beginning in 2007, each election was marred by significant violence which had enduring impact. Such violence is not uncommon in African elections, by one metric afflicting almost half of all elections across the continent. Research has shown that such specifically electoral violence (in contrast to the insurgent violence discussed by Isbell in this collection) has significant negative effects on citizens' support for democracy and political trust. In his essay, **Martin Fikiri Oswald** argues that fear of electoral violence is likely to diminish participation in elections, which in turn undermines the legitimacy of those elections and their ability to produce political figures responsive to popular needs and demands. Using Afrobarometer data, he shows that a full two-thirds of Kenyans reported feeling fear of election day violence ahead of the 2012 elections. **Sylvia Muriuki**, in her essay for the collection, shows that this violence also undermines trust in the independent electoral authority.

Perhaps the deepest effects of electoral violence are women who suffer gender-based violence. In her essay, **Terry Jeff Odhiambo** shows how pervasive such sexual violence has been during Kenya's electoral cycles and how little accountability there has been. Only in December 2020 did four victims of sexual violence in the 2007-8 electoral cycle win their lawsuit against the government for its failure to investigate alleged abuses by state agents. Odhiambo argues convincingly that the repeated sexual violence and the absence of access to meaningful justice has had serious consequences for Kenyan women and undermines the foundations of Kenyan democracy. While no major incidents

of sexual or gender-based violence were recorded in the 2022 elections, fear of such abuses still arguably affected the willingness of women to fully participate in the electoral process.

For all the challenges to democracy, many of the authors find reasons for hope. **Gloria Na'antoe Longba'am-Alli** focuses on nonviolent protest movements challenging military rule, showing how civil resistance is best suited to confronting military regimes. She details the emergence in 2020 of the anti-SARS protest movement demanding human rights and an end to abuses by security forces. But those protests ultimately dissipated. Sudan is a stronger case of momentum in the opposite direction, with a democratic spirit manifest in sustained nonviolent challenge to military rule which overthrew Omar al Bashir in 2019, and continues to confront the military regime which hijacked the transition in October 2021. Longba'am-Alli highlights the importance of historical memory and recent experience in shaping protest strategies and building movement resilience. Activists hearken back to protests in 1964 and 1985 for historical precedent, and more immediately learned critical lessons from abortive uprisings and fierce repression in 2013. Their activism is rooted in widely held public support for democracy. There is still strong support for these democratic trends. **Anne Okello**, in her essay for the collection, draws on Afrobarometer data to show that a full 80% of Sudanese favor regular democratic elections and 71% reject strongman rule.

**Bamba Ndiaye's** essay in the collection traces the energy and enthusiasm of protestors across Francophone West Africa as they draw on a wide range of cultural production and social media. Ndiaye shows how political challengers creatively used platforms such as Facebook Live to attract sizable audiences. The interaction between digital media and traditional media helps support a robust Senegalese public sphere, keeping citizens engaged in critical discourses, but may have

limitations in terms of reaching mass audiences which are less present on social media platforms. As in other regions of the world, Ndiaye also tracks the increasingly sophisticated tools of repression targeting such challengers, including cybermonitoring and targeted arrests and harassment. The back and forth dynamics of digital activism and digital authoritarianism form a critical backdrop to the struggle between democracy and autocracy. **Pauline Mateveke** uses social media as well, with a critical analysis of tweets revealing profound discontent with the failure of the state to meet citizen expectations generating profound doubt about whether Zimbabwe is really democratic. Her use of social media expressions to explore the deeper levels of beliefs about democracy offers an effective complement to the Afrobarometer survey data used throughout the collection.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put unprecedented pressures on these regimes. As **Damilola Agbalogbo** argues, the pandemic both revealed the weakness of the state and facilitated an expansion of its power over society in Nigeria and across Africa. Despite widespread poverty and the effects of a draconian lockdown, 93% of the respondents to a phone survey in Lagos State said that they had received no support from the government. The failure of the Nigerian state to provide support for citizens undermines their confidence in the state and likely contributes to the decline in confidence in democracy. **Vayda Megannon**, by contrast, uncovers surprisingly effective targeted relief efforts by the South African government in response to the pandemic. In contrast to the neglect by the Nigerian state, South Africa engaged in “the biggest

fast roll out and the fastest big roll out” in Africa of a social support program targeted at the poorest citizens. The expansion of state power, including enforced lockdowns familiar across the continent, here seemed to facilitate more effective government action rather than drive autocratic impunity.

Even as support for democracy wavers, there are signs of growing citizen engagement at the local and municipal level. In Morocco, **Abderrahman el-Karmaoui** explores new initiatives for citizen participation in decision making outside of formal democratic institutions, particularly an experiment in participatory budget making at the municipal level. In Ghana, **Owura Kuffour** shows that local legislative candidates can have electoral appeal beyond that of the Presidential candidate, a reverse coat-tail effect which implies a greater resonance for the local level of democratic political engagement.

The essays in this collection both support and challenge the narrative of democracy in decline across Africa. Military coups do not necessarily reflect underlying distaste for democracy, nor do rates of support seem to decline in a straightforward linear way. New forms of civic activism, from online public spheres to mass mobilization against military rule, show strong civil engagement. If the underlying problems of economic crisis, insecurity and failed governance could be addressed, then the deeper support for democratic governance could rebound. The essays also demonstrate the value of collaborative research by scholars across the African continent, and the unique value of Afrobarometer survey data for facilitating cross-national pan-African comparative research. ■



# West Africa's 'Comeback Coups': The Role of Civil-Military Relations

*Sulley Ibrahim, PhD*

West Africa has seen accelerating democratic decline, including unconstitutional third-term extensions, electoral fraud, disputed polls and coups d'état.<sup>1</sup> Analysts argue that the region has returned to the infamous tag of 'Africa's coup belt' that it held in the 1960s and 1970s. Based on Afrobarometer data and speeches and socio-demographic backgrounds of coup plotters and backed by theory of civil control of military, this essay merges democracy and military explanations for the return of coups in West Africa. It argues that mutinies and coups, even though separate political phenomena, are linked in the region such that the officer corps most likely to rebel have also been the officers most likely to plot coups. West African military mutinies and takeovers are linked not only by virtue of being civil-military relation problems but also because of problematic civil controls of military. The essay highlights civil initiatives which often foment material grievances within armed forces and push officers to stage mutinies as a form of military dissent but escalate them into military takeovers. It concludes by arguing that efforts to counter armed forces' predisposition to push their way into politics should also address elite tendencies to polarize national barracks.

Four successful and two failed coups took place in West Africa between August 2020 and February 2022. This means three out of the region's fifteen countries are now militarily governed. This wave of coups began in Mali in August 2020 when Colonel Assimi Goita led elite military members to topple the government and led another coup in May 2021 to topple the transitional government put in place following the August 2020 coup. Mali was followed by Guinea, with a coup in September 2021 led by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya. The fourth successful coup occurred in Burkina Faso in January 2022, led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba. The two failed coups included failed attempts to topple Niger's government in March

2021 and Guinea-Bissau's government in February 2022. Guinea Bissau's failed coup reportedly involved disgruntled drug lords who sought to destabilize the country for their illicit economic activities.<sup>2</sup> Guinea Bissau's coup also resulted in deaths, unlike the bloodless coups of Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.<sup>3</sup>

This trend of democratic backsliding in West Africa has rekindled the infamous tag of the region as Africa's "coup belt".<sup>4</sup> Ghanaian President Akufo-Addo, the immediate past chair of the region's bloc the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), painted a picture of a contagious coup effect, in that coup plotters have been copying one another.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that military takeovers are likely to be more regular in the region.<sup>6</sup> It is against this background that this essay integrates Afrobarometer data with speeches and socio-demographic details of coup plotters to explore democratic backsliding in West Africa. It focuses on relations between mutinies and coups while using a theory of objective civil control of military to coordinate the analysis.

While explanations for the recent military takeovers have varied, issues of poor governance, economic hardship and political corruption on the part of elected leaders have been discussed widely.<sup>7</sup> It is argued that failures of elected leaders have resulted in popular support for coup makers, which also repositions the military as saviors of the people.<sup>8</sup> The popular support for coups contradicts prevailing mass support for democracy in region. For example, while 62% and 75% of Burkinabe and Malians respectively reject military rule, 57% of Guineans are satisfied with democracy as a form of government.<sup>9</sup> While these levels of support were recorded prior to the region's newer coups, similar trends have been reported in relatively stable democracies, such as Ghana where 76% prefer democracy and 53.3% strongly reject military rule.<sup>10</sup>

Civil-military explanations for this democratic backsliding have remained relatively under-explored. This essay attributes recent military takeovers to how civil elites usually control and direct the military in the region. It shows how these controls have included problematic initiatives that foment material grievances and breed a sense of injustice in national barracks. These polarizing civil-military initiatives push military officers to use mutiny as a form of pushback, which escalates into outright military takeover of government. This demonstrates the importance of both countering tendencies of armies to push their way into politics and tendencies of civil leaders to polarize national barracks.

### **Conceptualizing and analyzing civil control of military**

I define democratic decline narrowly as disruptions to democratic consolidation, resulting in the deterioration of democratic institutions.<sup>11</sup> This may include abolition of term limits, truncation of ongoing elections, military mutinies and coups.<sup>12</sup> Mutinies are a form of insubordination military officers use to air specific grievances.<sup>13</sup> Mutinies manifest in forms such as shutting down and/or blocking of roads by aggrieved officers as a way to vent out their displeasure with a specific policy and/or leadership decision.<sup>14</sup> They are typically staged by rank-and-file soldiers, while junior officers are the most likely among the officer corps to stage mutinies.<sup>15</sup> Military insubordinations can have disastrous consequences,<sup>16</sup> which may include triggering a coup, defined as an extralegal seizure of power.<sup>17</sup> Coups are illegal replacement of (usually) elected leaders with a political leadership which has not been elected, installed and held to account by citizens.<sup>18</sup> Although mutinies and coups are both problems of civil-military relations, this paper focuses on controls and directions of elected elites over military.<sup>19</sup>

The essay draws on the *objective* civil control of military theory, and not the *concordance* theory, to analyze West Africa's returned coups. The concordance theory states that the co-existence of political leadership, military leadership and civil society oversight in the management of military

affairs is the optimal way to curtail coups.<sup>20</sup> This proposition hardly reflects the current situation of West Africa countries where elected leaders already exercise extreme control over armed forces.<sup>21</sup> The essay thus draws insights from the objective civil-military control theory, also known as separation theory, to explain the democracy-military linkage in the resurgence of coups in West Africa. This theory posits that the separation of military from politics is the optimal way to prevent military intervention in political processes.<sup>22</sup>

### **Explaining civil-military linkage of West Africa's 'comeback coups'**

Mutinies and coups are often analyzed as different forms of political violence.<sup>23</sup> Cases of both events in West Africa show they are often linked, such that mutinies can explain coup onset. Both arise at the intersection of civil-military relations. Dwyer argued that West African militaries often leverage mutinies to push back unwanted civilian initiatives that they view as disruptive to military discipline.<sup>24</sup> Civil disruptions in armed forces breed a sense of injustice and sometimes mobilize officers, especially the junior officer corps, to stage rebellion. When poorly addressed, these grievances can foster disobedience in national barracks. This disobedience can be followed by uprisings within armed forces and escalate into outright takeover of government. Yet, instead of viewing military mutinies as tactical acts used by military officers, as efforts to open dialogue with civil leadership,<sup>25</sup> West African elected leaders often counter military dissent by co-opting senior-ranked officers with patronage rewards.<sup>26</sup> These rewards may buy top-level officer corps' loyalty and potentially lower the chances of a coup, but they can also disrupt the capacity of senior officers to control military discipline.<sup>27</sup>

Features of West Africa's recent coups clearly illustrate aspects of the foregoing dynamic. Garcia reported, for example, that Burkina Faso's coup developed from not just a general frustration with the deposed government but rather from accumulated material discontent within the national barracks.<sup>28</sup> The military accused the government of poorly caring for their wounded

members and surviving families of comrades who lost their lives in the fight against terrorism:

Mutinous soldiers told the AP [Associated Press] that the government was out of touch with troops. Among their demands are more forces in the battle against extremists and better care for the wounded and the families of the dead. About 100 military members have planned the takeover since August [2021], according to one of the mutinous soldiers.<sup>29</sup>

Burkina Faso, like Mali, had seen swaths of territory taken over by extremist groups. Militant attacks in Mali and Burkina Faso increased from 1,180 to 2,005 between 2020 and 2021 which then undermined public confidence in the ability of elected leaders to protect them.<sup>30</sup> In other words, it detached citizens, especially those in terrorist-occupied territories from identifying effectively with the civil governments of both Mali and Burkina Faso.

The way polarizing civil controls undermines civil-military relations begins with breeding disunity within armed forces.<sup>31</sup> It creates poor military cohesion which then splits armies into factions with conflicting loyalties to both military and civil leadership.<sup>32</sup> The case of Guinea illustrates this broad observation. It began with divisions that undermined discipline of the security forces, as a diplomat based in Conakry (Guinea's capital) reported that the coup "may have started after the dismissal of a senior commander in the special forces' which then provoked "some of its highly trained members to rebel."<sup>33</sup> This also means the division arose from the authoritarian tactics of the ousted president. In his effort to win an illegitimate third term election, Conde empowered the special forces and rendered them loyal to himself.<sup>34</sup> This ensued disharmony between the general forces and the special forces in the national barracks.<sup>35</sup> Conde particularly used the special force unit to support his crack down of political opponents and civic dissent. There were international attempts to sanction Doumbouya, who was not only Conde's close protection officer but also a prominent figure in the special forces, for human rights violations.<sup>36</sup> This threat could have also created personal

dilemma for Doumbouya, prompting him to depose Conde and install himself as president to avoid possible international arrest and prosecution. Burkina Faso's ousted President, Kabore similarly used security officers to crack down on political and civil protests which also contributed to ensue divisions within the national barracks. Kabore then promoted Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba as a strategy to "shore up support within the army" for the government.<sup>37</sup> Damiba was yet often perceived as loyal protégé of the long-term leader, Blaise Compaore whose ouster by a popular resistance in 2013 ushered the country into the current instabilities.<sup>38</sup> Damiba's promotion seems to have escalated the ensuing resistance as he led the elite forces to depose the government and installed himself as the president few weeks later.<sup>39</sup>

West Africa's coups are therefore indeed inspired by "restlessness within ... [national] armed forces."<sup>40</sup> This hostile working environment also links with restive civil controls and directions of military officers. For example, the maiden speeches of Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso's juntas revealed a common trend of military disapproval of certain political decisions. In Mali, the military blamed ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta for their sufferings. They faulted Keïta for imposing austerity on everyone and yet purchased himself a \$40-million jet.<sup>41</sup> This decision indeed sparked nationwide controversies, and even provoked the International Monetary Fund, which had granted the government a credit facility of \$23 million, to demand explanation.<sup>42</sup> This suggests sections of West Africa (serving) military officers loathe the use of state resources for private comfort. This associates positively with a 2019 survey in which 46% of 742 security sector professionals across 37 African countries rated corruption as their greatest challenge.<sup>43</sup>

The recent coups were plotted by junior-ranked officers.<sup>44</sup> Doumbouya of Guinea, Assimi Goita of Mali and Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba of Burkina Faso were respectively forty-one, thirty-nine, and forty-one years of age and also bore lower-rank military insignias of lieutenants and colonels at the time they staged their coups.<sup>45</sup> The dynamic relation of junior officers and mutinies

also reiterates the linkage between mutinies and coups, as the officer corps most likely to stage mutinies have also been the officer corps most likely to plot coups in West Africa.<sup>46</sup> This trend moreover suggests junior-ranked officers are often suspicious of relations between civil leaders and senior-ranked officers. This suspicion partly confirms the way coup leaders immediately retired senior officers, as illustrated as such: “Citing the failure of the ousted civilian governments in Mali and Burkina Faso to defeat Islamist insurgents, the new military rulers want to reorganize their countries’ security systems, retiring many of the old cohort of senior officers.”<sup>47</sup> Thus, coup leaders hold both senior officers and political elites equally accountable for the governance malaise they exploited to plot their coups.

### **Conclusion & way forward**

Mutinies and coups are often treated as separate political events. The chapter however showed both events are often linked, especially in West Africa. This linkage arises not simply because mutinies and coups are common civil-military relation problems but rather because officer corps most likely to stage mutinies have also been officer corps most likely to seize political power illegally. The two problems also arise largely from civil initiatives that polarise

national barracks. The chapter showed polarising civil controls and directions of armed forces typically push military officers to stage rebellion and escalate these insubordinations into complete takeover of government. Also, the officer corps most likely to dislike polarising civil initiatives and official corruption have often been junior officers, which may be why mutinies and coups identify more positively with rank-and-file officers in the region. Hence, efforts to counter armed forces’ predispositions to push their way into politics should also address tendencies of civil leaders to polarise national barracks.

Civil leaders tend to misconstrue popular approval of ‘democracy as an idea’ in West Africa with popular support for their leadership practices. The chapter shows recent coups arose from civil provocations underscored by poor appreciation of separation of military from politics. Hence, future studies should examine whether elected leaders have become complacent in their controls and directions of armed forces. These suggestions however imply democracy and military explanations for West Africa’s ‘comeback coups’ are linked and hence could be more properly understood and redressed within the constitutional separation of armed forces from political leadership. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Portions of this essay have appeared previously in the Georgetown University *Journal of Democracy & Society*.
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# Repetitive Military Coups in Mali: The Nexus Between Democracy and Development

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Mali has benefited from the confidence and support of international development institutions as an example of successful democracy in West Africa (Bergamaschi 2014). For instance, the 2008 *Rapport Mission de Réflexion sur la Consolidation de la démocratie au Mali* argued that “it is undeniable that for the last fifteen years democracy is a reality in our country, which is worth being cited as an example”. But more than three decades of consolidated democracy was not enough to safeguard the democratic regime. In 2012, facing security issues combined with political crisis, Mali experienced its third coup d’état. Then, after a short “transition” period the “democratization” resumed, but not for long. In 2020 and 2021 a double coup d’état happened. This time, instead of conducting the “transition” to its end, a coup d’état overthrew the President in mid-transition. Why and how after a such good experience of the “democratization process” did Mali fall back into a military regime? First, it is necessary to assess international support for democracy in Mali. For Francophone Africa, institutional electoral democracy in place of single party regimes was in part encouraged from the outside. The 1990 Franco-African Summit in La Baule raised the question of the conditionality of development aid to the experimentation of democratic regimes, through multipartyism and elections. The foundation of democracy as a political regime is the promise of improved living conditions for the population and, above all, the involvement of all in the management and decision-making of public affairs.

It is in aspiring to these advantages that Mali, after an experience of nearly three decades of single party and military rule, switched to democracy following a popular uprising in 1991. Several opinion surveys demonstrate the population’s overwhelming preference for democracy in Mali over different types of political regimes. For example,

Afro barometer surveys in Mali since 1999 show a preference for democracy of over 60%. Paradoxically, since 1992, there has been a recurrent low citizen participation in elections. Now, in less than ten years Mali has experienced three coups d’état, all of which were massively supported by a large part of the population. This popular support for coups could augur a rejection of democracy in Mali. Thus, in this essay we seek to understand how, after more than three decades of democratization, a country can switch to military rule following a coup. To answer this question, we formulate the hypothesis that the stability of a democratic regime depends on the mass of the population that supports it and is involved in its implementation and proper functioning. It would therefore be possible to predict the probability of popular uprisings and military coups d’état according to the degree of satisfaction of the population with democracy.

Our methodology is based on fuzzy index approach. The fuzzy index is, generally, used in the literature to measure the degree to which an individual or a household belongs to the “poor class”. In this work we adapt this fuzzy set theory to try to estimate population satisfaction degree with the democracy in Mali. The degree of the population’s satisfaction can help to predict the likelihood of a popular demonstration which could be exploited by the military and lead to a coup d’état. This tool seems suitable for the study of a phenomenon whose knowledge of the factors remains imprecise or even uncertain.

## 1. Political regime in Mali

The political regime in Mali since independence passed from single party rule to military regime and then to a process of democratization. At the independence in 1960, the country was led by US-RDA which was Unique State Party (USP). The

regime of the first Republic featured some political elections, such as parliament members being chosen by elections. Then, a military coup on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 1968, by National Military Committee for Liberation (CMLN), ended this regime and put the country in a long military-led “transition”. For ten years, CMLN led the country by ordinance without any elected political bodies. After this long “transition”, the single party regime came back with Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM), led by Moussa Traoré, which then led the country for twenty-three years. In 1991, the country experienced another military coup which overthrew Moussa Traoré. The coup happened in part due to a strong and long popular demonstration for a “multi-party” and “democratic” regime. Unlike the first coup, this time the period of transition was very short. From 1991 to 1992 Amadou Toumani Touré, who carried out the coup, organized legislative and presidential elections in 1992. From there, the “democratization process” started with the support of the international community. The new constitution adopted a multi-party instead of a single state party. It also guaranteed freedom of the press, the right of associations (political and civil), elections, and other features considered as paths of democratization. From this point of view, Mali’s “democratization process” did quite well for thirty years. During this period, Mali was among

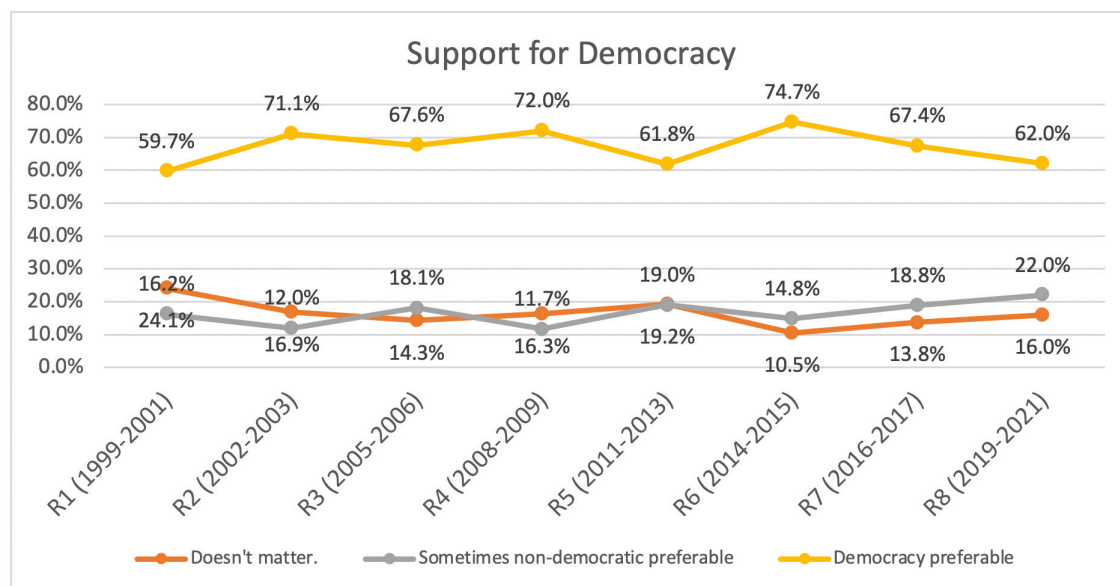
the most successful examples of democracy and an example to be followed in West Africa. But then, after more than three decades of democratic experience, Mali returned to military coups to the surprise of all international development institutions.

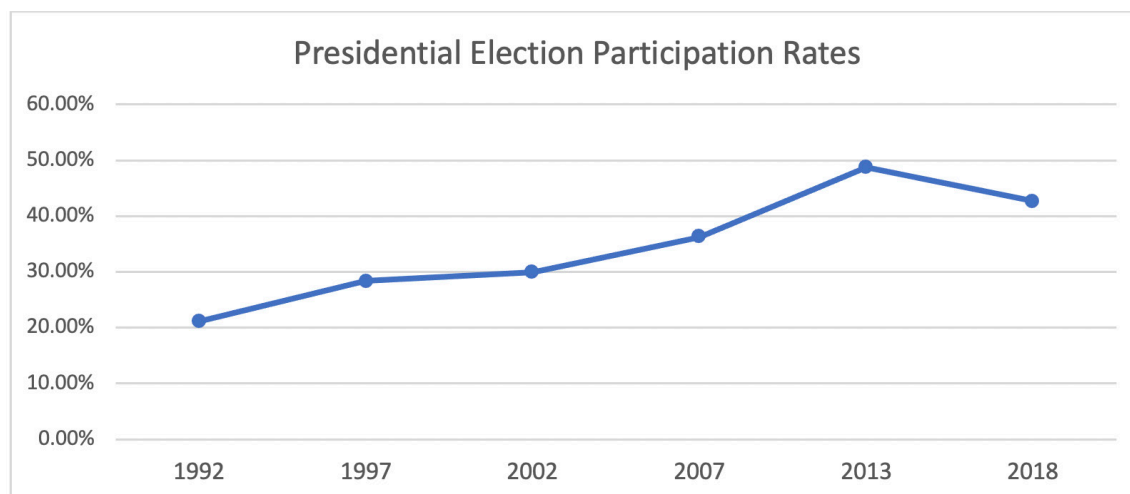
### Electoral democracy in Mali

If the national and international actors agreed on the effectiveness of democracy in the country, there was no doubt that it still needed to be strengthened. Thus, the *Mission de Réflexion sur la Consolidation de la démocratie au Mali*<sup>1</sup>, concluded in 2008 that:

[...] institutional practice has brought to light many issues of concern. The institutions of the republic regularly give rise to debates within the political class and in national public opinion about their organization, their functioning and the relationship between them. Despite the numerous revisions of the electoral law and the law on the Charter of political parties, the electoral process and the public financing of political parties still have shortcomings and deficiencies, the most obvious manifestation of which is the recurrent low level of citizen participation in elections.<sup>2</sup>

Figure 1 : Demand for Democracy





*Figure 2 : Presidential Election Participation Rates in Mali*

Democracy as a political system is not a problem in itself but the problem could be whether one looks at democracy as a process or as an outcome (Macamo, 2018). This can be seen in the results of the Afrobarometer's popular opinion surveys on democracy. As shown in Figure 1, since 1999 – 2000<sup>3</sup> the proportion of the Malian population preferring democracy to another political regime has remained above 60% of respondents. However, this raw rate hides several specificities and over time, this perception has varied between 59.70% and 74.7%.

The trend of popular preference for democracy shows an irregular evolution. The period 1999 – 2009 is marked by a more or less regular upward trend, up to 72% of opinion in favor of democracy. But after 2009, this rate experienced a sharp decline, falling to 61.8% between 2011 and 2013, before rising to 74.7% during the period 2014 - 2015. Since 2015, the trend in popular opinion in favor of democracy has been downward. These different phases in the evolution of popular perception on democracy could be the manifestation of aspiration to better living conditions and the euphoria of the promise of social contract, unmet expectations on the level of economic and social development and security, but also lack of confidence in leaders. However, the overall level of popular support for democracy in Mali suggests that democracy itself is not a problem.

According to the report of the reflection mission on the consolidation of democracy, the main concern in Mali is institutional practice. In other words, the institutions in their organization, functioning and current relationship with each other are less conducive to the effective involvement of all actors in the perpetuation of democracy. The report highlights certain shortcomings and intentional inadequacies, such as the lack of clarity in the competencies of institutions, the imperfections of the electoral system, and the problem of financing political parties. The main manifestation of the shortcomings in the electoral process is the recurrent weakness of citizen participation in elections, as illustrated in figure 2.

The election participation rate remains low and hardly reaches 50% in Mali. Admittedly, an upward trend was noticeable before 2013. But the momentum was broken in 2018, the last presidential election, an election widely contested by the opposition. Later, combined with the results of the legislative elections of 2020, lead to a political crisis. Some analysts argue that this political crisis is a manifestation of the country's institutional fragility, the persistence of governance deficits, and the frustrations and grievances of communities (Sogodogo, 2020). The reestablishment of social and political stability necessarily requires a renewal of the social contract.

## 2. Analytical Framework

In our analytical frame is based on two dimensions. First, we take into consideration the theoretical link between democracy and economic development and second the relationship between democracy and coup d'état. The relation between economic development and political regime is related to modernization theory (Wucherpfennig & Deutsch, 2009). In this perspective there is a relation between socio-economic development and political democracy. In other word, there is theoretical link between the level of development of a given country and its probability of being democratic (Lipset, 1959) So, socio-economic development (industrialization, urbanization, wealth, education, media and access to information) leads to democracy. From there, as stated Wucherpfennig and Deutsch (2009): "for any democratic regime to survive, it must provide sufficient legitimacy as perceived by its citizens". Thus, we consider the democracy not as a singular state but as a long process, "*democratization*" (Gisselquist et al., 2021). Also, we take into consideration that democracy may not leads to development, but rather development which eases the way for democracy (Macamo, 2018). The other dimension of our analytical frame is the possible relationship between democracy and coup d'état.

Two generations of coups d'état have shown a changing relationship between coups and democracy. On the one hand, it appears that coups d'état has been the major factor leading to downfall of democratic governments making this the generation of coup d'état. But on the other hand, the new generation of coups has been far less harmful for democracy than their historical predecessors (Marinov & Goemans, 2013). Furthermore, as stated by Bell (2016) : "democratic constraints on executive power inhibit a leader's ability to repress threats from political rivals. Though this decreases motivations for coup attempts, it also makes democracies more vulnerable should a coup attempt occur" (Bell, 2016). Our conceptual analysis is based on the assumption that shortcomings in the electoral process led to recurrently low citizen participation in elections, figure 3.

We think that citizen participation in elections is an important node in the democratization process and a factor that can increase the interest of individuals in public affairs. First, upstream, we have the shortcomings of the electoral process (mode of establishment of the electoral lists, mode of voting, low commitment of political parties and candidates, and fraud) that can explain the recurrent weakness of participation in elections. Secondly, we have, downstream, the possible

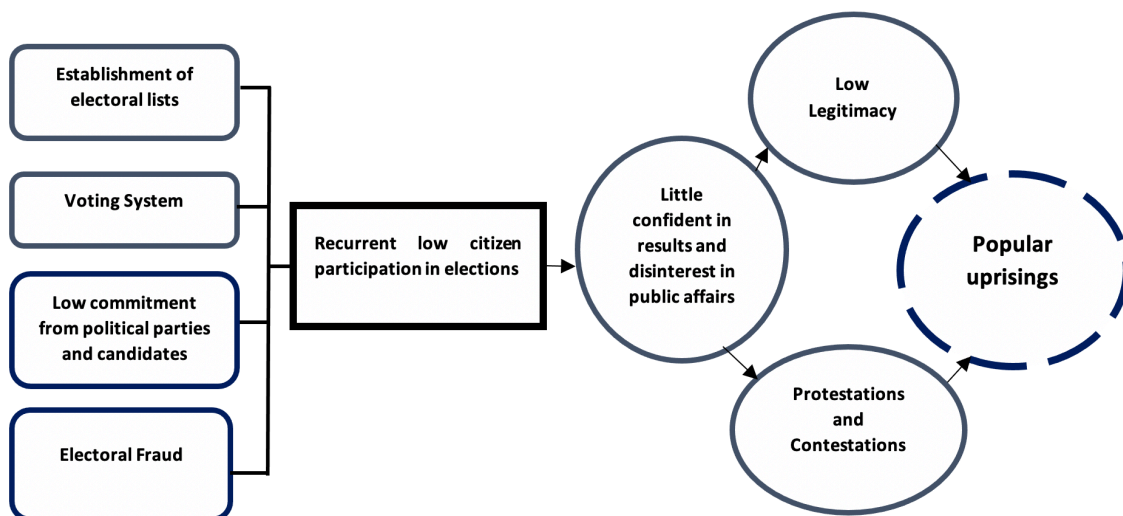


Figure 3 : Analytical Framework



key consequences of this recurrent weakness of participation such as the protest and contestation of the results of the elections, the disinterest in public affairs, the alternation, etc. Protest and contestation of the results, more often than not, lead to popular uprisings. In this essay we analyze the population's satisfaction with democracy using the fuzzy index model.

## 4. Analysis and discussion

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistic

In our analysis we use the Afrobarometer dataset<sup>4</sup>, which is a series of surveys on popular opinion on democracy. The Afrobarometer surveys are conducted using the random selection method and the probability sampling technique. We use the round 7 dataset, conducted in 2018, including thirty-four countries. From this dataset, we extracted information on Mali to create a dataset specific to Mali. The Mali dataset thus constituted contains 1,200 surveyed individuals, representative of all eight of the country's former regions. The distribution by region is fairly balanced and varies from 13% for Bamako to 18% for Sikasso. However, it is important to note that Tomouctou, Gao and Kidal are poorly represented, with 5%, 3% and 1% respectively. This could be explained by the low density in these regions compared to the other regions. In terms of gender distribution, a perfect balance can be observed. Also, the age of the respondents varies from 25 to 58. The variables contained in the dataset are qualitative and we have therefore proceeded to recode them. The variables (forty-two in total, see Appendix 2) that contributed to the calculation of the fuzzy index are divided into seven groups each representing a dimension or axis of democracy, namely:

- Axis 1: Presence of basic services
- Axis 2: Population's Living Conditions
- Axis 3: Management of Public Affairs
- Axis 4: Confident in Leaders
- Axis 5: Political Interdiction
- Axis 6: Access to Information
- Axis 7: Express Freedom

The modalities of the different variables are recoded according to three levels of appreciation. These

rating scales express the feeling that could lead an individual to participate in a popular uprising or support a coup. This scale is defined as follows: i) 0 for the feeling in favor of popular uprisings or supporting a coup; ii) 0.5 for the feeling that is undecided or mixed and iii) the feeling that the individual is in favor of democracy and therefore against a coup.

### 4.2 Global Fuzzy Index by Axe

Table 1 shows the Global Fuzzy Index by Axis (GFIA). We decompose the population's assessment of democracy into seven major dimensions. The choice of these dimensions is based on the literature and the dataset we use, Afrobarometer.

*Figure 4 : Population's Appreciation of Democracy Fuzzy Index*

Axis (dimension of democracy)	Fuzzy Index
Axis 1: Presence of basic services	0.272
Axis 2: Population's Living Conditions	0.677
Axis 3: Management of Public Affairs	0.686
Axis 4: Confident in Leaders	0.509
Axis 5: Political Interdiction	0.187
Axis 6: Access to Information	0.614
Axis 7: Express Freedom	0.424
<b>Global</b>	<b>0.48</b>

We found a global fuzzy index of 0.48. This index, very close to 0.5, expresses a global feeling of dissatisfaction with democracy. However, some of the axes taken individually show strong feelings of dissatisfaction. The population seems to be satisfied with the presence of basic services (axis 1). In addition, with respect to political freedom, the population seems to be satisfied. However, axes 2, 3, and 6 show a clearly expressed dissatisfaction of the population with democracy. On the other

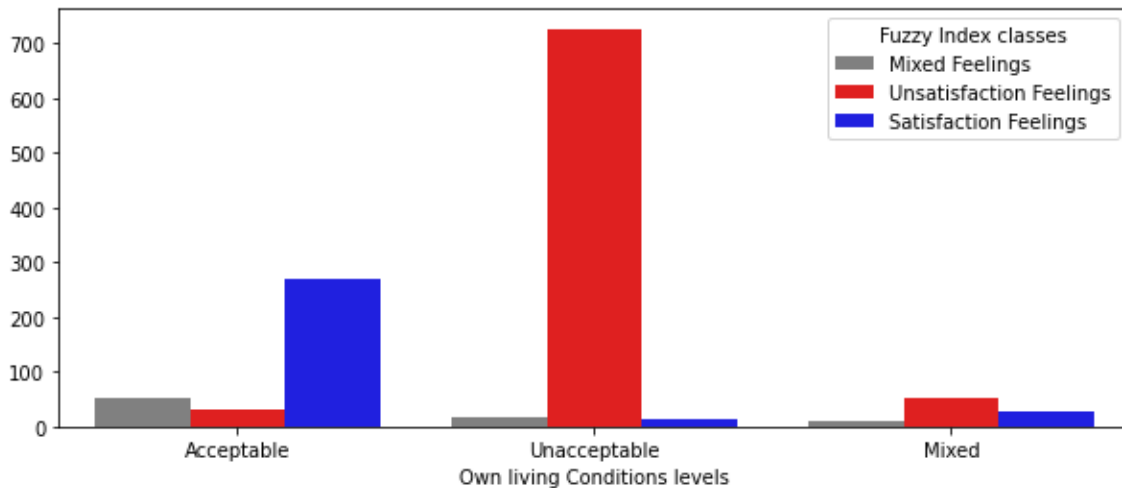


Figure 5 : Population's Living Conditions vs Democracy appreciation Fuzzy Index

hand, axes 3 and 7 represent undecided feelings about democracy. A detailed exploration of the living conditions of the population in relation to the relative index leads us to the results described in the figure 5.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the class of the population that complains about their living conditions (feeling disappointed) registers the highest score of dissatisfaction with democracy. In contrast, those who find their living conditions acceptable are satisfied with democracy. This may suggest that people's assessment of a political regime may be a function of its response to problems of economic and social development. But the question would be to what extent do people's living conditions influence their judgments of the political regime that governs them? For the moment, we have little evidence to answer this question. However, participation in elections and the interest of citizens in the management of public affairs seem to be useful barometers for measuring the effectiveness of democracy.

### Political Parties

In this configuration, with regard to their attributes, political parties play a preponderant role in political life in a democratic system. Political parties in Mali should not be the exception. The political party in Mali is based on three dimensions: mission of public interest, civic education of

citizens and leaders, and public responsibility. From this understanding of the political party, and in view of the state of management of public affairs, a number of questions can be raised. First, the problem of the shift from general interest to private interest: could the meteoric evolution of political parties, more than 250 parties in less than 30 years, really be motivated by general interest rather than personal interest? Then, what relation can be established between this plethora of political parties and the behavior of citizens and leaders when we know that they have a vocation of civic education? Finally, the problem of public responsibility and the animation of political life arises. What is more, how can we understand the five-year existence of political parties that only manifest at election time?

The political party should constitute a social and collective organization rather than a vehicle for individual interests. As such, its financing is primarily the responsibility of its members and not of an individual, to avoid the risk of personalizing the party and diverting it from the general interest to serve personal interests. The structure of the candidates' campaign budget can provide information on deviation from the public interest. On this issue, the Group "Observation of Spatial, Social Dynamics & Endogenous Expertise" (ODYSSEE)<sup>5</sup> conducted a study in 2019. This study shows that the cost of election campaigns is dominated by private funding, including the personal resources of candidates, contributions

from family, friends and acquaintances of candidates, contributions from the party (leaders, elected officials and other members) and others (loans and contributions from economic operators). The study pushes the analysis further by estimating that the candidates' personal resources account for at least 80% of campaign expenses. To this should be added the contributions of family, friends and acquaintances of candidates. All in all, this could give elected officials the means to escape party control.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, it would be plausible to formulate the hypothesis of a shift from public interest to personal interest.

What is the real situation of political parties on the ground? The number of political parties, offers us a first key answer. To put it simply, there are as many parties as there are specific social projects. Thus, for Mali, the number of political parties suggests more than 250 specific social projects. Consequently, political life should be very lively, leading to extensive civic education. All things being equal, civic education would lead to civil maturity, a high sense of citizenship (fulfillment of duty and obligation and demand of inherent rights), a great involvement in the management of public affairs. However, everything points to the contrary in Mali. Moreover, the recurrent weakness of the elections seems to be the pronounced manifestation of the population's lack of interest in the management of affairs. One of the possible consequences of this recurrent low turnout in elections would be the lack of credibility given to election results. This may lead to a lack of legitimacy of leaders, with protests and challenges to elections often leading to popular uprisings.

The experience of Mali shows that popular uprisings are generally crowned by the interference of the military through a coup d'état. As an illustration, we can mention the case of 1991 and the recent uprising of 2020 following the contestation of the results of the legislative elections of the same year. The latter coup was accompanied by a euphoria that could reflect a desire for a break with the past, but a belief in democracy as a system that allows the people to decide who should govern them and how this should be done, as stated by Nyenyezi Bisoka & Tangara (2021). But according to these same authors, the experience of Mali shows that this theory is not always possible

to apply: "governing means taking into account a multiplicity of political, economic and social logics, etc., which more often than not explain why the ruling class does not always go in the direction of the willing of the population." Thus, they conclude, analyzing democracy is not just about measuring the index of democracy, but rather about being able to explain how theoretical democratic principles are articulated in pragmatic negotiations within different social arenas.

Regarding the recurrent low participation of citizens in elections, would it not be relevant, in the Malian context, for the validation and legitimacy of a ballot, to think of an irrevocable threshold model (ITM) to guard against challenges and rejections of the system? The idea would be to apply an ITM of elections operationalized by a participation rate required – PRR. For example, it could be, that for an election to be valid it must have a participation rate higher than 75%, or else it is automatically cancelled. The PRR promotes a number of practices necessary for the sustainability of democracy. First, it contributes to the improvement of the commitment of political parties and candidates, knowing from now on that the majority remains a necessary condition, but not sufficient to win an election. Second, the application of the PRR would help citizens appreciate the usefulness of their vote and therefore encourage them to take part in the electoral process. Finally, all of this could have a positive impact on citizens' interest in public affairs. Indeed, citizens who have taken an interest in the electoral process and participated in the votes will feel more concerned by the management and performance of the leaders.

## Conclusion

Democracy as a political regime does not in itself pose problems of governance, but rather the use to which it is put. A large part of the Malian people has difficulty recognizing themselves as living in a democracy. This is a corollary to the failure of the political elite in power to satisfy the essential needs of the population (education, health, food, etc.). This deleterious social and political situation often leads to a rush to challenge the legitimacy of the leaders, to contest the existing system and, in turn, to a military coup. It would be defensible for democracy

to be plural rather than universal in its application. Thus, the conjecture that we defend in this essay is the re-debate of the concept of democracy in view of a better assumption of responsibility for the local practices that are supposed to animate social and political life. The lessons drawn from the state of political life and the level of citizen involvement militate in favor of a remodeling of the electoral system, in its entirety, to guarantee a strong citizen participation in the elections, a guarantee of a high public interest in public affairs. ■

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## Annexes

### Appendix 1: Fuzzy Index Approach

#### 1. Fuzzy index principle

To establish the belonging function, we consider  $(X_1, X_2, \dots, X_K)$ , a set of  $K$  indicators of appreciation of the quality of democracy. Then, suppose that the variable  $X_j$  has  $m$  modalities  $x_{1j}, \dots, x_{mj}$ . In this case, an individual  $i$  takes a value  $x_{ij}$  for the variable  $X_j$ . Indeed, after sorting these modalities such that an increase denotes a worsening of the state of democracy, we can associate a score  $s_{ij}$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, m$ , for each modality  $x_{ij}$  described by the following relationship:

$$s_{1j} < s_{2j} < \dots < s_{mj}.$$

The belonging function proposed by Cerioli and Zani is then constructed as follows:

$$\mu_j(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } x \leq s_{1j} \\ \frac{x - s_{1j}}{s_{mj} - s_{1j}} & \text{if } s_{1j} < x < s_{mj} \\ 1 & \text{if } x \geq s_{mj} \end{cases}$$

In this weight allocation system, we have  $s_{1j} = 0$ ,  $s_{2j} = 1, \dots, s_{mj} = m - 1$ . In fact, given the ordinal nature of the variable  $X_j$  a possibility is to find a modality corresponding to a situation favorable enough to exclude democracy. The degree of belonging to the fuzzy set increases proportionally to the proximity of a state unfavorable to democracy.

#### 2. Multidimensional Democracy fuzzy Index

After having specified the belonging function, then it is possible to determine how much an individual belongs to the set of feeling favorable to the democracy. The aim is to reduce to single dimension degrees of belonging obtained from different indicators to a single dimension. To do so, we follow Cerioli and Zani (1990) proposing:

$$I_D = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^k \mu_j(x_{ij}) \omega_j}{\sum_{j=1}^k \omega_j},$$

where  $\omega_1, \omega_2, \dots, \omega_k$  represent the weight system. Cerioli and Zani suggest the following weighting system:

$$\omega_j = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{1}{\bar{\mu}_j}\right)}{\sum_{j=1}^k \ln\left(\frac{1}{\bar{\mu}_j}\right)}$$

where  $\bar{\mu}_j = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \mu_j(x_{ij})$  represents the fuzzy proportion of individuals the indicator  $X_j$ . So, we precise that, in our study,  $I_D$  is the the belonging degree of a sub set fuzzy of unfavorable to the democracy. Then we have:

- $I_D = 0$  if and only if  $\mu(x_i) = 0$ , for all individuals have only attributes very favorable to democracy.
- $I_D = 1$  if and only if  $\mu(x_i) = 1$ , for all individuals have a very unfavorable attribute to democracy.

From these two extreme cases above, we can retain that in the intermediate state  $0 < I_D < 1$ .



## Appendix 2: Variables List

Axis	Variables
<b>Axis 1:</b> Presence of basic services	EA_SVC_A: Electricity grid in the PSU/EA EA_SVC_B: Piped water system in the PSU/EA EA_FAC_C: Post office in the PSU/EA EA_FAC_D: School in the PSU/EA
<b>Axis 2:</b> Population's Living Conditions	Q4A: Country's present economic condition Q4B: Your present living conditions Q5: Your living conditions vs. others
<b>Axis 3:</b> Management of Public Affairs	Q26B: Contact media Q26C: Contact official for help Q26D: Refuse to pay a tax or fee to government Q26E: Attend a demonstration or protest march
<b>Axis 4:</b> Confident in Leaders	Q44B: Corruption: Member of Parliament Q44C: Corruption: government officials Q44D: Corruption: local government councilors Q44E: Corruption: Police Q44F: Corruption: Judges and magistrates Q44G: Corruption: Traditional leaders Q44I: Corruption: business Executives Q44H: Corruption: religious leaders Q44J: Corruption: Non-governmental organizations
<b>Axis 5:</b> Political Interdiction	Q15: Government bans organization vs. Join any Q19B: Better or worse: freedom to join political organization
<b>Axis 6:</b> Access to Information	Q18A: Access to information: school budget Q18B: Access to information: land ownership Q18C: Access to information: local government development plan and budget Q18D: Access to information: business registration Q17: Media free to publish vs. Government control
<b>Axis 7:</b> Express Freedom	Q3: Overall direction of the country Q13: Discuss politics Q14: Freedom to say what you think Q19A: Better or worse: freedom to say what you think Q19C: Better or worse: media freedom to investigate, report Q19E: Better or worse: freedom of opposition to function Q21A: Attend a community meeting Q22: Voting in the most recent national election Q23: Freeness and fairness of the last national election Q25B: Contact MP Q25C: Contact official of a government agency Q25D: Contact political party official Q25E: Contact traditional leader Q26A: Join others to request government action Q26B: Contact media

## Endnotes

- 1 Décret N°08-107 /P-RM du 27 février 2008, Portant nomination des membres du Comité d'experts chargé de la réflexion sur la consolidation de la démocratie au Mali
- 2 Rapport Mission de Réflexion sur la Consolidation de la démocratie au Mali, 2008
- 3 Period of the first round of Afro barometer surveys.
- 4 <https://www.afrobarometer.org/about/>
- 5 <https://groupeodysee.ml/>
- 6 This situation could lead to the abandonment of the societal project, if the party has one, on the basis of which the citizens have placed their trust in the party. In addition, this could encourage political transhumance with the corollary of weakening the opposition and by the same token to strike a serious blow to the possibility of alternative in terms of visions and policies of development.

# Who Prefers Democratic Regimes in Africa?

Louis Tomavo

Democracy in Africa in recent years has undergone a series of questions and public debates. While the development and progress of democracy is celebrated at the international level, coups d'état are becoming more and more recurrent in African countries. In case after case, governments resulting from democratic elections are rejected by a fringe of the population through action by the military. Freedom House (2018) notes a significant decline in political rights, civil liberties, and the overall quality of democracy. Afrobarometer data, however, shows that some 70% of Africans still express a preference for democracy. Who are they, and why do they continue to support democratic government while 30% do not?

As Professor Abdoulaye Bathily pointed out to the ECOWAS parliament, democratization as a process reflects extremely contradictory demands. African systems are based on the rejection of the authoritarianism of the “nationalist” regimes that emerged from decolonization; but at the same time, they express a revolt against the economic and social effects of the liberal policies implemented by structural adjustments. Public opinion on democracy in Africa is therefore still embodied by divergences. The responses from the questions asked by Afrobarometer surveyors during Round 8 in the countries covered by the network present a more varied and complex picture.

In this essay, we draw on these surveys to highlight the profile of people who prefer democracy to any other form of governance in Africa. We first present the frequency of the latter in the consolidated database of the Afrobarometer Round 8 in Africa and then proceed to the estimation by the Logit model to measure the explanatory variables. We explore several hypotheses:

**H1:** Unemployment may be a source of support for non-democratic regimes.

**H2:** The performance of the president and the economic performance of the country could lead to a rejection of a democratic regime.

**H3:** Support for democratic rule depends on certain demographic criteria.

## Data

To conduct our study that aims to see the profile of people who support democracy or not in African countries, Afrobarometer Round 8 data is used. Afrobarometer Round 8 was collected between 2019 and 2021 with over 48,000 adult respondents in 34 countries. The data produces a result with a marginal error of +/- 3% and a confidence interval of 97%.

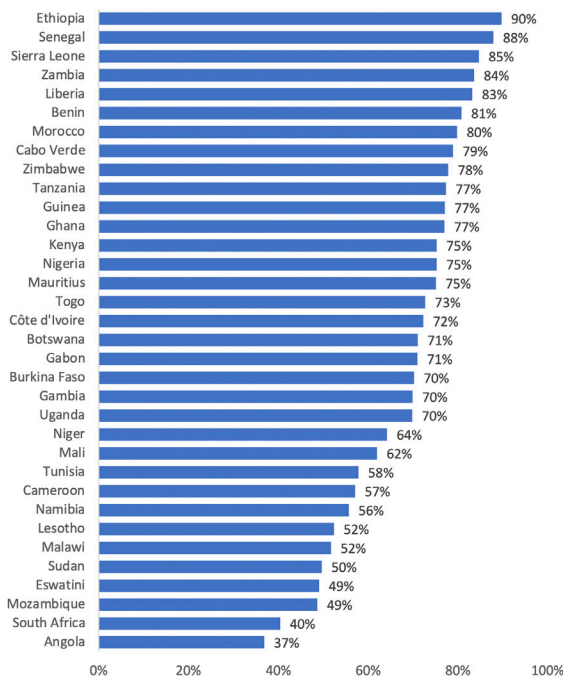
**Table 1** below describes the dependent variable for which the paper aims to provide a profile of respondents who prefer a democratic government. It turns out that about 7 out of 10 Africans support democracy. However, it also appears that about 3 out of 10 people don't support democracy. In other words, they approve a non-democratic government under certain circumstances or do not care which regime governs their country.

*Table 1: Support for Democracy|AFRICA|2022*

éléments	Observation	Frequencies (100%)
Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.	32.837	68,29
Statement 2: Under certain circumstances, a non-democratic government may be preferable.	6.919	14,39
Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	6.840	14,22
Don't know	1.378	2,87
Refused	110	0.23
	48.085	100

**Question to respondents:** Which of these three statements is closest to your opinion?

The objective of our work is to provide a plausible explanation for those who choose a democratic regime even when democracy appears to be one the decline globally. In the following section, this variable will be subdivided into two options. The first is support for democracy, which considers the fact that democracy is preferable to any type of government, and the second considers the last two options for answering the above question. These are referred to in this paper as non-support for democracy.



*Graph 1: Trend of people who support democracy / 34 countries AB R8*

**Questions asked of respondents:** Which of these three statements is closest to your opinion?

- **Statement 1:** Democracy is preferable to any other form of government.
- **Statement 2:** Non-democratic government may be preferable in some circumstances.
- **Statement 3:** For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have

In general, the average African supports democracy. However, there is a 53-point gap between the countries with the highest and lowest levels of support. People living in Ethiopia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Zambia, etc. have a strong preference for democracy; but it is also true that less than half of all citizens prefer democracy in Angola, South Africa, Mozambique.

### Overview of the variables that explain the preference for democracy

The purpose of this section is to briefly describe the variables that can explain the preference for democracy in Africa. It is expressed through the socio-demographic characteristics of the people, their satisfaction with the performance of the president and his management of the economy but also through the unemployment situation in our countries.

### Support for democracy according to socio-demographic factors

One possible explanation is gender (Table 2). The data shows that nearly 7 out of 10 men (71%) prefer democracy to all other forms of governance, unlike women, whose rate is lower (66%). However, young people, particularly those between the ages of 18 and 35, have a lower level of preference for democracy (67%), which should attract the attention of leaders, since youth is the lever for Africa's future development. Also, the poorer people are, the more they believe that another type of government other than democratic can improve their living conditions (67%).

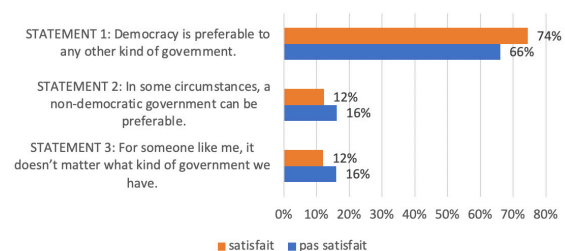
Table 2: Support for democracy and socio-demographic characteristics

	For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.	In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.	Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
High Lived Poverty	15%	15%	67%
Moderate Lived Poverty	15%	15%	68%
Low Lived Poverty	14%	14%	70%
Over 55	12%	13%	71%
36-55	13%	14%	70%
18-35	16%	15%	67%
Female	17%	14%	66%
Male	12%	15%	71%

**Support for democracy/satisfaction with democracy:** the data suggests strongly that the more the population is satisfied with the functioning of democracy (74%), the more they are inclined to a preference for democracy in their country. (See Graph 2.)

Graph 2 :

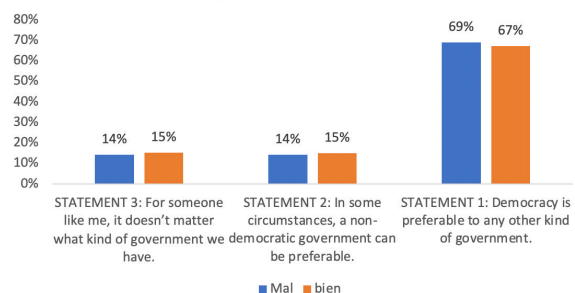
Support for democracy/satisfaction with democracy



**Supporting democracy and creating jobs:** despite a high rate (67%) of preference for democracy, the level of unemployment follows a high rate (69%), and these people may in the long term want a non-democratic regime. But, as Graph 3 shows, this analysis showed no significant differences in support for democracy.

Graph 3: Creating jobs

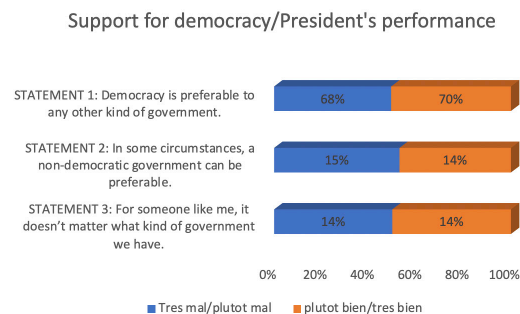
Supporting democracy / Creating jobs





**Support for democracy and President's performance:** the president's performance in office could also be an indicator of support for democracy, but the data again do not show any significant differences in support for democracy based on satisfaction with the President's performance.

*Graph 4: Support for democracy/President's performance*



## Study Variables

The dependent variable in this study is support for democracy. We examined a set of variables. based on the literature which might explain preference for democracy in Africa: presidential performance, satisfaction with democracy, job creation, management of the economy, poverty, gender, education, and age. The analysis in (Table 3) shows that there is a dependence between all the explanatory variables and the choice of democracy (Pvalue less than 5%).

*Table 3: List of explaining variables for support for democracy in Africa*

Variables	Description	Modality	Chi-square test
<b>President's performance</b>	Do you agree or disagree with the performance of the following individuals in their positions over the past 12 months, or have you not heard enough about them to make a statement	1- Very bad/very bad 2- Pretty good/very good	0.000
<b>Satisfaction with the democracy</b>	Overall, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Benin?	1-Not very satisfied/ Not at all satisfied 2-Somewhat satisfied/ Very satisfied	0.000
<b>Job creating</b>	Rate how well or poorly the current government is addressing the following concerns, or have you not heard enough about them to comment?	1- Very bad/very bad 2- Pretty good/very good	0.009
<b>Managing of economy</b>	Rate how well or poorly the current government is addressing the following concerns, or have you not heard enough about them to comment?	1- Very bad/very bad 2- Pretty good/very good	0.000

<b>Lived poverty</b>	It refers to subjective poverty	1. Low Lived Poverty 2. Moderate Lived Poverty 3. High Lived Poverty	0.000
<b>Gender</b>	Gender of respondent	1. Male 2. Female	0.000
<b>Education</b>	What is your highest educational level?	0. No formal instruction 1. Primary 2. Secondary 3. Higher education	0.000
<b>Age</b>	It has been recoded from the variable age	1. 18-35 years old 2. 36-55 years old 3. 56 and over	0.000

## Model

### Factors explaining the preference for democracy

This section aims to establish a plausible link between attitudes toward the performance of the president and support for a democratic government. In addition to satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, we considered management of the economy, insecurity issues, and so forth as potential factors in the choice of a democratic government or not. To further investigate this study, we used the econometric model with binary qualitative Logit variables (see Appendix 1 for the model.)

## Results

The search for explanatory factors for support for democracy in African countries led us to estimate using a binary (Logit) model. To achieve the objective, four regressions were performed. The first was for *President's Performance*, while the second considered the effect of *Satisfaction with democracy* on support for democracy. The third regression explored the impact of *Job Creating* on support

for democracy and then the last one considered *Management of the Economy and Freedom of Speech*. Finally, *demographic variables* such as gender, experienced poverty, and education were used as control variables to better assess the explanatory factors of support for democracy. The results show that the estimated model is globally significant and well-specified with all variables considered. The analysis of the results reveals that the performance of presidents in managing the city has a significant effect at 1% on support for democracy. Indeed, the good performance of the president of the Republic leads about 2% of the adult population to support democracy. Similarly, a better living condition of the people ensures greater support for democracy. Controlling for demographic characteristics, the results indicate that the president's performance leads women to be 3.4% more likely to prefer democracy to any other form of government than men. Finally, when the president's performance is good across all African countries, people often prefer democracy in general and 0.3% of the fluctuations in the probability of support for democracy are explained by the president's performance in running the city. Satisfaction with democracy being a fundamental element of support for democracy, the results of our

estimations show that the more people are satisfied with the functioning of democracy, the more they are inclined to support a democratic regime ( $1 - 0.086 = 0.914$ , i.e., nearly 92%). The level of poverty and the level of education are elements that explain this phenomenon: with satisfaction with the functioning of democracy, more than 99% of the population supports the democratic regime regardless of their standard of living or their level of education. It is also noticed that the good functioning of democracy makes women 3% more likely to want to support a democratic regime than men. Countries like Senegal, Sierra Leone, Benin, Botswana among others have a very significant threshold of satisfaction with democracy (1%) unlike South Africa, Mozambique, or Tunisia among others which present a less significant threshold (10% approximately) of satisfaction with democracy.

The issue of job creation does not necessarily translate into lower unemployment. Everything depends on the balance between entries into the labor market (especially young people who have finished their studies) and exits (especially people retiring). The unemployment rate will only fall if job creation is sufficient to absorb an increase in the labor force. Our estimation results show that if the leaders of our states provide job opportunities, more than 85 percent of the population will tend to

support a democratic regime. This does not change the propensity of female to support democracy relative to male.

As far as the management of the economy is concerned, the more the country's resources are well allocated to sustainable development actions, the more the population feels better in their daily lives and therefore supports democracy. The better management of the economy is, the most 83% of the population prefers the democratic regime. The support of women remains constant even with a perception of better management of the economy. Since we cannot speak of democracy without freedom of expression, we have made a comparison between these notions, and we must admit that freedom of expression, free choice to join a political organization of one's choice or the freedom to choose without pressure the person to vote for have a significant (1%) on the support to a democratic regime in our countries.

At the end of these different findings, we can affirm that our hypotheses are validated; in other words, the performance of the president, the economic performance of the country as well as the issue of job creation are prerequisites for supporting democracy in our countries, as well as the demographic variables help explain this phenomenon.

Table 4: Estimation of variables for support for democracy in Africa

	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
Variables	Coef.	Odds ratios	Coef.	Odds ratios	Coef.	Odds ratios	Coef.	Odds ratios
President's performance <b>Agree (Ref. Disagree)</b>	0.093*** (.02149)	0.0192*** (0.0044)						
Satisfaction with the democracy			0.423*** (0.0219)	0.086*** (0.004)				
Job creating					-0.075*** (.024)	-.015*** (.005)		
Managing of economy							0.17*** (0.022)	0.036*** (.004)

<b>LivedPoverty_</b> <b>CAT</b>	-0.084*** (0.011)	-0.017*** (0.002)	-0.048*** (0.0117)	-.009*** (.002)	-0.093*** (.011)	-0.019*** (0.002)	-0.079*** (0.012)	-0.016*** (0.002)
<b>Education</b>			-0.024*** (.010)	-.005*** (.002)	-0.044*** (.009)	-0.009*** (.002)	-0.038*** (0.009)	-0.007*** (0.002)
<b>Sexe</b>  <b>Female (Ref</b> <b>Male)</b>	-0.1600*** (0.0210)	-0.034*** (0.004)	-0.164*** (.0211)	-0.033*** (.004)	-0.164*** (0.020)	-0.034*** (0.004)	-0.161*** (.021)	-0.033*** (.004)
<b>COUNTRY</b>	0.003*** (.00101)	0.0006*** (0.0002)	0.0010*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.003*** (.001)	0.000*** 0.000	0.003*** (0.001)	0.001*** (.000)
<b>Cons</b>	1.132*** (0.060)		0.6453*** (.0589)		1.38*** (.058)		1.01*** (.059)	
Prob > chi2	0.0000		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.0030		0.0096		0.0027		0.0039	
N.Observ.	44,265		44,535		45,495		44,850	
Area under ROC curve	69,18%		68,75%		68,66%		68,50%	
Taux de prédictions correctes	70.97%		72.26%		71.85%		72.00%	

Standard errors in parentheses \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1

	(5)	
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Coef.</b>	<b>Odds ratios</b>
Freedom to express one's opinion	0.072*** (0.01)	0.015*** (0.002)
Freedom to join a political organisation	-0.008*** (0.001)	-0.002*** (0.000)
Freedom to choose who to vote for without pressure	0.070*** (0.01)	0.014*** (0.002)
COUNTRY	0.002*** (0.0009)	0.000*** (0.000)
Cons	0.415*** (.043)	
R <sup>2</sup>	0.005	
Number of obs	46,596	

## Conclusion

From the results of our study, we note both positive and negative advances on the state of democracy in Africa. In most African countries, support for democracy remains an important element in the eyes of the average population in most countries. Beyond the continental averages, pro-democracy attitudes are widespread in some countries (Angola, South Africa, Mozambique) but dangerously sporadic in others.

The leaders of the African states must also take the well-being of the youth into account because their development is a guarantee for the development of our continent. But a question remains: is democracy compatible with the African context? ■

## APPENDIX 1: Logit Regression Model

$$\Lambda(t) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-t}} = \frac{e^t}{1 + e^t} \quad t \in \mathbb{R}.$$

The density of the logistic distribution is:

$$\Lambda'(t) = \frac{e^{-t}}{(1 + e^{-t})^2} \quad t \in \mathbb{R}$$

We deduce a simple relationship between the density and the distribution function:

$$\Lambda(t) = \Lambda'(t)[1 - \Lambda'(t)]$$

The logistical distribution is symmetrical:

$$\Lambda(-t) = 1 - \Lambda(t)$$

The mean is zero and its variance is:

$$\frac{1}{3} \pi^2$$

The probability  $P_i$  can be written as:

$$P_i = \frac{1}{1 + \exp[-(\alpha + \beta x_i + \lambda z_i)]}$$

Models with dichotomous dependent variables are often defined based on a latent variable, i.e., a variable reflecting an unobservable process that governs the realization of the observed dichotomous variable.

They are explained by:

$$Y_{ik} = aX_{1ik} + bX_{2ik} + e_{ik}$$

**With: Y the endogenous variable, i.e., the preference for democracy**

**Y=1** if preference for democracy

**Y=0** otherwise

The explanatory variables retained are:

$X_{1ik}$  represents the performance of the president

$X_{2ik}$  the satisfaction with democracy

$X_{n...ik}$ : the management of the economy, insecurity, job creation....

$e_{ik}$  which represents the constant.

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Module de cours : Stata 5 :, SPSS, EVIEWS  
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# How Securitization Impedes Democracy: The Case of the Sahel

*Yousra Hamdaoui<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

The Sahel is now the largest military laboratory since the launch of the global war on Jihad. This war on terror, which has lasted for more than a decade, has not been able to produce a state of security in the region. The various military interventions supported mainly by France are bogged down in a context marked by the rise of communal violence and the expansion of the dynamics of violence by armed groups. Does this imply the loss of confidence of the populations in their governments and the deterioration of democracy? In general, the goal of a democratic system is a mechanism of legitimate representation such that leaders act on behalf of the people and are chosen through regular elections. In the Sahelian countries, this democratic cycle has been often interrupted by military pushes since the independence. However, the recurrence of coups d'état since 2020 in Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso and Guinea unfolded in the context of the fight against terrorism and must be understood within that context.

Since 2012, the introduction of prevention and militarization programs in the Sahel has reconfigured its geopolitics and domestic politics alike. The security policy imposed on the Sahel has created a climate of urgency in which terrorism is the dominant threat, the solution to which requires exceptional measures that sometimes break with normal politics, as is often the case in any securitization process. This paper explains that the security choices imposed on Sahelian countries have impacted democracy in the region. The latest coups, while not an exception in the region, have occurred in a context where Sahelian states have failed in the fight against terrorism. Thus, the militarization of the Sahel, as well as geopolitical competition and political interventionism by international powers, have hampered democracy in the Sahel.

## Methodology

In this work, we use qualitative analysis using process tracing. Process tracing is a research method for tracing causal mechanisms through detailed empirical analysis.<sup>2</sup> In effect, the goal is to examine how the independent variable X (the cause) produces effects on the variable Y (the effect).<sup>3</sup> The unique feature of process tracing is that it allows for the study of how the mechanisms that contribute to producing an outcome work. The causal mechanism (CM) is a concept that explains how the independent variable x (explanatory factor) can have an effect on the dependent variable Y that we need to explain.<sup>4</sup> Concretely, to study process tracing, we need to decompose it into mechanisms. Figure 1 illustrates the basic framework of process tracing in this work. Indeed, we know both X (the context of the global war on Jihad) and Y (the deterioration of democracy/governance). We then formulate a causal mechanism based on securitization theory.

Figure 1 shows the causal mechanism between X and Y based on securitization theory. If the context of the war on terror is influencing democracy in the Sahel, how is this happening? To identify the mechanisms, we use inductive reasoning by examining field observations, interviews and official documents. The militarization of the Sahel, the political interventionism of international actors, and the geopolitical competition are the causal mechanisms that we want to analyze in this work. The second step (operationalization) consists of translating the theoretical elements into specific predictions through the observable manifestations that each part of the mechanism must have. In figure 1, operationalization of the causal mechanism involves identifying the empirical evidence observed in each stage of the mechanism. Step 3 (evidence collection) proceeds in stages, checking whether the evidence indicates that each



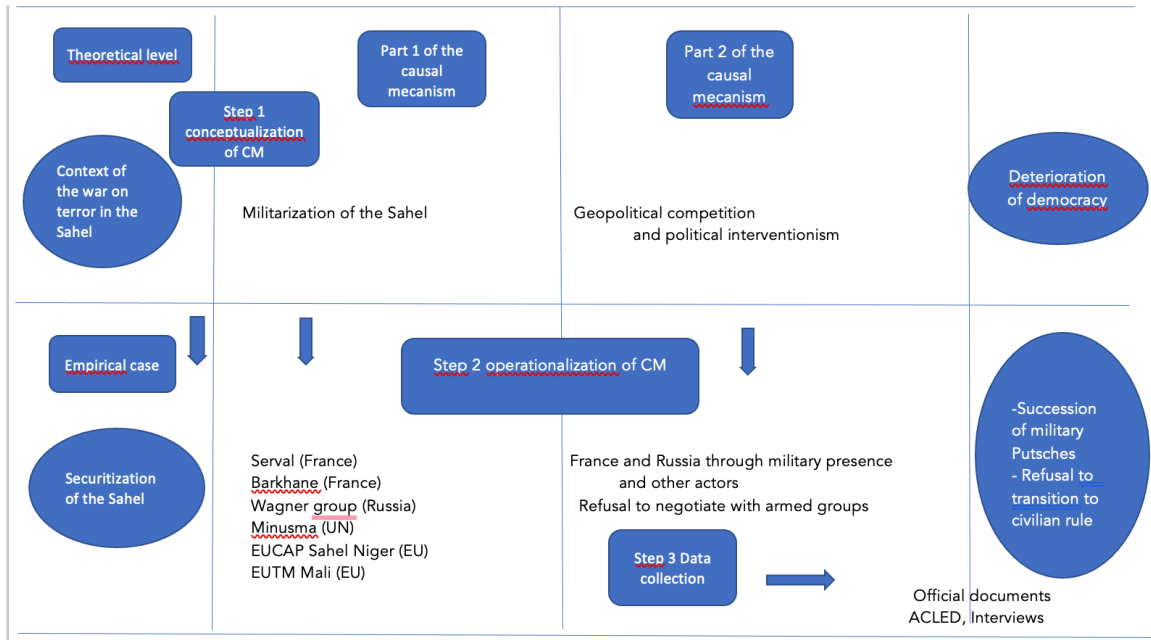


Figure 1: adapted from Beach and Peterson (2017)

part of the mechanism was present. In our case, the observed evidence is the observable manifestations in each part of the causal mechanism. In addition, we also use other types of evidence, such as interviews, grey literature, and ACLED data to fill in the gaps in the causal story.

### The militarization of the Sahel

The Sahel entered a phase of securitization characterized by increased militarization with France's launch of Operation Serval in 2013. This military operation represents a return to a classic form of rapid intervention by France from the era of the Cold War (Goya, 201), allowing for the introduction of a panoply of Sahel strategies and military operations that reconfigured the geopolitics of a transnational area spanning multiple countries. In this sense, these military operations were aimed at reducing the combativeness of armed groups and bringing them down to the levels of Sahelian armies. In addition, their goal was to prevent these groups from creating new sanctuaries.

However, the militarization of the region instead accelerated the movement of terror to the south. The expansion of violence in the Sahel is ongoing

despite the significant military presence of various state and institutional actors. At the institutional level, the United Nations has been operating in the Sahel since 2013 under an integrated Sahel strategy. The objectives of the UN's integrated strategy in the Sahel involve the presence of a multitude of UN agencies that benefit from the advantage of a long presence in the region, particularly through humanitarian and human rights work. but the multiplication of actors on the ground complicates the achievement of the integrated approach advocated by the strategy. In addition, the UN deploys the peacekeeping operation MINUSMA (The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali). The persistent discourse on the threat and militarization of the region maintains the effect of the sustainability of securitization and consequently the introduction of various actors into the process of the governance of insecurity.

None of this has prevented the rise in violence and attacks against civilians. In 2021, the Sahel recorded more than 2,000 violent events and 7,052 deaths linked to armed groups. On the ground, MINUSMA collaborates with other institutions that are involved in this securitization process. The

European Union is also an actor implicated in the governance of insecurity in the region, relying on military instruments defined in the framework of its Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). It has implemented an integrated strategy similar to that of the United Nations, using development instruments and civil-military missions. In this sense, most of the institutions implicated in the governance of insecurity in the region rely on the security and development nexus. The use of civilian missions such as EUCAP Sahel Niger and EUCAP Sahel Mali were established after the Libyan and Malian crises to focus on strengthening the effectiveness of regional joint command posts to improve crisis response, intelligence gathering, and sharing among the various security actors in the region. In addition to these training missions, military missions have been set up such as EUTM Mali, which intervenes mainly in southern Mali by providing military assistance to the Malian army to restore their military capabilities in order to conduct field operations. Since the launch of the French operation in Mali, other actors have been invited to join the war against Jihad in the Sahel.

At the regional level, the involvement of various pan-African institutions in the resolution of political and security crises in the Sahel has been similarly unable to quell insecurity, violence against civilians, and the advance of armed groups. At the military level, the African Standby Force (ASF), considered the armed arm of the African Union, has also shown its limitations on the ground. During the Malian crisis of 2012, this mechanism faced a problem of operationalization. The divergence of interest between communities as well as political disagreements between certain countries delayed the intervention and conflict resolution processes. Similarly, the establishment of the African Capacity for Immediate Crisis Response (ACIRC) in 2013 in the context of the Malian crisis has not been able to fill the gaps in the ASF. While it is supposed to fill this operational gap, the African Crisis Response Capability appears as a competitor to the African Standby Force and highlights the rivalries between the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the AU, which wants to assert itself at the regional level.<sup>5</sup> The ASF and ACIRC are essentially “virtual” forces whose difficulty of maneuvering

complicates the ownership of security by countries in crisis. The lack of centralized leadership at the level of one country or a small group of countries that would clearly assume the role of coalition leader in terms of troop commitment and military logistics has hindered effective action. Sometimes, the participation of African states in military interventions is primarily motivated by obtaining military equipment or training. In terms of mediation, one of the African Union’s tools for intervention in the security crisis in the Sahel, the results are mixed. Similarly, since the beginning of the political crisis that followed the coup d’état in 2020, the African Union and ECOWAS have not been able to reach an agreement on the duration of the democratic transition in Mali.

### **Political interventionism and Geopolitical competition**

This foreign military and political pressure has prevented the Sahelian countries from making their political and security choices. The option of negotiating with armed jihadist groups has been refused by France, despite a few attempts by religious actors in the Malian civil society, even though the report of the 2017 National Understanding conference highlighted the importance of setting up a negotiation process for the establishment of peace. The multiplication of red lines on the part of France and its allies has stifled Mali’s political autonomy.

This political interventionism manifested itself on several occasions around the choice of a president. After the death of Marshal Idriss Itno, his son, France and its allies supported General Mahamat in taking power in disregard of the rules of succession. In addition, sanctions have been used as a pressure tool to bring about a civilian transition after the series of coups since 2020. For the two coups in Mali in 2020 and 2021, a series of sanctions, believed to be supported by France, were applied by ECOWAS involving the closure of land and air borders and the suspension of commercial transactions. Similarly, sanctions have been applied to Guinea and Burkina Faso. France’s president, Emanuel Macron expressed his support for ECOWAS in condemning the military coup against Burkinabe president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. These sanctions sometimes

reflect the regional organization's lack of autonomy in decision-making.

This political interventionism by France and its allies has led to geopolitical competition with the military involvement of other actors such as Russia to dominate the security market in the Sahel. Relations with Francophone African regimes were based on the policy of the "pré-carré". French military interventions in the Sahel in the context of the global war on Jihad reflect somehow the continuity of this policy. After more than 9 years of counter-terrorism, the mixed security and military results have fueled anti-French sentiment in the region. This has resulted in sometimes violent demonstrations, such as November 2021 protests against the presence of the military operation Barkhane in the Sahel. Several other blockades of military convoys took place in Kaya in Burkina Faso, in Téra in Niger, and in Ansogo in Mali, in January 2022. On the other hand, the Russian flag is being waved in several demonstrations in support of the juntas. Consequently, Russia used this anti-French sentiment to play its cards in the region.

The partnership with Mali through the Wagner group, which operates with mercenaries and security services, is the main unofficial tool of Russia's military influence. According to ACLED, the Wagner group has been involved in many attacks targeting civilians in Segou, Mopti, Koulikoro, and Tombouctou regions which are the main area of the group Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). ACLED confirms that 71% of Wagner's political violence in Mali has taken the form of violence targeting civilians.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the use of mercenaries, Russia has resorted to an aggressive "informational war". This hybrid war is conducted by non-military and unconventional means through fake news relayed by social networks.

This Franco-Russian competition does not date from today but from the Soviet era when some Sahelian countries got closer to the USSR. In this way, the first president of independent Mali, Modibo Keita, made his first visit to Moscow in 1962. He declared that he was "following the path of socialism". Soviet-Malian relations had been

established in 1961 through military agreements concluded in Moscow resulting in the provision of military equipment for Mali<sup>7</sup>. So the junta's rapprochement with the Wagner group is not actually a surprise, since Russia wanted to extend its influence generally in Africa. In this sense, Russian-African relations received a major boost at the first Pan-African Summit in Sochi in 2019.<sup>8</sup> This summit was seen as Russia's return to Africa. In the face of these geopolitical accelerations, the former French pre-squared is being turned upside down with the involvement of Russia at times with popular support expressing both disappointment with local democracy and in the ongoing efforts to bring peace to the Sahel.

### **A deterioration of democracy**

The multiplication of military coups in Francophone Africa reveals a certain porosity between the civilian and the military. The coups that followed independence were aimed at challenging the orientations of the post-colonial state, often with the support of the international community. Another wave of coups was launched after the fall of the Berlin Wall bringing a wave of democratization.<sup>9</sup> In 1991, for example, Mali became an example of democratization after Amadou Toumani Touré's coup d'état put an end to the military regime of Moussa Traoré by conducting the country's first free election. The military has therefore this role of controller and protector of the State itself.<sup>10</sup> In this sense, the return of coups in the Sahel in 2020 for the military makes it possible to make political choices to reclaim lost political space as well as to choose military and technical partners with roadmaps that are not imposed and do not respond to particular geopolitical considerations. These coups d'état also have the particularity of taking place without the approval of France, which often intervenes unofficially in the electoral process in the region.

It is necessary to see the coups in the Sahel as part of this broader regional process of securitization and not only as isolated national cases. The 2020 coup in Mali was carried out by Malian armed forces on August 18, 2020. It began at the Soundiata-Keita military camp in Kati, north of

Bamako. It led to the overthrow of the president of the Republic, Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta, who had been in power since 2013. This coup d'état occurred against a backdrop of terrorist and inter-ethnic violence and multiple attacks against the Malian army, notably the Indelimane attack in November 2019 in the Asongo circle, which killed more than 80 Malian soldiers. This attack caused tensions between former President IBK and the Malian army. The putsch also took place against a backdrop of protests and challenges to power since June 2020. These are led by the June 5 Movement - Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP) against the war and alleged irregularities in the March-April 2020 legislative elections. In less than a year, another coup d'état occurred in Mali in 2021 in a context where the two ministers close to the colonels of the former CNSP were left out of the list of the new government. Suspicions have been raised about France's involvement in this putsch. The pressure exerted by France and the international community to move to civilian transition is motivated by its military agenda in the region but also by the arrival of a competing actor in the region: Russia. In that respect, President Macron accused the Wagner company of being in Mali to serve "its own economic interests" and to secure the Malian military junta in power in Bamako, referring to the presence of about 800 mercenaries.

Frustrations began to grow in Mali's neighboring country, Burkina Faso, where the spread of violence emerged in the northeast of the country. Attacks linked to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State were on the rise. According to ACLED, Violence moved to Boucle du Mouhoun and it became the region with the highest number of violent events. The deterioration of security and the government's inability to curb jihadist violence have angered both the military and the population.. On January 11, 2022, eight soldiers accused of preparing "a project to destabilize the institutions of the Republic" were arrested. On January 24, members of the army, led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba, detained President Kaboré of Burkina Faso and seized power. The military putschists have violently criticized the anti-terrorist strategy being implemented in the region. This wave of coups in Sahelian countries comes against a backdrop of insecurity and increasing violence against civilians.

The cross-border areas of Liptako-Gourma and the Lake Chad Basin, which are particularly affected by insecurity, concentrate people in need of food assistance. In the tri-border area (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), 2.7 million people were in crisis and beyond in June-August 2021.

In conclusion, the political turmoil in the Sahelian region today underscores deeper problems of governance, which is overshadowed by an ongoing struggle against terrorism that seems to have exhausted the countries of the region. The result of this military focus has been reduced attention to social sectors, major disruptions to the livelihoods of millions of citizens, and regional political failure. The recent political crises and repeated coups in Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea point to the unfinished democratic transition since independence and point to a difficult future for the populations of the Sahel. ■

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# The Effects of Exposure to Conflict, Insecurity, and Violence on Popular Attitudes Towards Democracy in the Sahel

*Thomas Isbell<sup>1</sup>*

## Introduction

In this paper we look at the effect of exposure to conflict, insecurity, and violence on popular attitudes towards democracy in four Sahel countries: Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria. Much attention has been given to the consequences of conflict, insecurity, and violence on state formation and democratization (Tilly, 1992; Centeno, 2002; Wantchekon & Neeman, 2002; Bermeo, 2003). However, the study of such consequences has largely focused on cases where regime change occurred. What has been less studied in the empirical literature are cases where conflict, insecurity and violence did not result in regime change, but may have nonetheless weakened the quality of democracy (Cheeseman et al., 2018).

As noted by Cheeseman et al. (2018: 38) it is common in the Africanist literature to argue that “variations in the quality of democracy are shaped by the strength and independence of political institutions”. Here we focus on a ‘bottom-up’ approach to understanding the strength of such institutions by focussing on the popular support that such institutions garner. As is widely accepted in the literature, institutions require such support – at least in the long run – to function smoothly, efficiently and sustainably without reliance on coercion (Lipset, 1960; Easton, 1975; Mishler & Rose, 1999; Dalton, 2000; Norris, 2011). Our research therefore asks whether exposure to conflict, insecurity and violence has consequences for democracy through its effect on public attitudes towards democracy and possible alternative regime forms.

Specifically, we query two causal mechanisms. First, we explore a retrospective and instrumental mechanism: could exposure to conflict, insecurity, and violence influence attitudes towards democracy through its effect on public evaluations of government and state performance? Here, a decline in positive attitudes towards democracy

may occur as the result of negative perceptions and evaluations of government performance in protecting people from such events. Second, we explore a prospective and instrumental mechanism: could exposure to conflict, insecurity and violence influence attitudes towards democracy through improving evaluations of the military and non-democratic actors?<sup>2</sup> Here, a change in attitudes towards democracy would occur as the result of improving perceptions and evaluations of military and non-democratic actors who may be perceived as stronger or more capable in protecting from future exposure to such events.

To test these two mechanisms, we use nationally representative Afrobarometer (AB) data (round 8) to measure attitudes towards democracy, trust in the president and the military and support for non-democratic rule. In addition, we use Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) to capture incidents and intensity of conflict, insecurity and violence. We match the Afrobarometer and ACLED data using geo-spatial information which both sources provide.

Our models suggest that people who live in areas with less events of violence, conflict and insecurity have more trust in the military, more trust in the president and more positive evaluations of how government is handling violent conflict. We find that more trust in the army and more positive evaluations of government handling violent conflict – in turn – is significantly correlated with more support for military rule. This means that living in relatively peaceful areas in the studied countries is significantly linked with more support for military rule, while living in more violent and insecure areas is significantly linked with less support for military rule. We do not find the same results when predicting demand for democracy into the model instead of support for military rule. In this case we find that trust in the military and trust in the president are uncorrelated with demand for



democracy and more positive evaluations of how government is handling violence is significantly associated with less demand for democracy.

## Methodology

Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Nigeria are selected for several reasons. All four countries are characterized by multiple ongoing conflicts. These conflicts are varied in type and intensity and have generally changed in type and intensity over time. At the same time, the countries have seen a general worsening of their political freedoms and democracy ratings (see table 1).<sup>3</sup>

*Table 1: Democracy ratings for selected Sahel region countries (2017-2020)*

<b>Freedom House scores (Global freedom scores; 0-100)</b>				
	2020	2019	2018	2017
Burkina Faso	56	60	60	63
Mali	41	44	44	45
Niger	48	49	49	49
Nigeria	47	50	50	50

<b>Bertelsmann Transformation Index (Democracy Status; 0-10)</b>			
	2020	2018	2016
Burkina Faso	6.20	6.40	4.73
Mali	5.80	5.95	5.85
Niger	6.10	6.30	6.70
Nigeria	5.45	5.35	5.40

## Dependent Variable: Demand for democracy

In survey studies, some uncertainty surrounds what exactly ordinary people mean by ‘democracy’ when they voice support for it. Critics such as Schedler and Sarsfield (2007) have argued that the commonly used measures of ‘support for democracy’ often lack reference to concrete attributes of democracy. Such “vacuous conceptions of democracy” (Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007: 639) are problematic as it is unclear what, if anything, ‘democracy’ means to the respondents, and if such

understandings are consistent across different groups and contexts.<sup>4</sup> This is further compounded by the normative nature of democratic rule. Widely held support for democracy in survey studies around the world may lack reliability due to interviewer effects which make it unclear whether reported support for democracy reflects actual views and attitudes of the respondent, or simply reflects the “‘almost universal’ practice of [...] ‘paying lip service to democracy’” (Inglehart, 2003:51). Lastly, it is also unclear from measuring only support for democracy whether respondents may support democracy and hold “conflicting values” (Schedler & Sarsfield, 2007: 639). Rather, as Bratton and Mattes (2001: 457) state, support for democracy is best queried in “concrete terms and in the form of comparisons with plausible alternatives”.<sup>5</sup>

In survey studies, including ‘plausible alternatives’ is referred to as measuring ‘authentic democratic support’.<sup>6</sup> The premise of this measure is that democratic and non-democratic norms and ideals are inherently incompatible. Thus, someone who prefers democracy but can still accept or see merit in non-democratic forms of governance may display normative and practical support for democracy, but not authentic support. Only if a person supports democracy practically and rejects non-democratic alternatives does someone report authentic support.<sup>7</sup> Afrobarometer uses a constructed index called ‘demand for democracy’ to tap authentic support for democracy. Demand for democracy captures whether someone voices support for democracy as a regime type and rejects non-democratic alternatives, such as one-man, military or one-party rule. The index is made up of ‘support for democracy’ and as three variables which probe support for alternative regimes forms.

To measure support for democracy, respondents were asked:

Which of these three statements is closest to your own opinion?

- Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.
- Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

- Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

To measure rejection of non-democratic alternatives, respondents are asked:

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives?<sup>8</sup>

Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office?

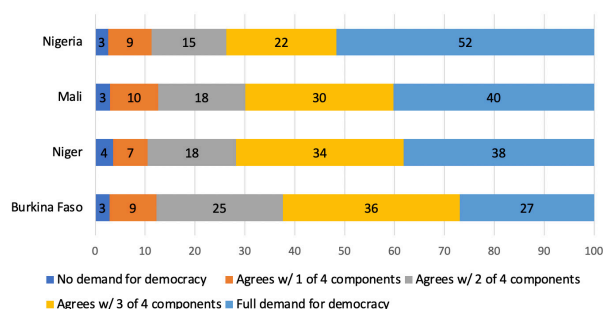
The army comes in to govern the country?

Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything?

An index of 'demand for democracy' is computed by combining the four variables with a scale running from 0 to 4.<sup>9</sup> Someone who is indifferent to or supportive of non-democratic alternatives score lower on this scale, while someone who supports a democratic regime and rejects other alternatives scores higher. Accordingly, a score of 0 is labelled as 'no demand for democracy', while a score of 4 is coded as 'full demand for democracy'.

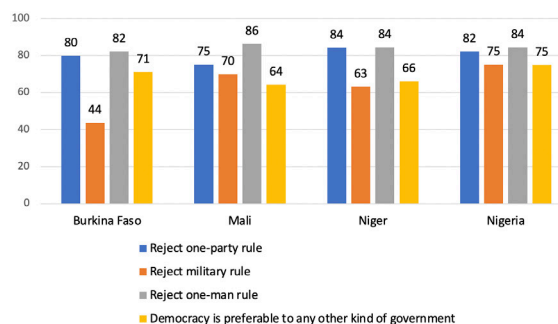
Demand for democracy is highest in Nigeria, with 52% of respondents having 'full' demand, followed by Mali (40%) and Niger (38%) (see figure 1). Conversely, only around a quarter of Burkinabe appear to have full demand (27%). In general, majorities of respondents agree with at least 3 of 4 components of demand for democracy, while only less than 5% in each country have no demand for democracy.

Figure 1: Demand for democracy by country. Afrobarometer Round 8 data (2019-2020)



Disaggregating the index suggests that respondents most widely rejected one-party rule and one-man rule across the four countries (see figure 2). Respondents were consistently less willing to reject the idea of military rule and were generally less frequent to say that democracy – as a regime type – was preferable to any other regime form.

Figure 2: Rejection of non-democratic regime forms and support for democracy by country. Afrobarometer Round 8 data (2019-2020)

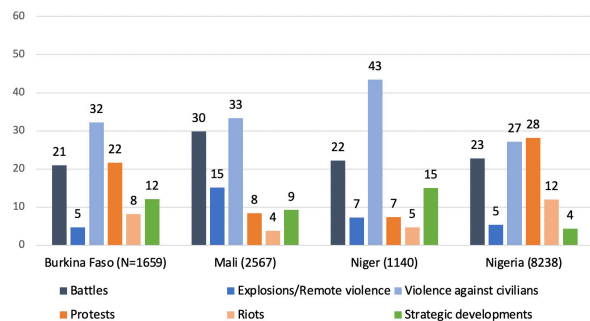


## Exogenous variables: exposure to conflict, insecurity, and violence

To measure a respondent's exposure to conflict, insecurity, and violence, we use ACLED to compute several scores based on the distance of a respondents' enumeration area to events of conflict, insecurity, and violence in the 5 years prior to the interview.<sup>10</sup>

For this time period, the ACLED data includes 13604 events, of which 60.6% are in Nigeria (n=8238), 18.9% in Mali (n=2567), 12.2% in Burkina Faso (n=1659) and 8.4% in Niger (n=1140). Across all four countries, events of conflict, insecurity, and violence increased year on year leading up to the Afrobarometer fieldwork (see Appendix 1). The ACLED disaggregates events of conflict, insecurity, and violence by type of event (as well as sub-type).<sup>11</sup> Across all four countries, violence against civilians<sup>12</sup>, battles<sup>13</sup> and protests<sup>14</sup> are the most common event type (see figure 4). Other forms – such as explosions/ remote violence, riots and strategic developments are less frequent.

Figure 3: Events type per country (in % of country total and for all years)



To compute scores of exposure to conflict, insecurity, and violence I combine Afrobarometer and ACLED data using GIS. GPS information is collected by Afrobarometer at the level of the Primary Sampling Unit (PSU). The Afrobarometer sample is stratified using the main subnational units of government and urban or rural location. Following this stratification, PSUs are randomly selected.<sup>15</sup> Afrobarometer limits the number of interviews per PSU to 8. As such, the assumption

we make is that people within a PSU experience the same level of exposure based on their geographic proximity.

To compute exposure scores, ACLED events are limited to 2 degrees latitude and longitude from the respondent's PSU. This cut-off equates to a radius of approximately 250km in the Sahel region. Two considerations informed this cut-off. First, for practical reasons, a cut-off was needed to keep the data manageable. Second, many of ACLED's event type are likely limited in their impact on people. Applying this cut-off produces 4,069,056 reports across the four countries. These reports reflect the distance of each Afrobarometer respondent to any ACLED event within a 250km radius which occurred in the 5 years prior to the interview in the respondent's respective country. Figure 4, below, displays the respective locations of AB and ACLED data in the four countries.

Several strategies are employed to compute the exposure scores.

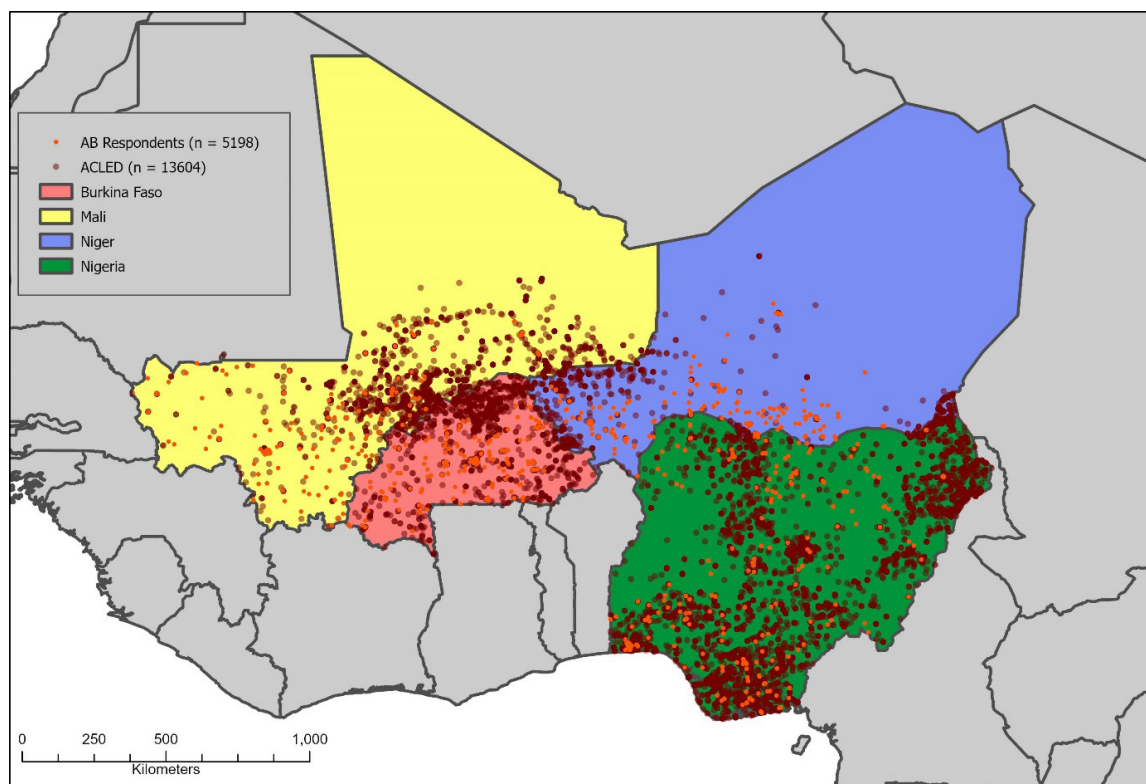


Figure 4: Afrobarometer Round 8 survey and ACLED (2015-2020) locations

First, we computed a basic count score. This score reflects the total number of events recorded by ACLED which occurred within the radius 2 degrees longitude and latitude (~250km) of the respondent's PSU. This score however does not consider proximity of events. Therefore, we computed a second score which reflects the mean distance of all events within the determined radius. Third, we computed a score which reflects the closest event to the respondent.

Fourth, we computed an intensity score of events. It is highly plausible that more violent events influence people's attitudes and evaluations differently than less violent events. We use the number of recorded fatalities as a proxy for the intensity of an event. An overview of descriptive statistics of the four scores is given by country in table 2, below.

Endogenous variables: popular government evaluations, attitudes towards the military and non-democratic leaders as well as security perceptions

Several endogenous variables are considered using Afrobarometer data. First, we include people's evaluation of how government is handling preventing violent conflict.<sup>16</sup> The 4-point response scale runs from negative assessments ("very badly") to positive ones ("very well"). Second, we include people's trust in the army<sup>17</sup> and the head of the executive (president/ prime minister).<sup>18</sup> Both variables are measured on 4-point scales running from no trust (trust "not at all") to high trust (trust "a lot").

## Analysis

To test the mechanisms outlined in the introduction, we construct a series of structural equation models which include the 4 exposure scores as exogenous variables.<sup>19</sup> Popular performance assessment of government handling conflict, trust in the army, trust in the president, and demand for democracy are included as endogenous variables. As noted above,

Table 2: Descriptives for exposure scores by country. ACLED 2015-2020

Number of events		Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	123	1901	1097.24
	<i>Mali</i>	24	1738	904.30
	<i>Niger</i>	9	1548	586.30
	<i>Nigeria</i>	134	2504	1613.14
Nearest event distance		Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	0.02	37.59	7.07
	<i>Mali</i>	0.04	56.13	6.20
	<i>Niger</i>	0.20	142.96	14.45
	<i>Nigeria</i>	0.03	47.23	5.00
Mean event distance		Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	110.81	175.26	150.32
	<i>Mali</i>	62.92	195.07	135.85
	<i>Niger</i>	82.13	198.99	156.74
	<i>Nigeria</i>	80.96	182.37	131.81
Reported fatalities		Minimum	Maximum	Mean
	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	50	4583	1513.97
	<i>Mali</i>	1	4502	1019.53
	<i>Niger</i>	12	8987	1161.83
	<i>Nigeria</i>	366	13492	2479.52

Afrobarometer data across the four countries suggests that people are least opposed to military rule, compared to one-man and one-party rule. Moreover, if events of conflict, violence and insecurity are likely going to change people's perceptions of an actor, it is the military. We therefore run a second series of models in which we enter the support for military rule variable instead of the demand for democracy variable. For both dependent variables we first consider all events – irrespective of event type -- before disaggregating by event type. A conceptual path model for the models run in this section is displayed in figure 6.

Standardized regression weights for all models are given in tables 3 and 4, below. Regression weights for non-significant effects are not listed for ease of reading the table. All significant results are significant at either the  $p < 0.05$  or  $p < 0.01$  level (an overview of parameter estimates is given in appendix 3 and 4).

## Results

People who live in areas with more events are less positive in their evaluations of how government is handling violent conflicts, have less trust in the military and less trust in the president. Comparing

across the different exposure scores, the additive sum of events is most strongly correlated with government evaluations, trust in the military and trust in the president, while proximity (closest event) is least strongly correlated. This suggests that people take a broader assessment into consideration rather than only their immediate surroundings.

Whether an event is violent or not matters in regard to how exposure to such events correlate with evaluations of government handling violent conflict, trust in the president and trust in the military, respectively. As might be expected, violent events have a stronger effect on government evaluations than protests and non-violent events. Here the greater the number of events that the respondent is exposed to, the more negative the evaluations of government handling conflict is. Although the question of government performance specifically asks about violent conflict, we find that a greater number of protests and non-violent events are also correlated with more negative evaluations of government, although the correlations are considerably smaller in magnitude.

Counter to what we might expect, we find a positive correlation of fatalities with evaluations of government as well as trust in the president and

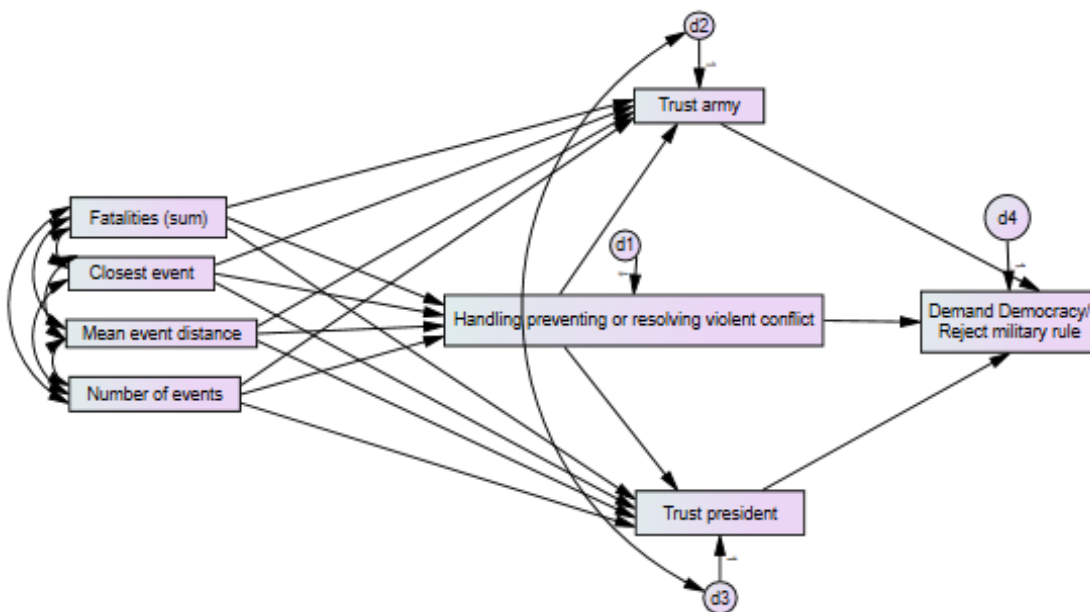


Figure 6: Conceptual path diagram for Demand for Democracy/ Military Rule

the military, respectively. This means that greater numbers of fatalities are significantly correlated with more positive evaluations and more trust. This might be an indication of a ‘rallying around the flag’ effect during violent events. However, disaggregated by events type, our results suggest that the ‘rallying around the flag’ effect of fatalities during violent events applies only to government and the president, but not the military.

Looking at different measures of exposure, trust in the military is most strongly correlated with lower overall number events, followed by a higher number of fatalities. However, the correlation looks very different depending on what type of event is considered. The results show that fatalities at violent events and non-violent events are not correlated with trust in the military but are negatively correlated with trust in the military for protests.

What is more, we find no significant correlation between fatalities at protests with trust in the president or evaluations of government performance. This may suggest that fatalities at protests are associated with military conduct rather than a failure of government or the President.

How government is perceived to be doing in handling violent conflict is significantly correlated with more trust in the President and more trust in the military. Across different event types the strength of correlation between government evaluations and trust in the president and military, respectively, remains comparable in magnitude.

But does this matter in regard to people’s attitudes towards forms of government? The results suggest that neither trust in nor trust in the president are significantly correlated with how much people

Table 3: Demand for democracy model

From	to	Standardized Regression Weights			
		All event types	Violent events	Protests	Non-violent events
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.088	0.211		-0.047
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.046			0.046
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.093	0.176		0.090
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.237	-0.329	-0.177	-0.051
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.106		-0.218	
Closest event	Trust military		0.061	0.042	0.195
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.095	0.147		
Number of events	Trust military	-0.363	-0.158	-0.204	0.133
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.150	0.187		0.040
Closest event	Trust president	0.046			0.065
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.105	0.182	0.108	0.098
Number of events	Trust president	-0.238	-0.227	-0.215	
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.164	0.199	0.189	0.242
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.198	0.213	0.228	0.250
Trust military	Demand for Democracy				
Trust president	Demand for Democracy				0.029
Handling violent conflict	Demand for Democracy	-0.077	-0.083	-0.078	-0.077

All event types: Chi-sq/df= 1.444; p= 0.228; IFI= 1.000; TLI= 0.998; CFI= 1.000; RMSEA= 0.009 (0.000-0.027); Hoelter (95%)= 9373; n= 5198  
Violent events only: Chi-sq/df= 0.025; p= 0.975; IFI= 1; TLI= 1.003; CFI= 1.000; RMSEA= 0.000 (0.000-0.000); Hoelter (95%)= 621174; n= 5198  
Protests only: Chi-sq/df= 0.983; p= 0.374; IFI= 1.000; TLI= 1.000; CFI= 1.000; RMSEA= 0.000 (0.000-0.027); Hoelter (95%)= 15847; n= 5198  
Non-violent events only: Chi-sq/df= 0.19; p= 0.981; IFI= 1.000; TLI= 1.005; CFI= 1.000; RMSEA= 0.000 (0.000-0.000); Hoelter (95%)= 815924; n= 5198



want democracy (measured through demand for democracy). However, we do find that people's evaluation of government is significantly correlated with how much they want democracy. The results suggest that people who are more positive of how their government is handling violence conflict are less in favour of democracy, versus non-democratic alternatives.

Indeed, we only find a significant – albeit weak – significant effect of government performance evaluations on demand for democracy. Interestingly, this effect is negative, suggesting that more positive government evaluations significantly predicts less demand for democracy. Here it is possible that the perception of whether the government is in fact democratic at the time is important.

## Reject military

Our models suggest that neither trust in the army nor trust in the President significant predict demand for democracy. But does exposure to conflict, violence and insecurity shape people's attitudes towards military rule?

Unlike in the initial path models for demand for democracy, we find a significant path linking exposure to conflict, violence and insecurity to support of military rule though trust in the army. Analogous to the models discussed in the previous section, people who experience a lower number of events, have a greater mean event distance and more fatalities (again paradoxically) are more trusting in the army. This higher trust translates into more support for military rule.

Table 4: Support/ rejection of military rule model

From	to	Standardized Regression Weights			
		All event types	Violent events	Protests	Non-violent events
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.09	0.211		-0.047
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.046			0.046
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.094	0.176		0.09
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.24	-0.329	-0.177	-0.051
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.103		-0.218	
Closest event	Trust military		0.061	0.042	0.195
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.093	0.147		
Number of events	Trust military	-0.355	-0.158	-0.204	0.133
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.148	0.187		0.04
Closest event	Trust president	0.045			0.065
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.102	0.182	0.108	0.098
Number of events	Trust president	-0.232	-0.227	-0.215	
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.172	0.199	0.189	0.242
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.207	0.213	0.228	0.25
Trust military	Support military rule	0.049	0.049		
Trust president	Support military rule				
Handling violent conflict	Support military rule	0.09	0.102	0.091	0.092

All event types: Chi-sq/df= 3.066; p= 0.027; IFI= 0.999; TLI= 0.992; CFI= 0.999; RMSEA= 0.02 (0.006-0.035); Hoelter (95%)= 4415; n= 5198  
Violent events only: Chi-sq/df= 3.922; p= 0.048; IFI= 1.000; TLI= 0.992; CFI= 1.000; RMSEA= 0.24 (0.002-0.05); Hoelter (95%)= 5091; n= 5198  
Protests only: Chi-sq/df= 3.677; p= 0.025; IFI= 0.999; TLI= 0.991; CFI= 0.999; RMSEA= 0.23 (0.007-0.041); Hoelter (95%)= 6510; n= 5198  
Nonviolent events only: Chi-sq/df= 10.309; p= 0.000; IFI= 0.948; TLI= 0.953; CFI= 0.997; RMSEA= 0.042 (0.027-0.060); Hoelter (95%)= 1511; n= 5198

Here the results suggest that more positive evaluations of government handling violent conflict is significantly correlated with more approval of military rule in the respondent's country. In addition, we find a significant – albeit weak – correlation of more trust in the military and approval of military rule.

## Conclusion

Faced with ongoing conflict, violence, and insecurity in their countries, what does exposure to such insecurity do to Sahelians attitudes towards democracy and military rule? The models in this paper suggest that greater exposure is significantly correlated with more negative government evaluations as well as lower trust in the military and the president. While lower levels of trust in the president and military, respectively, are not significantly correlated with demand for democracy, more negative evaluations of government performance are significantly associated with more demand for democracy. In other words, greater exposure to violence, conflict and insecurity appears to be significantly linked with more demand for democracy through performance evaluations of government handling said conflict. Conversely, less exposure to conflict, violence and insecurity appears to be linked to less demand for democracy in these countries, again through more positive performance evaluations. More specifically we find that more positive evaluations of how government is handling violent conflict is significantly associated with more approval for military rule.

Faced with ongoing conflict, violence and insecurity in their countries, Burkinabe, Malians, Nigerien and Nigerians who are less exposed to such events report more approval of military rule than those who experience greater exposure to such events. Containing or reducing the occurrence of conflict, violence and insecurity in these countries may thus not lead to more democratic rule but a publicly backed and supported military rule. ■

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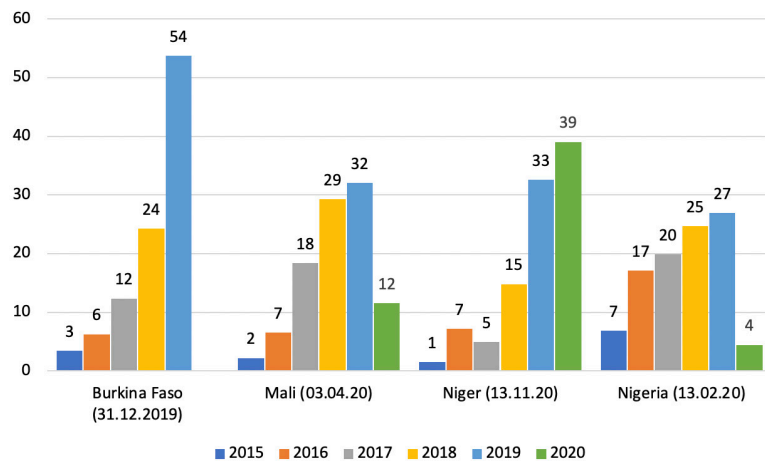
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## Appendix

Appendix 1:  
Events per year and country  
(in % of country total)



Appendix 2:  
ACLED event types and  
sub-event types

General	Event Type	Sub-Event Type
Violent events	Battles	Armed clash
		Government regains territory
		Non-state actor overtakes territory
	Explosions/Remote violence	Chemical weapon
		Air/drone strike
		Suicide bomb
		Shelling/artillery/missile attack
		Remote explosive/landmine/IED
		Grenade
	Violence against civilians	Sexual violence
		Attack
		Abduction/forced disappearance
Demonstrations	Protests	Peaceful protest
		Protest with intervention
		Excessive force against protesters
	Riots	Violent demonstration
Non-violent actions	Strategic developments	Mob violence
		Agreement
		Arrests
		Change to group/activity
		Disrupted weapons use
		Headquarters or base established
		Looting/property destruction
		Non-violent transfer of territory
		Other

Appendix 3: Parameter estimates for table 3

<i>From</i>	<i>to</i>	All events			
		<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.088	0.056	0.127	0.001
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.046	0.016	0.078	0.003
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.093	0.064	0.124	0.002
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.237	-0.274	-0.205	0.001
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.106	0.074	0.137	0.001
Closest event	Trust military	0.011	-0.016	0.037	0.398
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.095	0.066	0.126	0.002
Number of events	Trust military	-0.363	-0.4	-0.325	0.001
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.15	0.123	0.181	0.001
Closest event	Trust president	0.046	0.014	0.072	0.006
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.105	0.07	0.132	0.003
Number of events	Trust president	-0.238	-0.271	-0.207	0.001
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.164	0.136	0.192	0.002
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.198	0.17	0.223	0.002
Trust military	Demand for Democracy	-0.011	-0.039	0.017	0.494
Trust president	Demand for Democracy	0.025	-0.005	0.056	0.104
Handling violent conflict	Demand for Democracy	-0.077	-0.104	-0.046	0.002

Appendix 3: Parameter estimates for table 4 (continued).

<i>From</i>	<i>to</i>	Violent events				Protests				Non-violent events			
		<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.211	0.162	0.261	0.000	0.011	-0.023	0.042	0.529	-0.047	-0.08	-0.012	0.005
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.026	-0.008	0.059	0.13	0.034	-0.001	0.068	0.054	0.046	0.012	0.081	0.01
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.176	0.144	0.207	0.001	0.018	-0.015	0.051	0.31	0.09	0.056	0.125	0.000
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.329	-0.377	-0.28	0.000	-0.177	-0.212	-0.14	0.000	-0.051	-0.083	-0.019	0.002
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.04	-0.006	0.082	0.083	-0.218	-0.249	-0.185	0.000	0.01	-0.015	0.036	0.412
Closest event	Trust military	0.061	0.032	0.089	0.000	0.042	0.012	0.071	0.005	0.195	0.162	0.227	0.000
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.147	0.116	0.177	0.000	0.008	-0.021	0.036	0.587	-0.003	-0.039	0.031	0.853
Number of events	Trust military	-0.158	-0.207	-0.111	0.000	-0.204	-0.239	-0.169	0.000	0.133	0.101	0.165	0.000
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.187	0.147	0.227	0.000	0.022	-0.01	0.054	0.172	0.04	0.015	0.065	0.001
Closest event	Trust president	0.016	-0.018	0.049	0.334	0.005	-0.026	0.037	0.735	0.065	0.031	0.1	0.000
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.182	0.149	0.212	0.000	0.108	0.077	0.138	0.000	0.098	0.064	0.131	0.000
Number of events	Trust president	-0.227	-0.272	-0.178	0.000	-0.215	-0.249	-0.179	0.000	-0.015	-0.046	0.016	0.346
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.199	0.172	0.227	0.000	0.189	0.163	0.215	0.000	0.242	0.215	0.269	0.000
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.213	0.186	0.24	0.000	0.228	0.202	0.254	0.000	0.25	0.223	0.276	0.000
Trust military	Demand for Democracy	-0.007	-0.037	0.022	0.645	0.002	-0.029	0.032	0.893	0.000	-0.03	0.029	0.993
Trust president	Demand for Democracy	0.022	-0.007	0.052	0.143	0.022	-0.007	0.053	0.13	0.029	0.000	0.059	0.047
Handling violent conflict	Demand for Democracy	-0.083	-0.113	-0.056	0.000	-0.078	-0.108	-0.051	0.000	-0.077	-0.107	-0.05	0.000

Appendix 4: Parameter estimates for table 4

<i>From</i>	<i>to</i>	All events			
		<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.046	0.015	0.077	0.003
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.094	0.064	0.125	0.002
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.09	0.057	0.129	0.001
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.24	-0.276	-0.208	0.002
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.103	0.072	0.134	0.001
Closest event	Trust military	0.011	-0.017	0.037	0.384
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.093	0.064	0.124	0.002
Number of events	Trust military	-0.355	-0.393	-0.319	0.001
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.148	0.12	0.179	0.001
Closest event	Trust president	0.045	0.014	0.071	0.007
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.102	0.068	0.129	0.003
Number of events	Trust president	-0.232	-0.264	-0.199	0.002
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.172	0.144	0.2	0.002
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.207	0.179	0.232	0.002
Trust military	Support military rule	0.049	0.018	0.077	0.002
Trust president	Support military rule	-0.011	-0.042	0.021	0.48
Handling violent conflict	Support military rule	0.09	0.061	0.123	0.001



Appendix 4: Parameter estimates for table 4 (continued).

		Violent events				Protests				Non-violent events			
<i>From</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>	<i>P</i>
Fatalities (sum)	Handling violent conflict	0.211	0.162	0.261	0.000	0.011	-0.023	0.042	0.529	-0.047	-0.08	-0.012	0.005
Closest event	Handling violent conflict	0.026	-0.008	0.059	0.13	0.034	-0.001	0.068	0.054	0.046	0.012	0.081	0.01
Mean event distance	Handling violent conflict	0.176	0.144	0.207	0.001	0.018	-0.015	0.051	0.31	0.09	0.056	0.125	0.000
Number of events	Handling violent conflict	-0.329	-0.377	-0.28	0.000	-0.177	-0.212	-0.14	0.000	-0.051	-0.083	-0.019	0.002
Fatalities (sum)	Trust military	0.04	-0.006	0.082	0.083	-0.218	-0.249	-0.186	0.000	0.01	-0.015	0.036	0.412
Closest event	Trust military	0.061	0.032	0.089	0.000	0.042	0.012	0.071	0.005	0.195	0.162	0.227	0.000
Mean event distance	Trust military	0.147	0.116	0.177	0.000	0.008	-0.021	0.036	0.587	-0.003	-0.039	0.031	0.853
Number of events	Trust military	-0.158	-0.207	-0.111	0.000	-0.204	-0.239	-0.169	0.000	0.133	0.101	0.164	0.000
Fatalities (sum)	Trust president	0.187	0.147	0.227	0.000	0.022	-0.01	0.054	0.172	0.04	0.015	0.065	0.001
Closest event	Trust president	0.016	-0.018	0.049	0.334	0.005	-0.026	0.037	0.735	0.065	0.031	0.1	0.000
Mean event distance	Trust president	0.182	0.149	0.212	0.000	0.108	0.077	0.138	0.000	0.098	0.064	0.131	0.000
Number of events	Trust president	-0.227	-0.272	-0.178	0.000	-0.215	-0.249	-0.179	0.000	-0.015	-0.046	0.016	0.346
Handling violent conflict	Trust military	0.199	0.172	0.227	0.000	0.189	0.163	0.215	0.000	0.242	0.215	0.269	0.000
Handling violent conflict	Trust president	0.213	0.186	0.24	0.000	0.228	0.202	0.254	0.000	0.25	0.223	0.276	0.000
Trust military	Support military rule	0.049	0.017	0.079	0.002	0.012	-0.02	0.043	0.47	0.029	-0.001	0.059	0.065
Trust president	Support military rule	-0.004	-0.034	0.027	0.808	-0.009	-0.04	0.021	0.542	-0.01	-0.041	0.021	0.523
Handling violent conflict	Support military rule	0.102	0.073	0.133	0.000	0.091	0.062	0.122	0.000	0.092	0.063	0.123	0.000

## Endnotes

- 1 Thomas Isbell is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Democracy, Citizenship and Public Policy in Africa (University of Cape Town) as well as a Research Assistant at Afrobarometer. His PhD explores the role of perceptions of individual material inequality on popular support for democracy in Africa. Isbell has widely written on democracy, participation and service delivery in Africa using Afrobarometer data.
- 2 Throughout this paper I used the terms military and army interchangeably. While the army is typically a branch of the military, it is unlikely that ordinary people make such distinction when asked about the army in their country.
- 3 Since the latest round of Afrobarometer surveys in Mali in early 2020, Mali has seen military-led coups in both 2020 and 2021. Although the military-led interim governments have pledge democratic ambitions, it remains unclear how Mali will be governed in the future.
- 4 In earlier survey rounds, Afrobarometer asked respondents what the most essential characteristic of democracy was to them. The survey included two questions using the same question text with four response categories, each. In the first question, respondents most commonly said that to them the most essential characteristic of democracy was that people chose government leaders in free and fair elections (33%), followed by government narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor (25%) and freedom of expression (22%). In the second question, respondents most commonly said that government ensuring job opportunities for all (36%) was the most essential characteristic of democracy, followed by government ensuring law and order (24%). Multiparty competition and media freedom was mentioned by 18% and 17%, respectively. Importantly, the percentage cannot be compared across questions. Also, it must be considered that respondents were presented a closed question format, making it impossible to ascertain what they would have said without the given response categories.  
Another weakness of the Afrobarometer data are that the term 'democracy' is read out in English, French or Portuguese and only translated into a local language if the respondent does not understand the original term. Unfortunately, no recordings are made of how often the interviewer is required to do so and whether the interviewer was able to use a single local-language term or had to describe democracy to the respondent. However, the Afrobarometer survey does allow interviewers to record questions which they feel the respondents 'had problems answering' (Q109 in Round 7). 59 interviewers noted that respondents had issues regarding 'questions about democracy', without making references to specific questions, while 167 specifically name question 28 (Support for democracy). Moreover, 99 respondents refused to answer the question. Just over 4% of the sample said they 'don't know' (n=970), although no further details are available as to what exactly respondents may be referring to or whether the question was not understood. Respondents without any formal education (7%) or with primary schooling only (6%) are considerably more likely to say they 'don't know' than those with secondary (2%) or post-secondary (1%) education. This may suggest that the question is not understood by those lacking education or that the subject is not understood.
- 5 See also Norris (1999), Dalton (2004).
- 6 Testing whether respondents prefer democracy as a regime type over other regime forms is typically referred to as the Churchill hypothesis in survey research (Rose et al., 1998).
- 7 See also Bratton et al. (2005), Sin & Wells (2005).
- 8 Each of the three questions uses a 5-point scale (1= strongly disapprove, disapprove, neither disapprove nor approve, approve, 5= strongly approve). Respondents were also able to refuse to answer or say they 'don't know'. The latter two responses were excluded from the substantive analysis.
- 9 Respondents are then categorized by whether they 'strongly disapprove' or 'disapprove' such alternatives on the one hand, or 'approve', 'strongly approve' or 'neither approve nor disapprove' of alternatives on the other hand. The former category is awarded a score of 1 while the latter is awarded a score of 0. Likewise, respondents who said that democracy as a regime type is preferable to them are scored as 1, while respondents who said that alternatives may be preferable, or the regime type doesn't matter are scored as 0.
- 10 In Round 8, Afrobarometer interviewed 1200 respondents in Burkina Faso and Niger, respectively, 1199 in Niger and 1599 in Nigeria. Interviews were conducted 15 to 31 December 2019 in Burkina Faso, 16 March to 3 April 2020 in Mali, 29 October to 13 November 2020 in Niger and 20 January to 13 February 2020 in Nigeria.
- 11 See appendix 1 for an overview
- 12 Violence against civilians is comprised of three sub-event types: sexual violence, attack and abduction/forced disappearance
- 13 Battles in comprised of three sub-event types: armed clash, government regains territory, and non-state actor overtakes territory
- 14 Protests is comprised of three sub-event types: peaceful protest, protest with intervention, and excessive force against protesters
- 15 Within PSUs, random starting points, random households and random household members are selected. For more information see: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/surveys-and-methods/sampling/>
- 16 Respondents were asked: How well or badly would you say the current government is handling the following matters, or haven't you heard enough to say? Preventing or resolving violent conflict
- 17 Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? The army
- 18 Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? The president. In countries where the Prime Minister forms the head of government, people are asked how much the trust the Prime Minister, instead.
- 19 Covariance and disturbance terms were added as required. We used SPSS Amos version 26. Missing data was imputed using regression imputation. We used maximum likelihood estimation and performed bootstrapping (B=1000).

# Taxation, Coercion and Civicness in South Sudan

*Dr Matthew Benson*

## Overview

Recent scholarship underscores taxes are central to forging African governments that are more capable of delivering public services in ways that are accountable to citizens and representative of citizens' demands.<sup>1</sup> And yet, South Sudan illustrates that taxation without representation can also be embedded within a country's politics. A kleptocratic elite has captured most of South Sudan's petroleum finances despite the enormous need for basic public services to improve the lives of its 11 million citizens, the majority of whom live on less than \$1 a day. And while Charles Tilly's dictum that 'war made the state and the state made war' holds true in analyses of European state-formation, South Sudan's conflicts suggest that war made rebels and those rebels turned the state into a vehicle for self-enrichment.<sup>2</sup> Rather than democratic decline, the South Sudanese case underscores how anti-democratic governance patterns can remain firmly lodged within Africa if decolonisation, civil wars, or successful secession fail to disrupt colonial-era political economy patterns.

This paper analyses state budgets and direct tax practices in South Sudan to analyse how South Sudan departed from other countries in Africa and the world. This paper argues that because different states in South Sudan have relied upon export revenue, initially in the form of cotton and eventually oil, the country's direct tax architecture has remained an extractive governance tool used to subordinate populations. Neither decades of civil wars nor independent statehood have disrupted this governance pattern and tax revenue has continually failed to provide demonstrable benefits or services for contemporary South Sudanese citizens. In contrast to individuals and communities with privileged access to oil rents at the centre of government in Juba, South Sudan's rural territorial peripheries are consequently marginalized and excluded from state resources. Individual citizens'

rights in South Sudan's territorial peripheries are similarly diminished, which limits South Sudan's democratic prospects.

Rather than symbols of petty corruption, some direct taxes and fees are integral to the sustenance of the country's coercive political marketplace. This paper argues that this finding is rooted in the colonial state's embrace of a political economic repertoire the anthropologist Louisa Lombard frames as 'forceful acquisition'. The British-led colonial state occupied the vast region that is now South Sudan through collaboration with a network of customary authorities recruited from the population in the territory. The colonial state 'bought' or 'rented' collaboration from customary authorities through the explicit promotion and expansion of these individuals' social status rooted in their ability to coercively take taxes from others.<sup>3</sup> The post-independence Khartoum-led government subsequently adopted the same governance pattern and extended it to the country's civil service. Meanwhile, southern rebels fighting against the then unified formal government in Khartoum embraced similarly severe tactics. Most recently, South Sudan's post-independence leadership has integrated the same approach to devastating effect.

This paper, which draws on a larger research project, is based on a review of Sudanese, South Sudanese, and British colonial archival material from 1899 until the present. Due to the limited material available during South Sudan's civil wars due to conflict or environmental degradation, 200 oral histories from range of South Sudanese respondents supplement the archival review. Archival research took place from 2015 to 2019 and oral histories were conducted in 2019 and 2020. Direct taxes, as opposed to indirect taxes and licenses, are this article's focus because of their comparatively unique capacity to contribute to bargaining between taxpayers and government.<sup>4</sup>

## The Origin of South Sudan's Taxation Systems

Instead of 'starting from scratch' when South Sudan became independent in 2011, the country's direct tax system was built upon three sets of different tax collection practices. Each have embedded some coercive governance patterns and others that to a limited extent support civiness, which is a logic of public authority that contrasts with the political marketplace and identity politics.<sup>5</sup> These commenced with extractive colonial rule taxation policies that endured into the early years of post-colonial independence, which was followed by similarly coercive rebel taxation practices that emerged shortly afterwards. The third foundational layer emerged with the transition from rebel rule to South Sudan's independent statehood.

Two interconnected contemporary tax systems emerge from this layered past, which support different governance outcomes. One is 'government' taxes, which are largely monetary and levied by the civil service on individuals and businesses and taxes collected by customary authorities such as chiefs. Government taxes maintain a 'salaried' class of civil servants, who predate upon taxpayers largely to supplement their irregular wages and lack the fiscal resources to deliver public services.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, taxes levied by customary authorities, such as chiefs, provide a modicum of representation for most South Sudanese, which has been integral for communities to weather decades of conflict and successive, frequently violent, state-building attempts by different governments. These 'community' taxes are monetary but can also include food items and livestock.

Rather than a 'command and control' model of taxation from Juba to the peripheries, which is how the revenue system might appear from the capital, South Sudan's tax system is far more fragmented. This patchwork taxation system is shaped by different governments' attempts to wield taxes for a range of monetary and governance purposes, including as a tool for social control and the initiatives of rebel movements both to secure loyalty and partially to finance their own activities.<sup>7</sup> The taxes contemporary customary authorities

collect are exceptions to this pattern, as these now support perhaps the only example of taxation and representation in the country. The following three timeframes have shaped both coercive and civic tax practices in South Sudan:

### 1. Taxation, Submission, & Forceful Acquisition, 1899-1963

The first period commenced with the colonial arrangement known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium, which lasted from 1899 to 1956 and continued into independence until the first civil war began in 1963. Under British-led occupation, taxes were collected as a sign of fealty, submission, or loyalty to the British-led colonial state. Rather than pay for government, which was financed through export revenue, direct taxes were a tool for the state to 'buy' or 'rent' loyalty from government-selected customary authorities.

Taxes were a key component of the anthropologist Louisa Lombard's notion of 'forceful acquisition' and provides the basis for Alex de Waal's notion of transaction-based political dynamics in the country. Customary authorities benefited from tax collection in both material and social terms since they kept an unspecified proportion of tax revenue for their own aims and enhanced their social status through their central role on courts. Meanwhile, the colonial state used taxes to establish government-backed chieftaincies, which were loosely territorialised in ways that remain salient today. Taxes were also used to monitor the relative loyalty and fealty of chiefs depending on how much revenue they reported back.

This choice departed from colonial tax policies in other British-led colonies, such as the Gold Coast, now Ghana. In the Gold Coast direct taxes were so difficult to impose that the colonial state did not levy them until 1943, even though the territory had been under British occupation since 1821.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, in colonial Sierra Leone, the British colonial state paid chiefs 'extravagant amounts of money for following government directives'.<sup>9</sup>

Direct taxes did not fully finance local government administrations and customary authorities had limited incentives to develop public services for

their populaces when they personally benefitted from the tax regime. Instead, taxes were an effective tool for the colonial state to consolidate its authority over the vast territory that was difficult to physically access and took 30-years to violently 'pacify' through militarised colonial patrols. Local governments subsequently depended on fiscal transfers from the capitol, which is a governance pattern that continues into the present.

## 2. Taxation, Conflict, & Rebel Finance, 1963-2005

The second timeframe took shape shortly after then unified Sudan acquired its independence from the British in 1956 and approximately five decades of civil war commenced in 1963. During the first civil war against Khartoum-led rule, from 1963 to 1972, Anya-Nya rebels predatorily collected taxes to supplement their guerrilla war effort. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) adopted similar rebel taxation patterns during the wars for independence that it primarily led from 1983 to 2005, while also working through customary authorities to collect taxes.

Rebel taxes did not meaningfully finance local government civil administrations. Instead, in another overarching governance pattern that continues into contemporary South Sudan, from the Anya-Nya years into the fragmented SPLM/A administration into the region's 2011 independence, taxes supplemented external finances from regional and international powers. External finances included military support; additionally, while aid did not directly finance different kinds of rebel or state administrations the ability to manipulate aid contributed to the resources available to the SPLM/A.<sup>10</sup>

While seemingly insignificant to the official national budget, taxes supplemented decades of civil wars that contributed to independence. Nor are they a distant memory that is no longer salient to today's politics. When South Sudan's current leadership declares that people will simply 'return to the bush' if there are no economic opportunities available, this is a tacit reference to the enduring salience of the predatory taxation patterns that

rebel movements devised during the country's civil wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Taxes were directly linked to Lombard's notion of forceful acquisition as a political repertoire because the social status of these rebels was linked to their ability to take from southern populations in the region.

## 3. Taxation as Fragmented Predation & Limited Representation, 2005-Present

The current political, economic, and social moment emerged with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM/A. Accurate figures on the amount of oil revenue the Government of South Sudan derives from oil are not publicly available and the full scale of the revenues the country generates from oil are similarly difficult to ascertain. Even with these gaps, oil is widely believed to underpin most of the South Sudanese government's finances.<sup>11</sup> For example, South Sudan's most recent public revenue figures for FY2019/2020 budget state that the country generated just one quarter of its total revenue from non-oil revenue sources.<sup>12</sup>

A major outcome of this development is that subnational governments remain dependent on Juba both for the political legitimacy of nominally elected political representatives and for fiscal handouts.<sup>13</sup> Rather than contribute to much needed public services, government-administered taxes primarily support South Sudan's 'payroll peace' in which formal taxes that civil servants collect supplement their salaries.<sup>14</sup> The national civil service is consequently trapped in a holding pattern, whereby the taxes they raise, both informally and formally, barely cover or supplement shortcomings in pay, let alone finance expensive clinics or investments in public infrastructure. Meanwhile, interviews revealed that in some instances military personnel are literally fed by taxes local publics pay; the latter justifiably fear violent repercussions if they fail to comply.

Respondents noted that while there was some initial reprieve or patience among taxpayers, which was partly enabled by the provision of aid, these sentiments are wearing thin. Akin to how the SPLM/A leveraged aid during the wars that

led to independence, aid initially provided public evidence that post-2011 independence provided aid-sponsored medical clinics, roads, and schools. However, interviewed taxpayers now openly question where their tax revenue is going when public services are essentially contracted out to the international aid system.

Throughout these waves of conflicts and the subsequent transition from rebel rule to internationally recognised statehood, customary authorities devised innovative ways to survive decades of political instability, politically motivated violence, and in some instances, environmental degradation. Civil war and neglectful post-2011 governance patterns have shifted the institution of chieftaincy from one that was solely founded in forceful acquisition towards one that is rooted in their ability to both obtain taxes and transparently spend them on public services that are representative of taxpayer demands. This transformation is notable given the broader context in which the South Sudanese state fails to deliver public services and elected officials use government positions to self-enrich.

Across research sites, for example, customary authorities collected taxes that communities used to respond to citizens' demands to redress inequities. This includes redistributing food within the community to ensure food insecure families are aided. Other examples include motivating labour to construct local infrastructure in the form of roads and at a much smaller scale to assist communities with social functions such as funerals and weddings. The taxes that customary authorities collect

consequently represent a potentially transformative source of civicness. Customary authorities' taxes are consensual and largely voluntary and in so doing so generate and sustain 'integrity, trust, civility, inclusion and dialogue, and non-violence', which are tenants of the concept.<sup>15</sup>

## Conclusion

This historically embedded analysis shines a brighter light on the bottom-up nature of South Sudan's political marketplace, which is in part shaped by state capture and potentially counteracted by the expanded representation community taxes provide. Instead of 'starting from scratch' as the South Sudan related cliché goes, akin to other governments that have occupied the region prior to 2011, including the British-led colonial state, the economy of the independent South Sudanese state is once again dominated by rents. Just as during British and subsequent Sudanese rule, these revenues are not meaningfully distributed to devolved or decentralised subnational regions. Contrary to how the political marketplace might appear to analysts at the centre of government in Juba, the picture that emerges across this project's research sites does not adhere to a command-and-control model from Juba to the peripheries. The system is closer to fragmented predation rather than what the scholar Mahmood Mamdani characterises as 'decentralised despotism'.<sup>16</sup> Despite the hope South Sudan's 2011 independence justifiably embodied, the coercive political economy embraced by the Sudanese and British-led colonial state that previously occupied the region has endured and undermined contemporary South Sudan's democratic prospects. ■



## Endnotes

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# Coalition Building and Electoral Alternation in Malawi

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## Introduction

Proponents of democracy in Africa postulate that alternation in power between political parties and leaders increases the capacity for citizens to hold their leaders accountable (Carbone and Pellegata, 2017: 1). Yet, electoral alternation in Africa remains rare. Between 1990 and 2019, incumbent leaders won almost 90% of all executive elections held on the continent (Cheeseman, 2010; Bleck and van de Walle, 2019). Incumbent leaders have an arsenal of techniques that they use to guarantee their re-election which includes gerrymandering, corruption, coercion, and electoral fraud (Cheeseman, 2015: 146). These techniques allow incumbents to subvert the electoral playing field and to create disparities between ruling parties and the opposition in terms of access to resources, public media, and the law (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 58).

The high rate of incumbent wins has coincided with a global decline in democratic regime attributes (Lührmann and Lindberg, 2019). It was reported in 2020 that 34% of the world's population was affected by a wave of autocratization (Hellemeier et al., 2021). On average, the level of democracy enjoyed by the global citizen in 2020 was down to levels last witnessed in 1990 (V-Dem Institute, 2021). Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the African continent reported similarly significant declines in freedom, the state of democracy, and quality of elections in 2020 (Repucci and Slipowitz, 2021). Incumbent governments used COVID-19 restrictions to hinder voter registration and to repress opposition campaign programmes (ibid: 25). Elections held in Tanzania, Central African Republic, and Togo – which were all won by incumbents – were characterized by government repression, violence, and accusations of fraud (ibid). Presidents Alassane Ouattara of Cote D'Ivoire and Alpha Condé of Guinea also won unconstitutional third terms.

Malawi stands out for being one of only two countries – alongside Seychelles – that experienced alternation in power, out of 11 elections held for president on the continent in 2020 (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, 2022). Malawi had held regular elections in May 2019 that were won by President Peter Mutharika of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The election results were petitioned by opposition parties – that cited fraud and other irregularities in the vote counting process – and nullified by the High Court (Siachiwena and Saunders, 2021). Mutharika and the DPP lost the ensuing fresh election that was held in June 2020.

This essay asks what explains electoral alternation in Malawi amidst global democratic decline. It argues that the formation of a multi-ethnic and multi-regional coalition involving the two largest opposition parties galvanized popular support amongst citizens who were dissatisfied with the economic performance of the incumbent president and governing political party. The formation of an opposition coalition in 2020 allowed the leading opposition presidential candidates – Lazarus Chakwera of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) and Saulos Chilima of the United Transformation Movement (UTM) – to unite their political and regional bases under one platform. This essay argues that alternation of power to the opposition would not have happened in the absence of a coalition for three reasons. Firstly, data from an Afrobarometer survey conducted in late 2019 show that the DPP and MCP were in a 'dead heat' with similar levels of support (Dulani and Chunga, 2020: 2). Secondly, the MCP and UTM contested the 2019 elections as separate political parties but neither of them had more support than the DPP. Finally, the rules for determining a majority were changed by the High Court ahead of the 2020 poll, which required a winner to obtain more than 50% of the vote. These factors provided incentives for political parties to

form election coalitions which had implications for the results and electoral alternation in Malawi.

The rest of this essay proceeds as follows. First, it provides a background of the 2019 and 2020 elections and discusses the results of each contest. The essay then turns to Afrobarometer survey data to understand the attitudes of Malawian citizens towards aspects of economic performance and the leading political parties ahead of the June 2020 elections. Thereafter, the essay discusses the significance of an opposition coalition for understanding Malawi's electoral alternation. Finally, the essay concludes by demonstrating the implications of opposition coalition building and electoral alternation for democracy and elections in Africa.

### **Malawi's 2019 and 2020 elections**

Malawi transitioned from one party rule to a multiparty democracy in the early 1990s and held its sixth multiparty elections in May 2019. The 2019 presidential election was won by the incumbent president, Peter Mutharika of the DPP, who obtained 38% of the vote (Dionne and Dulani, 2020). He was followed closely by Lazarus Chakwera of the MCP who garnered 35% (ibid). Mutharika's immediate former vice president, Saulos Chilima of the UTM, was third with 20% (ibid). Chakwera and Chilima petitioned the election results in the High Court, citing various irregularities in the management of the elections (Chirwa et al, 2020: 410). The country was also engulfed with a series of protests led by a civic organization, the Human Rights Defenders Coalition (HRDC), which demanded the nullification of the election and resignation of the head of the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) for mismanaging the election (Chunga, 2020: 1). Thousands of Malawian citizens participated in the protests that were held in the country's largest cities for several months. Afrobarometer survey data revealed that 53% of Malawians agreed with the key demands of the protests (ibid: 2). In February 2020, the High Court nullified the May 2019 presidential election and ordered a fresh poll within 150 days from the date of the ruling (Dulani and Chunga, 2020: 1). In a 500-page ruling, the court

found that there were widespread irregularities in the 2019 poll which included the use of Tippex correction fluid to change results (Siachiwena and Saunders, 2021: 83). The outcome was an especially unusual thing for the High Court to do given that they had never nullified a presidential election before. The extent of irregularities (including the alternation of results with Tippex) was cited as the main reason for the nullification. It is also likely that sustained protests from citizens contributed to the High Court's ruling. Although the DPP and the MEC appealed the ruling in the Supreme Court, the apex court upheld the ruling, also citing widespread irregularities in the management of elections.

The MEC set June 23 as the date for a fresh presidential election (Chirwa et al., 2020: 411). While the 2019 election was held under the first-past-the-post (FPTP) voting system, the High Court ordered that the 2020 election would be held under a 50% plus 1 majority electoral system, which the court argued was the correct method for determining an electoral majority according to the Malawian Constitution (Siachiwena and Saunders, 2021: 83). Given that neither of the leading political parties had come close to obtaining 50% of the vote in 2019, the parties and their candidates recognized the importance of forming electoral coalitions to bolster their chances of securing electoral victory.

The DPP formed its alliance with the opposition United Democratic Front (UDF), which had been the party in government from 1994 to 2005. Meanwhile, the MCP and UTM formed an alliance known as 'Tonse' which means 'together' in the Chewa language. The June 2020 elections were therefore held under new MEC leadership and a new threshold for determining a majority. The MEC declared Chakwera of the Tonse Alliance the winner with 59% of the vote (Siachiwena and Saunders, 2021: 84), which met the 50% plus 1 threshold and averted a run-off. This series of events made Malawi only the second African country to have a court nullify a presidential election won by an incumbent, after Kenya in 2017, and the first to witness a transition to the opposition after a fresh election. It was also only one of two countries on

the continent where alternation in power occurred in 2020. What dynamics help to explain this rare case of electoral alternation?

### Survey evidence

Prior to the June 2020 contest, an Afrobarometer survey was conducted that showed that most Malawian citizens were dissatisfied with various aspects of government economic performance. Most citizens also reported low levels of trust and support in the president. The data further show that neither of the opposition parties commanded sufficient support to unseat the DPP in the absence of a coalition. This section reports descriptive statistics from the survey to demonstrate the extent of support that each party had. This also helps to explain why both the ruling party and the opposition formed coalitions ahead of the fresh poll.

The Afrobarometer Network conducted its eighth Malawian survey in November and December 2019. It was conducted 6 months after the May 2019 elections and at least six months before the June 2020 poll. The survey was based on interviews with 1,200 adult Malawians. This sample size yields country-level results with a margin of error of +/-3 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

The Afrobarometer survey includes several questions that ask citizens about their perceptions of aspects related to development and democracy.

Table 1 reports the percentage of citizens who held positive assessments of various issues that measure the performance of the president and government. It also reports the percentage of the survey population that had high levels of trust in the president, the ruling party, and the opposition.

Afrobarometer computes a lived poverty index (LPI), on a four-point scale from 0 to 4, which measures the frequency with which citizens in a country went without access to five basic necessities in the previous year. The five necessities are food to eat, clean water for home use, medical treatment, fuel to cook food and, a cash income. The LPI provides an average score based on each respondent's response to the five questions. Table 1 reports results of citizens who reported high levels of lived poverty in 2019, measured as those who scored an average of more than 2. The results show that at least six months before the June 2020 election, nearly three-quarters of Malawian citizens (71%), reported high levels of lived poverty.

It is not surprising, therefore, that most Malawians also had negative evaluations about the president and ruling party. Only 40% of all surveyed citizens approved or strongly approved the performance of the president. About a quarter (24%) believed the government was managing the economy well or very well. Further, roughly 1 in 10 respondents (13%) reported that Malawi's present economic conditions were fairly good or very good. It is also notable that the percentage of respondents that

*Table 1 Descriptive statistics of Performance and Trust*

Issue	Percentage
High Lived Poverty	71%
Positive evaluation of performance of the president	40%
Positive evaluations of government's handling in managing the economy	24%
Positive evaluations of country's present economic conditions	13%
High levels of trust in the president	43%
High levels of trust in the ruling party	40%
High levels of trust in the opposition	43%

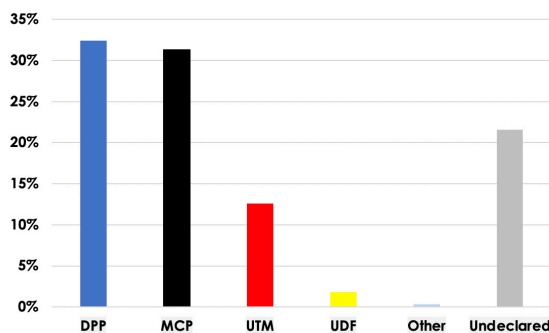
*Source: Afrobarometer R8 survey*

had high levels of trust in the president and the opposition was similar, at 43%. The levels of trust in the ruling party were slightly lower, at 40%.

What emerges from these data is that the president and the leading opposition party enjoyed similar levels of trust despite most citizens reporting negative assessments about the president and ruling party. A further analysis of the survey data reveals that regional dynamics were crucial for both ruling party and opposition support. Afrobarometer surveys ask the question: “If national elections were held tomorrow, which party would you vote for?” Figure 1 reports the results for parties that received 1% or more of the intended vote choice. It also reports the results of citizens who intended to vote for other parties and those who did not declare their voting intentions i.e., those who would not vote, did not know who they would vote for, or refused to indicate which party they would vote for.

Figure 1 shows that 32% of Malawians in the survey indicated that they would vote for the then ruling DPP if an election were held the following day. This was only 1% percentage point more than respondents (at 31%) who indicated that they would vote for the official opposition, the MCP. Thirteen percent indicated that they would vote for the third largest party, the UTM, while 2% would vote for the fourth largest party, the UDF. However, about a fifth of respondents (22%) did not declare their voting intentions while less than 1% reported intentions to vote for other smaller political parties.

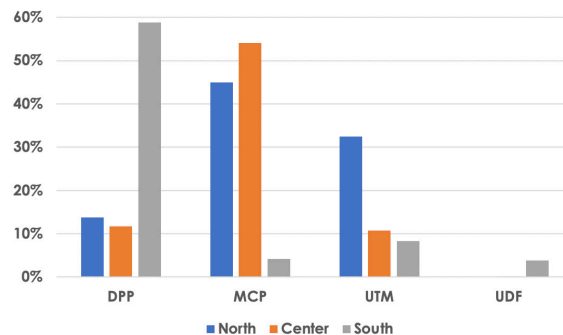
*Figure 1 Preferred Presidential Candidate*



*Source: Afrobarometer R8 survey*

It is evident from the data that no party could meet the 50% plus 1 threshold to obtain a majority under the new electoral system. However, as Figure 2 shows, the four parties that garnered more than 1% of support amongst prospective Malawian voters, each commanded regional support. This support was crucial for coalition building and determining which presidential candidate could win a majority.

*Figure 2 Voting Intentions by Region*



*Source: Afrobarometer R8 survey*

Historically, elections in Malawi have been characterized by regional bloc voting patterns. In the first democratic elections (after one-party rule) held in 1994, voters in each of Malawi’s three administrative regions, bloc voted for a candidate who originated from that region (Kaspin, 1995: 595). The trend has repeated itself in subsequent elections, except for 2009 when former president, Bingu wa Mutharika, won with 66% in the presidential vote. The Afrobarometer survey data show that the DPP which was led by a Southerner, was the most popular party in terms of intended vote choice in the South, with 59%. By contrast, less than 15% of respondents in the North or Center indicated intentions to vote for the DPP. The UDF which was also led by a Southerner – Atupele Muluzi – recorded 4% of the intended vote choice in the South, and 0% in both the North and Center. The coalition between Mutharika’s DPP and Muluzi’s UDF, was therefore limited to support in the South.

The MCP received 54% of support amongst survey respondents in the Center, which is the home region of the party’s president. The party also

received 45% support in the North but only 4% in the South. The UTM's Chilima recorded 33% of the intended vote choice in the North. Support for UTM was much smaller in the Center and South, with only 11% and 8% respectively, in terms of voting intentions. These results demonstrate that the coalition between MCP and UTM had broader regional appeal than that of the DPP and UDF.

### **Significance of the opposition coalition**

Across much of Sub-Saharan Africa, political parties have often been associated with representing the interests of specific ethnic groups – usually the co-ethnics of a party leader – at the expense of programmatic content (Arriola, 2012). Malawi has frequently been described as a country whose politics is defined by ethnicity or regional voting patterns (Kaspin, 1995). Arriola (2012) observed that incumbent African parties routinely retained power because the opposition was often fragmented along ethnic or regional lines and failed to unite against incumbents that enjoyed various advantages.

While Afrobarometer evidence suggests that regionalism is important for explaining support for leading political parties ahead of Malawi's 2020 election, regional voting is not sufficient to explain why electoral alternation occurred. The nullification of the 2019 election by the High Court and the determination that an electoral majority must be defined as obtaining 50% plus 1 of all votes, created an incentive for political parties to form coalitions to contest the 2020 poll. In the 2020 contest, the MCP and UTM therefore formed a coalition that galvanized support in the North and Center. While perceptions of Mutharika and the DPP's handling of the economy were low, the party enjoyed significant regional support in the South which contributed to its electoral success in 2019 under the FPTP voting system. This shows that neither regional support nor performance evaluations were sufficient for electoral alternation. What mattered was the ability for political parties to establish multi-regional coalitions led by popular candidates with support from more than one administrative region – and the incentive for them to do so created by the new requirement for a 50% plus one majority.

### **Conclusion**

The African continent experienced a democratic wave in the early 1990s but that has not translated into democratic consolidation (Bleck and van de Walle, 2019). Incumbents have a range of techniques at their disposal that allow them to win most elections. This has contributed to a general decline in democracy regionally and globally. This was notable in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, when several countries on the continent faced democratic challenges including elections that were neither free nor fair. Malawi provides a unique case of a country that had elections nullified in 2019 because of irregularities only for an opposition coalition to win a fresh election more than a year later. Malawi's 2020 election demonstrates that there are possibilities for electoral alternation on the continent despite recent trends, and that changes in the design of elections can encourage such outcomes. Alternation between political parties is crucial for democracy as it increases the ability for citizens to hold their leaders accountable.

This research essay also shows that democratic institutions such as courts have important roles to play in safeguarding African democracy. The High Court's interpretation of majority to mean 50% plus 1 vote, prompted leading political parties and their presidential candidates to form coalitions. The creation of the Tonse Alliance mobilized support across political party and regional lines which was sufficient to dislodge the DPP from power. This further demonstrates the importance of opposition coalition building especially in multi-ethnic societies characterized by regional bloc voting patterns. In the absence of such coalitions, incumbents have a high likelihood of retaining power even when their performance in handling the economy does not meet the expectations of most citizens. Moreover, parties that form government with only a plurality of the vote, have an incentive to govern in the interests of ethnic groups or regions that brought them to power, at the expense of the majority of citizens who expect policy adjustments that address broader national concerns. ■



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# The Impact of Electoral Violence on Electoral Participation and Support for Democracy in Kenya

*Martin Fikiri Oswald*

## 1. Introduction

Electoral violence is a common occurrence in Africa. Most African countries have experienced varying degrees of electoral violence. Citizens' fear and experiences of electoral violence have had an impact on their support for democracy on the one hand and their propensity to participate in democratic activities such as voting and attending campaign meetings on the other. Thus, it is the purpose of this study to determine the extent to which fear of electoral violence impacts individual support for democracy and participation in electoral activities in Kenya.

It is hypothesized that individuals who have experienced and fear some form of electoral violence and/or intimidation are less likely to support democracy as well as less likely to participate in democratic activities such as voting and attending campaign meetings. Election campaigns are the most essential platforms for politicians to connect and communicate with voters about their election manifestos and goals. Thus, nonparticipation in election campaigns, especially in newly democratizing countries, is not a good indicator for democratic consolidation. Correspondingly, nonparticipation out of fear of violence is likely to lead to a communication breakdown between candidates and the electorate, which is harmful, especially to participatory democracy. The viability of democracy largely depends on widespread citizen participation without which the quality of elected leaders is likely to be negatively affected.

## 2. Electoral democracy in Kenya

In the early 1990s, Africa rushed to reintroduce "liberal democracy", defined in terms of multiparty politics, the conduct of regular and competitive

elections among parties and candidates, separation of powers between and among the branches of government, checks and balances, an independent judiciary and rule of law, an independent and impartial election management bodies, civil society organizations as well as an impartial and balanced media. These are seen as the necessary ingredients of a successful democracy. Huntington (1993) referred to this rush as "*the third wave of democracy*," which surged over Africa after decades of various forms of autocracy such as one-party regimes, military rule, and dictatorships. Kenya was not left behind in this stampede. After more than 30 years of monopolistic single-party administration, Kenya transitioned to democracy in 1991.

Prior to the transition, Kenya African National Union (KANU) solely governed for more than three decades. After the opening of the political space, Kenya saw a proliferation of political parties and related democratic institutions. Following this transition, in 1992 the country held its first multiparty elections with eight newly formed parties. Since then, Kenya has successfully and uninterruptedly held elections every five years. However, these elections have been marred by sporadic acts of violence of varying degrees, with the 2007 elections being the most violent.

Apart from conducting elections uninterruptedly for three decades and providing the citizens with the democratic right of electing their leaders and the right to be elected for political offices, the restoration of democracy in Kenya has been successful in several other ways. Through the conduct of elections, there have been successful transfers of power between and among political leaders and political parties. Along with that, there has been an improvement in the quality of elections in terms of the rules and laws governing the practice.<sup>1</sup> There has also been

an improvement in the number of people who participate in the activity such as the voters (voter turnout)<sup>2</sup>, candidates vying for political offices, political parties, civil society organizations and institutions. All these have increased in quality and quantity over time making elections increasingly competitive.

However, the transition to democracy has not been without difficulties and challenges. Election-time clashes and disputes between rival candidates and party supporters have often sparked electoral acts of violence. Out of apprehension of violence, voters tend to avoid attending campaign events and are more likely to skip the polls on election day. This has resulted not only in low voter turnout but also in minimal support for democracy. This has been the trend not only in Kenya but in other African countries, as has been documented and evidenced by Mpabanga (2000) and by Kuenzi and Lambright (2007). And, as Adejumbi (2000:59) puts it, elections have been the main victim of the common occurrences of electoral violence across Africa.

According to studies on electoral violence in Africa, more than 50 percent of elections since the transition in the 1990s can be characterized as violent, with the citizens suffering from abuse, intimidation, property loss, and, in some cases, fatalities as a result of the electoral process (Burchard, 2015:3). As evidence of the seriousness of the issue, Lindberg (2006) states that between 1990 and 2000, there was electoral violence in 80 percent of the elections held in Africa. This is similar to recent investigations which show that almost no African election is free of violence (Straus and Taylor; 2009; Adolfo et al. 2012).

Given the severity of the problem, electoral violence has attracted massive attention among political scientists and sociologists with most scholars focusing on the causes and effects of electoral violence. Studies have identified the closeness of competition and institutional frameworks in the management of elections as some of the triggers

of violence (Wilkinson 2006; Chaturvedi 2005; Kristine Höglund 2009; Straus and Taylor 2009; Collier 2011). On the effects of electoral violence, a sizeable literature focuses on voter turnout and democracy (Bratton 2008; Collier and Vicente 2014; Condra et al. 2018; Ley 2018; Burchard 2015, 2020). On the other hand, much less scholarship has attempted to examine the impact of electoral violence on other political attitudes. Those studies which have been done have concluded that electoral violence undermines citizens' *support for democracy* and *political trust* (Burchard 2020; Höglund 2009; Opitz, Fjelde, and Höglund 2013).

### 3. Research design

The paper uses the violence in Kenya's 2007 elections and the subsequent election in 2012 as a case study. The analysis was performed using Afrobarometer survey data conducted in 2014, i.e the survey after the 2012 elections. The choice of this data is to allow the study to assess how supportive or unsupportive of democracy citizens were after experiencing electoral violence. This is consistent with the study's premise that citizens who are exposed to and/or have experienced electoral violence are less inclined to support democracy and hence may be unwilling to participate in democratic activities like voting and attending election campaign meetings. Consequently, citizens are likely to prefer less violent non-democratic regimes to democratic regimes that instill violence.

Self-reported individual fear of electoral violence is this study's dependent variable. This is selected from Afrobarometer's survey question where respondents were asked: "During election campaigns in this country, how much do you personally fear becoming a victim of political intimidation or violence?" Responses were coded (0) fear and (1) do not fear.

The independent variables are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Variable definition: dependent, independent and control variables

Variable	Variable description
<i>Dependent variable</i>	
Fear of election violence	Binary variable: 0=Fear; 1=Do not fear
<i>Independent variables</i>	
Attend a political rally	Binary variable: 0=No; 1=Yes
Support for democracy	Categorical variable: 1=non-democratic can be preferable; 2=Democracy preferable.
Political interest (public affairs)	Categorical variable: 0=Not interested; 1=Somewhat interested; 2=Very interested
Political trust (IEBC)	Categorical: 0=Not at all trust; 1=Just a little; 2=A lot
Discuss politics	Categorical variable: 0=Never, 1=Occasionally; 2=Frequently
Vote last election	Binary variable: 0=No; 1=Yes

#### 4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics using SPSS (Figure 1, Table 2 and Table 3) show that more than two third (67 percent) of the respondents indicated fear of electoral violence in the 2012 elections. This fear of electoral violence explains why almost three quarter (74 percent) of the respondents indicated that they did not attend election campaigns. After performing a frequency analysis, it was found

that half of the respondents (50 percent) are not interested in politics and only less than a quarter (22 percent) indicated interest in politics. With regards to trusting the election management body - the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), only slightly lower than a quarter (23 percent) indicated trust for the body. The rest either do not trust it at all (28 percent) or have little trust (49 percent).

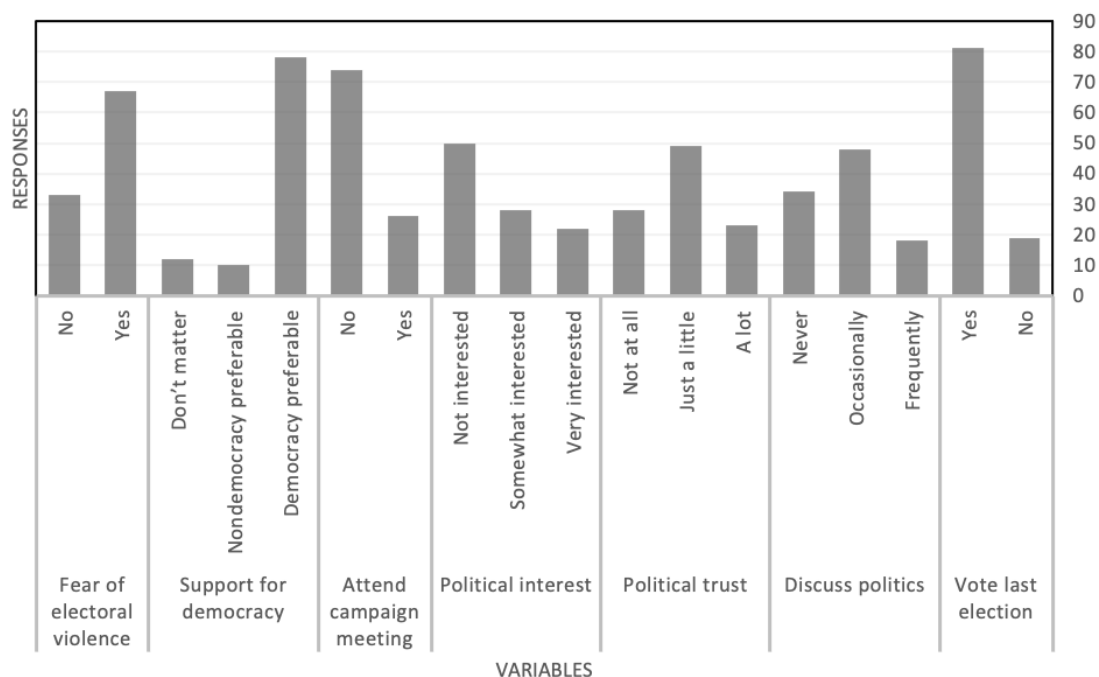


Figure 1: Respondents' fear of electoral violence against other political attitudes (in percentages) Source: Afrobarometer

Table 2: Frequencies of responses of selected variables

Variables/Questions	Responses	Percentages
Fear electoral violence	Yes	67
	No	33
Attend campaign meeting	Yes	26
	No	74
Support for democracy	Doesn't matter	12
	Non-democratic preferable	10
	Democracy preferable	78
Political interest	Not interested	50
	Somewhat interested	28
	Very interested	22
Political trust	Not at all	28
	Just a little trust	49
	Trust a lot	23
Discuss politics	Never	34
	Occasionally	48
	Frequently	18
Vote last election	Voted	81
	Did not vote	19

Source: Afrobarometer

A simple crosstabulation of fear of electoral violence and selected variables provided useful results that substantiate the frequency analysis results. The crosstabulation results show that more than three quarter of respondents who fear electoral violence (76 percent) did not attend election campaign meetings. Although the voter turnout from the sample seems to have been relatively high at 80 percent, more of those who fear electoral violence did not vote (21 percent) compared to 17 percent of those who do not fear electoral violence. Similarly, there were fewer respondents that fear electoral violence who voted (79 percent) compared to 83 percent of the respondents who voted and indicated they did not fear electoral violence.

Therefore, most respondents who fear electoral violence did not vote.

With regards to support for democracy, the simple crosstabulation of *fear of electoral violence* and *support for democracy* showed that those who fear electoral violence were less supportive of democracy (78 percent) than those who do not fear electoral violence (81 percent). The same applies to the trust variable where fewer respondents who fear electoral violence (19 percent) trust the electoral management body than 31 percent of the respondents who do not fear electoral violence. This is to say that those who fear electoral violence are less trustful of IEBC than those who are not fearful.

Table 3: Self-reported fear of electoral violence against selected variables, as percentages

Variables	Responses	Fear electoral violence	
		Yes	No
Attend campaign meeting	No	76	72
	Yes	24	28
Support for democracy	Doesn't matter	12	11
	Non-democratic preferable	10	8
	Democracy preferable	78	81
Political interest	Not interested	49	53
	Somewhat interested	30	24
	Very interested	21	23
Political trust (IEBC)	Not at all	34	16
	Just a little trust	47	53
	Trust a lot	19	31
Discuss politics	Never	33	35
	Occasionally	50	44
	Frequently	17	21
Vote last election	Did not vote	21	17
	Voted	79	83

Source: Afrobarometer

## 5. Implications and Conclusion

The results of this study have shown that electoral violence tends to discourage the electorate from taking part in electoral activities including voting and attending election campaign meetings. Similarly, the fear of electoral violence has proven to affect the electorate on other attitudinal and behavioural aspects of democracy apart from voting and attending election campaigns. These other attitudinal aspects include support for democracy, political trust and political interest. It was found that citizens who fear electoral violence are less likely to have an interest in politics, support democracy and trust institutions that manage elections.

These findings are congruent to those found by other scholars on the subject matter in Africa. They include Kramon (2013), Bratton, Bhavnani, and Chen (2012) Bratton, (2008), Burchard, (2015, 2020), Collier & Vicente (2014), Condra et al., (2018) and Ley, (2018) who concluded that electoral violence had a significant impact on the levels of electoral participation in Africa at varying levels and intensity. From the findings of this study, it is important to strengthen democratic institutions to earn the citizen's trust and confidence. By so doing citizens' support of democracy will be restored hence more participation which is important for the survival of democracy. With strong and trustworthy institutions in place – such as competent and impartial electoral management

bodies and a vigorous independent media- we might expect to have more reliable and peaceful elections.

Aside from institutional shortcomings in administering peaceful elections, electoral violence is attributed to a variety of issues. The closeness of elections is cited as one of the factors contributing to violent elections. In Africa, proximity is usually related to and based on ethnicity, religiosity, and/or regionalism, where contending parties want the election to be in their favour, triggering fights with opponents. For example, ethnicity is cited to be significantly responsible for the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya (Wahman 2014; Burchard 2015; Gutiérrez-Romero and LeBas 2015). Therefore, in addition to building democratic institutions, it is important to inculcate political tolerance in society and appreciation of the diversity that exists in the country. ■

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## Endnotes

- 1 On 27 August 2010 Kenya promulgated a new constitution replacing the 1963 independence constitution, which provided among other things better rules of managing elections.
- 2 However, in recent elections, voter turnout has been appallingly low.

# Electoral Institutions, Perceptions, and Consolidation of Kenya's Democracy

*Sylvia Muriuki<sup>1</sup>*

Kenya's democracy dates back to independence when the newly established republic embraced a multiparty political system. Soon after independence, a series of constitutional amendments constrained the political space, transforming Kenya first into a de facto one-party state in 1964 and then into a de jure one-party state in 1982. A push for political liberalization returned the country to a multiparty system in 1991. There was hope then that multiparty elections would finally give Kenya the democracy for which it yearned. This hope diminished with the elections that followed, culminating in a violent electoral conflict in 2007-8 which paved the way for electoral reforms. The promulgation of Kenya's second constitution in 2010 established various electoral institutions aimed at responding to challenges relating to the consolidation of Kenya's young democracy. However, these reforms have not eliminated the high-stakes elections that create fear and uncertainty of political [in]stability related to disputed electoral outcomes. This paper uses Afrobarometer data to argue that the problem with Kenya's elections lies in the perception of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission's (IEBC) ability to guarantee credible free fair elections as demonstrated by the election petitions presented before the Supreme Court of Kenya challenging the legitimacy of the 2013, 2017 and 2022 election outcomes. Low trust levels in electoral management should impact negatively on the legitimization of elections and the subsequent democracy consolidation process in Kenya. But surprisingly, the Afrobarometer data does not find a strong correlation between mistrust in IEBC and trust in democracy especially after the institutionalization of elections by the 2010 Constitution of Kenya.

This essay uses online data from the Afrobarometer public opinion survey on democracy in Kenya to examine the implications of perceptions of the

IEBC and election management for the legitimacy of elections and democracy. It has four sections: an introduction which discusses the theory of liberal democracy, background on elections in Kenya, the data on perceptions of the IEBC and election management, and a conclusion.

## 1.0 Introduction

Strong formal institutions are necessary for the progress of democracy in any democratic state. Institutions are humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic, and social interactions (North, 1991, p. 97). Election management bodies are fundamental institutions in the electoral process, due to their role in securing, protecting, and promoting democracy (Abuya, 2010). Election management is a critical determinant of the perception of elections as credible, free, and fair or not and the subsequent progress of the democratic consolidation process. The perceptions of citizens about credibility and fairness impact the legitimacy of elections and the acceptability of their outcomes (Pippa, 2015). The success of any election is gauged by the extent to which it promotes or hinders political stability (McAuslan & Ghai, 1966)

While elections alone are insufficient institutions for democracy, no other institution precedes participatory, competitive legitimate elections (Lindberg, 2006). Elections are the first step without which democracy cannot be born (Bratton & Van de Walle, 1997). They are important pillars of democracy that provide citizens the opportunity to exercise their sovereign right by electing their leaders and at the same time legitimizing their government (Lindberg, 2006). Furthermore, credible, free, and fair elections promote the progress of democracy and its deepening by promoting political and civil rights (Lindberg, 2006) Regular, free, and acceptable

elections indicate whether basic constitutional, behavioral, and attitudinal foundations are being laid for a sustainable democratic rule (Bratton, 1998). Building on these arguments, this essay observes that Kenya's aspiration to consolidate its emerging democracy through multiparty elections is problematic. The problem lies in the perception of the election management body's capacity to guarantee open and fair electoral competition by following the laid down rules as stipulated in the Constitution of Kenya and other rules governing election management. Every five years of the electoral cycle the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) finds itself on the receiving end when election outcomes are disputed – at times with violence – eroding the democratic gains and threatening to destabilize the country.

While there are many views on what democracy is, this study adopts the Liberal democracy framework that emphasizes the centrality of elections in establishing democratic governments, rule of law, separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property (Zakaria, 1997, p. 22). Consolidation of democracy refers to following the democratic rules for competitive inclusive elections that guarantee the political and civil rights of the citizens (Dahl, 1998; Dahl, 1971). Democratic consolidation is attained when democracy is “the only game in town” and when no major political groups are advocating for a return to authoritarian rule or an overthrow of the democratic system (Linz & Stepan, 1996). The level of consolidation can be assessed in terms of the supremacy of the rule of law, such that even in disputes the use of violence is not an option. Consolidation and deepening of democracy thus implies stability by avoiding democratic erosion and breakdown until disloyal players are eliminated, neutralized, or converted (Schedler, 1998, pp. 95-103).

## 2.0 Background of Elections in Kenya

The process of building democracy and the challenges of democratic consolidation are contextual and unique to each state. In Kenya, historical, socio-economic, and political factors have each played a key role in determining the

trajectories of the democratization process. The challenges associated with election management in Kenya are therefore located within this context.

When Kenya attained independence in 1963, it embraced multiparty democracy. It inherited a Westminster parliamentary system with a Senate and a National Assembly. The dominant parties, namely, Kenya African National Union (KANU) and Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). KANU formed the government with Jomo Kenyatta becoming president and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga his deputy. In 1964, KADU disbanded and joined KANU, purportedly in the national interest of making Kenya a *de facto* one-party state (Ajulu, 1999). Although the independence constitution of 1963 created an electoral management body to oversee elections, the institution lacked independence from the onset. The commissioners were appointed by the governor-general. Following the constitutional amendment of 1966 (The Turncoat Rule), the office of supervisor of elections was created to supervise elections and put under the Attorney General's office. As an electoral body, it played a subdued role since civil servants became increasingly involved in the management of elections (Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission, 2020).

In 1982, Kenya became a *de jure* one-party state following a constitutional amendment. The one-party system greatly affected the ability of the electoral management body to promote free and fair elections, as the political competition was reduced to a one-party affair. With the shrinking of political space, agitation for multiparty politics intensified in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Internationally, the early 1990s is associated with the third wave of democratization that opened up more democratic space in Africa for political change following the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a global power (Huntington, 1993). Kenya's politics were influenced by these international trends.

In 1991, the repeal of section 2 (A) of the constitution that had established the single-party rule re-established multiparty politics in Kenya (Adar, 2000). This required election reforms. Parliament abolished the office of the Supervisor

of Elections and instead recognized the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) as the sole body responsible for elections. (Independent Review Commission, 2007). ECK had operational independence from the government structures by recruiting its staff and did not rely on the previous local administration structures, a significant departure from the past. However, President Moi unilaterally appointed the commissioners of ECK, putting into question the independence of the institution, and the opportunity to establish a fair electoral body was lost. As argued by Nasong'o (2007), the problem was that there was political liberalization without democratization of political institutions and the rules of the game.

The flawed multiparty elections over the years exploded into a violent electoral conflict in 2007-8 which was blamed on the failure of the election management body to dispense its mandate as a neutral body (Independent Review Commission, 2007). The 2007-8 electoral violence provided an opportunity to review the Constitution, leading to electoral reforms. Following the promulgation of a new Constitution of Kenya in 2010, there was renewed hope that the institutionalization of multiparty elections would yield peaceful predictable stable electoral cycles. However, this has remained elusive. Electoral competition is as disappointing as it was in the past with high-stakes elections that create anxiety and fear of electoral violence every five years of the electoral cycle because of the electoral disputes revolving around election management.

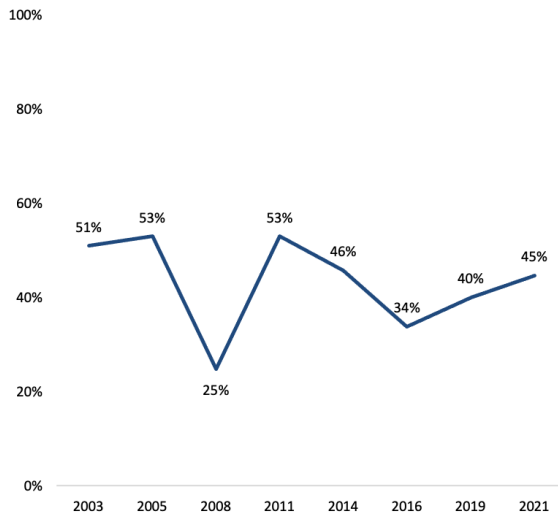
### **3.0 Election Management in Kenya and Perceptions of IEBC.**

IEBC is the electoral body established under article 88(1) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010. Art 88(4) mandates IEBC to conduct elections and supervise referenda and elections to any elective body or office established by the Constitution or any other elections prescribed by an Act of Parliament. Properly administered elections are critical for the credibility and legitimacy of elections. IEBC encountered several challenges that negatively impacted perceptions of the credibility of elections, however. Among them was low trust in

the independence of IEBC as an autonomous body free from the control of the executive, due to the continuing role of the executive in the appointment of IEBC commissioners. The 2010 Constitution, Article 81(1) sought to guard against any interference in the electoral body by establishing an independent IEBC, but the appointment of the commissioners is still done by the president after the vetting by parliament. As such, the question of the independence of the institution arises.

Low levels of trust in the autonomy of the election management body impact the perceptions of neutrality of IEBC in executing its mandate. IEBC is at times perceived as acting in favor of the executive. In 2017, the opposition coalition of parties under the umbrella of the National Super Alliance (NASA) accused IEBC of rigging elections by manipulating figures to increase the votes in favor of the pro-regime Jubilee coalition of parties (Cheeseman, Karuti, Lynch, Mutuma, & Willis, 2019; Cheeseman, 2018). This eroded the public trust in IEBC resulting in disputed election outcomes that escalated into violence that threatened to destabilize the country and at the same time eroded the gains of democracy attained. To support this argument, the Afrobarometer public opinion survey on Kenya shown in figure 1 indicates that the level of trust in IEBC declined from 53% in 2011 to 34% in 2016. This can be attributed to the disappointment of the opposition coalition in the 2013 presidential results that it contested in the supreme court but the ruling was in favor of their competitors in the Jubilee party. Although the opposition accepted the verdict of the court, their supporters felt that their victory had been snatched from them (Karuti & Odote, 2019). In 2008, trust in IEBC was lowest at 25% following the 2007-2008 electoral violence that was blamed on flawed elections. The highest level of trust in IEBC was from 2003 to 2005 which was occasioned by the opposition win during the 2002 elections under the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that brought to an end the Kenya African National Union Party (KANU) rule of forty years since independence.

*Figure 1 Levels of Trust in Independent Electoral And Boundaries Commission (IEBC)*



*Respondents were asked: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission? (% who say "somewhat" or "a lot")*  
*Source: Afrobarometer online time series analysis*

Elections are high-pressure events that extend to the electoral body, especially in Kenya where elections are high stakes. IEBC commissioners have always experienced pressure to resign whenever election results are disputed. This erodes the image and trust in the electoral body as an independent institution. The Constitution of 2010 sought to guard against this by creating security of tenure of office for IEBC officers. However, this has not deterred politicians from attacking IEBC when election results are not in their favor. After the 2013 and 2017 elections, the IEBC commissioners came under pressure to resign from the opposition accusing IEBC of acting in a partisan manner and not conducting the elections fair manner (The Carter Centre , 2018 ). In 2017, pressure mounted on IEBC commissioners to resign following the historic nullification of the presidential result – the first-ever case in Africa and the fourth in the world on the grounds of illegalities and irregularities (Election Observation Group, 2017). Although this nullification was an indicator of democratic consolidation, it nonetheless eroded the public trust in IEBC's capacity to conduct free fair elections. It was also perceived as a confirmation of the

opposition's allegation that elections are rigged in favor of the incumbent, further casting doubt on the credibility of elections. In addition, corruption scandals associated with IEBC tainted the image of the institution. After the 'chicken gate' scandal – where it was alleged that top election officials of IEBC were bribed to award Smith and Ozman (a British company that was found guilty by the United Kingdom courts of bribing the Kenyan election officials to get the tender for printing the 2013 election materials) (Election Observation Group, 2017) –the commissioners finally bowed to pressure and resigned.

The level of efficiency and effectiveness of IEBC affects the perception of election management. Like its predecessor, IEBC is not adequately equipped with enough resources to function well for the effective and efficient execution of its mandate. Funds are released late by the government, delaying their work such as tendering processes for election materials. Capacity building in terms of human resources and timely funding is critical for the planning and execution of electoral mandates. The new commissioners were replaced in February 2017 just six months before the general elections. After the 2017 elections, four commissioners resigned unceremoniously, once again jeopardizing the effectiveness of IEBC. While calling upon the appointing authority to expedite the process of replacing the commissioners that had resigned, the chairman of the IEBC pointed out that the electoral body could not function properly without the other four commissioners. Plenary sessions could not take place due to lack of quorum. (Kenya News Agency, 2018).

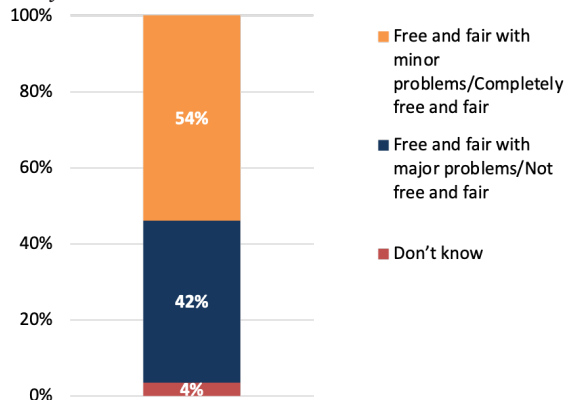
It was not until September 2021 that the commissioners were replaced, less than one year before the 2022 general elections. The legality and constitutionality of the decisions made by the three commissioners (including by-elections) were challenged in the high court on the grounds of IEBC not being properly constituted. In the case of Isaiah Biwott Kangwony v Independent Electoral & Boundaries Commission & another [2018], the high court ruled in favor of IEBC. The resulting trust deficit has made Kenya's elections one of the most expensive elections in the world at 25USD

per voter (Karuti & Mboya, 2021). The cost drivers are extra features put on the ballot papers, transparent ballot boxes which have extra security seals, use of technology in elections, and hiring of extra human resources due to the increased number of voters during elections (KTN News, 2017).

IEBC has to continuously register voters and regularly review the voter's register, which has always elicited a lot of controversies. Oftentimes, IEBC is accused of not cleaning up the voter register to remove the names of those that have died or of other inconsistencies such as double registration of voters. (Election Observation Group, 2017). These are some of the basis for suspicion of rigging elections and ultimately rejecting electoral outcomes. The lack of timely communication and transparency in decision-making by IEBC is another factor eroding trust in the institution. Lack of consistent, regular communication creates suspicion, allowing fake news and propaganda to take over especially through social media platforms as was the case in the 2017 elections (Election Observation Group, 2017). Moreover, the delay in announcing election results with little communication from IEBC aggravates anxiety and suspicion of rigging. According to the Carter Center Elections Observer Group, in the 2017 elections, IEBC failed to clarify that the results used to declare President Kenyatta the winner of the presidential elections were provisionally collected from the electronic forms received from the polling stations. Furthermore, IEBC did not utilize the seven days window provided by law to receive all the ballots from the polling stations for verification but instead used the scanned copies to tabulate the results and hurriedly announced the results. These formed the basis of challenging the 2017 presidential results at the Supreme Court which could have been avoided. However, the scanned copies were available to party agents and candidates for verification. Still, an independent tabulation estimated results by Election Observation Group (ELOG) were consistent with those released by IEBC (The Carter Centre, 2018). To date, the same results are available on the IEBC website and no one has gone to court to challenge them.

Following the nullification of the 2017 presidential results and the low levels of trust in IEBC at 34% in 2016, it would be expected that Kenyans would not trust their elections to be credible. Surprisingly, Afrobarometer found that a significant majority 54% of Kenyans believe that the 2017 elections were free and fair while 42% felt that the elections were neither free nor fair as shown in Figure 2.

*Figure 2: Freeness and Fairness of 2017 Elections in Kenya*



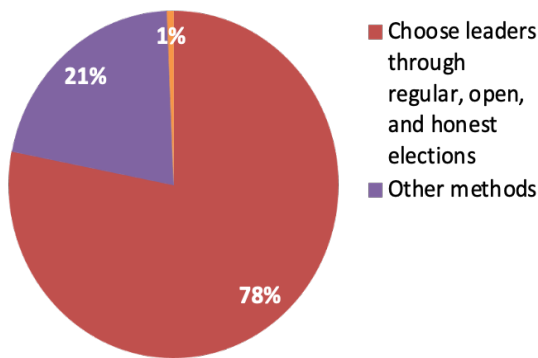
*Respondents were asked: On the whole how would you rate the freeness and fairness of the last election in 2017*

*Source: Afrobarometer round 9 2019-2021*

The low levels of trust in IEBC in 2017 at 34% (see figure 1) and the high trust in elections conducted by the institution in the same year at 54% (see figure 2) is a paradox. These findings by Afrobarometer are consistent with the liberal democracy theory which emphasizes the centrality of elections in the democratization process of a state. It means that Kenyans trust the institution of elections as the best mode of attaining democracy through the rule of a democratically elected government as shown in figure 3. A 78% majority of Kenyans believe that elections are the best method of establishing democratic governments and reject other methods.



Figure 3: Trust in Elections

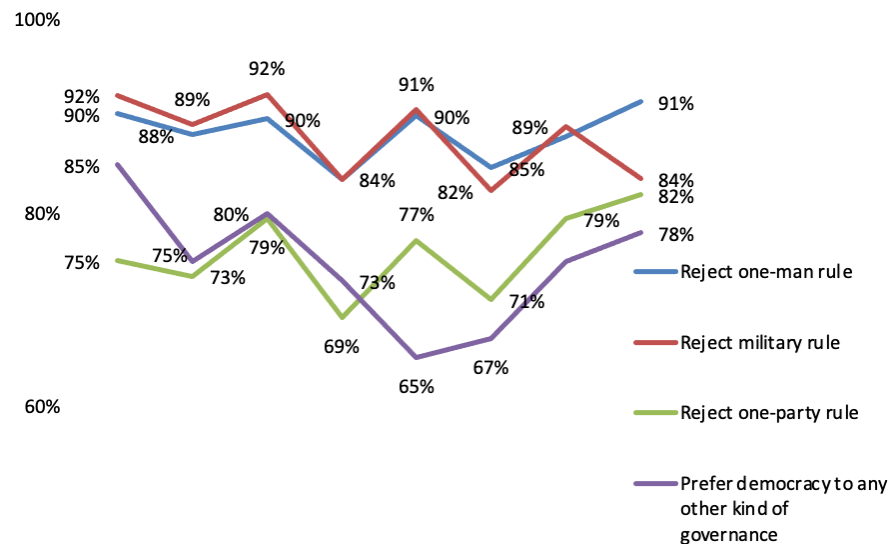


Question asked: Which of the following statements is closest to your view? Choose Statement 1 or Statement 2. Do you agree or agree very strongly? 1 We should choose our leaders in this country through regular, open, and honest elections. 2. Since elections sometimes produce bad results, we should adopt other methods for choosing this country's leaders.

Source: Afrobarometer Round 9 survey 2019-2021.

The findings in figure 3 also imply that despite the challenges associated with election management, Kenyans want democracy and reject any form of rule as shown in figure 4. Since 2002, democracy is highly rated as the preferred political system comparable to no other. Kenyans strongly reject the one-man rule, military rule, and one-party rule. Even when there is a decline from 79% to 65%, trust in democracy remains significantly high at 65%. There is renewed optimism in 2016-2021 showing an upward trend of 67%, 71% and 78% respectively. Therefore, the problem with Kenya's elections evidently lies elsewhere in low perception of IEBC's capacity to function as an effective, efficient and autonomous institution in election management. The prospects of consolidating Kenya's democracy are high if the electoral body is strengthened and empowered to deliver its mandate.

Figure 4: Support for democracy and rejection of authoritarian alternatives in Kenya 2003-2021



Respondents were asked:

Which of these statements is closest to your own opinion?

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

(% who say "democracy is preferable to any other kind of government")

There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.

The army comes in to govern the country.

Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything.

(% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove")

Source: Author's analysis from Afrobarometer time series 2003-2021.



#### 4.0 Conclusion

Election management is a continuous process with the potential of promoting democracy. Electoral cycles provide useful lessons for reforms. No sooner do elections end than planning for the next elections begins. Efforts should be put to strengthen Kenya's electoral management institutions for the progress of democracy. Although the 2010 constitution institutionalized elections and established an electoral management body as custodian of elections, the institution has not exuded confidence from the citizens as a fair arbiter. Elections remain high stakes. The credibility and legitimacy of elections depend on the perception of whether elections are free and fair resulting in acceptable electoral outcomes. IEBC should aspire to meet the requirements of Art 81 (e) (v) of the Constitution of Kenya which prescribes that elections should be administered in an impartial, neutral, efficient, accurate, and accountable manner in order to build confidence in the people.

Further, elections are high-pressure events with high stakes. They have remained so despite the Constitution of 2010. Elections precipitate an outbreak or recurrence of violence when perceived as flawed. IEBC should strive to make elections a nation-building exercise by actively engaging communities at the grassroots through increased voter and civic education to boost the level of trust. Cost-cutting approaches should be explored to reduce the cost of democracy. Since elections provide the means of peaceful transfer of power, they need to be conducted in a way that delivers a peaceful political contest by constant, timely communication and engagement of stakeholders throughout the electoral period and more so during elections to allay any fears or suspicion that arises when there is no communication. Acceptable electoral outcomes contribute to stability and other nation-building activities. To improve the management of future elections, there should be timely execution of tasks and long-term investment in the procedure. Proper timely facilitation is key for IEBC to deliver its mandate. ■

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## Endnotes

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# The Politics of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Kenyan Elections

*By Terry Jeff Odhiambo*

Political and election-related violence continues to be characterized by sexual violence. In Kenya's contested political processes, sexual violence has long been used to intimidate and punish political opponents, their families, and female human rights defenders. In Kenya, sexual violence is a serious public health and human rights concern. The survivor suffers adverse physical and psychosocial effects, affecting both men and women. Outbreaks of sexual violence have plagued elections since the 1990s. The post-election violence in 2008 following the disputed election of 2007, which saw a wave of sexual abuse against women and girls, may have been one of the most evident manifestations of the gravity of sexual violence in Kenya.<sup>1</sup>

The Commission for Inquiry for Post-Election Violence (CIPEV) was established in February 2008 by the Kenyan government to investigate disputed presidential elections in Kenya. It examined 900 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by security agents, militia groups, and civilians in the aftermath of the 2007/2008 election violence, which led to mass displacement and more than 1,000 deaths.<sup>2</sup> Similar trends were reported in the 2013 and 2017 elections. In 2017, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) noted similar patterns of sexual violence to those witnessed during the 2008/07 post-election violence.<sup>3</sup> CIPEV found that sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) was perpetrated by various actors, including security force personnel (police and general service units), members of gang groups, neighbors, relatives, individuals working in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps, and friends.<sup>4</sup> The number of cases may well be understated. Approximately 80% of sexual violence victims in Nairobi, Nakuru, and Eldoret did not report the crimes to the police, either because they did not trust the police or because they did not know who was responsible.<sup>5</sup>

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) is any sexual act perpetrated against someone's will and based on gender norms and unequal power relationships. The violence can be physical, emotional, psychological, or sexual, as well as the denial of resources or services.<sup>6</sup> Sexual violence against women, girls, men, and boys violates several key human rights. Kenya is a signatory to the key international women's human rights agreements, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Human rights law, particularly the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), protects against sexual and gender-based violence. Through innovative jurisprudence, ad hoc tribunals, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, and the International Criminal Court have contributed to developing legal and normative frameworks for such crimes. In today's world, sexual violence can constitute a war crime, a crime against humanity, or genocide.<sup>7</sup>

Over the last 30 years, feminist activism and scholarship have made women's experiences increasingly visible, including through descriptions and analyses of SGBV. Women's studies of SGBV recognize it not as an aberration but rather as a system designed to perpetuate male dominance.<sup>8</sup> In Kenya, SGBV is not simply the result of political transition but rather of a long history of violence. As a result of colonial oppression and ethnic alienation, Kenya has inherited legacies from brutal regimes. History has shaped gendered identities and unequal power relations differently due to its violence. It is not uncommon for forms of violence that first appeared years ago to resurface.<sup>9</sup> Elections in Kenya have been marred by deadly violence, unrest, and serious human rights abuses and violations, including sexual violence. The violence

and inequality faced by women in a crisis are not isolated events but reflect and result from violence, discrimination, and marginalization experienced by women during times of peace. The issue of sexual violence in transition does, however, raise specific concerns.

In this essay, I first describe the state's obligations and existing gaps to prevent, protect and respond to SGBV. Then I show how SGBV has undermined the democratic gains of Kenya. Finally, I discuss how to break cycles of SGBV during political transitions.

### **The State's Obligations on SGBV**

A historic decision by the High Court of Kenya was delivered on December 10th, 2020, in favor of four female survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) committed during the 2007-2008 post-election violence (PEV). Kenya witnessed the most despicable forms of sexual and gender-based violence of its post-independence history during this time. Consequently, women have been caught in a vicious cycle of violence due to a failed state and incompetent government. In a case that lasted almost eight years, the Court found that the Government of Kenya was responsible for its failure to conduct independent and effective investigations and prosecutions of allegations of sexual abuse committed by state agents and awarded compensation of KES 4 million per survivor.

In the Court's decision, only four out of the eight survivor-petitioners were recognized as having suffered harm as a result of the post-election violence because the Government of Kenya failed to conduct independent and effective investigations and prosecutions.<sup>10</sup> In this case, the Court ruled that the State is responsible for investigating and prosecuting SGBV committed by its own agents. The Court challenged the unconvincing State narrative, which claims survivors are responsible for investigating and proving crimes. Even though the High Court's original ruling recognized the trauma experienced by four of the eight survivors, I believe that it was not sufficiently comprehensive in acknowledging the legal obligation of Kenya in preventing and responding to sexual violence

after elections. Still, in Kenya, the ruling marks the first time the government has recognized and compensated survivors of post-election sexual violence.

Kenya's presidential elections have played a central role in transforming its political landscape and, by extension, in the outbreak of political violence. There has also been considerable violence during parliamentary and local elections.<sup>11</sup> Violence against women and girls during these elections has a grave, multiple, and specific consequences for survivors. In the absence of action, these issues worsen over time and can affect women's participation in follow-up elections. The reconstruction process is hampered by the lack of access to justice for women survivors of sexual violence during conflict periods. After failing to receive support, like security, from the government institutions during their time of need, the survivors clearly have very little confidence in the legitimacy of the government institutions. Accordingly, improving access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women and children is a fundamental need.

Despite the scale and gravity of the crimes and the continuing consequences for survivors, no meaningful action has been taken by the authorities to genuinely investigate election-related SGB. SGBV that occurs during elections is not solely due to impunity but rather to Kenya's abrogation of its national and international human rights obligations and commitments. The ability of perpetrators of sexual violence - particularly those who are part of security forces - to escape justice discredits political power and further intensifies divisions in society between those in power and those without.

### **Gender, Violence, and Democracy**

Kenya is increasingly plagued with sexual violence, which is a grave human rights violation.

In this section, I highlight how women and girls face significant economic and social limitations as a result of SGBV, which grossly violates their human rights. SGBV has undermined democratic gains during Kenya's political transitions. Capitalist interests and the imperative to exploit laboring women have largely contributed to the

contradictory relationship between democracy and gendered violence.<sup>12</sup> Democracy is based on freedom, respect for human rights, and periodic and genuine elections by universal suffrage. Democracies provide an environment in which human rights can be protected and effectively realized.<sup>13</sup> As citizens make their way to the polls, many hope that political transitions will lead to major socio-political changes, establishing a more democratic system of government and greater respect for the law. In spite of this, the state remains patriarchal: violence against women in the home has become a norm, and sexual violence, and in particular rape, has been used to punish and control women. Women remain extremely vulnerable to violence despite relatively progressive legal frameworks.

I argue that, despite notable advances in international law, democratic transitions do not adequately address the needs of gender-based violence victims. Beyond moments of democratic transition, sexual violence reinforces discriminatory attitudes and gender inequality because of its gendered nature and its ongoing economic, social, and psychological impacts. The effects of SGBV on political processes are felt in democracies and countries undergoing democratic transition.<sup>14</sup> The holding of elections does not cause election-related SGBV. A patriarchal system perpetuates where hegemonic men control governmental, social, economic, religious, and cultural institutions to exercise power and dominate women and other men.<sup>15</sup> Violence directed against women in Kenyan politics reflects deeper efforts to deny women access to traditionally male-dominated political spaces, and this type of violence is becoming increasingly normalized. Additionally, the violence symbolizes patriarchal efforts to maintain control over women's bodies and rights.<sup>16</sup> As patriarchy manifests itself most visibly and violently when women are victimized, women's marginalization must be addressed alongside efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures in their everyday lives, including their subordinate position in the family, education, and economic systems.<sup>17</sup>

There's still a disproportionate impact of SGBV on women and children. In the criminal justice

system, data indicates that cases of SGBV often take a long time to prosecute, and most of the time they are prosecuted without incorporating a gender lens.<sup>18</sup> The lack of accountability for survivors of SGBV means that justice is delayed or denied, which violates the rights enshrined in legislation and policies both locally and globally, as articulated by the various laws and policies.<sup>19</sup> Studies show that democratic institutions and gender equality are mutually reinforcing, with liberal democracy being necessary but not enough for women to be equal and safe.<sup>20</sup> A nation's relative peace and domestic security positively correlate with gender equality. Strategies for strengthening democracy and human rights should emphasize women's empowerment and accountability for violence against women and girls.

### **Breaking Cycles of SGBV during Political Transitions in Kenya**

The Government of Kenya is responsible for preventing, mitigating, or addressing the risk of sexual violence known to the authorities. The state should do this by collecting, analyzing, and publishing data disaggregated by type of violence so that preventative measures can be further developed. In so doing, they are also obliged to establish and implement national awareness-raising programs. In order to adequately prevent and address violence, law enforcement officers need recurrent, mandatory, and effective training.<sup>21</sup> CEDAW reiterates this by urging states 'to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise.'<sup>22</sup>

Kenya held its general elections on August 9th, 2022. There was serious concern that there would be an escalation of violence in the lead-up to and during the elections due to existing political tensions. Mild protests arose in different parts of the country after the declaration of the presidential results by the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC); however, so far, no SGBV-related cases have been reported. In order to prevent future incidents of violence against women during elections, it is important to focus on the gender dimensions of such violence.



Election-related SGBV remains problematic due to a number of shortcomings, which contribute to its normalization and impunity. In cases where police officers are alleged to be responsible for crimes, the measures taken to support survivors, investigate and prosecute them, and institute internal investigations and disciplinary measures are insufficient. By addressing misogyny and patriarchy within the political realm, the Kenyan government could address the root causes of election-related SGBV.

In order to establish effective protection, SGBV must be prevented, identified, and responded to using a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach.<sup>23</sup> Many challenges and opportunities in Kenya's current protection environment should be considered carefully when devising responses. Even though the Kenyan legal framework addresses SGBV, the extent to which such frameworks address the plight of survivors is questionable.<sup>24</sup> Law and policy mostly focus on bringing the accused to 'justice' without a corresponding obligation to alleviate the SGBV survivors' conditions. Because the criminal justice system perceives the offense as an offense against the state rather than against the individual survivor of the SGBV, the survivor of SGBV is more alien to the justice system.<sup>25</sup>

Law enforcement during elections should respect human rights, and guidelines should be issued on the protection of women and girls. The National Police Service (NPS) – comprised of the Kenya Police Service (KPS), Administrative Police Service (AP), and Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI) – should also adopt the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples Rights (ACHPR) Guidelines on Combating Sexual Violence and its Consequences in Africa into its standing orders and procedures.<sup>26</sup> The guidelines are intended to guide and support African Union Member States in preventing, protecting, investigating, and prosecuting sexual violence and ensuring reparation for survivors.<sup>27</sup> Each of the constituent services should fulfil its mandate. AP Service functions include maintaining law and order, maintaining peace, protecting life and property, and providing specialized stock theft prevention services.<sup>28</sup> The KPS is responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing and detecting crimes,

apprehending offenders, and enforcing laws and regulations.<sup>29</sup> Investigations, intelligence collection, crime detection, and crime prevention are all responsibilities of the DCI.<sup>30</sup>

The Kenyan government should investigate election-related sexual violence cases without delay to bring the alleged perpetrators to justice and ensure victims' rights to reparation. Through the provision of medical, psychosocial, legal, and social services, the Kenyan government should provide an extensive rehabilitation program for election-related SGBV survivors and their families and allocate a budget to support them. SGBV must be addressed by the Kenyan government, including through public apologies, acknowledgment of the facts, and accepting responsibility. More broadly, the country urgently needs comprehensive and fundamental constitutional reforms which should reflect the interests of women which have thus far been neglected. ■

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# The Impact of Non-Violent Protests in Nigeria and Sudan

*Gloria Na'antoe Longba'am-Alli'*

The surge of military coups in Africa since 2018 threatens democracy to the point where it has impeded mass political involvement in governance, human rights and constitutional freedom. This study focuses on the anti-coup protests and social movements in Sudan and Nigeria to examine their impacts, analyse institutional reactions, and examine the sustainability of the successes of the protests. The case studies show that anti-coup protests threatened military regimes which wished to continue protecting their political interests against opposition forces demanding democratic reform. Our findings reiterate that the most successful strategy for protest organisations to attain their policy objectives against conventionally superior opponents is to employ nonviolent tactics. Nevertheless, this achievement can only be accomplished if the opposition movements are adaptable, inclusive, and widely accepted.

People have long sought redress for their complaints and protested the unlawful takeover of government by the military through popular and anti-coup demonstrations. To advocate for constructive change, social and anti-coup movements from Tunis to Egypt, Burkina Faso to Sudan, and Uganda to Nigeria have learned from Gandhi's 'satyagraha' and Martin Luther King's nonviolent resistance. Civil resistance focuses on actions like strikes, boycotts, mass protests, and sit-ins to address society's social, political, and economic deficiencies.

Civil resistance movements are potent because they inspire widespread participation in measures to resist oppression by giving a new vision of a freer, fairer society and possibly changing the allegiances of those who uphold the old system. When individuals stop cooperating with unjust authorities, it becomes too expensive to maintain the system. When a sufficient number of individuals choose to disobey, the system becomes

unsustainable and must be altered, or it will collapse.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, civil resistance movements and campaigns have attained some degree of success against their adversaries, even if the opponents of civil resistance are armed and state-funded. Nonviolent protests make it more complex and expensive for regimes to use violence. If the state employs violence to quash peaceful protests, it might backfire and increase sympathy for the protestors.

The study revealed that nonviolent resistance remains a powerful alternative to any form of violence that can effectively challenge both democratic and non-democratic opponents and, at times, more effectively than violent resistance. Our arguments align with Zunes, who states that democratisation is not primarily top-down transitions or the outcome of a struggle between competing political elites without recognising the critical role of civil society and the citizens in forcing democratic reforms from below.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Schock,<sup>4</sup> Stephan and Chenoweth,<sup>5</sup> Chenoweth and Cunningham,<sup>6</sup> and Pinckney<sup>7</sup> assert that the ability of nonviolent movements to mobilise supporters more effectively, resist regime crackdowns, and develop innovative resistance techniques aids them in defeating repressive regimes or reversing a coup. This paper also challenges scholars like Gelderloos,<sup>8</sup> who argued that change comes not solely from nonviolent but also from violent tactics, provided they are utilised effectively.

This article compares protests in Nigeria and Sudan by focusing on how these protest movements influenced democratic fundamentals like human rights, autocratic-to-democratic government, and free speech and assembly. These case studies are essential in the study of nonviolence because individuals and civil society used peaceful measures against their leaders to attain democratic aims or, in the case of Nigeria, better human rights. In Sudan,

this research of 2018 exemplifies how applying strategic nonviolent protests have served as a critical component to a possible democratic transition.

These two instances reinforce Gandhi and Martin Luther King's view that deliberate nonviolent action leads to democratic transformation. Therefore, this research examines the significance of strategy, alliances, and nonviolent discipline to the success of mass movements. Even more so now that military and civilian ideologues have destroyed democratic institutions in recent years. People's civil resistance is frequently necessary to sustain a democratic system since they cannot rely exclusively on traditional political methods and established political institutions' leaders to keep it in place.

After reviewing the literature, the following section examines the historical trend of the protests. We then present the empirical findings in the third section. Finally, we conclude with recommendations derived from the study's results.

## Literature Review

Richard Gregg's central argument in his book *The Power of Nonviolence*<sup>9</sup> is that nonviolent resistance employs the military virtues of courage, discipline, and endurance and "uses many military methods and principles on a moral plane." Nonviolence employs many psychological processes and "retains some military objectives, with moral modifications."<sup>10</sup> Gregg's contribution to the literature on nonviolence was profound because his study was written from both the pacifist and militarist perspectives. He acknowledged the role and writing of military strategists like Napoleon, Von Clausewitz, Foch, J. C. Fuller, and Liddell Hart to elucidate the workings of mass nonviolent action, mainly as practised by Gandhi in India.<sup>11</sup>

Gene Sharp recognised the strategic political brilliance of Gandhi's methods, and in 1973 his book, titled *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, became a classic in nonviolence scholarship. The book's first two chapters provided a theoretical framework for understanding the influence of nonviolence. In the subsequent seven chapters, Sharp categorised the methods and tactics of

successful nonviolent resistance, such as simple letter writing, to establish alternative governments using historical illustrations.<sup>12</sup>

Holmes<sup>13</sup> and Nagler<sup>14</sup> also draw from Gandhi's ethics and philosophy of nonviolent resistance by emphasising the spiritual roots of nonviolence and acknowledging its various applications in everything from personal development and personal relations to institutional practises and international relations. Holmes approaches the study of nonviolence from a philosophical perspective, using ethics and principles to guide his theory.

Sharp and Holmes use the theory of power to explain the effectiveness of nonviolence. For example, Sharp<sup>15</sup> posits that people in society may be divided into rulers and subjects, but the subjects' consent grants rulers power. He accentuates political and social power by emphasising ruler-citizen connections in nonviolent activity. Specifically, through nonviolent action individuals stop consenting to dictatorships, genocides, wars, and repressive institutions. People and groups pressure authorities to address problems through persuasion, refusal to comply, and peaceful demonstrations. Holmes, like Sharp, sees power as best mobilised through peaceful means. He presents moral and ethical arguments, as well as practical ones, as to why people should not murder, go to war, or use violence during a movement or protest.

Numerous scholars have researched, evaluated, and analysed nonviolent action in Africa. Existing literature in this regard is, however, fragmented. In the literature that assesses the overall trends of protest, Branch and Mampilly<sup>16</sup> assert that protests are constrained by the disparities across societies and the repressive state apparatus that stifles resistance. Furthermore, It is challenging to overcome the urban-rural divide, and ethnoreligious differences mitigate the potential of protest from being more coordinated and national in outreach. From a very different perspective, Rotimi<sup>17</sup> and Aderinto<sup>18</sup> studied Fela Kuti's use of music to carry out revolutionary movements. Tamale,<sup>19</sup> Okech,<sup>20</sup> Tibbetts,<sup>21</sup> Brownhill,<sup>22</sup> Ukeje,<sup>23</sup> and Alozie<sup>24</sup> broaden the scope beyond nonviolent protests by focusing on women's protests,

especially naked women's protests in Africa. These scholars reiterate how many tactics of nonviolent demonstrations in Africa differ from those in the global north. In addition, they highlight how geographical, ethnoreligious, and cultural factors contribute to or hinder the effectiveness of peaceful demonstrations. Nepstad<sup>25</sup> and Chenoweth<sup>26</sup> emphasise that defection is the single characteristic that determines successful nonviolent resistance movements. Most nonviolent campaigns are successful when a regime loses power, especially when it loses military support.

## Methodology

In this study, the primary mode of analysis was qualitative historical analysis. Firstly, this research analysed newspapers, articles and secondary data from Afrobarometer, Freedom House, the United States Institute of Peace, and the International Centre on Nonviolent Conflict. The researcher used social media data to supplement those secondary sources to articulate the protesters' experiences and agency towards achieving their goals. Together, these two different data sources generated a robust perspective on the events and outcomes in the two countries.

## Sudan

*Mawkib*, the word describing the Sudanese protests since 2018, offers a glimpse of hope for attaining democracy for a country that has experienced long military rule. The Arabic word, translated to English means 'parade,' spans from the peaceful protest that ousted Al Bashir's regime to the protests against the 25th October 2021 coup of General Abdallah Alfatah Burhan and his coup supporters.<sup>27</sup> Economic policies were the immediate driving force pushing the people to demonstrate and remain resilient until change occurs.<sup>28</sup> As the 2021 Afrobarometer report indicates, 73.6 percent of respondents to their survey believed that the country is moving in the wrong direction.<sup>29</sup> Poor management of the economy and prevailing poverty rates stood out as the major problems of the citizens. So, it was unsurprising that the rise in bread prices sparked the 2018 protests for political change.

The protests have united the Sudanese in opposition to an autocratic government. They have not fully achieved their objectives, but protestors are determined to continue, as Galal, a respondent quoted in the Observer, explains:

It is impossible that I will stop coming to the streets to protest; what I came out for three years ago hasn't been achieved. We called for freedom, peace and justice, but none of them is actually here.<sup>30</sup>

These nonviolent demonstrations, expressed through slogans, songs, sit-ins surrounding the military headquarters, and tweets, generate collective memory and celebrate unfinished historical revolutions.<sup>31</sup> Azzam,<sup>32</sup> a respondent in a blog post explaining the root of the Sudanese revolution, stated that the 21<sup>st</sup> October 2021 Sudanese protest revived the memory of the October 1964 revolution, which peacefully overthrew a military regime. Azzam attributes emotions and feelings as essential to the resilience of the protesters, even in the face of brutality.<sup>33</sup>

The resilience of the protesters resembles the historical successes of the 1964 and 1985 protests that successfully ousted military regimes and saw other protesters' demands being met. Marovic and Hayder argue that Sudanese resilience since the 2018 demonstrations is explained by the violent repressions of the Sudanese Arab spring in 2013.<sup>34</sup> The experiences of 2013 helped develop about 5,000 neighbourhood-based resistance committees<sup>35</sup> and labour unions whom the people trusted and respected because, through the years, they have filled the gap in the government's health care and service delivery services to the people. Alongside these committees and trade unions were shadow unions such as the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), which spearheaded political demands.<sup>36</sup> These experiences and organisations helped the nonviolent resistance to withstand most military onslaughts based on the ability of neighbourhood-based resistance committees to operate in tandem with the trade unions and their ability to the centre-periphery differences.<sup>37</sup>

Women played a crucial part in the 2019 protest movement and have requested more involvement in

administration and peace talks. Nevertheless, their involvement in governance has been minimal, and they have not fully enjoyed human rights privileges. For example, two women joined the TSC in August 2019, but one resigned in May 2021, citing military domination. Despite provisions of equal treatment in the interim constitution and other legislative amendments established as part of the July 2020 reforms, women had disadvantages in many areas of the law, and perpetrators of numerous crimes against women—including during armed conflicts—enjoyed impunity. In April 2021, the transitional government signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. However, it did not support measures equalling marriage, divorce, and parenting rights.

The protestors had to sustain nonviolence against repeated violent provocations. After al-Bashir was ousted from power, the government security forces responded with excessive force, using live bullets to disperse the unarmed protesters. They arrested thousands of protesters, opposition leaders, organisers, and activists, often violently, and held hundreds without charges for months, beating and abusing many of them. They restricted the media by seizing newspapers, arresting journalists, censoring social media, and closing or expelling foreign news outlets.<sup>38</sup> Human Rights Watch reports that between June 3 and 18, and in the following days, it recorded more than 120 deaths and over 900 injured.<sup>39</sup> Freedom House also reports that violence by the authorities against protesters increased from the October coup through the end of the year, with security forces killing 53 anti-coup protesters and injuring hundreds more.<sup>40</sup> Security forces also obstructed demonstrators' access to medical care by arresting doctors and patients, firing tear gas into hospitals, and blocking access to ambulances and health facilities. The Sudanese authorities shut down the internet to prevent more demonstrations. Journalists and reporters were stopped from reporting. The military's aim for these audacious measures was to instil fear in people's minds and discourage them from further protests. However, these measures only worked for only a short period.

The most important gain for the protesters was ousting Omar al-Bashir from power. After the constitutional declaration in August 2019, the transitional government of Sudan mediated the Juba Agreement in October 2020 to settle the Blue Nile, Darfur, and South Kordofan hostilities.<sup>41</sup> Further talks between the government and the protesters identified issues such as some groups' political and socio-economic marginalisation, a lack of freedom and justice, the hegemony of the centre over the periphery and the failure to manage ethnic and religious differences<sup>42</sup> as essential and needing immediate attention and negotiation. Protesters believe their goals would remain unmet if only al-Bashir stepped down but his regime continued. Furthermore, any local or international negotiation that excludes resistance committees effectively excludes Sudanese demands.

In the two weeks following al-Bashir's ouster on 11th April 2019, the on-street activists and signatories of the Declaration of Freedom and Change attempted to force Burhan's led Military Transition Council to allow their in-house coup to give way to a genuine transition through a mix of negotiation and continued protest.<sup>43</sup> Subsequently, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FCC) and the coalition groups that led the unarmed protests that led to al-Bashir's removal signed a political agreement in August under the auspices of the African Union (AU) which ushered in a 39-month-long political transitional period.<sup>44</sup>

Nevertheless, the hopes of a transition to democracy were squashed when General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, commander of the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and head of the Transitional Sovereign Council (TSC), staged a coup on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021. He declared a state of emergency and dissolved the transitional government that had been in place since 2019. Under the deal signed in November, elections are scheduled for 2023 and would officially end the security forces' control of the country. Few people believe Burhan will permit elections to take place because the military coup has undermined the transition to democratic rule. Therefore, protests continued despite the civilian prime minister Abdulla Hamdok's reinstatement and the release of political detainees. Hamdok's

critics believed that the deal with the TSC and Burhan betrayed their democratic cause and would only pay lip service to their sacrifices and democratic agenda while leaving the generals with enough power to either rig a poll or prepare for another coup.<sup>45</sup> The coup's ruthless security forces and impediments to achieving democracy have not diminished the people of the political will for change.<sup>46</sup>

The coup affected the political dynamic in Sudan by reconsolidating political and economic power in the military. Unable to rally public support, the coup regime turned to members of the ousted al-Bashir regime for support. National Congress Party (NCP) adherents have been rewarded with lucrative appointments in the General Intelligence service (GIS), the judiciary, the state media, embassies, the educational sector and embassies abroad.<sup>47</sup> The international community's influence is crucial to breaking the stalemate between the Sudanese military and the people. Instead of consolidating the influence of civil society organisations in Sudan, the international community has been working towards a power-sharing administration whose sustainability appears impossible. If the international community continues giving the TMC more credibility, the people's demonstrations and fatalities will be in vain.

## **Nigeria**

In October 2020, Nigerians staged the #ENDSARS protest against human rights violations and abuse of power by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian police force. They reflected widespread public attitudes. According to the Afrobarometer, 68.9% of Nigerians felt the country was moving in the wrong direction. Crime and insecurity are among the most pressing issues that 19.5% of citizens believe the country must address. 13.3% complained of poor electric power supply, and 11.7% highlighted unemployment.<sup>48</sup>

Protest strategies included protest walks in some southern and Middle Belt states, musical concerts, and social media hashtags. The protesters did not seem to have a leader who would negotiate

with the government. However, funding from the diaspora community and other supporters helped coordinate protesters' feeding, cleaning, and mobilisation. Popular opinion on social media, newspapers, and broadcast media suggested that the protesters' outcry against human rights violations by the police would force the government to tackle other social issues such as security, poverty, and poor governance. As a result, the movement continued to protest even after the government agreed to look into the five-point demand. The conveners requested that the government reconsider political office candidates' age and impose tenure restrictions. The protesters also proposed that all public officials, from the president to the council chairman, be prohibited from receiving medical care overseas, and their children should be prohibited from attending schools abroad.

The mass action was relatively peaceful at the initial stage, but it later turned violent and culminated in the breakdown of law and order in over 23 states of the federation.<sup>49</sup> Some people used the public protest to loot some government and privately owned warehouses, burgle stores and private residencies; destroy and vandalise some public properties; engage in arson and forcefully release inmates from lawful custodial facilities.<sup>50</sup> The climax of the protest occurred on the 20<sup>th</sup> October 2020, when the military opened fire against peaceful protesters at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos, leaving 78 people dead.

Looking at the #ENDSARS protest's impact, the protesters' primary challenge was poor framing. A section of the country, especially Northern Nigeria, did not share, understand, or accept the problem or situation that necessitated a change in Nigeria. There was also no articulation of alternative arrangements that would encourage others to act in concert to facilitate positive change. Therefore, while the southern and some north-central states were advocating for an end to police brutality and making other demands, their northern counterparts tagged it as a revolution to oust their "brothers"—President Muhammadu Buhari—out of power. The movement's failure to be inclusive also meant that the movement fell apart into chaos and anarchy.



## Conclusion

Nonviolent protest movements in Sudan and Nigeria have recorded varying degrees of success in protesting against coups and maintaining democracy. Both case studies showed that gathering a band of enthusiastic individuals is not enough to garner success. The organisers need to make their purpose clear, establish their values, and create plans for success. This explains why, despite the military's repressive measures in both countries, the Sudan protests continued years after erupting in 2018 because they had more explicit goals than their Nigerian counterpart. This study agrees with Chenoweth and Schock's<sup>51</sup> thesis that armed violence might achieve short-term goals during nonviolent protests but will not deliver enduring change. The protesters may also argue in support of self-defence, the diffusion of an oppositional culture that strengthens the commitment of more radical members, or catharsis associated with the ability to "blow off steam." However, violent outliers often get in the way of longer-term strategic goals, like keeping a growing diverse base of participants, getting more support from third parties, and getting security forces to support their cause. ■

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# Sudan's Dilemma: Democratic Aspirations and Military Rule

Anne Okello

Tunisia and Egypt demonstrated in 2011 that pro-democracy protests by civilians have been successful in challenging incompetent regimes and gaining the concession of long-time dictators (Alkurd 2019; Bashri 2021; Bolatito 2019). Sudan finally had its 'Arab Spring' moment with the fall of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019 after months of persistent mass action. After al-Bashir's ouster, Sudanese continued to demand their involvement in governance through the institution of a civilian government and for peace and justice through the trial of the perpetrators of violence against protesters (Berridge et al. 2022). Sudan's brief glimpse of a democratic transition was dashed in 2021 by a military takeover that dissolved the transitional civilian government. Notwithstanding, democratic participation is an emerging issue in Sudan.

Democracy is commonly associated with being representative, accountable, and pluralistic (Bashri 2021). Democratic governance often guarantees civil and political rights and legislative and judicial oversight over the executive. Pro-democracy uprisings have been linked with the citizenry's awakened desire to decisively replace authoritarian regimes with inclusive and democratic governments. At times, as Ake (1993) points out, democracy and its tenets are often modified to fit a country's realities against its political arrangements and cultural context. Citizens conceptualize democracy based on its substantive outcomes rather than its procedural outcomes. Democracy is therefore thought to be successful when a regime delivers good politics and healthy economies.<sup>1</sup>

This paper utilizes Afrobarometer data to explore Sudanese perceptions and opinions on democracy, military rule, governance, the rule of law, and their lived socio-economic and political realities. Afrobarometer is a pan-African, non-partisan research network that conducts face-to-face interviews on nationally representative samples. So

far, eight rounds of surveys have been completed since 1999. Sudan was last surveyed between February and April 2021. A sample size of 1800 yielded national-level results with a margin of sampling error of  $\pm 2.3$  percentage points, at a 95% confidence level. Afrobarometer conducted previous surveys in Sudan in 2013, 2015 and 2018. This paper argues that despite rising scepticism towards democracy, it remains the preferred system of governance among Sudanese, who demand political participation.

## Background of Sudan

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan has experienced its fair share of precarious political events. In 1964 and 1985, mass demonstrations toppled previous military regimes after five and eleven days, respectively (Berridge, 2019). The 1964 uprising, also dubbed *the October Revolution*, was triggered by clashes between students and police at the University of Khartoum and the general citizen disdain for being ruled by President Abboud's authoritarian government. The 1985 protests were set off by President Nimeiry's decree of a hike in basic food prices, similar to the 2018-2019 protests. Also, as was the case in 2018-2019, the 1985 protests began in the periphery town of Atbara and spread to Khartoum (Berridge, 2016). Also similarly to 1964 and 1985 when the Professional Front and Union Alliance spearheaded the uprisings, the 2018-2019 demonstrations were greatly shaped by the Sudan Professional Alliance, underlining the essence of such professional bodies (Berridge 2019).

In 1989, the country's already weak socio-political and economic standing was exacerbated by the military coup led by Omar al-Bashir that deposed a democratically elected government and dissolved political parties and major professional associations (Berridge 2016). In the subsequent 1996 general elections, vying unopposed, al-Bashir was elected

president. He was backed by the National Islamic Front (NIF), which later evolved into the National Congress Party (NCP). During the 1989 coup, the National Islamic Front (NIF) leveraged rising public anti-government sentiments due to Prime Minister al-Mahdi's inability to resolve civil war and economic crisis. The National Islamic Front (NIF) was also a proponent of the Islamisation of Sudan. During the insurgency, al-Bashir, through the National Islamic Front (NIF), cited claims of saving the country from "political parties".<sup>2</sup>

Al-Bashir re-instated the registration of political parties in 1999. Notwithstanding, his administration constantly undermined and suppressed political opposition. The National Congress Party (NCP) was widely criticized for corruption and backing human rights violations in Darfur by militia and paramilitary forces. The 2018-2019 revolution initially challenged al-Bashir's legitimacy and targeted replacing him with a democratically elected ruler. However, the protests later evolved to calls for an end to al-Bashir's regime, including deposing the National Congress Party (NCP), which was deemed equally oppressive (Bolatito 2019).

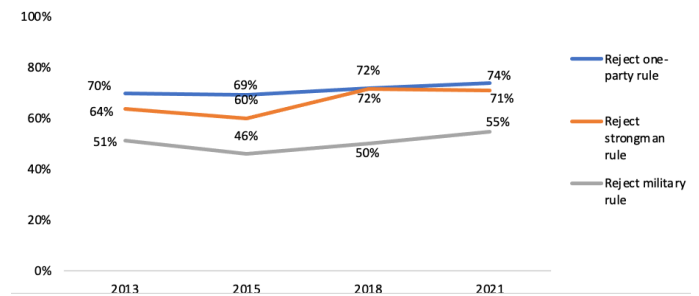
### Sudanese attitudes about democratic government

What do ordinary Sudanese think about democracy, given this history? On average, more than seven in 10 Sudanese reject the idea of a one-party rule (74%, in 2021, up from 70% in 2013). Similarly, as of 2021, Sudanese widely (80%) endorse choosing leaders through open, regular, and honest elections, a point increase from 2018 (79%), though slightly below the 2013 average (83%). In a similar light, the 2021 survey found that over half of Sudanese (54%) prefer to have many political parties for people to have real choices of who governs them compared to 41% who deem political parties to be divisive.

Sudanese have persistently rejected one-man rule. As of 2021, more than one in seven (71%) Sudanese oppose the notion of a strongman, a seven-point increase from the 2013 level (64%). Additionally, two-thirds of Sudanese (66%) favour the constitutional limit of a president serving

a maximum of two terms in office. Before the 2018-2019 protests, this opposition was expressed through sporadic attempts to topple al-Bashir. However, these efforts were repeatedly quelled by the al-Bashir regime by invoking heavy military crackdowns (Bolatito 2019).

Figure 1: Trends in views on authoritarian alternatives in Sudan (2013-2021)



Source: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/>

Respondents were asked:

*There are many ways to govern a country. Would you disapprove or approve of the following alternatives? (% who "disapprove" or "strongly disapprove" of each alternative)*

*Only one political party is allowed to stand for election and hold office.*

*The army comes in to govern the country.*

*Elections and Parliament are abolished so that the president can decide everything.*

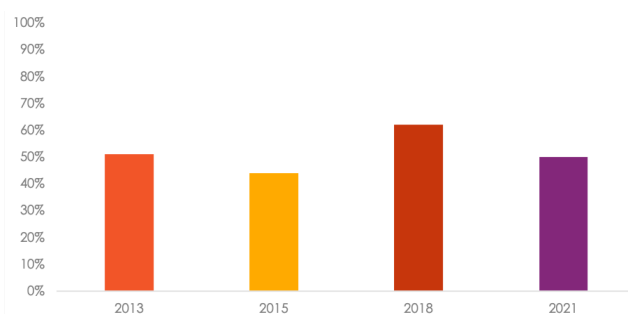
In 2021, over half (52%) of Sudanese valued government accountability over government efficiency, a seven-point increase from the 2013 (45%) level. In contrast to the past, Sudanese hope for legal restrictions on executive control. In 2018, two-thirds of interviewees (64%) said that the president must always obey the law and courts, compared to 46% in 2015 and 2013. Similarly, over half of Sudanese (55%) support checks by parliament on how the executive spends taxpayers' money, a twelve-point increase from the 2013 level (43%). In addition, the proportion of Sudanese who support media freedom has increased. About half of respondents endorsed the media being free to publish any views or ideas without government control, up from the 2013 average (49%).

Also evident in the 2018-2019 revolution was the surge in the political awareness of Sudanese of the country's democratic reality, and the awakened



intentions to re-establish its tenets. This rising political consciousness is captured in the extent to which Sudanese define the governance of their country as a democracy. In 2021, one in seven Sudanese (70%) described their country as “a democracy with major problems” or “not a democracy”, a sharp increase from 59% in 2013. According to the latest (2022) Arab Barometer data, over half (53%) of Sudanese prefer democracy, an eleven-point increase from 2018 (42%). In parallel, as of 2021 Afrobarometer data, half of the population (50%) were reported to support democracy, a slight decline from 2018 (62%), notably undertaken before the fall of al-Bashir. Across socio-demographic groups, support for democracy was higher among men (52%) than among women (47%). Support for democracy was higher among the young (50% of 18-35 year olds) compared to the elderly (43% of those above 56 years). The median age of Sudan citizens is nineteen years, meaning that well over half of the population has only experienced al-Bashir’s leadership.<sup>3</sup> This data affirms the zeal of the youth for change, given their relentlessness in leading the 2018-2019 protests in the streets and on social media, which enabled the dissent to spread more rapidly (Berridge 2019; Bolatito 2019).

Figure 2: Support for democracy in Sudan (2013-2021)



Source: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/>

Respondents were asked:

Which of the following statements is closest to your own opinion? (% who agree with Statement 1)

Statement 1: Democracy is preferable to any other kind of government.

Statement 2: In some circumstances, a non-democratic government can be preferable.

Statement 3: For someone like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have.

## The aftermath of the 2018-2019 uprising

After the fall of al-Bashir, the Sudanese Defence Minister took charge, declaring the establishment of a two-year transitional government administered by the military, a three-month state of emergency and a curfew. Nonetheless, the protestors were not dissuaded by these measures. They remained in the streets, calling for al-Bashir’s prosecution, accountability for the protesters who were killed and the institution of a transitional civilian government (Bolatito 2019). In her 2022 draft, Longba’am-Alli demonstrates that, non-violent protests, when accompanied by explicit goals, result in varying levels of success.

The persistence and determination in protests can be linked to lessons learnt from past Sudanese experiences. The 1964 and 1985 uprisings were squandered by the military who prioritised their interests rather than enabling democratic transitions (Bassil & Zhang, 2021). Given continued military influence in the political space, continued demonstrations can also be garnered to fear that the country will backslide into a military regime, diminishing the gains and consequences of the 2018-2019 revolution. On average, in 2021, over half of Sudanese (55%) “disapprove” or “strongly disapprove” military rule, a four-point increase from the 2013 level (51%).

Subsequent negotiations led to the institution of a transitional government, consisting of the people, represented by the Freedom for Change Movement (FFC) and the military. In August 2019, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) transferred power to the Sovereignty Council headed by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdook after a detailed power-sharing agreement.

The Sudanese glimpse of democracy was however halted in October 2021 by a military coup. The military leader, General Al-Burhan, deemed the seizure and dissolution of the civilian government a “corrective step” and promised the military’s exit from politics after the 2023 elections. General Al-Burhan dissolved the government and arrested Prime Minister Hamdook, highlighting recurrent efforts by the military to reverse democratisation



(Omer, 2022). Thereafter, General Al-Burhan announced a new ruling council that excluded the civilian coalition. Nonetheless, civilian protests were re-ignited, almost three years after al-Bashir's fall, demonstrating the continued Sudanese desire for civic involvement.

The 2021 coup rescinded the lifting of sanctions dimming hopes of debt relief and economic normalisation. Therefore, unemployment remains high while the Sudanese pound plummets against the dollar. Inflation has spiked to over 400%.<sup>4</sup> Global challenges, including climate change have resulted in drought and food shortages. The Russia-Ukraine war has affected Sudan's wheat supply, driving up the price of wheat products further, given that the country sources most of the commodity (59%) from Russia and Ukraine.<sup>5</sup>

While Sudanese persistently expressed their discontent with the economy in the 2018-2019/2021 revolts, the country's economic crisis can be linked to al-Bashir undermining agriculture in favour of the oil industry which however depleted close to three-quarters of its assets in the 2011 separation with South Sudan (LeRiche & Arnold, 2013). The Sudanese legacy in economic desperation can also be associated with decades of civil war, sanctions and international isolation that impeded the country's access to aid. The 2021 coup, which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic, worsened the situation and widened inequalities as banks closed, making cash scarce, donors cut off aid, food supply was erratic, and prices rose (Devi, 2021).

## Conclusion

The October 2021 coup significantly paralysed the 2018-2019 pro-democracy efforts, despite the initial success in overthrowing al-Bashir. But it has not changed Sudanese preferences for democracy. As of early 2021, over half of Sudanese (55%) disapprove of military rule, and even larger majorities reject one-party rule (74%) and one-man rule (71%). Curiously, only half of the population (50%) supports democratic rule, a 12-point decrease from the 2018 level (62%).

More research is needed to ascertain the declining support for democracy. Nonetheless, the mixed public perception can be associated with the country's past with authoritarian regimes. The undermining of Sudanese democracy can be traced back to the country's fifty-two-year military rule, which failed to introduce consistent mass participation in governance. Secondly, the roots of Sudan's democratic movement are based on their dissatisfaction with decades of suppression which planted seeds of high expectations that can easily turn to disappointment against the country's structural constraints and its complicated political economy. Thirdly, we can posit that given the country's prevailing economic conditions, Sudanese are yet to disentangle political democratization and their economic well-being.

Once again, Sudan is at a critical juncture. However, the country needs complex solutions to undo decades of political and socio-economic turmoil (Isbell & Elawad, 2019). Notwithstanding, it is evident that the citizenry is keen on involvement in the future organization of government. While the general elections are set for 2023, the question remains whether the military will yield power and return to the barracks. Can the Sudan military be trusted for a smooth democratic transition, albeit with bated optimism? The military has exhibited its continued disconnect to cater to the people's will, its challenges in detangling from its past influence and its intention to protect its future interests. Notwithstanding, what is undeniable is that ordinary Sudanese are committed to their hope for change and genuine national inclusion. ■

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## Bio

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## Endnotes

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# Francophone Social Movements and the Challenges of Cyber-Monitoring

Bamba Ndiaye

On May 31, 2020, agents of the Division of Criminal Investigations, an elite unit of the Senegalese national police, burst into the house of a Senegalese activist named Assane Diouf while he was live on Facebook chastising President Macky Sall's regime. Hundreds of citizens witnessed the activist being violently wrestled to the ground and handcuffed by police officers.

Three years prior to this arrest, Assane Diouf was living in New Orleans, Louisiana where he was organizing daily Facebook Lives to insult President Macky Sall and high-ranked members of the regime, denounce corruption and mismanagement of fund, and share sensitive and private information about members of the Senegalese government. In retaliation, the Senegal government used those Facebook videos to accuse Assane Diouf of being a "terrorist" and proceeded via its embassy in Washington DC to denounce him to the FBI. After days of detention and interrogation, The FBI found no evidence of the Senegalese government's accusation but still proceeded to place the activist under Immigration and Custom Enforcement custody due illegal entry to the US territory. Subsequently, in August 2017 Diouf was deported to Senegal, where he faced multiple arrests and police harassment. In February 2021, Diouf was arrested again by the Division of Criminal investigations along with two other Senegalese activists named Guy Marius Sagna and Clédor Sène following the interception of a Whatsapp audio message deemed subversive by the government.

It isn't only Assane Diouf. In August 2022 the co-founder of the formidable Senegalese cyber-activist group, *Mafia Kacc Kacc*, Outhmane Diagne, was detained for sharing caricatured newspaper headlines taunting the Sall regime and the presidential coalition *Benno Bok Yakkaar* on Facebook. These cases are examples of the rampant monitoring of social activists' digital footprints not only in Senegal but also in the Francophone West African region

which has seen an increase of contentious politics through digital platforms. This phenomenon triggers several questions: Why do Francophone West African activists increasingly rely on social media platforms to engage with the public and antagonize power establishments? What are the benefits and disadvantages of using social media platforms for social activism in contrast to traditional mass media? How effective is the use of social media for mass mobilization and mass action in Francophone West Africa? And then finally, how can the use of digital technology facilitate cyber monitoring and governmental repression in the region?

By focusing on Senegal's *Y en a marre* (YEM) movement, this essay unpacks the growing resort to digital technology to defy Francophone African governments and the ensuing state repression and monitoring of online activism. The term *Y en a marre* (Enough is Enough) is a Senegalese social movement that came into existence in 2011 as the result of prolonged power outages that paralyzed the country's economy. Upon its inception, *YEM* rapidly became a prototype of activism on the continent, especially in Francophone Africa. Its co-founders (Sophia Denise Sow, Fadel Barro, Aliou Sané, Cyrille Touré) continue to play a central role in African and diasporic activism. They denounce the policing of internet which has paused a severe threat to African cyber-activism, thus driving many movement participants into an existential precarity. Despite this hurdle, young Africans continue to weaponize digital platforms against their governments while acknowledging that the profound structural changes they are seeking will inevitably come from the offline confrontation.

## Growth of African Social Media

Social media has transformed politics in Francophone Africa over the past decade. Tech-savvy young people turned social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp into

alternative communication tools and mediums to express grievances and mobilize masses for political action, particularly in urban areas. Simultaneously, political candidates, political parties, activists and social movement participants used social media to engage with various audiences, fuel political conversations, and inspire social change. Political analyst André-Michel Essoungou highlights the pervasiveness of social media in African social activism. He writes:

Social activists have been using social media to campaign on critical political issues. Across the continent, they have exposed human rights violations which would have remained hidden otherwise. On Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp, they have kept the important conversations at the forefront. In North Africa, the Arab Spring was spurred, in no small part, by their use of these platforms (Essoungou 2019).

Essoungou's statement captures social movements' predilection for cyber-activism and shows the results it can yield when used during protests, as in Tunisia and Egypt during the 2011 uprisings. Contrastingly, in his book *Antisocial Media* (2018), media scholar Siva Vaidhyanathan remarks that social media, more often than we think, produces the opposite effect for which it was intended. His theory is applicable to protest movements in Francophone West Africa, where social media can be counter-productive, exclusionary and predatory under certain circumstances. The more movements become comfortable with digital media, the more they are tempted to shift the mobilization efforts online. By resorting to online mobilization efforts, social movements might inadvertently exclude people who cannot read or lack internet access. Despite the positive results online activism can yield, African activists such as those of the *Y'en a marre* movement recognize the limits of internet and strive to find a balance that could provide them with the best of both worlds (online and offline activism).

### **Y'en a marre and the Use of Traditional and Social Media**

While many Francophone West African social movements employ social media as a substitute

for mainstream media, *YEM* adopts social media to supplement its already strong media arsenal. The Senegalese activists have never regarded social media as the only means to an end. Though they acknowledge the mobilizing power of Facebook, WhatsApp or Twitter, they never relied on them exclusively to conduct mass actions. *YEM's* quest for traditional and social media equilibrium could partially be explained by the fact that the movement was co-founded by two professional journalists, Fadel Barro and Aliou Sané, who previously worked for well-established Senegalese press outlets. Not only do they understand effective communication methods, they also possess strong connections in the Senegalese media environment which encourage a kind of sympathy for the *YEM* cause. Media coverage is therefore not an issue for the movement, especially when it organizes press conferences, solicit interviews, or need event coverage. *YEM* undoubtedly benefits from more local and international airtime than any other social movement in Francophone West Africa due to the size and socio-political impact of the movement. International media corporations such as BBC, TV5, and *The New York Times* continue to show interest in its activism.

With these advantages, since its inception in 2011 *YEM* has managed to impose itself as an opinion leader when it comes to the daily political affairs of the country. Leaders of the organization are solicited by the media to comment on current political issues or participate in televised debates. However, this proximity with the media sphere can sometimes be a double-edged sword because certain outlets owned/co-owned by government officials or pro-regime journalists often negatively portray the movement or fail to accurately present the position of *YEM* activists. The fact that the Senegalese government provides annual financial resources to all major Senegalese media outlets could ultimately be detrimental to the movement's coverage. The Senegalese press is not entirely free. Since organizations like *YEM* partially rely on it to project their messages and popularize their political actions, powerful government officials could compel certain media outlets to deny them coverage or even lead slander campaigns against the movements.

For these reasons, *YEM* launched its web TV channel, LTC (*La Télé Citoyenne*), formerly YEM TV in 2018 thanks to the availability of Internet and the will to democratize the media in Senegal. In an interview I conducted with *YEM* co-founder Fadel Barro in 2019, he argued that “the internet constitutes a tremendous opportunity for social movements because classic media will not always relay their discourse. With the availability of internet, we now have the possibility to create our own media outlets”. Not only does Barro articulate the significance of the internet in contemporary African activism, he also expresses the desire to emancipate social movements from their dependence on classical or traditional media. In this respect, LTC epitomizes the result of a movement’s will to remain independent from traditional media.

Furthermore, it translates the activists’ desire to relay reliable information about state mismanagement and corruption and provide a platform for thousands of marginalized voices. *YEM* co-founder Aliou Sané expands on this idea when he argues that: “YEM TV is a participatory media grounded in citizen-journalism that allows citizens to share videos about their daily struggle” (Aliou Sané 2018). To Sané’s declaration, Fadel Barro (2018) adds that creating their own internet TV channel “is a possibility to do raw journalism which means giving truthful and objective information. We remain impartial and we will not allow censorship”. Sané and Barro reignite the notion of resistance journalism which thus represents a resource of communication that empowers ordinary denizens and movement participants to construct unique narratives or viewpoints.

Through their web TV, *YEM* activists embody the role of citizen journalists who “question established media roles of journalists and raise publicity for everyday citizens as alternative experts and creators of reality” (Vincent and Straub 2017, 3). The use of the internet and social media allows activists to totally control their narrative and free them from the dependence on classic media.

However, while mobilizing the masses through the Internet has proved to be successful in more

industrialized countries, it may not translate well in African settings for multiple reasons, especially since many African cultures place significant value on interpersonal relationships and community links. Fadel Barro (2019) understands this phenomenon when he asserts that “Internet is extremely important for social movements, but it cannot replace the action on the ground”. Whereas ground action (or offline activism) and physical interactions with the public can reinforce symbiosis, social media can create an unwanted distance between activists and movement participants. The virtual interactions can also lead to participant disengagement in the long run.

Furthermore, not everyone can read social media posts in local languages (Wolof, Pulaar, Joola, etc.) or in French or English. Additionally, not every potential movement participant has the means to access a reliable internet connection. As of October 2019, only 39.6% of the African population had internet access in comparison to 62.7% in the rest of the world. In Senegal, 58.2% of the population have access to the internet versus 18.2% in Burkina Faso, 12.4% in Togo, 18% in Guinea and 32% in Benin. Given these relatively low rates of internet access in Francophone West Africa, internet-based mobilization campaigns might prove inefficient for social movements in the region and from one country to another, and activists might face more obstacles reaching out to people via digital technologies.

Consequently, cyber activism in Francophone West Africa may not always guarantee the strengthening of the social capital that movements manage to build through physical interactions and traditional means of communication such as TV, radio, flyers, tours, concerts, door-to-door interactions, etc. Furthermore, internet-based activism can be exclusionary in the sense that it does not reach people in rural areas with unstable internet access and the urban proletariat. Additionally, precarious access to electric power in many African countries makes cyber activism unreliable. By using this medium, social movements might only reach citizens of the middle class and the diaspora who might not constitute a critical mass to foster successful political actions. Not only does this

form of activism generate an access issue, it can potentially widen the class divide as well, thus reinforcing Lisa Mueller's arguments that African social activism remains the domain of the middle class (Mueller 2018).

A good example of this can be seen in the number of people who engage with *Y'en a marre's* Facebook event posts. For example, on August 2, 2019, the movement created a Facebook event asking people to join them in protest against the arbitrary detention of Guy Marius Sagna, a fellow activist who was arrested for posting a "false terrorist alert." Only 26 people shared the post, 57 said they would attend, while 176 people said they were interested in participating. Similarly, *Balai Citoyen's* past Facebook events and online calls for mobilization also show low numbers of engagement. Its April 2019 online attempt to gather protesters against the Burkina Faso national telecommunication company reveals that only 150 people clicked the "Going" button while 21 Facebook users hit the "Interested" icon. These numbers are low considering that approximately 108,000 people follow *Y'en a marre* on Facebook on a daily basis and nearly 55,000 people follow *Balai Citoyen's* Facebook page. The users who engaged with these Facebook posts include direct movement members, which means that the campaigns reached even fewer people than intended.

What the data demonstrates then is that engagement with the social movements' Facebook posts is low on average (less than 1% of the total Facebook page followers). Social movements' Facebook post engagement is even lower in Benin and Togo where the populations have less internet access. Therefore, we could argue that participants tend to better relate to movements that approach them to inquire about their daily struggles rather than to cyber protesters. Despite being tech savvy and having relatively easy access to mobile internet, Burkinabé and Senegalese youth are not always receptive to social media calls for mobilization. *Y'en a marre* has however seen well-attended rallies when it used a combination of more conventional methods of communications like text-messaging, flyers, concerts, bus tours, and other forms of mass communications.

In the African context, the power of social media in mass actions may therefore be overstated. In the wake of the "Arab Revolts", Many political analysts and commentators in Western mainstream media held on to the Western-centric notion that political changes in the Global South are always directly or indirectly influenced by technological tools or socio-economic policies from the North. Contrastingly, many African activists and scholars have pushed back against this type of narrative. They remind the public that social media are a strong vector for mobilization and denunciation, but we should never forget that ultimate change will come from the actions on the ground, the physical confrontation, the pressure the masses exert on the state apparatus. When analyzing social insurgencies, one should therefore dissociate the mobilization tools (social media and traditional media) from the actual physical confrontation while acknowledging that they are not mutually exclusive. The way Francophone West African social movements engage with social media, as shown in the essay, effectively debunks the "Facebook Revolution" theory. Mobilization, revolts and political change in Africa or elsewhere can exist independently from the influence of social media and digital technology. The latter had minimal to no effect in the political changes that took place in Senegal and Burkina Faso between 2011 and 2015. Barro reinforces this idea when he says:

Social media cannot replace action on the ground. I have been saying that there exists a western trend which is arguing that "if there exists enlightenment in the world, it is thanks to us because we have created the internet which allows African youths to be awakened." It is as if all of these [revolts] would not have happened if the internet had not existed, that is not true! (Barro 2019).

Barro rejects the "Facebook Revolution" theory and minimizes the power of social media in contemporary insurgencies on the African continent. His sentiment does not echo African leaders who have developed a legitimate phobia about social media over the past decade due to its capacities to mobilize, disseminate information and help expose corruption. Cyber activism also compromises government communication



strategies, hence African governments' unbridled efforts to clamp down on or police social media.

### Cyber-Surveillance

Many African activists understood early on that a successful mobilization of resources does not depend on social media, especially knowing that they have no control over the availability of the internet. Governments can unilaterally cut power lines, disconnect internet devices and phone, radio and tv signals to the detriment of protesters. More importantly, they have accentuated surveillance activities against opponents of the regime.

"Facebook has grown into the most pervasive surveillance system in the world" is how Vaidhyathan describes the "Big Brother dimension" of the picture, video, and message sharing platform. Whereas social media and ICTs in general enable protest movements to have a shared control in the political discourse, it makes government surveillance easier and poses a serious threat to cyber activists and social movements.

In 2019, several Senegalese activists were located and arrested due to sharing their whereabouts on Facebook and/or posting messages the Sall regime deemed subversive. On February 25, 2019, former *Y'en a marre* member and founding member of the movement *Nittu Dëg* Abdou Karim Guèye was arbitrarily arrested at Independence Square in Dakar while he was live on Facebook. He was calling for people to join him in protest against the provisional results of the presidential election that intended to declare Macky Sall's coalition winner. Guèye was again arrested under similar circumstances on June 19, 2019 due to sharing his location on Facebook Live and calling for a mass mobilization against what he called the dilapidation of Senegal's natural resources. Guèye is known for sharing provocative Facebook lives with his followers in which he chastises the Sall regime. His overzealousness leads him sometimes to publicly share his location thus facilitating his own arrests by law enforcement.

Guy Marius Sagna was also the victim of government surveillance when law enforcement

placed him in custody due to a Facebook post criticizing the fact that members of the government always go to France to seek medical care. This post came after the announcement of Oumane Tanor Dieng's death in a Paris medical facility. Dieng had been Premier Minister under President Diouf and Chairman of the High Territorial Collectivity Council under Macky Sall. In reference to his death, Sagna published on Facebook: "Dying in a hospital of the former colonial power though they had 59 years to endow this country with medical facilities worthy of the name. What a pity!!! What a waste!" (Manon Laplace, *Jeune Afrique*, July 19, 2019). Sagna was interrogated following this post though law enforcement later reported that his arrest emanated from a different Facebook post on the same day in which *Frapp-France Dégage*, a movement co-founded by Sagna published the following message: "*La France prépare un attentat terroriste au Sénégal*" (France is preparing a terrorist attack in Senegal). However, Sagna's lawyer, Aly Kane counteracted the police report by arguing that investigators questioned his client only about the first Facebook post.

These examples demonstrate that law enforcement and regimes are carefully watching every movement activists make online and will not hesitate to use that against them. It is not a secret that African governments have been trying to sophisticate their cyber surveillance techniques and technologies. In 2015 *Quartz Africa* reported that "African countries are entering the world's newest arms race, for cyber weapons and surveillance at a rapid pace. According to recent *Wall Street Journal* report, an estimated 29 countries around the world now have formal or military units dedicated to cyber warfare, and 63 countries have used cyber surveillance on their own citizen or abroad. Of those, four were in Sub-Saharan Africa." (Lily Kuo, *Quartz Africa*, October, 16, 2015). This report reveals that cyber spying is becoming more pervasive on the African continent. In 2015, BBC and Privacy International obtained leaked classified documents detailing the existence of a Ugandan internal surveillance program called *Fungua Macho* (Open Eyes in Swahili). The operation uses a software called Finsher Technology developed by the Gamma Group International, a firm based in the UK. The surveillance system

“can covertly be deployed in buildings, vehicles, computers, mobile phones, cameras and any other equipment deemed worthy for information extraction or surveillance”. More importantly, the document revealed that the same program “is being used by countries like Nigeria, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Senegal, and most recently Kenya” (Nick Hopkins and Jake Morris, *BBC News*, October 15, 2015). From the BBC and Privacy International report, it is clear that political opposition and activists in Senegal and other African countries are primary targets of government cyber espionage. *Y en a marre* member Djily Bagdad seems to understand the seriousness of cyber espionage when talking about the mobilization against the Wade region between 2011 and 2012. He stated: “we used to do the meetings in some very anonymous places that nobody would know. We stopped using our regular phone numbers, we started buying sim cards, using them for two days and then disposing of them because you might have your phone tapped. It was pretty hectic” (Djily Bagdad 2015). While they were being hunted down by the Wade regime for instigating massive protests against the change of the Senegalese constitution and Wade’s candidacy for a third term, *Y en a marre* members worried about their movements and communications. Out of fear of being monitored by government intelligence services, they strategically restrained their online presence.

In summary we can say that media constitute a vital resource for movement mobilization. In the Francophone West African context, social activists are conscious that access to traditional media can be an uphill battle given the bifurcation of the press and government control of information. Thus, the advent of social media and mobile technology has provided them with opportunities to control the narrative around their political actions, revolutionizing the ways protest movements mobilize masses to support activism. However, as cyber skeptics, argue, online activism cannot necessarily replace the offline mobilization efforts. Virtual or online mobilization efforts can de-socialize/disengage movement participants who seem to better engage with ground action and in-person interactions with social activists. Nevertheless, the biggest issues with cyber activism

remain government espionage which is becoming more and more pervasive on the African continent. In addition to media challenges, Francophone African social movements struggle with financial resources. ■

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# Social media and the prospects for functional democracy in Zimbabwe

*Pauline Mateveke*

## Introduction

With the 2023 general elections looming in Zimbabwe, there are two front running political parties. On the one hand, there is the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), an emerging opposition political party asserting its readiness to take over and to make the necessary changes in the country. On the other hand, there is the ruling Zanu-PF political party which is equally determined to win the elections and retain its power. Zimbabwe today is therefore in election mode, as can be seen clearly in the hive of social media activity from both opposition and ruling party supporters. This study explores the ways in which social media is being used to construct ideas about democracy within the context of a volatile election season. Such an exploration is important because the trending social media not only frames everyday reality, but it also frames political ontology. Many take for granted the assumption that the advent of social media in Africa has provided the necessary democratic tools for pushing back against nationalist driven ruling political parties. While this may be true to a certain extent, the nature of the “push back” and its effect on ideas about democracy requires further analysis. The lines between democracy and autocracy continue to be blurry despite the assumed autonomy of the social media space. Zimbabwe has for a long time been in a state of political turbulence and social media discourses can reveal those political tensions and turbulence. I am thus interested in understanding the constructions of democracy emanating from these existing tensions.

## Theory

Ademola Kazeem Fayemi’s theorization of democracy underpins this study’s exploration of the constructions of democracy on social media. I am

particularly drawn to Fayemi’s conceptualization of democracy not just as an idea or concept, but also a method of government that allows citizens the freedom to decide their desires (2009:103). Accordingly, I use the term democracy to broadly refer to a people centered government which is characterized by peaceful transfer of power which is regularly sanctioned through elections. Still, such a definition will be used with caution and qualification because as Fayemi highlights, holding elections alone does not constitute democracy. A democratic government is also seen by how it guarantees its people civil and political liberties which enable them to freely express themselves without fear. A truly functional democracy “... emphasizes that values should not be forced upon any people” (Fayemi, 2009:105).

Fayemi’s characterization of functional democracy takes the debate further by problematizing the taken-for-granted Western standards of democracy and their applicability to African political systems. In doing so, he points towards the urgency of an African centered theory of democracy which takes into consideration the traditional ways of doing democracy within diverse African contexts. This argument is crucial to the realization of the objectives of this study because while Zimbabwean democracy largely takes its cue from Western democratic values, there are some democratic practices steeped within Zimbabwean indigenous traditions that persist and that should not be ignored.

## Data and Methods

Steven Wilson (2022) emphasizes the validity of social media as social science data, arguing that social movements draw from the bulk of the population leading to the growth of contemporary ways of data mining. Wilson rightly observes how

social media makes it easy for citizens to have cheap access to considerable political information and to quickly exchange that information. As a result, vibrant political debates and a wealth of research data has been made available through social media.

Wilson's observation informs my selection of Twitter posts from purposively selected official accounts of known CCC and Zanu-PF enthusiasts. I have also selected Tweets from non-partisan accounts. I downloaded Tweets that were specifically posted in the year 2022. The main reason for selecting 2022 Tweets is because it is the year when the main opposition party CCC was formed. This is also the year that political parties and citizens went in to full election mode as the date of the Presidential election approached. The selected Tweets were downloaded using the keyword of interest #Zimdemocracy.

The dataset of Tweets was analyzed using the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodological tool. CDA is a special approach to Discourse Analysis which focuses on discursive components and consequences of power and abuse by dominant groups (van Dijk, 1995). CDA thus examines patterns of access and control over contexts, genres, text and talk, their properties as well as the discursive strategies of mind control. CDA studies discourse in society and the ways in which forms of inequality are expressed, represented, legitimated or reproduced in talk and text. Norman Fairclough (1995) views CDA as a method aimed at systematically exploring language as it relates to the wider, social and cultural structures and how they are shaped by relations of power and struggles over power. CDA is a practice of representing the world as well as signifying the world, hence, constituting and constructing the world in meaning.

CDA is a crucial methodological intervention well suited to analysing the constructions of democracy as envisaged and expressed on social media, because CDA is not restricted to the description of linguistic forms but is also committed to the purposes or functions which the linguistic forms are designed and serve in human affairs. As van Dijk (1993) argues, CDA analysis involves an elaborate relationship between text, talk, social cognition,

power, society and culture. This means that my analysis is not merely observational or descriptive but rather involves the effectiveness and relevance of these constructions and the extent to which they contribute to an understanding of democracy in Zimbabwe.

## Findings and discussion

This project's findings are not conclusive because Zimbabwe's general elections are expected to be held in 2023 even if the exact date has not yet been released. This means that there will be a lot more elaborate political discourses and debates on social media and if these are followed continually, a more expansive conclusion may be available. However, the discourses on Twitter thus far already attest to the political divide in contemporary Zimbabwe. The Tweets make visible, legible and intelligible citizens' constructions of democracy. They show how the existent and irreconcilable political differences between the two opposing political parties have crippled the democratic project and may present a huge challenge to the management of elections.

There are four related themes derived from selected Tweets:

### 1. Democracy as a failing trope

Generally, the language that is used in connection with the idea of democracy in Zimbabwe is laden by cynicism and distrust. An overriding pessimistic tone pervades public opinion about the democracy. Pessimism refers to a state of mind that constantly expects the worst. It is the tendency to see the worst aspects of things and the conviction that the worst will happen. Pessimistic political attitudes and discourses usually exist within a framework of continued disillusionment. Thus, the pessimistic discourse about Zimbabwean democracy suggests that the story of democracy in Zimbabwe is that of continued failure.

Such discourses work to communicate information to the state about the bridge between the citizen's democratic expectations and the state's constant failures to fulfill those expectations. For example:

The ruining party Zanu-PF is fond of making headlines for the wrong reasons. It is running the country like a tuck shop. Zimbabwean democracy is the biggest scam I have witnessed #CCC is the alternative that can bring freedom, a better economy and rule of law in Zimbabwe (@ZimboFella, 26/02/22)

The range of responses to this particular post reveals citizens that are plagued by a deep sense of pessimism with the idea of a Zimbabwe that is truly democratic. Citizens expect, for example, that Zanu-PF in suspected collusion with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC), will fail to make sure that the political playing field will be level for all the political parties. The citizens' previous experiences with the ZEC explains why they expect that it will defraud the elections and rob Zimbabwe of a peaceful and just transfer of power through elections. This is typical of public opinion concepts, as citizens derive their attitudes from their previous knowledge and experiences with elections in Zimbabwe. Twitter provides them with a relatively safe window through which they can freely express their disappointment and suspicions.

For as long as Zanu-PF is in power, these citizens have no faith in an electoral route to true democracy. However, there is also a sense in which even as they expect the worst they also cautiously hope for the best outcome. This is because, unlike popular perceptions about pessimism, pessimistic discourses are not useless to political thought, instead, pessimism goes hand in hand with optimism. This is because it is a rhetoric strategic that communicates to the state, the citizens' expectations and forces the state to be accountable, while also keeping the citizens grounded and away from the wilder utopian promises of politics. At the center of the failing narrative of functional democracy in Zimbabwe is the Zanu-PF political party and one of the central constructions of democracy is a Zanu-PF problem.

## 2. Democracy as a Zanu-PF problem.

The general sentiment on Twitter is that the ruling political party is too autocratic to be able to foster democracy in Zimbabwe. Since the formation of

CCC, there have been a series of Tweets alleging that CCC supporters are experiencing politically motivated violence from the Zimbabwean police and Zanu-PF supporters. For example on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, @Hurungwefarmer posted pictures of members of the Zimbabwe Republic Police with the caption:

This is the Zimbabwean story  
Vote ED out  
Vote for human rights  
Vote for a corrupt free president  
Vote for clean hands

The Tweet suggests that the problem of democracy in Zimbabwe is a Zanu-PF problem. Zanu-PF is solely burdened by the failure of upholding democratic practices in Zimbabwe. This sentiment is shared across Twitter posts by CCC supporters and activists. The message that comes across is that Zanu-PF ruins democracy especially because of its violent history under the leadership of the late Robert Mugabe.

While it is evident that the sentiments shared on Twitter undoubtedly point to Zanu-PF as the white elephant in Zimbabwe hindering the achievement of democracy, the sentiments are encumbered by underlying fear and anxiety which are communicated through covertly anxious discourses. Generally, anxiety refers to reactions that come about as a result of feeling threatened. In volatile political contexts, anxiety is predicated upon ubiquitous cultural dispositions of insecurity. Thus, citizens' anxiety becomes an all-encompassing force that dominates and informs the citizens' public attitudes and perceptions of political phenomena, in this case the phenomenon of democracy. For example, @ZHRO\_Zimbabwe recently posted:

As we celebrate Heroes day, let's not forget the injustices and suffering that Zimbabwean are being subjected to by Zanu-PF. Zanu has failed good governance, rule of law, democracy and human rights. (08/08/22)

Most of the responses to this post seem to concur with the post and are similarly characterized by political anxiety is caused by a deep sense of

vulnerability and fear that the continued rule of Zanu-PF sustains anti-democratic practices such as bad governance, lack of rule of law and the suppression of human rights. CCC naturally becomes the anti-thesis of Zanu-PF. The flip side of presuming that CCC naturally translates to functional democracy is that citizens fail to be objective. Yet, a closer analysis of some Twitter posts reveals that democracy is as much a CCC problem as it is a Zanu-PF problem.

### 3. Democracy as a CCC problem.

Generally, Twitter posts by CCC activists and supporters presume that the party is the foundation of a flourishing democracy and it is its burden to lead Zimbabwe towards change and freedom. I however observe from this narrative some political blind spots around change and democracy. For example, recently Professor Jonathan Moyo through his Twitter handle has been taking CCC to task about its lack of political structures and reforms. There has been a lot of backlash from CCC supporters who are quick to dismiss Moyo because of his links with the ousted Zanu-PF government led by the late Robert Mugabe. Examples of this backlash are many and varied but one stands out because of the huge engagement that it receives:

Satan knows all bible verses. He even has the intellect to engage Jesus pound for pound using scripture. But his quoting scripture does not mean he wants heaven for you! So when they raise issues like constitution, structures etc. their elaborate intent is not for a CCC win! (@freemanchari 04/07/22)

For Chari, a seasoned political activist, to blithely dismiss the legitimacy of Moyo's observations is counterproductive to the attainment of democracy. It is as if CCC and its supporters are saying they want democracy in theory but are uncomfortable with democracy's outcomes in practice. The functional political structures and reforms to which Moyo alludes, and which Chari attempts to make light of, are part of the democratic outcomes that CCC must clearly spell out.

While democracy (lack thereof) is overtly a Zanu-PF problem because of its violent history, it is not just good for Zanu-PF to be democratic, it is also good for CCC. The fact that CCC supporters and activists are at the center of attacking Moyo's legitimate concerns reveals the many instances where CCC is dismissive of dissenting voices which are quickly labeled a Zanu-PF agenda. For both political parties there is an urgent need to think outside the immediate box of winning elections and to deal with the democratic limits, paradoxes and incoherences within their political parties. Otherwise the prospect of functional democracy in Zimbabwe will remain a narrative of failure.

### 4. Democracy as collective effort

Since the acrimonious 2018 elections and within the current context of political tensions while preparing for the upcoming elections, there has been no real dialogue between the two main opposing political parties. The lack of meaningful dialogue has also meant that CCC and Zanu-PF activists and supporters have also not meaningfully engaged with each other online and offline. What seems to be evident on Twitter are polarized political posts that degenerate into hate speech, intolerance and political insults. The poverty of dialogue and healthy political engagement reflects how the two parties are unwilling to abandon their respective voices and to listen to opposing voices. Yet, this ability to listen is a necessary virtue in democratic politics.

There have been noticeable Tweets that have pointed to the necessity of dialogue and collective effort in trying to achieve democracy in Zimbabwe. Thus, democracy is not just the burden of politicians and their political parties, but is the burden of every Zimbabwean citizen. This is aptly captured by @STimburwa when tweeting:

Our democracy seems to be teetering on the brink of a crisis rooted in a fundamental contests between two opposing visions of what Zimbabwe is, what it should be. It is the crisis that has left the body politic divided, angry and distrustful (20/04/22).



Other tweets have also stressed the urgency of dialogue in the current Zimbabwean political crisis, without which, the 2023 elections will repeat the cycle of violence and instability (@MKomichi 06/04/22).

I argue that re-thinking functional democracy in Zimbabwe and in Africa as a whole, requires the kind of politics that allows the existence of a multiplicity of voices. Komichi's tweet rightly alludes to "Inclusive National Dialogue" as the driver of a successful democracy. I agree with Komichi's stance because it helps politicians, supporters and activists to grow in perspective and to foster a common political consciousness that is driven by the need to achieve a common goal that surpasses differences.

The bulk of dialogue on democracy as it is expressed on Twitter is essentialist. Either a person is pro-Zanu-PF or pro-CCC, anything in-between is not seen as valuable. This kind of essentialism presents a challenge because it is used as a weapon by both political parties to silence those with different views.

### **Re-thinking functional democracy in Zimbabwe: Concluding remarks**

As has been mentioned earlier in the study, the effects of social media were often framed on the perspective of a total revolution, a democratic revolution and politics and public governance, or

of a technological fix for basic problems of political activity and the trust of citizens in government (Hacker and van Dijk 2000). However, looking at the examples from the Zimbabwean situation, this view of internet and democracy is utopian. The truth is social media's outcomes may either be democratic or autocratic. While we see some functioning of democracy in as far as people's opinions are robustly expressed on Twitter, their opinions on what and how democracy should be, come with paradoxes, limits and inconsistencies based on their political party preferences. ■

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# COVID-19 and the Nigerian State: A Sociopolitical Analysis

*Damilola T. Agbalajobi<sup>1</sup>*

The COVID-19 pandemic has unsettled political, economic and social structures across the world. Although each country has its unique set of COVID challenges, some preliminary analyses have singled out African countries regarding the impacts of the pandemic, citing the level of structural violence within them, and their structural vulnerabilities on the micro, meso and macro levels of the international sociocultural system. We argue in this essay that the pandemic provides Nigeria with an imperative to restructure state-society relations and provide opportunities for citizens to enjoy the dividend of democracy. Based on a large phone survey conducted during the lockdown period in Lagos, we conduct a sociopolitical analysis to examine the structural vulnerabilities exposed during the of COVID-19 pandemic. We also evaluate the extent to which residents of Lagos State could make claims and enjoy the dividend of democracy as well as make claims on the government. This is imperative given that COVID-19 pandemic has led many governments to make emergency legislation to implement lockdown regulations which, in most cases, undermines democracy and change how political leaders make decisions.

We contribute to the emerging literature on the sociopolitical impact of COVID-19 by focusing on Lagos State, Nigeria. Our choice of Lagos was informed by the fact that the state is the epicenter of COVID-19 in Nigeria. It is also central to the country's response to health emergencies as it houses the country's major international entry port, is the most populous state, and is the economic capital. The study was a telephone-based survey with two thousand respondents drawn from one thousand households across local government and local council development areas of Lagos State. The study coincided with the inception of the second wave of COVID-19 in Nigeria. Fieldwork commenced from 5th of November 2020 and ended on 18th of March 2021. A total of nine

thousand, six hundred and eighty-six (9,686) telephone contacts were made. Effective household interviews were evenly distributed between male and female respondents, across 57 Local Government Area/Local Development Council (LGA/LCDAs) of Lagos State.

In response to COVID-19, Nigeria's government policies affected citizens' ways of life and the civil liberties of individuals and communities. For example, freedom of association has been restricted by the Federal and Local governments, with restrictions on the number of people that can assemble. This approach is not so different from the responses in most other countries, as social distancing, where people stay some meters apart from each other, has become the norm. Freedom of movement has also been severely curtailed with interstate travel restrictions, and curfews within the states, thus abridging the fundamental and constitutional rights of citizens. In addition, all schools and gatherings were banned, and the citizenry ordered to confine to their abodes (Obiakor & Adeniran, 2020; Oxford Analytica, 2020). The drastic decisions, such as total lockdown and restriction on movement, further complicated the challenges of meeting the populace's welfare needs across national boundaries. This has been especially challenging in Lagos State, where the population density is the highest in the country (Osabuohien et al., 2020; World Population Review, 2020).

COVID-19 exposed the weaknesses in systems all over the world, and Nigeria is no exception. It revealed the deep-seated inequalities, and the disproportionate impact it has on the urban poor. The pandemic has affected the way we relate, revealing the way cities are organised and how Nigerian cities are not planned. COVID 19 also revealed how ineffective the pandemic protocols were in unplanned cities and has exposed cities bedevilled with a lack of necessary infrastructures.

COVID-19 impacted Nigeria's health response, its social inclusivity, and its governance structure by challenging the fundamentals of democracy as it is currently practised.

In terms of health systems, COVID-19 exposed the dilapidated state of Nigeria's health care system and forcefully revealed the need to learn the lessons and maximise the experience of COVID-19 to ensure our health sector does not remain the same. Similarly, COVID-19 has made people appreciate the need to stay in hygienic cities, more evidently as most public buildings now have water outlets, hand sanitisers, and soaps to ensure people maintain the protocol to avoid the spread of the virus. These were the initial steps taken by the government even though we eventually learned that the major way COVID spreads is via air/droplets not via unclean surface.

On social inclusivity, COVID-19 exposed the reality of the level of poverty in Nigerian cities, both urban and rural. Providing for the vulnerable and have-nots has been particularly difficult because of the unplanned nature of Nigerian cities, and the unavailability of structures or vital data such as population figures and household figures to effectively reach them. Good governance would include the provision for and meeting of the welfare needs of the citizens, but in Nigeria, no welfare system could be relied upon when COVID struck. To make matters worse, the government enforced lockdown of activities without adequate palliatives. Although there was the news of some pockets of palliatives such as food supplies, there were also widespread allegations of diversion of such palliative materials by some agents working for the government (Ufua et al, 2021; Agbede, et al. 2020; Eranga, 2020).

In regards to the governance structure, the pandemic exposed the weakness of Nigeria's state. The availability of baseline information/data to enable the nation to plan, and strategize against the pandemic is non-existent. In Nigeria and her communities, there is no social security, and there are no centralised medical or dental records. Going by the prevalent use of affidavits, more people are likely not to have their births adequately registered. The Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) System, though built on viable statutory and

institutional platforms, has some major weakness. The weakness among others are inadequate financing and deployment of registration facilities, unfriendly sociocultural norms, weak national data infrastructure, systemic corruption, poverty and undeveloped civic culture (Makinde et al., 2020; Maduekwe, Banjo & Sangodapo, 2017; Garenee et al., 2016). These difficulties make it almost impossible for the government to advise or support the populace rightly to contain the pandemic.

Globally, in terms of mental health evidence has shown that women are more likely to report anxiety than men in low and middle income countries. While both genders suffer greater job losses during the COVID-19 lockdown, women who faced economic hardship were more likely to report anxiety and being negatively affected than their male counterparts (Hossain, 2021; Surucu, Ertan, Baglarbasi & Masalakci, 2021). A majority of Nigerians experience psychological distress, with women likely to exhibit severe depression more than men owing to isolation and/or lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic (Olaseni, Akinsola, Agberotimi, & Oguntayo, 2020). Given the unprecedented closure of schools and lockdown in a bid to curb the spread of the virus, women's work outside the home dropped and their productivity declined, which disrupted the advancement of women in leadership roles (Plaunova, Heller, Babb & Heffernan, 2021). Evidence of negative implications of COVID-19 on women's mobility and transport in the peripheries of three African cities (Abuja, Cape Town and Tunis) has proven that women bear much of this burden (Porter, et al, 2021). In a bid to aid the understanding of the gendered effects of COVID-19, the report by the National Income Dynamics Study- Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM) in South Africa, stated that women in South Africa were particularly hard hit. Relative to men, they were much more likely to lose their jobs during the initial strict lockdown phase, and their recovery was slower as the economy started to reopen (Casale & Posel, 2020). In addition to uneven effects in the labour market, inequalities in the time spent on childcare and in the income support for unemployed or furloughed workers persist, as women experienced carrying out more of the responsibilities (Casale & Shepherd, 2021).

In comparison to the studies on the gendered effects of COVID-19 across the world with specific references to implications, such as, mental health, economic, psychological, social, mobility and transport, etc., we lack sufficient studies on gendered experiences of COVID-19 in Lagos State, Nigeria. Lim, Park, Tessler, Choi, Jung and Kao (2020) showed that although a substantial share of Korean men and women anticipate a reduction in the gendered division of paid work and household work after COVID-19, Korean women are not as optimistic as their male counterparts about this potential reduction. In particular, younger women are most skeptical about the prospect that paid work and household work will be less divided by gender beyond the pandemic. In the United Kingdom, Zamberlan, Gioachin and Gritti (2021) analysed the impact of changes in paid working hours on gender inequality, specifically time devoted to housework and childcare. The study found that both men and women who lost paid hours increased the time devoted to domestic chores, but gender inequality strikes back, especially after breadwinner women lose paid hours. Casale and Shepherd (2021) examined the gendered effects of the COVID-19 crisis and ongoing lockdown in South Africa. Using the earlier waves of the National Income Dynamics Study- Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM), the study found that women in South Africa were particularly hard hit. Hill and Kohler (2020) analyzed the effects of South Africa's national lockdown on gender wage inequality. Relying on the first two waves of NIDS-CRAM data, the study presents results for the conditional and unconditional gender wage gap at the mean, revealing that women earned approximately 29% less than men per hour in February 2020, which expanded to approximately 43% less in June 2020. Monthly figures are more severe, with the gender wage gap estimated at approximately 30% in February 2020 and 51.6% in June 2020.

## Analysis

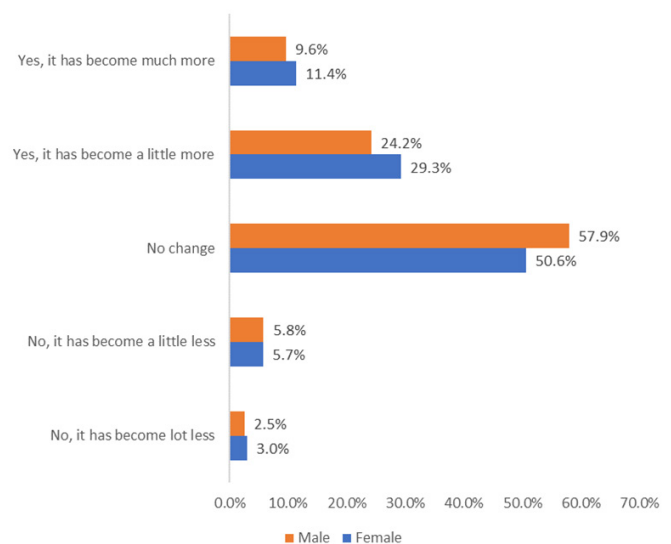
Given that the political and social environment of every society is being shaped by the economic environment, we begin our analysis by looking at the economic impacts of COVID-19 in Lagos State

by looking at how employment status changed during and after the lockdown; the burden of chores which impacts on social activities, and the response of government to the needs of the people of Lagos in relation to health care and palliatives.

In terms of the economic effects, 73% of the respondents to our phone survey were working before the pandemic, with 44% self-employed and the majority earning less than \$100 a month. This is consistent with the data collected by the World Bank (2022), that prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 around 4 in 10 Nigerians were living in poverty. Despite this and the decision to lockdown, 93% of the respondent reported not receiving any support from the government during the period. With many Nigerians living just above the poverty line in 2018/19 (World Bank, 2022), the pandemic shock left them vulnerable to falling into poverty when shocks. Despite the fact that Lagos state has the lowest poverty rate of 4.5% (World Bank, 2022), 43% of our respondent reported that they had difficulties in buying essential food items.

Evidence from our survey shows that more women reported that the burden of work increased (see figure one). The results showed that there was a significant association between the burden of chores and the gender of the respondents:

*Figure One: Burden of Chores by Gender*



Interestingly, only 18% of our respondents reported they took ill during the period and the majority sought advice from a health provider and got the medications they needed. Our analysis showed that there was no significant association between employment status and whether they had received money or other benefits from the government (chi-sq. = 2.428;  $p = 0.488$ ). On the other hand, there was a significant association between their employment status and whether they thought the lockdown was an effective strategy to handle the COVID-19 situation (chi-sq.=63.657;  $p = 0.001$ ). Those who kept their job had a less favorable perception of the lockdown compared to others who either changed jobs or were let go from their work.

It is evident from our study that the majority of our respondents couldn't access help from government, hence they could not enjoy the dividend of democracy. In addition, people had to abide by the regulations made by government despite the impacts it had on their sociopolitical wellbeing. ■

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## Endnotes

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# The South African Government's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

*Vayda Megannon*

The South African government introduced the COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant in April/May of 2020 in response to the socio-economic hardship related to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is the fastest big roll out and biggest fast rollout of a social protection cash transfer in Africa thus far. This paper explores the experiences of 41 poor, formally unemployed South African citizens who were eligible to receive the SRD grant. The data suggests that the majority of the sample was able to successfully receive the SRD grant. Material and technocratic barriers presented challenges which needed to be navigated in order to receive the cash transfer. Those technical challenges systematically excluded some of the poor from accessing the SRD grant, despite the intention to serve the poor during a time of crisis. Challenges to accessing the SRD grant are similar to those reported when accessing various other social grants in South Africa (such as the Child Support Grant). These challenges include lack of identity documents and needing to travel long distances. This paper argues that material, technocratic and technical challenges which hinder access to the SRD grant are political. Overall, though, the SRD grant can be understood as a success in that it was able to serve millions of poor South Africans relatively quickly during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gronbach, Seekings & Megannon, 2021).

## Introduction

In March of 2020, facing the overwhelming effects of the first wave of COVID-19, the South African government declared a national state of disaster and placed the country into complete lockdown on the 26 March 2020. This extension of state power confined all citizens to their households with only 'essential services' permitted to operate and only those employed in these essential sectors permitted to move around for work purposes. In line with international COVID-19 responses, the South

African government claimed that these initiatives to 'flatten the curve' of infections were 'following the science'.

During lockdown the government announced "unprecedented" emergency social protection reforms (Gronbach, Seekings & Megannon, 2021). Prior to lockdown, policy decision making processes in relation to social assistance would involve non-state organisations and a social cluster of government ministers. Lockdown introduced a significant deviation in how this legislative reform process would normally occur. Major reforms to tax-financed social assistance during lockdown became less transparent, with decisions made by the newly formed National Command Council (Seekings, 2020). Faced with this centralisation of decision making within the presidency, civil society proved to play a major role in applying pressure on the presidency to act in the best interest of those most vulnerable.

This extended control over the economy and society, over and above the public health response initiatives, occurred in highly inequitable context with rising unemployment rates. With approximately 14 million South Africans already living in poverty (defined as less than ZAR18.34 per person per day), the socio-economic consequences of a nation-wide lockdown only worsened poverty and inequality. Throughout the pandemic, data on employment trends have varied, with several sources suggesting that by the end of 2020, 2 million people had experienced job loss (Statistics South Africa, 2021a; Statistics South Africa, 2021b). One survey (NIDS-CRAM) found that 47% of respondent households reported that they had run out of money to buy food in April 2020. While improvements of about 1 million job recoveries were recorded in the beginning of 2021, employment rates are still devastatingly low and levels of hunger have remained problematic.

To mitigate the effects of loss of jobs and income, especially for those most vulnerable, the South African government announced a package of emergency reforms including the introduction of a special COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) Grant. Initially introduced for a period of 6 months (from May until October 2020), the ZAR350 per month cash transfer was later extended by three months (to January 2021), then again until April 2021. Due to the prolonged economic impact of the pandemic and social unrest in the provinces of Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal during July of 2021, the government reintroduced the SRD grant on 25 June 2021 after a two-month break. The second round of the grant would be from August 2021 until March 2022 (extended later for a further twelve months, to March 2023).

Nattrass and Seekings (2022) argue that these planning directives have borrowed from the legitimacy of technocracy in order to “justify projects of expanded government control over the economy and health sector”. They explain how the employment of scientific and technocratic expertise has allowed for projects of state expansion which reach beyond the immediate governance of COVID-19 economic and health responses. In relation to the SRD grant, we can come to see how extended powers of regulation embedded in the states response to COVID-19 has facilitated further powers of surveillance through the digital administration of a new target population, a population which has previously been neglected when it comes to government’s administrative capacity (Megannon, 2022).

These large projects of state expansion as well as the more direct response towards COVID-19 have lacked capacity to fulfil their purposes. Civil society and the private sector has stepped in to shouldered the burden of many COVID-19 impacts, not only through charging the government with failures but also practically by fulfilling the poverty alleviation needs of many citizens. Difficulties in lateral coordination between various government departments caused delays in the rollout of emergency relief programs. While further criticism has been geared towards allegations of corruption, inadequate financial management and poor leadership capabilities.

## The SRD Grant

Social protection programs became a priority given the need to mitigate the social and economic effects of COVID 19, with over 190 countries employing social protection measures in response to COVID-19 (Gentlini et al., 2020). Of these initiatives, 271 offered targeted cash transfer programmes in 131 countries. The global shift towards a greater reliance on social protection measures, especially targeted cash transfers occurred alongside an accelerated use of technologies and digitisation in social grant machinery. In its response to the pandemic and in line with ‘international best practise,’ the South African government relied to a large extent on social protection. Working with the country’s existing social protection framework, the government introduced social grant reforms in the form of benefit increases for existing social grants and extended the reach of social assistance through the introduction of the SRD grant (Seekings, 2020).

South Africa’s existing social protection system was established in the early 1900s. Replacing the relief programmes for ‘whites’ and “coloureds” only, social protection provision was partially deracialised. Social security became accessible to all in the 1900s and then enshrined as a basic right for all South Africans under the new democratic constitution. Later, the right to social security could be enforced through the judicial system by means of Social Assistance Act of 2004 (Gronbach, Seekings & Megannon, 2022). As a component of South Africa’s social protection system, social assistance “consisted primarily of tax-financed, unconditional, and (mostly) means-tested cash transfers that support ‘deserving’ groups such as children, the early and the disabled” (Gronbach, Seekings & Megannon, 2022:4). In 2020 social grants covered a third of the country’s total population (18 million), including through the Child Support Grant, Older Person’s Grant, Disability Grant, Foster Care Grant, Care Dependency Grant, War Veterans Grant and Grant-in-Aid. Many, but not all, workers in the formal sector were supported through cash and food transfer. Workers in the public sector or unionised private sectors also enjoyed a “social or semi-social insurance element”, the Unemployment Insurance Fund

(UIF), the Expanded Public Works Program and a contributory old-age pension.

During COVID-19, the government expanded on the pre-existing social grant system and introduced new emergency programmes. These programmes would be initiated through an allocated budget of ZAR50 billion to support those most vulnerable to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic (Seekings, 2020). Of this ZAR50 billion, ZAR30 billion was administered towards topping up or extending pre-existing social grants, and an additional ZAR1.8 billion was allocated to the extension of the Care Dependency Grant and the Temporary Disability Grant until December 2020 because the state could not process renewals under lockdown (South African Social Security Agency, 2021). This allowed for the remaining ZAR18.2 billion to be allocated towards a new emergency programme, the SRD grant. The SRD grant aimed to prevent and alleviate extreme poverty for those vulnerable in the country who are not yet (directly) benefiting from the already established social protection measures.

The SRD grant can be paid to people aged 18 to 59, who are South African citizens, permanent residents or refugees registered with Home Affairs, and who are resident within the borders of South Africa. To be eligible, people must be unemployed and not receiving any other income. People are ineligible if they receive any other social grant, any UIF (including the emergency UIF introduced in 2020) or are eligible for UIF benefits, a stipend from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme or any other form of government support in response to COVID-19. They are also ineligible if they are resident in a government-subsidised institution. Public information dissemination around the grant application process was done through Presidential announcements (broadcast on television) and by South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) via various local and national communication channels. This was supplemented by efforts from volunteers, civil society organisations and local government networks.

Innovation within the existing social grant machinery was intentionally designed to limit social interaction by facilitating two core functions of

social protection, recognition of beneficiaries and assigning their respective entitlements. The existing grant system was clearly incapable of delivering the SRD grant to millions of new recipients in a timely manner. Taking these factors into account, South Africa's first automated application system for social grants was designed. The grant application system was novel in so far as it was South Africa's first digitised grant application system, this was made possible through the waiving of the requirement for a SASSA official being present during grant application. Three electronic modes of application were made possible: an Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD)-based system, a WhatsApp channel, and website/email address. It is important to note that only the USSD-based system was freely accessible, while airtime or data was required for both other modes of application.

In August 2020, a means test to verify applicants' income through commercial banks was further incorporated into the verification checks, with this potentially becoming a monthly re-assessment to verify grantees' income status. The implementation of a payment system was under pressure to deliver payments in a timely manner, and in line with global trends some state actors encouraged employment of mobile technologies. Mobile money technologies would appear to not have been utilized for the purpose of the SRD grant, however. Instead, three existing payment channels were used: payments through Postbank (which administered existing social grants), private bank account payments, and cash collection of grants at post offices. SASSA reported that around 70% of SRD grant beneficiaries received their pay-out via the Post Office (South African Social Security Agency, 2021d).

In line with global responses to COVID-19, the South African government was able to employ its pre-existing social protection network in order to combat the devastating social and economic impacts of the pandemic. Following the democratic government's vision of poverty alleviation, the SRD grant was able to incorporate a novel population into the fold of social protection by extending social grants to the potentially employable. This significant incorporation relieved pressure on the

expected practise of sharing existing social grant entitlements between families and households, and reinvigorated conversations about the introduction of a basic income grant (Megannon, 2022). As a landmark for social protection in South Africa, the SRD grant represented the first grant awarded to working-age adults without any work requirements and for their own use. In this case, the SRD grant can be understood as a moment in which the state took advantage of the COVID-19 crisis in order to facilitate the extension of the social grant machinery. In doing so, the government achieved a degree of state expansion through the project by means of enhanced regulatory powers (by means of control) and surveillance (through the datafication of those eligible).

## Methodology

In order to gain a better understanding of personal experiences of the SRD grant, myself and a research assistant conducted forty-one in-depth, semi-structured interviews (see appendix 1) between July and October 2021 in urban Khayelitsha, Cape Town (21) and around rural Mount-Frere, Eastern Cape (20) (Megannon, 2022). Khayelitsha is a partially informal township on the edge of the metropolitan Cape Town in the Western Cape province of South Africa and serves as the urban location of our sample. The rural component of the sample took place in several villages near Mount Frere in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. Those who met the eligibility criteria for the SRD grant were recruited by means of community based sampling with the help of a locally-resident research assistant. This approach was chosen as an effective sampling technique due to limitations on social interaction resulting from COVID-19 lockdown regulations.

Most participants in the urban sub-sample were recruited from Site-C, which is a long-established area within Khayelitsha. The rural sample was dispersed throughout different villages. Within the broader group of those who met the SRD grant eligibility criteria, three specific groups of participants were identified: (1) people who had successfully applied for the SRD grant (2) people who applied for the SRD grant but whose application was unsuccessful and (3) people who

did not apply for the SRD grant but were eligible (Megannon, 2022). Participants were interviewed in relation to the first round of the SRD grant. The proportions of participants within each group were 88%, 7%, 5%, respectfully. Participants were between the ages of nineteen and fifty-nine years old. With close to 70% of all grant beneficiaries being men (Senona et al., 2021), it was expected that most participants would be men, however a slighter higher percentage (54%) of participants were women.

Interviews were conducted in-person and predominantly outdoors in order to observe COVID-19 social distancing regulations. Interviews were between 30 and 45 minutes, semi-structured and conducted in either English or isiXhosa, and then translated and transcribed. Transcripts were accompanied by field notes from the primary researcher. Consent was obtained verbally and participants have been assigned pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. Key themes which were focused on included SRD grant experiences, forms of income, household resource allocation and attitudes towards grants.

## Findings and Discussion

I argue that the SRD grant can be understood as a success as it was able to serve millions of poor South Africans relatively quickly (Megannon, 2022). By recognising the embeddedness of claimants in wider networks of collective identities and communities the SRD grant extended well beyond the individual during a time of crisis. David (21) understood the grant as a means to “buy food and toiletries, so that we won’t go to bed with an empty stomach”. This was substantiated by Bandile (60) who intended to purchase “sugar, washing soap and other smalls things while waiting on the salary for my wife”.

Many of the households within this sample were receiving multiple grants and grant money would often flow between extended urban and rural family settings. The SRD grant reached beyond crisis aversion to enable some beneficiaries to enhance their future prospects. Not only was the actual receipt of the cash transfer a success, various stages within the process of receiving the SRD

grant deserve recognition. Although Andiswa was sceptical at first, she describes her experience of applying “fast if you do it on the phone. Everything was settled and they said I should wait for messages to see if it is approved”. These findings align with broader conceptualisations of social protection which “highlight the role of social protection in enhancing the social status and rights of the marginalised” (Plagerson, Harpham & Kielmann, 2012:969). What is more, information dissemination was evidenced to be largely successful with no reports of individuals not accessing information about the grant. Application processes were reported to empower individuals and effected was with ease. This allowed grant applicants to exercise agency to claim socio-economic rights. Additionally, information regarding outcome results was efficient and timely. These promising findings lend credit to the adaptations made to the pre-existing social grant machinery which was employed alongside new innovations which adopted digital technologies in place of old pre-digital technologies.

Overall, the participants reported that their experience of the SRD grant was positive, while at the same time contextualising their optimism in relation to the economic climate of declining employment rates. Understanding the introduction of the SRD grant in the larger history of South Africa, I argue that the incorporation of a new cohort of grant beneficiaries allows for an enhanced inclusion into the political, social and economic life in South Africa that extends beyond notions of legal citizenship. Cash transfers in this regard translate “basic constitutional rights into de facto lived experience(s) of ordinary people” (Plagerson, Harpham & Kielmann, 2012:979). As an arm of South African social protection measures to combat the socio-economic hardship of COVID-19, the SRD grant is a means by which the economically vulnerable can access the political world through the context of bureaucracy, administration and service delivery.

Still, material and technocratic barriers presented challenges which most participants navigated in order to receive their cash transfers (Megannon, 2022). Reported barriers included a lack of access

to connectivity or smart devices, lack of digital literacy, hostile or unhelpful street level bureaucrats, long distances to travel to (and then long waits at) post offices for information regarding application status and collection of grant, high costs of traveling, and lack of identification documentation. Many times these barriers would intersect with one another, compounding the challenges needing to be navigated by individuals. While in the Eastern Cape, David would pay R50 to travel long distances to the post office. He explains further,

We used to wake up at 2 o'clock in the morning, and when we get there, there are already people who slept there the day before. We will wait and queue and the post office will only open at 8 in the morning. And I will receive the money at three in the afternoon when they are closing. And the line will still be full at that time and people are pushing through one another, and they are fighting and sometimes the system would shut down or slow down at times when you are already in front of the line, they will tell you to go home and come back the next day or might as well sleep in line and not go home, because you need the money.

Participants from our rural sample reported spending between R50 and R160 for return trips to post offices. Adding to this, our rural sample would often have to return to the post office several times due to lack of network at the post office, or to a limited number of people being served per day. The navigation of these barriers resulted in various outcomes which included attitudes of disempowerment, lack of agency during decision making processes, sharing of personal information, utilisation of unauthorised digital platforms and exposure to COVID-19. This is illustrated by Tumi (22) whose friend completed her application process: “No I did not get any options during my application and I remember at that time some people were saying they got paid via bank and my approval only said I must go to the Post Office”.

The majority of the sample navigated these barriers through their personal and familial networks which highlights the complex political landscape of social



protection in South Africa. Not only is there a relationship between the state and applicants, but through ‘recognising’ applicants as citizens this relationship extends to the multiple networks of association held between applicants and their community. The extended relationship between the state, the applicant and their community is rooted in the failure to transform racial injustices stemming from apartheid as “definitions of citizenship are embedded in different historical trajectories and complex demarcations between individual and collective identities” (Plagerson, Harpham & Kielmann, 2012:970). The struggle to actualise one’s socio-economic rights intersects with economic marginalisation and a lack of economic and educational transformation allowing all citizens to participate in technological advancements. The intersection between marginalisation and a lack of political transformation was especially localised for participants in rural areas.

There are technical challenges which systematically excluded some of the poor from accessing the SRD grant, despite the intention for the grant to serve the poor during a crisis (Megannon, 2022). Our interviews revealed that the partial reliance on word of mouth in cases where direct government communication did not reach could systematically exclude those who are in more remote locations with little access to information dissemination channels. The greater reliance on technology for application purposes (when compared to other grants) led to systematic exclusions in cases where there was a lack of smartphones, digital literacy skills and connectivity access for application purposes.

Furthermore, lack of identity documents excluded some individuals from collecting their cash transfer. Gibbs et al (2018:1829) support this notion of exclusion through documentation by arguing that “access to documentation and therefore grants is not purely a technical issue, but rooted in wider economic and political institutions”. False rejection outcomes due to outdated and incorrect government databases was a prominent exclusion barrier. This bureaucratic failure is rooted in the political failure of the government to ensure lateral coordination between different departments. It

is argued that barriers to access and systematic exclusion in relation to the SRD grant are aligned with Gibbs et al (2018:1828) whereby they are “fundamentally about larger political and economic processes” which are understood as “embedded in a complex intersection of economic, political and social marginalisation”. These processes have historically created an intersection of marginalisation spanning across generations and persist due to a failure of transformation. This finding is political by nature because it emerges at the intersection of pre-existing government social and economic policies that have failed to transform the economic landscape of South Africa originating from an era of pre-democratic racial segregation.

Individuals in the sample who engaged with the process of applying for the SRD grant had experienced job loss and were not protected by regulation during the pandemic. The majority of the sample stated their preference for secure employment instead of a reliance on grants to secure a livelihood, highlighting the need for greater economic transformation in South Africa. Furthermore, socio-economic differences between rural and urban spaces, which are rooted in the legacy of apartheid, hindered the ability of citizens to exercise agency in their relation to the state when accessing social grants. This highlights compounding socio and economic challenges faced by applicants and the obstacles they must navigate to avoid extreme poverty during a time of national lockdown measures and high numbers of COVID-19 cases in the population (Megannon, 2022).

Many alternative avenues to navigate these challenges were not accessible to the rural population, therefore excluding them further. The severity of the barriers presented during the appeals process prevents citizens from exercising their agency in relation to the state and therefore can be charged as political in so far as individuals are barred from claiming their rights. Inconsistent payments, material barriers and street level bureaucrats embedded in larger political, economic and social structures place SRD beneficiaries at further risk of poverty, hunger and exposure to COVID-19 (Megannon, 2022). Such avenues of downward social mobility not



only impact beneficiaries, but also households and family members due to the complex historical embeddedness of individuals and their associated communities.

As a relatively successful, large scale introduction of a cash transfer, the SRD grant has proven to enhance the immediate and future prospects of a new cohort of individuals throughout South Africa. Further investigation is needed in relation to individuals who are eligible for the SRD grant, but did not apply. This would illuminate the more severe forms of systematic exclusion. Furthermore, as an extension of research on access to social grants in South Africa, I argue that additional research is needed in relation to barriers which are specific to the SRD grant. SRD grant specific barriers are mainly attributed to the use of new technical systems in the application and verification processes, a key area of literature moving forward. ■

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## Appendix 1 – Interview Guide

(Sections 1 and 2 redacted)

### 3. Personal information

*[Transition: “Let me begin by asking you a few questions about yourself and your family...”]*

**1. Name:** “What is your first name?”

**2. Age:** “How old are you?”

a. If participant states he/she is 18/19 or 60/61:  
“When did you turn [age]?”

i. If participant turned 18 in or after March 2021, terminate interview as they were not eligible for the SRD grant while the programme was active [i.e. until 30 April 2021].

ii. If participant turned 60 in or before May 2020, terminate interview as they were not eligible for the SRD grant while the programme was active.

**3. Gender:** [interviewer to record participant’s gender]

**4. Nationality:** “What is your nationality?”

a. If participant is not a South African citizen:  
“What kind of visa or permit do you have to stay in South Africa?”

**5. Residence:** “In which area do you live?”  
[suburb/ ward/ section... no need to provide full address]

**4. Economic situation, income, eligibility for SRD grant**

*[Transition: Now, let’s talk about your income and living situation...]*

**1. Income and economic situation NOW:**

“How do you earn your income?” [**probe:** formal or informal employment, i.e. is the respondent a registered taxpayer? Do they get a government grant? Inheritance, support from family members? Other sources of income?]

**2. Comparison last year:**

“Looking back at last year, was your income situation the same as now? What were your sources of income last year around the same time?”

**5. COVID-19 Special Relief of Distress Grant**

*[Transition: “As you know, the COVID-19 pandemic hit South Africa at the beginning of last year.*

*Many people were affected by the pandemic and the lockdown measures. The government launched a number of programmes to support people in these difficult times....”]*

**1. Information:**

“Do you remember hearing about the special COVID grant for people affected by COVID during last year’s lockdown? When and how did you first hear about it and what did you think about it?” [**probe:** when did respondent first hear about the grant, what was the source of information (friends, radio, social media...), did they immediately plan to apply or were they sceptical?]

**2. Application:**

“Did you apply for the grant?”

**a. If yes:** Proceed to next question.

**b. If no:** Proceed to section 7.

**3. Success:**

“Was your application for the grant successful? In other words, did you receive the grant?”

**a. If yes:** Proceed to section 5.

**b. If no:** Proceed to section 6

**6. Successful grant applicants**

*[Transition: “You said that you applied for the special COVID grant and that your application was successful. Please tell me a bit more about the application process and how you experienced it...”]*

### 1. Application process:

- a. “Please describe when and how you applied for the grant and how you experienced the application process...” [probe: Time of application (month), application modality (website, mobile phone, WhatsApp...), challenges or difficulties e.g. with the online application portal, did someone assist the respondent with the application process]
- b. “Did anyone encourage or discourage you to apply for the grant? Please tell us more...”
- c. For respondents who stated they were working last year: “Were you worried that the government would find out that you were working and that your application would be rejected?” [probe: Or was the respondent concerned because of other reasons, e.g. not disclosing other information?]

### 2. Verification and confirmation:

“What happened after you submitted your application? When and how did you find out if your application was successful? [probe: did they receive confirmation or communication from SASSA? Did they have to submit additional documents? Did they contact SASSA at any point to follow up? How long did it take for SASSA to inform the applicant of the outcome? How did SASSA communicate with the applicant (SMS, Email...)?]

### 3. Payment process:

#### a. Payment channel:

“Please describe how you received your first payment and how you experienced the payment process” [probe: Which payment option did respondent choose (bank account, cash, other...)? Why did they choose this option? Any challenges when collecting the payment, e.g. late notification about payment date, long queue at post office or ATM, cash shortages at pay points, difficult to get to pay point during lockdown?]

#### b. Bank account:

“Did you have a personal bank account when you applied for the grant?”

i. **If yes:** “Did you use your bank account to receive your grant payments?”

ii. **If no:** “Did you open a bank account specifically to receive your grant payments?”

1. **If yes:** “Have you used this account for anything other than receiving the grant?”

2. **If no:** Proceed to the next question

#### c. Changes in payment modalities:

“Were there any changes in how you received your grant payments over time?” [probe: did communication from SASSA or the situation at pay points improve or get worse? Did the respondent pay someone to queue for them? Did the respondent change to a different payment method (e.g. open a bank account rather than collecting the payment in cash)? If so, did that make it easier to collect the payment? Any other changes that occurred during the payment period?]

*[Proceed to section 8 – use of grant money, intra-household dynamics]*

### 7. Unsuccessful grant applicants

*[Transition: “You said that you applied for the special COVID grant but that your application was unsuccessful. Please tell me a bit more about the application process and how you experienced it...”]*

#### 1. Application process:

“Please describe when and how you applied for the grant and how you experienced the application process...” [probe: Time of application (month), application modality (website, mobile phone, WhatsApp...), challenges or difficulties e.g. with the online application portal, did someone assist the respondent with the application process]

#### 2. Verification and confirmation:

“What happened after you submitted your

application? When and how did you find out that your application had been rejected? [**probe:** did they receive confirmation or communication from SASSA after applying? Did they have to submit additional documents? Did they contact SASSA at any point to follow up? How long did it take for SASSA to inform the applicant of the outcome? How did SASSA communicate with the applicant (SMS, Email...)? Was the applicant given a reason why their application was rejected?]

### 3. Re-application or appeal:

“What happened after you were informed that your application for the grant was rejected?”  
[**probe:** Did the respondent lodge an appeal? If so, how did they go about it and what was the process and outcome? Was the respondent part of the group of applicants who were wrongly rejected due to incorrect information in the government database and were encouraged to re-apply? Did the respondent re-apply for the grant?]

*[Transition to section 8 – use of grant money, intra-household dynamics]*

### 8. Participant eligible but did not apply

*[Transition: “You said that you did not apply for the special COVID grant. Please tell me more about this decision...”]*

#### 1. Reasons:

“Why did you decide not to apply for the grant?” [**probe:** Possible reasons: grant value was too low, complicated application process, not enough information about the grant/application process, respondent thought they were not eligible, fear that grant money would be claimed by relatives or household members, stigma around social grants/ ‘peer pressure’, lack of trust in government that grant would actually be paid...?]

“Did anyone encourage or discourage you to apply for the grant? Please tell us more...”

“Looking back, how do you feel about your decision not to apply for the grant?” [**probe:**

Does the respondent regret the decision not to apply? Did they, at any point, re-consider applying? If so, what prevented them from doing so?]

“If the government were to launch a basic income grant for every person who does not have a formal job or receive any other form of government support, would you apply for it?”  
[**probe:** Does the respondent feel the same about a basic income grant and the special COVID grant? Was the decision not to apply for the SRD grant ‘COVID-specific’ or based on a more general attitude or issue? Would it depend on the value of the grant?]

*[Transition to section 9 – use of grant money, intra-household dynamics]*

### 9. Use of grant money and intra-household/family dynamics

#### 9.1 Household Information (Before COVID 19 / Beginning of 2020):

- c. “Who did you live with in January 2020, i.e. before COVID?” [**probe** how are these people relationally involved to participant (such as father, sister, aunt, children, partners etc)].
- d. “Did you pay for any household expenses in January 2020?” [**probe** who benefitted from this money? Why did they provide this money?]
- e. “Did you provide physical care for anyone in your household in January 2020? [**probe** what kind of care did the participant provide and why?]

#### 9.2 Household Information (December 2020/ the towards the end of 2020):

- a. “Who did you live with towards the end of 2020?” [**probe** how are these people relationally involved to participant (such as father, sister, aunt, children, partners etc)].
- b. “Did you pay for any household expenses

towards the end of 2020?” [probe who benefitted from this money? Why did they provide this money? did you give other household members cash or did you pay for shared expenses?]

- c. “Did you provide physical care for anyone in your household towards the end of 2020? [probe what kind of care did the participant provide and why?]

### 9.3 Household Information (June/July 2021):

- a. “Who do you live with now?” [probe how are these people relationally involved to participant, such as father, sister, aunt, children, partners etc].
- b. “Do you pay for any household expenses currently?” [probe who benefitted from this money? Why did they provide this money?]
- c. “Do you provide physical care for anyone in your household currently? [probe what kind of care did the participant provide and why?]

### 9.4 Children in the interviewee’s household:

- a. “In your household, do you have any children or care for any children younger than 18?” (Note: we ask about children living in other households in the next section).

If no, proceed to 9.5:

- b. “How many children do you have or care for in your household? How old are they?”
- c. “Did they live with you in January 2020, i.e. before COVID?” [probe if the children lived elsewhere then, who did they live with? Why?]
- d. “Did you help support them at that time (January 2020, before COVID)?” [probe What support did you provide? What did you pay for? How much did you pay? Who else supports the child?]
- e. “Did they live with you at the end of last year (around December 2020)?” [probe if the

children lived elsewhere: who did they live with? Why?]

- f. “Do you remember supporting them towards the end of last year?” [probe What support did you provide? How much did you pay for? Who else supports the child?]
- g. “You have said that they live with you now. Do you support them now?” [probe What support do you provide? What do you pay for? How much? Who else supports the child?]
- h. Do you think that your relationship with your children has changed over the past eighteen months, i.e. during the time of COVID?

### 9.5. Children living in other households

“Do you have any children or care for any children who do not live in your household and are younger than 18?”

*If no, proceed to Section 10:*

- a. “How many children do you have or care for who do not live in your household? How old are they?”
- b. “Where did they live in January 2020 (before COVID)?” [probe if the children lived elsewhere: who did they live with? Why?]
- c. “Did you help support them at that time (January 2020, before COVID)?” [probe What support did you provide? What did you pay for? How much did you pay? Who else supports the child?]
- d. How much time did you spend with your children then?
- e. “Did they live in the same place at the end of last year (in about December 2020)?” [probe if the children had moved, who did they live with? Why?]
- f. “Do you remember supporting them towards

the end of last year?” [ **probe** What support did you provide? How much did you pay for? Who else supports the child?]

- g. How much time did you spend with them then?
- h. “Do they live in the same place now?” [ **probe** if they have moved, with whom do they live with? Why?]
- i. “Do you support them now?” [ **probe** What support do you provide? How much do you pay for? Who else support the child?]
- j. How much time do you spend with your children now?
- k. Do you think that your relationship with your children has changed over the past eighteen months, i.e. during the time of COVID?

## 10. Normative Questions:

- 10.1 “What do you think about the grants that were paid out to young people under lockdown?” [ **probe** Do you agree/disagree, think it was right/wrong, why/why not?]
- 10.2 “Do you know of anyone who received the grant but did not deserve it? Why did they not deserve it?”
- 10.3 “Some people say that young people should have to work in return for a grant. What do you think?”



# Participatory Budget and Citizen Participation in Morocco

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On the African continent, citizens are becoming less and less interested in politics and democracy. The decline of electoral participation, the repeated coups, and the rise of autocratic populists are all symptoms of an increased and undeniable alienation of citizens from democracy as practiced in most African countries. This is not unique to Africa. Political science has been talking for some time about a crisis of representative democracy. The causes of this decline are still the subject of a lively debate. Babacar Gueye draws our attention to those representative systems that empower a political elite to decide on behalf of the citizens without the need of consulting them, thus eliminating any possibility of citizen participation and public deliberation.<sup>1</sup> Agbude puts forward another element related specifically to the political practices of African regimes: by alienating the opposition and prohibiting any form of democratic competition, citizens find themselves unable to choose and hold accountable their representatives.<sup>2</sup>

This declining interest in traditional and institutionalized forms of political participation contrasts with an impressive increase in multiple alternative forms of citizen participation.<sup>3</sup> More than ever, citizens want to get involved in the public making-decision process, and from Casablanca to Bamako, Khartoum to Kampala, they demand more direct forms of participation. In political theory, participatory democracy and citizen participation have the potential to play a major role in overcoming the multiple crises of representative democracy.<sup>4</sup> New mechanisms of democratic participation aimed at increasing citizens' involvement and interest in public affairs and improving the quality of political decision-making have been designed and implemented in many countries around the continent.

Morocco is one of those countries. Following the 2011 popular uprisings, Morocco introduced

constitutional and institutional reforms aimed at enhancing citizens' participation in the decision-making process. Among these instruments is *participatory budgeting*. We could consider this mechanism as an instrument to promote citizen and civil society participation in local affairs and a framework for responsive and accountable governance. The first part of this essay discusses the theoretical debate on citizen participation and its effects on democracy and good governance. The second part uses data collected during my fieldwork in the municipality of Kenitra to examine how participatory budgeting works in practice in Morocco. To understand the adaptation of citizens, local elected and state officials, and civil and human rights activists to the new mechanisms of local participatory democracy, I conducted a qualitative survey in the municipality of Kenitra with different stakeholders, notably civil and human rights activists, local elected officials, and state officials.

Based on the results of my fieldwork and an extensive literature review, I argue that citizen participation in the process of public budgeting is an innovative tool for participatory democracy in Morocco. Nevertheless, it confronts several challenges, among which is the absence of a culture of citizen involvement in decision-making processes at the local level. Most elected and public officials view the process of participatory budgeting as a transgression of their powers and as an unproductive complication of the decision-making process. Moreover, ordinary citizens and civil society actors lack the knowledge and the technical skills to take part in budget monitoring.

## **Citizen participation, deliberation and democracy**

The participatory budget is an innovative democratic mechanism that aims to promote inclusion, exchange, and civic participation by

allowing citizens to decide, in a collegial approach, the fate of a part of the local public budget. This mechanism was first implemented in 1989 in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre before spreading to large parts of Latin America and beyond during the 1990s and 2000s. Today, it is considered to be one of the most widespread instruments of participatory democracy.<sup>5</sup>

We can study this instrument through several theoretical frameworks that fall within the scheme of democratic theories, in particular participatory and deliberative democracy. The participatory budget presents elements of both participation. The process requires participation by involving citizens in the process of decision-making, and deliberation through establishing a deliberative process to legitimize and rationalize this process.

In the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote about the theory of participatory democracy. For him, involving citizens in the public sphere is a vital condition for bringing about a just and a democratic society. For Rousseau, participation in the public decision-making process is a way that allows citizens to stay informed, exercise control, and watch over the “good management” of public affairs.<sup>6</sup> Today, with the social, economic, and ideological changes experienced by modern societies, as well as the deep crisis facing representative democracy, the benefits of participatory democracy are appreciated by many theoreticians who affirm that involving citizens is a fundamental condition for the consolidation and proper functioning of democracy, even if the form and scope of this participation are not always unanimous<sup>7</sup>.

In her definition of participatory democracy, Pateman emphasizes three fundamental contributions to citizen participation<sup>8</sup>:

- The educational element that gives individuals the possibility to stay informed of polity structures and public actions.
- The democratization element that reforms the polity to become more accessible to citizens,

- The participation element that fosters deliberation and civic engagement.

Pateman represents the participatory budget as an instrument to promote democracy since it responds to all of these elements. The democratizing role of the participatory budget helps strengthen citizenship values in society by giving the citizens a voice and a say in the decision-making process.

However, this “ideal conception” of the participatory budget must be nuanced by the experience in reality. The literature on deliberative democracy inspired by Habermas argues that in any deliberative and participatory procedure the only force that should matter is the “best argument” put forward by the engaged, rational, and well-informed citizens<sup>9</sup>. In reality, the lack of information and expertise, the complexity of the procedures, and the excessive control exercised by the state and elected officials over the forms and agendas of these processes expose them to the risk of being inefficient and exploited, even abused, by officials to legitimize their decisions. This skeptical point of view becomes even more pertinent with an authoritarian regime. Faced with the lack of a tradition of deliberation, tolerance, and political openness, participatory mechanisms are less likely to bring about any change in the institutional structures toward democratization and the empowerment of citizens.<sup>10</sup>

Citizen participation in the public policy process can take various forms. Many participatory processes take the form of information sessions to legitimize and give a democratic configuration to a set of political decisions. Sometimes, however, power is delegated to citizens to a greater extent. Ideally, officials take into consideration their views, needs and comments.<sup>11</sup> To assess the different scales of citizen participation, it is possible to use the model developed by A. Fung, which comprises five stages according to citizen influence.<sup>12</sup> In the first phase of this model, the participants pursue their interests without being able to promote them. During this stage, citizens are a group of passive participants, and elected and state officials control the process. In the later steps, citizens can express their points of view to other participants

and influence the outcome of the decision-making process. Co-governance provides citizens with more power and makes them equal to elected and state officials. The last stage of Fung's model represents a situation in which citizens exercise power by deciding for themselves.

Arnstein, in her turn, created a participation model as an eight-step ranking.<sup>13</sup> This ranking of civic participation shows the different levels of citizen involvement according to decisional power redistribution. Citizens thus take part in defining new future policies, as they can influence the outcome of the public policy process. The lowest rungs of the ladder show participatory pseudo-practices, through which the real inequality between citizens and politicians is masked. The higher the scale, the more power and control are transferred into the hands of citizens. Arnstein distinguishes between three generic terms: civic non-participation, symbolic and civic influence. In the first category, one cannot speak of citizen participation, because through manipulation, politicians strive to influence and mislead the citizens. The symbolism is much higher and already shows an engagement in which politicians can hear citizens and express their opinions. However, there is no guarantee that their views will be considered and that the status quo will change. Symbolism involves three types of civic participation: information, consultation, and involvement. At the top of the scale, Arnstein categorizes three levels of genuine civic participation into the category of civic influence: partnership, delegation of power, and civic control. In this situation, we consider citizens as equal partners in public policies negotiations. In our analysis, and in order to deepen our understanding of participatory processes as practiced in Morocco, we will use the two models.

### **Participatory budget in Morocco: between incomprehension and distrust**

In Morocco, participatory budget was introduced in 2015 at the level of the municipality of the city of Chafchaouen, before extending to other municipalities. Implementing this participatory mechanism comes in applying the 139th article of the 2011 Moroccan constitution, which

foresees the establishment of a set of participatory mechanisms at the local level.<sup>14</sup>

The Brazilian experience is the main source of inspiration to the Moroccan participatory budget model, as it is also based on a set of cycles that vary between one to two years. Local elected officials trigger the process following a decision by the municipal council. The potential participants (all the inhabitants of the municipality) are then invited to a series of public consultation meetings as part of the Citizen Forums. These include ordinary citizens, civil society and human rights activists, politicians, and experts. While in this first phase, all citizens are invited to participate and identify local public problems and propose solutions and alternatives. In the other phases related to the choice of projects and the vote on the budget, only a group of representatives chosen by the engaged citizens, through a public vote, continue to take part in the process. Despite excluding citizens from some stages of the participatory budget process, public discussion and deliberation always take place, first in the groups that bring together all the concerned citizens and then in a smaller group of delegates and representatives chosen by those citizens. The process ends with the creation of a specific proposal to allocate public budget resources. These proposals are then included in the municipality budget and implemented the next year.

If one tries to classify participatory budget as practiced in Morocco using the scale developed by Fung, the result will be a positioning between consultation and co-government. Indeed, by including all citizens and setting up a system of deliberation and exchange, the process allows the emergence of open space for dialog and consultation between the citizens of the municipality, their representatives, and the state officials. In this process, citizens can propose solutions, coordinate their personal preferences with other viewpoints, and communicate their demands and grievances to local authorities and elected officials. In short, by allowing citizens to take a part in the decision-making process, despite the mediocrity of the sums involved, the participatory budget as practiced in Morocco

has the potential to represent an improvement compared to the more traditional consultation procedures.

On the scale developed by Arnstein, we could classify participatory budget as a consultative or cooperative participation process. A political actor, the municipal council in our case, always triggers this process. Thus, an effective transfer of power to citizens, which would be a primary criterion for a higher ranking with Arnstein, does not follow automatically. The problem with such a process is that consultative processes of participation and deliberation can generate little pressure and influence and that the decision and its execution remain in the hands of the most powerful participants: state and elected officials. Thus, for participatory budget to be effectively transformed into participation in the sense of co-creation and co-responsibility, more egalitarian participation and larger power of initiation and decision-making for the benefit of the citizen and the civil society activist will be necessary.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the various stages of this process allow the creation of “areas of contact” which guarantees that the expectations, resentments, and grievances of citizens will be heard by local elected officials and local administration representatives. The participatory budget process thus functions as a channel of communication between citizens and the politico-administrative apparatus, which stimulates social and political discussion. It also encourages citizens to take more initiatives and show an interest in the management of public affairs, what could represent a premise of democratization.

As mentioned before, participation in the process of participatory budget in Morocco concerns three significant groups: ordinary citizens, local elected representatives, and state officials. Politicians’ and officials’ preferences regarding civic participation have a significant impact on the opportunities and success of the process. There must also be a certain culture of participation among citizens. The absence of this culture or the slowdown in its development is caused by prejudices and doubts about new forms of participation that occur among

participants, politicians, and officials.

Certainly, not all state officials support and promote citizen participation, for multiple reasons. On the one hand, decision-making with citizen participation is more costly compared to decisions made by a small group of “experts”. Another obvious reason integrating citizens into the public policy process may seem difficult is the need to adapt the traditional governance and bureaucratic model to an open and competent infrastructure that will enable citizens to enter political processes. This can also result in extra work for them and civil servants, and often additional resources are needed to achieve effective participation.<sup>15</sup> Citizen involvement increases public scrutiny of elected officials, which some politicians may resent. Because of citizens’ regular interaction with ruling party members, the trust may increase or decrease, which could affect the image of politicians and their reelection potential. Participation can thus often come up against specialized, routine, hierarchical, and impersonal imperatives.

A strong resentment vis-à-vis the new modalities of participation could be noticed, especially in elected organs. The elected officials believe that they know exactly what is best for the citizens - otherwise they would not have been elected. From this point of view, citizen participation appears as useless inflation and an additional complication of decision-making processes. During my field research, I heard many variations of these complaints: “Honestly, it’s not very useful... They have ideas... nothing impressive or new... But at least we have the opportunity to discuss,” said local elected official. Moreover, state officials often believe that the quality of proposed solutions diminishes if they are not checked by experts. It is also doubtful that citizens are interested or ready to commit for a longer period. One state official complained that during the process, “Sometimes people demand the construction of schools, hospitals, and factories... It is legitimate, but it is necessary to address the government and not a civil servant of the municipality.”

The main reason for these prejudices is an incorrect or insufficient understanding of the usefulness of

the participatory process. It is particularly often feared that the participatory budget process limits the field of intervention of local elected officials. Clear communication is therefore essential to make elected officials understand that the new participatory processes are after all complements of representative democracy.

There is also a great deal of skepticism about the procedure among participants in a participatory budget process. As one ordinary citizen told me, “They don’t know what to do. Now they are listening to us for once. But will anything change?” On the one hand, participants fear being exploited by politicians or not being taken seriously, and ultimately wasting their time and energy. As a civil society activist explained, “The elected officials... They only seek their interests... They want my vote; they want us to do their job... I am here for the youth and children of my neighborhood.”

This mistrust can usually be overcome quickly during the process, even for very skeptical participants. At the end of the process, participants agreed that they would participate again, that the process was personally rewarding, and that it could be a building block for democratic participation.. An activist told me that “Of course, we will attend next time... We will form a block to protect our neighborhood, me and the other young people in the neighborhood.”

A key issue in the process is how the municipality will react to the suggestions and recommendations of ordinary citizens. Engaged citizens expect their involvement in a participatory budget process to lead to a serious and honest discussion with elected and state officials, and above all, to materialize in reality. Indeed, the success of participatory procedures with an essentially consultative function depends a great deal on how their recommendations are managed by the representative and administrative institutions. As a civil society activist reflected, “Now that the park exists, people will take us seriously... I have already mobilized a lot of young people from the neighborhood... I anticipate more participation with the new municipal council.”

## Conclusion

In sum, we can conclude that the commitment made in the 2011 constitution in favor of more effective citizen participation could forge an open and inclusive public space. We should also note that participatory budget remains in an embryonic state, and face fierce resistance from politicians and bureaucrats. But despite these limits, this process makes it possible to create an open public space for dialogue and deliberation, which could in turn have positive effects on the political commitment of citizens and the democratization of local affairs management. Thus, a considerable effort must be made to make this mechanism more attractive and effective. The commitment showed by engaged citizens and civil and human rights activists in favor of this process shows that the will exist and that the people will always fight for the good of their community. ■

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# Legislative Candidates as Agents of Political Mobilization for National Parties in Ghana

*Owura Kuffuor*

## Introduction

In the 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana, Nana Akufo Addo – the presidential candidate of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) – secured 4,056,634 votes, while an addition of co-partisan legislative candidate votes amounted to 4,013,013. Nana Addo had in effect secured about 43,321 votes more than the vote share of all NPP legislative candidates. Nana Addo's votes did not pass the 50 percent threshold to win him the presidency of Ghana, however. By the electoral rules of the country, a run-off election had to be held between the two presidential candidates who gained the highest number of votes. At a meeting with legislative candidates at the party's headquarters, Nana Addo expressed his disappointment in the performance of the legislative candidates. He emphasized that he lost the election largely because legislative candidates were not popular enough to draw votes to his (Nana Addo's) candidature (Kennedy, 2009).

This story suggests that to the knowledge of Nana Akufo Addo, the performance of legislative candidates in elections correlates with that of presidential candidates. Legislative candidates impact the electoral chances of presidential candidates positively. This idea is also reflected in campaign advertising materials displayed during elections. Campaign posters for legislative races typically have the images of both presidential and legislative candidates (LCs) placed side by side indicating that a vote for a LC should lead to a vote for a presidential candidate.

Yet this understanding of the role of legislative candidates in national elections remains under-explored. Very little has been written on the effect of the popularity of legislative candidates on their co-partisan presidential candidates and in effect the political parties LCs' represent. The dominant

idea in the political behavior literature holds that in candidate centered democracies, presidential candidates are the "be all, see all". According to this literature, legislative candidate endorsements by presidential candidates are what matters (Dominguez, 2011). Most such studies are situated in contexts where there is high information and strong ideological commitment by voters. These features do not necessarily transfer to many new democracies. In many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, information about government performance, proposed political party programs are quite low (Conroy-Krutz, 2013). In such environments, voters have to resort to other cues to make electoral decisions. Given that legislative candidate campaigns represent specific electoral constituencies, legislative candidates tend to have closer relationships with voters compared to presidential candidates. As such the lack of attention on the role legislative candidates play in getting their parties elected is puzzling.

Studies on candidate endorsements have so far mainly focused on presidential candidate endorsements. The few works that have made attempts at studying bottom up endorsements are situated in Brazil and grounded in a political system that is specific to Brazil and some parts of Latin America. The mechanism through which bottom-up endorsements work in the Brazilian context is almost non-existent in the African context. Using a new experimental data from Ghana, this study finds that voters update their evaluations of legislative candidates to the political parties' legislative candidates represent. This means that, when legislative candidates are evaluated positively, their political parties are also evaluated positively and vice versa. The inference from this finding is that popular legislative candidates affect the electoral chances of co-partisan candidates. This paper contributes to the growing literature on information and political mobilization in

Africa (Conroy-Krutz, 2013; Adida et al., 2017) by showing that contrary to the expectations from the literature, bottom up endorsements have an impact on voter choice.

### **Theoretical Background**

A great deal of research has gone into how voters make electoral choices. Traditional approaches to studying voter choice especially in well-established democracies has been hinged on partisan source cues as the means of solving informational deficits on behalf of voters (Zaller, 1992). In young democracies where partisanship is less structured as a long historical and stable identity, national elites cannot solely rely on these partisan source cues. Particularly, in new democracies, national elites reduce costs of voter outreach by structuring their campaigns in an economy of scale which relies on local allies. As a result, when voters are forced to decide between thousands of candidates (Calvo and Murillo, 2015) but cannot use party membership to distinguish between candidates, they tend to rely on “local politicians” to make a decision. National candidates therefore have strategic reasons for aligning their campaigns with that of local candidates.

Presidential elections are commonly thought to influence legislative elections through a coattails effect where the fortunes of legislative candidates are tied to the fate of co-partisan presidential candidates (Cox, 1997; Mozaffar, Scarritt and Galaich, 2003; Samuels, 2000). The presidency is always the most important prize in a presidential regime. As a result, presidential candidates become the focus for a vast majority of national media attention and campaign contributions. This aspect of presidential campaigns generates incentives for legislative candidates to organize their campaigns around co-partisan presidential candidate in the hope of benefiting from their organizational, financial, and media advantages (Samuels, 2002). Voters also recognize the overwhelming importance of the presidency relative to other political offices in presidential regimes. As a consequence, they typically pay more attention to presidential campaigns and use the party of their presidential candidates as an informational shortcut to help

them decide how they should vote in legislative elections. Recognizing that voters concentrate their attention on presidential campaigns in this way, legislative candidates have even more of an incentive to coordinate their own campaigns with their party’s presidential candidate. This theoretical framework predicts that legislative candidates will have no influence on voters’ evaluation of political parties (Ferejohn and Calvert, 1984).

The empirical expectation of this theory is that legislative candidates will lose elections in areas where their presidential candidates lost. However, this is not the case in many African countries. African countries with multi-party elections rather have a high incidence of split voting (Weghorst and Lindberg, 2013). Voters make evaluative decisions on legislative candidates independent of their co-partisan presidential candidates. Ghana might be the only country on the continent with strong evidence of presidential coattails, largely because Ghana is exceptional in having strong partisanship among voters.

Reverse coattail theory on the other hand predicts that legislative candidates can be a determinant of national level electoral contests. Ames (1994) posits that local political elites have the capability of delivering blocs of votes to national candidates. According to Ames (1994) evidence abounds in democracies around the world of local political elites engaging in active mobilization of voters for national candidates. For example, in Colombia, the two dominant parties rely on an “extensive clientelist network” to link political machines to the national state. Similarly, in Japan, local politicians mobilize votes for Diet candidates by persuading constituents that good relations with their Diet members are a prerequisite for the continuation of subsidies and grants-in-aid from the central government. The mobilization power of local political elites (local machines) is based on their patronage networks. Voters whose livelihoods are dependent on local machines support leaders of these machines. This provides one avenue for local machines to influence voters’ decision in their communities. Local machines also play other roles such as disrupting rallies and meetings of opposition parties, hindering attempts of the

opposition to distribute electoral advertisements or gifts to voters, influencing local newspapers and radio and television stations to slant news to benefit their favorites. Local party machines as described by (Ames, 1994) refer to city mayors and their inner circles and they primarily influence voters in their communities by promising them jobs in the city government.

The conception of local machines is therefore very contextual and limited. In sub-Saharan Africa, local government leaders are not as influential as they are in the Latin American context and do not have the capacity to offer employment to voters in their communities in exchange for votes. Rather, legislative candidates are important local personalities. Legislative candidates mobilize voters in two main ways. Firstly, a legislative candidate could use resources to build support for the presidential candidate. Second, a candidate could use personal traits to attract support for the presidential candidate. Ames (1994) reverse coattails deals with only the first part. The expectation of the resource utilization model is that political parties and presidential candidates will allocate more resources to legislative candidates in swing or competitive constituencies. The traits model on the other hand deals more with either phenotypical characteristics (Miles, 2015), or with identities such as ethnicity, religion (Aspinall, Dettman and Warburton, 2011), gender (Pitkin, 1967) or even community identity. Reverse coattail theory does not make accommodations for these determinants of electoral outcomes.

Both presidential coattails and reverse coattails models clarify how voting decisions are made in new democracies especially in sub-Saharan Africa. In this essay, I focus primarily on the reverse coattail model.

### **Political Parties and Elections in Ghana**

In the early 1990s, Ghana returned to democratic governance. While it did not exhibit real features of democracy such as protecting civil liberties and freedoms of its citizens or allowing for rule of law and constitutionalism, Ghana democratized through elections (Lindberg, 2006). After multiple

elections had been held in Ghana, a seeming pattern of ethnic voting was made apparent. Since 1992, different political parties have competed in both presidential and parliamentary general elections. Two political parties have remained dominant in the Ghanaian electoral system, making Ghana a de facto two-party electoral system. These are the New Patriotic Party and the National Democratic Congress. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) is associated with the Akan ethnic group while the National Democratic Congress (NDC) is associated with the Ewe ethnic group. Political mobilizations occur in two major ways: marketing policy programs and reaching voters through clientelist networks.

Political mobilization via programmatic policies happens through the dissemination of well-structured and devised messages to electorates (Paget, 2019). These messages are typically termed political campaigns and delivered via multiple platforms such as political rallies, radio and TV advertisements, mail-ins telephone calls, in-person, or face-to-face campaigns etc. Studies have shown face-to-face mobilizations work better than the other forms of mobilization (Gerber and Green, 2000). Face-to-face mobilizations tend to be more effective if the canvassers identify with the voters demographically. As such, political parties are very strategic about the type of canvassers/volunteers they send to different communities. An experiment that was carried out in New Haven indicates that canvassers who share similar racial identities with respondents had a higher chance of drawing voters to the polling booth compared canvassers who did not share racial identities with voters (Gerber and Green, 2000, pp 655). In some new democracies, the practice of using volunteers as person-to-person canvassers is not a common one. Rather, legislative, or local candidates bear the task of visiting different households themselves to sell policies to electorates.

With increasing election turnovers, policies stated in party manifestos and how they are marketed are increasingly becoming relevant in African elections. In the 2016 election in Ghana, Van Gyampo, Graham and Yobo (2017) posit that there was an election turnover because the opposition political party did a great job of marketing its manifesto

programs. While there have been some attempts to assess the effect of manifesto policies on voter choices, the mechanism through which this message is delivered requires greater attention from scholars. This is because at the national level, the mechanisms of disseminating manifesto programs differ significantly from how party programs are disseminated at the local level.

Clientelism is the second mobilization strategy in Ghana. Clientelism is defined as “an instrumental friendship in which an individual of higher socio-economic status uses his own influence and resources to provide protection or benefits, or both for a person of lower status who, for his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services to the patron” (Scott, 1972: 97). Often, this protection is sought from individuals who are known and very influential in the community. Since elections are costly for contestants, especially in countries with no clear political party funding rules, individuals in communities who have the necessary economic resources put themselves up to be elected (Bob-Milliar and Bob-Milliar, 2010). In many parts of the world, citizen-politician linkages are often based on direct material inducements targeted to individuals and small groups of citizens whom politicians know to be highly responsive to such side-payments and willing to surrender their vote for the right price (Stokes, 2007). In new democracies in sub-Saharan Africa, legislators are the ones who establish these positions. Legislative candidates serve as the link between the national party and voters in a constituency.

To establish a connection with voters (clients), candidates need a network of brokers who are already known to members of the community and hold influence among the people. Brokers could therefore be an influential member of a family, an opinion leader in a community, local executives of political parties etc. Due to the heterogeneous nature of populations in SSA countries and the challenges of accessibility of communities as well as language barriers, political parties have adopted the strategy of using legislative candidates to sell national candidates. This phenomenon has become a critical type of political mobilization. Parties

adopt this strategy because 1) legislative candidates have a better knowledge of the geography of voters in a given constituency; 2) legislative candidates in a lot of cases can communicate with voters in the most used local language of the constituency; 3) legislative candidates have a better idea of interpreting how proposed national policy programs affect voters in a constituency; 4) lastly, it is expected that the likability of legislative candidates will transfer to the party he/she represents and by extension make the national candidate also likable to the local constituents.

Given that elections are very local, and oftentimes legislative candidates rely heavily on shared residency traits or co-ethnicity in mobilizing votes, the success of legislative candidates in helping voters update their preferences for national candidates remains a mystery. For instance, at the local level, candidates could be deemed to be a potential descriptive representative of a constituency if the candidate shares an ethnicity with the majority population of a geographic area. Legislative candidates could also be presented as a committed member of a community that has helped in building the community where he/she seeks to represent. In such an instance, the political party of the candidate may not have any effect on voters' preference for the candidate. Based on this logic, we would expect that voters will update their preference for legislative candidates to the political parties the candidates represent.

## Research Design

Prior to the 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana, a legislative level candidate debate was conducted by the National Commission of Civic Engagement (NCCE) and the Center for Democratic Development across 50 constituencies in 10 regions. Out of the 50 constituencies, three were selected for an experimental study (Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu, 2019). The three constituencies are: Effutu, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA), and Mfantseman in the Central Region. The Central Region is considered a swing region. Three constituencies from this region were selected for the experimental study primarily because they represent a microcosm of Ghana's

partisan landscape, each with communities that strongly support the NDC or the NPP as well as communities that are competitive. The debates were held in public locations and were attended by ordinary voters as well as party members, traditional authorities, and leaders of community organizations. The debates were broadcast on local radio stations and were covered in local newspapers. Candidates expressed themselves in the language of their choice. The majority of the candidates spoke exclusively in Fante – which is the dominant language in the constituencies that were studied – while other candidates spoke partly in English. Candidates were in the same location and on the same stage when answering the moderator's questions, and they often engaged with the statements of other candidates. The debates were videotaped and then transferred to smartphones to show study participants.

In the experimental study conducted by Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu (2019) participants were sampled through a stratified sampling method that allowed for equal representation of electoral area strongholds of the two main political parties to be captured in each district. Through this process, 1991 participants were sampled for the experiment. The study employed an implicit mediation analysis. The design of the experimental study included randomly assigning participants to different components of the treatment - in this case, different segments of debates - that correspond to different potential causal channels. Randomization was done at the individual level. In one treatment condition, participants watched only the personal background segment; they learned about candidate quality but not policy positions. In another treatment condition, participants only viewed the policy segment. In another condition, participants watched both segments. Participants in the control group watched a nonpolitical, placebo video that was equal in length to the debate.

In the original article, the main outcome measures were collected through a survey conducted immediately after each participant viewed the debate (or control video). The first dependent variable is a continuous measure ranging from 1 to 7 of the participant's overall evaluation of each candidate in the debate. Participants were asked: [What is] your overall assessment of [candidate name], who is the [political party name] candidate for parliament in [constituency name]? Brierley, Kramon and Ofosu (2019) also create a binary measure using the same question which takes a value of 1 if the overall evaluation is greater than 4 (deemed a positive rating), and 0 otherwise.

In this paper, I am interested in the effects of evaluation of legislative candidates on the party the candidate represents. I use the evaluation of legislative candidates as my independent variable. The independent variable in this study is a binary variable that is coded 1 for positive evaluations of legislative candidates and 0 for negative evaluations. The dependent variable is the evaluation of political parties with codes ranging from 1 to 7 (1 being the lowest evaluation and 7 being the highest evaluation). The unit of analysis is the candidate-participant dyad. This means for each legislative candidate; a participant is surveyed on a set of questions relating to the candidate. To test the effect of candidate evaluation on the party the candidate represents, I implement an OLS model where I regress the party evaluation on candidate evaluations. I formalize this model in equation 1 where  $PartyEvaluation_{ijk}$  is the outcome for participant  $i$  in electoral area  $j$  for candidate  $k$ . I estimate the causal effect of a parliamentary candidate's evaluation on political party evaluations. This model allows control for differences across constituencies and local communities. However, to improve precision, I factor in pre-treatment covariates namely age, gender, education, and employment status.

$$PartyEvaluation_{ijk} = \beta CandidateEvaluation_{ij} + Controls + \epsilon_{ijk}(1)$$

*Table 1: Naive Estimate Model: A regression of Party Evaluation on Candidate Evaluation*

	NPP	NDC	CPP	PNC	PPP
Candidate Evaluation	3.799*** (0.181)	3.813*** (0.158)	2.905*** (0.347)	2.151* (1.012)	3.517*** (0.161)
Constant	3.137	2.516	1.380	0.735	2.200
N	1915	1893	1868	636	1886
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> F	0.188	0.237	0.036	-0.009	0.203
Statistic	32.8	43.07	5.93	0.552	35.34

## Findings

Table 1 presents results for party evaluations of average voters in the constituencies where the experiment was carried out. The results of this table indicate that there is a strong positive effect of legislative candidate evaluation on the political parties the legislative candidates represent.

The effects vary by political party. The NPP and NDC are the two dominant political parties in Ghana. The effects are stronger on the dominant parties compared to the CPP, PNC and PPP which are regarded as minor political parties based on their vote share during general elections. From the table, a positive evaluation of a legislative candidate who represents the NPP leads to a 3.79 positive evaluation of the New Patriotic Party. In a similar fashion a positive evaluation of a legislative candidate belonging to the NDC leads to a 3.813 positive effect on the evaluation of the NDC. The effect of candidate evaluation on the CPP and the PNC reduces to 2.905 and 2.151, respectively. The findings from this table means that voters who show a preference for legislative candidates from the different political parties in Ghana are also likely to prefer other co-partisan candidates from the same political parties. For example, a voter who evaluates legislative candidate A from Party A positively and as a result of the evaluation votes for legislative candidate A will also vote for other candidates from party A. At the polls in Ghana, only two types of co-partisan candidates feature

on the ballot. These are legislative candidates and presidential candidates. Voters are given a one ballot with the pictures and names of legislative candidates and another ballot sheet with a list of the names and pictures of presidential candidates. What this finding indicates is that voters who vote for legislative candidates based on their evaluations of the candidate will most likely vote for the co-partisan presidential candidate.

## Conclusion

This paper has explored the effect of candidate evaluations on the political parties the candidates represent. The main argument in the paper is that, empirically we see political parties rely on legislative candidates during election cycles to campaign for national candidates. The assumption of this strategy is that legislative candidates tend to have a stronger personalized relationship with the voters in the constituencies they represent. Therefore, positive evaluations of the legislative candidates by voters will automatically transfer to the political parties they represent. This assumption is in line with a common saying that “the bearer of the message is as important as the message itself”. Based on this assumption, the paper used an experimental dataset that captures evaluations of legislative candidates in four different constituencies belonging to five different political parties in Ghana, and found that evaluations of legislative candidates do transfer unto the parties they represent. ■



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