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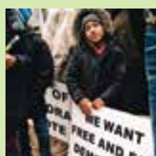

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Cover photo: *Nhimbe* is a traditional Shona practice of working together as a community to help each other in daily tasks such as harvesting, weeding fields or other tasks. Photo/Tshikululu

EDITORIAL

BY **VASU GOUNDEN**

In October 1998, five years after ACCORD was established, we took the bold step of starting a quarterly magazine called *Conflict Trends*. We were aware of the difficulties of establishing and sustaining a non-commercial magazine. Today, we are very proud that in this, our 20th year of *Conflicts Trends*, we can reflect on having successfully and regularly produced this quarterly magazine. Our commitment to publishing the thoughts and ideas of African scholars and practitioners remains a cornerstone of our objectives.

In the 1998 inaugural issue, I wrote:

> ACCORD is an organisation dedicated to finding solutions to the many conflicts that confront Africa. We do not claim to be neutral or apolitical on the issues that we deal with. To claim this would be a denial of our identity as Africans, living amidst conditions of poverty and deprivation of freedoms of one kind or another that stifle individual and collective potential. In this context our neutrality and political silence will be an abrogation of our responsibility to alleviate the conditions of those who are poor and deprived of freedoms. *Conflict Trends* provides a forum for this ongoing reflection and analysis. In dispensing our responsibility we have to be mindful of the role that we have chosen to play in this African drama. We have to find an appropriate and effective manner to dispense our responsibility. Our role is that of an impartial broker and facilitator of solutions to complex and simple challenges that face Africans at the local, national and continental levels. In addressing these challenges we will use all our resources to seek and achieve peaceful solutions that advance human development.

I stated further in that inaugural editorial:

> Our modus operandi has been and will continue to be one where we develop skills in conflict management, research conflict situations and provide possible solutions, and facilitate communication between conflicting parties. This magazine will reflect that modus operandi. We will present in a non-judgemental way the views of autocrats and democrats, dictators and liberators, academics and policy makers, young people and old people, modernists and traditionalists, moderates and extremists. Our intention will be to educate and enlighten and to use this mechanism in a responsible way to facilitate the peaceful settlement of African conflicts.

We hope that you, the reader of today, and our future readers, can look back on 20 years of *Conflict Trends* and clearly see the criteria and standards to which we remain committed. We hope that we have presented you with diverse opinions, so that you could make informed decisions or hold balanced discussions on our contributors' analyses in *Conflict Trends*. We hope that we have also given a voice and platform to Africa and the Global South, and that we have remained true to our policy of ensuring gender representation in the selection of authors and articles.

Over the years, we have adapted the feel and look of *Conflict Trends* to a changing world. We have also ensured that *Conflict Trends* is available in electronic format as well as in print. The electronic format is also available in several languages through Google Translate.

For the last eight years, *Conflict Trends*, together with our other publications, have earned ACCORD a place in the top 100 think tanks globally, according to Pennsylvania University's annual Think Tanks Survey of approximately 6000 think tanks. We plan to continue sharing with you cutting-edge perspectives and practices of African writers, as well as global scholars and practitioners who have chosen to think and write about Africa.

I want to thank the team who has steadfastly contributed their time and energy to making sure *Conflict Trends* is produced on time, on budget and with great quality. I therefore conclude this editorial as I did the first one 20 years ago:

> We hope... to make a modest contribution towards making the twenty-first century the African Century! We invite you to share in this hope with us by using *Conflict Trends* as a vehicle to make African voices heard on African issues.

Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.

ADAPTIVE MEDIATION

BY CEDRIC DE CONING AND STEPHEN GRAY[1]

UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

Introduction

When United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres took up his post in December 2016, he observed that "conflicts have become more complex and interlinked than ever before".[2] The increase in complexity that Guterres refers to stems in part from a proliferation in the range of national and transnational stakeholders and interests that affect peace processes. We are now concerned with, for instance, the roles that governance, corruption, organised crime, increasingly fragmented opposition movements, violent extremism, the environment, gender, youth and natural resource management play in contributing to – or hindering – conflict resolution. The proliferation of actors and threats stretches the limits of traditional state and multilateral mediation processes.

The challenge of navigating complex stakeholder landscapes is compounded by dynamic, interconnected and unpredictable local to global societal processes. Digital interconnectivity allows people to mobilise in ways that was not possible just a few years ago. The more the world is globalised, the more changes one factor can have in unpredictable and unintended political, economic, migration or conflict consequences elsewhere.

The consequence of increasing complexity for peacemakers is that there are more variables that can affect peace processes, less stability in the behaviour of these variables, and less predictability when it comes to how peace and conflict processes are likely to unfold.

Above: United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres observed that conflicts have become more complex and interlinked than ever before.

REUTERS/KENNY KATOMBE

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo the state-building project of external actors has failed, in part, because their designs have been based on fixed, non-negotiable conceptions of what the state should eventually look like, without due regard to the complex interests and relations between domestic powers.

Complexity therefore renders rigid adherence to analysis, plans and structures ineffective and potentially harmful.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for instance, Eriksen has argued that the state-building project of external actors has failed, in part, because their designs have been based on fixed, non-negotiable conceptions of what the state should eventually look like, without due regard to the complex and evolving interests and relations between domestic powers.[3]

ADAPTIVE MEDIATION EMPLOYS TOOLS THAT ANTICIPATE COMPLEXITY AND HELP MEDIATORS OF PEACE PROCESSES COPE WITH UNCERTAINTY, SETBACKS AND SHOCKS

The "determined-design" thinking inherent in traditional peacebuilding approaches is fundamentally at odds with the dynamic, non-linear and unpredictable behaviour of complex social systems.[4] Determined-design thinking is based on static conflict analyses and linear planning. It underestimates how dynamic contexts are and overestimates the ability of international experts to understand complex local issues and interests. It leads mediators to mistakenly extrapolate linear causal trajectories, when the interaction between cause and effect in complex systems is rarely linear or proportionate. Determined-design thinking causes mediators to undervalue the uniqueness of local context and overestimate the transferability of models, and leaves them surprised when their efforts generate unintended consequences.[5]

Adaptive mediation is a set of principles and practices that are more suited to the challenges of mediation processes in complex environments. Coleman and colleagues define adaptive mediation as "the capacity to read important changes in the fundamental dimensions of mediation situations and to respond to them with strategies and tactics that are more 'fitting' and thus more effective in those situations".[6] Adaptive mediation in the context of resolving interstate or intrastate armed conflicts recognises that uncertainty is an intrinsic quality of complex social systems, not a result of imperfect knowledge, inadequate planning or poor implementation.[7] Adaptive mediation employs tools that anticipate complexity and help

TREVOR SAMSON/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The formal Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) multiparty talks were managed by the parties themselves and is an example of self-organised mediation.

mediators of peace processes cope with uncertainty, setbacks and shocks.

Two concepts that are important for adaptive mediation are resilience and self-organisation. Resilience refers to the capacity of social institutions "to absorb and adapt in order to sustain an acceptable level of function, structure and identity under stress".[8] Self-organisation refers to the ability of a complex system to organise, regulate and maintain itself without a controlling agent – for example, the way an ecosystem such as a coral reef or wetland regulates itself. In complex social systems, the resilience to withstand shocks and challenges grows as social institutions develop increasingly complex forms of self-organisation, which distributes and dilutes vulnerability across a network of interdependent parts. In a mediation context, self-organisation refers to a stage in a mediation process when the parties recognise their interdependence, and when they start to work collaboratively towards mutually acceptable agreements. Agreements reached through self-organised mediation are more resilient because the ownership is distributed among all the participants who co-created it.

The South African case is an example of self-organised mediation. The formal Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) multiparty talks (1992–1994) were managed by the parties themselves. The talks broke down on several occasions due to various setbacks, such as violent massacres or the inability to find common ground on certain particularly challenging issues. However, the relationships that had developed among the parties were resilient enough to enable them to find ways to resume talks and ultimately reach an agreement.

ADAPTIVE MEDIATION CHALLENGES MEDIATORS TO ACCENTUATE RATHER THAN CONSTRAIN THE AGENCY AND INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE PARTIES

Adaptive mediation challenges mediators to accentuate rather than constrain the agency and interdependence of the parties. It focuses more on process or means rather than preconceived ends, and contrasts with top-down approaches that promote the adoption of pre-existing international standards, norms and models. Adaptive mediation encourages a process whereby the content

of agreements emerges from interaction among the participants, and where the emergent dynamics of the mediation process create the basis for the ultimate sustainability, resilience and implementation of the agreements reached.

An Adaptive Approach to Conflict Analyses, Planning and the Assessment of Results

It is widely recognised that mediation planning needs to be informed by comprehensive conflict analyses. A prevailing assumption is that if one applies a reputable methodology, conflict analysis will enable the mediation team to identify the contextual components necessary to formulate an effective peacemaking strategy and tactics.

Adaptive mediation, however, recognises that our ability to understand complex systems is inherently limited and time-bound. Complex social systems are dynamic, non-linear and emergent. This means that both the causes and consequences of conflict are continuously evolving. An adaptive approach recognises this dynamism and responds with an iterative process that continuously generates new analyses, as well as regular reflection points, where teams or organisations reflect and make judgements regarding the changes they have identified and their implications. An adaptive conflict analysis methodology enables mediation support teams, and the parties, to continuously adapt their strategies and approaches to the changing context.

Adaptive mediation encourages the maximum possible participation of the parties themselves, whether independently or together, so as to encourage self-organisation and resilience. The more the parties (or their proxies or constituencies) participate in conflict analysis, the more likely the process is to reflect indigenous narratives and perspectives relevant to the context, rather than the assumptions, interests and biases of external experts. Participatory conflict analysis across conflict divides can be a source of tension (or even impossible, in the early stages of a peace process) – but when skilfully facilitated, it can be a source of common understanding and stronger ownership of mediated outcomes.[9]

ADAPTIVE MEDIATION, HOWEVER, RECOGNISES THAT OUR ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND COMPLEX SYSTEMS IS INHERENTLY LIMITED AND TIME-BOUND

REUTERS/JAMES GIAHYUE

Determined-design thinking underestimates dynamic contexts and overestimates the ability of international experts to understand complex local issues and interests.

YE AUNG THU/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Myanmar's internal mediators and parties explored a wide variety of peacemaking options during the early stages of the country's post-2012 peace process.

Applying an adaptive approach to mediation in the face of uncertainty does not imply that we cannot plan, but it does suggest that we must depart from linear and causal log-frame-type planning approaches. Murray and Marmorek argue that an adaptive approach allows "activities to proceed despite uncertainty regarding how best to achieve desired outcomes... in fact, it specifically targets such uncertainty... and provides a science-based learning process characterised by using outcomes for evaluation and adjustment".[10]

Adaptive mediation approaches planning as an iterative exploration and adaption process that continuously co-evolves with the system it is attempting to influence. Adaptive mediation employs variation and selection to generate a variety of hypotheses or options for achieving objectives, and institutes a selection process that identifies which options to explore further and which to discontinue. In contrast to traditional approaches, the adaptive approach does not privilege one potential solution or end-state, but purposefully pursues a variety of options simultaneously. For instance, adaptive mediation may simultaneously employ multiple track approaches to engage with potential parties, or concurrently probe different topics for negotiation.

Myanmar's internal mediators and parties explored a wide variety of peacemaking options during the early stages of the country's post-2012 peace process. Bilateral ceasefires, deeds of commitment, informal political dialogue framework negotiations and covert military to military talks were attempted – often in parallel – before a mutually agreeable peace roadmap, centred on the 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA), was reached. However, by binding momentum and progress too closely to the NCA, the peace process has since lacked alternative pathways to tackle the challenges of a lack of inclusion, weak implementation capacity and escalating violence.

When multiple options are explored, special attention must be paid to the feedback generated by these different initiatives. Feedback enables purposeful, selection-based adaptation of the mediation process, whereby underperforming options are modified or abandoned and promising options are expanded.

Our linear determined-design assumptions also influence how we assess success and failure, and are poorly

REUTERS/STRINGER

Mediation teams must reflect regularly and consider the continued validity of their hypotheses, or which options to disregard or pursue based on feedback from the context.

suited to complex, dynamic peacemaking environments. Ramalingam observes: "The reporting requirements of some traditional monitoring and evaluation approaches have, in some instances, regrettably left no room for 'honourable failure', reducing donor and practitioner scope for calculated risk-taking and innovation."[11] Wadley observes: "Traditional monitoring and evaluation methods are not well suited to this task, typically imposing artificially linear project models on a dynamic conflict situation, as well as compliance reporting that moves attention away from real value."[12]

An adaptive monitoring and evaluation model, proposed by researchers at The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, seeks to better assess real value in uncertain mediation contexts by ensuring that assessment measures the quality of the process, not just observable results. This is achieved by assuring the quality of professional judgements through peer review, assessing a project's strategic logic and its implementation, and measuring observable results wherever possible.[13]

An additional imperative for monitoring and evaluation in adaptive mediation is to shift the focus from pure accountability and more towards real-time learning and adaptation. Mediation teams must reflect regularly – weekly, monthly or quarterly – to consider the continued validity of their hypotheses, or which options to disregard or pursue based on feedback from the context. As far as possible, this process should be conducted with the parties or their constituencies, to stimulate self-organisation and resilience. To encourage timely adaptation, the sources of feedback available to the mediation team must be systematic (that is, drawn from a diverse spread of actors and issues that could affect the mediation), timely (that is, preferably before rather than after context changes have affected the mediation) and accurate (that is, ideally verifiable, or not adversely affected by stakeholder bias).

In adaptive mediation, conflict analysis, planning and the assessment of results should not be understood as sequential steps in a linear project cycle with a defined beginning and end. Instead, they should be approached as interdependent dimensions of an iterative adaptive process that is undertaken simultaneously. For example, an adaptive mediation process can include iterative cycles of meetings within or between parties (or their proxies or constituencies) that simultaneously (a) reflect on the conflict context, dynamics and drivers, and the implications for planning and implementation; (b) reflect on current activities under implementation, considering the viability of

UN PHOTO/ISAAC BILLY

The August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS) has been criticised for being imposed on the conflict parties by South Sudan's neighbours.

existing or alternative options; and (c) derive lessons and data to serve both internal decision-making (planning) and external accountability functions. Jordan's social dialogue on gender, for example, included regular two-step reflect and adapt iterations, where national and international partners reflected and then changed course related to process design, allocation of resources, discontinuing or piloting initiatives, and how best to use data.[14]

Facilitating Mediation Processes for Self-organisation and Resilience

In this section, we turn our attention to the role of the mediator and how self-organisation and resilience can be encouraged in mediation processes. Adaptive mediation suggests that when the aim is a self-sustainable peace agreement, mediators should, as a rule of thumb, apply a light touch. They should protect parties from external interests and agendas, foster inductive processes that maximise the capability of parties to self-organise, and generate agreements that are rooted in the local context and narrative.

The quality of a peace agreement should be assessed on its sustainability – that is, the degree to which the parties are committed to implementing the agreement on their own after the mediation has ended. Many peace agreements fail to be implemented because the parties don't sufficiently own the mediation process or subsequent agreements. Important indicators of the sustainability of an agreement include the resilience of the mechanisms agreed to for implementation, such as the extent to which the agreement puts in place processes that can manage future disputes or emergent issues.

Peace agreements that are not strongly owned by the parties lack resilience and sustainability. Implementation breakdowns are common – for example, when international mediation processes coerce parties to go along with processes, agreements or externally conceived end-states (such as an accelerated election timetable) that do not necessarily reflect their interests or are not viable for implementation in the local context. One example is the August 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (ARCSS), which has been criticised for being "imposed on the conflict parties by South Sudan's neighbours", contributing to a lack of political willingness or "selective implementation" by some parties.[15]

With adaptive mediation, the aim of the mediator is to provide the benefits of external intervention without undermining self-organisation. Every time a mediator

intervenes to solve a perceived problem among the parties, they interrupt internal feedback and deny the parties the potential to respond to a challenge together, thereby deepening their interdependence. The result is a lost opportunity to develop self-organisation and resilience.

Too little facilitation, however, may result in a lack of purpose, deadlocks or breakdown. External influence has many advantages, including bringing leverage, encouraging accountability, opening political space and encouraging more inclusive processes. The key to successful adaptive mediation lies in finding the appropriate balance between external facilitation and self-organised mediation.

Adaptive mediation also recognises the inherently political nature of mediation. Choices regarding who gets to participate and what criteria will be used to decide which items are on the agenda, or in which order they will be discussed, all have political dimensions and political effects. A decision to pursue a particular initiative may face pushback from those who may view it as harmful to their interests, or who were excluded from the process. All these choices are influenced by political judgements about who may lose or gain – and as a result, it is rare that the "technical" aspects of a mediation will override what is seen as politically feasible in a given context. Even with the best expert advice, no mediator can replace the role of the political marketplace to effectively discount all political interests and considerations. Thus, as the South African example cited earlier demonstrated, the less the mediator directs the outcome, the more the parties themselves will self-organise, and in the process develop the ability to absorb and adapt to stress together, making the process more resilient to internal political trade-offs and external shocks.

Conclusion

Traditional state-based and determined-design models are ill-equipped to help mediators manage increasingly dynamic, complex and unpredictable violent conflict systems. This article explores an alternative approach: an iterative adaptive mediation process that enables the parties to generate solutions themselves, and which responds more nimbly to the challenges posed by complex conflict dynamics. With adaptive mediation, the aim of the mediator is to provide the benefits of external intervention without undermining self-organisation. When this approach is applied to conflict analyses, planning, monitoring and evaluation, the ability of mediation processes to navigate uncertainty and adapt to changing dynamics will be enhanced. For more resilient and self-sustainable agreements to emerge, adaptive mediation requires mediators to apply a lighter touch. This encourages greater interdependence among the parties and discourages dependence upon the mediator. Utilising an adaptive mediation approach should result in generating peace agreements that are more locally grounded, more self-sustainable and better able to withstand setbacks and challenges.

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Stephen Gray is the Director of Adapt Research and Consulting.

Endnotes

1 The authors would like to acknowledge valuable comments by Adam Day, and thank Bård Drange for excellent editorial support.

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THE JOINT FORCE OF THE G5 SAHEL: AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO COMBAT TERRORISM?

BY **NATASJA RUPESINGHE**

UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

Above: A wide view of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) chamber as Moussa Faki Mahamat (on screen), chairperson of the African Union Commission, addresses the UNSC's meeting on the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel via video conference (30 October 2017).

Introduction

The Joint Force of the Group of Five of the Sahel (*Force Conjointe du G5 Sahel* or FC-G5S) is the latest initiative by African member states to reduce the threat of terrorism in the Sahel, a region that is often framed as an arc of instability. The FC-G5S – which includes Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Mauritania and Chad – was authorised by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC) on 13 April 2017 for a 12-month period, and was later – on 20 June 2017 – welcomed by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).[1] It was reauthorised by the AU PSC for a 12-month period on 12 April 2018.[2]

This article focuses on the security pillar of the G5 Sahel, by examining the FC-G5S mandate to combat terrorism in the Sahel. After a brief background, the article provides an overview of the main jihadist protagonists in the Sahel, demonstrating that some of these groups emerge and thrive, due to distinctly local, societal problems, and should not only be viewed through the prism of terrorism. The article then examines the FC-G5S counterterrorism (CT) strategy and the conceptualisation and configuration of the force itself, and argues that currently there is a danger of advancing

a security-first stabilisation strategy through relying on military-led CT operations to contain and deter the threat of terrorist groups. This approach depoliticises these groups, and risks reducing emphasis on the local, sociopolitical and economic factors that have enabled violent extremism to take root in the first place.

Background

The FC-G5S is the military force that falls under the auspices of the Group of Five of the Sahel, a subregional organisation formed in February 2014 to bolster cooperation around development and to unify collective action against common threats such as terrorism and organised crime. It can be categorised as what the AU calls "ad hoc security initiatives"[3] – coalitions that are authorised but not mandated by the PSC, and which create security pacts to enable their forces to conduct cross-border operations to target common threats.

The G5 Sahel heads of state announced the creation of the force during a summit on 6 February 2017. Militants had demonstrated their transnational capacity by launching attacks against Nigerien and Burkinabe security forces, demonstrating the need for a more robust transnational response. With extensive political support from France, the force was subsequently launched in Bamako on 2 July 2017. The force headquarters, which are now operationalised, are located in Sevaré, Mopti, central Mali. At the last donor conference, held in Brussels in December 2017, pledges for the force accrued to a total of €414 million, exceeding the original target by €100 million.[4]

By consolidating existing cross-border operations (18 were already conducted before its official launch),[5] the new arrangement formally enables hot pursuit operations on neighbouring soil, up to 50 km on each side of the border. The joint force will implement a centralised joint command and communication structure,[6] with a rotating force commander who is responsible for shaping strategy and operations from Sevaré. Three sector command posts will be set up in the Central Sector (Niamey, Niger), Eastern Sector (Wour, Chad) and Western Sector (N'beiket, Mauritania), with seven cross-sectoral battalion command posts spread over its area of operations.[7] These consist of the Central Sector (Mali–Burkina Faso–Niger borders), the Eastern Sector (Niger–Chad border) and the Western Sector (Mali–Mauritania border). The force's initial operations prioritise the Central Sector, also known as the Liptako-Gourma region – a 370 000 km² area straddling Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, which has seen escalating levels of violence since 2015.[8]

Figure 1: Insecurity in the Liptako-Gourma Region[9]

Jihadist Groups in the Sahel

Jihadist groups in the Sahel have increased both in number and scope in recent years. Mali is often considered to be the epicentre of violence, following the Islamist occupation of three of Mali's northern regions (Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal).[10] While the French Operation Serval succeeded in containing the advance of the Islamist coalition, its protagonists retreated and regrouped in the rural hinterlands. The deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) focused on maintaining minimal levels of security in the north while supporting the implementation of the Algiers Peace Agreement, whereas the French counterterror force, Barkhane, shifted focus to fighting Boko Haram.[11]

Since 2015, insecurity has been escalating in Mali's central regions of Mopti and Ségou. A string of lethal, small-scale attacks was carried out against the Malian state, MINUSMA and Barkhane.[12] The main jihadist actor operating in this area is known as the Katibat Macina or Macina Liberation Front,[13] led by Fulani preacher, Hamadoun Kouffa. The group is considered to be an offshoot of Ansar Dine and is also a member of the broader umbrella organisation, Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (known by its Arabic acronym, JNIM). However, it has its own distinct agenda, designed to mobilise Niger Delta communities.

The Katibat Macina has managed to create broad-based appeal, initially among the Fulani nomadic pastoralist community, because of its ability to exploit longstanding grievances against the Malian state and its local agents, its instrumentalisation of existing conflicts over resources between communities, and its promises to remove rigid social hierarchies that are perceived as oppressive by some social groups.[14] While the Katibat Macina has led a campaign of intimidation, punishing or killing non-collaborators, it has also tried to introduce minimal governance provisions that respond to community needs, such as the delivery of justice. The group is entrenched in large swathes of Mopti's rural zones, and has introduced Sharia law in many localities.

Violent activities perpetrated by jihadist insurgent groups have also emerged in Burkina Faso's northern provinces of Soum, Loroum and Yatenga, and Niger's south-western regions of Tillaberi and Tahoua. In Burkina Faso, the jihadist insurgency spearheaded by Ansaroul Islam is a product of the broader discontent within the social order of the north, and should therefore not be interpreted as only a spillover from central Mali.[15] Ansaroul Islam, led by Malam Dicko (a close friend of Kouffa), has had appeal in Soum province,[16] because it channelled the grievances of the lower social classes, who were frustrated about rigid social stratification. It also tapped into the sense of abandonment and lack of confidence in Burkinabe state institutions.

In Niger, several attacks have been perpetrated along its border with Mali since early 2017 by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) – a Da'esh offshoot led by Abou Walid Al Sahraoui.[17] The Institute for Security Studies found

NOEL QUIDU/PARIS MATCH VIA GETTY IMAGES

Operation Serval was launched by the French army to help Mali regain occupied territories by Islamist groups (April 2013).

ROMARIC HIEN/AFP/GETTYIMAGES

The Kabitat Macina has managed to create broad-based appeal among the Fulani pastoralist community by exploiting long-standing grievances against the Malian state and its local agents.

that jihadist insurgent groups operating on the Niger–Mali border (such as ISGS and Ansar Dine) have recruited among the Fulani community there, mainly by exploiting longstanding tensions between the Fulani (Tollèbè) of Niger and the Touareg (Daoussahaq) of Mali.[18] Analysts argue that the Islamist merger in March 2017 into JNIM – which includes Ansar Dine, Al-Mourabitoun, the Katibat Macina and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) – is a strategic move to create a common, united front against the FC-G5S. Since the merger, attacks in the Liptako-Gourma area have become more sophisticated and frequent.[19]

Yet, these jihadist groups have not emerged in a vacuum – their ability to mobilise local support stems from much deeper, systemic social, political and economic problems. These countries all face considerable development challenges: on the Human Development Index, Niger scores 187/188; Burkina Faso scores 185/188 and Mali scores 175/188.[20] Jihadist groups have taken root in largely rural, marginalised areas marked by governance crises, and which to varying degrees suffer from high levels of unemployment, poor public service provision, and low education and literacy levels. Each region has also historically experienced intercommunal and intracommunal conflicts. The fact that the jihadists can present themselves as protectors against the state's indiscriminate practices, as pious saviours against corruption, and emancipatory social liberators in socially stratified societies, renders them appealing to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

The Counterterror Response

The mandate of the force is to "(1) combat terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking in order to create a secure environment by eradicating the actions of terrorist armed groups and other organized criminal groups; (2) contribute to the restoration of state authority and the return of displaced persons and refugees; (3) facilitate humanitarian operations and the delivery of aid to the affected populations and (4) contribute to the implementation of development actions in the space of the G5 Sahel".[21]

While the joint force does not have a common doctrine that elaborates a theory of change underpinning its operations, it has developed a concept of operations (CONOPs), approved by the PSC on 13 April 2017.[22] This mandate contains all the elements of a stabilisation strategy – which combines CT with softer (traditionally civilian-led) tasks, such as facilitating humanitarian assistance and development. Several interlocutors conceded that these will not be the priority, and that the joint force is a purely military tool that will focus on CT. Other aspects of the mandate will be the responsibility of actors like national governments or MINUSMA. The current priority is to "detect and neutralise all terrorist groups of concern",[23]

ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The categorisation of all jihadist groups as terrorist armed groups effectively lumps together a range of disparate actors with different agendas and depoliticises their aims - some of which actually respond to local social and political grievances.

as well as to prevent trafficking and disrupt supply chains to cut off the groups from their sources of funding. Specific operations will seek to isolate terrorist and criminal groups to deny them of their support base, neutralise these groups, protect the local population and control the area. The joint force also aims to make the national military presence on the border posts more permanent, by sedentarising existing battalions. [24] Eventually, it is foreseen that a "fully-fledged force" could operate in the Sahel, although details of the scope, scale, command and control, and objectives are still in development.[25]

The force is largely military heavy: it has been scaled up to 10 000 troops, as well as a 105-strong police force.[26] The military focus can, in part, be attributed to France's eventual exit strategy from the region, which aims to transfer the task of fighting terrorism and organised crime from Barkhane to the G5 Sahel states. The force's advocates argue that if it manages to patrol the borders with a more permanent security presence, it is possible that such a projection of force could tilt the balance of power against these groups on the ground, reduce their cross-border movements, and disrupt the illegal organised crime and trafficking networks that fund them. While this strategy may contain these groups geographically and cut off their funding sources, it is unlikely to address the root causes of violent extremist mobilisation. This is not to negate the role of the military, which is, of course, important in providing security guarantees and protection to the local population, who face violence and abuse from some of these jihadist groups. However, the current CT approach does not recognise the multifaceted strategies these groups use to mobilise civilians, and which often involve legitimacy-building tactics such as providing employment, local justice and basic services.

The role of the police can be scaled up, as experience from other situations reveals that they are often more effective in gathering intelligence and engaging in law-enforcement at the community level. It is envisaged that the force will have a modest civilian unit, though it is likely that accruing necessary civilian personnel will take time. Plans are underway to include 19 civilian personnel, of whom 17 will work in logistics. Civilian personnel that could make the CT approach more multidimensional will, however, report directly to the force commander – as opposed to a civilian head of mission – meaning that the CT strategy will be driven by a military lens.[27] In Somalia, lessons learnt revealed the importance of complementing CT operations with the reinstallation of civilian administration and the provision of "peace dividends". The failure to do this resulted in short-lived military gains, leading to the reoccupation of recovered areas by Al-Shabaab once forces left.[28]

The current conceptualisation and configuration of the joint force risks repeating the mistakes of other African CT operations, which have, for a long time, been criticised for

their military-centric focus.[29] Preventing violent extremist mobilisation will require the joint force to provide a much more attractive offer of security, or public services, to win hearts and minds – something that is currently not evident in its strategy, and which it will not have the capacity to do in its current military-heavy configuration.

A Counterterror Strategy without a Target?

The CT approach is problematic in that there is no clear indication of which terrorist armed groups (TAGs) the force will target or prioritise. Contrary to the multinational joint task force (MNJTF), which fights one, relatively unitary enemy, the FC-G5S confronts a region with dozens of armed groups.[30] The CONOPs lists the following groups in the Sahelo-Sahara band: ISGS, Boko Haram, Ansaroul Islam, the Katibat of Gourma, JNIM, AQIM, Ansar Dine and the Katibat Macina. Jihadist insurgents are not easily identifiable and may be confused with bandits, self-defence militias or anyone who fits the profile and carries a gun. The groups vacillate from hiding in the bush or the forest, between training camps and combat operations, to living among communities. They often have several identities, allegiances and alliances, resulting in a highly complex, fluid security environment. It has already been difficult for the Malian army to distinguish between terrorists and civilians, as well as terrorists from compliant groups – which are signatories to the Peace Accord. In the FC-G5S's first operation (Hawbi), members of the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) – a compliant group – were wrongly arrested.[31]

The categorisation of jihadist groups as TAGs effectively lumps together a range of disparate actors with different agendas and depoliticises their aims – some of which actually respond to local social and political grievances.

THE GROUPS VACILLATE FROM HIDING IN THE BUSH OR THE FOREST, BETWEEN TRAINING CAMPS AND COMBAT OPERATIONS, TO LIVING AMONG COMMUNITIES

Preserving Relations with Communities

Building an effective community engagement strategy should be high on the priority list of the joint force going forward. The national militaries that comprise the joint force have a poor track record in upholding human rights during their military campaigns.[32] Given that jihadist insurgents emerge from and live within these communities, it will be extremely challenging to adhere rigorously to the principle of distinction in practice. Civilians living under jihadist control often perform auxiliary functions (usually for economic incentives or coercion) such as being informants, or providing food and shelter to combatants. This blurs the lines between the jihadist insurgents and civilians, and consequently might wrongly penalise civilians living in areas where jihadists are active. There is therefore a likelihood that the mission will incur civilian casualties or damage to property – even if unintentionally – which can quickly turn local people against the mission. For example, it was the brutal crackdown of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) on the Peulh pastoralist community since 2015 that swelled the ranks of the Katibat Macina, demonstrating how abusive CT campaigns, which do not respect human rights or due judicial processes, can catalyse radicalisation.

To offset these potential negative consequences, it was agreed that each contributing country will provide police to make up the *force privotale* intended to monitor troop behaviour by ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL), as well as through conducting investigations.[33] While this is encouraging, given that the police personnel will be drawn from the same country as the military personnel, it is unlikely that this will lead to independent reporting in practice. Recognising the need to build trust and confidence with local populations, the joint force will develop a framework for compliance with IHL and IHRL (under development, at the time of writing).

The potential for a security-first approach to generate more insecurity has already become evident, following Operation Pagnali. It has been reported that approximately 2 000 Burkinabe refugees have arrived in the commune of Gossi in Timbuktu, Mali, fleeing as a result of military activities undertaken by the joint force.[34]

Security First, but Not Only

Originally, the subregional arrangement of the G5 Sahel was a development instrument to fast-track infrastructure and development in the shared border regions. However, as insecurity in the Liptako-Gourma area grew, development priorities became increasingly sidelined and the need for a security response became more pronounced.[35]

Nevertheless, the G5 Sahel and its partners have repeatedly underlined the need to complement military initiatives with long-term development efforts to address the roots of insecurity. In addition to the €100 million pledged to the joint force, the European Union (EU) will also provide US$8 billion in development support to the G5 Sahel countries over six years. In February 2018, the founding members of the Alliance for the Sahel announced the implementation of more than 500 projects between 2018 and 2022, for a total amount of €6 billion.[36] The focus will be on six areas: youth employment, rural development and food security, energy and climate, governance, decentralisation and access to basic services, and security – which build on nationally defined priorities, including the Priority Investment Programme (PIP) developed by the G5 Sahel. These focus areas address some of the structural causes of insecurity, at least on a macro level.

At the national level, G5 Sahel governments have their own plans that focus on the Liptako-Gourma joint areas. Burkina Faso developed an emergency development programme for the northern Sahel (an administrative region in the country's north) for 2017–2020, which focuses on infrastructure,

THIERRY MONASSE/GETTY IMAGES

European Union (EU) and Sahel leaders meet at the EU-Sahel High-level Meeting on the Sahel at the EU Commission in Brussels (23 February 2018) to focus on strengthening much-needed international support to Africa's Sahel countries in the areas of security and development, through the Joint Force of the G5 Sahel.

poverty reduction, livestock breeding, justice provision and fighting corruption.[37] There is also the *Programme Gestion Intégrée des Espaces Frontaliers au Burkina Faso* (ProGEF), which focuses on border management, capacity-building and socio-economic development of communities living in the border areas.[38] There do not appear to be any specific plans for Niger's western regions, other than the *Appui à la Justice, Sécurité et à la Gestion des Frontières au Niger* (AJUSEN), with a budget of €30 million, focusing on security, justice, migration and border management, supported by the EU.[39]

Finally, in Mali, there are now multiple and overlapping plans for the central regions. There is the government-led Integrated Security Plan for the Central Regions (Plan de Sécurisation Intégrée des Régions du Centre, or PSIRC). Other programmes, such as the EU-funded *Programme d'Appui au Renforcement de la Sécurité dans les régions de Mopti et de Gao et à la gestion des zones frontalières* (PARSEC), focus on re-establishing adequate security conditions in the centre and along the borders with Niger and Burkina Faso, including strengthening the capacities of its internal security forces.[40]

With these multiple and potentially overlapping plans, it is essential that efforts are coordinated towards one common, comprehensive stabilisation goal, which systematically takes into the account the perspective of the communities living there.

Conclusion

The FC-G5S risks following the global trend of security-first stabilisation initiatives that have risen to prominence in a context of heightened militarism.[41] While establishing firmer border control and enhanced intelligence-sharing between G5 Sahel states are crucial, a narrow conceptualisation of security as the reduction of the threat posed by terrorist groups risks resulting in a reliance on the military as a tool, and CT as a policy response, to problems that are fundamentally related to governance, state-society and tense intra-societal relations. Using violence to counter violence has had mixed results at best, and counterproductive results at worst – partially because it is applied in the context of an "untangible web of human relations" and can consequently give rise to unpredictable responses.[42] Removing the categorisation of jihadist insurgents as terrorists only, and understanding their multifaceted identities – some as legitimate social/political actors and local protectors to communities – would open up more policy responses, including dialogue, and traditional, bottom-up conflict resolution. The multiple large-scale efforts to address socio-economic and political needs in the Sahel should also consider how to stream their interventions towards common outcomes in targeted areas, and could benefit from lessons learnt in other contexts. For example, in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, donors, the UN peacekeeping mission, the government and local communities devised a new strategy for stabilisation using system-wide community engagement and democratic dialogue to encourage demand-driven programming, which has yielded some positive results. Finally, addressing human rights, compliance and accountability is a challenging issue, with no quick fix. But it is certain that if tactical blunders are made at the cost of the civilian population, this CT force, like others in Africa, will suffer strategic consequences and success will be compromised.

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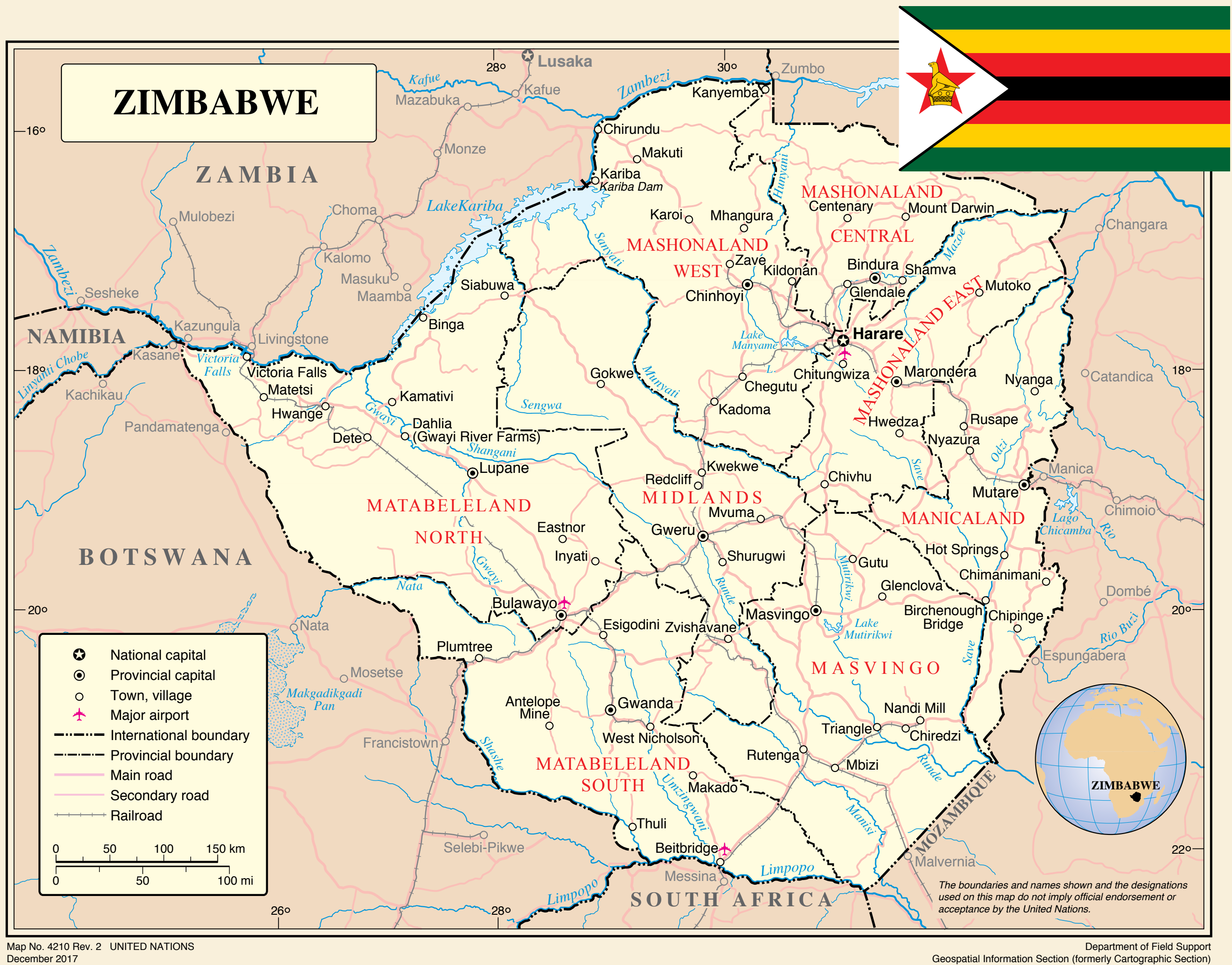


RECONCILIATION, INTEGRATION AND HEALING EFFORTS IN ZIMBABWE

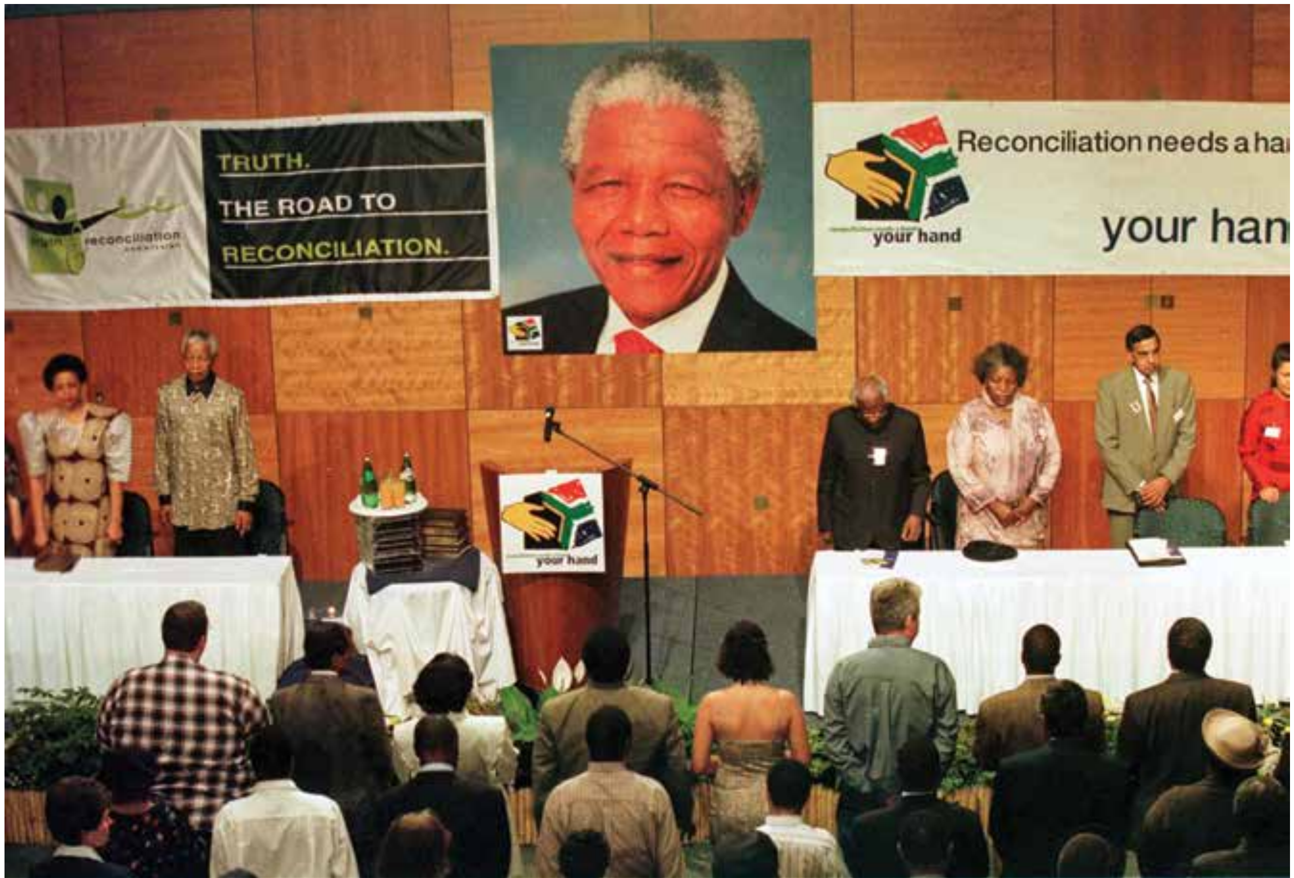
BY **DARLINGTON TSHUMA**

Introduction

This article is an attempt to interrogate Zimbabwe's national unity and reconciliation efforts through one of its key organs, the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC). It contends that while the NPRC potentially represents a first attempt at resolving Zimbabwe's violent past, the central premise on which both the Commission and the government's broader national unity and reconciliation policy are based is critically flawed. The unity that the government seeks to achieve as a vehicle for reconciliation relies upon a negation of accountability, itself a core component of national healing and reconciliation that allows for an open and honest engagement with Zimbabwe's dark and gruesome past. The problem is further compounded by what has been seen by many as the government's unwillingness to engage honestly and genuinely with the past, possibly because a good number of past and current serving senior government officials fear implication.

The article also highlights some of the complexities that continue to characterise the national mood as far as

JUDA NGWENYA/REUTRS



Truth and Reconciliation Commissions play a fundamental role in establishing the truth of what happened, which is a prerequisite for reconciliation.

national healing and reconciliation is concerned. For example, proposals were made recently at an Exchange Seminar of Civic Society Organisations (CSOs) in Bulawayo to have the NPRC's mandate stretch from as far back as the 11th century. How to address all these issues holistically, given the limited time the Commission has before its official expiry, is something the Commission must be innovative about. These challenges demonstrate the mammoth task the NPRC has, and the responsibility it shoulders.

Reconciliatory Efforts: Retributive or Restorative Justice, or Both?

In the context of Zimbabwe and the NPRC model, restorative justice can be defined as a process aimed at the redefinition of crime so that is it seen not as an offence against a "faceless state", but as wrongs or injuries done to other persons. Restorative justice, by its nature, seeks to promote healing and reconciliation of all concerned parties – victims in the first place, but also offenders, their families and the larger community. At the heart of restorative justice is the recognition that both victim and offender must be directly involved in the resolution of conflict.

A RETRIBUTIVE MODEL OF JUSTICE, ON THE EXTREME END, IS CONCERNED WITH A PROSECUTORIAL APPROACH AS A MEANS TO "RESTORING" JUSTICE

A retributive model of justice, on the extreme end, is concerned with a prosecutorial approach as a means to "restoring" justice. Both models have their advantages and disadvantages. Finding what works best under which conditions is critical for successful post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding.

In post-conflict societies such as Zimbabwe where mass atrocities, violence and human rights violations have occurred, the following questions are key: Are healing and reconciliation possible? If so, how can they be achieved and if not, what are the consequences? Literature on transitional justice has traditionally focused on two particular mechanisms that are believed to aid reconciliation processes significantly.[1] These are truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) and criminal trials. The former, in the case of South Africa, played a fundamental role in establishing the truth of what happened – a key prerequisite for reconciliation – while criminal trials

STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Zimbabwe's government clean-up campaign, Operation Murambatsvina (Clean the Filth), displaced thousands of poor urbanites.

reputedly facilitate reconciliation largely through dispensing justice. Post-genocide Rwanda is a case in point. There is currently a huge debate in Zimbabwe – albeit in hushed voices – as to which approach could possibly lead to more positive and sustainable peace. Insights on what could possibly work for Zimbabwe are shared later in this article.

HOWEVER, THIS "UNITY PACT" HAS INCURRED HEAVY CRITICISM FOR HAVING BEEN TOO ELITIST AND NOT TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION THE VOICES OF ACTUAL SUFFERERS AND VICTIMS

Healing and reconciliation efforts in Zimbabwe continue to face substantial challenges. Before 1980, Zimbabwe waged a protracted liberation struggle against the white settler government of Ian Smith. About 80 000 Africans are estimated to have died during this war, while a further 450 000 suffered injuries of varying intensities.[2] Emerging from this dark past, it did not take long before the country was once again plunged into conflict – but this time it was ethnic strife, where more than 20 000 predominantly Ndebele-speaking people and Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) supporters were murdered between 1982 and 1987.[3] Hostilities were eventually halted with the signing of the Unity Accord in 1987 between the leader of ZAPU and the leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). However, this "unity pact" has incurred heavy criticism for having been too elitist and not taking into consideration the voices of actual sufferers and victims. The complexities around what transpired during this period have been made worse by half-truths and an almost-persistent blame game by both parties. This phase, the "darkest" of all post-independence atrocities, has posed significant challenges for any efforts directed at national healing and reconciliation. Still coming to terms with that legacy of brutal violence, the country once again found itself plunged into a series of high-level conflicts– the violent seizure of white-owned farms in 2000 and Operation Restore Order in 2005, which was an operation disguised as a "war on filth" that is estimated to have displaced close to 700 000 poor urbanites.[4] Less than three years after Operation Murambatsvina ("Clean the filth"), the country was engulfed in a violent electoral conflict in 2008. This conflict claimed scores of opposition supporters who were either, killed, maimed or raped in the ensuing political conflict following Robert Mugabe and the Zimbabwe

RODHULLANDEMU

Rwanda chose to deal with its past by using a variety of approaches such as international trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), national trials in local courts of law and, in some instances, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (gacaca trials).

African National Union – Patriotic Front's (ZANU-PF) defeat by Morgan Tsvangirai's Movement for Democratic Change (MDC-T).

Unlike Rwanda – which chose to deal with its dark past by using a variety of approaches such as international trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), national trials in local courts of law and, in some instances, traditional dispute resolution mechanisms (gacaca trials) – the Government of Zimbabwe adopted a policy of national unity and reconciliation through the NPRC, which came into operation under Section 251 of its newly adopted constitution. Under the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the NPRC will have a life span of 10 years, which started in August 2013. The Commission faced several challenges from its inception, which further delayed its effective start date. As an example, the eight commissioners were only sworn in on 24 February 2016, and not much work was done until 5 January 2018 when President Emmerson Mnangagwa signed the NPRC Bill into law, making operational the Commission that was appointed two years previously. The unnecessary delays in operationalising the Commission cut the life span of the NPRC by half. In recognition of the unnecessary delays on the work of the NPRC, there have been calls by some sections of civic society to have the NPRC's full 10-year mandate reinstalled. Whether the government will relent is yet to be seen. Section 252 of the Constitution mandates the NPRC to do the following, among other functions:

- ensure post-conflict justice, healing and reconciliation;
- develop and implement programmes to provide natural healing, unity and cohesion and the peaceful restoration/resolution of disputes;

IN RECOGNITION OF THE UNNECESSARY DELAYS ON THE WORK OF THE NPRC, THERE HAVE BEEN CALLS BY SOME SECTIONS OF CIVIC SOCIETY TO HAVE THE NPRC'S FULL 10-YEAR MANDATE REINSTALLED

- encourage people to tell the “truth” about the past and facilitate the making of amends and the provision of justice;
- develop procedures and institutions to facilitate dialogue between political parties, communities and other groups; and
- take appropriate action on complaints received from the public.

From the functions outlined above, it is clear that the NPRC’s emphasis is not only on healing and justice as paths to reconciliation. Most importantly, it emphasises unity and cohesion as fundamental ingredients to healing and reconciliation. The inward-looking nature of the NPRC and its strong focus on the grassroots reflects a more holistic and comprehensive approach to reconciliation than conventional TRC approaches. Yet, the central premise upon which both the Commission and the government’s broader national unity and reconciliation policy are based is critically flawed and cannot be a vehicle for attaining positive and sustainable peace. In other words, the NPRC seeks to achieve national healing and reconciliation through the creation of a false unity that ignores the critical aspect of truth-telling and accountability, and hence, does not allow for an open and honest engagement with the past. A recent survey by Heal Zimbabwe Trust in Matabeleland North province, home to scores of victims of state violence, revealed that 36.7% of its respondents mentioned that they wanted to see the NPRC promote accountability, transparency and truth-telling first.[5] Failure to deal with the past in a holistic and comprehensive manner leaves room for the past to rear its ugly head in the future.

Possibly, it may be argued that similar to Rwanda, the establishment of the NPRC reflects a critical recognition by the Government of Zimbabwe that criminal justice and trials alone (retributive justice) are not sufficient to bring about reconciliation, as opposed to restorative justice. Certainly, there is merit in this argument, but it also begs the question: How can justice be restored and reconciliation achieved when perpetrators of some of the most heinous crimes continue to live lavishly and get “rewarded” with top positions in government, while victims of violence continue to live in abject poverty and misery? Furthermore, none of the known perpetrators have taken responsibility for their past actions, nor issued public apologies in acknowledgement of their wrongdoing. These and other

UN GENEVA

President Emmerson Mnangagwa signed the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission Bill into law on 5 January 2018.

JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES)

The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission emphasises unity and cohesion as fundamental ingredients to healing and reconciliation.

contentious issues beg the question: Is Zimbabwe's NPRC an attempt at "reconciliation without justice"?[6] These are critical questions that the NPRC and the Government of Zimbabwe need to interrogate seriously, given that securing restorative and socio-economic justice consequently become a broader basis for ensuring sustainable peace, healing and integration.

Despite the shortcomings of the policy, one could think that the NPRC potentially represents a significant and innovative model that could be adapted to other post-conflict societies to aid peacebuilding processes. First, as clearly outlined in its constitutional mandate, the NPRC has a broad and comprehensive mandate. This is important, given that reconciliatory efforts usually require holistic and multidimensional approaches to nation-building and peacebuilding. This contrasts favourably with TRCs – which, due to limited time, sometimes scarce resources and the magnitude of their task, "have to be selective in what they cover and emphasize".[7] Post-genocide Rwanda's experience is a case in point. Second, and most importantly, is that societies and communities affected by large-scale violence of the magnitude of Gukurahundi, Operation Restore Order (Murambatsvina), land seizures (Jambanja) and the election violence of June 2008 need to own the reconciliation process. This is something that cannot be imposed from outside or in a top-down approach. Huyse notes that "lasting reconciliation must be home-grown" – because, in the end, it is the survivors who assign meaning to the terms and the processes.[8] What is creative about the model adopted by the NPRC is that it transfers ownership of the reconciliation process to local communities and encourages them to become the primary actors. For example, one of the Commission's key functions is to "develop procedures and institutions to facilitate dialogue between communities, political parties and other groups".[9] Finally, whereas TRCs (and, to some extent, war crimes tribunals) are essentially premised on the notion that truth is healing and represents a path to reconciliation, the NPRC seeks to create reconciliation primarily via unity and cohesion. Amadume correctly argues that it amounts to modern arrogance to assume that courts of law can be instruments of true healing and reconciliation.[10]

The Way Forward?

While few authors agree on what constitutes reconciliation or how to achieve it, two core elements can be identified. First and foremost, reconciliation entails the repair and restoration of relationships – and, regrettably, Zimbabwe has scored marginally on this. This explains why Zimbabwe continues to be plunged into conflicts, mainly of a political

nature. Second, reconciliation involves dealing with the past, taking responsibility and acknowledging wrongdoing. In fact, Jeong notes: "As a critical first step, guilt needs to be recognised with the acceptance of responsibility for atrocities or other events symbolising intercommunal and interpersonal relations."[11] In this area, however, there has been minimal progress, with much playing of the "blame game". On the one hand, it may be argued that the NPRC represents the first major attempt by Zimbabweans to confront their painful past and build a brighter and more prosperous future for all citizens. Yet, on the other hand, its attempts to forge national unity and reconciliation through the suppression of truth and constant denial and victim blaming on the part of perpetrators represents a serious flaw by both the government and the NPRC to engage honestly and genuinely with the past. In terms of Zimbabwe's future, there are grounds for both optimism and caution. The NPRC, which represents an original concept born out of a compromise between various political parties and which demonstrates the first attempt post-1980 to engage the past honestly and truthfully, raises much optimism and has a critical role to play and a significant contribution to make to the peace process. At the same time, however, the NPRC is the manifestation of a fundamentally flawed approach that must be addressed.

THE CREATION OF UNITY AND NATIONAL COHESION MUST FIRST EMBRACE AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRUTH ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED, RATHER THAN DENY IT

The creation of unity and national cohesion must first embrace and acknowledge the truth about what happened, rather than deny it. Simply put, the NPRC must work with existing reality rather than trying to create a new reality of its own. The NPRC must also be seen to be independent in carrying out its activities rather than to be seen as pursuing an ulterior motive, which is likely to jeopardise the peace process in Zimbabwe. The NPRC has already started on a bad footing, with two of its public meetings in Bulawayo and Lupane disrupted by activists who felt the Commission was trying to shield "powerful" people from taking responsibility for the Gukurahundi atrocities committed in the aftermath of political independence. This is one of the challenges the NPRC might want to look into in the future. Similar

PAUL CADENHEAD/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The National Peace and Reconciliation Commission represents the first major attempt by Zimbabweans to confront their painful past and build a more prosperous future for all citizens.

disturbances occurred in Harare at a Southern African Political Economy Series (SAPES) policy discussion, aimed at creating dialogue on national healing and reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Perhaps an even bigger challenge for the NPRC and its overall objective of healing and reconciliation lies in Section 10 of the NPRC Act. In what is seen by many as a huge drawback, the Act empowers the Minister of National Security to block an investigation by issuing a certificate blocking disclosure of evidence and documentation that they may deem to be prejudicial to the defence, external relations, internal security or economic interests of the state. Such a provision undermines the work of the NPRC and its quest to achieve unity and national cohesion.

Conclusion

The NPRC marks the first and important positive step by the people of Zimbabwe to non-violently and peacefully confront a painful past of violence, socio-economic hopelessness, forced disappearances and gruesome murders. It is a constitutional mandate that the NPRC will have to handle with great agility and must demonstrate great skill in balancing and moderating different demands and expectations from the populace on one hand and the government on the other, to whom the Commission is accountable. The possibility of successful reconciliation, national healing and integration in Zimbabwe hinges on identifying those cultural elements that make us all human – for example, *ubuntu/hunhu*: "I am because you are" – loosely translated as "a person is a person through other persons". Once these elements have been identified, they can be used to aid the process of healing and reconciliation. In other words, any attempts at reconciliation and healing that fall outside the purview of conflict resolution rooted in Zimbabweans' rich cultural heritage are likely to fail. The values and philosophical concept of *ubuntu/hunhu* recognises and affirms the people of Zimbabwe's common and shared existence, which creates an atmosphere conducive to honestly and truthfully engaging the country's dark past with a view to promoting national unity and cohesion. Some of the fundamental values of *ubuntu/hunhu* are espoused in part of a reconciliatory speech that former president Mugabe gave on the eve of independence in 1980, according to De Waal:[12]

> You and I must strive to adapt ourselves, intellectually and spiritually to the reality of our political change and relate to each other as brothers bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship. If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and ally with the same national interest, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, that in these circumstances anybody should seek to revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven but must not be forgotten. If ever we look to the past, let us do so for the lesson the past has taught us, namely that oppression and racism are inequalities that must never find scope in our political and social system.

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THE AFRICAN MILITARY IN A DEMOCRATIC AGE

BY **CRAIG BAILIE**

DANIEL STEPHEN HOMER/SOPA IMAGES/LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

At the end of the Cold War, Huntington described the expansion and contraction of democracy through history and across the world in terms of "waves". Referring to what he called "democracy's third wave" (argued to have begun in the mid-1970s), he asked whether the world was "[e]arly in a long wave, or at or near the end of a short one".[1] He could only speculate, however, as to the answer to his question.

Although Huntington's analysis of democratisation is not without criticism, it remains true that at the time of his writing, a significant number of countries in the world lacked democratic regimes – that is, political systems involving competition, inclusiveness and civil liberties.[2] Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, "remained personal dictatorships, military regimes, one-party systems, or some combination of these three."[3] In Africa, the opportunity and need for democratisation was therefore significant.

The Notion of a Democratic Age

With hindsight, we know that the so-called "defeat" of communism and the subsequent end of the Cold War ushered in what Diamond describes as "an unprecedented democratic breakthrough"[4] and Doorenspleet an "explosion of democratization".[5] Africa, in particular, experienced an increase in democracies – from three in 1990 to 24 in 2008.[6]

Consequentially, Zakaria begins his book, *The Future of Freedom: Illiberal Democracy at Home and Abroad*, with the following words: "We live in a democratic age."[7] Zakaria explains his opening statement by arguing, among other

Above: The democratic journey in Africa, often hindered and challenged by various factors, has been far from smooth.

UN PHOTO/NEKTARIOS MARKOGIANNIS

Democratic values include free and fair elections amongst other values.

things, that democracy "has become the standard form of government for humankind" and "is the sole surviving source of political legitimacy".[8]

Democratisation in Africa

Democracy's journey in Africa, often hindered and challenged by various factors, has been far from smooth, however. Today, the process of democratisation across the continent is incomplete, having come to a halt in some countries and having regressed in others.[9] Houngnikpo describes democracy's journey on most of the continent as being "treacherous".[10] Such a description offers a very different picture of democratisation in Africa when compared to Huntington's "wave" metaphor[11] and Doorenspleet's reference to "steps".[12]

Over time, democratic values have come to include human dignity; free and fair elections; the rule of law; equality before the law; and human rights and freedoms, including freedom of the press, freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of association. In predicting possible scenarios for the future of democracy's third wave, Huntington observed that "the weakness of democratic values among key elite groups and the general public" was the most prominent factor responsible for transitions away from democracy to authoritarianism in the years 1922–1942 and 1960–1975 – what he labelled as the first and second reverse waves of democracy.[13] Further to this, it was the "[o]ne serious impediment to democratization… among political leaders in Asia, Africa and the Middle East".[14] Scholarly work suggests – albeit with greater emphasis on the elite – that Huntington's predictions based on the first and second reverse waves of democracy are accurate for Africa in contemporary times.

Falana argues: "To move Africa forward, emerging democratic governments would have to confront a legacy of poverty, illiteracy, militarization, and underdevelopment produced by incompetent and corrupt governments."[15] Reflecting indirectly on elite leadership, a 2014 AfroBarometer news release found that "Africans' support for democracy is robust and rising (7 in 10 Africans prefer democracy to other political regimes) but the supply of democracy has not kept pace with demand".[16] In 2015, Freedom House listed "5 governance challenges for Africa", all of which have negative implications for democracy.[17] These included the dismal state of press freedom, the proliferation of restrictive laws, entrenched leaders and the abuse of term limits, weak regional human rights mechanisms, and the absence of economic competitiveness.

IN THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE HURDLES FACING DEMOCRATISATION IN AFRICA, SEVERAL SCHOLARS GIVE ATTENTION TO THE PHENOMENON OF MILITARY INTRUSION IN AFRICAN POLITICS

Although the factors inhibiting democratic values are varied, they remain connected and invariably underscore poor leadership, particularly on the part of Africa's political and military elite.

Military Intrusion in Politics

Huntington's observation regarding the weakness of democratic values – whether it be among key elite groups, the general public, or both – is relevant to Africa's civil-military relations. This is because, by definition, these relations involve interactions between the key elites within the military, those running the state (that is, government) and the general public.

In his study of democracy's reverse waves, "[t]he overwhelming transitions from democracy... took the form either of military coups that ousted democratically elected leaders, or executive coups in which democratically chosen chief executives effectively ended democracy by concentrating power in their own hands."[18] The latter could not have occurred without the backing of the military or the support of other elements of the security sector more broadly.

Mangu states: African armies pose the greatest threat to constitutionalism and democracy on the continent... The failure of constitutionalism and democracy in postcolonial Africa was primarily due to the intervention of the military on the political scene. Africa abounds with examples where the military has usurped power, suspended the constitution in whole or in part, or terminated transition processes that seemed to be succeeding.[19]

If Africa's development and democratic challenges are primarily attributable to leadership issues, as Ngambi and other scholars argue,[20] then the role played by the military cannot be excluded from an analysis of Africa's development and democratisation. In their assessment of the hurdles facing democratisation in Africa, several scholars give attention to the phenomenon of military intrusion in African politics.

The Military *Coup d'État* in Africa

In democratic terms, the most explicit form of military intrusion in politics is the military *coup d'état* – the military execution of a "sudden and unconstitutional change of government or regime".[21] The African Development Bank

REUTERS/THOMAS MUKOYA

A Kenyan journalist participates in a protest for press freedom, in Nairobi (December 2013).

REUTERS/ARNAUD BRUNET

Military intrusion in African politics, usually in a coup, is one of the hurdles facing democratisation in Africa.

(AfDB) recorded more than 200 military coups in Africa since the post-independence era of the 1960s, with 45% of these being successful.[22]

Why are military coups undesirable, and why have they occurred with such comparatively high frequency in Africa? In answering the first question, it is important to understand that, broadly, a military coup can occur in a democratic or an undemocratic state. The extent of freedom experienced by citizens underscores the fundamental differences between these two forms.

In a democratic state, military intrusion in politics inhibits democracy because "intrusion" involves moving beyond constitutionally and democratically mandated roles and goes against the authority vested in democratically elected civilians. When the military intrudes in the politics of a democracy, it intrudes upon the sovereignty of the people who elected representatives to government. The occurrence of a coup in a democracy therefore points to the failure of democratisation.

African militaries, in particular, because of their historically negative impact on development and influence over democratisation, therefore have an important role to play in relation to democratisation. They must know, understand and accept their role in relation to the political sphere. This will lead to what civil-military relations scholars refer to as "democratic control" of the military. Without the military's acceptance of the principles of democratic control, democracy cannot exist. The most important among these include accountability before civil authorities; adherence to the rule of law; transparent planning and budgeting processes; respect for human rights; submission before political control over operations and expenditure; regular consultation with civil society; and military professionalism.[23]

WITHOUT THE MILITARY'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC CONTROL, DEMOCRACY CANNOT EXIST

The notions of "military intrusion in politics" and "democratic control" should not detract, however, from the fact that the military is a tool and therefore an extension of politics. This means that the military does have a political role to play, more especially in the context of a country's foreign policy. A military under democratic control is well aware of what this role is and abides by it.

What about coups in undemocratic states? This question is especially important because "the vast majority of coups do not happen in democracies".[24] The record of military rule in Africa discourages preference for a military government over a civilian regime that is authoritarian. In the post-Cold War era, the latter often masquerade as democracies.

Even so, Africa's record of military-led governments is uninspiring. McGowan writes:

> Military rule is by definition authoritarian and is often very corrupt... and the historical record shows that military rulers "govern" no better than elected civilians in Africa, often much worse – witness Babangida, Idi Amin, Jean-Bedel Bokassa and Sani Abacha. Because African militaries in power often fail to create political order, they are part of the problem, not its answer.[25]

A further reason why military rule should never be preferable to authoritarian civilian rule is the greater difficulty that comes with moving away from the former, as opposed to the latter, and dealing with the ill-effects of military rule. For a number of reasons, outlined by Hutchful,[26] civilian authoritarianism offers greater prospects for democratic transition.[27] First, military rule, at its end, raises the problem of bringing the military under democratic control. Related to this, there exists the challenge of preventing the re-entry into politics by the military. Second, military rule in Africa has had a negative impact on military institutions, professionalism and efficiency. This adds to the challenge civilians face in bringing the military under democratic control. Third, the struggle against military authoritarianism, because it inevitably involves shifting power dynamics, has often led not to democracy but to new forms of militarism and militarisation.

What then of the notion of "good" or "democratising coups", interpreted as "a development that furthers democracy"?[28] Marinov and Goemans conclude that "the new generation of [post-Cold War] coups have been far less harmful for democracy than their historical predecessors", with the majority having "led to competitive elections, not a consolidated military regime".[29] In support of the "good coup", Thyne and Powell argue that "coups in authoritarian regimes can provide a necessary 'shock' to push authoritarian states towards democracy".[30] They write:

> Though history is unfortunately replete with examples of coup leaders who chose to consolidate their power and continue authoritarianism following a successful coup, many others have chosen to enact meaningful reforms toward democratization – reforms that would have been wholly unlikely in the absence of a successful coup.[31]

The same authors offer only three examples of "good coups", one of these from Africa – the coup in Mali in 1991. More recently, in November 2017, Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe relinquished his 37-year hold on power. Zimbabweans who suffered under his authoritarian rule

ISSOUF SANOGO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The front page of a newspaper in Bamako shows the leaders of the 2012 military coup who ousted Mali's government.

BELAL KHALED/NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

People in Zimbabwe celebrate that Robert Mugabe was forced to relinquish power.

and who understood the events in the days preceding his resignation as constituting a coup will likely have welcomed the development, describing it as a "good coup". Evidence makes a strong case, however, for the argument that the military elite ushered Mugabe out because it was in their interest to do so. This was the same military that had propped up the same undemocratic regime. The military officers who oversaw the coup handed control over to a civilian who met with their approval. This retained their access to revenue, while avoiding the political baggage that would have accompanied their hanging onto power indefinitely. This civilian was Emmerson Mnangagwa, the new leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) and Zimbabwe's new president. Mnangagwa was a close ally of Mugabe and enjoys the support of the military. This may not inspire hope for Zimbabwe's democratisation. He has, however, pledged to hold credible elections in July 2018.[32] Time will judge the validity of this pledge and whether Zimbabwe's coup was, in fact, a "shock" to democracy.

Even if in the aftermath of a "good coup", and if the military steps aside and allows democratisation to run its course, there is no guarantee that it will not intervene again in future, this time to the detriment of democratic development. Mali is a case in point. Thyne and Powell present this country's 1991 coup as an example of a "good coup". In 2012, the country witnessed another coup, described as "a severe setback for democracy in Africa".[33] The country remains in turmoil after this latest coup left a power vacuum exploited by Islamic insurgents.[34]

To avoid such a scenario, the same military that created an opportunity for democracy to grow in the midst of authoritarianism must allow the civilian government and civil society to bring it under democratic control – a process that will require security sector reform, the concomitant professionalisation of the military and opportunities for education on civil-military relations across society at large.

To answer the second question, related to the high frequency of military coups in Africa, one must first understand the conventional purpose of the military, the function of African militaries during colonialism, and the generally weak nature of African states. African militaries have executed and attempted coups at regular intervals because they can. The military exists to defend the state and its inhabitants against external aggression. To fulfil its task, the military is equipped with the necessary means to do so. Paradoxically – and this has often proven to be the case in Africa – the means given to the military can also be used to threaten the state and its inhabitants.

"During the colonial era the military was expected to project the dominance of the colonial powers."[35] Inevitably, this involved the use of the military as a tool of "domestic politics" in each of the colonial territories. The colonial experiment therefore instilled a military culture of intrusion in politics that is antithetical to the civil-military norms of a democratic age.

Given the extractive nature of colonialism, the physical departure of Africa's colonisers left Africa's independence leaders in charge of weak and ill-equipped states – a condition that has persisted into contemporary times, although not to the same degree. Throughout post-independence Africa, when leaders, for different reasons, have failed to fulfil expectations surrounding modernisation and development, the military – due to its inherent design and the culture established during colonialism – has often felt it necessary and justified to intervene. Lieutenant Amadou Konaré of the Malian Army had, in fact, cited the government's failure to equip troops to defend the nation against northern rebels as a reason for the 2012 coup.[36]

A Persistent Phenomenon?

Military coups are likely to remain a feature of the Africa political landscape, even if at a reduced rate. Writing in 2015, Ntomba suggested that military coups in Africa are slowly going out of fashion.[37] He offered several reasons in support of such a development, each of which receives a response below:

- ***The speed with which regional and continental bodies sanction countries that have undergone coups***
  Writing in 1993, with reference to the high frequency of military coups during Africa's post-independence period, Clapham observed, "It is this profoundly undemocratic inheritance that many Africans have recently sought to change."[38] The perceived intent that Clapham noted characterised the 33rd summit of the Organisation of African Unity[39] (OAU) in 1997 and finds reflection in, among others, francophone Africa's Bamako Declaration (2000),[40] Article 30 of the Constitutive Act of the African Union (AU) (2000)[41] and Chapter 8 of the AU's *African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance* (2007).[42]

  Despite these good intentions, however, research conducted by the AfDB reveals that 67 military coups (attempted and successful) occurred over the period 1990–2010.[43] Military coups that followed this period include the 2012 coup in Mali, attempted coups in Burundi and Burkina Faso – both in 2015 – and the most recent coup in Zimbabwe.

  Given the continued occurrence of military coups, the impact of rhetoric and policy positions in dissuading this form of military intervention is highly questionable. The reason for this will rest to some degree, if not largely, with the AU's failure to apply its constitutive principles of good governance and human rights in a consistent manner.[44] This has ultimately led to a problem of credibility for the organisation.[45]

  The Central African Republic (CAR) coup of 2013, for example, led to immediate suspension of the country from the AU and the AU placing the coup leaders under sanction. The president, François Bozizé – who had been overthrown – had, however, initially come to power through a coup in 2003 against his predecessor, Ange-Félix Patassé.[46] While the AU condemned the coup in this earlier instance,[47] it took no action against the coup leader, nor was the CAR suspended from the organisation. Once a country has undergone a coup, it very often experiences more.[48] Since the AU showed tacit support for Zimbabwe's first and recent coup, one cannot help but wonder whether the same inconsistency that has characterised relations between the AU and other African states also awaits the future of Zimbabwe. The failure of the AU to apply its constitutive principles of good governance and human rights consistently, contrasts with Ntomba's perception of the speed with which the necessary bodies have acted against military coups.
- ***Consensus that democracy should be the only means of ascending to power***
  The claim that consensus exists that democracy should be the only means of ascending to power is debatable. The figures for military coups, noted previously, speak for themselves. Houngnikpo's contention that "democracy's appeal has yet to attract African leaders in general and military ones in particular"[49] suggests a different picture of Africa's contemporary reality to the one presented by Ntomba. It also suggests that a primary reason for democratic reversals during the 20th century persists today: "[T]he weakness of democratic values among key elite groups and the general public."[50] While research conducted by AfroBarometer[51] reveals that African citizens are generally in support of democracy, the same is not true of the continent's political and military leaders. As long as this remains so, the claim that military coups are going out of fashion is a premature one, at best.
- ***The increasing opportunity to engage in politics through elections and the consequential decline in support of coups***
  An overemphasis on elections (democratic procedures) in assessing the development and spread of democracy across Africa risks neglecting an assessment of the very important principles and values without which no government can claim to be democratic. Citing Joseph (1999), Houngnikpo has the following to say about elections in Africa:

  > Clearly, Africa has made advances in the apparent competitiveness of elections with the renewed participation of opposition parties. However, only in a few instances do elections represent real opportunities for the population to determine who governs. In Joseph's words, "there was a sharp learning curve after 1989 as authoritarian regimes mastered the script of contemporary democratization while finding ways to

> neutralize and disable its transformative mechanisms." They quickly learned to manipulate the electoral process and divide the opposition, creating what Joseph calls "soft authoritarianism".[52]

Recent elections in Africa suggest a continuation of the approach described above:

> Using violence as but one indicator of electoral quality or integrity, elections in sub Saharan Africa have not demonstrated much improvement since the 1990s… Of the 100 elections held between 1990 and 1999, 24 percent experienced either violent repression or large-scale violence. From 2010 through 2013, approximately 21.5 percent of the 51 elections held have experienced similar levels of electoral violence.[53]

Elections, on their own, have failed to meet the proven demand for democracy in Africa. This will remain so even in the face of credible elections, as long as citizens place too much emphasis on the procedural aspects of democracy to the detriment of the values that ultimately make for a democratic political culture. One should by no means interpret this as a reason for scrapping elections. It does mean, however, that as despondency over elections and lack of the desired progress increases, the potential for turning towards and supporting more forceful means of change might increase with it.

Historically, military coups have been a source of hope for Africans who have suffered under corrupt and repressive civilian-led regimes. In 1971, seizure of the Ugandan government by Major-General Idi Amin Dada and news of Milton Obote's deposition "brought Kampala people cheering into the streets, strewing green branches before army vehicles, cheering, drinking and dancing with troops".[54] In the aftermath of the CAR's coup of 2003, residents in the capital city of Bangui "initially greeted the insurgents with delighted dancing". Similarly and more recently, residents of Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare, welcomed the news of Mugabe's resignation following military intervention "with hooting of car horns and wild cheering".[55] If oppression and economic hardship in Africa become severe enough for reasons not directly related to the military, this institution may once again become the false hope of the people in the midst of corrupt and incompetent civilian politicians.

- ***The zealous resentment of external interference by foreign states that would otherwise exploit the opportunity to sponsor surrogates to seize power for their benefit; related to this, Ntomba argues that the Western world, in particular, would want to avoid being seen as undermining its own gospel of democracy***

  One should take care to overgeneralise resentment in Africa towards external interference and remember that Africa is not a homogenous entity. Instead, it consists of a range of political actors, many of which have different and/or competing political interests. In this regard, the use of rhetoric against foreign interference by political leaders, as a ploy for political scapegoating or in creating political smoke screens, is worth consideration. As for Ntomba's specific reference to Western countries, one should not underestimate their propensity to prioritise their own security and socio-economic interests ahead of democratisation.[56] France is one example of a Western nation that serves as the primary trading partner of countries where coups have taken place. Also, although France "suspended" cooperation with Mali following the 2012 coup, it continued giving food aid and maintained joints efforts with Mali to combat terrorism.[57] In 2015, the US was reluctant to label military intrusion in the politics of Burundi as a coup. This was because of its dependence on and subsequent strong relationship with Burundi's military in the context of peacekeeping and security efforts.[58]

Africa's legacy of military involvement in politics will ensure that the military continues to play a role in the ongoing processes of political transition for some time to come.[59] Clark notes, for example, how "the postcolonial experience of military intervention and rule in many African states has created a culture in which military officers may still feel that interventions are legitimate".[60]

However, in countries moving towards democracy, this role need not involve intrusion – and by implication, an infringement of democracy. Whether the role of the military in Africa going into the future is good or bad for democracy will depend on the political context of the country concerned and, more specifically, the extent to which the principles of democratic civil-military relations have been institutionalised in the interactions between the government, the military and the public.

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HARNESSING GENDER TRANSFORM-ATIVE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN HUMANITARIAN CRISES: A FIELD NOTE FROM NORTH-EAST NIGERIA

BY **ANUSANTHEE PILLAY**

CREATIVE COMMONS

Above: Boko Haram is responsible for much of the violence and conflict in north-east Nigeria, since it emerged in 2005.

Introduction and Background

Originally protesting the corruption and inequality produced by state structures and calling for a return to a "purer", more Islamic way of life, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Lida'awati Wal Jihad (JAS, translated as "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad") – commonly known as Boko Haram – emerged in north-east Nigeria in 2005. Over time, the protest morphed into declaring control over territory, setting off bombs including through "suicide" bombers, forced recruitment, kidnapping and violence against women and girls, including sexual violence and forced marriage.[1] As with all asymmetrical[2] conflicts, those profoundly affected are the civilians. This conflict has

affected over 14 million people, with an estimated 20 000 killed, about 2 million displaced and over 200 000 having fled to neighbouring states and countries.[3] Borno State has been the epicentre of the conflict, with the neighbouring states of Adamawa and Yobe severely affected. These three states host 92% of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with females accounting for 52% of the IDP population. While 10.2 million people are estimated to be in need, there are varying levels of vulnerability within the affected communities, which are frequently defined by age and sex.[4] Vulnerability assessments show that female-headed households, for example, are at higher risk of sexual and physical violence, and are also more likely to experience rape, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation – engaging in survival sex with humanitarian aid workers, security forces and community members who have access to food, shelter or non-food items. This is compounded by the fact that the social fabric – including supporting mechanisms and institutions – has collapsed and is unable to provide protection to the most vulnerable, such as the elderly, women and children. In addition, abductions, particularly of women and girls, have become a trend. While many girls are ultimately returned, they face stigma and discrimination when they try to reintegrate themselves and any children born as a consequence into their communities. This leaves them severely traumatised and isolated, which has led to further negative outcomes – even, in some cases, to the extent of rejoining their abductors.

Humanitarian assistance from the government, the international humanitarian community in the form of the United Nations (UN), international non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) has become crucial to saving lives, meeting basic needs and protecting the human rights of IDPs, including host communities with already limited resources. However, much scope exists to expand the gender-responsiveness and inclusiveness of the current humanitarian response efforts by all these actors to effectively address disparities in the needs and vulnerabilities of all women, girls, men and boys. As a gender equality specialist for humanitarian affairs on standby[5] to support humanitarian crisis response efforts, I was brought in for six months to address this gap. Based in the north-east at the epicentre of the crisis in Nigeria and hosted by the UN, my work is to support the actors in the humanitarian response to collect

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Women wait outside a barricade for food rations at an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri, north-east Nigeria (June 2017).

information and analyse it according to the distinct needs of the women, girls, boys and men of all ages who are affected by the crisis. This is to ensure that the affected communities can access and benefit from assistance and support that caters to their different needs and experiences, with particular focus on highlighting the needs and experiences of women and girls.

While the conflict situation seems to have had severe negative impacts on the lives of women and girls, it is important to note that in the north-east of Nigeria they have been subjected to patriarchal oppression and gender-based violence for eons before the current conflict situation. Historically, while colonialism brought many changes, it did little to challenge patriarchal structures in the north, and independence altered even less. In fact, contrary to the southern states, Borno and 11 other northern states enacted a more restrictive version of Sharia law[6] in 2003 and further reinforced the patriarchal norm of male superiority to women. Women's freedoms and rights were further limited, and they do not usually own land or their homes. Polygamous marriages were also recognised in the laws of the 12 northern states, as opposed to federal law, which does not recognise such unions.[7]

It is also important to acknowledge that like women all over the world, women in north-east Nigeria do have agency and many are breadwinners and providers, marketeers in the marketplace or from their homes, and also engage in farming. Some work in offices, in the government, in the police force and even in the army. However, their status in society is still defined by marriage and child-bearing. Even today, the guard company servicing the humanitarian system in the north-east has an unwritten rule that married women cannot be employed as guards, and any woman employed as a guard must resign if she gets married. The expectations and roles of women and girls in north-east Nigerian society have thus been at the centre of debates by the male-dominated political and religious elites and civil society, including women activists, long before the conflict began. This tension provided an opportunity for the insurgent movement to attract followers by using women and girls as the standard of moral behaviour. So, while the current conflict situation in the north-east may have begun over disputes between the north-eastern states and the federal government that escalated into territorial conflict, the battle is being waged through the bodies of women and girls. Boko Haram invokes religious authority to back up its claims that the behaviour of women and girls is central to the re-enforcement of moral behaviour and calls for tighter restrictions on all females, while offering religious education and financial empowerment to women to win them over to its way of thinking.[8]

Thus, the patriarchal ideology of oppression and subordination of women and girls that existed before the conflict has been a major factor in the attention paid to women and girls within this crisis situation, and in the battle between Islam and "the West" to gain traction in north-east Nigerian society. This ideology is fuelling the insurgency, and humanitarians working on the response cannot ignore the high levels of different forms of violence against women and

girls within this crisis. However, they must fully understand the historical conditions that have shaped the lives of women and girls and have rendered them more vulnerable to abuse and attacks from the insurgents, while also noting that insurgency and counterinsurgency have dramatically changed the lives of thousands of women and girls. The disruption of society and the demands of the insurgency have cast women and girls into new roles outside of the domestic sphere – for example, as fighters and supporters of the conflict. In addition, with the loss of their husbands to the conflict, many more find themselves with new responsibilities as sole breadwinners and decision-makers for the remaining family.

Out of the nearly two million people displaced internally in the north-east, more than half are women and girls. Maiduguri alone hosts over 250 000 of these IDPs.[9] Although it has never been captured, it is repeatedly attacked, which further displaces those already displaced. The ongoing displacement throughout the north-east is driven by the indiscriminate killing and maiming of civilians and destruction of towns, villages and livelihoods by the insurgents and military alike. Further complications arise from the fact that the lines between victims and perpetrators are completely blurred. Women and children left behind are the siblings, wives and mothers of the forcibly or voluntarily recruited male insurgents, and the security forces are hard-pressed to know what to do with the thousands of survivors who are linked to the insurgents through these relationships. Combined, these factors have created a harsh humanitarian crisis, featuring massive food shortages, serious health issues, sexual and gender-based violence including kidnappings, the use of women as fighters and suicide bombers, and women and girls engaging in transactional sex with camp and security officials in exchange for goods or favours. This situation has become so acute that it is creating early and forced marriages of young girls as a negative protective mechanism. It is also apparent that this crisis has generated serious long-term risks for the positive recovery of north-east Nigeria.[10]

THE DISRUPTION OF SOCIETY AND THE DEMANDS OF THE INSURGENCY HAVE CAST WOMEN AND GIRLS INTO NEW ROLES OUTSIDE OF THE DOMESTIC SPHERE – FOR EXAMPLE, AS FIGHTERS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE CONFLICT

Addressing Gender Issues in a Humanitarian Response to the Crisis

Since the Beijing Conference in 1995, the integration of the feminist political aim to liberate women from patriarchal oppression has been through the mechanism of gender mainstreaming. The political aims of gender mainstreaming are to make women visible and remove the blindness of

USAID

A significant proportion of displaced people in north-east Nigeria are women and girls.

programming that manifests as an invisibility of the distinct needs, vulnerabilities, voices and presence of women and girls. Women's repression in the private sphere also remains unseen and unaddressed. In the humanitarian sector, the purpose of gender mainstreaming is seen to be integral to bring about gender-sensitive responses and to address gender-based violence in crisis situations. This is done through gender analyses of needs, adaptation of activities taking gendered dimensions into account, and encouraging the participation of women and girls at all levels of humanitarian response programmes.[11]

My experience, over years of working in the humanitarian sector on gender analysis and gender mainstreaming, has demonstrated that even with all good intentions, we consistently fail to adequately address the real issues that underlie gender inequalities and are challenged to make the work sustainable and transformative in the long term. To bring gender dynamics and issues to the fore in the largely male-dominated humanitarian sphere, the feminist political project on gender equality was made palatable to the mainstream and delinked from patriarchal power relations. Feminists, including myself, have written copiously about how this delinking from patriarchal power in the humanitarian world

ALIYU MARIAM

Some of the displaced women that Mariam talked to about their experiences and lives in camp.

translates into providing immediate relief in the situation and addressing differences based on gender, by ensuring that all those affected by the crisis are treated equally and fairly. We are often unable to unearth and address the underlying issues that created the inequality in the first place, or the power politics of why such inequality exists – that is, the ideology of male superiority and female inferiority. Thus, women and girls as equal human beings remain obscured and are largely regarded as victims,[12] and patriarchal power relations that subjugate and subordinate women and girls remain intact. In addition, since humanitarians claim an immediate priority to save lives before any analysis is done on the status of men and women in crisis situations, it is difficult even to persuade them that there are differences in the impact and experiences of women, men, girls and boys – or that there are underlying factors that create deep-seated inequality and abuse, which could be transformed through the actions we take to address the crisis. There are multiple transformative opportunities in gender mainstreaming actions, but without understanding and implementing them, the humanitarian community talks at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, which came up with the "New Way of Working",[13] focusing on resilience and engaging communities through localisation, is in danger of remaining just that – talk!

Without transforming gender power relations, the factors mentioned in the New Way of Working – resilience, participation and empowerment – cannot be achieved in any real sense. Mercy Corp's 2014 study on resilience found that gender integration is a critical component in resilience programming – but, more importantly, it is "impossible to build resilience in households and communities without also addressing systemic gender inequality".[14] The key word is "systemic", meaning that the humanitarian sector needs to go far beyond providing relief based on gender differences. They must dig deeper into the underlying root causes of the inequalities they encounter, and address these effectively. While patriarchal power is alive and well, women and girls will continue to be at the margins, being even more severely violated. At present, we are faced with further challenges by current campaigns from men's groups to include the violations of men and boys under the concept of gender-based violence. This is another challenge, which cannot be discussed in this article – but suffice to say that it further obscures the impact of patriarchal norms on women and girls and makes the hope that gender mainstreaming and gender analysis will work as key policy tools for transformative change for women and girls as elusive as ever.[15]

Conversations with Mariam[16]

I met Mariam at a meeting I had called of all actors in the north-east and based in Maiduguri who were working on gender-related issues. I was struck by her tireless work to help women in need of assistance wherever and whenever she finds them. She asked for my help with a young woman who had acid poured on her face and body and who was in a dire state at the hospital. She had been gang-raped by her ex-boyfriend and his friends, because her family had refused his marriage proposal. Mariam garnered support for this woman and went to the hospital every day to check on her. This is how I came to know what Mariam does. She told me that she is an orphan and that she lives off the inheritance left to her and her younger sibling by their mother. She graduated

from university as a radiographer but has not yet worked in that field. She started a small business to get an income and is using the proceeds to finance a local group working with IDP women. The idea is to offer skills training and food assistance so that women and their children can break out of the debilitating cycles of helplessness they find themselves in as IDPs. I was intrigued, and asked her: "Why are you doing this, Mariam? You could have left and made a life for yourself and your brother in a bigger city, or even outside Nigeria. Why did you stay here to help these women?"

Mariam related her story as follows.

My father died when I was five years old, and we lost everything. My mother, who had just given birth to a set of twin boys, was beaten by the family, called a witch who had killed her husband, and we were pushed out of the community. One of the twins died due to malnutrition and my mother took a cleaning job to support us. She wanted to protect us and accepted a marriage proposal from a wealthy man.

For a while, all was well and my mother finished school and got a better job. Then my stepfather started coming into my room when I was 17 years old, and my brother and I would fight him off. My mother did not believe us until she caught him peering through the door at me while I was taking a bath. When she confronted him, he beat her and me. I was unconscious for four days. We had to leave without getting any support from anyone, nor any justice for the abuse. We lived in a makeshift home for two years. I was 19 years old when my mother died from an infection she got from my stepfather. We were thrown into abject poverty and I took a job as a housemaid to feed myself and my brother, who was 14 at the time. After a while, the man of the house started harassing me sexually and when I refused, he complained to his wife that I was trying to seduce him. She beat me mercilessly, scars of which I still bear today, and we were thrown out and went back to the makeshift house. I started doing any job I could find, plaiting hair… anything that would keep us from starvation. Life became such a struggle that one day, out of utter desperation, my brother and I decided that we should just end it all and commit suicide. Just before we could do that, a lawyer got in contact with me, and said that he had been looking for us for months to tell us that our mother had left quite a lot of money for us. Our lives changed dramatically, and we went back to school.

At the same time, the crisis hit the north-east, and I started hearing stories of how women were being targeted. I wanted to help. I really felt their pain and wanted to give what I could to make a difference to whoever I could. I started a small business and used the profits from that to finance an organisation that would help women get back on their feet after being forced out of their homes by the conflict. I could not bear to see them suffering in the same way we had suffered.

REUTERS/AFOLABI SOTUNDE

As long as patriarchal power remains a factor, women and girls will continue to be at the margins.

REUTERS/AFOLABI SOTUNDE

Women have demonstrated their capacity to do more than just be passive recipients of aid.

Mariam went on to tell me about a small group of IDP women she works with. This group did not receive much attention, so she went to talk to them. She talked to a group of 20 women and asked them how they came to be internally displaced, how their lives were now in the camps and what their hopes were for the future. Most of the women said their husbands had been murdered by the insurgents, and at least half of them had witnessed the murders. Many of them had lost their children to the insurgents' forced conscription. Those whose husbands were still with them said they were experiencing high levels of domestic violence. The majority of the women said they did not have a voice in the camp and were not participating in any peacebuilding activities. They had little, if any, sources of livelihood and felt hopeless, with suicidal thoughts. Their frustration was that although they were receiving humanitarian aid, they were traumatised with what they were going through and with what they had seen. They were also not included in planning or decision-making about issues that affected their lives. They did not see a positive way forward for themselves or their children. They felt that with a little assistance, they could do so much more and could form support groups and participate in rebuilding their lives.

The following are two stories from this group that Mariam translated from the local language and shared with me.

Falmata's Story

Falmata is 33 years old and has six children. This is what she revealed.

> Four years ago, Boko Haram came to our local government area (LGA), Damboa. They were killing and kidnapping, but it had not gotten to our ward at that time – not until five days later, when they stormed our house and killed my husband. We were able to sneak away at night by playing dead. They burnt our house and rendered me and my children homeless. We trekked for days before we were able to get to Maiduguri, and we have been staying at this camp since then.
>
> All the years I have been staying at the camp, I have been catered for by humanitarians, I feel safe. I have been fed and sheltered, and they also created a health facility for us to be able to treat and examine ourselves. There are schools, too, but nothing can take away the pain I feel every day. The camp might be safe, but it is not a suitable place to raise a child. There are a lot of vices happening around the camp. I am scared my children won't have a proper upbringing if we continue to stay here in the camps. We have minimal access to information, and women are usually restricted from gaining access to the peace process or any conflict resolution. The only way we could get information would be if my husband was part of the decision-makers or he was there when the decision was being made, then he could tell me. Another way is maybe a friend's husband is present, and then the information is passed down till I am able to get it, or maybe through rumours.
>
> I can say for a fact that where peace topics are discussed or issues relating to the well-being of society, women are not allowed in such places. The people allowed are the heads of the state or the community leaders; in fact if a woman is seen present, they are tagged (labelled) as prostitutes, and this could cause a permanent mark on her name and might even hinder her from getting married in the local area.
>
> My hope and wish is for peace to return to my country. I want to be able to sit amidst people and talk without being scared of bomb explosions. I wish and hope for my children to have a better life than I did.

I also want to get a job so as to be able to provide for my children and myself. We plead for the government and heads of local government to help us get a source of livelihood. We want to get a source of livelihood, so we can stop depending on people for help and assistance.

I really don't know what the future holds, but I keep praying for things to get better.

I can also contribute to peacebuilding at the camp level, if there is a group formed by fellow women where we all can sit and share our stories, and we advise each other on the hazards of violence.

Asabe's Story

Asabe is 20 years old with three children. This is what she related.

One morning, we started hearing sounds of gunshots and bomb blasts. I came outside and saw many people coming towards my house with guns and shouting. They were shooting at men and forcing the women to get into a van. It took me time to process what was happening, but as soon as I was able to understand that we were under attack, I ran into the compound and was calling on my family to come out and to look for a way to escape. But, the Boko Haram men were already at the doorstep and there was no way to run away. We were able to hide in the sewer pit with the children, but my husband wasn't so lucky; he was slaughtered and then they set our house on fire and left. I was able to escape with the children alongside many people. We all trekked for days before we got to Maiduguri, and then we were accepted by the government and given a place to stay in the camp. My children and I have been in the camp for four years now. When I got to the camp, I was given shelter and food, and my children were enrolled in a school here in the camp. I am very grateful. I also want to beg the government, as well as humanitarian aid, to teach us a skill, so as to be able to fend for ourselves and our families in the long run. I go out to beg so I can support my children.

I am not comfortable with begging but I have no choice; my children are my priority and I am determined to make sure I put food on their table. I am not at peace. I am depressed, but I have no choice but to be strong for my children. Staying here in the camp has not been easy at all. The environment is not conducive for me and my family. Over the radio, we do hear the government stressing on empowering women, but it's never done. During these discussions, issues of gender-based violence are never addressed. We are treated poorly and men are usually considered before us, even in the camps. I do not have any hope for my life being better, I just pray for my children to have a better life than me.

I also wish I could get a job, so as to enable me to cater for my children. I just wish for peace and the ability for women's voices to be heard. I wish we could be taken more seriously and treated with respect, both in and out of the camps. Women should be included in peace talks; we should be given the ability to help in conflict resolution. Small groups of women with an elected female leader from the camp should be set up to enable our voices to be heard. We want our voices as women to be heard, we want peace to reign and we also want the ability to be able to speak in public and contribute to conflict resolution with others. A major discussion still left out is the issue of gender inequality; we are being tagged [labelled] for competing with men, but all we want is the ability to help too, which we are deprived of.

The Opportunity within the Conflict

Listening to Mariam's story of how patriarchal power relations impacted on her young life, and from the stories told by the small group of women she works with, it is evident that protecting women in the immediate setting by, for example, putting locks on the latrines to keep them safe, is a far cry from what they need and want in such a situation. Through listening to the women's personal narratives, it is clear that the intense conflict in the north-east has created a humanitarian crisis. This crisis has resulted in huge loss of lives and disrupted education and livelihoods, while separating and destroying communities. Yet, we also realise that within this tragedy lie opportunities to transform gender norms and contribute to a transformation that goes beyond immediate relief and equal treatment. To effect lasting change requires a deliberative effort, where humanitarian practitioners understand the gender dimensions and undertake interventions that not only provide equal and equitable relief, but also work towards transforming the lived realities of women and girls[17].

Women can and do engage in non-violent conflict resolution in the north-east, and have demonstrated their capacity to do more than just be passive recipients of aid. There are many organisations and individuals such as Mariam, who have worked within the religious restrictions on women to improve their socio-economic status through training, education, health and humanitarian services, micro-enterprise and advocacy. Some have been active against domestic violence, female genital mutilation and child marriage. For example, the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative (WRAPA)[18] played a major part in the successful defence of Amina Lawal, who was condemned to death under Sharia law in 2003.

These women are conscious that while immediate protection and humanitarian issues need to be addressed, the overall condition of the daily reality of women's lives will not change without addressing the longer-term issue of transforming gender power relations. Such motivated women and women's organisations should be nurtured to participate fully in humanitarian decision-making and coordination

processes and systems. This will harness and advance the potential for transformation, inherent in the disruption of established gender norms, to find a way out of patriarchal, systemic inequalities and oppression.

Conclusion

Women and girls in north-east Nigeria continue to suffer appalling violence and abuse that add to the burdens of stifling patriarchy. Nigeria's recovery of insurgent-controlled territory has not necessarily alleviated women's suffering. In a deeply divided, traumatised society, the patriarchal system fuels new forms of violence, exclusion and coercion, particularly against those suspected of complicity with the insurgents.[19] The reality of women and girls' lives is that under a patriarchal system – be it within a conflict or in "peace" times – women and girls are consistently subjugated, oppressed and violated. Humanitarian assistance must do more than apolitical gender mainstreaming. It must take into consideration the historical context of gender discrimination rooted in law and cultural practice, and note how the insurgency has further affected women in various ways – from sexual abuse to lost economic opportunities. Development and reconstruction plans must be based on a gendered analysis of the conflict and pre-existing gender inequalities. Finally, women and girls need support not only to gain more control over their lives, but also to become actors and decision-makers in reconstructing the north-east. The tragedy of conflict and challenges of recovery and reconstruction are strong arguments for efforts to meet women's immediate needs, but also to harness their power as agents of change.

Anusanthee (Anu) Pillay writes in her personal capacity as an International Gender Specialist with experience from various humanitarian contexts of conflict and natural disasters, gained over the last 10 years around the world.

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6 *Sharia* in Arabic means "the way", and is more accurately understood as referring to wide-ranging moral and broad ethical principles drawn from the Quran and the practices and sayings (*hadith*) of Prophet Muhammad. These broad principles are interpreted by jurists to come up with specific legal rulings and moral prescriptions. The body of legal rulings that emerges from the interpretation of Sharia law is commonly referred to as Islamic law, or as *fiqh* in Arabic. The Conversation (2017) 'What Sharia Law Means: Five Questions Answered', Available at: <http://theconversation.com/what-sharia-law-means-five-questions-answered-79325> [Accessed 27 May 2018].

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15 *Ibid.*

16 Aliyu Mariam is a women's rights activist in Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria. She contributed immensely to this article by sharing her story and the stories of the women she works with in the IDP camps in Borno State. The organisation she started is called Learning through Skills Acquisition Initiative (LETSAI), which is a youth-led organisation that works on gender-based violence and the empowerment of women.

17 Percival, Valerie and Theobold, Sally (n.d.) From Gender Blind to Changing Minds: Five Steps to Building Back Better in Humanitarian Action. In *Building Back Better* Available at: <http://www.buildingbackbetter.org/resources/2017/11/10/from-gender-blind-to-changing-minds-five-steps-to-building-back-better-in-humanitarian-action> [Accessed 1 May 2018].

18 Women's Rights Protection and Advancement Alternative (WRAPA), a Nigerian non-governmental organisation, successfully represented Amina Lawal in 2003 and prevented her death by stoning. Amina Lawal was a divorced woman who was sentenced to death by stoning by a Nigerian Sharia court for her alleged commission of *zina* (unlawful sexual intercourse) – a capital crime under the recently adopted Shari'a penal code of Katsina State in northern Nigeria. Since women are not allowed to argue in Sharia courts, WRAPA contracted with barrister Aliyu Musa Yawuri to represent Amina Lawal in her appeals.

19 ICG (2016) op. cit.

NHIMBE: UTILISING A TRADITIONAL PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY PEACEBUILDING

BY **EDKNOWLEDGE MANDIKWAZA**

REZA/GETTY IMAGES

Above: *Nhimbe* promotes community responsibility and community security rather than individual welfare.

Introduction

Little is known about the contribution of *nhimbe*, an indigenous collaborative work system, in peacebuilding – yet it has boundless potential to promote sustainable peace and community cohesion-building. *Nhimbe* is an indigenous traditional practice where community members come together to work towards a common goal. In the process of working together, individuals build relationships – they share experiences and develop a sense of family and community. Societal conflicts, tensions and problems are diffused, and some conflicts are resolved as people participate in *nhimbes*. This article proposes an indigenous conceptual model for peacebuilding using *nhimbes*, by reviewing how Heal Zimbabwe Trust, a community peacebuilding organisation, utilises *nhimbe* as a violence prevention and conflict transformation tool. The article demonstrates how *nhimbe* platforms promote community peace and social cohesion by empowering communities to become tolerant, mend individual and community relations and, ultimately, reconcile their past disputes.

The Traditional Concept of *Nhimbe*

Nhimbe is a traditional Shona practice of working together as a community to help each other in daily tasks such as harvesting, weeding fields, constructing a house, gathering manure or other tasks. It is "a socialising agent where members of the community come together and communally assist each other in a number of ways".[1] Individuals and families participating in *nhimbe* promote an African ideal of individuals' communal responsibility,

REUTERS/PHILIMON BULAWAYO

Workers grade cured tobacco at a community farm outside Harare, Zimbabwe.

prevention of selfishness[2] and, most importantly, keeping people interacting within communities.[3] By nature, a *nhimbe* caters for community security rather than individual welfare, and it broadly exemplifies a Shona and African culture of extended family, oneness, community, sharing and togetherness. A *nhimbe* hosted at the traditional leader's home was largely known as *Zunde raMambo*, while when hosted by other ordinary members of the community, the *nhimbe* was called *jakwara, jangano* or *humwe* among other Shona dialects. However, the practice of undertaking a common task is not solely peculiar to Zimbabwe. It is also practised in other countries – examples include *harambee* in Kenya, *chilimba* in Zambia and *milpa* in Mexico.[4]

Existing literature shows that many scholars view *nhimbe* variously as a work party, communal entertainment and leisure practice[5], or a community development model.[6] However, early missionaries considered the practice evil because people drank beer at *nhimbes*.[7] Irrespective of different scholarly interpretations, the practice of hosting *nhimbes* has existed since the 1800s, when community members helped each other to grow crops, weed, harvest and develop water sources, such as small dams and wells. Holleman observes that "every field holder, man or woman would at least host a *nhimbe* during every season depending on the size of the field and prospects of the season".[8] Households would aim for higher productivity by investing in *nhimbes'* pooled labour. Those without oxen would also be helped by community members through *nhimbes*, if they participated in other members' *nhimbes*. Generally, the person or family hosting a *nhimbe* would brew traditional beer and prepare food, which acted as a mobilising factor for community members. *Nhimbes* were hosted by village or community members, or by the local traditional leader. As such, *nhimbe* had multifaceted benefits ranging from improving food security, promoting a sense of community and community responsibility, transforming the moral economy of communities, cutting labour costs and pooling resources for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

However, *nhimbe* is declining with modernisation, although it is still being practised in rural areas. This may imply a lack of modernity in the *nhimbe* practice. This view is bolstered by Shutt, who observed that *nhimbes* were used by squatters to help each other in agricultural activities.[9] The decline of the *nhimbe* practice and its benefits is blamed on the rise of African businessmen, the replacement of chieftainship roles with modern local government structures, work parties, and the general selfishness of the new generation.[10] Although declining, the importance of

hosting *nhimbes* – expressed in their capacity to promote togetherness, reciprocity, trust, respect, allegiance and inclusivity – requires an intellectual and practical regeneration of the concept towards building community cohesion. In addition, Muyambo notes that brick moulding and school block construction are modern adaptations of *nhimbe* practices in rural Zimbabwe.[11]

Utilising *Nhimbe* in Contemporary Peacebuilding

To promote political tolerance, prevent violence and address the effects of past gross human rights violations and violence, Heal Zimbabwe Trust has been implementing *nhimbes* as part of its grassroots peacebuilding activities. Heal Zimbabwe Trust considers *nhimbe* as a neutral platform where community members can meet to participate in some household or community work without being sensitive to their social, economic or political affiliation. *Nhimbes* are unifying, and they allow room for community members to start valuing working together. They can help community members build relationships, become tolerant and enhance community security through trust-building, collectivism, loyalty and humanity. Although *nhimbes* are principally identified with food production, their application to peacebuilding, conflict transformation and violence prevention shows that *nhimbe*s have multiple functions. For example, working together shows community solidarity, while building relationships can translate to community security.

To Heal Zimbabwe Trust, the assumption of hosting a *nhimbe* is that "if communities implement *nhimbes*, they will be able to improve individual and group relations" – hence contributing towards improved community cohesion. If communities hosting *nhimbes* involve diverse stakeholders such as village heads, headmen, chiefs, councillors, church leaders and community-based organisations (CBOs)/faith-based organisations in their activities, then they promote inclusive decision-making processes and build bridges for engagement across different levels of decision-makers and citizens. However, while a *nhimbe* can be a neutral platform, it can also act as a conflict trigger within communities – especially when the platform is wrongly perceived as a political gathering tool or if it overlooks valuable traditional community protocols, such as failing to involve traditional leaders and authorities who can legitimise its essence in community cohesion.

The diagram below outlines the way in which *nhimbe* is understood by Heal Zimbabwe Trust as a tool for peacebuilding. *Nhimbe* is the change tool found at the centre, while the first layer represents change agents. These change agents are infrastructures for peace, such as the peace clubs established by Heal Zimbabwe Trust in the communities where it operates. A peace club is a group of local members who come together to promote peaceful social relations, tolerance and non-violent activities in their community. Membership to peace clubs is open to all local community members including traditional leaders, church leaders, women, youth, men, businesspeople, people with disabilities, representatives of CBOs and village health workers. Peace clubs are change agents because they are responsible for organising *nhimbes* and other peacebuilding activities in communities where they are established.

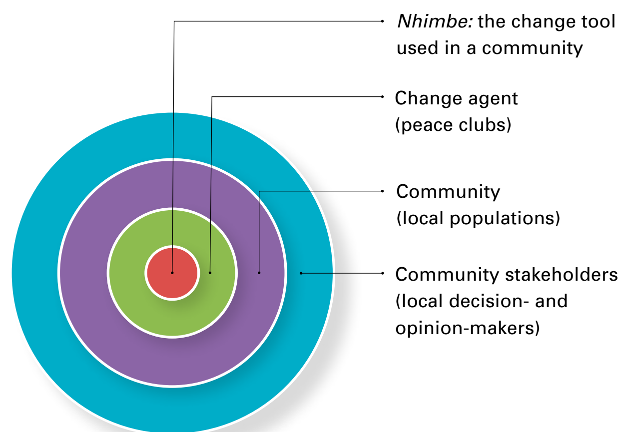


Figure 1: *Nhimbe* peacebuilding conceptual model

The second layer represents community members. These are local populations that are invited by peace clubs to participate in *nhimbes* and other peacebuilding activities. By inviting community members to a *nhimbe*, the change agents expand their role of building community cohesion among community members and build relationships in the communities where they are established. The peace clubs' capacity to mobilise community members and stakeholders to participate at *nhimbes* legitimises their acceptability as a peacebuilding infrastructure in that community.

The third layer represents community stakeholders such as village heads, headmen, chiefs (traditional leaders), church leaders, village and ward development committees and councillors. These stakeholders are decision-makers and influencers within communities, whose support to peace clubs improves the legitimacy and effectiveness of *nhimbes* as a peacebuilding tool. If the stakeholders disapprove of the holding of any *nhimbe* or the legitimacy of a peace club, it becomes difficult for the peace clubs to build peace and promote social cohesion. Communities may even be further divided between those in support of the peacebuilding interventions and those against. Therefore, in all cases where *nhimbes* are organised, peace clubs are upheld to engage both community members and stakeholders without being selective or discriminatory, thus enhancing inclusivity, a culture of consultation and respect for diversity.

A Typical *Nhimbe* Implementation Process

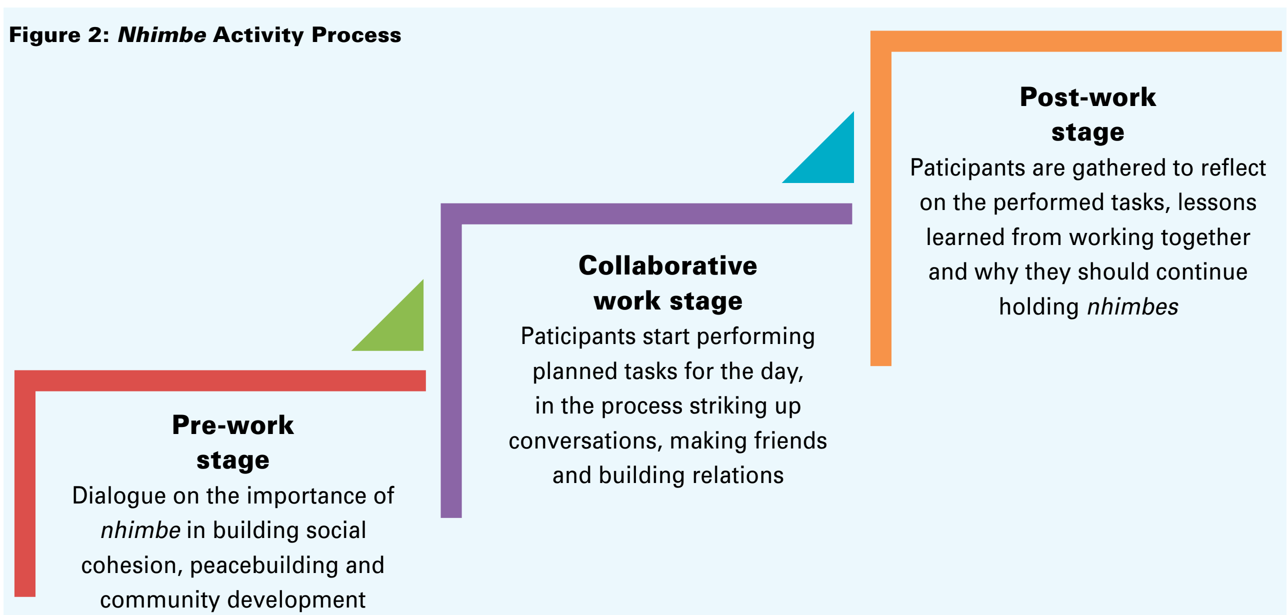
Peace clubs organise their own *nhimbe* activities without Heal Zimbabwe Trust taking a leading role. Most *nhimbes* held include organising clean-up campaigns in public

WAYNE HUTCHINSON/FARM IMAGES/UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES

In the collaborative work stage, community members consciously work closely with each other, engage in conversations and build relationships.

spaces (such as schools, shopping centres and clinics), repairing roads, weeding, harvesting crops or working at any preferred community project. Peace clubs could also organise *nhimbes* at the homesteads of their members, needy people in their community or upon request by some members of the community or stakeholders. They also target specific homesteads of community members where they have detected conflicts within the family or between families. To increase the buy-in of stakeholders, peace clubs also organise *nhimbes* at the homesteads of traditional leaders, church leaders and opinion-makers. It is the responsibility of peace club members to mobilise community members

Figure 2: *Nhimbe* Activity Process



JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP/GETTYIMAGES

***Nhimbes* place traditional leaders and elders in their positions of authority by giving them opportunity to preside over the activity.**

and key community stakeholders to participate in planned *nhimbes*.

The implementation process of a *nhimbe* has three stages: the pre-work stage, the collaborative work stage, and the post-work discussions stage.

Process Pre-work stage: This stage is a short dialogue process that takes place immediately before implementing a *nhimbe*. Participants are gathered and introduced to the purpose of the *nhimbe* and the nature of work involved. A peace club member leads by explaining to the participants in attendance: (1) the purpose and structure of the peace club; (2) why they organise *nhimbes*; and (3) the traditional importance of *nhimbes*. This allows all participants to get to know each other initially, as well as to recognise the essence of the peace club in their community. Pre-work dialogue creates a shared vision and a unifying position towards building relations through working together.

Collaborative work stage: This stage involves all participants working on the planned tasks. As the work commences, community members consciously work closely with each other, engage in conversations and create relationships. However, peace club members have a responsibility to deliberately set up conflicting parties (if any) to work close to each other, so that they can start conversations and begin building relations. A conversation is unavoidable when conflicting parties are working close to each other. However, setting up conflicting parties to work close to each other requires caution, since some parties could end up escalating their conflict. To avoid such scenarios, the peace club assigns trusted individuals to be attentive to the paired persons. A peace club can consider their pairing successful if conflicting parties are able to strike up a conversation and start dialoguing on their conflict issues. As such, the collaborative work stage is crucial in conflict transformation and building cohesion.

Post-work stage: This last stage comes after the collaborative work process, when the *nhimbe* participants come together to rest and have lunch or refreshments. During this resting period, a peace club member, community leader or designated facilitator leads a dialogue on what participants learnt from working together, as well as what they liked best or what frustrated them. This session is meant to provide a reflection of the purpose of *nhimbes* and the value of working together as a community or family.

The three stages of the process are crucial in that each stage has a specific objective that contributes to the broader peacebuilding and social cohesion goal. The first stage

AS THE WORK COMMENCES, COMMUNITY MEMBERS CONSCIOUSLY WORK CLOSELY WITH EACH OTHER, ENGAGE IN CONVERSATIONS AND CREATE RELATIONSHIPS

conscientises participants about the deliberate purpose of building relationships and improving community networks for the prevention of violence and conflict. It also introduces the peace club and its objectives to community members, hence creating an opportunity for recruitment to expand beyond the peace club network. The second stage enables all participants to use the space around them to converse, engage each other and build relationships during the working process. The final stage allows participants to reflect on the value of a *nhimbe* and how they have benefited from working together for future relations and peacebuilding processes.

Participation

There is usually high attendance and participation in *nhimbes* where local leaders are involved in the mobilisation process, as opposed to where only community structures are involved, as the presence of local leaders legitimises the *nhimbe* and the peace club activities. However, there are instances where key stakeholders – such as councillors and traditional leaders – do not attend, because they perceive the *nhimbe* to be a disguised political gathering. Non-involvement in such activities is an indication of disapproval or fear of being associated with politically interpreted initiatives. Local residents who attend disapproved *nhimbes* could fall out of favour with their leaders and kinsfolk, or are cautioned against attending such activities in the future.

Other Benefits of *Nhimbes*

Building community relationships: *Nhimbes* facilitate relationship-building among community members and conflicting parties. The relationship-building process is perpetual, depending on the frequency of the *nhimbes*. The more *nhimbes* are carried out within a specific community, the more local people improve their relationships. The assumption, therefore, is that the more community members interact, the more they are likely to resolve their conflicts and the more they can protect each other from violence.

Reinforcement of community ties: Community ties are improved between the local members themselves, as well as between community leaders and residents. Improved community ties between community leaders and citizens, as well as among locals, increases a sense of community, thus strengthening individual and community security through collectivism.

Restoration of traditional leaders' responsibilities and authority: The reputation and authority of traditional leaders has been waning over time, particularly due to political polarisation and interference from political parties and partisan government officials. Local members who perceive traditional leaders as partisan political frontrunners have ceased respecting the authority of traditional leaders. On the other hand, some political entrepreneurs have informally assumed the authority of traditional leaders, especially in the allocation of land, distribution of food aid and resolution of community conflicts. Therefore, *nhimbes* rightfully place traditional leaders in their positions of authority by allowing them to preside over the activity, and by reminding community participants about the traditional African functions of *nhimbes*.

Conclusion

Nhimbe is a traditional collaborative tool that can be used to advance peacebuilding, violence prevention and conflict transformation. From Heal Zimbabwe Trust's experience with *nhimbes*, it is clear that this practice can enable communities to build relations among themselves and with key community decision-makers or stakeholders. While the *nhimbe* practice was previously used for improving food security and community development, it can be applied to peacebuilding and conflict transformation initiatives. The *nhimbe* practice can facilitate relationship-building, allow communities to work together, prevent divisions among community members and enhance inclusive community development processes. However, *nhimbes* work best when the convening grassroots peacebuilding structures – such as peace clubs – are legitimately accepted within the communities of which they are part.

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Endnotes

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WHY STATES FAIL – INTERNAL COLONIALISM AND THE CHALLENGES OF STATE MAKING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

BY **JOHN H.S. ABERG**

PUBLIC DOMAIN

The tentative argument made in this article is that "failed states" have failed to develop successful projects of internal colonialism. Yet, in the present era, human rights norms and world society governance models denounce states that pursue internal colonial projects. This paradox highlights the great challenge of state making in the present age.

Internal colonialism can be defined in terms of a failed state concept that conceives of the state along a strong-weak state continuum, based on three core factors: the monopoly of the legitimate use of force, effective institutions and national consensus.[1] In that order, they relate to coercive power, administrative and infrastructural power, and cultural hegemony. Succeeding with these three core aspects of state making has historically been an internal colonial process – that is, it involved (1) pacification and subduance of enemies of the state; (2) dismantling of the existence of parallel institutions; and (3) suppression of rival cultural frameworks. The campaign of the Argentine state to establish dominance over Patagonia, known as the Conquest of the Desert, is an example of this internal colonial process, which had catastrophic effects for the indigenous people who inhabited the area. This was in line with the dominant understanding of the Westphalian ideal of the state where authority is one, bureaucracy is one and nation is one – and together they make up the trinity of the modern state.

The fundamental contradiction between internal and external sovereignty inherent in the modern Westphalian system is evident.[2] States gained external sovereignty through recognition before they gained internal sovereignty within their territories. Therefore, to establish internal sovereignty, states needed to engage in internal colonialism – that is, processes of organised violence, bureaucratic expansion and cultural assimilation. States that fail these

Above:The campaign of the Argentine state to establish dominance over Patagonia, known as the Conquest of the Desert, is an example of an internal colonial process, which had catastrophic effects for the indigenous people.

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A more restrictive definition of internal colonialism involves the rule of one ethnic group over other ethnic groups combined with territorial separation of the subordinate groups, as in apartheid South Africa.

processes thus fail in their projects of internal colonialism and, hence, fail in their state making project as conceived by the Westphalian ideal of the state.

Pablo Gonzalez Casanova defines internal colonialism as "a structure of social relations based on domination and exploitation among culturally heterogeneous, distinct groups".[3] It is further conceived as "the result of an encounter between two races, cultures, or civilizations, whose genesis and evolution occurred without any mutual contact up to one specific moment. The conquest or the concession is a fact which makes possible intensive racial and cultural discriminations."[4] In other words, internal colonialism is domination of a population by another population.[5] Casanova applied the concept to understand the situation of the indigenous population in post-independence Mexico. Pierre van den Berghe offers another, more restrictive definition of internal colonialism that involves the rule of one ethnic group over other ethnic groups combined with territorial separation of the subordinate groups, which also have special legal status.[6] Native American reservations in the United States and apartheid South Africa exemplify this conception.

While Casanova focuses on internal colonialism as a process of domination, inequality and uneven development resulting in *marginalisation*, Van den Berghe focuses on rule over other spatially separated groups with distinct legal status, or internal colonialism as *separation*. This article argues that more than inequality resulting in marginalisation or spatial separation, internal colonialism is a process of *extermination* associated with the development of the modern state. In this sense, modernity is indeed a colonial project writ large, yet more so; modernisation is a process of structural transformation that entails extermination, if not physically, by necessity culturally. Hence, the aim of the Chinese Cultural Revolution to eradicate the "four olds" – old culture, old customs, old habits and old ideas – captures well what internal colonialism entails. While genocide or mass violence[7] is the extreme form, ethnocide or acculturation in the form of assimilation – forced and intentional, or as a result of socialising effects – is what characterised the development of the modern homogenous nation-state.

Seen from this perspective, failing with internal colonialism is indeed a good thing. That is, it might highlight the fact that the state making process was bloody and oppressive, or that states will not succeed if they follow a European model of state making, or that the primary institution of territorial sovereignty of the Westphalian system is inherently flawed and imbued with an anti-nomadic bias,[8] or that internal colonialism is fundamentally at odds with human rights norms and world society

governance models.[9] At the same time, many developing states face continued tensions and contradictions linked to the Westphalian understanding of state making and its logical connection to internal colonialism.

State Failure and the Nation

From a neorealist perspective, one would explain state failure as a matter of insufficient capabilities at the unit level.[10] From a world-system perspective, one would explain state failure as part of core-periphery and dependency relations at the system level.[11] Both perspectives have merits, yet they share the same flaw: they omit culture.

Among the five capabilities Kenneth Waltz includes in his neorealist analytical model, culture is hidden in the undefined capability he terms "political stability and competence".[12] Immanuel Wallerstein, on the other hand, includes culture in his analytical framework as part of mini-systems, but never as part of world-systems. Yet world-system scholars have convincingly addressed this by elevating culture to the macro level and including world-culture next to world-economy and world-empire in the world-system trinity.[13] In essence, materiality alone did not structure the emergence of the modern (Westphalian) international order. Even if we consider culture as epiphenomenal, the cultural make-up of entities and the cultural system of the world should not be left unexplored.

FINE ART IMAGES/HERITAGE IMAGES/GETTY IMAGE

The aim of the Chinese Revolution to eradicate old culture, customs, habits and ideas captures well what internal colonialism entails.

Philip Bobbitt argues that state making is the result of the dynamic interplay between strategy and law – that is, military and constitution.[14] While Bobbitt develops a classification of six historically specific state types that emerged from this interplay, Liah Greenfeld, on the other hand, argues that nationalism is the cultural framework of the modern world[15] – the new consciousness and vision of reality that has come to shape state making up until this day, despite shifts in law and strategy. This further resonates with the English School perspective, which puts attention on the cultural dimension of an international society structured by primary institutions such as sovereignty, territoriality and nationalism.[16]

EVEN IF WE CONSIDER CULTURE AS EPIPHENOMENAL, THE CULTURAL MAKE-UP OF ENTITIES AND THE CULTURAL SYSTEM OF THE WORLD SHOULD NOT BE LEFT UNEXPLORED

The work of Bobbitt and Greenfeld is impressive and useful, yet they fail to acknowledge the racist superstructure of the world-system that divided human beings into different degrees of humanity.[17] In contrast to Bobbitt, the dynamic interplay between strategy and law did not apply to people whom Europeans denoted as savages, since savages stood outside the law.[18] In contrast to Greenfeld, there was one cultural framework at a higher level of abstraction than nationalism that united British, French, Germans and Spaniards alike: the world-cultural framework of white supremacy. Hence, the formation of law and the emergence of the nation generated a contradiction that had a direct bearing on the relationship between external and internal sovereignty. Externally, the nation-state exercised sovereign rights, while internally, the dominant (white supremacist) culture suppressed difference and subdued people that deviated from the national standard. The historical process of internal pacification, the growth of the infrastructural and administrative capabilities of the state, and the development of the homogenous nation were internal colonial processes.

Today, while human rights norms and universalistic governance models denounce the internal colonial practices of the modern state, the lack of monopoly of the legitimate use of force and institutional weakness are very real things in many African states, as is the lack of a unifying national framework. Greenfeld would argue that in the postcolonial age, nationalism is still the dominant cultural framework of the world, and perhaps the prerequisite for successful state making. If so, the answer to why states fail, offered by Acemoglu and Robinson – who distinguish between "inclusive" and "extractive" institutions[19] – is then

ВО СВОБОДА

In the postcolonial age, nationalism is still the dominant cultural framework of the world, and perhaps the prerequisite for successful state making.

dependent on a "national solution" that is, according to Greenfeld's terminology, a choice between individualistic/civic, collectivistic/civic and collectivistic/ethnic types of nationalism.

The individualistic/civic type of nationalism views the nation as a composite entity made up of individuals considered free and equal. This is the foundation of Western liberal democracy and the Anglosphere – the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand exemplify this type of nationalism. This type is, in principle, the least prone to forced assimilation, yet a crucial question is if it can escape the need for a dominant national language. The collectivist/civic type of nationalism views the nation as a collective individual with its own unique will and interests. With this type, we do not escape assimilation, since the nation, the collective individual, has its unique language, characteristics and culture that one needs to "buy into" to gain full membership in the nation. Here, France serves as the archetype. Ultimately, the collectivistic/ethnic type of nationalism is defined by blood. While membership in the individualistic/civic and collectivistic/civic types of nationalism is in principle voluntary, membership in the collectivistic/ethnic type of nationalism is connected to a primordial or genetic link to the nation. The collectivistic/ethnic type of nationalism is, in fact, a form of racism, which makes it very hard – in principle, impossible – to join the nation without blood ties. It is thus also the most intolerable and aggressive type of nationalism. Historically, this type of nationalism first developed in Russia, then in Germany, before it spread to the rest of the world.[20]

The Contemporary Challenge of State Making

In the present postcolonial age, how do we establish monopoly of the legitimate use of force while creating inclusive institutions and a culturally diverse nation that simultaneously allows cohesive national development projects to be undertaken? How do we avoid the conflicts and the human rights violations that have come to plague the developing world? Of course, posing these questions is much easier than answering them. Notwithstanding the severity of other problems – such as dependency relations and neocolonial schemes that encumber various African countries – a conscious deliberation about what type of nationalism that should be nurtured could perhaps lead the way forward.

If multi-ethnic African states are run by myopic, ethnically defined patron-client networks,[21] the expansion of the state bureaucracy and of national development projects cannot escape being met with resistance when the ethnically defined state ventures into land where it has no blood ties. As a result, the monopoly of the use of force will be seen as illegitimate and challenged. The construction of a collectivist/civic type of nationalism will also meet resistance from people who do not "buy into" the national project.

Yet, one could perhaps consent to a dominant language (while giving some room for local secondary languages) and accept that there are certain common national values that all can agree with. If not, secession might be a solution, albeit a highly controversial one. The collectivist/civic type further requires institutional centralisation and a national vision carried out by skilled, farsighted and honest politicians who, above all, desire their nation to develop. Yet, with the spread of globalisation and the emergence of a world society, my supposition is that the individualistic/civic type of nationalism will grow - so also in Africa. The only accepted social differentiation, in principle, should then come as a by-product of effort, the corollary of hard work for the sake of individual security and prosperity. A significant challenge is then to fight against the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. One's university diploma might get devalued by nepotism, one's social mobility might get blocked by discrimination, and one's entrepreneurial spirit dismayed by corruption. Differentiations based not solely on merits but on ascribed status attributes (including inherited wealth) are particularly damaging to the individualistic/civic type of nationalism.

The contemporary challenge of state making is well illustrated by the cases of Bolivia and Ethiopia. In Latin America, Bolivia recently revised its constitution and redefined the state as a pluri-national state. It is widely seen as a progressive exemplar of how to elevate indigenous rights. However, these rights clash with the right of the state to exploit natural resources to finance welfare reforms designed to benefit the common good. This tension has prompted protests among indigenous social movements that oppose extractive development of the land.[22]

In Ethiopia (perceived to be dominated by the Tigrinya ethnic group), there is an ongoing tension between forces of centralisation, connected to the government's national development plan, and forces of decentralisation, nurtured by Ethiopia's federal constitutional structure and ethno-national social movements desiring greater autonomy. This tension is observable in local-level disputes as well as violent protests, triggering the state of emergency that has plagued Ethiopia in recent years as the government pushes through its national development plans.[23] The central government is also clearing the ground for agribusiness and large-scale land acquisition by foreign investors, which has resulted in people being forcibly removed from the land and transferred to new villages under Ethiopia's "villagisation" programme.[24]

Bolivia and Ethiopia showcase the contemporary challenge of state making, yet there are many more examples, and the contradiction can be seen wherever state practices contravene human rights norms and resistance arises. How do we move beyond internal colonialism and create more just, equitable and inclusive nations? This is the great social challenge of state making in the 21st century that developing states need to tackle.

UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

Bolivia recently revised its constitution and redefined the country as a pluri-national state. Evo Morales, the president of Bolivia, is pictured here.

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