

# CONFLICT TRENDS

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Cover photo: Military and police peacekeepers serving with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) patrol the Muslim enclave of PK5 in Bangui (October 2017). UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe.



On 3 February 1960, the United Kingdom prime minister Harold Macmillan, addressing the South African Parliament, said: “The wind of change is blowing through this continent. Whether we like it or not, this growth of national consciousness is a political fact.” Five decades later, those winds of change led to a substantially decolonised and free continent. However, the shackles of poverty, unemployment and inequality have still not been removed for the vast majority of people on the continent.

Today, we once again see those winds of change sweeping across Africa, bringing a renewed national consciousness. This time, people are not removing colonial rulers but long-standing African rulers who have failed to deal with poverty, unemployment and inequality. Leaders in Burkina Faso, Libya, the Central African Republic, Zimbabwe and, more recently, in Algeria and Sudan have all been removed by street protests in cities where people have been rapidly urbanising for the past several decades.

An exponential population growth and multitudes of young people with little prospect of employment characterise cities in such countries. In addition, deteriorating public services, poor governance, corruption and economic and social marginalisation for the majority of people to the advantage of a small political and business elite, have led to a growing national consciousness around these challenges. Triggers such as rising food and fuel prices, impacting on the daily lives of people, have converted long-term structural challenges into immediate crises. This has resulted in poverty, unemployment and inequality becoming a reality for middle-class citizens, too, and driving solidarity among economically marginalised, economically disadvantaged and gainfully employed people.

This national consciousness and class solidarity have been welcomed across the continent. However, it leaves us with new challenges to which we have few, if any, answers. Prime among these questions is how to manage such transitions so that life, for those who are protesting injustices and inequalities, gets better and not worse. Our record in managing transitions has not been satisfactory, and part of the answer lies in the fact that we have not dealt with the deep structural challenges that resulted from our failure

to transform our economies, social systems and political institutions.

These challenges will take decades and generations to address. In the meanwhile, the immediate challenge is how to ensure a smooth transition from one set of leaders to another; how to ensure continuity in governance and, where it has broken down, how to rebuild it; how to ensure continued or renewed safety, security and stability; and how to ensure economic stability and growth. This is a tall order, even for the most efficient, honest and capable leaders. It is even more difficult where institutions of governance have deteriorated.

The recent cases of Zimbabwe, Algeria and Sudan need to be closely observed for lessons and solutions to these challenges. These countries are relatively stable, have not reached the stage of being failed states, still have their institutions of governance that are relatively intact, and have economies which can be turned around. Our ability to negotiate smooth transitions in these countries will determine the fate of our continent. The current trends in Africa indicate that these countries are not the last to experience such challenges. Many relatively stable countries that have not succeeded in transforming their economies to address poverty, unemployment and inequality meaningfully will find themselves in similar situations.

These complex problems require reasoned thinking and analysis of actual events that are occurring for the development of appropriate solutions. Resorting to populist rhetoric will not resolve these challenges; neither will easy “either/or” dichotomous problem-solving. The solutions to the current crises in Zimbabwe, Algeria and Sudan are not simply a choice between the negotiations and elections based on democratic principles that the protestors are calling for, or the stability that the military promises. The problems are more complex than just these choices. Therefore, we cannot reduce our analysis and problem-solving of such complex challenges to a simple choice between democracy and stability. ▲

**Vasu Gounden is the Founder and Executive Director of ACCORD.**



# ECOWAS'S EFFORTS AT RESOLVING GUINEA-BISSAU'S PROTRACTED POLITICAL CRISIS, 2015–2019

BY **BROWN ODIGIE**



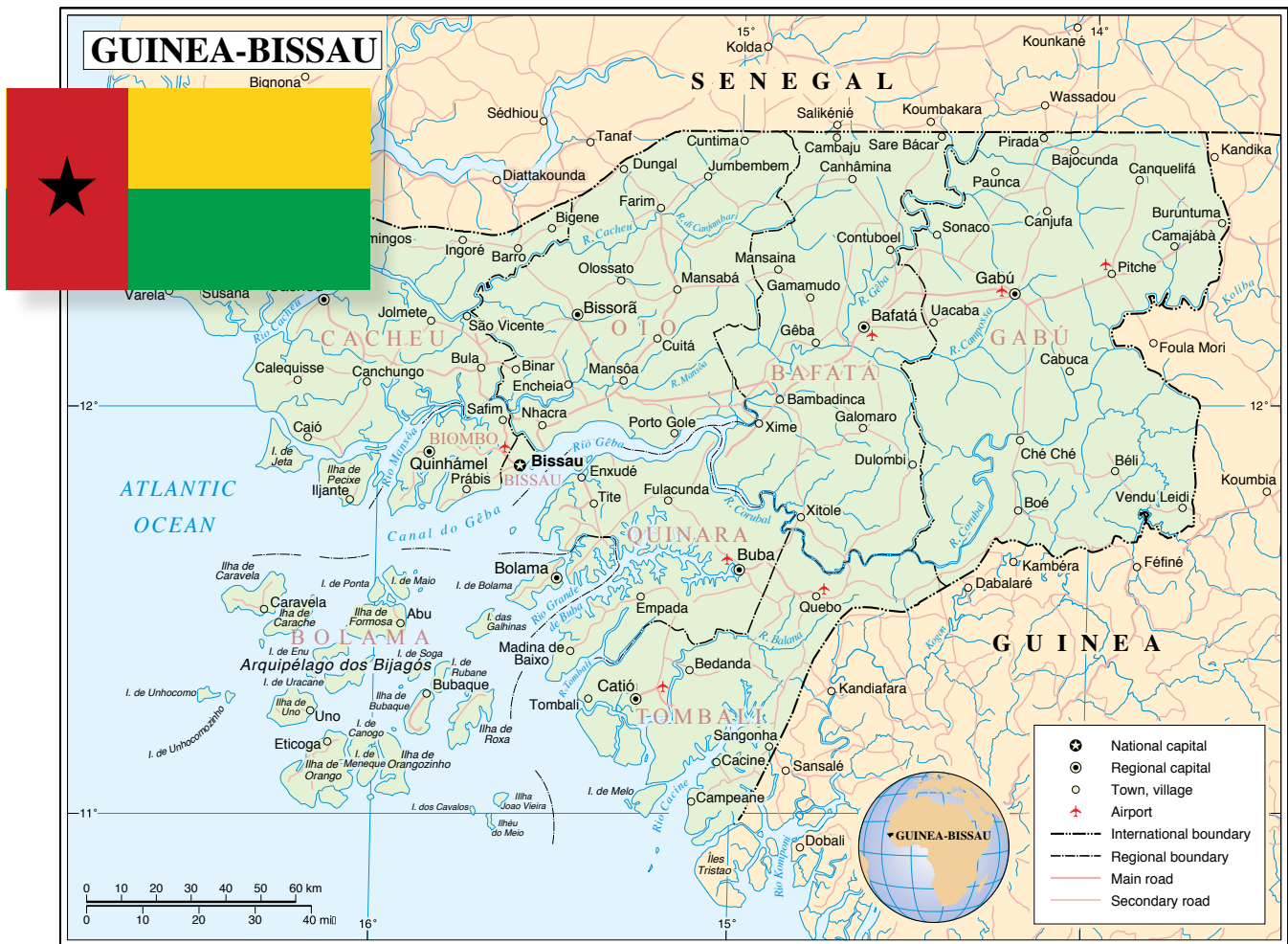
## **Introduction**

Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese colony in West Africa with a population of 1.8 million people,<sup>1</sup> has been embroiled in political and institutional crises since August 2015, following the run-off presidential elections of May 2014 that produced President José Mário Vaz. The political and institutional crises had roots in certain structural factors common to most post-colonial African states: an underdeveloped economy, overdependence on foreign aid and former colonial masters, fractionalised and factionalised elites, a praetorian army

serving personal interests, and general governance deficits. The case with Guinea-Bissau, however, is peculiar. It has a long history of political and institutional fragility dating back to its independence in 1974, with recurring coups and assassinations of political leaders.<sup>2</sup> With the exemption of President Vaz,

**Above: José Mário Vaz was elected president of Guinea-Bissau in the April 2014 election.**





whose constitutionally mandated term of office ended on 23 June 2019, no elected president has ever completed a term of office – an indicator of the gravity of the country’s political instability.

This article examines the lingering political crisis that erupted in August 2015 within the leadership cadre of the country’s governing elites, following the dismissal of Prime Minister (PM) Domingos Simões Pereira by President Vaz and the Economic Community of West African States’ (ECOWAS) sustained efforts to foster peace, political stability and harmonious relationships among the country’s governing members. It concludes by noting that although ECOWAS and friends of Guinea-Bissau have a responsibility to assist the country in finding enduring solutions to its political and institutional crises, the primary responsibility rests with the country’s political and military leaders and their resolve to collectively act in the best interest of the country.

**The dismissal of Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira by President Vaz in August 2015 triggered a political crisis in Guinea-Bissau.**



UN PHOTO/OIA PAK



**In September 2015 the Supreme Court ruled that Baciro Djá's appointment to Prime Minister, by President Vaz, was unconstitutional.**

### **Political Crisis under President Vaz and Efforts to Broker Peace by ECOWAS**

Guinea-Bissau returned to constitutional order in 2014, following years of political fragility occasioned by military coups and political assassinations, with the election of Vaz as president. Pereira was appointed PM by the president. Both individuals belonged to the Party for the Independence for Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), a party that has dominated the political landscape of the country since its formation in 1956. But the relationship between Vaz and Pereira deteriorated, leading to renewed political and institutional crises. Since assuming the presidency and the holding of parliamentary elections on 10 March 2019, Vaz has worked with seven PMs<sup>3</sup> – an indicator of the degree of political instability that characterises his administration. On 12 August 2015, Pereira – who doubled as leader of the ruling party – was dismissed as PM by the president over what appears to be a personality clash.<sup>4</sup> Following Pereira's dismissal, the president requested PAIGC to nominate a replacement, but the party presented Pereira again and insisted that in accordance with its statute, the party leader is to be appointed PM. The nomination was rejected by the president; instead, he appointed the third vice president of PAIGC, Baciro Djá, thus triggering a series of political crises, with PAIGC approaching the Supreme Court for adjudication. On 8 September 2015, the Supreme Court ruled Djá's appointment unconstitutional.<sup>5</sup>

The crisis then assumed a scale that necessitated ECOWAS's intervention.

On 21 August 2015, in his capacity as chairperson of the ECOWAS Regional Contact Group on Guinea-Bissau, President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria appointed former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, as special envoy, mandated to engage the disputing parties to work out a solution to the crisis. Between 14 and 18 September 2015, following the Supreme Court's pronouncement, Obasanjo visited Bissau and his mediation efforts yielded the appointment of Carlos Correia as PM. In forming his government, on 2 October 2015 Correia submitted a list of cabinet nominees to Vaz, which included Pereira. The president rejected the proposed cabinet, thus triggering another round of crises that necessitated a second mediation mission by Obasanjo to Bissau, from 9 to 11 October 2015, to hold further negotiations with key actors, with the specific focus on negotiating a list of cabinet ministers.

**GUINEA-BISSAU RETURNED TO CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER IN 2014, FOLLOWING YEARS OF POLITICAL FRAGILITY OCCASIONED BY MILITARY COUPS AND POLITICAL ASSASSINATIONS, WITH THE ELECTION OF VAZ AS PRESIDENT**



**In 2015, ECOWAS appointed former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, as special envoy, mandated to engage the disputing parties to work out a solution to the crisis in Guinea-Bissau.**

Consensus was reached on the list, which then excluded Pereira. With the new cabinet formed, the 2016 budget and programme were presented to parliament for ratification – but in a new twist of events, 15 members of parliament (MPs) from the PAIGC, perceived to be loyal to the president, attempted blockage of its passage. With this action, the 15 MPs were expelled from the PAIGC by the party's leadership, thus re-igniting hostilities and putting the country's fledgling democracy in serious jeopardy. On 10 February 2016, Obasanjo embarked on a third mission to seek a political solution to the crisis. This was followed by a fourth mission on 2 May 2016, to renew earlier attempts at resolution of the crisis. Vaz dismissed Correia and reappointed Djá as PM on 27 May 2016. The appointment was rejected by the leadership of the PAIGC, thus deepening the crisis.

With growing political hostility having a negative impact on governance, ECOWAS, at its 49<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit of Authority of Heads of State and Government on 4 June 2016, “urged all political stakeholders to engage in dialogue with a view to resolving the crisis and commended the professionalism of the army for not involving itself in the political impasse and encouraged it to continue in that direction.”<sup>6</sup> The summit “designated a Presidential Mission comprising Guinea, Senegal and Sierra Leone to meet and conduct discussions with those involved in the political crisis... in order to better assess the current political situation.”<sup>7</sup> The summit equally

extended the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) – which has played a stabilising role, despite the infighting among political actors – by one year.

Pursuant to the directives of the Authority, a ministerial delegation comprising the ministers of foreign affairs of Liberia and Sierra Leone, the minister of state and secretary general of the presidency of the Republic of Guinea, and the president of the ECOWAS Commission, were in Bissau from 7 to 8 September 2016 to hold initial consultations with political stakeholders. This led to the adoption of a six-point roadmap for the resolution of the conflict. On 10 September 2016, a presidential mission – comprising President Alpha Conde of Guinea and ECOWAS mediator for Guinea-Bissau and President Ernest Bai Koroma of Sierra Leone – joined the mission. From 11 to 14 October 2016, Conde hosted Bissau-Guinean political stakeholders, including representatives of religious groups and civil society organisations, in a four-day political dialogue in Conakry, Guinea, resulting in the signing of the Conakry Accord of 14 October 2016.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Monitoring the Implementation of the Accord**

The Conakry Accord provided for:

1. consensus on the choice of a PM who has the confidence of the president of the republic. The PM should be in office until the 2018 legislative elections;



2. the formation of an inclusive government, based on an organogram agreed upon by all political parties in the National Assembly, in line with the principle of proportional representation;
3. the possibility of appointing independent prominent figures and civil society leaders to the inclusive government;
4. the inclusive government to implement a programme prepared by a national roundtable dialogue within 30 days following the appointment of the PM;
5. compliance with the existing principle for the appointment of senior officials of the republic;
6. preparation and adoption, by the national roundtable dialogue, of a stability pact signed by key political and social stakeholders, and structured around the principles of:
  - I. accountability and transparency in institutional decision-making,
  - II. constitutional reform aimed at establishing stable relations between the executive, the legislative and the judiciary,
  - III. reform of the electoral law for the organisation of legislative and local elections in 2018,
  - IV. new political party law, including public funding of political parties on the basis of their representation in the National Assembly,
  - V. defence, security and justice sector reform, and
  - VI. implementation of a development programme in line with vision "Terra Ranka"<sup>9</sup>;
7. ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), the United Nations (UN) and the European Union's (EU) support for the development, implementation and monitoring of the stability pact, in particular through the provision of high-level expertise as well as other substantial financial resources and logistics;
8. establishment of a three-level monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure the stability of the process:
  - at the level of the ECOWAS Council of Ministers,
  - at the level of the ECOWAS Commission, in conjunction with international partners, and
  - at the level of the mediator, who will report to the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government;
9. constitutional reform, which will be conducted as part of a nationwide consultation, taking into account existing review structures. ECOWAS and the UN will provide high-level constitutional experts; and



ALFA BALDE/AP/GETTYMAGS

**ECOWAS extended the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission for Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) at its Summit meeting in June 2017.**

10. the unconditional reintegration of the 15 radical MPs into PAIGC, albeit in consonance with existing texts<sup>10</sup> within PAIGC.

All parties that signed the accord undertook to work in good faith towards its successful implementation, but this was far from the reality, as its implementation became ensnared in controversy over the choice of a consensus PM – the first item on the accord. Another controversy that militated against the smooth implementation was the meaning of the text in the content of the Conakry Accord translated into Portuguese, which was later seen to be inconsistent with the original French language used in drafting the accord. The president had appointed Umaro Embaló Sissoco as new PM on 18 November 2016, but this was objected by the PAIGC, claiming a lack of consensus on his candidacy. With sustained opposition to the appointment of Sissoco by the leadership of the PAIGC and the increasing breakdown of trust necessary for implementing the accord, ECOWAS, at its 50<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja on 17 December 2016, emphasised the importance of dialogue and reaffirmed its deep concern over the protracted crisis, urging Vaz and all parties to comply with the explicit contents of the Conakry Accord.<sup>11</sup> For a second time, the Authority commended the non-interference of the army in the political crisis and strongly urged it to continue in the like manner, while reiterating the planned withdrawal of ECOMIB, effective 30 June 2017.<sup>12</sup> ECOMIB's withdrawal would lead to the deterioration of security, yet the political actors were unperturbed and remained stuck in their positions.

The leadership and MPs of PAIGC sustained its opposition to the appointment of Sissoco, whilst the group of 15 expelled MPs from PAIGC, in alliance with the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) (the main opposition party), backed his appointment.<sup>13</sup> Against the backdrop of possible complete government breakdown, the ECOWAS Council of Ministers Monitoring Committee on the Accord embarked on a mission to Bissau from 23 to 24 April 2017 to assess the situation and report back to the Authority. After wide consultations, the delegation urged all stakeholders to act in good faith in seeking to strictly implement the Conakry Accord, with the appointment of a PM with the consensus of all stakeholders within 30 days – the failure of which would result in a recommendation to the Authority to consider the adoption of sanctions targeting individuals and entities obstructing strict compliance with the accord. The ultimatum elapsed, with stakeholders unable to agree on a consensus PM.

Mindful of the dire security implications of withdrawing ECOMIB, and to give another opportunity for the Bissau-Guinean political stakeholders to hold direct talks, especially on the appointment of a consensus PM, the ECOWAS Authority, at its Summit of 4 June 2017 in Liberia, extended the mandate of ECOMIB for three months – and, for the first time, affirmed its determination to institute targeted

sanctions against all those who obstructed the smooth implementation of the accord, if warranted. It once again commended the army on its non-interference in the political impasse, urging it to continue in the like manner.<sup>14</sup> By October 2017, it was apparent that the stakeholders had again failed to reach an agreement on a consensus PM. The Ministerial Monitoring Committee embarked on a mission to Bissau from 2–3 December 2017 to assess the situation once again. The committee submitted its report to the 52<sup>nd</sup> Summit of Authority of Heads of States and Government meeting in Abuja, Nigeria on 16 December 2017. At this summit, the Authority bemoaned the lack of progress in the implementation of the Conakry Accord and consequently entrusted Conde, the ECOWAS mediator for Guinea-Bissau, and President Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé Eyadéma of Togo and chairperson of the ECOWAS Authority with the responsibility of holding talks with all Bissau-Guinean stakeholders within a month to resolve the impasse, failing which individual and collective sanctions would be imposed on all those who obstructed the implementation of the accord. The summit thereafter called on the international community – notably the UN, AU and all sub-regional organisations – to support ECOWAS in the application of the sanctions.<sup>15</sup> In response to the directive of



UN PHOTO/CIA PAK

**President Vaz appointed Umaro Embaló Sissoco as the new Prime Minister on 18 November 2016 but this was objected by the PAIGC, claiming a lack of consensus on his candidacy.**



**On 17 April 2018 President Vaz announced the appointment of Aristides Gomes as the consensus Prime Minister.**

the Authority, on 30 January 2018, Vaz appointed Augusto Artur Da Silva as PM, but this appointment was again rejected by the leadership of the PAIGC, claiming lack of consultation and consensus.

On 27 January 2018, during the 30<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in Ethiopia, the ECOWAS Heads of States and Government held a meeting to review political developments in Guinea-Bissau. Noting the failure by Vaz to appoint a PM who had the consensus of all stakeholders, they dispatched the Ministerial Monitoring Committee to Guinea-Bissau from 31 January to 1 February 2018 to hold further consultations with political stakeholders. The delegation noted the failure by the leadership of Guinea-Bissau to appoint a consensus PM. Acting on the report of the committee, the ECOWAS Commission announced the imposition of individual and collective sanctions, effective from 1 February 2018, on all persons or organisations hampering the process to end the crisis.<sup>16</sup> With sanctions in full effect and taking their toll on the affected individuals, consultations between the Guinea-Bissau leadership and all relevant stakeholders to the crisis intensified. In an Extraordinary Summit of 14 April 2018, Vaz informed the ECOWAS Authority on the possibility of finally having a consensus PM in a few days. On 17 April 2018, by presidential decree, the appointment of Aristides Gomes as consensus PM was announced. Parliament was reopened on 19 April 2018, with parliamentary elections set for 18 November 2018. The lifespan of the parliament was extended to accommodate the new date, following which the election management body was constituted to organise the scheduled elections.

Due to logistical and financial challenges, the elections were pushed further and held on 10 March 2019, with support from ECOWAS and other partners.

#### **Political Realignments and the Re-enactment of an Old Order**

In the lead-up to the parliamentary elections on 10 March 2019, there were alignments and realignments, with the group of 15 expelled MPs from the PAIGC forming a new political party, the Movement for a Democratic Alternative G-15 (MADEM G.15). Twenty-one political parties contested the 102 parliamentary seats, with the PAIGC securing 47, MADEM G.15 with 27, Party for Social Renewal (PRS) with 21, Assembly of the People United (APU-PDGB) with 5, New Democratic Party (PND) with 1 and Union for Change (UM) with 1. Although the PAIGC lost 10 seats, costing it an absolute majority, a post-election negotiated pact with the APU-PDGB, PND and UM gave the PAIGC-led coalition a six-seat majority in parliament.

The new parliament was inaugurated on 18 April 2019, with the PAIGC-led coalition expected to form a new government. A power tussle between the PAIGC-led coalition and the MADEM G.15/PRS parties over the composition of the Bureau of the Parliament – the organ responsible for managing parliamentary affairs – became a new source of conflict, stalling the prompt formation of the government.<sup>17</sup> In a swift response to the stalemate, on 30 April 2019, an ECOWAS ministerial delegation comprising Nigeria's foreign affairs minister, Geoffrey Onyeama; minister of state and secretary-general of the presidency of the Republic of Guinea, Naby Bangoura; and the president of the ECOWAS Commission, Jean-Claude Kassi Brou, visited Guinea-Bissau





**An electoral worker holds up a parliamentary election voting form at a polling station in Bissau (10 March 2019).**

to hold consultations with the various stakeholders, including Vaz, Gomes, the president of the National People's Assembly, Cipriano Cassama and the various groups represented in the parliament. Noting that an impasse was not unexpected in parliament, the political actors were urged to finalise the composition and installation of the Bureau of Parliament in conformity with the outcome of the elections as expressed by the people, while reiterating the readiness of ECOWAS to support the government to be formed in resolving the protracted crisis and restoring peace and development to the country.<sup>18</sup>

On 17 June 2019 President Vaz requested PAIGC's nomination for the position of Prime Minister and the party submitted the name of its leader, Domingos Pereira. Vaz rejected this and asked the party for another nominee. The disputing parties held on to their positions prompting a second visit to Bissau by the ECOWAS Ministerial Monitoring Committee on 19 June 2019. In the course of their consultations with President Vaz and other political stakeholders, the Ministerial Committee again expressed concerns over the climate of political uncertainty in the country and urged all political actors to engage in inclusive dialogue aimed at resolving the impasse, with the appointment of a Prime Minister on or before 23 June 2019 (the last day of the constitutional term of office for President Vaz). On 23 June 2019 Vaz announced the reappointment of Aristides Gomes as Prime Minister. Taking into account the end of tenure for President Vaz on 23 June 2019, the absence of a new government, and on the basis of the consensus reached by political stakeholders, the ECOWAS Authority, at its 55<sup>th</sup>

Ordinary Session held in Abuja, Nigeria on 29 June 2019, took far-reaching decisions towards the resolution of the impasse, which includes amongst others;

- President Vaz to sign the decree of nomination of the government before 3 July 2019, on the basis of the proposition made by the Prime Minister,
- the government will, amongst other things, engage in the preparation of the presidential election to be held on 24 November 2019,
- a new Attorney-General to be nominated on the basis of consensus before 3 July 2019 and,
- President Vaz to stay in office until the next presidential election while government affairs will be fully conducted by the newly-formed government in line with the Guinea-Bissau constitution.<sup>19</sup>

A new government was formed on 3 July 2019 with the exception of the appointment of a new Attorney-General which remains a source of dispute among the political stakeholders. There also remains disagreement over the constitution of the Bureau of Parliament.

### Conclusion

The ECOWAS Authority affirmed its confidence in the Conakry Accord as a solution to the prolonged political and institutional crisis in Guinea-Bissau, and urged all stakeholders to strictly respect and comply with the contents of the accord.<sup>20</sup> The UNSC reiterated the same.<sup>21</sup> Full implementation of the accord for the most part of the last three years was stalled over disagreement on the appointment of a consensus PM –

the first item in the agreement. A consensus PM was eventually appointed after much spirited engagement with the various stakeholders by ECOWAS, paving the way for parliamentary elections. It was unpredictable that disagreement over the appointment of a new Prime Minister and the composition and installation of the Bureau of Parliament would hamper the prompt formation of a government. With the new government now formed by the PAIGC-led coalition, the country is facing the daunting challenge of organising the 2019 presidential election. It is, however, imperative to note that for other items of the Conakry Accord to be fully implemented – in particular, constitutional reform, defence, security and justice sector reform and development programmes – Bissau-Guinean political actors must exhibit statesmanship, prioritising the interests of the nation above party, groups and personal interests. Trust-building among political stakeholders is critical. The Guinea-Bissau leadership and all political stakeholders must be mindful of likely support fatigue by the international community.

The establishment of a three-level monitoring and evaluation framework in the accord to follow up on its implementation is quite commendable. The presence of ECOMIB helped to stabilise the country, ensuring protection for key government personnel and critical installations. The ECOWAS Authority's deliberate act of commending the professionalism of the army and urging it to maintain neutrality and non-partisanship was impressive, especially against the backdrop of a history of military coups and assassinations. Sustained engagement with Bissau-Guinean stakeholders by ECOWAS and its partners will be critical for lasting peace, stability and development to be restored in the country. ▲

**Dr Brown Odigie is a Programme Officer for Mediation at the Directorate of Political Affairs, Department of Political Affairs, Peace and Security, ECOWAS Commission, in Abuja, Nigeria. The author would like to thank Ebenezer Asiedu, Head of the Mediation Facilitation Division, for his insightful input in the article.**

#### Endnotes

- 1 The World Bank (2019) 'The World Bank in Guinea', Available at: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guineabissau/overview>> [Accessed 3 May 2019].
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 The prime ministers in order: Domingos Simões Pereira (2014–20 August 2015); Baciro Djá (20 August–17 September 2015); Carlos Correia (17 September 2015–12 May 2016); Baciro Djá again (27 May–18 November 2016); Umaro Cissoco Embaló (18 November 2016–16 January 2018); Artur Da Silva (30 January–16 April 2018); Aristide Gomes (17 April 2018 to date).
- 4 The personality clash between Vaz and Pereira could be inferred as the main reason that stalled the formation of a new government after the 10 March 2019 parliamentary elections. As Pereira remains the leader of the PAIGC, he would normally, in accordance with the statute of the party, be nominated as PM, and the president was opposed to appointing him PM.

- 5 BBC News (2015) 'Guinea-Bissau's "unconstitutional" PM Baciro Dja resigns', 9 September, Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34203240>>
- 6 ECOWAS Commission (2016) Final Communiqué, 49<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Dakar, Senegal, 4 June 2016, p. 9.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 ECOWAS Commission (2016) 'Newsletter 2016', Available at: <<http://www.ecowas.int/to-end-guinea-bissau-political-crisis-ecowas-leaders-sign-final-communique>>
- 9 Vision "Terra Ranka" is Guinea-Bissau's national priorities set forth in its 2015–2020 strategic and operational plan derived from the 2015–2025 government strategy. See Republic of Guinea-Bissau (2016) 'Partnership Framework between Guinea Bissau and the United Nations, 2016–2020'. Available at: <<https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/files/GNB%202016%20UNPAF.pdf>>
- 10 "Existing texts", as used in the Conakry Accord, refer to the provisions of the statute/constitution of the PAIGC.
- 11 ECOWAS Commission (2016) *Final Communiqué, 50<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria, 17 December 2016*, pp. 8–9.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 It is instructive to note that the parliament is made up of 102 elected members, with the PAIGC having 57 seats (before the expulsion of the 15 MPs), the Party for Social Renewal (PRS) 41, New Democratic Party (PND) 1, Democratic Convergence Party (DCP) 2 and Union for Change (UM) 1. The PND, DCP and UM were always on the side of the PAIGC. The country's constitution has no provision for "aisle crossing" once elected into parliament, and this put the expelled 15 PAIGC MPs in a dire situation. They later formed a new party to contest the 10 March 2019 parliamentary elections.
- 14 ECOWAS Commission (2017a) *Final Communiqué, 51<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Monrovia, Liberia, 4 June 2017*, pp. 6–7.
- 15 ECOWAS Commission (2017b) *Final Communiqué, 52<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria, 16 December 2017*, p. 6.
- 16 ECOWAS Commission (2018) 'ECOWAS Imposes Individual Sanctions for Non-implementation of the Conakry Agreement in Guinea-Bissau', Available at: <<https://www.ecowas.int/ecowas-imposes-individual-sanctions-for-non-implementation-of-the-conakry-agreement-in-guinea-bissau/>>
- 17 According to parliamentary rule, the president of the Bureau of Parliament and its first vice president should be produced by the ruling party, the second vice president by the party that secured the second-highest number of parliamentary seats, and the first secretary by the party with the third-highest number of seats. This normally meant that PAIGC produced the president and first vice president of the Bureau, while MADEM-G.15 produced the second vice president and then PRS produced the secretary. But, in honouring a post-election negotiated pact with the APU-PDGB, the PAIGC gave the position of the first vice president to the APU-PDGB, whilst at the same time opposing the candidate nominated by the MADEM-G. 15, suspicious of his past acts and perceived to be too close to Vaz, thus triggering a stalemate.
- 18 ECOWAS Commission (2019) *Press Release of the ECOWAS Ministerial Delegation to Guinea Bissau, 30 April 2019, Abuja, Nigeria*.
- 19 ECOWAS Commission (2019 b) *Final Communiqué, 55<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Abuja, Nigeria, 29 June 2019*, p.8.
- 20 ECOWAS Commission (2017a) op. cit., p. 6.
- 21 United Nations (2019) 'Security Council Press Statement on Guinea Bissau', SC/13746, 26 March, Available at: <<https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13746.doc.htm>>

# OIL PIPELINE VANDALISM IN THE NIGER DELTA: NEED, GREED AND GRIEVANCE FACTORS

BY AL CHUKWUMA OKOLI



REUTERS/AKINTUNDE AKINLEYE

## Introduction

This article examines the basis of petroleum pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta, against the backdrop of the high prevalence and incidences of such events in the region in recent years. Nigeria is an oil-endowed state and an example of a petro-dependent economy. Oil wealth and petroleum resources account for about 75% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings.<sup>1</sup> The petroleum sector is thus, justifiably, the mainstay of the economy.

Although the petroleum sector has rightly been the backbone of Nigeria's economy, it has paradoxically doubled

as a centre for the primitive accumulation of wealth as well as a platform for petro-rentier crimes. Within this sector, petroleum rents have been the object of an opportunistic scramble by corrupt political elites and their counterparts. In effect, the significance of oil wealth in Nigeria has been contradictory: it has been a blessing as well as a curse, by generating both revenue and criminality. This seeming paradox resonates with the "resource-curse" thesis – which

**Above: Nigeria is an oil-endowed state and an example of a petro-dependent economy.**





holds, among other things, that oil-rich nations have the tendency to squander their development prospects through the abuse or mismanagement of their oil wealth.<sup>2</sup>

Over the years, the Nigerian petroleum sector has presented many petro-rentier problems: corruption, armed criminality, violence, and so on. A critical dimension of the manifestation of the petro-rentier problem in Nigeria's oil industry is the phenomenon of petroleum pipeline vandalism – the wilful and malicious destruction of oil and gas pipelines for economic, political or idiosyncratic reasons.

Incidences of petroleum pipeline vandalism in Nigeria have spiralled over the years. By way of example, such occurrences surged from 57 incidents in 1998 to over 2500 incidents in 2008.<sup>3</sup> This is rather ominous, considering the primacy of the petroleum sector vis-a-vis the sustenance of the Nigerian economy. The alarming occurrence and trajectory of petroleum pipeline vandalism in Nigeria has caught the attention of scholars and policymakers. There now exist many scholarly and policy-based studies on the various aspects of this subject.<sup>4</sup>

Nonetheless, most of the insights into petroleum pipeline vandalism in Nigeria has been inadequate in proffering a rigorous interrogation of the socio-structural basis of the phenomenon. What is more, the existing works have overtly

concentrated on the political economy of organised crime and violence, with disproportionate emphasis on how the factors of “greed” and “grievance” provide impetus for the crimes. Beyond refreshing the aforementioned perspectives, this article adds the variable of “need” in an attempt to proffer a more robust and comprehensive account of petroleum pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta. Thus, based on the factors of “need”, “greed” and “grievance”, this article provides a socio-structural analysis of the oil pipeline challenge. The article is a by-product of the author's doctoral research, undertaken in 2015-2016, on oil pipeline vandalism in select communities of the Niger Delta.<sup>5</sup> What is reported in this article derives substantially from the outcome of the study.

### Conceptualising Petroleum Pipeline Vandalism

Petroleum pipeline vandalism has to do with the violation of the safety and functional integrity of a petroleum pipeline for political, economic or idiosyncratic reasons. This principally takes the form of sabotage, motivated by political reasons, or theft, motivated by economic need. Petroleum pipeline vandalism could also be informed by accidental occurrences, such as reckless agricultural or construction activities. The target of petroleum pipeline



**Firefighters work near the shore of a lagoon after vandals hacked into an oil pipeline to siphon fuel at Ilado village, on the outskirts Lagos (2013).**

vandalism can be any aspect of the pipeline hardware or the product(s) that it carries. Essentially, oil pipeline vandalism has been associated with two important motivations: theft and sabotage.

Oil theft refers to the act of hacking into pipelines with the intent to steal product(s) thereof, either for sale or personal use. Oil theft involves the stealing of crude oil and its derivatives from pipelines through a variety of mechanisms, including illegal “bunkering” and fuel pilfering.<sup>6</sup> Oil sabotage has been motivated by malicious intent, often associated with industrial uprising, militancy and terrorism, and can be physical or technical. Oil sabotage is physical when the prime targets are the critical physical components of the oil and gas infrastructure. On the other hand, it is mechanical when it involves damaging non-physical components of the infrastructure, such as digital and cyber resources. The incidences of pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta typify physical and structural sabotage of the petroleum infrastructure.

**Theoretical Premise: Structural Materialism**

The incidences of petroleum pipeline vandalism can best be understood and explicated using the general structural paradigm of crime. Propounded by criminologists,

**OIL THEFT REFERS TO THE ACT OF HACKING INTO PIPELINES WITH THE INTENT TO STEAL PRODUCT(S) THEREOF, EITHER FOR SALE OR PERSONAL USE**

the structural theory holds that crime is a creation of society and that people tend to take to crime principally as a consequence of existential conditions, which make criminal living not only attractive but also compelling.<sup>7</sup> The structural materialism of crime is thus hinged on the understanding that “the structure matters”. This is to the extent that the structural underpinnings of a society determine both the character and dynamics of such a society. Hence, the problem of petroleum pipeline vandalism is fundamentally structural, both in origin and essence. The factors that are responsible for the phenomenon are rooted in the socio-structural foundations of society, especially the material conditions of the people, the state of the economy, and the socio-economic imperatives that arise.

Poverty in Nigeria creates a material pretext and incentive for survival or “need”-based criminality. This is evident in the prevalence of corruption and opportunistic



**A signboard campaigning against oil pipeline vandalism is seen along a road in Yenagoa, Nigeria.**

living in the country. The spiralling unemployment rate in the country has added a dire complication to the situation, and the aforementioned situations fester within the operational environment of a petro-rentier state system. A petro-rentier state is one that is mischaracterised by an overdeveloped petroleum economy, which reproduces “a dynamic crowded political economy”, driving “competition for looted resources”.<sup>8</sup> Embedded in this state system are sundry anomalies such as oil piracy, pipeline vandalism, oil bunkering and the illicit refining of petrol.

The tragedy of Nigeria’s petro-state syndrome is a crisis of unearned income. There is a fraught, intensive struggle for the acquisition and appropriation of petro-dollars among the people. The battle is desperate and opportunistic. In the absence of mediating state mechanisms to moderate this, what prevails is a wild race for the plundering of

petroleum resources. The scenario creates a vicious cycle of criminality and violence.

**Oil Pipeline Vandalism in the Niger Delta and Need, Greed and Grievance**

**The Need Factor:** The social conditions of the Niger Delta present a context and pretext for oil-related crimes, among which is petroleum vandalism. The region is characterised by high levels of poverty. There is a high prevalence of material destitution, and basic amenities – such as potable water, schools and electricity – barely exist. The incidences of environmental degradation arising from oil pollution have exacerbated the situation by making it almost impossible for rural dwellers to engage in sustainable farming and fishing, which used to be their traditional mainstay. Furthermore, the occurrence of armed militancy in the region has created more insecurity, which impedes rural productivity and sustainable livelihoods.

This aggravated insecurity in the Niger Delta is exemplified in high rates of illiteracy, unemployment, poverty and livelihood failures. This scenario inescapably drives a desperate struggle for survival. The desperation is such that even criminal opportunities are explored in a bid to survive. Thus, the “need” factor in petroleum pipeline vandalism refers to the imperative of material subsistence and survival.

**THERE IS A HIGH PREVALENCE OF MATERIAL DESTITUTION, AND BASIC AMENITIES – SUCH AS POTABLE WATER, SCHOOLS AND ELECTRICITY – BARELY EXIST**



The field research underlying this article revealed that a number of people in the Niger Delta who took to oil pipeline vandalism did so as a means of ensuring survival in adverse socio-economic conditions. Some youth who are involved in petty vandalism in the area are unemployed and, therefore, susceptible to opportunistic living. They took to petroleum pipeline vandalism as a means to an end. As a key informant stated: "...[W]e have learned to resort to self-help strategies in order to survive; our boys take to the act [pipeline vandalism] to make ends meet."<sup>9</sup>

The need factor is certainly plausible in explaining acts of petty vandalism in the Niger Delta. It is, however, quite naive to assume that only the poor and needy indulge in oil pipeline vandalism. This brings us to the issue of greed as a critical driver of petro-pipeline vandalism.

### THE FIELD STUDY ALSO DISCOVERED A NEW AND ARCAINE PATTERN OF PETRO-PIPELINE VANDALISM – THAT IS, VANDALISM MOTIVATED BY THE QUEST FOR COMPENSATION AND CLEAN-UP

**The Greed Factor:** The greed factor refers to the inordinate ambition of individuals to accumulate and amass wealth. This accumulative tendency is driven by crass materialism and ostentatious living. With a high premium placed on material aggrandisement in Nigeria, some people are inclined to take to crime – such as oil pipeline vandalism – in a bid to further their accumulation of wealth. The outcome of the field research showed that organised vandalism was perpetrated by the rich. The use of sophisticated hardware – such as barges, sea boats, road tankers, hoses, and so on, which could not easily be afforded by the poor – is an indicator that organised petro-pipeline vandalism is an elitist venture, too.

The field study also discovered a new and arcane pattern of petro-pipeline vandalism – that is, vandalism motivated by the quest for compensation and clean-up.<sup>10</sup> Often, the oil multinationals award monetary compensation for environmental damage engendered by incidents of oil pollution and/or spillage. They also award "clean-up contracts" in the aftermath of such occurrences to restore the ecological safety of the areas affected by oil pollution. In view of this, disgruntled actors in Niger Delta communities have often connived with some criminal elements in the oil and gas industry to instigate pipeline vandalism for the purpose of prospecting monetary rewards in terms



REUTERS/AKINTUNDE AKINLEVE

**Poverty in the Niger Delta creates the material incentive for survival or "need"-based criminality.**

of ecological damage compensation or clean-up contract awards. This is an emerging practice that has added a new dimension to the challenge of pipeline vandalism.

**The Grievance Factor:** Grievance explains the pattern of pipeline vandalism that is motivated by collective agitation in the context of militancy. In this regard, oil pipeline vandalism is an avenue for expressing grievances against the perceptibly hostile and indifferent Nigerian state and the oil multinationals. The field study confirmed the prevalence of this pattern of pipeline vandalism, particularly during the critical era of the Niger Delta crisis (1998/99–2009). Driven by populist grievances against the state and the oil companies over resource equity, militants in the Niger Delta took up arms and damaged pipelines and allied petroleum infrastructure. This scenario came to a head in the late 2000s, when oil production in the Niger Delta was almost grounded following the relentless destruction of petroleum infrastructure in the area. The exigencies of this situation forced the federal government of Nigeria into a sort of peace bargain with the irate militants – a deal that morphed into the Amnesty Programme.<sup>11</sup> It must be pointed out that some militants involved in petro-pipeline vandalism were driven by motivations other than concerns for resistance or self-determination. In fact, a good number of them could have

been influenced by survivalist and/or accumulative concerns disguised otherwise.

Contemporary trajectories of petroleum pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta indicate that the phenomenon is becoming a flourishing economic crime. What is at issue is the scramble for petro-dollars through illicit means. So, while the kingpins indulge in organised oil theft via pipeline vandalism (oil bunkering) – often in collusion with elements of public security agencies and multinational oil companies – the petty vandals engage in the rudimentary breaking of pipelines to pilfer products. Of all the factors highlighted here as drivers of pipeline vandalism, the most salient is economic motivation. The need-greed-grievance schema of petro-pipeline vandalism is illustrated in Figure 1.

THIS SCENARIO CAME TO A HEAD IN THE LATE 2000s, WHEN OIL PRODUCTION IN THE NIGER DELTA WAS ALMOST GROUNDED FOLLOWING THE RELENTLESS DESTRUCTION OF PETROLEUM INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE AREA



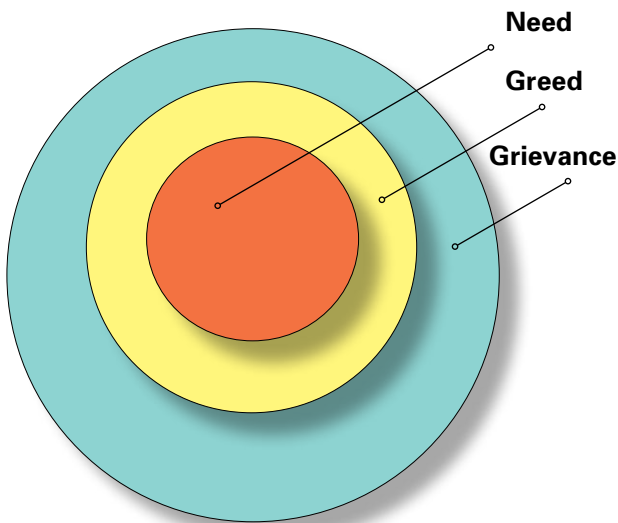
Grievance explains the pattern of pipeline vandalism that is motivated by collective agitation in the context of militancy.





**Driven by populist grievances against the state and the oil companies over resource equity, militants in the Niger Delta took up arms and damaged pipelines and petroleum infrastructure.**

Figure 1 shows that the need factor (innermost circle) constitutes the most basic driver of pipeline vandalism. This is followed by the greed factor (middle circle), which is intermediary, and the grievance factor in the outermost circle.



**Figure 1: Need-greed-grievance factors in Niger Delta pipeline vandalism**

Nigeria's petroleum sector has been a veritable arena for petro-rentier violence and criminality. Over the years, criminals, militants and state agents have abused the sector through systematic plundering and/or physical sabotage. There have been massive oil thefts as well as infrastructural vandalism, leading to enormous development costs. The phenomenon of pipeline vandalism is at the core of this systemic abuse. Underpinning the phenomenon of petro-pipeline vandalism is an underworld political economy based on the illicit exploitation of oil resources. As Katsouris and Sayne<sup>12</sup> rightly observe:

Nigerian crude oil is being stolen on an industrial scale...– it is not entirely clear how much is exported. Proceeds are then laundered through world financial centres and used to buy estates in Nigeria and abroad. In Nigeria, politicians, government security forces, militants, oil industry personnel, oil traders and community members benefit to varying degrees along with organized criminal networks.

**NIGERIA'S PETROLEUM SECTOR HAS BEEN A VERITABLE ARENA FOR PETRO-RENTIER VIOLENCE AND CRIMINALITY**



Hence, in its apparent dynamics of systemic degeneration, the Nigerian petroleum sector has presented a veritable context for rentier politics and crime. The petro-rentier challenge is sustained and reproduced by the prevailing culture of criminal opportunism, impunity and indulgence. Pipeline vandalism represents only one of the most critical dimensions of this systemic problem.

## WHAT IS COMMON ACROSS ALL THESE PATTERNS OF PETROLEUM PIPELINE VANDALISM IS THAT EACH OF THEM IS DRIVEN BY A SOCIO-EXISTENTIAL IMPERATIVE

### Conclusion

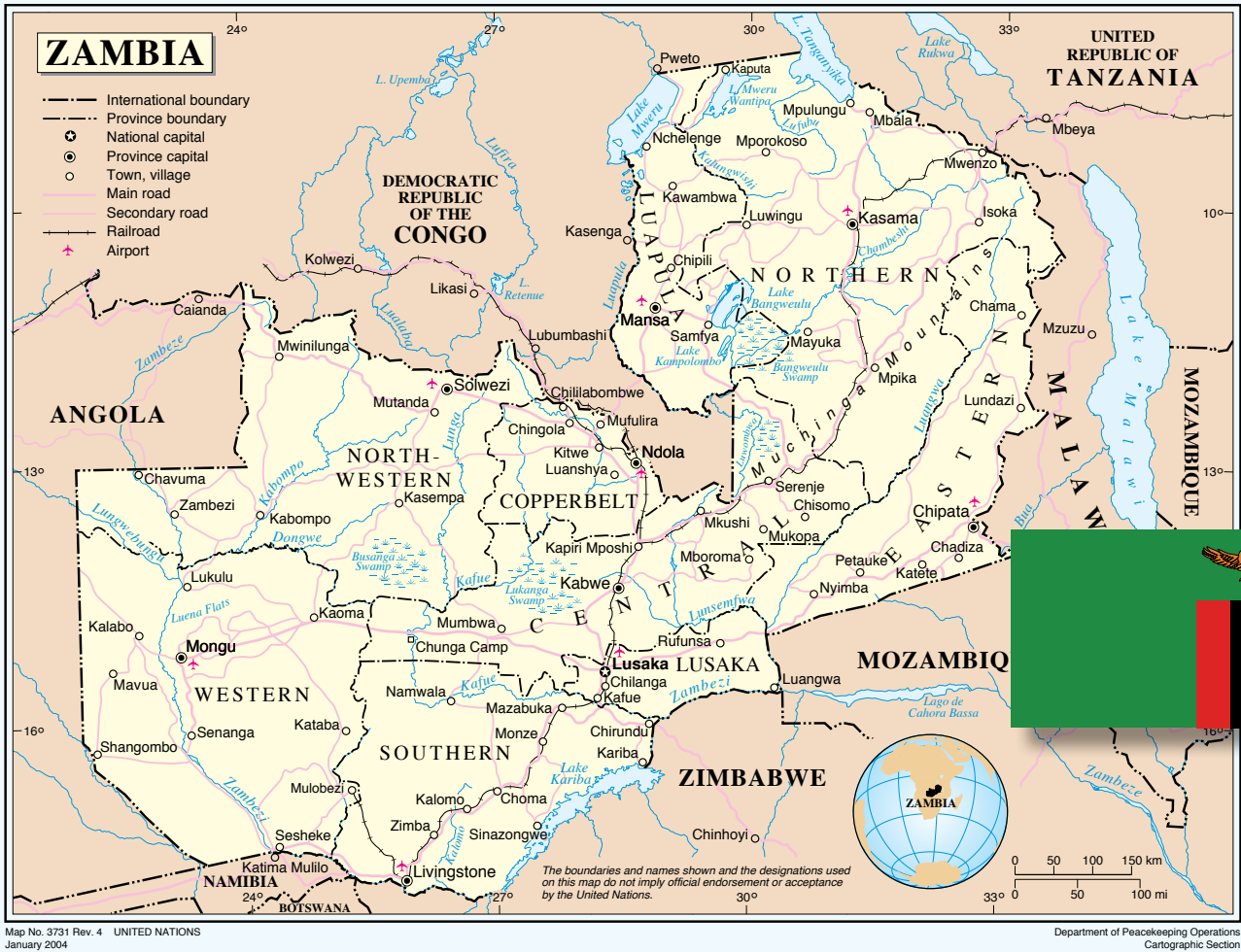
Since its advent in the 1970s, the petroleum sector has predominantly sustained the Nigerian economy. The sector has also been a centre for petro-rentier politics and corruption – more specifically crime and violence, including oil theft sabotage and pipeline vandalism.

This article examined the phenomenon of petroleum pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta from a socio-structural perspective that focuses on the factors of need, greed and grievance. The article posits that petro-pipeline vandalism has been variously motivated, depending on the socio-structural dynamics underpinning its occurrence. The characteristics of the Niger Delta social context have informed three patterns of petro-pipeline vandalism, represented in the “need-greed-grievance” schema. Need-based vandalism is driven by the imperative for subsistence and survival, while greed-based vandalism is associated with the quest for primitive accumulation of petro-wealth. Grievance-based vandalism, on the other hand, refers to pipeline vandalism as an avenue for the advancement of an environmental justice cause. What is common across all these patterns of petroleum pipeline vandalism is that each of them is driven by a socio-existential imperative. Whether it is “need”, “greed” or “grievance”, the implication is that the cause of any form of pipeline vandalism is essentially embedded in the socio-structural dynamics of its occurrence. The lesson in this respect is that any meaningful endeavour towards mitigating incidences of petro-pipeline vandalism must be predicated on a proper understanding of its structurally dynamic material roots. Such an effort must recognise and prioritise the gamut of organic and often intersecting social, economic, political and idiosyncratic variables that precipitate the occurrence. There is also a need to discourage criminal impunity by ensuring that the cost of indulging in a crime is much higher than its reward. **A**

**Dr Al Chukwuma Okoli is a Lecturer in Political Science at the Federal University Lafia in Nigeria, where he is also the Coordinator of the Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution Programme.**

### Endnotes

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# APPRAISING INTERGROUP CONTACT IN ZAMBIA'S ELECTORAL POLITICS

BY **KABALE IGNATIUS MUKUNTO**

## Introduction

While senior leaders on both sides of Zambia's political divide may communicate civilly when faced with differences, the majority of their rank and file members seldom do so. For the latter, the handling of political conflicts is synonymous with violence. The socialisation of the current cohort of political party stalwarts is devoid of peace-oriented mechanisms of dealing with political dissent. Electoral politics have continued to be characterised by skirmishes, discontent and violence, 54 years after the country's

political independence. Political players are no strangers to polarisation, and differences in ideologies or ascension to leadership positions have culminated in splinter parties.

What is worrisome is the propensity for violent engagements when managing political disagreements, especially at the lower strata of the Zambian polity. There is very little effort invested in cultivating an environment that facilitates collegial contact among political party affiliates. Such an environment of contact may also promote and support mutual understanding, tolerance and

a sense of coexistence. Contact and learning about other parties (outgroups) reduce preconceptions and negative assumptions that drive hostilities, antagonisms and violence within the polity. Elite interparty interactions, even if on a slighter scale, also ought to permeate all political party structures horizontally. This article therefore appraises intergroup contact in light of Zambia’s electoral politics and the emergent violence.

### **Understanding Intergroup Contact**

The contact hypothesis theory posits that sustained interaction between diverse groups ultimately reduces prejudice and hostility and promotes friendship.<sup>1</sup> It further holds that regular interactions between groups invariably engenders reduced intergroup tensions and conflicts. On the contrary, the isolation of groups fosters the emergence of negative attitudes, preconceptions and labels.<sup>2</sup> Contact also leads to dissipation of the rigid political boundaries that breed hostility and impede conviviality among political entities and their respective members. There are two dominant approaches to intergroup contact. The “coexistence approach” encourages mutual understanding and tolerance to reduce stereotypes and outgroup discrimination, as well

as identifying the commonalities and diversities between the opposing groups. The “confrontational approach” emphasises conflict issues and the power relations of the parties. It does not aim at cultivating harmony; instead, it attempts to allow participating groups to engage in direct confrontation.<sup>3</sup> While of the two approaches the former is preferred and recommended, given its orientation to promote partnership and cooperation between parties, Zambia’s electoral politics appears to embrace the latter approach.

While electoral politics may be oriented towards the confrontational model, the coexistence approach parallels communication styles from Asia and Africa that merit

**CONTACT ALSO LEADS TO DISSIPATION OF THE RIGID POLITICAL BOUNDARIES THAT BREED HOSTILITY AND IMPEDE CONVIVIALITY AMONG POLITICAL ENTITIES AND THEIR RESPECTIVE MEMBERS**



**The contact hypothesis theory posits that sustained interaction between diverse groups ultimately reduces prejudice and hostility and promotes friendship.**

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**Regular interactions between groups invariably engenders reduced intergroup tensions and conflicts.**

mention. Sarwari, for example, argues that the Asian or Eastern part of the world practises a high-context style of communication that stresses politeness and indirectness.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, in Kiswahili, *Mtu ni Utu* (“a person is humanness”) signifies the value in humanness. *Utu* highlights forgiveness, showing compassion and sharing with others. As Njogu adds, it encourages going beyond “self” to the “other” to get fulfilment.<sup>5</sup> Just as language is shaped through interaction, so is our humanity, and our relationships are continually dialogic. The further we move away from this dialogic interaction, the more we are separated from our humanity.

The point of the high-context communication pattern and the value of humanness is that despite differences in ideologies, players across the political continuum in Zambia can communicate civilly. Africa is endowed with principles that can have a positive bearing on intergroup or interpersonal contacts within the polity. Thus, political interactions predisposed to violence can steadily be

**JUST AS LANGUAGE IS SHAPED THROUGH INTERACTION, SO IS OUR HUMANITY, AND OUR RELATIONSHIPS ARE CONTINUALLY DIALOGIC**

ameliorated. However, effective intergroup contact is realised in situations driven by six conditions or factors: mutual interdependence; common goal; equal status of group members; having informal and interpersonal contact; multiple contact with members of the outgroup; and social norms to promote equality.<sup>6</sup> Before delving into these conditions, it is imperative to look at Zambia’s electoral politics and the resulting violence.

#### **Zambia’s Electoral Politics and Violence**

A fundamental understanding of electoral politics includes meetings, rallies and campaigns by political parties for purposes of informing would-be voters about their policies and programmes. The ultimate goal is to persuade voters to vote for the politicians. Mohapatra and Bhattacharyya associate electoral politics with the primary mechanism of citizen mobilisation, and the communication of ideologies and actions behind the process of choosing from among the candidates.<sup>7</sup> They add that it is also about paying attention to the integration of voters’ individual choices into a collective expression. In the case of Zambia, there is an inextricable link between electoral politics and violence.

Since 2015, the country has continued to witness unprecedented increases in electoral violence. Electoral



**Electoral violence encompasses any intimidation or harassing action that is directly related to the electoral process.**



**President Edgar Lungu of Zambia constituted a commission of inquiry into electoral violence and voting patterns following the August 2016 presidential election.**

violence encompasses any intimidation or harassing action that is directly related to the electoral process. This may be before elections, on polling day or immediately after an election has taken place, often as a result of the announcement of the outcome.<sup>8</sup> The events that accompanied the 11 August 2016 presidential and parliamentary elections are aptly captured by this definition. The intensity of electoral violence prior to the elections, and when the results were announced, obligated the incumbent, President Edgar Chagwa Lungu, to constitute a commission of inquiry into electoral violence and voting patterns.<sup>9</sup> The commission was instituted in October 2016 and concluded its work on 31 December 2018.

The findings of the commission have not yet been made public, but an independent conflict structural vulnerability assessment (SVA) revealed that electoral politics contributed to most of the country's conflicts. Political party leaders and party members' inclination to use violence as a means to achieve their goals during electioneering was cited as the thrust.<sup>10</sup> This trend has remained, with nearly every local government and/or parliamentary election giving rise to incidences of violence. Examples of Zambia's electoral violence can be seen in three such cases.

First, the parliamentary by-elections in June 2018 in Chilanga District of Lusaka Province witnessed unmatched



levels of violence. Young political party cadres were reportedly blocking roads and intimidating people during the filing of nominations by candidates.<sup>11</sup> Following the close of voting, when counting of votes was underway, these members from competing parties allegedly attacked journalists from several media organisations.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps it is critical to highlight here that during the campaigns, some of the senior party leaders seemed to have endorsed the violent acts of “their cadres”. For example, two leaders firmly urged their supporters not to be scared, and to defend themselves whenever attacked.<sup>13</sup>

From what may be described as an attempt to sanitise their past records, the front-runner political parties during the Chilanga violence, the Patriotic Front (PF) party and the United Party for National Development (UPND), pledged to maintain peace through a joint communique. Signed by party representatives, the police and the district electoral officer, the 10-point plan was a commitment to end violence during future elections in the same district and across the country. Supervised by the Electoral Commission of Zambia (ECZ) officials, some of the agreements in the communique that merit mention are:<sup>14</sup>

- no political party shall import cadres from outside Chilanga during the campaign period;
- the carrying of offensive weapons – for example guns, machetes, golf clubs, catapults and knives – during the campaign period shall not be tolerated;
- campaign messages shall be issues-based and must avoid character assassination;
- the resolutions taken at this meeting must be disseminated to all members in various political parties; and
- door-to-door programmes are open to all political parties participating in the elections.<sup>15</sup>

Second, despite these commitments, the Lusaka city mayoral by-elections were not devoid of violence. For example, it was alleged that PF members attacked the house of the UPND mayoral candidate, but the attack was thwarted by his alert security.<sup>16</sup> The ECZ’s intervention was a firm indicator to participating parties of possible disqualification if the Electoral Act was abrogated. The Electoral Process Act No. 35 of 2016 part VIII under Section 83 (Election Offences), among other



DAWOOD SALIM/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

**Zambian police intervene between supporters of the main Zambian opposition party, the United Party for National Development (UPND) and the Zambian ruling party, the Patriotic Front (PF) before the presidential election (10 August 2016).**



provisions, stipulates that a person shall not directly or indirectly, by oneself or through any other person – (a) make use of or threaten to make use of any force, violence or restraint upon any other person; and (b) do or threaten to do anything to the disadvantage of any person in order to induce or compel any persons –...“to vote or not to vote”; “to vote or not vote for any registered party or candidate”; or “to support or not support any political registered party or candidate”.<sup>17</sup>

While some of these provisions may have been violated with diminutive effect in previous elections, the Lusaka mayoral by-elections revealed a worrying result. Over 80% of registered voters did not vote, despite the election day being declared a holiday (only 131 777 people of 839 027 voted).<sup>18</sup> This outcome was implicitly attributed by some to the violence that continued to characterise elections since 2016, claiming that if civility returned to elections, the situation would be different.

Third, another parliamentary by-election that saw unparalleled incidences of violence was that of Sesheke in western Zambia, held on 12 February 2019. Once more, the front-runner parties included the PF and UPND, which clashed in different locations during the pre-election campaigns. Allegations of possessing the voters’ register and distribution of money to voters in some areas triggered violence. This occurred in addition to mere provocation and attacks for belonging to the other party. It appears that the leaders of both political parties fully understand what makes areas holding elections, such as Sesheke, predisposed to violence. For example, the PF national youth leader attributed the propensity to violence to the transportation of cadres, mostly from cities such as Lusaka, into election areas.<sup>19</sup> Both PF and UPND were guilty of this.

A UPND Lusaka Province chairperson, while denying the movement of cadres into election areas, affirmed his party’s “self-defence” whenever attacked, and doing so with full force.<sup>20</sup> Both the PF and UPND leaders and their party members are more often in confrontation mode during electoral campaigns. When canvassing for votes, there seems to be very little commitment to peace and coexistence beyond campaign rhetoric, as these three cases attest. There is a need for improved civil interactions before any election, and generally in electoral politics. Thus, the recommendation of this article is for political party associates to consider cultivated contacts across the board in their politics.

### **The Value and Challenge of Intergroup Contact**

In appreciating the value of intergroup contact, the six factors mentioned earlier, as espoused by Allport,<sup>21</sup> are contextualised in response to electoral violence within the Zambian polity. First, mutual interdependence of two or more groups needing each other to accomplish a goal is anchored on the cultivation of coexistence, enhanced relationships and cooperation. Thus, the PF as the ruling party should accommodate “positive” checks and balances

from the UPND and other opposition parties, as they all aspire to govern the Zambian people. Commitments such as those made during a joint press briefing in July 2018 – to be tolerant, and to promote coexistence and non-violence within rank and file – should be realised.

Second, implicitly or overtly, parties should commit to make contact with the “other”, because they theoretically share a common goal – to govern and provide leadership, including creating new trajectories and relationships. Parties on both sides of the political divide should be civil and allow the contacts at the top level of leadership to translate into cohesion. The contact and cohesion notion suggests that “contact initiation” should be followed by negotiation, cognition and finally cohesion.<sup>22</sup> The PF and UPND (and other opposition party) leaders should allow contact to trickle down within their party structures. For example, youth cadres should demilitarise during campaigns, and there should be joint programmes held to denounce violence and propagate violence-free elections. There must be follow-through of all this.

### **FOR EXAMPLE, THE PF NATIONAL YOUTH LEADER ATTRIBUTED THE PROPENSITY TO VIOLENCE TO THE TRANSPORTATION OF CADRES, MOSTLY FROM CITIES SUCH AS LUSAKA, INTO ELECTION AREAS**

Third, contact situations should symbolise equal status between the parties. A strong zero-sum-based competition between outgroup and ingroup members may perhaps “pollute” the mutual relationships, due to high stakes.<sup>23</sup> One of the hurdles to civil contact between parties is the quest to win elections at all costs, and not even allow the other party to freely canvass for votes. Within the Zambian polity, party members must refrain from seeing themselves as above the law. The principle holds that the equal status of group members is important for contact. Both the incumbent and opposition parties should be able to enjoy equal status for effective and cohesive intergroup contact. In other words, all political players ought to have access to a level playing field devoid of unnecessary restrictions. For instance, some young party members have advanced no-go-area threats toward their opponents. Some senior leaders have been threatened and/or barred from accessing perceived/claimed stronghold areas (wards, constituencies or towns). Although some have persisted as threats, most of such intimidations have resulted in clashes, especially between UPND and PF party members.

Fourth, informal interpersonal contacts between members of the ingroup and outgroup has a bearing on the overall outlook of the contact. Informal interpersonal contact has the potential to lessen prejudices, defined as an averted



**Leaders from the main political parties committed to depoliticising markets and other trading places to create space for everybody to trade freely. Markets and bus terminals have often been the centre of clashes between members of different parties.**

and hostile attitude towards an individual simply because one belongs to a particular party. The UPND has suffered unsubstantiated accusations of being a tribal political party for simply having a slightly larger proportion of its membership and leaders from the southern region.

Fifth, beyond informal interpersonal contact, the contact hypothesis also calls for multiple contacts with members of the outgroup. In 2018, one of the attempts at cultivating peace between the UPND and PF had a special focus on young people. Leaders from both parties committed to depoliticising markets and other trading places to create space for everyone to trade freely. Markets and bus terminals have often been the centre of clashes between members of different parties. Intergroup contact calls for multiple interactions of different party stalwarts, including youth and women, beyond official party business. This, in keeping with Vezzali and Stathi, entails that “contact between individuals from groups (parties) can stimulate the development of more positive outgroup attitudes”.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, some of the specific social norms that may be encouraged to foster contact between the two parties

includes reducing group inhumanisation – that is, the inclination to see the ingroup as more human than the outgroups. Sometimes, the predisposition to attack an opponent is driven by negative perceptions, such as hooliganism or criminality by the other group. Another norm that may support intergroup contact is “intergroup forgiveness”, or clemency for the others’ past wrongdoings.<sup>25</sup> While the elite often communicate courteously despite their divergent political ideologies, and even cross over to other parties, their respective rank and file rarely do so. Thus, the call from an intergroup contact lens is for party stalwarts to appreciate political plurality. For example, senior party members should socialise/enlighten lower-ranking members to embrace the existence of other parties as equal stakeholders. Any differences should be handled civilly through dialogue and reconciliation.

### **Conclusion**

There is a need in Zambia to build interactions and capacities of different players for enhanced political tolerance. Intergroup contact should not simply be for the

sake of contact, but should instead include planned efforts to socialise party stalwarts differently. Put differently, it must be about creating the space for youth, women and other ordinary political party associates to engage civilly. The electoral violence associated with young people, especially, is not beyond redress or restraint. Thus, intergroup contact infused from the lower strata of party structures and horizontally across parties can be quite potent. The onus to implement this is on the UPND and PF, whose young party cadres continue to bear culpability for the violence experienced during elections. **A**

**Kabale Ignatius Mukunto is a Lecturer at the Dag Hammarskjöld Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, Copperbelt University in Kitwe, Zambia. He is also a Doctoral Student at the International Centre of Nonviolence (ICON), Faculty of Management Sciences, at the Durban University of Technology, South Africa.**

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# FOOD AID, VILLAGE POLITICS AND CONFLICT IN RURAL ZIMBABWE: THE CASE OF THE TANDI CHIEFDOM

BY **MARK CHINGONO**

## Introduction

Much has been written on the politics of food aid. In the literature,<sup>1</sup> food aid has been variously depicted as necessary to address the chronic food insecurities in poor countries; an instrument of foreign policy by donor countries; destroying local agriculture while securing markets for subsidised farmers in donor countries; entrenching the dependency syndrome; and fuelling the rampant practice by politicians of using food aid to reward supporters and punish opponents. A little known, if not more insidious, dimension of the politics of food aid is its impact on communities at the grassroots level.

This article focuses on the Tandi chiefdom in rural Zimbabwe and critically examines the dynamics, impacts and

politics of food aid distribution at grassroots level. The article shows that the food aid distribution system is flawed and is abused by villagers, and that village politics determines who gets food. It identifies the inherent flaws and popular criticisms of the food aid distribution system. Specifically, it shows that the selection of food aid recipients is not always based on the “poorest and most vulnerable” principle as espoused by donors, but is oftentimes determined by the village politics of kinship, alliances and power. Consequently, some of the poorest and most vulnerable fail to get food aid, while some of the rich get it. Even worse still, food aid

**Above: Food aid is depicted as necessary to address the chronic food insecurities in poor countries.**



tends to exacerbate community conflict, promote laziness and entrench the dependency syndrome. The article ends by considering policy options to address some of the challenges of the food aid distribution system.

Analytically, the article provides a micro-level analysis of the relationship between village politics and food aid distribution, and of the unintended consequences of free food aid. It exposes the underlying oppressive structures that produce egoistic and violent behaviour exhibited during food aid distribution. Methodologically, it is based on critical observations and interviews conducted by the author during the 2008–2009 food aid distribution in the Tandhi chiefdom.

**Context**

Food insecurity in Zimbabwe dates back to British colonial land dispossession. Robert Mugabe’s attempt to redress these colonial injustices through a chaotic and violent land reform, which started in 2000, worsened the food security situation, and transformed the country from being Africa’s bread basket to a nation dependent on food aid. The 2008–2009 drought compounded an already bad

situation, and forced about 3 million people to depend on donor food aid<sup>2</sup> and vegetation. Villagers in the Tandhi chiefdom were not spared the wrath of the drought.

The Tandhi chiefdom is in the Makoni District of Manicaland Province and about 170 km south-east of the capital city, Harare. The chiefdom has 46 villages, with households ranging from seven to over 40 per village. As the area is semi-barren and overly populated, villagers grow mainly maize on small pieces of land. Some own small heads of cattle. Not surprisingly, many villagers in the chiefdom survived the 2008–2009 drought through food aid.

Presenting emergency food aid support funds to the World Food Programme (WFP), Dave Fish, head of the United Kingdom’s aid programme to Zimbabwe, said:

The UK has given \$6.7 million for food aid that will help reach 1.8 million of the poorest and most vulnerable Zimbabweans in the lean months.<sup>3</sup>

Feeding the poorest and most vulnerable is indeed a noble deed. However, the experience of the Tandhi chiefdom demonstrates that the reality on the ground is a far cry from

this noble ideal; accurately targeting the most vulnerable is a complex and difficult task.

Village politics, characterised by backstabbing, corruption and jealousy,<sup>4</sup> has compromised the “poorest and most vulnerable” principle of the food aid distribution system.

Not infrequently, some of the poorest and most vulnerable fail to access food aid, while some of the relatively rich receive the aid, thereby widening the gap between the rural poor and the rich.

### Flaws of the Food Aid Distribution System

In theory, the WFP humanitarian food aid distribution programme is based on the “poorest and most vulnerable” principle. The most vulnerable are defined as poor families with no source of income – usually comprised of orphans, young children, widows, the elderly and the disabled. However, this system is flawed and is open to abuse by villagers, and has many other negative unintended consequences.

First, targeting the poorest and most vulnerable only may not be the most effective strategy for addressing persistent poverty. Among other things, focus on poverty only allows other important issues – of economic injustice and development policy, for instance – to slip out of view.

Therefore, to effectively assist the poorest and most vulnerable, vulnerability assessments should be more detailed, holistic and inclusive.

Second, the exclusive focus on the individual and the “numbers game” of counting heads in a poor household is problematic. Not only is accurately ascertaining the level of individual vulnerability difficult and costly, but also by focusing on the individual, the selection criteria ignore family and class background. Thus, individual orphans are considered the most vulnerable, yet it is their family and class background that determines their level of vulnerability and standard of living. Through inheritance as well as assistance from extended family members, orphans from rich families are better cushioned against poverty than children of living poor families: a late “rich dad” can be a much better provider than a living “poor dad”.

Third, allocating food aid to the individual child contributes to the disintegration of the family by undermining the authority of elders. In the past, elders had control of economic resources. Now, with the donor perceived as the new rich godfather, that source of power and authority is being eroded. Some children who receive food aid are becoming rebellious against their pauperised



KATE HOLT/AFRICA PRACTICE

Women carry their village's food aid in a cart, near a World Food Programme food distribution point in Zimbabwe (April 2009).





**Young adults are often excluded from food aid programmes on the presumption that they are still energetic, productive and able to fend for themselves.**

guardians, claiming the right to do whatever they wish with “their” food aid; some end up stealing and selling it.

Fourth, because of the focus on age – namely, young children and the elderly – young adults are excluded from the food aid programme on the fallacious presumption that they are still energetic and productive, and therefore able to fend for themselves. The reality is that owing to the economic crisis of the last decade, most young rural adults have never had formal employment, and indeed are among the poorest and most vulnerable of the rural people. Unlike some of the elderly, who are either supported by their adult children and/or own bride wealth cattle as well as rented houses in towns, young unemployed adults do not own any valuable assets. In one village, for example, the focus on age led to an absurd situation in which elderly but relatively rich villagers – a family that owns the biggest shop at a local business centre, and another that owns a farm, a truck and

rental houses in Harare – qualified as beneficiaries, while the poor young adults who do casual work for these families were disqualified.

A fifth shortcoming is the insensitivity to gender, and especially to the plight of young single mothers. In traditional Shona society, women are considered minors, and this means that poor single mothers living with their parents are not eligible for food aid in their own right. Rather, whether or not they receive food aid depends on the eligibility or otherwise of their guardian. In one such case, a poor single mother, her child and two orphan cousins all had to depend on the meagre pension of their great grandfather, who they live with – all pensioners (and workers) are ineligible for food aid. Poor, vulnerable and discriminated against, some of these young women end up as sex workers, thereby exposing themselves to HIV/AIDS and premature death (as happened to the young woman in this case). All this gives further momentum to the vicious circle of poverty.

A sixth challenge relates to village size. There seems to be a threshold number of people in a village that donors are comfortable feeding at a given time. When this number is exceeded, and regardless of the degree of vulnerability, the “excess people” are denied food. In other words, the relatively well-off in smaller villages stand a better chance

**THERE SEEMS TO BE A THRESHOLD NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN A VILLAGE THAT DONORS ARE COMFORTABLE FEEDING AT A GIVEN TIME**



**In traditional Shona society, women are considered minors, and this means that poor single mothers living with their parents are not eligible for food aid in their own right.**

of receiving food aid than the relatively poorer in bigger villages; in the smallest villages, everyone usually gets food aid.

A seventh challenge: giving bigger families more food, while understandable, encourages the poor to have bigger families – which, in turn, exacerbates the problems of poverty and hunger. For example, when bulgur wheat – considered a delicacy by the poor – was only given to families with six or more children, some of those with smaller families openly wished they also had bigger ones too. When the poor keep over-procreating, the hope of ever breaking the vicious circle of poverty diminishes.

**FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN BULGUR WHEAT – CONSIDERED A DELICACY BY THE POOR – WAS ONLY GIVEN TO FAMILIES WITH SIX OR MORE CHILDREN, SOME OF THOSE WITH SMALLER FAMILIES OPENLY WISHED THEY ALSO HAD BIGGER ONES TOO**

Finally, the automatic privileging of disability without assessing the level of disability may “disable” the selection system’s capacity to reach the most vulnerable.

Some relatively well-off people with minor disabilities that only marginally affect their productive capacity have been regular food aid recipients. One such recipient – a partially disabled but relatively rich farmer – is able to sell his produce because he receives food aid all the time. The point is: disability is not synonymous with inability, and its extent should therefore be assessed accurately.

#### **Selection of Food Aid Recipients**

Beneficiaries are selected through a rudimentary process in which the villagers identify and vote for those eligible. The selection criteria are open to abuse and manipulation by villagers. The process also exposes the limits of village democracy. Chiefs and headmen play a prominent role in identifying beneficiaries in their villages, and food aid disbursement offers them an opportunity to assert their fragile authority. It allows them to punish dissenters by excluding them from the beneficiary list, and reward supporters by including them.

Further, and with even more serious implications, villagers form alliances in vetting and voting for potential beneficiaries. In a manner not too dissimilar from vote buying by corrupt politicians, they vote for one another reciprocally, or in exchange for food and other favours. It is not uncommon for those voted for to give a portion of their



food to those who voted for them. In closely knit villages, all the members, including the relatively rich, regularly receive food aid.

### **Poor, Vulnerable and Unpopular**

The poorest and most vulnerable have great difficulty being popularly voted for, for they are too poor to afford resources (such as goods to give to neighbours) for social networking and mobilising support. In addition, poverty comes with low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and a sense of failure and being unentitled. All these factors militate against the capacity of the poorest and most vulnerable to defend their interests vis-a-vis those of the powerful.

There are quite a few categories of the poorest and most vulnerable who, for some reason, are unpopular with other villagers. For example, orphans and the elderly who are forced to stay with relatives in other villages usually fail

to get food aid as they are considered outsiders. Typically, they are rejected by villagers of their new homes as “aliens” and by their old villages as “exiles”. New arrivals from other parts of the country are routinely excluded from receiving food aid and dismissed as “strangers”.

Another group that tends to be excluded from receiving food aid is the previously well-off, but presently down and out. One such family, visibly distraught and malnourished, complained bitterly for being consistently voted out of the food aid programme. A beautiful house, built during the “good old days”, caused jealous neighbours to disqualify them for food aid.

Yet another example of a victim of village politics is that of a prophetess with three vulnerable children of her own and another three orphan wards from her deceased sister. Although they are probably the poorest family in her village, she has never been voted for to receive aid for allegedly exposing the “evil” ways of other villagers. The prophetess



REUTERS/PHILMON BULAWAYO

**Food aid beneficiaries are selected through a rudimentary process in which the villagers identify and vote for those eligible.**





**A long-term solution should involve capacitating the poor to become self-reliant and graduate from being aid recipients to becoming aid providers.**

has had to abandon her home and relocate to a peri-urban shanty town on the outskirts of Harare. In a nutshell, the dynamics of village politics means that power, networking and alliances determine who ultimately gets food aid.

### **Abuse of the System**

The food aid distribution system is open to abuse by many. In one case, a headman was accused of including on the beneficiary list names of deceased people, and receiving the food himself on their behalf. It is alleged that some of the new arrivals try to beat the system by getting food aid in both their old and new villages. Many more inflate the number of their dependent children, usually including independent children.

Some recipients of food aid sell it, while others use it to pay for casual farm work (or to feed chickens, in the case of bulgur wheat). Quite often, casual farm workers are the poorest and most vulnerable who fail to access food aid. In addition, the process of selecting beneficiaries generates conflict within communities.

### **Community Conflict**

Since everyone wants to get something of the little food aid available, it is not surprising that the Hobbesian<sup>5</sup>

egoistic instinct of self-preservation looms large in food aid beneficiary selection. With villagers using food aid distribution to settle scores and/or to profit, the outcome is rising conflict. For example, a male villager spent six months in jail as a result of a physical fight with another villager's wife over his alleged unfairness in portioning out donated rice. In another case, two village women were in a conflict after one of them revealed that the other only had one child and not two dependent children.

In another case, a woman was warned by an angry neighbour whom she had "sold out" that: "We will use the cooking oil you have received at your funeral." The "traitor" is since deceased. Given the strong superstitious beliefs among villagers, her death was attributed to witchcraft by the one she had "sold out". In all these examples, relations between the extended family members of the parties to the conflict became strained, and when other villagers were forced to take sides, the village became polarised.

### **Popular Criticisms**

Popular criticism against food aid is mounting. First, donors are criticised for offering what they have and not what recipients need – for instance, rice and cooking oil instead of seeds and fertiliser. Not surprisingly, some recipients end up selling food

aid to get money to buy other basic essentials not provided by donors.

Second, food aid is said to make planning and budgeting difficult. As one villager complained:

It is difficult to plan and budget when you don't know when they (donors) are coming next, and how much they are bringing.

Third, waiting for food aid – oftentimes in vain – is time-consuming and causes anxiety. Often, when rumours spread that food aid is coming, villagers flock to the food distribution point only to be sent back home empty-handed, angry and hungry. Finally, those who fail to receive food aid are scathing in their criticism, and their angry outbursts are quite revealing:

WFP should never come back again; it is promoting laziness; free food will not take us far; it is embarrassing and humiliating to keep being fed by other people; we want to farm and feed ourselves as we have always done, but now in addition to political sanctions, we also have God's sanctions – drought.

The desire to become self-sufficient seems to run through these popular criticisms. Therefore, policy changes should create conditions for a realisation of these dreams.

### **The Way Forward**

The politics of “who gets what and why” of the food aid – especially when too few of the many who are hungry get it – is potentially destructive and destabilising. New innovative ideas, as suggested below, are needed to deal with this challenge.

A local chief reasoned that since drought affects everyone, everyone should be given a little of what is available. Some felt that instead of providing a complete package – of cooking oil, beans/peas and maize – to a selected few, donors should provide only maize to everyone, as maize meal is the most basic staple. Others suggested that to discourage the pervasive “free dinner” mentality, the food should be sold at affordable prices.

A long-term solution should be holistic. First, it should involve capacitating the poor to become self-reliant and graduate from being “aid recipients to becoming aid providers”, as happened to the beneficiaries of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID's) Enhancing Nutrition, Stepping Up Resilience and Enterprise (Ensure) project.<sup>6</sup> After receiving agricultural resources, participants were able to produce surplus food, which was bought by USAID and given to the vulnerable. Second, empowering the poor should also include training them in better and environmentally sustainable farming techniques, as well as encouraging them to grow drought-resistant crops.

Finally, since the chaotic land reform process contributed substantially to a decline in food production,

the subject should be revisited with a view to making farms productive again. A 1998 conference on “The Land Question in Zimbabwe”, held at the University of Cambridge, recommended a win-win outcome in which only the unused part of farms would be reallocated.<sup>7</sup> This would have avoided the disruption of production and its catastrophic consequences, the suffering endured by displaced farmers and farm workers, the looting of farm equipment, and the need to compensate farmers. It would also have promoted racial reconciliation and even the learning of new skills by new farmers from the established farmers. Such an approach, which should involve consultations with all stakeholders, seems the only way that stability and development can be achieved.

### **Conclusion**

Colonial land dispossession, chaotic land reform and drought have all conspired to produce food insecurity of catastrophic proportions in rural Zimbabwe. Consequently, humanitarian food aid has become a major source of livelihood sustenance for many of the country's rural poor. The dynamics of village politics, coupled with the inherent flaws of the beneficiary selection system, mean that some of those who deserve food aid sometimes fail to get it, while the undeserving get it. To address the inadequacies of the food aid distribution system effectively, a holistic policy rethink is essential. **A**

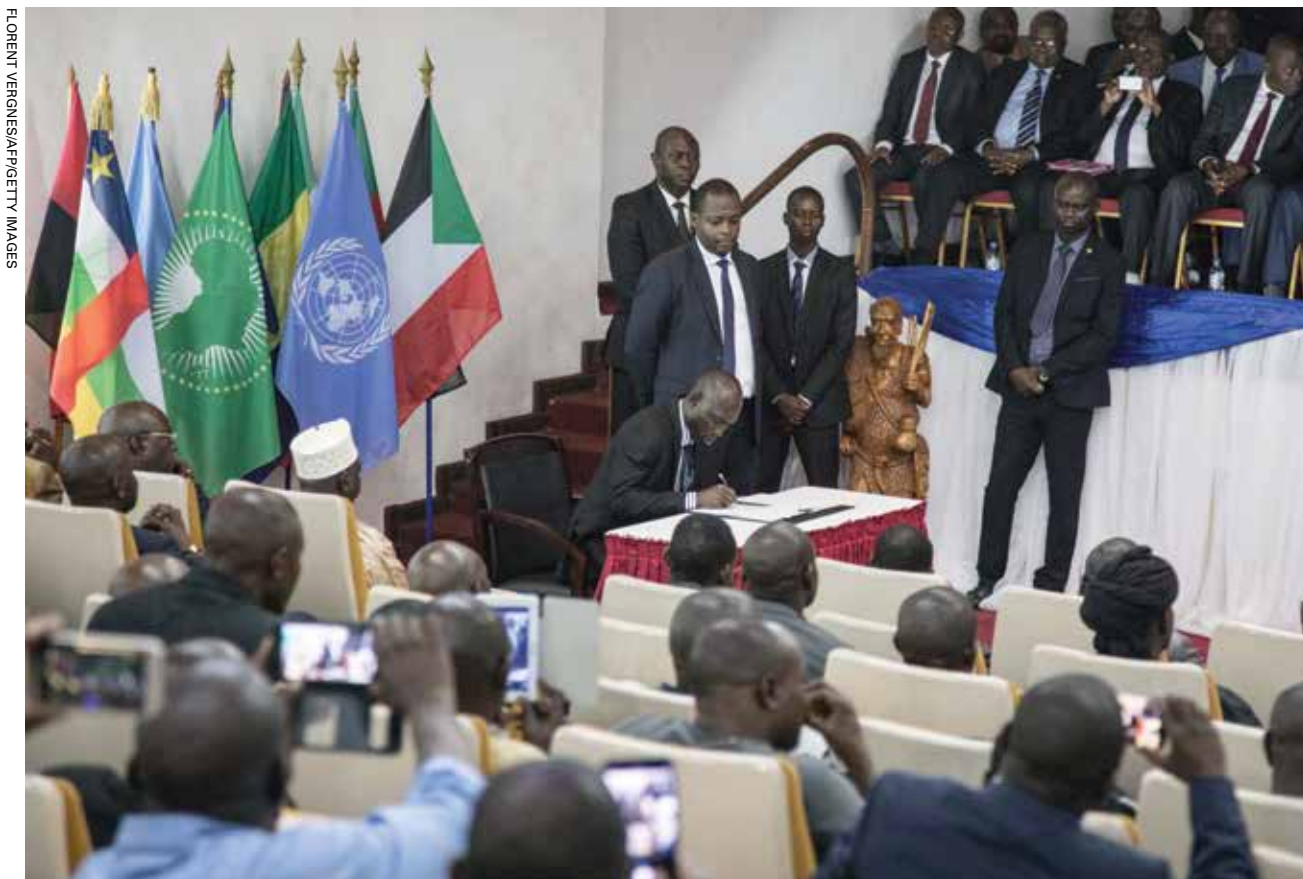
**Dr Mark Chingono is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at the University of Eswatini, Swaziland.**

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# A LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

BY OPEYEMI ADEMOLA OLAYIWOLA



FLORENT VERGENES/AP/GETTY IMAGES

## Introduction

On 6 February 2019, a peace agreement was signed between the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) and 14 armed groups that control most of the country. After two weeks of talks in Sudan, the Khartoum Agreement was agreed upon to end years of civil war in the CAR. While the agreement is seen by some as a step towards lasting peace, others are sceptical about its viability.<sup>1</sup> Such pessimistic reactions are understandable for several reasons. First, the Khartoum Agreement is the eighth of such agreements to attempt to bring peace to the CAR since the country descended into conflict in 2013. Second, less than a month after the new peace agreement was signed, one of

the 14 armed groups that signed the agreement abandoned the deal, while another armed group quit a new government designed to be the keystone to the agreement.<sup>2</sup> The failure of such peace agreements to stabilise the CAR suggests a need to examine the role of leadership in processes of building peace.

Since independence in 1960, the CAR has suffered five successful *coups d'état*. The 2013 coup, orchestrated by the Séléka – *Séléka* means “coalition” in the Sango language –

**Above: The Khartoum Agreement is the eighth of such agreements attempting to bring peace to the Central African Republic.**







**People celebrate the resignation of Central African Republic's president, Michel Djotodia (10 January 2014).**

and mistreatment of local populations by concessionary companies further contributed to the culture of resistance and self-defence among local communities.<sup>9</sup> However, the economic exploitation of the colony did not result in social and economic development.

By independence in 1960, infrastructure in the CAR was virtually non-existent.<sup>10</sup> More so, the post-independence period was characterised by a disequilibrium between the rural areas and the centre of power, Bangui, and inequalities between different groups within the population – all leading to the underdevelopment of the country. Regions outside of Bangui have consequently become marginalised, to the detriment of populations and ethnic groups living in those areas. This has resulted in a weak state that has little capacity or political will to govern beyond the capital.<sup>11</sup> The government's failure to provide services to outlying regions in the north and east is a major grievance and a key driver of conflict. This, in turn, perpetuates the cycle of conflict, poverty and grievances, and the further subcontracting of governance to international organisations. This fractured social landscape has created deep distrust between communities, and between the general population and the central government.<sup>12</sup>

Consequently, it has triggered politics of religion and identity by adding to the narrative that the government

does not care about its Muslim citizens – many of whom already share greater social connections with communities in Chad and Sudan. In turn, this helps ferment opposition against Muslims by Christians, resulting in the narrative that Muslim Séléka forces, supported by foreign powers, are trying to “Islamise” central African society.<sup>13</sup> The institutional crisis has also been both the cause and consequence of the near collapse of the country's economy.

**THE FORMAL ECONOMY WAS DRASTICALLY REDUCED AS FOREIGN COMPANIES GRADUALLY LEFT THE COUNTRY, AND UNEMPLOYMENT BECAME THE COMMON FATE OF A LARGE PART OF THE POPULATION**

The introduction of economic liberalisation in the late 1980s reduced the state's capacity and position to distribute resources, and structural adjustment programmes seem to have further contributed to the downfall of the CAR. The formal economy was drastically reduced as foreign companies gradually left the country, and unemployment



became the common fate of a large part of the population. Furthermore, for years the CAR's natural wealth has flowed out of the country rather than being used for local development. This has created a system whereby CAR politicians are often more concerned with the personal relationships they hold with these outside sources of power than with fulfilling their social contract with CAR citizens.<sup>14</sup> The military's interference in political and civil affairs has further resulted in a cyclical pattern of political instability, economic stagnation and social dissatisfaction.

It is clear that the CAR is faced with the need to address the structural problems inherited from the colonial power, as well as challenges arising from its leadership. To respond to and address the structural problems, leadership should take into consideration a broad understanding of the comprehensive challenges facing the citizens of the CAR, build the eroded social cohesion, and design measures to address such challenges, among other things.

### **The Challenges of Peacebuilding in the CAR**

A careful examination of the security situation in the CAR shows that the key challenges confronting national, regional and international peacebuilders in the country are conflict relapse and conflict resurgence. Conflict relapse refers to decline into armed conflict in a number of

situations that have experienced concerted peacemaking and peacebuilding interventions, while conflict resurgence occurs when armed conflict increases after a period of concerted peacebuilding interventions.<sup>15</sup> For example, the Bangui Forum was organised from 4 to 11 May 2015 to collect people's grievances and concerns.<sup>16</sup> Although the forum was seen as a sign of hope for the country, there was conflict relapse. Also, the failure of successive peace agreements between the warring parties revealed similar patterns of relapse. This is consistent with research, which indicates that a significant percentage of armed conflicts that conclude through negotiated settlement have a chance of relapse within 10 years.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, in some cases in the CAR, rather than end instability and armed conflict, peace agreements can add layers of further violence and division. The impact of both conflict relapse and conflict resurgence in the CAR is devastating and deadly.

Against this backdrop, the need for prevention of armed conflict in the first instance and prevention of its relapse or resurgence where conflict was not prevented seems obvious and necessary.<sup>18</sup> More so, African countries have realised the importance of prevention rather than reaction, because the costs of reaction are high. Despite this realisation, armed conflict in the CAR still represents high costs of reaction, as regional and international bodies such as the African Union



REUTERS/GOPAN TOMASEVIC

**Séléka (Muslim) fighters patrol as they search for Anti-Balaka Christian militia members near the town of Lioto (6 June 2014).**





**Members of the of the Anti-Balaka militia in the in the town of Bocaranga, Central African Republic (28 April 2017).**

(AU) and United Nations (UN) respectively have expended huge investments to respond to the armed conflict in the country. Thus, addressing the challenges of peacebuilding in the CAR requires a broad understanding of factors responsible for conflict relapse and conflict resurgence, followed by prevention commitment.

#### **Process-based Leadership in Peacebuilding**

Many studies of leadership reveal multiple interpretations of what constitutes process-based leadership.<sup>19</sup> Typically, much emphasis is placed on individual leaders and their actions or inactions – which, in many cases, serve to undercut rather than bolster the potential for peace and prosperity that exists in society. Some perspectives view leadership as a psychological endowment, or as result oriented.<sup>20</sup> Others consider leadership as the ability of a country or coalition of countries to initiate and guide the actions of a wider group of states to sustainably satisfy common good and need.<sup>21</sup> But none of these perspectives have consistently explained or delivered sustainable peace in conflicts in Africa, and the CAR in particular. How then must

leadership be understood and applied if it is to have value with peacebuilding challenges?

A process-based approach to leadership offers perhaps the most robust and all-encompassing framework of analysis for the pursuit of sustainable peace.

**OTHERS CONSIDER LEADERSHIP AS THE ABILITY OF A COUNTRY OR COALITION OF COUNTRIES TO INITIATE AND GUIDE THE ACTIONS OF A WIDER GROUP OF STATES TO SUSTAINABLY SATISFY COMMON GOOD AND NEED**

Central to a process-based approach to leadership in the search for sustainable peace is the societal exchange of influence in seeking solutions or responses to the situation confronting that society. This exchange of influence involves a process of interaction in which the whole society is involved in seeking solutions to their mutual situation.<sup>22</sup>

In the CAR, this important leadership element seems to have eluded peacebuilding interventions, as wider society has been excluded from peace processes. In addition, the wider society in the CAR are considered victims of conflict and/or recipients of humanitarian aid, while the process of peacemaking is an activity that concerns state actors, armed group leaders and international actors.<sup>23</sup> As a result, the work achieved by such top-down approaches is undermined by communities at the local level (which continue to perpetuate the violence and conflict), where the root causes of conflict are often situated. Thus, leadership as a process in peacebuilding should provide for a societal exchange of influence for addressing the underlying issues of conflict.

Leaders who exert influence in peacebuilding contexts may not always hold formal positions in government or society, and therefore do not rely on position power. Nonetheless, these leaders have a sense of shared feelings or intentions among people experiencing a particular situation, and offer the most viable ideas and solutions to the mutually felt needs of the affected society in that situation.<sup>24</sup> For example, religious leaders in the CAR have successfully harnessed their symbolic influence to call for restraint, and

in the provinces, priests have successfully mediated local conflicts.<sup>25</sup> In line with this summation, it is important for external actors seeking to intervene in war-affected societies to understand the context and recognise those leaders with whom a sufficiently broad cross-section of that society have mutually held needs and goals.<sup>26</sup> This offers a more viable path to peace rather than an approach that simply seeks to identify individuals outside of that context (or sometimes within), who may have attractive personal qualities but are irrelevant to the situation at hand.<sup>27</sup> Adopting this perspective offers a better lens for understanding conflict and peacebuilding dynamics.

The CAR is an example of the lack of process-based leadership in peacebuilding, which has engendered

**IN THE CAR, THIS IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP ELEMENT SEEMS TO HAVE ELUDED PEACEBUILDING INTERVENTIONS, AS WIDER SOCIETY HAS BEEN EXCLUDED FROM PEACE PROCESSES**



REUTERS/SIEGFRIED MODOLA

**Central to a process-based approach to leadership is the societal exchange of influence in seeking solutions to the challenges facing society.**





**An Archbishop and Imam participate in a street tour to spread tolerance and reconciliation in the outskirts of Bangui (11 December 2013).**

political instability, violence and disillusionment. The common leadership efforts in the country centre on interactions between national elites and international interlocutors. The outcome of this is often the control of the state and its resources by the elites. The interference of the military in the state with external backing has further produced a leadership approach that is based on amassing power and authority by the elites, rather than exchanging influence with CAR citizens. Thus, achieving sustainable peace in the CAR requires an “exchange of influence” between the leaders administering peace and the wider society receiving peace, with a focus not only

on the emergence of leaders through elections but also on reconciliation, relationship-building and addressing the structural causes of the conflict.

**Exchange of Influence: The Missing Link**

Leadership emergence in the CAR has been characterised by the influence of external actors. France is highly influential in the internal processes of the CAR. For example, a French-sponsored coup led by Jean-Bédél Bokassa, a colonel in the CAR military, overthrew the regime of David Dacko in 1960. Whereas Dacko was removed due to his close ties to China, Bokassa was chosen because of his devotion to France and his anti-communist stance. Eventually, France had problems with Bokassa, too, and stopped supporting him.<sup>28</sup> In addition, there is the Chadian interference in the CAR’s domestic affairs. Chad’s president, Idriss Déby, has been at least as influential in CAR politics as has the former colonial power. In fact, Chad has become known as the “king maker” in the CAR over the last few decades. In 2003, Bozizé benefited

**THE COMMON LEADERSHIP EFFORTS IN THE COUNTRY CENTRE ON INTERACTIONS BETWEEN NATIONAL ELITES AND INTERNATIONAL INTERLOCUTORS**





**Chad's president, Idriss Deby, has been influential in the Central African Republic's politics.**

## THE POPULATION RECEIVING THE LEADERSHIP INFLUENCE OFTEN RESPONDS BY ASSERTING INFLUENCE IN RETURN – THAT IS, BY MAKING DEMANDS ON THE LEADERS

from Chadian support to topple the Ange-Félix Patassé regime. Likewise, in 2013, Djotodia received support from Chad to ascend to power.<sup>29</sup> The lack of substantive exchange of influence within the CAR population served as one basis for the rejection of Djotodia's government and subsequent conflict, as future incentives for conflict were not reduced. The exchange of influence in peacebuilding entails the involvement of the CAR population in the emergence of leaders with ideas to deal with the issues at hand, and whose influence on the population is accepted. The population receiving the leadership influence often responds by asserting influence in return – that is, by making demands

on the leaders. Most simply, the leaders with ideas assert influence by sharing them with the wider society – which, in turn, accepts this assertion of influence if and when they are seen to offer a relevant solution.<sup>30</sup> However, wider society in the CAR was excluded from the exchange of influence, and therefore the scope of relationships and interactions were reduced.

The decision to form a transitional government in 2015, which resulted in Samba-Panza becoming president, was tasked with the main aim of guiding the CAR to elections. This decision was reached during an Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) summit in Chad's capital, Ndjamena.<sup>31</sup> In addition, the decision stopped Samba-Panza, Djotodia and Bozizé from contesting the elections. However, the process did not include discussions on the structural causes of successive coups. The process only involved discussions on the immediate planning of elections as a resolution to the trigger causes of the conflict. Furthermore, the process of selecting Samba-Panza as the president was concluded in Chad, under the influence of Déby, together

with France and ECCAS.<sup>32</sup> Such leadership emergence occurs when forces outside the group assign leadership to an individual and assert their influence in the acceptance of the individual as a leader.<sup>33</sup> This is different from process-based leadership, which calls for representation of wider society at the negotiation table and involvement in choosing the leaders, even in transitional periods.

The 2016 elections were supposed to mark the end of the transitional period and produce a new government. However, the timing – which was dictated by the international community – did not only underestimate the complexity of the conflict, it also impaired the dynamic nature of the leadership process by undermining the process of building societal relations that would have anchored an enduring process of peacebuilding. More so, the elites' preoccupation with elections reflects the fact that external political agendas, not always aligned with local needs, have heavily influenced the conflict resolution process.<sup>34</sup> This, however, does not downplay elections. It only means that the participation of wider society should determine the importance and sustainability of a democratic process.

### Conclusion and Policy Implications

This article argues for a peace process anchored in process-based leadership to achieve sustainable peace in the CAR. Several peacebuilding measures and processes, including the latest peace agreement, have been put in place to address the unresolved instability and armed violence in the CAR. However, the missing link seems to be the exchange of influence, as a process-based leadership approach for sustainable peace did not occur in the CAR. Despite political transitions and successive peace agreements, the absence of sustainable peace continues to point to the fact that the exchange of influence between elites and citizens of the CAR is minimal – and, in many cases, such exchanges never took place. There is a need to build sustainable peace in the CAR through interactions and the exchange of influence between those who are offering peace and the affected society receiving peace. This would require committed efforts towards relationship building and addressing the structural causes of the conflict by all relevant stakeholders. ▲

**Opeyemi Ademola Olayiwola is a Graduate Student at the Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Science, Pan African University, in Cameroon, and a Researcher and Policy Analyst at the Organization for World Peace (Africa Division) in Canada.**

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# ELECTIONS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

BY NAILA SALIHU



UN PHOTO/MICHAEL ALI

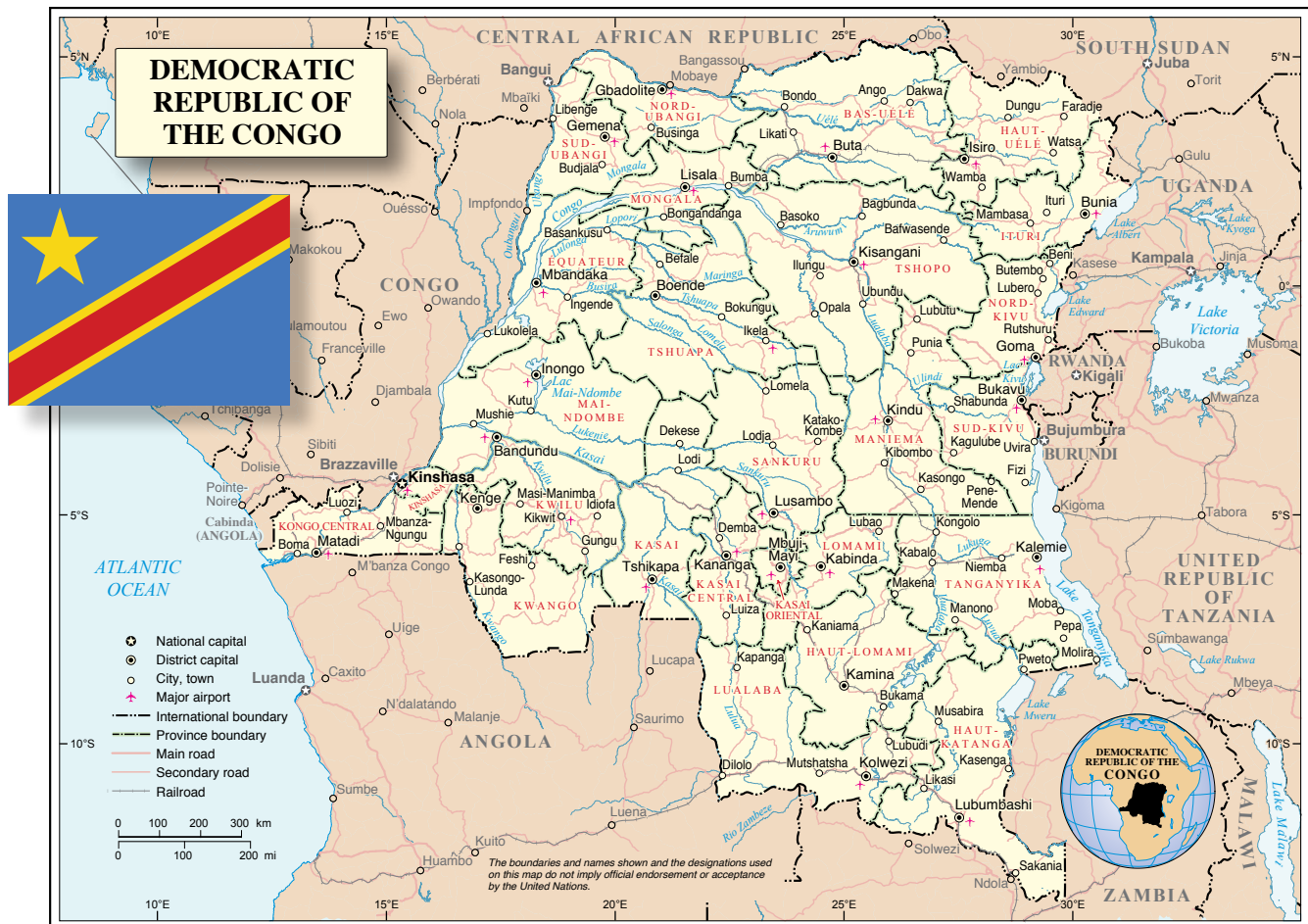
## Introduction

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been home to the one of the oldest peacekeeping missions in the world – the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) – due to many periods of instability. Since independence in 1960, the country has been embroiled in conflict. Joseph Kabila succeeded his late father, Laurent Kabila, as president, following the latter's assassination in 2001. He ruled the country for almost 17 years, and controversially won two elections, in 2006 and 2011. His tenure expired in November 2016, necessitating presidential and legislative elections. However, in September 2016, the Independent National

Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the postponement of elections, citing reasons of violence in parts of the country, as well as logistical and financial constraints. CENI also petitioned the Constitutional Court and obtained authorisation to postpone elections to compile a fresh voter register. These developments were met with widespread anger and protests over what some saw as Kabila's refusal to relinquish power at the end of his second constitutionally mandated term.

**Above: The United Nations Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) is one of the oldest peacekeeping missions in the world.**





Map No. 4007 Rev. 11 UNITED NATIONS  
May 2016

Department of Field Support  
Geospatial Information Section (former Cartographic Section)

In the face of a legitimacy crisis and mounting domestic and external pressures from western powers, the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), combined presidential, legislative and provincial elections were held on 30 December 2018. The initial announcement to the elections was met with some reservations. Nonetheless, the elections took place. Contrary to widely held views of machinations by the incumbent government to cling to power, long-time opposition leader, Félix Tshisekedi, emerged as the new president of the DRC, having secured over 7 million votes, representing 38.57% of the total votes cast. The runner-up – another opposition candidate, Martin Fayulu, leader of the Lamuka coalition – garnered about 6.3 million votes (34.38%). The ruling coalition’s candidate, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadary, came in third with over 4.3 million votes, representing 23.84% of votes cast.<sup>1</sup> The voter turnout was 47.6%. However, Fayulu, who led the pre-election polls, filed a fraud complaint with the country’s highest court, calling for a recount of the official results. The court upheld the results. The DRC’s Catholic Church also intimated that the results gathered by its 40 000-strong monitoring team pointed to a different outcome than announced by the electoral commission.<sup>2</sup>

The disputed elections have larger consequences for the post-Kabila government.

This article discusses the issues surrounding the elections and implications for stability in the post-election environment. The first section discusses the contentious issues that characterised the pre-election phase. This is followed by an analysis of developments in the post-election environment and the overall implications for stability.

### Contentious Pre-election Issues

Electoral preparations did not include some of the important elements of the Saint Sylvester Agreement, signed by the government and its opponents on 31 December 2016. This agreement was brokered by the influential Catholic bishops of the National Episcopal Conference of the Congo (CENCO), following the heavy security clampdown on protesters calling for Kabila to step down.<sup>3</sup> The agreement set out a power-sharing roadmap for the transition period until elections by 31 December 2018. The agreement forbade Kabila from attempting a third presidential term and precluded constitutional amendments during the transition period. It also outlined certain measures meant to ease political tensions, including the release of political prisoners.<sup>4</sup>



**Joseph Kabila, who succeeded his late father, Laurent Kabila, as the Democratic Republic of the Congo's president in 2001, and presided for almost 17 years, casts his vote during the presidential and legislative elections in Kinshasa (30 December 2018).**

Following the announcement of the electoral calendar, preparations for the election started. These included new electoral legislation, voter registration, introduction of new voting technology, and dialogues between the CENI and opposition parties. Kabila approved a new electoral law on 24 December 2017. This law included provisions that sought to reduce the huge number of candidates, as was experienced in previous elections in 2006 and 2011. For example, the proliferation of political parties (more than 600) and candidates led to a 55-page ballot in Kinshasa in 2011.<sup>5</sup> The law also included electoral thresholds (the minimum shares of the total vote that parties must win to qualify for seats in the national and provincial legislatures), and increased the non-refundable deposit for national assembly candidates to US\$1000, and almost doubled that of presidential candidates – from US\$5 000 to US\$100 000.<sup>6</sup> These reforms were aimed at addressing some of the structural flaws of the Congolese political system. Typically, they helped reduce fragmentation in the legislature and led to a decrease in the number of smaller parties.<sup>7</sup> Since February 2018, smaller parties were compelled to form new

electoral coalitions to ensure that they could garner sufficient votes to meet the new electoral thresholds and qualify for seats in future national and provincial assemblies.

On 13 January 2018, the head of CENI, Corneille Nangaa, announced the end of voter registration, which took place between 25 July and 8 August 2017. This was an important milestone in electoral preparations. The DRC government funded a US\$400 million voter registration exercise, which recorded over 46 million potential voters (well above the 41 million expected),<sup>8</sup> and was seen as a very expensive and complex process. Nonetheless, opposition and other interest groups, such as the Catholic church, cited irregularities in the registration process and challenged the ensuing voter register.

One major issue was the electoral calendar and the limited transition period. The electoral cycle, including local elections, should be completed by 16 February 2020. The timetable was criticised by political and civil society groups as a difficult schedule orchestrated to give Kabila and his ruling party an unfair advantage, as the then ruling party had an upper hand in terms of organisational and resource





**In September 2016 the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced the postponement of elections, which some saw as President Kabila's refusal to relinquish power.**

capabilities. On the contrary, the relatively tight nature of the electoral calendar was seen as disadvantageous to the numerous and fragmented opposition political parties, which needed more preparation time. Despite scepticism about the process, most parties took steps to keep up with the CENI calendar.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of calls by the international community for him to make public his intentions of not seeking re-election, Kabila remained silent on the topic until his prime minister, Bruno Tshibala Nzenze, announced in June 2018 that Kabila would not seek re-election.<sup>10</sup> This announcement helped to calm tensions at the time. The incumbent Peoples' Party for Reconciliation and Democracy (PPRD) announced Shadary, the former interior minister, as its presidential candidate. This partly resolved earlier concerns and speculation about Kabila's intentions, and also indicated the selection

of a successor whom Kabila trusted to safeguard his family interests in the successor government, as Shadary is known to be close to Kabila.<sup>11</sup> While some members of the international community viewed the election calendar as a sign of progress, many Congolese people remained sceptical, citing the rising tensions in the country.<sup>12</sup> The country's history of political conflicts remains a driver of instability, and violent conflict continued in the eastern part of the country.<sup>13</sup> The pre-election period was characterised by violent protests and the state responding with excessive force.<sup>14</sup>

The PPRD has carried out some reforms, including making Kabila the president of the party, among other internal restructuring. These actions and political preparations pointed to a regime strategy that would see Kabila step down but still exercise a degree of control behind the scenes as the PPRD president. Even though Shadary has been beaten to third place in the presidential election, legislative results from the election showed that the Common Front for Congo (FCC), a pro-Kabila coalition, won a majority, with 341 of the 500 seats in the national assembly. This figure exceeds the threshold of 250 seats needed for a majority. Tshisekedi's Union for Democracy and Social Progress (UDPS) and its allied Union for the Congolese

**THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD WAS CHARACTERISED BY VIOLENT PROTESTS AND THE STATE RESPONDING WITH EXCESSIVE FORCE**





**Félix Tshisekedi is sworn into office as the new president of the Democratic Republic of the Congo during the inauguration ceremony at the Palais de la Nation in Kinshasa (24 January 2019).**

Nation (UNC) only managed 46 seats, while Fayulu's Lumuka coalition won 94 seats.<sup>15</sup>

Before the elections, there were some concerns about the transparency and overall outcome of the polls. The Kabila government was operating from a position of relative strength: it retained firm control of the state security and electoral machinery, and was also better resourced than most of the relatively weak and fragmented opposition parties. The Kabila government had a strong footing in the CENI and the Constitutional Court, which arbitrates electoral disputes in the presidential and legislative elections. It also controlled most provincial governments. Furthermore, public perception about the impartiality of the CENI was low. Some local civil society groups described this as a "total crisis of confidence" in the electoral process.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, there were concerns about preparations for the elections, especially the logistics. In particular, the introduction of new voting technology stirred more controversy. The electoral body envisaged using voting machines instead of printed ballot papers – a change that sought to remedy the logistical challenges encountered in previous elections, particularly lengthy ballots. The opposition and civil society groups were worried that electronic voting machines could lead to voter fraud, and

raised issues about voter confidentiality. Other political, technical and financial concerns were also raised. As recounted by a civil society activist: "DRC currently has a population which is 65% illiterate – mostly women and young people – who would consequently have enormous difficulties in using these machines, particularly as they are programmed in the French language, not the local language."<sup>17</sup> Others argued that although the CENI was testing prototypes that were reportedly more reliable, using novel technology potentially posed a risk, given the poor infrastructure and a lack of reliable electricity.<sup>18</sup> Notably, there were concerns about financial transparency and the procurement of the machines, their timely delivery and the likely effects on training needed to use them. Some of these concerns were confirmed by the delay in the

**THE OPPOSITION AND CIVIL SOCIETY GROUPS WERE WORRIED THAT ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINES COULD LEAD TO VOTER FRAUD, AND RAISED ISSUES ABOUT VOTER CONFIDENTIALITY**

election process, especially in the collation of the results. The electoral body had to grapple with some logistical challenges – for instance, in early December 2018, one of its warehouses was burnt to the ground, including the thousands of electronic voting machines stored there. Voting was also suspended and delayed in some parts of the country – for example, close to a million people could not vote in states affected by the Ebola outbreak.<sup>19</sup>

Another contentious issue involved the contenders in the presidential elections. The names of prominent people – such as former vice president, Jean-Pierre Bemba, and Moïse Katumbi, an exiled businessman and former governor of Katanga province – surfaced as likely candidates. However, opposition forces accused Kabila’s government of blocking some top candidates from running. Notably, Bemba was a surprise contender after the International Criminal Court (ICC) appeal judges, in June 2018, acquitted him of war crimes committed by his Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) forces in the neighbouring Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003. Bemba returned to the DRC after more than a decade, and five weeks after his conviction for war crimes was overturned, he was nominated by the MLC as the

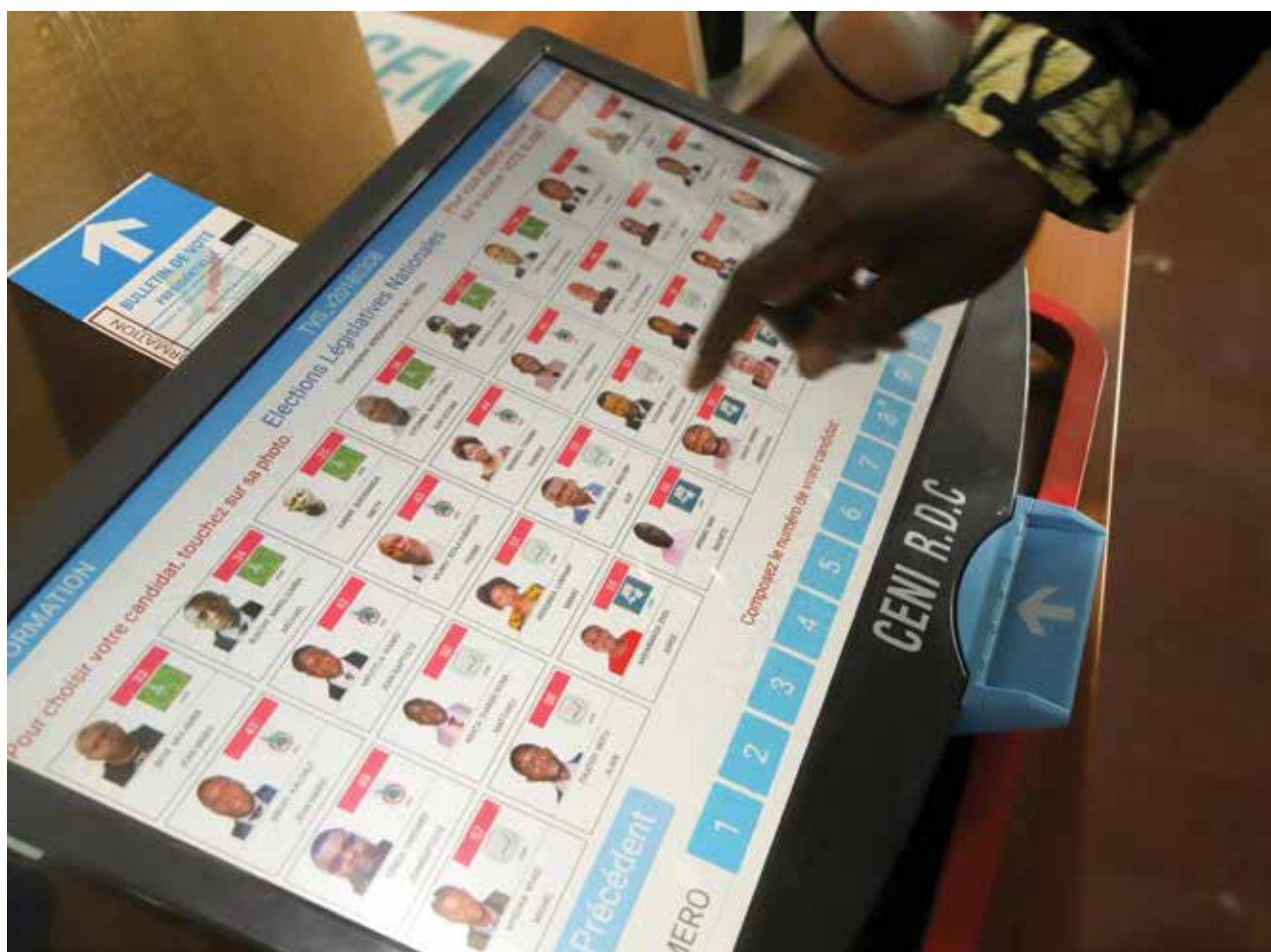
party’s candidate for the upcoming presidential election.<sup>20</sup> However, his candidature was disqualified by the electoral commission, citing a pending case in which Bemba was convicted of interfering with witnesses. This charge has been linked with corruption, as Congolese law prevents people convicted of corruption from running for the presidency. Unsurprisingly, on 3 September 2018, the Constitutional Court upheld the electoral commission’s decision that Bemba could not run because of the pending case at the ICC.<sup>21</sup> Congolese authorities also blocked Katumbi, another top opposition contender, from entering the country to register as a candidate. In addition, the Constitutional Court upheld the invalidation of former prime minister Adolphe Muzito,<sup>22</sup> but surprisingly, the Constitutional Court reinstated the candidature of former prime minister, Samy Badibanga Ntita, who was accused of having a second nationality.<sup>23</sup>

A further issue had to do with the role of the international community in the election process. The Congolese government indicated that the election was a purely internal affair and would fully pay for it. Interestingly, MONUSCO was mandated through Resolution 2409 to provide technical assistance and logistical support for the electoral process,



REUTERS/KENNY KATOMBE

**An official from Congo’s National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) records the finger prints of a resident during voter registration (31 May 2017).**



**Congo’s National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) tests a voting machine ahead of the postponed presidential election (24 December 2018).**

in coordination with the Congolese authorities. However, the CENI stated that it would not accept any assistance from MONUSCO.<sup>24</sup> The government also indicated that it was not open to having any outside special envoys observing the elections, and demanded an exit strategy for MONUSCO. For various reasons, in April 2018 the government denied the existence of a humanitarian crisis in parts of the country and refused to attend an international conference in Geneva, organised by the United Nations (UN), to raise US\$1.7 billion for emergency assistance for over 13 million people in Congo affected by recent violence.<sup>25</sup> The country also continued to suffer from recurrent outbreaks of the deadly Ebola virus. The position of the government was seen as part of a scheme aimed at repairing the image of the DRC to make it attractive to foreign direct investment.<sup>26</sup> Western governments and local civil society were sceptical about the capacity of the government to bear financial responsibility for the elections – however, the elections did take place, with enormous state funding.

At a regional level, the AU established a small liaison office in Kinshasa and engaged in preventive diplomacy talks with Congolese political actors and regional leaders. The AU

Peace and Security Council re-emphasised its support for the implementation of the Saint Sylvester Agreement and called for the region and the wider international community to provide technical, logistical and financial support for the elections.<sup>27</sup> The roles of regional powers and neighbours in the election is noteworthy – for example, southern African governments appeared frustrated with Kabila’s failure to cooperate with their election-related initiatives. The DRC government turned down both South Africa and SADC’s offers of technical support that followed a December 2017 visit of SADC officials and election experts.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, while SADC leaders nudged Kabila toward elections, some leaders of DRC’s immediate neighbours –

**AT A REGIONAL LEVEL, THE AU ESTABLISHED A SMALL LIAISON OFFICE IN KINSHASA AND ENGAGED IN PREVENTIVE DIPLOMACY TALKS WITH CONGOLESE POLITICAL ACTORS AND REGIONAL LEADERS**



Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi – seemed not to be directly involved. Interestingly, all three neighbouring countries have manipulated their own constitutions in the past to stay in power, and so have little credibility to push for respect of term limits, despite their security concerns vis-à-vis their borders with the DRC.

### **The Post-election Environment and Prospects for Democratic Stability**

The results of the elections were finally announced after a long delay, amidst tensions and allegations of tampering by different candidates. However, the delay in the release of results was explained by the CENI as being a result of the slow transmission of tally sheets from across the vast country. There were allegations of fraud in the elections, giving the runner-up candidate reason to challenge the results in court, and there were concerns by both local and international actors about the election outcome. The AU called for a recount of the votes – a call that was uncharacteristic of the AU, which rarely criticises election results. Similarly, the ICGLR expressed “great concern” about the controversy. Interestingly, SADC initially called for a recount, only to backtrack later and urge the international community to respect the DRC’s sovereignty, stressing

the need for stability in the country. The aftermath of the elections has seemed to give credence to some doubts about the credibility of the CENI. There are allegations that Tshisekedi struck a deal with Kabila to be declared victor, when it proved difficult to rig the election in favour of the FCC. Kabila sought to continue exerting influence behind the scenes.<sup>29</sup> Tshisekedi was simply the least-worst option for Kabila and his networks, given Shadary’s manifest unpopularity.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, Tshisekedi’s posture towards Kabila after the elections surprised many. During a speech, he referred to Kabila as “no longer an adversary, but instead as a partner in the democratic change in our country”.<sup>31</sup>

Some regional powers did not publicly congratulate President Tshisekedi, and he has a legitimacy deficit to overcome. As such, the government will likely find it difficult to undertake the many serious reforms that the DRC requires, because of its lack of legitimacy. Dynamics in the near future could be interesting for the new government. Although Kabila has officially stepped down from office, he and his associates will most likely continue to control the levers of power, such as the military and the economic sector. His political coalition, with the majority of seats in the National Assembly, has a voice in the choice of prime minister and cabinet ministers. Furthermore, the outcome of



**Voters queue outside a polling centre in Kinshasa, to cast their votes in the presidential and legislative elections (30 December 2018).**



**Congolese riot policemen disperse supporters of the runner-up in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s presidential election following his appeal, contesting the Congo’s National Independent Electoral Commission’s (CENI) results of the presidential election, at the constitutional court in Kinshasa (12 January 2019).**

**CONTRARY TO THE WIDELY HELD PERCEPTION OF THE RULING PARTY HOLDING ON TO POWER THROUGH ELECTIONS, THE OUTCOME WAS DIFFERENT IN THE DRC**

the senate elections in March 2019 seem to have tightened the leash on Tshisekedi, as the FCC won overwhelming control of the senate, with 90 of 108 seats.<sup>32</sup> In May 2019, Tshisekedi named Sylvestre Ilunga Ilukamba, former head of the national railway company, as the new prime minister. This appointment comes from a political agreement between Tshisekedi and Kabila.<sup>33</sup>

The election hurdle has been crossed, amidst some challenges with consequences for political stability in the country. While there are functioning executive and legislative arms of government in place, the DRC remains unstable and underdeveloped, despite being rich in minerals. The country continues to face severe challenges in exercising the essential functions of a state, such as security and sustainable development, and is placed 176<sup>th</sup> out of a possible 189 on the Human Development Index.<sup>34</sup> Deadly epidemics, such as Ebola, continue to break out in the country, and issues of sexual and gender-based violence persist – conflict-related sexual violence against women, girls and boys is rampant.<sup>35</sup> MONUSCO has metamorphosed over the years

in response to the political developments in the country. Its mission remains essential for meeting the existing security challenges of the DRC – in particular, those posed by armed groups in the east of the country. Nonetheless, there is a gradual disengagement of the mission in tandem with the effective exercise of the full sovereignty of the state over the entire territory.<sup>36</sup> It is, however, still unclear how the recent democratic transition can provide an enabling environment for lasting peace in the country, and possibly lead to the end of one of the oldest peacekeeping missions in Africa.

**Conclusion**

In hindsight, local and international pressure worked to get Kabila to organise elections and respect the constitutional term limit. The delayed elections eventually took place amidst contentious political, financial and technical obstacles. Contrary to the widely held perception of the ruling party holding on to power through elections, the outcome was different in the DRC. The contested elections produced a government with a legitimacy deficit to tackle the DRC’s multiple security and development challenges. Some argue that the acceptance by many players in the international community of the outcome of the January 2019 elections in the DRC in the name of stability, represents a failure to the Congolese people.<sup>37</sup> The DRC has benefited from significant international investments over the past two decades to help stabilise the country and the



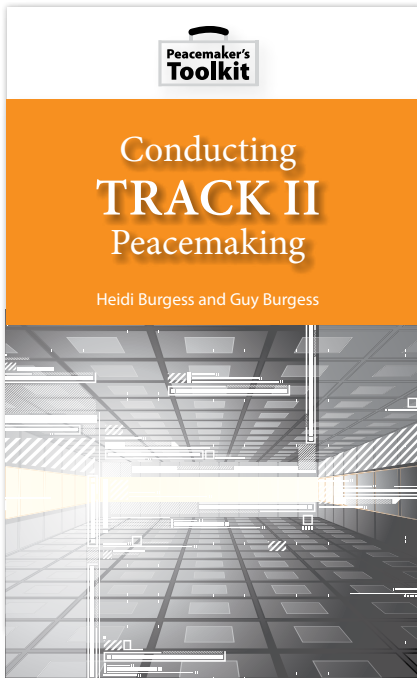
region. The international community must engage in robust preventive diplomacy to address some of the contentious issues still prevailing, and possibly push for important political and institutional reforms that will contribute to building confidence in future electoral processes, and to the consolidation of peace. **A**

**Dr Naila Salihu is a Research Fellow at the Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, in Accra, Ghana.**

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## *CONDUCTING TRACK II PEACEMAKING: A PEACEMAKER'S TOOLKIT BOOK 3*

Authors **Guy Burgess and Heidi Burgess**  
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 Pages **88 (print), 84 (Kindle online)**

This handbook, *Conducting Track II Peacemaking: A Peacemaker's Toolkit Book 3*, links the evolution of track II diplomacy to the complexity and intractability of post-Cold War conflicts. Modern-day conflicts involve too many actors with incompatible interests, violent histories and complex international entanglements. As such, militaries and teams of mediators alone cannot make and keep the peace. In response to this situation, national and multinational actors have launched loosely coordinated peace efforts involving development specialists and relevant conflict resolution experts to complement track I efforts.

The handbook delineates several levels of track I and track II diplomacy. Track I refers to official interactions between states and among several states, regionally or globally. Track II is the unofficial interaction and intervention of development actors with civil society, individuals or groups of individuals – sometimes called “non-state actors”. The handbook also outlines, with examples, how track II efforts complement track I efforts in myriad ways and at various points. Track II prepares the ground for track I when track II practitioners bring parties together across conflict lines to talk, build relationships, engage in joint civic projects, or even develop new ideas about potential political solutions to the conflict. Track II diplomacy is also valuable if conducted simultaneously with track I efforts, and can complement post-track I efforts. The book acknowledges the existence of multiple-track diplomacy, but limits discussions to track I and track II diplomacy.

When a conflict is not ripe for negotiations, track II activities can stimulate ripeness. Third party consultation

may catalyse unwilling parties to rethink their interests and positions. Track II can also facilitate communication, build trust and relationships, break down stereotypes, and develop new ways of seeing and solving vexing problems. Further, track II can ameliorate situations where conflict involves a party seen by another as “illegitimate”, as in the case of terrorists. Track II actors can work quietly through back channels to ensure that the interests of an illegitimate party are brought to the table – what the authors refer to as the needs versus values approach. Where direct contact with illegitimate parties is legally prohibited, track II actors can work with surrogates – local citizens who share the same aspirations with illegitimate groups, but have legal access to negotiate with the state. This is referred to in the handbook as the lower-power parties versus the higher-power parties.

Theoretically, track II is a series of linear activities. In practice, however, the process is not as linear, and the handbook clarifies that actors can decide to start with stage two before stage one, according to the specific conflict situation. Again, different track II practitioners can conduct various track II efforts concurrently in any one conflict setting – or repeat the same steps within a single intervention – as the situation demands. In some situations, while one track II actor may undertake a similar series of steps with each activity, different track II practitioners may also conduct many other track II efforts simultaneously in the same conflict setting. In addition, the intervener is likely to repeat the same steps within a single intervention, conducting the same process with different audiences or modifying the process as the situation on the ground changes. Furthermore, some steps actually take place throughout the process – for example,

evaluation can start from beginning of the process and continue to the end. The handbook thus discusses the need for ensuring that different peacemaking efforts complement and reinforce one another. Creating such synergy involves not only aligning track I and track II efforts, but also coordinating the various track II efforts to maximise their positive impact.

The first step in track II diplomacy involves conflict assessment or “going up on the balcony” to get a broader perspective of the situation, opportunities and challenges the intervention is likely to encounter. This is also known as a needs assessment. Knowing the local history of track II activities helps determine what new activities will be both possible and fruitful. As noted, track II activities depend on the presence of a reasonably developed and active civil society for success, but most importantly if that civil society voluntarily involves itself and does so in good faith. Interveners must thus assess attitudes, because if people are content with the status quo or pessimistic about the possibility for change, they will not participate effectively. Moreover, if people are cajoled into participating, they are likely to undermine the process more than help it. Where little civil society activity exists, peacebuilding efforts can start prior to dialogues, workshops and other bilateral or multilateral processes. Sometimes, even where an active civil society exists, track II efforts may be difficult because of restrictions on civil liberties.

The second step includes developing a strategy for engagement – one that maximises benefits to bring about the desired change. This entails deciding on the level of intervention (whether interpersonal, psychological or relational; interethnic dialogues and problem-solving workshops, or combining the two for maximum benefit) and planning for coordination (deciding how to fit the strategy into the larger picture of peacemaking activities, using the knowledge gained in the needs assessment to prepare a map of past and present activities that will indicate gaps, areas of need that are not being addressed, and possible avenues for coordination). The third step centres on designing the best suitable process for the conflict. Processes include training, intergroup dialogues, interactive conflict resolution/problem-solving workshops, public peace and tolerance education (face to face or media-based), and joint projects (to increase collaboration and intergroup understanding). These processes are most useful if undertaken simultaneously with track I negotiations, to help bring broader segments of society together. Actors must also choose suitable venues, select suitable participants (relational), find partners and decide on prescriptive<sup>1</sup> or elicitive<sup>2</sup> approaches, depending on the situation at hand.

The fourth step entails conducting track II activities, depending on the selected processes among those highlighted in step three. Activities must include building trust, adjusting goals and strategies to meet unanticipated needs, managing “people problems” and group dynamics, overcoming obstacles, addressing power inequities and managing the media. The fifth step focuses on undertaking follow-up activities and evaluation. It is difficult for participants to maintain relationships post-process setting, hence the need for frequent reinforcement through phone calls and emails to maintain and transfer positive attitudes. Documentation processes should continue to support evaluation, too. Where peace has been enabled, track II activities should continue, taking care to feed into track I to avoid suspicions, while enlarging the grassroots peace constituency. An agreement signed by elite negotiators but not supported by the grassroots will rarely hold.

This must-read handbook bridges theory and practice in track I and track II peacemaking processes. The simple fact that the book is a consequence of a married couple’s authorship, and that the two jointly established the University of Colorado Conflict Information Consortium, where they both teach about intractable conflicts, is the least of the reasons why reading this book enables an understanding of how a few people who possess profound imaginations can create a culture of peace that, in turn, aids institutional development for peace and stability globally. 🏠

**Dudziri Nhengu is a governance, gender, peace, security and conflict resolution scholar-practitioner, currently undertaking a PhD degree at Africa University.**

- 1 Prescriptive training or intervention assumes that the intervener – the trainer, the dialogue facilitator or the mediator – is the “expert” and that they are sharing their expertise with the client.
- 2 The elicitive approach assumes that the clients are actually the experts – they understand their situation better than any outsider, and they know (though they may not realise that they know) the best way to solve their problem.

## CONFLICT TRENDS

### Editor-In-Chief

Vasu Gounden

### Managing Editor

Venashri Pillay

### Language Editor

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### Design and Layout

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### Contributors

Mark Chingono

Kabale Ignatius Mukunto

Dudziri Nhengu

Brown Odigie

Al Chukwuma Okoli

Opeyemi Ademola Olayiwola

Naila Salihu

### Publisher

The African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)  
Private Bag X018  
Umhlanga Rocks 4320  
South Africa  
Tel: +27 031 502 3908  
Fax: +27 031 502 4160  
Email: [conflicttrends@accord.org.za](mailto:conflicttrends@accord.org.za)  
Website: [www.acCORD.org.za](http://www.acCORD.org.za)

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