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Militarization and Shifting Dynamics of Power in Africa

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We are committed to a world where people are free from all forms of oppression and exploitation, where respect for individuals' varied differences is maintained, and where everyone can realise their full potentials. A critical step in creating such a world requires us to analyze, reflect on, and debate the world as it is, as it might, could, or should be.

Nokoko aims to be a site for such important conversations related to Africa, the African diaspora, and the continent's relationship with the rest of the world. *Nokoko* is a platform for public intellectuals, academics, social movements and organizations that share our vision. The journal is open access, with no fees to submit, publish or read.

Hosted by the Institute of African Studies, at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada), the journal *Nokoko* offers a space for emerging and established scholars to publish and engage in discussions about their work on Africa and the African diaspora. Published annually, articles and contributions to the journal are peer-reviewed. Submissions should be robust, clearly written and accessible to academic and non-academic readership alike (see below for author guidelines).

Nokoko is a Ga word that means something new, novel, surprising and interesting.

James Tar Tsaioor, Professor of English, Media and Cultural Studies, and Independent Scholar

Pablo Idahosa, Professor, Development Studies, York University

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Navigating the Complex Terrain of Militarization in Africa

As this special issue of *Nokoko* was being wrapped up for publication, two remarkable developments related to the focus of the special issue came to the fore. The first is a news-feature article in *The New York Times* on the deposed President of Niger, Mohamed Bazoum, titled, "The Bleak Life of a Deposed President and His Wife, Held Captive." The second is a viral document making the rounds in Nigeria's online communities titled "An Open Letter to Mr. President and the Leadership of the National Assembly (NASS) on the Dangers of the Relocation of American and French Military Bases from the Sahel to Nigeria" and written by prominent civil society leaders. Together, these two developing stories underscore, not just the significance of this special issue, but also the urgency of the subject matter. Within the two-year gestation period of this special issue, the Sahel region of Africa has witnessed seismic changes in its political configuration and fight against neo-colonialism that have prompted increased attention to what a freelance writer, Kent Mensah, has described as "Africa's coup epidemic" in an *Al Jazeera* article of September 22, 2023.

Coping with the rapid trends in militarization while staying on course with the original idea for the special issue by the two editors, Toby Moorsom and Richard Raber, proved to be challenging. The journal was mindful not to produce a special issue with contents that would be stale on arrival. Hence, the issue offers more than the intricate and multifaceted subject of militarization in Africa, a topic that has shaped the continent's past and continues to influence its present and future. Particularly noteworthy then is the inclusion of articles that some might find as surprising as their aesthetic timelessness from the interdisciplinary lens of cultural studies. These are exemplified by Danson Sylvester Kahyana's essay, "Singing against the State's Guns and Goons: Timothy Wangusa's Poetry and the Quest for Democratic Governance in Uganda," and the Photo Essay by Tshepiso Mabula, "Ukugrumba: Recollecting Dry Bones: Revisiting the Aftermath of the Liberation Struggle."

As we present this special issue, we invite readers to engage critically with the content, reflecting on the complexities of militarization and its implications for the future of Africa. The articles highlight the importance of historical perspective, the interplay of local and global dynamics, and the necessity of inclusive and sustainable approaches to security and development. It is our hope that the insights provided here would contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for the continent.

We are particularly grateful to the editors of the special issue for painstakingly seeing it through even when the challenges seemed daunting. We are also grateful to the *Nokoko* board members for their invaluable support, and to the administrative crew at Carleton's Institute of African Studies: Susaritha Chandrabose and Gabriel Habiyaremye.

Finally, we thank our contributors for their rigorous research and thoughtful analysis, and we look forward to continued discourse on this pivotal topic.

Nduka Otiono
Ottawa,
May 5, 2024.

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Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada)
2024 (11)

We dedicate this special issue to Djombi de Kaze Keegan Valery,
Son of contributor, Tindo Narcisse Saturnin Kaze,
and Abeng Élisabeth Alexandrine
He passed away, February 19, 2024 at 6:17 pm. at 3 years 8 months old

INTRODUCTION

Militarization and Shifting Dynamics of Power in Africa

Toby Leon Moorsom and Richard Levi Raber

Transformation is underway from the post-Cold War order, characterised by American supremacy, towards a new multi-polar, or multiplex world order (Acharya, 2018; Carmody, this issue). This coincides with an increase in rhetoric departing from practices of international relations grounded in neoliberalism by core capitalist nations, toward what some, like Canadian Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland, describe as "friend-shoring", or "friend-sourcing", alongside a discursive return of economic protectionism (Hyder, 2022). The degree to which this actually represents a material shift in the architecture and trade flows of the international order remains unclear, however, some political economists periodize the neoliberal era as commencing in 1973 and concluding in 2008 (Davidson, 2023; Martineau and Folco, 2023). For others, the project is ongoing, with 2008 leading to a renewed round of "primative accumulation" and reconfiguration of production systems causing displacements of African peasants, increases in commodity exports, in turn leading to surpluses, declining prices, reduction in foreign exchange while food prices increase as more land goes to primary commodity exports (Maswi, et al. 2022, 10-11). Throughout the past two years of this issue's production, these transformative dynamics were felt across Africa and around the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic sent shockwaves through the global economy while core capitalist economies doled out billions in short term relief, often in the form of cash payments and emergency loans to the newly unemployed, while injecting far greater sums to private industry. At the same time, the Russian invasion of Ukraine brought runaway inflation fostering a renewed debt crisis most forcefully impacting Africa's largest economies. Core donor nations, already facing unprecedented budgetary strain, increasingly diverted unprecedented sums into military aid to Ukraine while slashing international development funding. Soon after, the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) collapsed and Ethiopia's brutal war in Tigray altered the regional security and humanitarian landscape. Recently, tensions escalated in the Horn of Africa after Ethiopia and Somaliland swapped access to the sea for the former in exchange for formal recognition of the latter. More concretely, military rule has reasserted itself, with seven recent coups, or "Unconstitutional Change[s] of Government" (UCG), partially resulting from, "an overemphasis on security at the cost of governance" (Okachukwu 2023). Across Africa and the globe, political soils are shifting.

Amid this turbulence, while weapons, surveillance technologies, and troops move across and within borders, responding to social, political, and ecological issues with violence and coercion continues to fail to improve human security or well-being. Dominant media coverage tends to present recent extra-constitutional changes of government as a retraction from a liberal democratic order in which African countries were, under the tutelage of the core capitalist states, learning to be more like the "West", or were at least pressed, through disciplinary powers, such as loan conditionalities, to adopt liberal institutions. The realities, however, are far more complex, with political dynamics within donor, recipient countries and among wider geopolitical actors coming into play in the past and present (Cheeseman, et al, 2024, Cheeseman, 2015). Nevertheless, from its inception, "there has been a clear antidemocratic disposition in the liberal capitalist social order" (Gordon and Webber, 2023). Authoritarianism is entirely compatible with the interests of western capitalist nations, neocolonial elite, and among the rising powers (Losurdo, 2014). This is blatantly evident in cases such as Egypt and Rwanda, and the disastrous invasion of Libya, but also in the neoliberal economic frameworks imposed under the dictates of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, often tantamount to "Economic strangulation"(on the latter see Mazwi et al. 2022, 6).

For more than thirty years, African countries implemented policies tied to the Washington Consensus, which sought to entrench a liberal international order. Governments rewrote constitutions to protect private property and foreign investment, diverted state expenditure from social goods, crippled economies with unpayable debt, while facilitating widespread (and ongoing) privatization, ultimately expanding the depth, reach and intensity of capitalism. Likewise, the US Africa Command (US-AFRICOM) sought hosts for US troops, resulting in a surge in US military presence across the continent, with American troops working alongside, training, and equipping African forces. Concretely, the United States gained interoperability agreements and a network of bases throughout Africa. Most can only be described as "lily pads", though bases in Kenya and Niger are concretely more significant, while American forces train thousands of troops each year on a daily basis. This expansion occurred with little public scrutiny, and resulted in regimes of legal immunity for US troops resembling or even exceeding those of prior colonial regimes. The military presence of UK, France, and Canada in Africa continues largely under the pretext of capacity building in counterterrorism, in lockstep with the US. In Kenya, the largest recipient of US military aid, the UK maintains 200-300 soldiers, mostly deployed to train Kenya's military to combat counter-terrorism. The now disbanded French-led MINUSMA mission involved Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. Also aimed at preventing "terrorism" in the Sahel, with West African governments pledging a billion dollars to the effort. This, despite the fact that known "terrorist" groups remain "embedded in local dynamics, and have some degree of political authority and legitimacy as they find support in criticisms of and protests over bad governance and lack of justice" (Bruno Charbboneau, 2018). Indeed, militarization often fails to align with stated goals of democratization. Furthermore, foreign involvement in the guise of counter-terrorism seems to only fuel the very armed groups it seeks to oppose.

The European Union (EU) also contributes to militarization in Africa. While refugees flee wars, often fought with weapons produced in the EU, and attempt to cross the Mediterranean, they face what the United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner described as the EU's "lethal disregard" for human rights (Farmer and Blomfield, 2018, Khan and Cooper, 2023, OHCHR, 2021). In 2022 the bloc withdrew its own vessels from search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean (Sunderland, 2022). Instead, it installed a network of aerial drone operations run by private companies to surveil its borders. When ships are in distress, coast guards have forcibly obstructed migrant vessels, with EU guards even firing on them, sinking them, and pushing them back (OHCHR, 2021). Human Rights Watch argues the EU's "let them die" migration policies contributed to increased cases of "death, torture and abuse" (Salah, 2023). The EU works with countries like Tunisia and Libya to extend its hardened borders into African jurisdiction, funding and exporting the detention of migrants to Libya despite "overwhelming evidence of torture and exploitation of migrants and refugees" (ibid,

Sunderland and Pezzani, 2022). Europe's interventions constitute a militarized response toward people who are often already victims of war and economic devastation thus further victimizing, and failing to protect them, while increasingly politically exploiting their plight as a resource in domestic populist mobilization. And yet in many instances, militarization remains the response of choice to non-military problems caused by failed economic policies, poor governance, ecological stresses, and persistent or growing poverty.

Western nations are not alone in increasing military funding in Africa. Since the 2008 financial crisis there has been a marked geopolitical recalibration. China, Russia, middle-powers, and former colonial countries established military relations with support for mercenary groups and the arms trade generally in countries where they have economic (generally extractive) interests. Meanwhile, smaller powers such as India and Saudi Arabia have since emerged as major sources of arms across Africa while both Egypt and South Africa ramp up arms production with the hopes of expanding exports on the continent. China's formal military presence in Africa commenced with ground troops in 2011 with the aim of withdrawing its citizens during the war in Libya. Chinese arms sales to Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Sudan, Tanzania, Morocco, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe increased 55% between 2013 and 2017 (Hendrix, 2020). Algeria is the third-largest buyer of Chinese weapons after Pakistan and Bangladesh. China's 8,000 member standby force with the UN is ready to take part in peacekeeping, training, and operations in Africa.

Russia's footprint in Africa is a fraction of China's, yet much of Russian growing diplomatic and military presence comes in the form of private armies, providing security to fragile states and weak regimes without political strings attached (Eguegu, 2022) making it a driver of instability, while encouraging kleptocratic and autocratic governments (Klomegâh, 2023). Russian natural gas and arms interests have established ties across the continent, while the state signed nuclear energy deals and support agreements with the Central African Republic and Mozambican militaries, revealing a pattern of entanglement between African militaries and business interests. In this special issue, Mahder Serekberhan examines this phenomenon in the context of Sudan. Just before the current war broke out between the Rapid Support Force (RSF) and the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAR), Russia concluded an agreement with the RSF to host a military base on the Red Sea, and to supply munitions. Initially, the RSF was under the command of the National Intelligence Security Services and directly accountable to the president—and therefore during the revolution, with the ousting of Omar Al-Bashir, they faced an existential threat. Thus, in signing the agreement without including the SAF, Russia contributed to the development of war, and continues to fuel it through military sales. This links to a broader Russian strategy of bolstering its regional influence, evident in the two Russia-Africa Summits, held in 2019 in Sudan and 2023 in Ethiopia (Mwangi and Fabiano, 2020).

As power continues to take on new forms and recalibrate across Africa, our contributors grapple with these shifts across a wide range of disciplinary, thematic and geographic foci. In "Singing against the State's Guns and Goons: Timothy Wangusa's Poetry and the Quest for Democratic Governance in Uganda", Danson Sylvester Kahyana offers literary analysis as an entry point into the politics of militarization in Uganda. The author employs Fanonian critique while drawing from Achile Mbembe's necropolitical framework to offer a damning condemnation of the postcolonial kleptocracy. To do so, Kahyana explores the often satirical work of Ugandan poet, Timothy Wangusa, to consider the nexus between neocolonial elite capture and the military at the expense of postcolonial Ugandan citizenry.

In "The Struggle to Transform Sudan", Mahder Habtemariam Serekberhan shows how the military structures in Sudan are deeply embedded in virtually every sector of the economy. Most importantly, their power is vested in processes of extraction, and as gatekeepers of global commodities, including access to foreign capital itself. In turn, foreign capital, foreign states, regional and global bodies (EU and the UN) and International Financial Institutions including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund are deeply implicated in upholding military power, against the nation's progressive anti-militarist movement. While international actors such as the "Friends of

Sudan" present themselves as righteous bearers of modernity in its material and ideological forms, including progressive social values such as women's rights, cosmopolitanism, as well as inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony, functionally they bolster military-industrial interests that viciously repress progressive forces within Sudan. As the author notes, despite gruesome violations of human life and dignity, external actors like the United Nations continually legitimize the military, by both treating it as legal-political entity capable of managing a democratic transition, and through political gestures, such as admitting the re-election of Sudan to serve on the UN Human Rights Council. Regional involvement from countries such as Yemen and Chad further destabilizes Sudan. As Serekberhan explains, following South Sudanese secession, the economic interests of military-industrial and foreign powers shifted from oil, toward the extraction of gold, with most stemming from small-scale and artisanal means, perpetuating the unequal terms in which Sudan is integrated into the global capitalist system; under-developing it further from its prior position as an oil exporter, once utilizing more sophisticated means of extraction, and in turn investing those proceeds into development of other sectors.

Likewise, the Anglophone secession in Cameroon is not simply a conflict between the central state and a unitary secessionist movement but characterized by a multivalent privatization of violence. In, "State Fragility, Non-State Armed Groups, and the Privatization of Violence in the Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon", Tindo Narcisse Saturnin Kaze outlines the background and dynamics tied to the proliferation of violent actors. Similarly, the article examines conflicts between and within these movements while considering the political economic dynamics underpinning armed groups in Cameroon. The author concludes by offering a sobering analysis of the prospects for peace that considers the economic incentives for sustaining the war and the role of diasporic separatist leadership.

Kialee Nyiayaana examines a "fundamental shift" taking place within Nigeria, towards the development of regional security complexes or security communities emerging in a context of the Buhari regime (2015-2023), characterized by the perceived systematic ethnicization of the state in favour of his ethnic Fulani against the interests of other ethnolinguistic groups. In response, the latter formed regional vigilante groups, the "Amotekun" and "Ebubeagu". These emerged from security frameworks established in 2020 and 2021 as the institutional expression of collective aspirations of state governments of the Southwest and Southeast regions to protect and defend their territories in ways that approximate a security complex. Nyiayaana shows how fighting new criminal activities, armed banditry, kidnappings, atrocities informed by religious fundamentalist ideologies and perceived ethnic and cultural differences, cattle-rustling and state support for such activities serves to bolster violence and results in regional approaches to security that reinforce these very polarizations. Thus, regional vigilantism driven by an integrationist bias to secure members of the imagined community, has also, paradoxically, contributed to the politicization of protection in ways that often deepen ethnic consciousness and mistrust. As Nyiayaana shows, vigilante groups fail to provide greater physical safety. Rather, killings, kidnapping, armed robbery, and arms trade continue to increase, while the territorial reach of the vigilante groups remains, like the federal police forces, also limited. The Ebubeagu and Amotekun seek out greater weaponry while the federal government obstructs the arms trade yet neither sufficiently wields any significant claim to sovereignty over their territories. At the same time, local politicians use vigilante groups to pursue and achieve their own narrow political goals, potentially creating further fragmentation. These entanglements impede the practice and effectiveness of security communities.

In his briefing note on "Shifting Geopolitics in Africa" Padraig Carmody provides an updated assessment of the relationship between militarism and processes he described in his influential book, *The New Scramble for Africa*. He notes signs of "de-linking", with the French military pulling—and being pushed—out of former colonies, while the rise of neo-populism across the globe offers potential signs of declining appetites for foreign engagement from within the Global North. The latter aligns with xenophobic fears in core capitalist countries over climate refugees, leading to an increase in securitisation; what he terms a "negative security scramble". Meanwhile, most African countries remain dependent upon exports of primary materials, with fossil fuels accounting for about half.

This coincides with a returning debt crisis. Climate change remains the largest challenge facing Africa in the emergent multiplex world order, where various actors at differing scales, driven by differing material forces, mix and mingle rather than stand off against each other.

China is becoming more involved in the continent's security frameworks through increased military cooperation. However, Carmody cautions against overestimating the Chinese position in Africa. He shows that one must disaggregate the Chinese state, in which "much of the real power" lies specifically within the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In turn, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) operate under conditions of "bounded autonomy" (Breslin, 2021), with a distinctive structure of "webpower", where the centre directs or sets the incentives for the improvization in commercial strategies by the nodes (such as SOEs) where power is simultaneously both concentrated and diffuse.

This raises the question of how much power Africa-based actors wield in these relations or networks. As Carmody cautions against analysis that, "...overstates local abilities to alter outcomes" and overlooks negative forms such as corruption, crime and "illegitimate regime maintenance". Furthermore, "political opportunity structure" does not generally encourage policies towards economic diversification. For Carmody, "The liberal global order is in a period of flux and challenge...in an era of great power competition and conflict". This amidst an existential challenge, from *omni-crises* of global power shifts, climate change, pandemics, and inequality with Africa being "one of crucibles" where the contradictions of the global order play out.

Turning away from the geostrategic field and toward the political economic foundations of material life, where the existential threat is the rapid loss of biodiversity, Sobantu Mzwakali examines issues of intellectual property, self-determination, and ecological preservation. His policy brief considers these dynamics amongst local communities in South Africa. In, "Community Protocols: The Legal Framework to Safeguard Biocultural Rights in South Africa", he outlines how Biocultural Community Protocols have far-reaching effects and offer the potential to stretch across questions of sovereignty, identity, and the preservation of biodiversity. Accordingly, Mzwakali highlights the potential of Access and Benefit-Sharing initiatives, while considering the intersection between biocultural rights, community self-determination and consultation, and the nexus of both international and South African law.

Three decades into South Africa's democratic dispensation, the traumatic imprint of the nation's liberation struggle continues to impact the lives of former freedom fighters and their families. In "Ukugrumba", isiXhosa for "to dig up", Tshepiso Mabula, herself the niece of a late freedom fighter, reflects on this complex, painful history directly. Weaving together images of people, landscape, and items, Mabula's photo essay sheds light on the enduring presence of this unresolved past in the present. Her work offers the viewer an opportunity to reflect on the many unrecognized, uncelebrated, even "forgotten people" who contributed to South Africa's liberation, often suffering deeply to do so. Visually revealing the tensions of reconciliation and the "new" South Africa, Mabula's work offers a reminder of the intergenerational fallout of anti-apartheid activism; that histories of state violence and murder continue to impact former activists, their loved ones, and wider post-apartheid society. While dynamics of power may shift, the fallout of struggle and activism against previous orders endure.

Our final piece is a review essay on Ukamaka Olisakwe's novel *Ogadinma* by Chibueze Darlington Anuonye. Anuonye identifies a shift taking place in African feminist literature away from "womanist" positions that tend to accept biological explanations for sociocultural differences between men and women. Instead, she shows how Olisakwe joins other contemporary African feminists tilting "towards socialist feminism, by identifying the root of women's oppression in the economic inequality that exists between men and women in patriarchal societies". Chibueze shows how the narrative in *Ogadinma* "identifies the economic disempowerment of women and girls as a tool of patriarchal oppression", yet Olisakwe also shows how solidaristic sisterhood creates, for Ogadinma, the protagonist, the feminist agency she envisions for herself. Anuoonye also shows how Olisakwe's contribution seeks greater representation of working class women in African feminist discourse, showing how struggles for economic and cultural emancipation are intertwined.

Our issue's focus, militarism, forms as an extension of and is sustained through masculinist, patriarchal authoritarianism, often enshrined in chains of command (despite the relative integration of women into many militaries throughout the world), and expressed in wartime gender-based violence. In *Ogadinma* Chibueze reveals Olisakwe's clear analogies between rape and war, with both profoundly violating the dignity of their victims. Ogadinma lost her own mother to war—not through her death, but in her determination to escape the patriarchal constructs it depended upon. Chibueze examines how for Ogadinma's new husband Tobe, being sent to prison further cements the violent patriarchy he brings home upon his return, and which is then reinforced by the church. The trauma of prison life also deepens Tobe's material impoverishment, while intensifying his use of violence. Ogadinma seeks to escape the roles of being the "virtuous wife" and "sweet mother," which demand absolute self-denial.

Returning again to the example of the attempted revolution in Sudan, it is impossible to overlook the fact that women were overwhelmingly the leaders of the revolutionary effort to oust the military and instil a framework to facilitate civilian rule in increasingly democratic terms. The counter-revolution, backed by external, predominantly western governments and bankers, unleashed gender violence in sickening ways. For these reasons, we must applaud Anuonye for bringing such an insightful reading of *Ogadinma* that helps us understand the crucially important turn taking place in feminist thinking amongst African women writers.
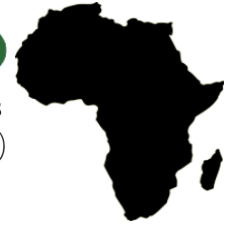
Together the contributions reveal that existing theories for understanding power remain insufficient in grasping the complicated and shifting dynamics of power in Africa and indeed, around the globe. Moreover, they reveal the ways weapons of war and structures of domination are disrupting, even ravaging the lives of Africans. In close pursuit of profit motives, militarization works against common desires for meaningful development and human dignity for all.

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Singing against the State's Guns and Goons: Timothy Wangusa's Poetry and the Quest for Democratic Governance in Uganda

Danson Sylvester Kahyana

Abstract

This article provides a close reading of selected poems by Ugandan writer, Timothy Wangusa, to examine his insights on bad governance and to appreciate his stylistic and linguistic richness. These poems are "The Walking Stick," "National Skulls Exhibition," "Africa's New Brood," "The State is My Shepherd," and selected sections from the book-length poem *Anthem for Africa*. I choose a qualitative research approach since my objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation within a particular context, that is to say, the insights on bad governance in post-independence African nation-states, particularly Uganda, as gleaned from the poems listed above. I perform a close reading of the primary texts and document review of the secondary texts. Theme and context analyses are the major methods that guide data analysis. Locating the discussion in Frantz Fanon's theorization of the pitfalls of national consciousness and Achille Mbembe's notion of necropolitics and that of the aesthetics of vulgarity, the paper highlights Wangusa's penetrating insight into how the rise to power of the military in Africa in general and in Uganda in particular has led to an unfortunate kind of politics—one that valorizes pillage over progress, convenience over constitutionalism, decay over decorum, and death over life.

Keywords: Uganda; bad governance; the military; necropolitics; death; disillusionment

Introduction

Born in 1942, Timothy Wangusa is "one of Uganda's best-known poets" (Nazareth, 1996, p. 459), with six collections of poetry to his name. He taught Literature at Makerere University for over three decades from 1969-2001, before moving to Kumi University, Uganda Christian University, and Bishop Stuart University. He has also served in political offices, including that of Minister of Education (1985), Member of Parliament, Bubulo County, Mbale (1989-1996), and presidential advisor on literary affairs (2001-2017). Although one of Africa's most productive poets and novelists, there is quite little critical engagement with his work to the extent that in the 868-page *Encyclopaedia of African Literature*, the editor, Simon Gikandi, does not find space for an entry on him, thereby forcing Eckhard Breitinger to object: "But if Austin Bukenya with limited creative output is listed, while Timothy Wangusa with an internationally acclaimed novel and several

collections of poetry is not, one can question the criteria employed [to determine who is included in the encyclopedia and who is excluded from it]" (2003, pp. 155-156).

Simon Gikandi observes that the decades following "flag independence" (Okoth, 1993, p. 35) by East African governments are "a period now remembered for the failure of the nationalist project and the emergence of both military and civilian dictatorships" (2007, p. 1). These decades were characterized by something unfortunate: "[T]he barrel of the gun [taking] the place of the ballot box as an arbiter in the way the Africans had to be ruled" (Okoth, 1993, p. 35). Perhaps no country has suffered the terrible effects of a militarized state more than Uganda which saw one government after another deposed through a military coup d'etat as Rose Mbowa explains:

> In the 1971 coup d'etat, Amin ousted Obote while the latter was away at a Commonwealth conference in Singapore. Amin's reign of terror lasted until his overthrow in 1979. After Obote returned to power in rigged elections in 1980 (hence the term Obote II), disappearances and murders continued; Obote was again overthrown in a coup d'etat on 27 January 1985 and General Tito Okello-Lutwa became president. On 25 January 1986, Yoweri Museveni with his guerilla National Resistance Movement toppled him and seized power. (1996, p. 89).

These developments came with a lot of bloodshed and disillusionment, forcing many commentators on the country's affairs to refer to it in depressing terms. Some of the terms referencing bloodshed are captured in the titles of major books on Uganda, for instance *A State of Blood* (a memoir by Henry Kyemba who served as a minister in Idi Amin's government) and *The Floods* (a play by Uganda's most acclaimed playwright, John Ruganda).

It is no wonder that bad governance and militarization loom large in Ugandan literature to the extent that military generals like Idi Amin are declared "the most dominant single factor in Ugandan literature" (Kiyimba, 1998, p. 124). Consequently, much of Ugandan literature is "prominently concerned with terror, especially in the form of institutionalized violence," hence the pervasiveness of state-perpetrated crimes like kidnapping, detaining, torturing, raping, and executions in much of it (Bukenya, 2000, p. 17).

In this article, I provide a close reading of selected poems by Timothy Wangusa to examine his insights on bad governance and militarization and to appreciate his stylistic and linguistic richness. These poems are "The Walking Stick," "National Skulls Exhibition," "Africa's New Brood," "The State is My Shepherd," and selected sections from the book-length poem *Anthem for Africa.*

Research Methodology

The research approach I employ here is qualitative since my major interest is in gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon that I am interested in, that is, investigating the relationship between literature and post-independence governance in African nation-states, with selected poems by Timothy Wangusa as a case in point.

I have chosen a case study design which involves "an in-depth examination of a single person or a few people" to "provide an accurate and complete description of the case" (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2005, p. 147). The case in question, as I have already mentioned, is the poet Timothy Wangusa, whose poems on bad governance and the militarization of the state in Uganda/Africa offer a comprehensive understanding of the misuse of power in post-independence contexts.

I employ an interpretivist paradigm focused "primarily on understanding and accounting for the meaning of human experiences and actions" (Fossey et. al., 2002, p. 720). The human experiences and actions here are those relating to governance deficits/challenges in post-independence African states. To understand this problem in close detail, we need to consider the perspectives of the personae that the poet creates, enabling appreciation for "the interpretive processes by which they assign meanings to events, situations, and so forth" (Leavy, 2017, p. 129). In other words, examining their passion and motivation enables the readers to understand what they are up to and what they represent.

I employ close reading, which Nancy Boyles defines as "reading to uncover layers of meaning that lead to deeper comprehension" (p. 90). Barbara Herrnstein Smith similarly describes close reading as "[r]eading individual texts with attention to their linguistic features and rhetorical operations" (2016, p. 57) in order to make observations and reflections "about the style or genre of the text at hand, or about its author, or reflections on the era in which it was written" (2016, p.69-70). The texts in question here are Wangusa's poems that comment on bad governance and the place of the military in African or Ugandan politics, with special focus on the insights that they (the texts) give us on the subject. I supplement close reading with document analysis, which Glenn A. Bowen defines as "a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic (computer- based and Internet- transmitted) material" (2009, p.29). In my case, the materials are the book chapters, journal articles and interviews on Timothy Wangusa or his work. This method enriches the former by providing insights and interpretations that other researchers have gleaned from Wangusa's work, which I in turn draw on to make further analysis.

To analyze the data collected, I identify key themes that emerge from the selected poems to consider what they reveal about the topic at hand—the militarization of the post-independence African nation-state. In doing this, I pay attention to the historical and political contexts shaping the production of these poems.

Theoretical Framework

In "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness," Frantz Fanon decries the decadence of the national bourgeoisie as soon as they take over the reins of power from the colonial regime: The army and the police constitute "the pillars of the regime," their strength and power being "proportionate to the stagnation in which the rest of the nation is sunk" (1968, p. 172). The despotism of the colonial regime morphs into post-independence plundering and massacring, hence Achille Mbembe's contention that in the postcolony there is "violent pursuit of wrongdoing to the point of shamelessness" (2001, p. 115). It is no wonder that sooner than later a feeling of disillusionment sets in after independence.

In the poems I analyze in this article, there are several examples of this shameless wrongdoing that Wangusa castigates through different linguistic and stylistic resources, for instance reversal ("The Walking Stick"), biting satire ('The National Skulls Exhibition"), animalization ("Africa's New Brood"), and a mosaic of stylistic devices (*Anthem for Africa*). In some of these poems, particularly the last three, Wangusa dramatizes the blunders and horrors of the military regimes in power with such vividness that the reader cannot help but shudder at how terribly the dreams of post-independence fraternity and prosperity have been dashed to smithereens. Fanon's notion of the pitfalls of national consciousness and Mbembe's idea of the vulgarization of power help me to make sense of the grotesque events that Wangusa sings about in these poems in the context of post-independence betrayal and disillusionment.

The other notion that I invoke in this article, albeit with caution, is that of necropolitics as theorized by Mbembe, that is, the sovereign's power and capacity "to dictate who may live and who must die" (2003, p. 11) and an understanding of "politics as the work of death" (Mbembe, 2003, p.16). Mbembe develops this notion by building on Michel Foucault's work on biopolitics – "the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race" (Foucault, 2003, p. 202). He also draws on Giorgio Agamben's three-pronged argument:

> 1. The original political relation is the ban (the state of exception as zone of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion). 2. The fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, zoe and bios. 3. Today it is not the city but rather the camp that is the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West. (Agamben, 1998, p. 181)

In Wangusa's poems, the necropolitical, as described above, is very clear as there are many horrors he protests, for instance, a market woman finding a corpse in the boot of a car as she loads a client's bunch of bananas, or the state extracting economic or political capital from exhibiting skulls of the people who lost their lives in the many wars that have been waged in Uganda. The caution with which I deploy Mbembe's term arises from the fact that his focus is on sophisticated technologies of occupation, domination, and exploitation from slavery to colonialism and apartheid whose aim is the "maximum destruction of persons and the creation of *death-worlds*," with vast populations being "subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*" (2003, p. 40, author's emphasis). In Wangusa's poems, the necropolitical is deployed at a scale smaller than what Mbembe highlights (the nation in some of the poems, and the African continent in *Anthem for Africa*, "Africa's New Brood," and "National Skulls Exhibition"). However, this does not mean that it is any less tragic or scandalous.

Literature Review

It has been observed by many scholars that Idi Amin's rise to power in Uganda in 1971 paradoxically led to the flourishing of Ugandan literature even as he killed some writers (for instance Byron Kawaddwa) and drove several others into exile (for instance Austin Bukenya, Robert Serumaga, and John Ruganda, to mention but a few). Simon Gikandi (2003, p. 221) writes, "The significance of Amin's era in Uganda lies in the creative impulse it engendered among Ugandans and non-Ugandans alike, leading to almost unprecedented flowering of literature in East Africa, only comparable to Mau Mau literature in the region." As early as 1985, Peter Nazareth observed that Ugandan literature is invested in "warning about and waiting for an Amin, and then protesting about his appearance and the corresponding disappearances his regime occasioned" (1985, p. 9). The latter sees the ghost of Idi Amin haunting Ugandan literature in the sense that the military general prominently features in more or less all the fiction, drama and fiction produced in the country, at least from the 1970s to the 1990s. For his part, Bukenya (2000) sees Amin in all the novels he reads, leaving bloodshed everywhere he walks, while Andrew H. Armstrong sees Moses Isegawa's narrative endeavor in his two novels (already mentioned) as "not only to *record* the chaotic events experienced during the years before and after the fall of Idi Amin, but to *recode*, through the tropes of language (symbol, imagery, and metaphor), the devastating effects of those years on the literary landscape of Uganda" (2009, p. 128, author's emphasis). I see something similar in Wangusa's poetry on bad governance and the military.

There is paucity of critical engagement with Wangusa's work despite the fact he is one of the most gifted Ugandan poets and novelists. There are two full-length journal articles on his novel *Upon this Mountain*, one by Carol Sicherman (1993) and the other by Frederick Hale (1999). The former discusses how the novel's protagonist, Mwambu, unsuccessfully negotiates his way through conflicting cultures (Gishu, British, Christian) and responsibilities (individual and community) as he grows up from childhood to adulthood, if not manhood (depicted in the novel as an elusive gem or project). The latter article astutely reads the novel as "a microcosmic representation of a colonial society's struggle for independence from both the indigenous bonds of its past and the imposed imperial hegemony of its present" (Hale, 1999, p. 96). Unfortunately, these articles say nothing about Wangusa's poetry since their focus is on his fiction.

Published in 2015, Wangusa's second novel, *Betwixt Mountain and Wilderness*, has hardly received critical attention, save for a brief review in *The Weekly Observer* on 28 October 2015, that summarizes the text while explaining the key issues that Wangusa grapples with, for instance the deployment of brutality to determine the outcome of political elections (Kahyana, 2015). The review likewise discusses the depiction of electoral violence in the novel, explaining how Wangusa uses the unfortunate assault on Mwambu—he is attacked by hooded thugs just a day to being nominated for the parliamentary seat of Elgonton South in order to be circumcised (yet he already is)—to comment on the failure of electoral processes in the soon-to-be independent Uganda (Kahyana, 2017). That one of his attackers, Peter Weyelo, takes advantage of Mwambu being critically ill to be nominated for the position of Member of Parliament of Elgonton South, and that he is

appointed Minister of Education after he wins the election, shows how the use of violence is doomed to be the standard way through which people are to access political power in the Uganda soon to be born. I suggest that Wangusa's poems be seen as being in dialogue with the events that take place in *Betwixt*. As with his poetry, the engagement with Wangusa's fiction remains sparse, save for an article here and a dissertation there.

There are two earlier studies on Wangusa's poetry. In a survey of Ugandan poetry spanning 30 years (1965-1995), Ernesto Okello Ogwang observes that "Wangusa's poetry exhibits humor and irony as much as satire, all of which subtly mask and underlie the seriousness of the social commentaries and the concerns with the plight of humanity or for that matter Ugandan social and political setups" (2000, p. 112). Ogwang briefly comments on four of Wangusa's poems in general terms, without specifically focusing on the poet's engagement with the brutality of General Idi Amin's military dictatorship, although *Anthem for Africa*, which is heavily invested in this subject, is one of Wangusa's poetry collections that he mentions in the essay.

Susan Nalugwa Kiguli (2000) spends considerable time discussing Wangusa's poetry, especially "The Taxi Driver on His Death," "The State is My Shepherd," "The Flight," and "Song to Mukokoteni." In "The State is My Shepherd," she sees Wangusa make "a satirical comment on the political instability as well as the failure of the state to look after its subjects," thereby "recreat[ing] a typically Ugandan scene and ably portray[ing] the evil rampant in the Ugandan society mainly caused by incompetent rulers" (2000, p. 123). Unfortunately, she does not look at *Anthem for Africa*, which was published by the time she was writing, and other poems discussed here, which were yet to be published in 2006. I supplement these debates on Wangusa's poetry by performing a rigorous reading of the poems that feature the military, showing the destruction that its personnel are depicted as causing in their nation-states.

Depictions of the Militarized African Nation-state in Selected Poems by Wangusa

I: Metaphor and Inversion in "The Walking-Stick"

The issue of the place of the military in the governance of post-independence Africa is one that Wangusa has grappled with for some time. In "The Walking Stick" (2001), the poet-persona recalls a lecture he attended as a student at Makerere University in 1964, just two years after Uganda's formal or flag independence, in which the professor (the unnamed venerable Ali Mazrui according to the poet's personal communication to me) used the rhetorical device of analogy to equate "organs of Government / To parts of the human frame":

> The executive is the head,
> The legislature is the chest,
> The judicature is the limbs. (2006, p. 16)

One of the students wonders what part of the body the military can be equated to, owing to the ubiquity and apparent power of the armed forces in post-independence states. "Given that the Government is the man," the professor quipped, "The army is his walking stick" (ibid). This analogy sounds harmless if looked at from the perspective of a walking stick being a common prop among elderly people, one associated with frailness as it provides extra steadiness to the person holding it. But there is something deeper that Wangusa is subtly alluding to: the frailty of the post-independence nation-state and therefore the need for a supporting prop for its survival, in this case the army. This is because the walking stick can be used as a weapon in situations where the person holding it is attacked or threatened, say by a stranger or a stray dog. By the professor quipping that the armed forces are the government's walking stick, he is pointing to this potential double function of the seemingly benign tool. The implied meaning—that the government (the "man" in power) takes the army as his personal property ("his walking stick")—is worrying since it points to what became a reality in many parts of post-independence Africa: The army serving the interests of the commander-in-chief (usually the president or

the prime minister), and not of the citizens. This is what I understand the poet-persona to mean when he states thus:

> Come 25th January, 1971,
> Major-General Idi Amin stormed the political stage –
>
> And overnight
> The walking-stick became the man, and
> The man became the walking stick! (2006, p. 16).

The metaphor of a storm used in the above lines is apt since Major-General Idi Amin captured power in a coup d'état (First, 1971) and took the country down a quick tragic path characterized by what Ugandan playwright and poet John Ruganda (1980) referred to as "the floods." The use of inversion, the walking stick becoming the man and the man becoming the walking stick, captures the confusion that characterized Amin's reign as it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the government and the army as the two became inseparably one and the same thing. More than 40 years after the fall of Idi Amin's regime, the army continues to play a big role in the affairs of state in a manner that echoes the regrettable Aminian situation of the man becoming the walking stick and the walking stick becoming a man. This is unfortunately the case in present-day Uganda under President Museveni, who has held power since 1986, as Roger Tangri and Andrew M. Mwenda (2010, p. 44) observe:

> The UPDF [Uganda People's Defence Forces] has been run as a de facto personal army of President Museveni to help him hang on to power. Army appointments and promotions are made solely by Museveni. The small Bahima sub-group (20% of the Banyankole ethnic group) have dominated the top echelons of the UPDF. The majority of soldiers and officers in the elite Presidential Guard Brigade (PGB) are also, like Museveni, Bahima from the west of the country. The 12,000-strong PGB comprises the best-trained, best-equipped and best-paid military force in Uganda. It constitutes the president's personalised military machine. Museveni wields strong control over its decision-making structures; his eldest son, Lieutenant Colonel Muhoozi Kainerugaba, is commander of special forces in the PGB. Museveni also keeps it and the UPDF deeply divided so that they are insufficiently coherent to confront him or to overthrow him.

The irony of the above observation is that the UPDF (the Uganda People's Defence Forces) is supposed to be a national army, meant to secure Ugandan borders against external aggressors. The reality, however, is that it sometimes comes off as a private army, meant to entrench personal, ethnic, and nepotistic rule and privilege in a manner that is imperial, hence the term "imperial presidency" used by Joshua B. Rubongoya (2007, p. 189). In this state of affairs, the enemy that the army brutalizes is not an external aggressor, but the citizens who demand that the nation-state be governed in a democratic manner, that is to say, that "the exercise of political authority should be accountable to the people" (Fox and Stoett, 2006, p. 556). Frantz Fanon identifies this partisan use of the army, moreover one whose power is "proportionate to the stagnation in which the rest of the nation is sunk" (1968, p. 172), as one of the pitfalls of national consciousness.

II. The Strange Fruits of Warfare: "National Skulls Exhibition"

In the poem entitled "National Skulls Exhibition," Wangusa sings against the incessant loss of life that Uganda has suffered in different wars it has fought on its territory or in different massacres that have happened there. The poem is in the form of a public announcement:

> A countrywide competitive exhibition
> Of war-time skulls and skeletons
> Shall be mounted on the next anniversary
> Of our permanent party's ascension to power (2006, p. 11).

The motivation behind the exhibition is not to record the tragedies that the country suffered since attaining its flag independence (hence bemoaning the failures of

nationhood), but to promote tourism in a manner that sounds outrightly callous and morbid:

> The prize-winning skulls and skeletons
> Shall constitute a tourist centrepiece
> At Namanve Memorial Holiday Resort,
> While exhibitors with the largest skulls
> Shall qualify to represent the country
> At the All-Africa Festival of Corpses and Bones (2006, pp. 11-12).

The poem employs satire, "a mode of writing that exposes the failings of individuals, institutions, or societies to ridicule and scorn" (Baldick, 2001, p. 228). The general failing that the poet attacks is poor governance in post-independence Uganda, a country that its rulers have plunged into war after war, and massacre after massacre as the battlefields that the persona enumerates testify:

> Mukura-Soroti AXIS
>   Representing Traitors Roasting Battalion (TRB)
> Luwero-Mpigi-Mukono TRIANGLE
>   Representing Bushcraft Resistance Army (BRA)
> Arua-Adjumani-Koboko-Moyo QUADRANGLE
>   Representing National Annihilators Front (NAF)
> Kasese-Kilembe-Kichwamba-Kabarole-Bundibujo PENTAGON
>   Representing Total Extermination Militia (TEM)
> Kitgum-Gulu-Atiak-Karuma-Apac-Lira HEXAGON
>   Representing Lord's Nose-cutting Legion (LNL). (2006, p. 11)

The fictitious names given to the above battlefields allude to particular wars and massacres that have happened in Uganda. The TRB, for instance, alludes to the National Resistance Army's roasting of people it suspected of being anti-government militants in a train wagon in Mukura, eastern Uganda, on 11th July 1989 (Apuuli, 2013, p. 614); the BRA alludes to the 5-year guerrilla war that Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's National Resistance Army waged in Luwero district, resulting in the deaths of thousands of people (Kasfir, 2005, pp. 271-272); NAF alludes to the West Nile Bank Front (WNBF) led by Juma Oris (Prunier, 2004, pp. 359-363), the Uganda National Rescue Front (UNRF) led by Moses Ali and the Uganda National Rescue Front II (UNRF II) led by Ali Bamuze (Day, 2011, p. 440); TEM alludes to the Allied Democratic Forces (Titeca & Vlassenroot, 2012, p. 154), while LNL alludes to the Lord's Resistance Army led by Joseph Kony (Doom and Vlassenroot, 1999, p. 5).

In the poem, it is suggested that the notion of "the people" is misused as seen in the use of the phrase "the People's Main Museum of Death" (2006, p. 11), which does not sound uplifting in the way a related one, say, the People's Main University or the People's Main Hospital is. It is worth noting that the word "main" suggests that there are other museums of death, although not as big as the one to be constructed, implying that the deaths that the nation has suffered are numerous.

Despite this, however, the persona sounds matter-of-fact in tone, thereby registering a certain indifference to the mass loss of life, if not outright callousness, arising out of sheer opportunism: The determination to turn a people's tragedies into a profit-making business enterprise, that is to say, constructing a tourist-attracting and hosting centrepiece in the form of a holiday resort. The indifference and callousness of the elites are reinforced by the fact that the exhibition is to be a competitive one, with the exhibitors with the largest (and therefore the best) skulls winning a place at "the All-Africa Festival of Corpses and Bones" (2006, p. 11). What is implied here is that the exhibitors are unbothered by the mass(ive) loss of lives of loved ones and the grief that comes with this; what matters is being in possession of the kind of skull that can win a prize and therefore guarantee one an air ticket—complete with per diem and travel allowances—to the morbid continental festival. The wars that produced the mass deaths and graves that make the exhibition possible do not serve the purpose of moving the people in power to resolve that never again should human life be lost in such mind-boggling numbers; to the contrary, the wars seem to be construed as an opportunity to make money by marketing the country, and the entire

continent of Africa, as a theatre of death. Rather than be ashamed of the violent history of the continent to the extent that there are thousands of unburied people who died in wars, the leaders exploit this past for selfish reasons, without thinking about the pain that the survivors of these wars (the wounded, the orphaned, the widowed, and so forth) suffer. The poet uses satire to great effect as he registers his bitterness at the people in power who practice necropolitics: Not only do they cheapen life, but they also differentiate between those whose lives are expendable (e.g. the peasants) and those who are elevated to a position of legitimate 'life' and high status (the politicians and the army personnel in charge).

The poem questions how triumphant militant groups like Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's the National Resistance Army (NRA) inscribe themselves in the narrative of the nation as liberators and heroes by making it clear that the bloodshed through which they wade as they rise to power does not mean much to them. Notice that the poet attributes the massacres that took place in the Luwero Triangle to the Bushcraft Resistance Army (BRA), a thinly veiled reference to the National Resistance Army (NRA), in order to challenge President Museveni's and his party, the National Resistance Movement's oft-rehearsed narrative that it was Milton Obote and his government that were responsible for the massacres in this region in the five years of the guerrilla war. In his first book, *What Is Africa's Problem?*, Museveni writes:

> If you go to a place like Luwero now, you will see skeletons and skulls upon skulls of human beings. In one place called Kiboga, where there was a unit of the Obote/Okello Army stationed at a saza headquarters compound, we collected 237 skulls from there alone. These people were in their trenches, eating and drinking with 237 skulls of their victims around them. We had the same experience in Bukomero, Lwamata, Kaya's farm, Nakaseke, Mityana, Masulita, and Kakiri. All these places are in the Luwero Triangle. If you saw these skulls, you would understand why we fought Obote, Okello, and the rest. (2000, pp. 10-11)

The last sentence of the above quotation squarely places the responsibility of the massacres that produced the skulls on Milton Obote, yet Obote's regime was the legitimate one that Museveni's army fought to overthrow although it was later toppled in a coup d'état staged by General Tito Okello.1 In the poem, Wangusa invites the reader to challenge this narrative by placing the responsibility for the massacres at the doorstep of the resistance army. While this might be the first time a Ugandan creative writer does this, it is not the case in the areas of Ugandan politics and scholarship. In politics, Museveni's former NRA fighters who later joined the opposition (for instance Major Rubaramira Ruranga, Major John Kazoora and Colonel Kizza Besigye) have implicated him in some of the massacres that took place in Luwero (Adyanga, 2015, p. 396). Ugandan academic Onek C. Adyanga accuses Museveni of using the Luwero Triangle human remains for selfish, propagandistic reasons to demonize opponents of his tyrannical hold on power and to harness an "ethnic-centred NRA/M regime legitimacy" (2015, p. 400).

Another subtle critique of President Museveni that Wangusa makes in the poem is his long stay in power. This is captured in the line "our permanent party's ascension to power (2006, p. 11). The word 'permanent' reveals that it is not Museveni's desire to leave power. Indeed, he has been in power for 37 years now, through a combination of means that Roger Tangri and Andrew M. Mwenda identify as "presidential manipulations, election rigging, and coercive measures" (2010, p. 31). One of the manipulations has involved President Museveni allegedly bribing the Parliament to drop the term limit from the 1995 Constitution (Tangri, 2006, pp. 185-186) and later having the special forces to storm the Parliament in order to ensure the age limit that barred him from standing for President once he turns 75 years of age was dropped (Wilkins, Vokes & Khisa, 2021, pp.

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1 Editors' note: The election that ushered in Obote's final term remains a source of sustained controversy. It was endorsed by the "Commonwealth Observer Group" under complicated circumstances, including malfeasance, "electoral manipulation", and "greater [state] resources," employed by Obote's party, the Uganda People's Congress. However, the ultimate factor contributing to their victory was the British-modeled first-past-the-post electoral system (Willis et al. 2017). That said, the writing of this history has been overdetermined by extremely weak, ideologically slanted, reporting by US newspapers and NGOs clearly aligned with US interests. Within Uganda the Museveni government has forcibly prevented any thorough examination of the years preceding and following the war leading to his ascension. For these reasons, we support the author's choice of words here. Moreover, as the following passages reveal, the purpose is not to advance his own position, but to contextualize that intimated by Wangusa. See: Willis, J., Lynch, G., & Cheeseman, N. (2017). "A valid electoral exercise"? Uganda's 1980 Elections and the Observers' Dilemma. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 59(1), 211–238. http://www.jstor.org/stable/26293565.

636-637). To Moses Khisa, the "repeated assaults on the constitution" attest to "Museveni's determination to hold onto power at all costs" (2019, p. 353).

Wangusa's choice of Namanve as the place where the Holiday Resort will be constructed is apt for during Idi Amin's regime, this place was a dense forest which state operatives used to dump those people that they extrajudicially killed on discovering that the bodies dumped into rivers, swamps or water reservoirs "floated to the surface, clogging dams and attracting vultures" (Decker, 2013, p. 134). In other words, the use of the forest as the dumping ground for the dead was one of those characteristics that Mbembe identifies with the postcolony: "a distinctive style of political improvisation [and] a tendency to excess and lack of proportion" (2001, p. 102). But there is something else that the reference to Namanve reveals: Under Museveni's regime, the forest is no more as it has been cut down to make way for an industrial park. Given the role of this forest in providing rain, a role it can no longer perform since it is no more, we see the death of Ugandan forests that Museveni has presided over—a death that saw him push his way to give Mabira Central Forest Reserve to the Mehta group's Sugar Corporation of Uganda Ltd (SCOUL) for sugarcane planting (Child, 2009, p. 241; Médard & Golaz, 2013, p. 560; Hönig, 2014, pp. 55-57). So, while there were physical and political skulls and skeletons in Amin's regime, there are environmental ones as well in Museveni's.

III. When the Hero Metamorphizes into the Monster He Slayed: *Anthem for Africa*

As the title suggests, *Anthem for Africa* is continental in scope: The singer-narrator, Namwenya, straddles different parts of the continent to "recount in rhythmic lines / The shape and pattern of those times, / The people's dreams and the ruler's deeds," well aware of the dangers that this could bring him since "in the midst of popular storms / Poets have perished for bitter poetics / As politic men for diabolic policies" (2021, p. 26). The bulk of the collection contains laments for what man, "the dreadful afterthought of God" (2021, p. 37), has done to fellow humans in the different epochs of the continent, including during colonialism.

The book is complex in structure; its singer-narrator moves about in a zigzag manner, starting with Part One (After the End), then moving to Part Two (The End), Part Three (Flashback I), Part Four (Before the End), Part Five (Flashback II), Part Six (Between the End and the Beginning), Part Seven (Before the Beginning), Part Eight (Flashback III), and ending with Part Nine (The Beginning). This zigzag appropriately captures the turbulence that the fictitious country where the action is set, Afrolandia, has experienced; a turbulence that would render a chronological rendering of events inauthentic. I therefore suggest that the difficulties that the reader meets in making sense of the structure of the book, for instance determining what constitutes the beginning or the end, or deciphering the meaning of a title such as "between the end and the beginning," mirror the messiness of the experiences that the country has gone through. It is as if it does not matter what constitutes the beginning, the middle, or the end in the affairs of state of Afrolandia, since the common denominator in all these stages is betrayal, hence the singer-narrator's conclusion that in this country,

> there is nothing new happens under the sky,
> There is no new wisdom or new foolishness;
> Ever bloody deed enacts its ancient original,
> And every saviour becomes the monster he killed. (2021, p. 24)

It is no wonder that Namwenya asserts that "the horror that once came and went / shall soon come to pass again!" (2021, p. 27), to suggest that Afrolandia is cursed, since its fate seems foredoomed. I find this position pessimistic and problematic since it depicts the country as being ill-fated. It is as if it does not matter how much it tries to put its affairs of state in order; every attempt will result in failure. But if we remember that Africa was "once the one and only world, / When Phoenicia was yet a dream, / And Greece and Rome not yet conceived" (2021, p. 12), it is conceivable to hope that one day, this continent will return to its feet and register greatness similar to what it once achieved.

One of the tragedies that the book depicts is the wanton killing of people as captured in the poem "Horror in a Boot." A boss's former cook, now a soldier, exercises vengeance on his boss for sacking him: He "disconnect[s] the head from the feet," and dumps his lifeless body in the book of his state-provided car. When a market woman sees the body, she exclaims, "Katonda wange!"—Luganda for "O my God!" (2021, p. 70). Tongue-tied,

> She screamed
> Struck senseless
> Hands crazily
> Flying up and down
> And her whole body
> Staggering backwards
> She gasped
> Tottering away. (2021, pp. 70-71)

The woman's response above points to the shock of seeing a corpse in the boot of the soldier's car. It impacts her language: It disintegrates into a phrase (O my God) and then disappears completely since she is struck dumb and senseless. This calls forth Elaine Scarry's work that "intense pain is language-destroying: as the content of one's world disintegrates, so the content of one's language disintegrates; as the self disintegrates, so that which would express and project the self is robbed of its source and its subject" (1985, p. 35). But it is not just her language that suffers: She loses her balance as well, which is seen in the way she staggers backwards and totters away from the horrific scene. A crowd gathers to see what she is fleeing from, and on seeing the corpse, it gets "[t]oo shocked to believe and "[d]ementedly howl[s]" a cry (Wangusa, 2021, p. 71). This howling is in line with Alex Pillen's observation that "carnage leads to an inarticulate state of cries" for dehumanization is an "injury to mankind's linguistic accomplishments" (2016, p. 96).

This does not only apply to the characters in literary works, but to the authors as well: They find it difficult to get an appropriate idiom to capture horror. When Carol Sicherman asked Wangusa whether there was "a need to invent new literary forms to express the chaos and horror" that Uganda suffered between 1971 and 1985, he replied:

> In writing *Anthem for Africa*, I have toyed with old forms. Should it be a stage play? Should it be a novel? I tried my hand at both of these. Eventually I decided I wanted to do this one in the form of verse [...] I tried regular verse, so-called free verse, dramatic verse—there are two poems in which I do that. There is a poem in which I describe a corpse being discovered in the boot [trunk] of somebody's car, and the whole market is thrown into disarray; everybody runs away from this thing, this object. The only way I could do that was to write lines staggered on the pages. Maybe there are other forms, maybe even new words, maybe forms involving an interplay of the languages of Uganda, maybe a work in which many languages may be part of the work. Maybe we need an idiom that has yet to be discovered, maybe a work without words. I cannot specifically say what form one should be trying. (Sicherman, 1992, p. 31)

In other words, while horror destroys language, it paradoxically sets into motion the search for creative, innovative ways that can aptly or effectively represent it. In the area of Ugandan drama, the playwright Robert Serumaga experimented with different forms in commenting on Ugandan politics during Obote's and Amin's regimes, including a wordless drama, *Amayirikiti* (1974), in which "[t]he only character that rises to speak out is the dumb coffin-maker, symbolizing people's speech suppressed out of fear of death" (Mobowa, 1996, p. 92). Wangusa is doing something similar in this poem: He uses short lines, among other strategies, to register the personae's shock upon seeing the horror depicted in the poem.

III. Another Change of Guard: From Africa's New Breed to "Africa's New Brood"

"Africa's New Brood" is perhaps Wangusa's angriest poem in which he directly addresses several African rulers and warlords, castigating them for unleashing immense bloodshed and misery, and their betrayal of the lofty ideals they once stood for. Like Okot p'Bitek's

Song of Lawino, the poem is structured as a lament in which the persona sheds tears for the leaders he mentions, once called Africa's "New Breed" but who have converted themselves into Africa's New Brood. Wangusa invests in alliteration to emphasize the similarity between the names of the rulers and the names of the cities that he castigates in each verse of his lament. For instance, he singles out "Kaguta, Kagame and Kabila," who have turned their respective abodes, "Kampala, Kigali and Kinshasa" into "cities of Africa's torrid and turbulent zone" (2006, p. 1), and then moves to other pairs of rulers at whose hands the citizens have suffered or places where similar tragedies have happened: Sankoh and Savimbi, Adis Ababa and Asmara, and Monrovia and Mogadishu, to mention but a few. The use of alliteration serves to underline the similarity in the state of events in the countries whose cities are named (which themselves represent their respective countries) as well as the similarity in the treacherous nature of the leaders, whom the poet collectively calls Africa's new brood—an animal image that underlines their brutality and inhumanity as I explain in a moment.

The poem is built on a reversal, that is to say, Africa's new breed of leaders converting itself into Africa's new brood. At work here is the use of allusion: When Kaguta, Kagame, Zenawi and Afwerki took power, they were "held in high esteem by Western intellectuals, media, and governmental and intelligence circles, and in particular by Bill Clinton, the U.S. president in power through most of the 1990" as presenting "a stark contrast to the bigman syndrome that had characterized much of the mode of leadership that African countries experienced from the early postcolonial period," thanks to their new "style of leadership, and the radical character of the reforms they envisaged for the transformation of the manner of 'doing politics' in their individual countries" (Oloka-Onyango, 2004, p. 31). Unfortunately, this is no more, since these leaders (the surviving ones) have become a brood—"a family of birds or other young animals produced at one hatching or birth" (Stevenson, 2010). By animalizing these leaders, the poet underlines their brutality and inhumanity as well as mobilizing and authorizing dissent against them in a manner similar to what Syned Mthatiwa sees in the animal imagery of Jack Mapanje targeting Dr Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship: Suggesting that "since they have generated into irrational animals, they can no longer be trusted as leaders and should be replaced" (2012, p. p. 99). For a person's response to a dangerous animal prowling about is to fight it in self-defense.

Wangusa's anger is captured in the directness with which he addresses the targets of his lament and critique in a manner similar to what Sule Egya discerns in Nigerian poetry of the 1980s to 2000s: a tendency for the poets to be "direct and confrontational, and hurl diatribes at the dictators, often referencing their real names, such as the eponymous 'Abacha' by Abdullahi Ismaila or the title of Idris Amali's volume, *General without Wars*" (2011, p. 61). After Wangusa's persona explains the reasons as to why he sheds tears for each of the rulers or rebel leaders that he mentions, he bravely castigates them: "But now shame on you all – / Brood that was lately / Africa's new breed (2006, p. 4). It is as if he has given up on them, hence the tears he sheds for their moral and ethical death, since they have betrayed the ideals that they once stood for—ideals that won them international acclaim. Nothing sums up this betrayal better than President Museveni's grip on power since 1986; a Museveni who once said that "the problems of Africa and Uganda in particular are caused by leaders who overstay in power, which breeds impunity, corruption and promotes patronage" (Nogara, 2009, p. 7). This is the Museveni who has since abandoned the nationalist project to the extent that he sees nothing wrong with appointing his relatives to critical positions in his government, for instance his biological son (who is a full General in the national army and the Commander of the Defence Forces), his brother (who is the chief coordinator of the wealth creation program and a presidential advisor on military affairs), and his wife (who is serving as the minister for education and sports).

Conclusion

In one of his celebrated poems, "The State is My Shepherd," Wangusa depicts a naïve public servant who uncritically considers the state his shepherd, in whose care he entrusts his life/future because it leads him "into realms of political tranquility [and] paths of loans and pensions," besides its "guns and pangas comfort[ing]" him to the extent that he does

not fear walking through a notorious slum, Kivulu, where kondos (armed robbers) are active (Wangusa, 1993, p. 18). The success of this poem lies in its effective use of parody and satire. By imitating the subject and style of King David's Psalm 23, Wangusa shows the persona's equivalence of his state with King David's Yahweh as mistaken, if not foolhardy, for while the latter is omnipotent and all-good (at least according to Judeo-Christian teaching), the former is fragile and capable of destroying the very people it is supposed to protect, hence its ownership of weapons of bloodshed like guns and pangas.

The satire lies in the persona's naivety and gullibility: He has internalized the state's styling of itself as the guarantor of peace and prosperity, even when it is clear this is not the case. This is because the presence of the slum, Kivulu, symbolizes the inequalities between the rich and the poor in this state and the violence that this inequality portends, hence the presence of armed robbers that roam the night. The poem therefore dramatizes the tension between what the state claims to be (the protector of people's lives, property, and freedoms) and what it can actually turn out to be (the destroyer of its own people, their property and freedoms). The poems above depict more or less the same tension: The person heralded as a liberator today no sooner becomes a tyrant who brutalizes and kills the very people that he claimed he had come to power to protect. In other words, the ghost of Idi Amin haunts both the poems discussed here, and the hopes and aspirations of the personae whose lives they dramatize. The leaders who take office sooner than later lose sight of the vision that guided them thereby impoverishing their nations through plunder and ineptitude. They exercise power in such a way that they turn the citizens into docile men and women who will not protest the damnation or wretchedness they are reduced to (Fanon), and since they have the power to determine who lives and who dies, they kill off those who challenge the status quo (Mbembe).
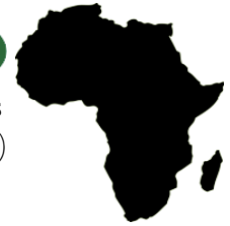
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Acknowledgement

The Struggle to Transform Sudan

Mahder Habtemariam Serekberhan

Abstract

On October 25, 2021, the military in Sudan staged a coup that reversed and continues to stall the revolutionary process launched by the Sudanese people in 2019. As daily demonstrations against the coup and military rule continue across Sudan, the military's position in Sudan is simultaneously reinforced by its control over the economic sectors and the support it receives from foreign capital and diplomacy. Unlike the previous uprisings in Sudan, the 2019 uprising has been followed by a mass refusal to *negotiate, partner, or compromise* with the military. As the people continue to demonstrate this refusal, the military sustains itself through its grip on the economy, and the explicit and implicit support it receives from its international allies, including the 'Friends of Sudan'.

Introduction

After four months of coordinated demonstrations began in Sudan, in April 2019, 30-year-incumbent Omar al-Bashir was removed from power, and within eight months the military conceded to negotiate with civilian forces. The military's effort to hold on to power after Bashir's removal was short lived as popular demands and organization led to a transitional government made up of the Transitional Military Council (TMC) and a coalition of civilian groups, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC). On October 25, 2021, however, the military staged a coup that reversed and continues to stall the revolutionary process launched by the Sudanese people. As daily demonstrations against the coup and military rule continue across Sudan, the military's position in Sudan is simultaneously reinforced by its control over the economic sectors and the support it receives from foreign capital and diplomacy.

The October coup has created a stalemate between forces that want to transform the politics and economy of Sudan and those that seek to maintain the status quo. The 2018/19 uprising resulted in substantial changes including the removal of a 30-year incumbent military regime, establishment of a transitional constitution and government, and the repeal of oppressive2 laws. After the removal of the previous regime (2019) and before October 25, 2021 at least two important structural changes affecting the politics and economy of Sudan were taking place: 1) there were bottom-up local elections happening

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2 Laws penalizing apostasy and legalizing Female Genital Cutting (FTC) were abolished.

in localities3, and 2) the Regime Dismantlement Committee4 (RDC) – "a domestic anti-corruption and asset recovery group composed of representatives from civilian political parties, the military, and intelligence services" (Cartier, Kahan, and Zukin, 2022). The latter had seized about 126 companies owned by the military regime and its allies. With the upcoming turnover of the leadership of the interim Sovereignty Council to civilians in February 2022, the March 17 military divestment agreement (Sayigh, 2021), and the overdue formation of the Transitional Legislative Council, the military's role in politics was coming to an end.5

The October 25 coup demonstrated the unwillingness of the military to relinquish power to civilians who sought to transform politics and the economy. Additionally, the various forms of support the coup regime received from different foreign actors exhibited the interest of these actors to preserve the political and economic system in Sudan as is. The coup resulted in the removal of most of the civilians in the Transitional Sovereign Council, the abolishment of new institutions (including the Committee to Dismantle the Former Regime), and ensured assets owned by SAF and RSF were not threatened. In its attempts to rollback political and economic transformations, the security apparatus in Sudan remains a counterrevolutionary force threatening democratic changes. To illustrate this point, this paper will reflect on the role of the security apparatus (with a focus on the military) in Sudan, why it is being contested, and who is contesting it over who is supporting it. Sudan has a remarkable history of organizing and 2019 was the third time (since independence in 1956) the Sudanese people mobilized to remove an oppressive military regime. But unlike the previous uprisings6, since 2019, the people7 have also clearly refused military rule or a military-led transition. As the people continue to demonstrate this refusal, the military sustains itself through its grip on the economy, and the explicit and implicit support it receives from its international allies, including the Quad8 and the Friends of Sudan.9

Brief Overview of Security Apparatus

Militarism in Sudan intensified under the previous regime and continues to do so under military rule. In Sudan, political Islam (Amin, 2007) has often been used as a justification for increased militarism. Increased militarism serves as a precondition to reproduce the status quo in Sudan, and in the process, it has led to the proliferation of violence, militias,

3 Beginning in each block, neighborhood, and administrative unit (which then make up localities) there were neighborhood- mobilized and informed elections happening in parts of Greater Khartoum to get representatives from the popular uprising into localities. This process was interrupted by 1) the FFC wanting to assign handpicked people to the positions, 2) the Ministry of Local Government passing a law giving the Mayor authority to assign locality executives, and 3) the October 25 Coup.

4 "The RDC issued more than five hundred decisions while it was active, seizing corporate and real estate assets from Bashir affiliates, removing individuals from public employment, and dissolving state-run non-profit organizations" (Cartier, Kahan, & Zukin, 2022: 7).

5 The agreement between the TMC and FFC, which was renegotiated multiple times since its signing, was a road map to a transition period of 3 years and 3 months. It would be led by a military member for the first 21 months and a civilian member for the following 18 months.

6 In 1964 and 1985, Sudan's democratic leaps and demands were cut short due to military intervention and role in politics after popular uprisings.

7 Reference to "the people" in this work, is a reference to the multicultural, multilingual, and multigendered working people and youth in Sudan that remain involved in the struggle for a better Sudan. The demonstrations since 2019 have been maintained through grassroots organization, coalition building, the role of the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), and the coordination of public and private sectors under informal networks. Various forces including professionals, civil/political society, armed groups, political parties, and youth and women's groups, individually and collectively, exerted pressure on the 30-year-old regime. Over the last three years, some groups have dealt with internally and externally caused rifts, with some leading to splits in organizations. This has meant there is a faction of civilians close to power, which are willing to negotiate with the military. Nonetheless, the grassroots and majority elements of the uprising, organized under labor groups, Resistance Committees, and locally-embedded organizations, continue to refuse military role in politics.

8 The 'quad' is reference to the United States, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, wheras the 'troika' represents Norway, United States, and United Kingdom.

9 Members of the group that refer to themselves as 'Friends of Sudan' include Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States of America.

and military units, and the encroachment, if not domination, of the military in Sudan's political, social, and economic sectors. After Jafaar Nimeri's regime's (1969 - 1985) alliance with Islamists, the role10 of political Islam in the military increased, but the Islamization of the security apparatus increased in unprecedented ways after Omar al-Bashir's11 Inqaz12 regime took power in 1989. El-Battahani's (2016b) analysis shows how the 1980s and 1990s class alliance of elites in the Muslim Brotherhood13 and military officers informed the evolution of the security apparatus (142-145).

The rise of a patriarchal Islamist military elite14 (the status quo) alongside Islamization and Arabization policies not only provides insight into what is being challenged in 21st century Sudan15, but also explains why women are at the forefront of this challenge. Between 1991 and 2000, the regime passed laws and decrees, collectively referred to as the public order regime. The three sets of laws (Muslim family law, public order laws, and labor laws) have been related to the oppressive and exploitative experiences of women in the Middle East and North Africa region (Tønnessen, 2019). In Sudan, scholars have argued these laws were directed at controlling women and enforcing the regime's ideology (Abbas, 2015). The regime established police departments and judicial courts to enforce public order laws and police women's "moral corruption." In Khartoum, the Public Order Police (POP) were created to enforce the laws, and in each neighborhood, the POP had their own police force and court system (ARC, 2018: 55).

Multiple reports have shown how the Public Order Police arrested and penalized women for arbitrary violations of Islamic law (ARC, 2018: 62). Women working in precarious and/or labor-intensive jobs suffered the most from the public order regime (SIHA Network, 2020). In addition, to gendering space and labor, the laws prohibited alcohol consumption and criminalized certain forms of trade. Because of the nature of their work, laws restricting women's mobility, public presence, and labor, affected most the women whose livelihood depended on their ability to work late and in various public settings, including the streets (SIHA Network, 2015). These women not only lost their family incomes and means of sustenance, as a result of the public order regime, but they suffered most from the systems and structures built to uphold them. Ali (2015) writes how "[l]iquor brewers and sex workers suffered flogging, fines, or imprisonment" (Ali, 2015: 57). The state and its security apparatus, thus, deployed political Islam to define morality and womanhood, and become its violent enforcers.

Similarly, the concept of al-sha'b al-muqātil (fighting people) and *jihad* were used as the bedrock for the military doctrine and as justification of organizing "tribal militias" (*marahil*)16 and paramilitary forces like the Popular Defense Forces (PDF). The Popular Defense Forces (PDF) were officially legitimized by the state during the democratic transitional period (1985 - 1989) but were better organized after 1989. The PDF have been implicated in modern day slavery, ethnic genocides, and mass displacements supported by

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10 Islamization of the military under Nimeri increased with the Special Organization, which supervised and managed military training of civilians among the Ikhwan (Muslim Brothers) in schools, universities, and neighborhoods.

11 Similar to the colonial governance system that blatantly placed political and military force at the head of the governance structure, Omar al-Bashir had "appointed himself head of state, prime minister, defense minister, and commander-in-chief of the armed forces" (Salmon, 2007: 14). Bashir's position exemplifies the convergence of politics and economy under military rule.

12 Islamization of the military also occurred through the termination of middle and top-ranking officers that were not part of the Islamist core.

13 The 1989 military coup brought the Muslim Brotherhood to power under the National Islamic Front (NIF), which would be re-founded as the National Congress Party (NCP). With Omar al-Bashir at the helm, the NCP stayed in power for 30 years until the 2019 uprising.

14 After the October 2021 coup, the military brought back Islamist elites associated to the previous regime. See Hoffmann, 2022. Amgad Fareid Eltayeb writes that "Islamist influence is once again visible throughout the public administration, especially in the prosecutor's office, the foreign service, the police and, above all, the judiciary. Since the coup, court decisions have handed over many previously confiscated assets to the Islamists."

15 The chants in the streets since the 2019 protests opposed patriarchy, Islamization, and Arabization, and instead embraced Sudan's diverse, matriarchal, and African realities: "the discourse of this generation is generally embracing diversity, equal citizenship, anti-racism, and the other demands of the revolution" (Arman, 2019: 1).

16 Spelled *murahileen* in plural form (Lobban, 2001).

the state (Lobban, 2001). As easily mobile and 'informal' units, the PDF became forces central to the reproduction of violence in peripheral regions:

> [D]escribed as a force of mujahideen (fighters of the holy war), the PDF [had] continued to exist as a military and civilian network to mobilize militia auxiliaries throughout Sudan; it currently has active units in Darfur and the Transitional Areas. The PDF has been a primary instrument militarizing local grievances in the government's policies of divide and rule (Salmon, 2007: 8).

Another "tribal militia," the Janjaweed, would not only work in the same vein, but they were upgraded to Border Guards, before becoming the now famed[17], Rapid Support Forces (RSF) (El-Battahani, 2016a). The Janjaweed officially became the RSF in 2013, to become a 'regular force,' with some units stationed in Khartoum to quell ongoing popular protests in the city (Langlois, 2022). The RSF was initially under the command of the National Intelligence Security Services (NISS)[18], whose leaders were appointed by the president, to which the body was accountable (Elhashmi, 2017).

Currently, the Sudanese military is said to be made up of the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), with General Abdelfatah al-Burhan[19] as commander-in-chief, and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), commanded by General Mohammed Hamdan Daglo (aka Hemeti)[20]. General al-Burhan also serves as the chair of Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council, whereas General Dagalo[21] serves as the vice chair of Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council. The security apparatus implicated in this work, however, includes the Central Reserve Forces, the Police, and the Riot Police, which make up a militia-military-paramilitary force that continues to suppress resistance in Sudan. To illuminate the risks of militarism in Sudan, this paper will focus on the collective and primary role of these institutions: accumulation of capital and suppression of resistance.

Patterns of Accumulation

The military, i.e., the colonial British army[22], emerged in Sudan as a force organized to create the necessary conditions to integrate Sudan in the imperialist chain of production. Since independence, the evolution and role of this force has had to contend with the working peoples of Sudan[23]. To talk security sector reform or professionalization without interrogating the current role of the military and its impact on the lives of Sudanese people would then be futile. The endogenous evolution of colonialism, neocolonialism, and the military in Sudan (Kalpakian, 2019; Mohammed, 1980; Mohammed, 1993), the intra-class struggles shaping the security apparatus (Mahé, 2019), and the use of military units to reproduce and maintain the power structure (de Waal, 2017; Kamrava, 2013; Salmon, 2007) have been discussed elsewhere. To map militarism and understand the current

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17 The title of this article "Arab Militias…" shows the shallow analysis reproduced by mainstream media, but the article here is used to show the evolution of the Janajaweed and the continued violence, which emanates from the nature of their formation (Walsh, 2022)

18 The NISS was dissolved after the 2019 uprising.

19 General Burhan is also the chair of Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council and leader of the October 25, 2021, coup.

20 Hemeti is also the vice chair of Sudan's Transitional Sovereign Council.

21 Used interchangeably with Hemeti.

22 The first battalion made up of Sudanese people was raised in Egypt in 1884. After Egypt became a British protectorate in 1882, the British dismantled the army and created a new military organized across vertical class, ethnic, and regional lines: British officers would command and recruit Egyptian and Sudanese peasants (Mohammed, 1980). Due to the slave trade, which peaked during the Turco-Egyptian period, and British solicitation of the Southern Sudanese (specifically the Dinka, Shilluk and Galla), there was a large of population of Sudanese in Egypt to which the laws of conscription applied. Between 1886 and 1889 six more battalions populated by Sudanese soldiers were raised (9th to the 15th), leaving the new Egyptian army with 18 battalions. See Mohammed, (1980)

23 "Since independence in 1956, periods of military rule ran from 1958 to 1964, 1969 to 1985, and from 1989 to 2015. The SAF took over power in 1958, 1969, 1985, and 1989, and twice—in 1964 and 1985—the army took a neutral stand toward popular uprisings against the governments of the day and tipped the balance of power. The SAF have been involved in protracted civil war since the independence of Sudan in 1956, except for a short period of eleven years following the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement of 1972. Radical Islamist military officers took over in 1989 and have been in power ever since" (El-Battahani, 2016b: 135).

contestation of military power in Sudan, this section will focus on the role of the military in the economy.

In 2020, then PM Abdallah Hamdok said the military's asset ownership and control over commercial businesses and sectors from mining to agriculture is "unacceptable," as "only 18 percent of the state's resources are in the hands of the government" (as quoted in AFP, 2020). The patriarchal military Islamist elite consolidated after 1989 made profound changes to the military, and simultaneously "expanded the economic corporate business of the military" (El-Battahani, 2016b: 135). The privatization and liberalization policies of the regime, often negotiated and encouraged by international finance institutions like the IMF, were coupled with nepotistic and military patronage networks that left private and public companies under the ownership or micro-management of the state, security apparatus, and/or regime leaders and their families. Increased privatization in the 1990s and 2000s resulted in the selling of State Controlled Enterprises (SCEs), such as Sudan Airways, but often these enterprises were sold to funds and charitable organizations (non-profits) linked to or owned by the regime.

Collectively, the SAF and the RSF own a range of enterprises from flour mills and transportation hubs, to import and export companies dealing with some of Sudan's top commodities (in terms of revenue and/or quantity), such as meat, gold, and sesame. Over the last few decades, the SAF expanded its role in the economy beyond military industries24 and trade, to include businesses, such as "Danfoudio (engaged in all sorts of business ventures ranging from furniture to construction); Al-Hiloul al-Mutakamila (in the business of restaurants, cafes, media); and Alaia Pharmacology (medicine and other related pharmaceutical businesses)" (El-Battahani, 2016a: 4). A recent investigative report regarding the role of the military (SAF and RSF) in the economy of Sudan identifies at least 408 State Controlled Enterprises (SCEs) directly and indirectly controlled by a network of military men, their families, and related entities (Cartier et al., 2022).

To insulate ownership and role of the military in the economy, SAF25 and RSF use charitable investment funds and/or shell companies. The number of new companies registered between 1989 and 1994, allegedly equaled the number of companies registered between 1925 and 1989 (Cross, 2021). Leaked documents have shown that the RSF has been using front companies based in the UAE and Sudan to circulate capital (Dabanga, 2019b). Following the oil boom (2000 to 2011), virtual companies were created by men like Fadul Mohamed Khair26 (a local shareholder in the Bank of Sudan), without tax file numbers or registration numbers. Such companies (referred to as shell companies) received funds from the Central Bank of Sudan (CBOS), which contributed to the banking crisis after 2011 (SDFG, 2018). The first few years of the oil boom saw increased foreign funds entering Sudan, which allowed the regime to consolidate power within an inner circle: "opportunities, goods and services, became virtually inaccessible to the public without the support or approval of a state official at some level" (Sidahmed, 2011: 181).

An investigative paper by the Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG) (2018) reveals the regime consistently intervened in the banking sector to determine who gets credit and foreign currency resources, for agricultural and other investments. The newly established structures, along with the patronage system of employment and ownership, functioned to serve the interests of the regime. For instance, Omar al-Bashir's brother, Abdallah Hassan Al-Bashir, had "access to the CBOS foreign exchange department at any time, to obtain permission to transfer foreign exchange resources from the CBOS to Omdurman National Bank (ONB), in order to allow the ONB to execute/implement ministry of defense imports

24 "The Defense Industries System (DIS), which comes under the authority of the Defense Ministry, had over 200 companies in May 2020, with annual revenues of 110 billion Sudanese pounds ($2 billion at the official exchange rate at that time). RSF companies bring the total to some 250 companies, but the RSF has also earned significant sums from hiring out troops to fight alongside Emirati- and Saudi-backed forces in Yemen (as has the SAF) and Libya. Its contribution of just over $1 billion to the Central Bank of Sudan to support essential imports in 2019 gave a sense of the volume of the RSF's reserves." (Sayigh, 2021: 2-3).

25 Despite the earlier refusal of General Burhan to transfer commercial companies to the public (AFP, 2020), the current Finance Minister, Gibril Ibrahim, claims the transitional regime is on track to shut down or privatize numerous companies owned by the military (Wahba, 2022).

26 In 2018, the NISS arrested him, which led to senior officials, mostly foreigners, in the Bank of Sudan leaving the country.

from abroad by issuing letters of credit" (SDFG, 2018: 26-27). Today, Omdurman National Bank (ONB) is the largest financial institution in Sudan, and more than 80 percent of its shares is currently owned by several corporations that can be traced to the SAF. Similarly, 20 to 50 percent ownership of the companies that are shareholders of the Al-Khaleej bank, founded in 2013, can also been traced to Hemeti and his family (Cartier et al., 2022).

The dominant involvement of the security apparatus in the Sudanese economy creates varied pathways for accumulation and capital outflow as it creates the necessary conditions for foreign capital. Ownership of companies by SAF and RSF provide the security apparatus with a level of control over basic necessities and services (e.g., flour and transportation), high-value commodities (e.g., gold and sesame), and capital influx and circulation (e.g., banking and financial sector). Press reports also indicate that companies owned by the military are "exempt from paying tax and operate in total opacity" (AFP, 2020). In 2019, the RSF was known to have an account in the National Bank of Abu Dhabi (now part of First Abu Dhabi Bank).

Ownership of banks and correspondent international banking relationships, such as Al-Khaleej's relations in the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United States, U.K., Turkey, and Italy27, means that SAF and RSF can access foreign currency and conduct illicit transfers28 with minimal oversight. The unaccounted circulation of capital and access to foreign currency is not facilitated just by banks, but other military owned companies and their relations abroad. For instance, Zadna International Company for Investment Ltd., "an agricultural and construction conglomerate" owned by SAF, has import-export relations with US company Valmont Industries (Cartier et al., 2022). In 2020, Valmont representatives met with coup leader General al-Burhan. Despite continued and at times simultaneous workers strikes of different sectors across Sudan (Dabanga, 2022c), the military's foreign contacts keep them afloat.

After the independence of South Sudan, in 2011, the state lost much of its revenue as most of the oil fields were in South Sudan. The security apparatus, particularly SAF and its rank and file, felt the loss as salaries, other provisions, and constructions projects were highly affected (El-Battahani, 2016b). The loss of oil revenue was also felt by foreign allies whose role29 in Sudan's oil economy was central. This turned the state's attention to exploring oil in the North, intensifying gold mining, and leasing out more land to international investors. Highlighting the cruciality of Sudan in the international market, in 2012, Sudan accounted for nearly 2 per cent of the world's gold production. The fact that 85 to 90 percent of gold output in Sudan comes from artisanal mines – with an estimated 50,000 artisanal workers just in River Nile and Red Sea states (Elhashmi, 2017) – illuminates how underdevelopment and accumulation on a world scale are integral to the global capitalist supply chains, with global capital being, at best, indifferent to desires for more meaningful social development.

Reports from the Central Bank of Sudan (CBOS) show that in 2016 and 2017, gold occupied the largest share of export commodities and was the most valuable export (in dollars). Attempts to gain control of regions endowed with gold, such as the struggle between militias commanded by Hemeti and Musa Hilal30 in Jebel Amir, North Darfur, has led to the arming of militias and cycles of violence (Global Witness, 2019; Perry, 2018). A report by the Sudan Democracy First Group shows how the NISS, in cooperation with

27 "About Al Khaleej Bank: Shareholders." Al Khaleej Bank website, accessed 30 May 2022, https://al-khaleejbank.com/alkhaleej/about/#Shareholders.

28 "According to Sudanese newspaper Al Rakoba, SFSSAF issued a circular contesting allegations by Salah Manaa, a member of RDC leadership, that Zadna was a vehicle for military money-laundering." (Cartier, Kahan, & Zukin, 2021: 21)

29 Sudan's oil production was aided by and profited numerous foreign private and state investments: "Britain's Rolls Royce supplied diesel engines and technical support to the GNPOC, both vital to oil operations…Weir Pumps Ltd. Of Glasgow, Scotland…supplied pumps and drivers vital for the pipeline…[and] also provided operational support for the pipeline and trained Malaysian and Sudanese mechanical engineers in Scotland. One-third of the pipeline was supplied by European consortium, Europipie, which is owned by British, French, and German firms" (Beny, 2015: 240).

30 Musa Hilal was also a leader of militia groups in Darfur that were often used by the state. Unlike Hemeti, Hilal was imprisoned before getting pardoned two years ago. The extent of exploitation by Hilal's forces was also intense: "it is estimated that Hilal and his armed followers make $54 million a year from their control of the gold mines" and the territories around the gold mines. "It remains to be seen how many health facilities the state, as a tax collector, has established in Jebel Amir." (Elhashmi, 2017: 5, 26)

the RSF and other militia forces, controlled the gold sector in Sudan, as opposed to the Ministry of Minerals or the Central Bank of Sudan (CBOS). After armed conflicts, Eljunaid31 Co., owned by Hemeti and his family, took full control of the gold mines in Jebel Amir (North Darfur). Eljunaid is now reported to be working in mining areas outside Darfur, including South Kordofan and northern Sudan. A Reuters report found that by 2017 Hemeti and his militia forces smuggled millions of dollars' worth of gold to the UAE: "[t]he documents, covering a four-week period from the end of last year [2018], show Al Gunade sent around $30 million of gold bars to Dubai, around a ton in weight" (Abdelaziz et al., 2019). Much of the gold from Sudan goes through the UAE32, but many actors, including Russian capitalists and the Wagner group have been implicated in gold mining and illegal exports (Rickett, 2022).

Gold and other goods are not the only source of revenue for the military and their allies. The use of Sudanese soldiers in wars beyond their borders, is not a new phenomenon33, but has strengthened the current military's autonomous relation with foreign powers. In 2015, a Saudi-Emirati coalition made a deal with the SAF to supply troops for their war in Yemen. A few months later, the UAE made another deal with the RSF to supply even more troops (de Waal, 2019: BBC, 2019). The military of Sudan has been supplying migrant military labor by sending Sudanese soldiers to fight wars in Chad in 2008, in General Khalifa Haftar's war in Libya (Radio Dabanga, 2020d) and for the ongoing war in Yemen (Achcar, 2019). It has been reported that RSF soldiers constitute the majority of ground troops fighting on the side of the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen (Tubiana, 2019). Hemeti himself has admitted34 that "people ask where do we [the RSF] bring this money from? We have the salaries of our troops fighting outside [abroad] and our gold investments, money from gold, and other investments." (as quoted in Dabanga, 2019b). Qatar, UAE, and Saudi Arabia have been subcontracting Sudanese soldiers to fight their wars and join their lower-rank military personnel (Barany, 2020). By 2017, over 500 Sudanese soldiers had already been reported as dead, and reports regarding Sudanese soldiers being refused backpay and being sent into "suicide missions" were released (Perry, 2018). Additional source of funds for the military include the millions of euros allocated by the European Union to Sudan (to curb migration to Europe), which has made its way to the RSF (Trew, 2019; Ramani, 2020).

Military revenue and state budgeting35 for the military, at the expense of the lives and livelihoods of the Sudanese people, is in turn used to repress the people. The appropriation of land, looting of resources, and destruction of environments, necessary to accumulate capital (Ayers, 2010; Beny, 2015; HRW, 2012), alongside the Islamization and Arabization policies designed by the state and enforced by the security apparatus (Poggo, 2002; Salmon, 2007), have often been met with resistance and led to cycles of violence.[36] More recently, an investigation into the RSF found that the institution purchased a "fleet of almost one thousand Toyota pick-up trucks – easily converted into highly mobile

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31 Also spelled Al Gunade.

32 Unofficial data from the UAE apparently suggests 1.7billion worth of gold went from Sudan to the UAE in 2021 (Africa Confidential, 2022).

33 During WWII, the British raised Sudanese Defense Forces (SDF) played an important role for imperialism in Eastern and Northern Africa, and Palestine.

34 https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=622192814921019

35 The depression of the social wages of the people is furthered by exuberant military budgets funded through direct and indirect taxation. In other words, taxes and government revenue disproportionately fund the military over necessary social services. During the oil boom, military spending of SAF was the third largest amongst armies in Africa (El-Battahani, 2016b). Despite it contributing a 10 to 15 percent to the grass national product, SAF received the largest share of government expenditure (60 to 70 percent), thus "military spending [was] a drain on the economy" (El-Battahani, 2016b: 145). In 2016, 70 % of government expenditure went to the military and intelligence, as compared to 2.3 % for education and 1 % for health (Elhashmi, 2017). Areas in Darfur and Kordofan have historically been some of the least serviced regions, albeit being sources of some of Sudan's top exports, such as livestock and Gum Arabic. In 2016 alone, the RSF's budget was 3.2 billion Sudanese pounds, "32 times the budget for education and 6 times the budget for health services" (Elhashmi, 2017: 13). As Mohammed Hussein Sharfi (2014) explained, "[i]n every budget before and after secession [of South Sudan] the government allocated the largest share of oil revenues, to the security and defense sectors. These huge allocations were effectively used to maintain the current regime's political and security control" (317).

36 Recent reports show the "RSF forces also guard gold mines in Darfur and South Kordofan and have preserved control over Darfur's economic resources by destroying forty-five villages and perpetrating extra-judicial killings" (Ramani, 2020).

'technicals' with mounted machine guns – which have been used by the militia to suppress popular uprisings around the country for over a decade" (Dabanga, 2019b). In South Kordofan, trucks with the same descriptions were used by the RSF and other militias to suppress anti-mining protests (Dabanga, 2019a). Video footage37 also shows these trucks pulling up to the sit-in in Khartoum before the Ramadan Massacre and throughout the protests in 2019 (HRW, 2019a). On June 3, 2019 – what is now remembered as the Khartoum or Ramadan Massacre – the RSF, SAF, and the Riot police, raided the sit-in in front of the military headquarters in Khartoum (El-Gizouli and Thomas, 2020). The sit-in was erected to demand the removal of Omar al-Bashir but outlived his deposition to demand civilian role in political transition. More than a hundred twenty people were killed, and many hundreds injured when the sit-in was violently disbursed. More than 70 women were also raped, and at least three committed suicide after the incident (Ali, 2019; Hassan and Kadouda, 2019; Salih and Burke, 2019). This event garnered international and regional condemnation, including the suspension of Sudan from the African Union.

The sit-in provided a glimpse of the democratic political possibilities in Sudan. Erected for 58 days, stretching for an estimated 108 hectares, the sit-in attracted people from at least nine cities across Sudan (Bahreldin, 2020). Youth, women, students, the unemployed and the professionals, and others with different religions, races, ages, ethnic groups, and genders, came together to form the sit-in. The sit-in drew so many people that security forces had to barricade roads and bridges entering Khartoum. The sit-in was transformed into a space where culture, art, and politics, by and for the people, was observed and/or practiced. There were medical facilities, public toilets, and food and drink service points organized with barricades, and security check points. There were also educational facilities, and a safe zone for women, where legal and psychological support was provided. The space was used to disseminate information and update the people on the ongoing negotiations and contestation between the people's representatives and military groups. In this sense, the sit-in became a space to practice a mode of politics built on popular participation, shared accountability, and collective contribution. Some have referred to the sit-in as "governing without a government," (Elnaiem, 2019: 141) which indicates why it was brutally disbursed.

After four months of nationally coordinated street protests, worker strikes, a few days of the sit-in in Khartoum, and the deaths and injuries of the young, old, [un]employed, women, and men in different regions of Sudan, the power of the political society was realized on April 11, when Bashir's Vice President and [then] Defense Minister, General Awad Ibn Auf, announced the security forces had removed Bashir. The army also announced it would hold power until democratic elections could be held in two years. The TMC was supported by external powers, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (Jacinto, 2019); and its military men already had strong relations with countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States, which had been implicated in attempts to overthrow Omar al-Bashir since 2012 (Lynch, 2019). Nonetheless, demonstrators continued to organize across Sudan, because in the words of Yousef Mohamed, a banker from Omdurman, "we tried a military government, but it didn't work for us in Sudan" (France 24, 2019).

Role of the Security Apparatus Today

Since the 2019 uprising, and particularly since the October 25 coup, the people of Sudan have been demonstrating their refusal to military rule daily. The Sudanese people's demands, which began with *Freedom, Peace, and Justice* are now *no negotiation, no partnership, [and] no compromise* with the military. The Riot Police, Central Reserve Forces, regular Police, and officers in civilian clothing, alongside RSF and SAF, have been witnessed attacking and brutalizing demonstrators in coordinated and uncoordinated manners. These forces have been conducting arbitrary arrests and using crowd control methods (e.g. tear gas) and excessive force on often young and unarmed demonstrators. Since the October 25, 2021 coup alone, 119 people have been killed and thousands have been injured for demonstrating against the military. Despite extreme repression, and the demonstrated

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37 https://twitter.com/BBCAfrica/status/1149611779225296896?s=20

inability of the military to lead a democratic process, external forces continue to facilitate power-sharing agreements and reinforce the role of the military in Sudan.

Beginning with the refusal of a democratic transition, the military men in Khartoum have shown they are incapable of delivering *Freedom, Peace, or Justice* in a myriad of ways. First, violence in different regions, especially West Darfur, have increased, with the military and militias being implicated in causing the violence itself (Dabanga, 2022d). Second, the military continues to release convicted officers or refuses to hold them accountable (Dabanga, 2022b). Thirdly, anti-coup and anti-military demonstrators calling for democratic political process are continuously met with brutal force. There have been multiple reports from teenage demonstrators being arbitrarily arrested and tortured (Amnesty International, 2022), and young women facing rape and abuse (Human Rights Watch, 2022a), to extreme use of violence (Human Rights Watch, 2020) and indiscriminate killings (Resistance Committee, n.d.; Amnesty International, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2019c). In August, the Central Committee for Sudan Doctors38 denounced the decision to bury thousands of unidentified bodies without recording forensic details (Dabanga, 2022a). Despite gruesome violations of human life and dignity, external forces like the United Nations continue to legitimize the military, by not only treating it as a legal-political entity capable of democratic transition, but making incompatible political gestures, such as admitting the re-election of Sudan to serve on the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) for the period 2023-2025.

A young organizer and then spokesperson for a Resistance Committee, Dania Atbani, called the UN's effort to negotiate with the military as "extremely disrespectful" of the democratic struggle in Sudan (Kulkarni, 2022). Atbani further highlighted the double standard under which Sudanese people are being coerced to accept the political legitimacy of and negotiate with their violators:

> This is something the Western countries know and understand well when it comes to their countries. But they seem to think that in Sudan, and in the Global South in general, we are not worthy of a government held accountable to the people and shall always be ruled by the power of weapons and militaries (as quoted in Kulkarni, 2022).

And despite the clear refusal of young and working people against military rule (Kulkarni, 2022), the "Friends of Sudan" call on "Sudanese authorities" to lead a democratic political process. The power-sharing agreement being brokered by Western countries and the UN, which seems to have culminated in the December 2, 2022 agreement, not only goes against the chants in the streets and among civilian groups, but also bought the coup regime time to work with Islamists in the former regime and external actors, to consolidate its power (Hoffmann, 2022). The members of the "Friends of Sudan," and the Quad, have very different interests in Sudan, from geopolitical to trade interests39, but they seem to agree on legitimizing the military's role in politics. The previous section attempted to show why the presence of force in politics is necessary to sustain the flow of capital beneficial to the elite in Sudan and their foreign allies. With the military (TMC) in power since 2019, Western states and creditors have been able to ensure the flow of capital and form of accumulation in Sudan is not interrupted through "continued implementation of IMF diktats, notably withdrawing fuel subsidies, the resurrection of junk bonds defaulted on by Sudan in the 1990s and earlier, a privatization programme of state assets, and 'compensation' payments for US victims of Islamic terrorism in the 1990s – without parallel compensation for Sudanese civilian victims of separate aerial strikes by the United States and Israel in the intervening period" (Cross, 2021: 68). Therefore, some members of the Friends of Sudan, such as the US and U.K., legitimize the military through public diplomacy and indirect business relations, whereas other members, such as Saudi Arabi and the UAE, do so through "military aid, as well as fresh cash, fuel and wheat injections" (Gallopin, 2020: 20).

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38 "In their statement, the Doctors Committee said that "the revolution, since the start in December 2018, has continuously witnessed attempts to obscure justice, and protect the perpetrators of violence and extrajudicial killings." It demands that "in order to preserve the rights of the unidentified dead to dignity and justice, a number of measures and procedures must be taken"" (as quoted in Dabanga, 2022).

39 Aside from providing migrant military and low-skilled labor, the Middle East has been historically dependent on Sudan's export of livestock and grain. Sudan's exports to the UAE in 2020 amounted to $1.86 billion (Escanollina, 2022).

The role of international forces not only legitimizes and strengthens the military, but it simultaneously undermines civilian roles in politics and the transition. This is not lost to the Sudanese people who have been rejecting foreign intervention in the political process (Bearak and Fahim, 2019). In 2020, the UAE facilitated a secret meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and General al-Burhan, without awareness of the civilian cabinet (Amin, 2020). Despite its unconstitutionality, and the undermining of civilian power with an exclusive engagement with the military, the meeting was applauded by Washington, and was followed by an invitation for General al-Burhan to visit Washington by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (Gallopin, 2020). In 2021, the UAE attempted to co-opt opposition groups [to the military], by paying money to members of Sudan Call40 (Gallopin, 2020). In 2022, countries like the U.S., on the one hand, designated the Central Police Force41 as an organization using force to suppress protest (Ramani, 2020), and on the other hand, called for civilians to negotiate with the RSF and SAF, which have been implicated in worse offenses.

Despite numerous statements condemning the violence unleashed by the security apparatus, Western countries and their collective statements42 since the 2021 coup, neither acknowledge the "coup" or the rollback it has created in democratic transition, nor used to punitive or effective measures that support the people of Sudan (Hoffmann, 2022). In a discussion of a viable political process, Amgad Fareid Eltayeb (2022), former deputy chief of staff to former civilian prime minister Abdalla Hamdok, writes,

> It is not possible to reach a solution to a problem by coexisting with it. What happened on October 25, 2021, is a military coup, in which power was illegitimately seized, and without clearly defining this as the basis for the crisis, any attempt at a solution becomes just an attempt to legalize this coup, nothing more.

The support of the most recent Framework Agreement – signed by the military and one faction of the FFC43 on December 5, 2022 – by the Friends of Sudan continues to show the double speak of foreign actors that claim to support the Sudanese people. The new Framework was not only rejected by the Resistance Committees and numerous civilian actors (Amin, 2022; Dabanga, 2022e) , and upheld by Hemeti and other military men, but it also abstracted reforming of security apparatus44 (Eltayeb, 2022) and differed transitional justice processes (Human Rights Watch, 2022b)45 necessary to make the military accountable. Despite the participatory process that led to transitional charters46 without the military (Alneel, 2022; Khalafallah, 2022), the Framework Agreement, was based on secret meetings and a Constitutional Charter privately drafted by the Sudan Bar Association in August.

Despite the opportunity to respect the self-organization and articulation of the Sudanese people, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and its allies, supported the latter proposal that would keep the military in politics. Despite multiple analysis of the impending failures of the agreement (Al-Karib, 2023; Eltayeb, 2022; Young, 2023), there have been some claims framing the agreement as a "victory" for Sudanese people (Bashir, 2022). Extending the transitional period under the military's leadership has bought the military time to reconsolidate their power (Hoffmann, 2022) and create unstable conditions to claim their

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40 Sudan Call made up an umbrella of political and armed opposition groups that were included in the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC).

41 "In March 2022, the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control designated the Central Police Force, a police organization that violently suppressed pro-democracy protests in late 2021 and early 2022" (Ramani, 2020).

42 https://www.state.gov/troika-statement-on-military-takeover-in-sudan/

43 The FFC split in 2022 into the FFC-Central Committee, which are willing to negotiate with the government, and the FFC-Radical Change, which continue to stand with Resistance Committees in refusing any partnership with the military. The new agreement was facilitated by the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and led by Western countries, despite the disagreement of many of the civilian groups that continue to demonstrate against the coup regime.

44 Amgad Fareid Eltayeb (2022), former deputy chief of staff to former civilian prime minister Abdalla Hamdok, writes that the "framework Agreement resorted to linguistic manipulation and talked about agreed-upon schedules for merging, without mentioning where these schedules are or how they will be reached and agreed upon… The agreement reduced all talk about Rapid Support to two clauses confirming its existence, independence and separate subordination to the head of state. While the agreement was detailed in the provisions related to the army and the police, and clearly stipulated that they were prevented from doing business and investment, this was ignored or even referenced in the text about rapid support force."

45 https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/13/sudan-pact-omits-key-justice-reforms

46 The Charter for the Establishment of the People's Authority (CEPA), as written and rewritten by the RCs in Khartoum State, and the Revolutionary Charter for People's Power (RCPP), as written and rewritten by RCs outside of Khartoum emerged even before the Sudanese Bar Association (SBA) constitutional draft that was endorsed by Embassies of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The RCs have outlined (and continue to work on a joint draft of) the structural and transformative forms of change necessary in Sudan.

necessary role in politics (Gavin, 2023). As this paper attempted to show the military role in politics has only been beneficial to elite men in uniform, their allies, and foreign supporters. In fact, substantial changes to the lives and livelihoods of Sudanese people, require not just an autonomous, representative, and profound democratic political process, but also a sovereign economic model (Cross, 2021), built, not on the exploitation of Sudanese people, but on delinked47 and alternative (non-coercive) trading networks, financial systems, and payment agreements.

Conclusion

There have been discussions of how democratization can come after military rule (Geddes et al., 2014), and older discussions of whether military rule can bring stability and order in particular societies (Huntington, 1968). However, this paper shows the only stability the military has brought is regarding the brand of accumulation that unequally integrates Sudan in the global capitalist chain of production. Additionally, despite claims to support 'civilian-led rule' and the Sudanese people, foreign actors continue to undermine democratic transformations through explicit and tacit support for the military. The refusal of military rule and militarism by the Sudanese people is a call to restructure politics and the economy in Sudan, which has been organized to benefit foreign capital and their soldiers on the ground. The prominent role of women in rejecting the coup regime is a rejection of patriarchal oppressions manifest in the unequal organizing of politics and the economy. Above all, the refusal of military rule in Sudan, is best understood as a struggle to respect the humanity and dignity of Sudanese people, by creating an accountable governance structure and a security sector that protects the people (not subjects them to repression). Ultimately, the military in Sudan would not stand a chance against the organized Sudanese people, if not for their foreign alliances that legitimize, reinforce, and depend on its role.

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47 On delinking, see Amin, S. (1987).

Photo by author, during a protest in Al Sahafa, Khartoum, June 3, 2022. The woman is holding up a flag of a martyr (a common act during demonstrations) named Abdelsalam Keshsha who was killed by the security forces. While text is somewhat illegible, the first line appears to be "politics or politicians", the second line reads "blood"; under the picture, it reads "martyr Abdelsalam Keshsha" (Thus, we could assume the general point is that "politicians have the martyr's blood on their hands").

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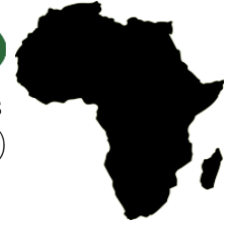
Constructing Security Communities in Nigeria? Interrogating the Politics of Regionalization of Vigilante Protection and the Dynamics of Ethnic Security Dilemma

Kialee Nyiayaana

Abstract

The recent adoption of the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* regional vigilante institutions in the governance of security in Nigeria marks a fundamental shift towards the development of regional security complexes or security communities in the country. This article seeks to address two questions: How does the regionalization of vigilantism and protection interact with national security interests of the Nigerian state and, in turn, impact the process of securitization amongst the various ethnic regions in the country? What are the implications of regional identity politics for ethnic security dilemma and effectiveness of regional vigilantism in Nigeria? It draws on the theory of cooperative security and secondary data with the aim of providing new insights into the nature of regional security politics and the ethnic security dilemma that the evolving dynamics of the regionalization of protection generates in Nigeria. The key argument is that while the regional vigilante structural arrangement is driven by an integrationist bias to secure members of the imagined community, it has also contributed to the politicization of protection in ways that tended to deepen ethnic consciousness in Nigeria. Yet, the realities of national security politics and internal political dynamics in each region of the country counteract the effectiveness of the regional vigilante initiatives. The article concludes that these challenges raise a number of questions, regarding whether the current attempts at regional vigilantism has rather produced an illusion of security transformation in the struggle for structural reforms of Nigeria's security architecture.

Keywords: *Amotekun, Ebubeagu*, Security community, Ethnic and cultural identities, security politics, Ethnic security dilemma.

Introduction

The recent adoption of state government-established vigilante groups in the governance of security in Nigeria along regional lines marks a fundamental shift towards the evolution and development of regional security complexes or security communities. Applied primarily in international relations, a security community is defined as "a collective in which members securitize together to protect a common referent from threat" (Buzan and

Waever, 2009). Shared values, norms, interests, cultural ties and history are critical variables that provide a common social identity underlining cooperation and peaceful relationships in a security community (Adler and Barnett, 1996). The boundary of a security complex is conceptualized as "where the specific security relationship separates a group of countries from the rest" (Esmaeili, Hossein and Firoozabadi, 2021, p. 139). At the domestic sub-national level in Nigeria, the formation of the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* security frameworks in 2020 and 2021 by the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups arguably exemplified the institutional expression of the collective aspirations of state governments of the Southwest and South-east regions to protect and defend their territories in ways that approximate a security complex. The Igbo people of Southeastern Nigeria speak the same language and are united by a contiguous territory and myth of common Igbo identity bound by an origin story linking them to the biblical, "lost tribe" of Israel". The Yoruba people are an ethnic group who trace their historical origins to *Ododuwa* and occupy contiguous territory in Southwestern Nigeria. Beyond the Yoruba and Igbo ethnic groups, the idea and sentiments of a security community have been embraced by other regions of the country. The oil-rich South-south region of Nigeria, comprising ethnic minorities with shared historical memories and sentiments of political marginalization formally announced in Port Harcourt, in April 2021, their intention to create their own regional security outfit.

Historically, the concept and practice of regional vigilantism are not new in Nigeria. The activities of the *Bakassi Boys* in Igboland in the 1990s and *Hisbah* in the North in 2003 are exemplars. However, the current wave of the regionalization of vigilante protection in the country where some federating states have more or less coalesced into 'pluralistic security communities' is linked to the evolution of new security challenges that confront the Nigerian state which the Federal Government appears impotent to tackle. Armed banditry and its associated kidnappings have threatened the social fabric of the Northwest and are compounded by the festering violence of the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Northeast. Additionally, the violent activities of rampaging Fulani herdsmen throughout the country are a huge threat to national security. Paradoxically, the perverse activities of these violent non-state armed actors like bandits and the Fulani herdsmen have also provoked ethnic distrust that is characterized by the politicization of federal, state and regional responses to them. Recent studies identify government complicity as a critical factor in the prevalence and escalation of the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria (Ugwueze, Omenma and Okwueze, 2022; Nyiayaana, 2022). Government complicity is defined as the political climate, policies and decisions that sanction certain forms of behaviour or shape institutional responses to security threats in ways that advance the political and economic interest of a particular group over the other, for example, the Fulani herder over the farmer and vice versa (Ugwueze, Omenma and Okwueze 2022). According to this view, the nature of state responses to the herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria reflects predispositions to ethnic considerations of state leaders rather than the inherent weaknesses of the police and the military institutions to confront security predicaments of herder-farmer violence (Ugwueze, Omenma and Okwueze 2022). The contradictions of these policy actions result in the creation of ethnic vigilante structures in support of their own means of protection and survival.

As Nwoko (2021) and David and Oyedele (2020) have noted, the formation of *Amotekun* was in part legitimated by the existential threats posed by the activities of Fulani herdsmen to life and property in the Southwest as well as perceptions of Hausa-Fulani domination. Motivation for regional security arrangement, thus, appears to be entangled with the protection of ethnic groups rather than providing security for Nigerian citizens. To state differently, the paradox of adopting regional solution to national security challenges that emphasizes regional distinctiveness and the protection of regional ethnic identities tends to deepen ethnic consciousness and ethnic animosity in Nigeria. Conceivably, the regionalization of vigilantism and protection in Nigeria raises not only the issue of regional security linkages in tackling emergent complex national security challenges, but also the dialectics of protecting shared cultural values and shared political identities. These contradictions may be considered inherently constitutive of the process of developing a regional security complex and the decentralization of the structure of security governance in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the contradictions also have implications for

effective national security and stable peace in Nigeria in terms of both the centripetal and centrifugal forces they generate.

This article raises two key questions: How does the regionalization of vigilantism and protection interact with national security interests of the Nigerian state and impact the process of securitization amongst the various ethnic regions in the country? What are the implications of regional identity politics for ethnic security dilemma and effectiveness of regional vigilantism in Nigeria? Drawing on the theory of cooperative security in international relations, this article aims to address the foregoing questions with a view to providing new insights into the nature of regional security politics and the evolving dynamics of ethnic security dilemma that the regionalization of protection generates in Nigeria. In doing so, the article contributes to our understanding of the complex interactions of identity management, conflicts, security politics and ethnic security dilemma (see Vinson, 2018; Xu, 2012; Tang, 2011; Baqai, 2004; Posen, 1993; Enloe, 1980).

The article is divided into five sections. The introduction provides brief conceptual and historical background to the notion of security communities and the emergence of regional vigilantism in Nigeria. Building on the broader discourse on regional security communities in international relations, the second section reviews the existing literature on the evolution of regional security frameworks in Nigeria. The third section explains the methodological framework for data collection and analysis while the fourth section deals with the theoretical perspective from which the article analyses its subject-matter. The rest of the sections deal with Nigeria's previous and recent experiments in the regionalization of vigilantism in the governance of security, highlighting relationships of interests and identities and their ramifications for securitization and the ethnicisation of protection and overall effectiveness of regional vigilantism. The final section is the conclusion.

Literature Review: The Evolution of Security Complexes

The literature on the institutionalization and implementation of regional security complexes seeks to explain the nature of interdependence and cooperation that takes place amongst states in their responses to unique and shared security threats in global politics. The centrality of explanations is that a security complex is a liberal approach to peacebuilding that emphasizes regional integration and security cooperation. The scholarly root of regional security complex is traceable to Karl Deutch's development of the concept of security community (see Deutsch, 1964; 1957). The character of post-Cold War politics, the challenges of 9/11 and the changing dynamics of insecurities such as environmental degradation and climate change have been identified as key factors underlying the significance and the evolving shift towards regional solution to international security crises (Jones and Smith, 2007; Kelly, 2007; Kim, 2004; Bah, 2005; Buzan, 1991). Indeed, by the end of the Cold War, Barry Buzan's study that produced the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) became widely regarded as a significant advancement on Karl Deutch's security community analysis. For Barry Buzan a regional security complex is "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritization, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (Buzan, 1991, p.190).

Following Buzan, several other studies have looked at the regionalization of responses to emerging security threats in different regions of the world with different findings and criticisms (see Esmaeili, Hossein and Firoozabadi, 2021; Walsh, 2021; Martel, 2020; Kilroy, Abelardo and Todd, 2017; Bah, 2005; Kim, 2004). Some, such as Kilroy, Abelardo and Todd (2017), note that power inequalities amongst states in a security complex, especially in North America may sometimes lead to securitization and desecuritization of threats in the regional complexes. Furthermore, in the same region, it is argued that the operation of regional security complexes is defined less by "the role of institutions and interests, and more by identity politics" (Kilroy, Abelardo and Todd, 2017, p.1). Others such as Walsh (2021) argues that the RSCT as developed by Barry Buzan loses explanatory power outside of Europe, particularly in Africa. In all, the literature on regional security arrangement embraces explanations at the level of international relations. Interestingly, such practices

in regional security cooperation are evolving at the subnational level in Nigeria in relation to the activities of *Ebubeagu* and *Amotekun*.

However, the emerging and growing literature on *Ebubeagu* or the *Amotekun* regional vigilante groups studies them as individual regional security arrangement designed to promote physical security rather than viewing them through the conceptual frame of security complexes or security communities. These studies, for example, Mou (2023), Otu and Apeh (2022), Nwoko (2021), Adebolu and Adebisi (2021), David and Oyedele, (2020) and Olubade and Ogunnoiki (2020) examined the causal determinants and technical effectiveness of regional vigilantism. By adopting the theory of cooperative security to study the recent development in regional vigilantism in Nigeria, the present article departs from the existing focus of the literature and articulates how fighting criminal activities and insecurities is connected to how the regions securitize ethnic and cultural differences in ways that reinforce ethnic polarizations. In doing so, the article provides an innovative addition to the existing understanding of the regionalization of vigilantism and the politics of regional security integration in the country and their ethnic implications.

The Theoretical Framework of Analysis

This article is guided by the theory of Cooperative Security, an offshoot of security community which is historically and strongly associated with Karl Deutsch (see Deutsch 1957, 1954). The underlying assumption of the theory of cooperative security is that working together in the provision and governance of security is better than proceeding alone. Buzan (1991) and Evans (1994) have popularized the theory and practice of cooperative security, including drawing attention to the role of norms and socialization of values in collective identity formation as a crucial factor conducing to cooperation and the need to protect the community. In fact, by the end of the Cold War, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's (1998) edited volume on security community devoted significant attention to explaining how inter-subjective understanding of the structure of international life, the role of norms and shared identity can facilitate the formation of cooperative security. Yet, their contribution did not ignore the significance of power and threats in triggering the formation and practice of security communities as originally formulated by Karl Deutsch. Indeed, the evolution towards more constructivist explanations of cooperative security is not a surprise. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett (1998) have argued that the development of security community is not an end-point in itself, drawing attention to flexibility in its ongoing evolutionary process. Therefore, while not losing the centrality of the role of power and threats as conditions for the evolution of a community as already noted, constructivist notions of shared identity and trust have led to the formation and crystallization of different security community arrangements. For example, Australia as a single state has always had to deal with the insecurity inherent in the "tyranny of distance" and the history of security threats posed by its neighbours through the application of the theory of security community. Yet, Australia does not want to lose sight of its roots in the collective identity of Asia. Its signatory to, and involvement in the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty, or ANZUS Treaty is quite illustrative. Higgott and Nossa's (1998) study, for example, traces the source of the tension in Australian security policy to its post-war beginnings: the "we-feeling" that held the ANZUS alliance together also confirmed the "otherness" of Australia's Asian neighbours.

This raises questions about the critical issue of integration and interdependence. Integration means the attainment of "a sense of community," which refers to the belief on the part of the individuals in the group that "they have come to agreement to address their security problems interdependently" (Vesa, 1999, p.18). Interdependence of states, is, therefore, key as security cooperation is based on the ideals of collective security and the principle of indivisibility of peace. A threat to one is conceived as a threat to the other in which there is also an increasing emphasis on human rather than hard security. Accordingly, there is a sense of security community in which the interests of all the member states are well served by acting and working together as a collectivity.

Regional vigilantism in Nigeria can be described as a form of institutionalized security cooperation. Although there is no formal operation of regional system of government with

some level of autonomy and power as characterized the 1940s and up to 1950s, Nigeria was politically structured into six geopolitical zones in 1993 by the Sani Abacha regime in a federation made of 36 states. In this context, federating states in the country that share similar cultural identities and values have come together to form regional vigilante groups to achieve their collective security aspirations. The values of regional distinctiveness defined by cultural ties and ethnic boundaries are preconditions, which have significantly influenced the institutionalization and implementation of security cooperation within the framework of *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu*. As Galtung (1972, p. 2) has argued, for this interdependence in security to develop and be effective, "it has to be based on some minimum structural similarity (homology)," which is already largely satisfied in the various regions in Nigeria from the East, West to the North. Yet, these integrating values, which separate the insiders of the security community from the outsiders and conduce to cooperation, also form the basis for securitization and politicization of external threats in the implementation of security cooperation. In this regard, the externalities and contradictions inherent in the implementation of a cooperative security arrangement create challenges for its effectiveness as well.

Applying the theory of cooperative security to the domestic level of analysis in Nigeria in relation to the formation and implementation of regional security systems, the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu*, for example, are apprehensive of the threats posed by bandits and herdsmen, which have been conceptualized as new forms of terrorism in Nigeria. It is also argued that the armed Fulani herdsmen are determined to capture the territories of non-Fulani ethnic groups with a view to Islamizing Nigeria, which is more or less an extension of the jihadist expedition of 1804. Given this context, the need to protect the ethnic and socio-cultural identities of the Yoruba and Igbo people conduces cooperation amongst the states in their regions to respond to a common threat. So it was with the *Hisbah* in Northern region where at conception and implementation in 2003, was aimed at safeguarding Islamic identities of the predominantly Hausa-Fulani people of northern Nigeria.

The point, therefore, is that while regional vigilante groups can be conceived as complementarities to the inadequacies of federal policing in Nigeria, their activities are at the same time mutually constitutive in the securitization of ethnic and cultural claims. To put it differently, mutual suspicion of ethnic threats and the dialectics of protecting one ethnic neighbour against the other are inherently problematic for peacebuilding and national security because of perceptions of ethnic domination. For example, the refusal of the federal government under the leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari to grant licence to state governors of the South to secure sophisticated weapons for their state vigilante groups is considered as an ethnically and politically motivated strategy by his regime to frustrate the effectiveness of these state vigilantes in the fight against crime and insecurities orchestrated by the Fulani herdsmen. This ethnopolitical claim is based on the fact President Buhari hails from Northern Nigeria and identifies as Fulani. Indeed, a more substantive argument for the ethnopolitical claim is that the Buhari regime has since 2015 been characterized by the perceived systematic ethnicisation of the governance of national security in Nigeria in favour his ethnic Fulani kinsmen. For example, almost all the security institutions in Nigeria were headed and led by the Fulani people during the Buhari administration of 2015 -2023.

Notes on Data Sources and Methods

Secondary data form the core sources of information for this article. These data sources comprise mainly newspaper articles and scholarly literature including recent official reports of non-governmental institutions such as the International Crisis Group. It is important to note that when the *Amotekun* first emerged in 2020, public discourse and analyses of the constitutionality and desirability of the new security framework dominated newspapers articles in Nigeria. The limitations of these newspaper reports must be problematized, especially the tendency toward sensationalism in news sources seeking mass appeal. This inadequacy was remedied through informal discussions with different people including villagers, academics and top-ranking security personnel from the states and regions where the *Amotekun and Ebubeagu* operate. Due to these triangulated data sources, the article adopted the discourse and thematic methods of data analysis to

analyse and interpret the divergent debate in the newspaper articles and grey literature as well as the views generated from informal conversations in order to develop coherent themes. Some of the major themes that emerged from the analysis and review of the scholarly literature such as books and journal articles speak to historical dynamics of the structural flaws inherent in Nigeria's security and policing architecture and implications for the replication of the *Amotekun* concept amongst the ethnic nationalities represented in the various regions of the country.

In this regard, the *Amotekun* tended to have set a precedent for a regionalized race in paramilitary security outfits for the purpose of filling the local security gap created by poor national policing system in Nigeria (Nwoko, 2021). As explained in the subsequent section, the formation of Eastern Security Network by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and later *Ebubeagu* in Igboland became an inevitable outcome of this regional race and ethnic competition. Accordingly, the interpretive findings of the data suggest that perceptions of ethnic domination strengthened the resolve of the various regions in their determination to protect their ethnic communities against the federal government's contestations of the constitutionality of their actions.

Dynamics of the Regionalization of Vigilantism and Evolution of Ethnic Security Dilemma

Regional vigilantism is not entirely a new phenomenon in Nigerian history. Instead, it is evolving and consolidating. The Bakassi Boys was the first in the historical evolution of state-directed regional vigilante institution. The background to the Bakassi Boys is traceable to the activities of traders in the commercial city of Aba, Abia State. Formed in 1998, it was created against the backdrop of crime fighting in Aba, an idea that was gradually regionalized to embrace the entire Igboland as Imo and Anambra states passed laws to legalize its operations in their states. As studies (McCall, 2004; Baker 2002) have shown, at the time, Aba had become so notorious for crime and insecurities posed by armed robbers to the extent that the people in Aba could hardly sleep with both eyes closed. Responding to these contexts where the Nigeria police had failed to provide security and peaceful conditions required for sustainable commercial activities, it became expedient for the Aba traders to initiate an alternative law enforcement institution in the name of the Bakassi Boys. The vigilante group operated in Eastern Nigeria until 2002 when the Federal Government, under the leadership of Olusegun Obasanjo, disbanded it.

Similarly, established in 2003 in Kano and extended to 11 of the 19 states of the north, the second regional vigilante structure in Nigeria was the *Hisbah*. The creation of *Hisbah* was influenced by the determination to promote both spiritual and physical security in Northern Nigeria. The introduction, enforcement and protection of Sharia code by *Hisbah* in the twelve Northern states was widely seen as an attempt to secure the Muslims against Christians who were considered as outsiders to Islamic culture and practice. For example, the *Hisbah* seized and destroyed 6000 cartons of beer, belonging to non-Muslims, mostly Christians (Last, 2008, p.53). "In a broader political vision, the enforcement of *Sharia* law was perceived as a return to Islamic values (divinely ordained laws) to foster societal re-orientation and redress moral decadence in the society" (Olaniyi, 2005, p.1). In short, *Hisbah* responded to the need to protect and expand Islam as a critical force in the advancement of the interests of Muslims in the predominantly Hausa-Fulani territory of Northern Nigeria.

For the *Amotekun*, the six state governors of the Yoruba ethnic group in Southwestern Nigeria endorsed the formation of the collective security initiative on January 9, 2020, at Ibadan, the capital of Oyo State. At present, the Yoruba nation in Nigeria comprises six states: Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, and Lagos; and they are ruled by different political parties. Importantly, despite political, ideological and religious affiliations of the governors, all of them supported the formation of the *Amotekun*. At the time of the formation of the *Amotekun*, the Southwest was confronted with the security challenges of Fulani herdsmen and kidnapping. However, the abduction of Chief Olu Falae on Monday, September 21, 2015, in his farm and the killing of the 58-year-old, Mrs Funke Olakunrin on July 12, 2019, were two critical events that drew the attention of the Yoruba people. Chief

Olu Falae was a former Minister of Finance and presidential aspirant in Nigeria while Funke Olakunrin was the daughter of Pa Reuben Fasoranti, the national leader of *Afenifere*, the Yoruba apex socio-cultural umbrella organization. While these two prominent Yoruba son and daughter provided the immediate sparks in the evolution of the *Amotekun*, the Yoruba people generally viewed the incessant kidnappings and killings by suspected Fulani herdsmen as evolving threats to the Yoruba ethnic group in Nigeria that needed to be confronted head-on. More broadly, therefore, the emergence of *Amotekun* represented an ideological struggle in the defence of the identity, security and territorial integrity of the Yoruba people in the Southwest.

Dialectically, the birth of *Amotekun* in Yoruba had consequential impact on the evolution of *Ebubeagu* in Igboland in terms of hardening of the ethno-cultural dimensions of regional security complexes. *Ebubeagu* was created by the five Southeast States of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo on April 11, 2021. In contemporary history of Nigeria, therefore, it can be argued that beginning from 2020, regional vigilante groups that assert ethno-cultural and political identities began to consolidate in their efforts to promote cooperative security amongst the state governments in the emergent security complexes. Yet, the intersections of crime fighting, security provisioning and the protection of ethno-religious and political identities in regional vigilantism drew attention to the nature of state-building and the practice of federalism in Nigeria that had historically ignored the resolution of the nationality question (Nyiayaana, 2021). In fact, the expression of ethnic grievances by southern politicians took on a stronger regional and political dimension in the Asaba Declaration of August 2021. On August 25, 2021 the governors of southern Nigeria met in Asaba, Delta State, and one of the major decisions adopted in that meeting was the ban on open grazing of cattle in the South. By October 2021, the South-South governors had resolved to establish a regional security framework as part of the measures to implement the ban on open grazing of cattle on farmlands in the south-south region even though some individual state governments have already implemented such bans. Indeed, the Southern governors' Declaration was an organized mobilization of the peoples of the southern states against what they perceived as Northern domination expressed in the increasing onslaught of herders' violent confrontations with sedentary farmers and their resultant killings. In these contexts, the political elite, that is the southern governors, represented the link between the people and their social-cultural identities by connecting them to shared broader collective security goals of their region. Against this background, enduring nationalistic and primordial sentiments, thus, strengthened each region against the other and underlined the significance of the evolving dynamics of the evolution of ethnic security dilemma and in some sense of security competition amongst the regions and by extension the politics of national security governance.

Ethnic and Political Constraints of Regional Vigilantism in Nigeria

Drawing on the above, it is argued in this section that national politics and the uniqueness and nature of intraregional politics provide important contextual backgrounds for understanding the effectiveness or otherwise of the evolving security complexes in Nigeria. In Igboland, internal politics of the pan-Igbo Biafran self-determination agitations and the repressive strategies of the Nigerian state on the one hand, and the struggle between the Eastern Security Network (ESN) and the *Ebubeagu*, on the other, affect the effectiveness of the latter. The ESN conceives the *Ebubeagu* as a tool of the governors to fight against the IPOB struggle. The ESN was formed by Nnamdi Kanu to serve as the military wing of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in ways comparable to the relationship between the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* and the African National Congress of South Africa in their struggle for liberation from apartheid politics of discrimination. Nnamdi Kanu is the leader of the IPOB, which champions neo-Biafra separatist movement in the Southeast. The selfish, political ambitions and activities of the Igbo governors are not compatible with the IPOB's visions and demand for armed agitation for a sovereign state of Biafra. At the same time, the political interests of the governors interfere with the operations of *Ebubeagu.* For example, Obasi Igwe, a prominent Igbo leader and Professor of Political Science, contends that the governors of Imo and Ebonyi States employ *Ebubeagu* to pursue their selfish political interests in ways that compromise the security of the

region (Ujumadu, et. al 2022, p. 38). Indeed, there have been several demonstrations by the Igbo youth for the disbandment of the *Ebubeagu* because of its increasing politicization by the political elite.

While these intraregional challenges, bordering on conflicting interests of the Igbo elite are important considerations in assessing the ineffectiveness of *Ebubeagu*, transregional power politics of the Federal Government, which revolves around the intersections of ethnic and political domination creates conditions that undermine the performance of the regional vigilante initiatives in two major ways. First, at the broader national level, the politics of licensing and giving legal approval for the operation of the regional groups is a serious and hotly debated issue in Nigeria. In the exercise of its constitutional monopoly of power over the control of the means of violence, the Federal Government has refused to grant licence to state governments to acquire sophisticated weapons, such as military-grade weapons, to arm their regional vigilante groups. Most governors, especially Rotimi Akeredolu, the governor of Ondo State, have justified the need to acquire superior weapon systems. Akeredolu has consistently argued that criminals, like bandits, are better armed with sophisticated weapons such as AK-47 while the *Amotekun* carry lower calibre weapons, making it practically difficult to confront criminals. Akeredolu and other governors' argument has not convinced the Federal Government to grant approval for the purchase and acquisition of sophisticated weapons by regional vigilante groups. In fact, it is worth recalling that in January 2020 when the *Amotekun* was formed, the Federal Government represented by Abubakar Malami, the Attorney-General of the Federation sued the governments of the Southwestern states, challenging their constitutional powers to create the regional security outfit despite the precedent that has been set by the establishment and operations of the *Hisbah* in the North in 2003.

Against the background of the *Hisbah*, some have argued that Abubakar Malami, a Fulani, may have acted to defend and protect the rights of the Federal Government and the constitution, yet ethnic considerations cannot be ruled out as an ulterior motive for his actions. Not the least of the reasons for this cynicism is the fact that the Northern region continued to view the resurgence of regional vigilante institutions in the south with suspicion. The other side of the ethnic predicaments in the management of regional security and regional vigilantism was demonstrated in the effective mobilization of primordial sentiments by the governors of the Southwestern states in support for the creation of the *Amotekun*. As noted earlier, despite the differences in religious, ideological and party affiliations of the six state governors of the Southwest, they all mobilized their resources and challenged the Federal Government in its suit over the constitutionality of the *Amotekun* and eventually won (David and Oyedele, 2020). In fact, for the Yoruba governors, the evolution of the *Amotekun* was much more than an indictment of the failure of the federal Police institution and national security architecture. *Amotekun* was conceived as a response to threats posed by Fulani herdsmen to the collective identity of the Yoruba people of southwestern Nigeria. What do all these mean for ethnic security dilemma in Nigeria? More research is needed to probe this question as the activities of the regional vigilante institutions mature alongside with the deepening of liberal democracy and the increasing ethnicisation and privatization of protection in the country.

The Security Impact of Regional Vigilantism

One of the major arguments that have been advanced in support of the decentralization of security governance in Nigeria is that the existing national security structure with its centralized command in Abuja, is too detached from the local people. A corollary to this argument is the view that local security outfits have better knowledge of their local terrains and, therefore, are better placed to gather and deploy local intelligence to protect the people effectively. Given that regional vigilantism embed these aspirations and is characterized by a sense of security community, it will be necessary to analyze how all these issues, taken together, have translated into practical realization of protection for ordinary people in the various security complexes. It would be argued that the empirical finding, regarding the impact of regional vigilantism on physical safety is mixed in terms of success and failure.

In the case of the Southwest, it is noted that the creation and presence of the *Amotekun* have sent strong signals to criminal groups in the region, both from the standpoint of deterring the aggression of Fulani herdsmen as well as its dynamic responses to internal security challenges of the region. The observation is that the *Amotekun* has contributed significantly to the reduction of incessant clashes between herdsmen and farmers to the extent that farming activities in the region are frequently disrupted for fear of being attacked by bandits or herdsmen. For example, a recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) suggests that "the two-year-old *Amotekun* has reduced crime, especially kidnapping for ransom by gangs based in the vast forests" (ICG, 2022, p. 12). Some have also argued that "the outfit's role in combating criminality such as kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killing, and herdsmen-farmer clashes has made them progress from providing intelligence for the police and other security operatives to being in charge" (Awojobi, n.d.). Indeed, "if there's any iota of criminal suspicion anywhere, the people in that area would prefer to call on the *Amotekun* Corps instead of the Police who have been perceived to handle issues with levity" (Awojobi, n.d.). There have also been cases of arrest of suspected criminals and cultists in Ondo State by the *Amotekun*, especially members of the 'Agbado' cult group who have been involved in cattle rustling.

But, despite these success cases, the Owo killing of June 5, 2022 appears to have called into question the effectiveness of the regional security infrastructure. On Sunday morning of June 5, 2022, no fewer than 43 people who were worshiping in St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owo community, Ondo State, were brutally murdered in cold blood by a terrorist group suspected to be the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP). During the invasion of ISWAP in the Owo community, the *Amotekun* was neither able to prevent the attackers from carrying out the killings nor respond effectively to save the lives of the innocent victims. So from the point of view of supplying local intelligence to the police or responding swiftly to the terrorist attackers, *Amotekun* failed to live up to its responsibility to protect the people of Owo. In fact, as Eghagha (2022) rhetorically asks: "where was the *Amotekun* when the ISWAP invaded the church and successfully killed its victims?" Furthermore, specific case study of the operational activities of the *Amotekun* in Oke and Ibarapa communities, Ogun State has suggested that people of the state perceived the vigilante group as largely ineffective based on the assessment of the impact of criminality **on** socio-economic developments, the decline in investments and periodic disruption of social order and restriction of movement. The conclusion of the study is that kidnapping, armed robbery and weapons proliferation remain key threats to peace and security in Oke and Ibarapa communities despite the operational presence of the *Amotekun* (Otu and Apeh, 2022, p.82). Moreover, like the federal police, the territorial reach of both the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* in local communities remain limited including limitations in the exercise of command and control over the activities of other local community vigilante groups. Consequently, this has had significant implications for regulating the activities of community vigilantes. For example, in spite of the operational presence of *Amotekun* in the Southwest, both urban and local vigilante groups in Lagos continue to engage in jungle justice, criminal and other violent activities (Tiwa, 2022, p. 276).

The activities of the *Ebubeagu* in the provision and management of security in Igboland are even more problematic and controversial than those of the *Amotekun*. At present, in Igboland, particularly since 2021, there is hardly any week that people have not been killed in armed attacks, targeted at destroying local communities or state infrastructures. Police stations, and offices of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) have been repeatedly attacked and burnt down in Anambra, Enugu and Imo States. Specifically, on May 13, 16, and 23, 2021 respectively, the INEC offices of the above mentioned states were attacked. And on December 4, 2022, the INEC office in Oru West Local Government Area of Imo State was attacked with improvised explosive devices of which the Federal Government accused the IPOB and the ESN (*The Nation*, 2022, p.1). Also, in the month of October 2022, the Enugu-Nsukka road was described as a nightmare for motorists because of the regularity of threats of kidnapping on the road. More importantly, the phenomenon of the "unknown gunmen" who kill people indiscriminately in the Igbo region since 2021 and the role of the Federal Government-sanctioned Operation Python Dance have become a defining feature of the chronic insecurity situation in the area. When

these attacks and variegated forms of insecurities that pose constant threat to the peace and security of Igbo people are cumulated at a regional level of analysis, they raise important questions about the effectiveness of *Ebubeagu* as a security provider.

But, even at that and as noted earlier, the seeming paralysis of the *Ebubeagu* must be situated within the wider context of national security politics as well the internal and external contradictions of the political dynamics generated by neo-Biafran struggle for independent statehood in Eastern Nigeria. As exemplified in the activities of the Operation Python Dance, the Federal Government's securitization and militarized repression of the IPOB is engendered by the politics of national security governance and political domination. For a detailed and critical analysis of how the deployment of kinetic strategies involving harassment, proscription, arrest, extraordinary rendition, torture and mass killing of pro-Biafra agitators underlies insecurity in the South-East (see Nwangwu, 2022). Furthermore, dating back to 2021, the IPOB has embarked on a sit-at-home protest every Monday to demonstrate solidarity and support for its detained leader, Nnamdi Kanu. Practically, the sit-at-home protestation, which has been widely embraced by the Igbo youth, disrupts socio-economic activities and further complicates the role of *Ebubeagu* and the already tense security situations in the South-East. The activities and impact of the ESN must also be factored in. Indeed, the contradictions of the activities of the Operation Python Dance, the IPOB agitation and the internal division it generates between the ESN and the *Ebubeagu* undermine the effectiveness of the latter and its security community broadly defined as Igboland.

The divergent responses of the states in the Southeast is an added complexity that further complicates the security predicament of the people in the region. In Anambra state, for example, the state government does not allow *Ebubeagu* to operate in the state except the Anambra Vigilantes Services alongside formal law enforcement agencies (Paul, et.al., 2023). The *Ebubeagu* has been accused of human rights abuses, extortion, illegal detention, and misuse of firearms. In March 2023, a Federal High Court in Abakaliki, Ebonyi state presided over by Justice Riman Fatun ordered the disbandment of the state's component of the *Ebubeagu* regional security agency due to what the court considered as serial human rights violations (Punch, 2023).

Ebubeagu has also been used by local politicians to pursue and achieve their narrow political goals. In the governorship election of November 11, 2023 held in Kogi, Balyelsa and Imo states respectively, it was reported that Senator Hope Uzodinma, the incumbent governor of Imo state and candidate of the APC employed the services of the *Ebubeagu* vigilante institution to rig the election, which he eventually won (Intersociety Report, 2023). Generally the different responses of the states in the southeast to the *Ebubeagu*, which revolve around lack of determined commitment to the pursuit of the ideals of security community raise issue of the politics of securitization. In fact, Like David Umahi, the governor of Ebonyi State who has not hidden his opposition to *Ebubeagau*, other governors in the southeast geopolitical zone only reluctantly established the *Ebubeagu* in ways that more or less reflected the domino effect of the creation of the Amotekun hence they have faced constant accusations of deploying it to harass their political opponents (Punch, ibidhttps://punchng.com/ebonyi-giving-ebubeagu-a-bad-name/). In the southwest, a common denominator in the differentiated responses of the state governments to the *Amotekun* lies in poor funding and general inability to equip the *Amotekun* Corps with modern sophisticated weapons systems (Otu and Apeh, 2022).

Conclusion

The evolution of security communities in international relations has drawn attention to how inter-subjective understanding of the structure of international life, the role of norms and shared identity can facilitate the formation of regional security cooperation and promote international security and peacebuilding. Indeed, these constructivist explanations and application of regionalism and cooperative security are important, and have become an integral framework in the management of international security since the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, it is worthy to note that power differentials amongst the states, and the need to protect their different regional and ethnic identities also create

entanglements that impede the practice and effectiveness of security communities in international politics.

Drawing on the theoretical insights of the notions and operation of security communities, this article investigated the adoption of the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* regional vigilante security outfits in the governance of security in Nigeria as a response to the structural inadequacy of the national security architecture of the Nigerian state. The argument is that the regionalization of the *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* vigilantism marked a fundamental shift towards the development and implementation of security communities in the country. A key finding of this article is that while the regional vigilante structural arrangement is driven by an integrationist bias to secure members of the imagined community, it has also contributed to the politicization and ethnicisation of protection in ways that deepen ethnic consciousness and ethnic mistrust in Nigeria. This is because in the implementation of regional vigilantism, physical safety intersects with the protection of ethnic and cultural identities. The *Amotekun* is not only confronted with the challenge of protecting life and property but also the preservation of the cultural identity of the Yoruba people in Southwestern Nigeria. Likewise the activities of *Ebubeagu* in Igboland of the South-East. One major implication of this is the evolving tendency towards engendering the complications of ethnic security dilemma.
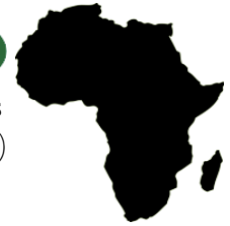
Another practical reality that has characterized the implementation of regional vigilantism is that national security politics, and in some cases, as in the South-East, internal dynamics of IPOB politics and the differentiated responses by state governments in the region have combined to challenge the sense of a security community. Taken together, both *Amotekun* and *Ebubeagu* have raised further questions about whether the current attempt at regional vigilantism has rather produced an illusion of security transformation in the struggle for structural reforms of Nigeria's security architecture. This question deserves more research and careful scholarly probing.

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State Fragility, Non-State Armed Groups, and the Privatization of Violence in the Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon

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and
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Abstract

This paper examines the ways colonial legacy and post-independent socio-economic, political, and cultural drivers of fragility, favored the emergence, operation, and fragmentation of armed non-state actors in the Anglophone secessionist conflict in the Republic of Cameroon. The dual accession of colonially partitioned Cameroon (French Cameroon in January 1960, and British Cameroon, in October 1961) and poor management of the unification of the two laid the basis of the current secessionist armed conflict. The postcolonial state attitude in Cameroon remains characterized by exclusivist policies such as socio-economic, political, and cultural marginalization of minorities that in turn favored the build-up and spread of secessionist ideologies and eventually the emergence of non-state armed groups. This article also examines the privatization of violence in the current Anglophone Cameroon secessionist armed conflict. It proposes to examine the role that ideological and political divergence among warlords based in Western countries and who command and sponsor armed groups in Cameroon, plays in such privatization.

This paper argues that the inability of the state to find a sustainable political solution to a historical problem led to the proliferation of ideologically divided armed groups and the privatization of violence. This study shows that as the Anglophone separatist conflict persists, some armed non-state actors have resorted to criminal activities such as kidnappings for ransom, rape, racketeering of business owners, drugs, arms, fuel, and cocoa trafficking. This transformation has given way to other forms of armed groups responding either to the logic of private actors with no clear political intention or even to dismantling commanding actors based in the diaspora. The fragmentation of armed non-state actors in the anglophone conflict has exacerbated violence privatization which in turn has incessantly led to human rights violations and narrowed eventual peace prospects.

Keywords: State Fragility, Anglophone conflict, Armed Non-State Actors, Violence Privatization, and Peace Talks

Introduction

The emergence and proliferation of separatist movements in post-independent African states resulted from historical vicissitude, exacerbated by exclusivist state policies. Exclusivist policies promote regional development inequalities, political and economic marginalization, and limit access to equal opportunities. Governments with exclusivist institutional set-ups lose legitimacy, and the very nature of the particular nation-state itself becomes illegitimate in the eyes and hearts of a growing plurality of excluded citizens (Rotberg, 2002). These environments have been fertile grounds for varied non-state armed movements and specifically what Charles Tilly (2008) has conceptualized as collective violence—the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group(whether this group is transitory or has a more permanent identity) —against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic, or social objectives (Zwi et al., 2002).

The cropping and proliferation of armed non-state movements in Africa and specifically in Cameroon is strongly linked to the governing authorities' neopatrimonial attitudes and exclusive institutions. Unfortunately, the latter has contributed in provoking radical movements which have in turn exposed the state to vulnerability and fragility. One of the main characteristics of contemporary conflicts and violence dynamics in Africa is the increasing privatization of violence. The number of armed non-state actors engaged in wars and violent conflicts has decidedly increased during the last two decades, many of which have been secessionist movements (Wulf, 2007). Armed non-state actors such as warlords, militias, rebels, paramilitary groups, and gangs fight for their own political or economic interests (Lewis, 2022).

Violence privatization in the context of secessionist conflicts is a threat, capable of failing a state. This is because the advantages and profits enjoyed by warlords are generally far better than what they receive in order to cease fire or engage in peace talks. The territorial control, political command, and local legitimacy enjoyed by separatist movements make them allergic to any form of return to normalcy. In fact, rising separatist agitation has carried with it growing challenges, both for governments seeking to retain control of their territory and citizens within states facing such challenges (Lewis, 2022). In Anglophone Cameroon, self-identified "Ambazonians" have engaged in violence and kidnapping campaigns targeting noncombatant citizens. Separatist conflict with a privatization perspective can last for decades and render the state unable to meet the welfare and security needs of their populations as a result of war investments that do not favor socio-economic development. At the same time, government affirmation of its sovereignty backed by the slogan of "no negotiation with terrorist groups" further compounds the prospects of peace-talks (ICG, 2023).

It is against this background that we examine the nexus between exclusivist policies, armed non-state movements, and the privatization of violence in the context of the Anglophone separatist conflict in Cameroon. We argue that the historical legacy coupled with postcolonial exclusivist government policies have driven the rise of the separatist movement and the privatization of violence. In turn, this undermined the prospect of an imminent return to peace and normalcy in the two English-speaking regions. To have a clear understanding of the question at stake, the paper is structured into five sections. Section One offers an overview of the Anglophone Separatist Conflict in Cameroon. Section Two conceptualizes violence privatization. It establishes the nexus between state fragility, intra- and inter-gang criminal networks and violence privatizations. Section Three dwells on the typology of actors involved in the exercise of private violence. Section Four examines interactions amongst the various factions and ideologies of non-state armed groups in the theater of Anglophone war. It investigates the infighting among these groups for territorial control and legitimacy over who is the real commander of separatist armed groups in the area of study. Section Five analyzes violence privatization and its implications on future peace negotiations in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.

1-Background to the Anglophone Separatist Conflict in Cameroon

Today's separatist armed conflict in Cameroon's anglophone regions remains one of the most researched questions in the past few years in fields of history, political sciences, and law (Nyamnjoh, & Konings, 1997; Kaushal, 2020, Annan et al, 2021; Pelican, 2022; Beseng, Crawford, & Annan,2023). The multiplication of scholarly works on the anglophone conflict is partly due to the outbreak of ongoing violent armed conflict between government forces and factions of separatist armed groups in the English-speaking Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon. Without replicating what early studies have already researched on the historical background to the Anglophone separatist, this section of the paper is essentially based on the transformative phases of the anglophone conflict which started as a political crisis and developed into an armed conflict. Given that the conflict is ongoing, weemphasize the first two phases of the war. But before delving into the phases of the Anglophone war conflict in Cameroon, it is important to note that the Anglophone crisis, today a full war, is in part a classic problem of a minority, which has swung between a desire for integration and a desire for autonomy, and in part a more structural governance problem (ICG, 2017). This conflict shows the limits of centralized national power and the ineffectiveness of the decentralization program that started in 1996. The weak legitimacy of most of the Anglophone elites in their region, under-development of the region, tensions between generations, and patrimonialism are problems common to the whole country. But the combination of bad governance and an identity issue could be particularly tough to resolve.

According to J. Galtung, the main stages of conflict include latent conflict, confrontation, crisis, outcome, and post-crisis (Galtung, 2000). Even though most conflicts go through these different stages, they often jump back and forth, as unresolved issues may lead to additional confrontations and crises. Protracted conflict, in particular, may not easily fit a linear model, nor will conflict in urban areas, in many cases (Ibid). Given the nature of the conflict and its current stage, this paper explores J.Galtung's first four stages of conflict—latent conflict, confrontation, crisis, and outcome—to understand its dynamics and development.

On October 11, 2016, lawyers from the Northwest and the Southwest went on strike. Their demands were deliberately ignored by the Justice Ministry. Their demands related to the justice system's failure to use Common Law in the two regions. The lawyers demanded the translation into English of the Code of the Organisation for the Harmonisation of Business Law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts. They criticized the 'francophonisation' (Kaze, 2021) of Common Law jurisdictions, with the appointment to the Anglophone zone of Francophone magistrates who did not understand English or the Common Law, and the appointment of notaries, to do work done by lawyers under the Common Law system. This was followed on November 20th by the teachers strike. They organized a rally against the lack of Anglophone teachers, the appointment of teachers who did not have a good command of English, and the failure to respect the 'Anglo-Saxon' character of schools and universities in the Anglophone regions (Kaze, 2021). Several thousand people joined teachers to express grievances ranging from the lack of roads in the North West to the marginalization of Anglophones. The police and the army violently dispersed the demonstrators, severely beating several people, and arresting dozens of others, and shooting dead at least two people.

In response to the degrading social atmosphere, the government of Cameroon dispatched the Prime Minister to listen and find a solution for teachers and lawyers who had constituted themselves to a consortium. Unfortunately, no deal was reached between the Prime Minister and his delegation and the members of the consortium. On November 21st, 2016, a local radio newscaster sparked a popular movement that was later referred to as the 'Coffin Revolution'. The radio broadcaster known as Mancho Bibixy went to one of the busiest roundabouts in the city of Bamenda in the North West and symbolically stood in a coffin criticizing the government for the socio-economic and infrastructural negligence of the North West region. This event was followed by a student protest at the University of Buea in the South West on November 28th, 2016. Among their grievances were the failure of the government to remit education grants for students in their final year and the insistence of the university administration that all students must pay a fee to check

their results at the university's online portal system. The government reaction to these manifestations was arrest and detention.

Both students of the University of Buea and members of the consortium were arrested and charged with crimes of revolution, insurrection and public disorder. By mid-2017, it seemed that the arrest or radicalisation of more moderate voices in the Anglophone movement led the remaining leaders of the Anglophone groups towards shifting goals, from the reinstatement of federalism to full secession from Cameroon and the creation of an independent Anglophone State (Roxana, et al., 2019). By October 2017, a number of secessionist groups formally declared the Anglophone regions independent, renaming the region "Ambazonia" (Nna-Emeka Okereke, 2018). Historically, "Ambazonia" is derived from Ambas Bay, considered to be the natural boundary of the former Republique du Cameroun and Southern people of Cameroons. The name was created in 1984 by a group led by FonGorji Dinka, who declared the Republic of Ambazonia an independent state that would have comprised all Anglophone Cameroon regions, North West and Southwest regions of Cameroon (Jeter, 2023). Since this declaration, secessionists and government forces have violently clashed across the Anglophone territories, both between government and separatist forces and between rival separatist forces.

II-Conceptualizing violence privatization

Since the first half of the twentieth century, states have experienced shifting patterns of violence (Tilly, 2002). During the century's second half, civil war, guerrilla and separatist struggles, and conflicts between ethnically or religiously divided populations increasingly dominated the landscape of collective violence (Ibid). Between 1950 and 2020, civil wars killed 6000 civilians in Cameroon (HRW, 2023), half a million people or more in countries suchNigeria, Afghanistan, Sudan, Mozambique, Cambodia, Angola, Indonesia, and Rwanda. Over the century as a whole, the proportion of war deaths suffered by civilians rose startlingly. According to one estimate, they rose from 5 percent in World War I to 50 percent in World War II, all the way to 90 percent in wars of the 1990s (Chasterman, 2001).

When analyzing the use of force in the context of modern politics, Max Weber's understanding of the state is generally the starting point (Avant, 2005, Penski, 2018). Weber (1946) defines the state as an entity that successfully claims a monopoly over the legitimate means of violence in a given territory. Using this understanding, it is generally assumed that the power to provide security resides within the state, who is therefore the only legitimate provider of it to a given population (Avant, 2005). Thus, non-state actors' use of violence is commonly conceived as a threat to the current system of sovereign states (Krause and Milliken, 2009).

Peace and development in any given society is tied to the degree of stability of the state and government. Fragility is one main danger that has been responsible for the multiple woes African states have experienced since independence. Indeed, poor governance, economic crisis, unemployment, climate change, and violent armed conflicts have significantly contributed in capturing and rendering African states vulnerable to aggression. The combination or co-occurrence of these problems has been qualified by LSE-Oxford Commission on State Fragility as the "fragility syndrome" (A. Hoeffler, 2019). The World Bank noted that fragility or fragile situations can be said to be periods when states or institutions lack the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to violence (World Bank, 2011).

Sovereignty and legitimacy are consolidating and affirmative characters of a state; when they are undermined states are prone to fragility. Legitimacy is a particular quality conferred upon a social or political entity by those who are subject to it or part of it, thus granting it authority (Bellina, 2009). State legitimacy concerns the very basis on which state and society are linked and by which state authority is justified; it is about a vision of what the authorities and the community are about, and are to do. The formation of a legitimate state presupposes that citizens take the state as the ultimate political authority. However, states in fragile situations are characterized by their inability to regulate the basic parameters of everyday practices, and by the failure to be seen as the overarching authority within the territory. When state institutions are not in a position to claim, with

reasonable success, a monopoly on the legitimate violence, and a strong impact over social relations, they lack institutionalized authority and social support. State fragility is thus intimately related to ineffective and poor connections with society.

The emergence of insurgent groups, a consequence of state fragility, has contributed in several cases to challenging the sovereignty and legitimacy of African States (Okechukwu, 2023). State fragility characterized by the low level or absence of the governance has led to the ineffective supply of public service(s) responding to the nation's citizens living in the geographical territory as well as an inability to maintain security for alleviation of threat by crime, rebellion or insurgency (Zartman, 1995).

Vulnerable or weak states are fertile grounds for the emergence of armed groups or non-state armed actors. In a fragile context, states and non-state armed groups tend to compete for legitimacy. In such a situation, they establish their authority through persuasion including through the use of propaganda as well as coercion to generate legitimacy from people within its boundaries. Indeed, where no overarching authority can punish those using violence for political means, all politics is likely to become violent (Zachary, 2010). In the situation of the Anglophone conflict, this situation enabled some separatist groups to find common cause with moderates without any change in either group's underlying ideologies.

According to Tatsuo (2009), structures of state fragility also multiply at least three ways which include: (1) a situation under absence of legitimacy of government, such as in the case of Somalia, but with a legitimated political entity with autonomous armed group as well as with comparatively small-scale armed groups; (2) low level of legitimacy of government contested by armed groups, for instance, Liberia before 2003; (3) comparatively lower-middle level of legitimacy of government, which is not invaded in most of the territory including the capital, but a part of the state territory is governed by some armed groups, for instance, Indonesia before 2005, or Sri Lanka and Colombia in 2009.

Penski (2018) argues that in early modern Europe, violent non-state armed groups used to have some utility for monarchs and rulers. Force used by different groups was a product in the market, as these groups could be hired as mercenaries to fight wars on behalf of kingdoms or other entities (Thomson, 1996; Davey, 2010, Penski, 2018)). However, because of the lack of allegiance and loyalty to specific entities, these groups became less useful to rulers and ultimately were perceived as threats. Eventually, this perception and the need of domestic pacification led to the formation of standing armies that were loyal to one single state (Kaldor, 2012). According to Thomson (1996), the abolition of non-state violence was, thus, also a result of the interests of rulers, and not of the society itself. After the consolidation of states, violence and the provision of security were thought to have shifted from being provided by the market, to being provided authoritatively by state institutions (Thomson, 1996). In short, according to Kaldor (2012: 22), there were a series of new distinctions that characterized the newly formed European states, which had significant implications for the relation between the state and non-state actors.

Contemporary violent non-state actors have exponentially grown in number, importance, and capabilities in modern conflicts (Sabastian, 2022). According to Tilly (1975), states emerge as by-products of warfare, due to the organizational complexities "wielders of coercion" have to master (Jüde, 2022). Consequently, when meeting the challenge of organizing warfare, armed movements should also develop an advanced organizational structure comparable to that of a state (Bereketeab, 2007). Analyzing armed movements in violent conflict instead of states in war lowers the level of abstraction and facilitates grasping the generative process that links war with the emergence of statehood (Jüde, 2022). Considering that European studies on war and state formation cover centuries-long periods, focusing on such movements and examining whether they develop according to the prediction of the bellicist account is more appropriate when analyzing current conflicts involving much shorter periods (Jüde, 2022). As captured by Spruyt (2017) the bellicists account for higher levels of warfare and create more centralized, higher-capacity states. Such states in turn are prone to war. "The central claim of this approach [the bellicist approach to state building] is that wars are a great stimulus to centralizing state power and building institutional capacity" (Spruyt, 2017)

From this perspective, wars have formative effects whenever violent non-state actors become highly institutionalized and develop a state-like organization. However, conflict have no formative effect when this institutionalization is absent. There is a great variety in armed movements: some indeed become states within states during conflict, for example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka or the Eritrean Liberation Front, yet others, such as the Revolutionary United Forces of Sierra Leone remain a band of armed militias spreading primarily violence and terror instead of establishing a proto-state (see: Abdullah and Muana, 1998; Radtke, 2009). This was the case with the *Resistencia Nacional Moçambicana* (Mozambican National Resistance) RENAMO, a post-independent armed group that emerged in Mozambique just one year after the country gained independence in 1976 (Nilsson, 2023)

The main organizational challenge wielders of coercion must tackle is ensuring a sound economic base since recruiting and equipping fighters as well as sustaining them and their relatives is a resource-intense endeavor (Tilly, 1992). State organization develops as a by-product of warfare since it is a prerequisite of obtaining the means for war if these organizational efforts cannot be circumvented. While Tilly's wielders of coercion had little opportunity to escape the resource imperative when they wanted to go to war, today's wielders of coercion have plenty. Organizing economic reproduction is easy when there are precious resources or international rents available, or when this requirement is outsourced to intermediaries like traditional authorities. Linking insights from the taxation-rents with the bellicist theory—warfare imposes incontestable burdens in terms of human suffering and economic expenditure, the long-term effect is beneficial, as warfare signals the birth pangs of the high-capacity state (Spruyt, 2017) —there are three main modes to ensure the economic reproduction of an armed movement: (1) rents, (2) indirect extraction/revenue collection via intermediaries, and (3) direct extraction/revenue collection by the coercion organization itself (Jüde, 2022).

Ultimately, the privatization of violence, driven by the prevalence of insecurity and the commercialization of core state functions, has significantly transformed the physiognomy of modern conflicts. According to Wulf (2007), violence privatization, occasionally also called commercialization, includes—willingly or unwillingly—giving up part of a state's authority in exercising the monopoly of violence. However, it is worth mentioning that not all privatized violence is commercialized. This can be justified from the standpoint of Tilly's argument that collective violence resembles the weather: complicated, changing, and unpredictable in some regards, yet resulting from similar objectives and causes variously combined in different times and places. Getting the causes, combinations, and settings right helps explain collective violence and its many variations.

The privatization of violence is largely a consequence of a state's inability to provide security for its citizens (Defort, 2013). The presence of non-state armed groups in the case of Anglophones in the Republic of Cameroon is not an exception. Fragile states often lack the capacity to enforce order and maintain a monopoly on violence, commonly competing with non-state armed groups for dominance. The "law of Omerta" reigning among the population as it is the case in the Anglophone conflict has complicated the efficiency of security defense forces (Amnesty International, 2023). Citizens that have denounced separatist fighters have either been kidnapped for ransom and/or tortured to death (Amnesty International, 2023).

According to Mair (2003), there are four ideal types of privatized violence: criminals, terrorists, warlords and rebels. They share a willingness to use violence in order to attain their objectives. They differ in their objectives, target groups, and the geographic scope of their use of violence as well as in their relation to the state monopoly on the use of force. In very general terms, these four ideal types could be classified according to these criteria:

1) Warlords and criminals are guided by economic objectives; terrorists and rebels by political ones.
2) The main target groups of violence exercised by rebels and criminals are other organs of force —official security forces, such as the police and the military, or competing rebel groups and criminal gangs—while terrorists and warlords predominantly direct their use of force against unarmed civilians.

3) The geographic scope of the warlords' and rebels' use of violence is usually limited and aims at the consolidation of control over a certain territory. Transnational organized crime and international terrorism act on a global scale, if with a limited territorial base.
4) Warlords and rebels try to replace the state monopoly on the use of force by their own monopoly, while the use of force by terrorists and by organized crime coexists with this state monopoly or rather requires it.

The actors of violence sketched here are, as already mentioned, ideal types, artificial constructs which rarely present as neatly in reality. Moreover, most of them have multiple identities. Depending on an observer's attitude, interests and motives, one and the same person can be regarded as a criminal, terrorist, warlord, or rebel.

Wulf (2007) classified actors involved in the privatization of violence into two groups. The first type is the bottom-up privatization, in which representatives of the state system are occasionally accomplices. In the North West and South West, these non-state actors, who can also be   classified as "violence entrepreneurs", create a situation of insidious insecurity (Wulf, 2007). They are often the cause for chaotic or lawless situations or even the collapse or failure of states, and are directly responsible for the loss of the state monopoly of violence. This can be explained historically—the state monopoly of force emerged in the mercantilist period; individuals were forced to give up their weapons; private armies were dissolved and war entrepreneurs ran out of business due to the creation of standing mass state forces. Today, neither the monopoly of force nor the existence of national armed forces is conceptually questioned. But outsourcing of military functions willingly or not, reduces the state's role in exercising the monopoly of force (Tilly, 1990).

The second type of privatization is top-down which is deliberately planned and implemented by governments. The aim is to outsource traditional military and state functions to private companies. They offer a wide range of services: they work for armed forces in war, but also for non-state institutions such as international agencies, humanitarian organizations in post-conflict societies, for governments in their fight against rebels or insurgents as well as for multinational companies. The boom in private military companies in recent decades, and more generally the privatization of security, entails the danger of undermining the state monopoly of force (Wulf, 2007). A number of governments enforce this process, while experimenting with the still yet-to-be proven argument that the private sector is more efficient in the area of military missions as well. Within the framework of this study, reference shall be made to the first category within the context of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon.

III-Taxonomy of Separatist Forces in the Area.

Violence privatization is as old as the state itself (Penski, 2018). Since the end of the Cold War, European and American decision-makers have tended to consider conflicts in apparently 'unimportant' countries as none of their business (Mair, 2003). This was partly changed by September 11th. Suddenly, the Global North realized that state failure, authoritarianism, cultural disintegration, social deprivation and economic hopelessness are not only tragic developments for the have-nots in the Global South but also affect the haves in the Global North.

In the contemporary world, the danger with putting the emphasis on terrorist threats is the that any form of private violence is classified as terrorism. This is done negligently by many governments, notably in Cameroon as seen by its Terrorism law (2014) because politicians are not willing or able to differentiate; calling rebels and oppositions movements terrorists serves to justify their repression and can generate additional resources to do this job more effectively (Mair, 2003).

With the increasing proliferation of terrorist movements, drug dealers, cybercriminals, secessionist movement, and transnational mercenary groups, state authority and sovereignty has been strongly de-monopolized. Violence privatization is a serious indicator of state fragility and absence of the role of law. The consequences are always very disastrous for the population who are supposed to be protected by the state. Since 2017, the cropping up of non-state armed groups spotted in several parts of North West and South West Cameroon has challenged the state's monopoly of violence.

One of the main features that characterizes the insurgency in the North West and South West is the multiplicity of insurgent groups both at the operational and leadership level. Inter-insurgent fighting is another major issue that has contributed towards diluting their common purposes which is fighting for secession to create "Ambazonia". It is important to note that the main militias operating in the region are: the Ambazonia Defence Forces (ADF); Southern Cameroons Defence Forces (SCRF); Southern Cameroons Restoration Forces; Red Dragons; Bafut Seven Karta; Manyu Ghost Warriors; Amberland Forces; Amberland Quifos; Amberland Marine Forces; Manyu Ghost Warriors; Menchum Falls Warriors; Tigers of Ambazonia; Warriors of Nso; White Tigers; and Vipers. The number of fighters in each of these groups is estimated to range from around a dozen to more than 500 (Bang and Balgah, 2022). The major confrontation within militia groups was the clash between ADF and SCRF in 2020. Clashes between these separatist groups led to the death of at least six fighters, with one of the groups allegedly abducting close to 40 rebels of another camp (Kindzeka, 2020). At the leadership level, there exist serious disagreements among several anglophone self-proclaimed political organizations, all based in the diaspora. The main opposing ones include, "Interim Government" whose leadership is based in the United States and the Ambazonia Governing Council (AGC), with leadership based in Norway (ICG, 2017). The Cameroonian government has reported that in December 2018, the ADF and Tigers Separatist armed groups battled over control of areas around the city of Batibo in the Northwest (Ben Ahmed, 2018).

This logic of the Anglophone conflict fits Charles Tilly's (1985) famous claim that "war made the state and the state made war". Just like Tilly, who argues that states were created unintentionally through a process of war, extraction, and protection, separatist armed groups in the Anglophone regions operate through the same logic. To finance their fight for independence, they had in the past created modes of extraction, or taxation, that could eventually become institutionalized and form relations of power among a population.

Today, there exist two ghost rival governments with members both living within and outside of Cameroon claiming political control and governance of the territory. The AGC, led by Dr. Cho Ayaba, is based in Norway (Ngala, 2022). Conversely, the Interim Government of the Federal Republic of Ambazonia (IG) was formed after the arrest and extradition from Nigeria to Cameroon of its main leader, Seseko Ayuk Tabe, alongside nine others in January 2018. As a matter of fact, Sisiku Ayuk Tabe, head of what is known as the "Ambazonia government," and nine other leaders were arrested in January 2018 in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, and forcibly returned to Cameroon, in an extrajudicial transfer denounced by the United Nations Refugee Agency as violating the fundamental principle of non refoulement – the practice of not forcing refugees or asylum seekers back to a country where they risk persecution, torture, or other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (HRW, 2019). The forced return of the 10 leaders was also declared illegal by a Nigerian court in March 2019. With their arrest, an "Interim Government" was formed by other Anglophone activists to replace the "Ambazonia Government"

Since the installment of the Interim Government, there has been a serious political leadership struggle, corruption, and embezzlement allegations. The two rival governments, AGC and the IG, both have operational armed forces fighting on the ground and because of the constant political leadership struggle between the AGC and the IG, both often ordered their troops to confront each other to claim territorial control and authority in some parts of the North West and South West where there is no government military presence (Kindzeka, 2020).

Militia groups operating in the North West and South West can be classified into two main categories. The first are the armed wings operating under the political command of the two rival governments, the AGC and the IG, and the second category are independent militia groups who finance their operations through kidnappings and racketeering. It is extremely difficult to know the exact number of armed groups operating in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon as new ones keep cropping up. However, there are hundreds of militia groups in the North West and South West, the few listed above are the most active and radical, whose military actions have attracted widespread public attention.

IV-Determinants and Manifestation of Violence Privatization in the Anglophone War

Due to the constantly shifting situation on the ground, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about the relationships between insurgent organizations, especially given that many groups have only existed for a few months or years. Nevertheless, a general outline is attainable. Among the many insurgent groups operating in the North West and South West, two are most influential: the AGC and the IG. The recurrent disagreements between the IG and the AGC can be explained by two factors; political leadership struggle and economic motivation.

The first manifestation of inter-insurgent conflict within the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon has to do with political leadership struggle between two opposing claimants to government known as the AGC and the Interim government. Both have leaders based in Western countries, have often conducted military acts carried out against government security forces and the civilian population. Worst still, there exists intra-leadership conflict within organizations. This is the case with the Interim Government with different factions each claiming absolute legitimacy and command over ground forces or militia groups in the North West and South West (Fru, 2022) .

The AGC and the IG have constantly accused each other of conniving with government authorities to slow their operations or make impossible their struggle for a separatist nation. Some separatist militias have been neutralized because of shadow governments' power tussle and its manifestations on ground fighters (Bang and Balgah, 2022).

Moreover, since 2017, the political wing of the Anglophone insurgent groups has imposed Mondays as lock-down days. Every Monday, all businesses are closed and movement restricted. Special events like the National Day (20th May) and Youth Day (11th February) are prohibited from taking place. In fact, the local population is forced to boycott all government manifestations and activities.

Again, since the outbreak of the armed conflict in the Anglophone regions, many schools, especially in the peripheries, have been shut down on instruction of the political wings of the insurgencies. These measures instituted by both separatist governments have generally been reinforced or rendered effective by militia groups that kill, kidnap or torture defaulters. Both separatist governments have contested locked down days imposed by their rivals. In detention camps operated by separatist groups, citizens "arrested" for diverse reasons are judged and sanctions passed. These sanctions vary from the payment of ransom and eventual release or simply summary execution

Despite shared interests, Anglophone separatist groups in Cameroon have tried and failed to unify. Leaders of militant organizations met several times to examine the possibility of joining forces. Each, however, claimed popular support from Cameroon's Anglophone community and proved unwilling to cede power, ultimately preventing the organizations from unifying under a single banner.

Economic incentives have also contributed to the exacerbation of violence privatization in the North West and South West. Since most insurgent groups lack financial resources, they have resorted to kidnappings and racketeering to finance their operations. Since the beginning of the conflict, several separatist movements have proliferated in the affected regions. According to the Global Organized Crime Index (2023), the majority of separatist armed groups in the North West and South West have become involved in illicit and criminal activities, some factions have effectively transformed into mafia-style groups, engaged primarily in smuggling and extortion. These groups are involved in a variety of criminal activities including drug trafficking, arms trafficking, kidnapping, hijacking, money laundering, and the illegal fuel trade. Kidnap for ransom is increasingly prolific in the North West (GOCI, 2023).

The military wing of the AGC known as the ADF has been noted for frequently conducting politically motivated kidnappings as part of its fight for independence, it also reportedly takes hostages for ransom in order to raise funds. Ransoms usually amount to between 100,000 to 1,500,000 CFA francs ($170-$2,500) (Reliefweb, 2019).

The ADF's use of kidnapping triggered a major breach with the Interim Government when the self-proclaimed Ambazonian Minister of Communication, Chris Anu, publicly condemned a Ayaba Cho Lucas, the political leader of the AGV, in April 2018 for the his

group's abduction and possible assassination of a Cameroonian government official, Animbom Aaron Ankiambom (Mapping Military Organisations, 2019). Inter-insurgent fighting both at the political and operational level has complicated the conflict. This has contributed to undermining the prospects for a successful secessionist agenda. However, the state of the Anglophone conflict, especially with a multitude of conflicting militia groups and divided political leadership based in the diaspora, constitutes a fueling factor that might potentially complexify the resolution of the conflict. This has been the case in recent years during the failed Swiss and Canadian Peace Talks. In 2022, secret negotiations between the government of Cameroon and commanding leaders representing diverse armed separatist groups met in Switzerland to engage in peace talks. Astoundingly, on September 13, 2022, the Cameroonian government rejected Swiss mediation to resolve the Anglophone Crisis in favor of continued military operations against Anglophone militant separatists (Regional Overview, 2022).

In the same vein, on 20 January 2023, Canada's foreign minister, Mélanie Joly, announced that the two sides had agreed to start peace negotiations (ICG, 2023). The announcement raised hopes that there might be a way out of the grinding seven-year conflict in Cameroon's two Anglophone regions, the North West and South West. For months, Ottawa led secret "pre-talks" that seemingly helped the two sides overcome key hurdles to initiating a formal dialogue. Shortly after Joly's comments, Anglophone leaders issued a joint statement affirming their commitment to participate in negotiations with Canada's facilitation (ICG, 2023). But three days later, Cameroon's government brushed aside Canada's efforts, denying that it had asked a "foreign party" to broker a resolution to the conflict.

At the same time, Swiss and Canadian peace talks were characterized by infighting among several self-proclaimed, all-diasporic, separatist leaders abrogating the legitimacy to talk or negotiate on behalf of the people of the North West and South West regions with the government(ICG, 2023)

V-Prospectives of Violence Privatization on Prospect Peace Measures in Cameroon

The possibility of political perfection is perennially doubtful, but many commentators consider democracy as the only legitimate answer (Evans, 2001). No country is perfect and none can claim to be completely "democratic". When we look around the world, we can identify countries on the verge of democracy but not quite there or countries that have been there but collapsed, and others that are doubtful to say the least. The situation in Cameroon is dire for obvious reasons. Cameroon is diverse in ethnic, religious, political and socio-economic terms.

The ruling party in most African states has deployed state resources at their disposal to instigate and encourage divisions within the ranks of opposition parties to profit from their chaos and disarray in order to remain in office (Morlino, 2004). To achieve this, those in power violate the privacy of their opponents. The Social Democratic Front (SDF), the leading opposition party since 1990, has been sidelined since the 2018 presidential election in its stronghold in the North West and South West (Fokwang, 2020). In other words, election capture does not leave room for opposition parties to fight another day.

There is evidence that the dress up game of peace is now a thing of the past in Cameroon as the government can no longer fake adherence to liberal standards. For Partisi (2019), the real divide is between rich and poor. If you want people to break out of their echo chambers, focus on poverty. This simply means that while democracy is a public good, self-interest is critical to its vitality. Winston Churchill, in his assessment of the enduring conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, established that "there is no worse mistake in public leadership than to hold false hopes soon to be swept away" (cited in Morgenthau, 1951,p.148).

Conclusion

Seven years into a deadly separatist conflict in Cameroon's English-speaking regions, hopes of finding a negotiated settlement seem more distant than ever as both the government and secessionist rebels dig in. The complex situation in the regions has been

compounded by violence privatization that has only distanced the prospects of eventual peace. Even if the government accepts peace negotiations, the infighting among diaspora-based separatist leaders will compromise peace talks given the deep-rooted privatized violence and spoils of war it has generated both for warlords on the ground and separatist leaders abroad. Today, the spoils of war may outweigh incentives for peace in Cameroon as the dynamics of privatized violence have changed with the growth of a lucrative "war economy", typically involving kidnapping and the broader extortion of the civilian population. The largely diaspora-based separatist leadership, initially key to raising funds and buying weapons, has seen their influence slip as fighters increasingly turn to homegrown sources of revenue. Their political clout has also been diminished by constant internal feuding. That lack of control over fighters has encouraged violence privatization and lawlessness. The political and economic spoils of the war have reduced the incentive to find a negotiated settlement.

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Shifting Geopolitics in Africa

Pádraig Carmody

Introduction

This special issue of *Nokoko* engages the issue of relationships between neoliberalism, militarisation and shifting geopolitics in Africa. These are big questions and much ink has been spilt on what exactly neoliberalism is (See (Robinson, 2022; Sheppard, 2016). There is also a voluminous literature on African (in)security. I want to focus here on what the changing nature of global geopolitics portends for the continent.

External states have a variety of interests in Africa. These include resources, markets and the associated security of supply and demand. The vast majority of what the continent exports are primary materials, with fossil fuels accounting for about half of total exports, depending on prices. Africa is also a substantial market for manufactures, with a population of 1.4 billion people, and a site for so-called Contracted Overseas Projects (COPs). These are particularly significant for China; and a source of demand for loans, oftentimes associated with these projects. During the period of the so-called "Africa Rising" phenomenon many countries also gained access to private international capital markets again and several issued Eurobonds, or government bonds denominated in foreign currencies. While these have the advantage of lower interest rates than bonds issued in local currencies, the danger is that if local currencies weaken relative to the euro, for example, their repayment becomes much more expensive (i.e. there is substantial currency risk).[48] These concerns can be considered geo-economic.

External actors also have more explicitly geopolitical interests on the continent, such as support in international institutions and fora, for example, and the prevention of conflict "spillovers" and piracy. They also have geocultural interests, such as the reinforcement of geopolitical identities and self-understandings as well as the desire for respect (Moisi, 2009; Nel, 2010). They also view the continent through different geopolitical codes (Kraxberger, 2005), with the United States emphasising charity and more latterly security and infrastructure development in competition with China, whereas China has demonstrated a more explicitly geoeconomic focus, at least until recently (Benabdallah, 2019; Carmody, Zajontz, & Reboredo, 2022; Schindler & DiCarlo, 2022).

Meta-Trends in African Geopolitics

A few major trends in African geopolitics stand out. Climate change is perhaps the biggest challenge facing the continent in the future (Toulmin, 2009). The destructive power of cyclone Idai in Southern Africa in 2019 speaks for itself, as does other potential catastrophes such as "day zero" in Cape Town, when municipal water taps were due to run dry (narrowly avoided as a result of rain), although some argue this was as much a financial crisis as a potential "natural disaster" (Millington & Scheba, 2021). The shrinkage of Lake Chad in recent decades by as much as 90% and associated increases in poverty have likewise provided fertile ground for conflict witnessed in the emergence of Boko Haram, although police brutality and repression, amongst other factors have also played a role in their emergence (Comolli, 2015; Perry, 2014; Smith, 2015). The

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[48] According to the President of the African Development Bank countries on the continent could have saved US $30bn by borrowing from his institution instead of issuing Eurobonds (African Business, 2022).

Anthropocence as a geologic era defined by human impact on the environment is socially constructed and environmental impacts are socially mediated, meaning we should perhaps talk about "socio-nature" as an actor, rather than "nature", which is in any event socially constructed.

For some, we are entering "Geopolitics for the End Time" (Macaes, 2021) or the era of an "uninhabitable earth" (Wallace-Wells, 2019). Africa has and will be the continent hardest hit by climate restructuring or departure both as a result of its physical geography and because much of the population depends on rainfed agriculture for subsistence (Toulmin, Crick, & Binyam, 2023). The meta-geopolitical implications of climate change are presently unknowable but it is clear that securitisation is accelerating (Buxton & Hayes, 2016), potentially leading to a new, "negative" (security) Scramble for Africa. However, there are also political imperatives for disengagement, with France pulling its troops out of Mali for example, as relations with the military junta soured. France had sent troops there in 2014 under the so-called "Operation Barkhane" to forestall an Islamist takeover of the country.

The overall development of the continent remains structured by neoliberalism, which is reinforced by rising debts in the context of the COVID pandemic, with many countries, such as Zambia, turning to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for loan packages (Scarfe, 2022). Oxfam has found that the vast majority of IMF programmes in Africa entail austerity measures, deepening poverty. In Zambia, the structural power of Western-dominated international financial institutions is demonstrated by the recent loan agreement with the IMF, which included the condition that Zambia will "totally cancel 12 planned projects, half of which were due to be financed by China EXIM Bank, alongside one by ICBC [Industrial and Commercial Bank of China] for a university and another by Jiangxi Corporation for a dual highway for the capital" (Scarfe, 2022). At the same time, World Bank projects, mostly focussed on social sectors, such as health and education, are continuing.

According to Acharya (2018), we now live in a multiplex world order, rather than a multipolar one, where the power of different actors intermix and mingle rather than stand off against each other. One of the secular trends of the twenty-first century has been the heightened importance of China in Africa. While this may appear set to continue, there has been a dramatic contraction of loan funding for China's signature foreign policy, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since 2016. Likewise, many of China's highest profile projects have been mired in controversy, such as the multi-billion dollar Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya (Taylor, 2020). Chinese foreign direct investment to the continent also fell almost 50% from 2018-19, prior to the pandemic, perhaps in response to investor concern and the new "dual circulation strategy" in China which places a greater emphasis on domestic market expansion. This economic retrenchment is however offset by great so called "soft power" engagements, such as the offering of more scholarships for African students to study in China. This represents an attempt to construct Chinese hegemony, which has, or is, also being attempted in other regions (Zou & Jones, 2020).

China operates a different type of power than other "great" powers. Whereas some write of China being characterised by "fragmented authoritarianism" (Lieberthal, 1992), in reality it is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rather than the state, which is controlled by the Party, where real power lies and this is tightly coordinated through a "red phone network" (Martin, 2021). There are about 3,000 red phones in a network run by the military for senior CCP officials in the country, which can only dial each other. The operators who run the network are expected to recognise people calling by their voice.

Whereas Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs) or corporations often compete aggressively overseas for business, they operate under conditions of "bounded autonomy" (Breslin, 2021), as evidenced by the dramatic overseas loan contraction from 2016 onwards for example. This represents a distinctive structure of power which can be thought of as "webpower", where the centre directs or sets the incentives for the improvisation in commercial strategies by the nodes (such as SOEs). In this structure power is simultaneously both concentrated and diffuse. For example, Huawei, the Chinese telecommunications giant has been controversial globally and in Africa. Notionally, it is a private company, but in reality the vast majority of voting rights are held by a CCP-affiliated trade union (Wen, 2020). It has been implicated in hacking scandals in the

African Union and in spying on opposition politicians in Zambia and Uganda, for example (Abegunrin & Manyeruke, 2019).

Webpower is in evident elsewhere. For example, "In Zambia, a 'pyramid of power' exists within Chinese associations from the Chinese embassy at the top, to associations and individual Chinese and companies; some associations 'may even take orders directly from homeland governments (provincial and municipal) and promote subnational and party policies within the Chinese community in Zambia' (Li & Shi, 2019) quoted in Large, 2021, 162. However, this power is not undisputed and has been subject to substantial pushback in recent years (Patey, 2020) and the BRI has suffered from a number of contradictions (See Carmody & Wainwright, 2022). This raises the question of how much power Africa-based actors have in these relations or networks.

African Agency

What can Africa-based actors do in such a rapidly changing context? In much of the academic literature on Africa there has been a tendency to present domestic actors, including political elites as powerless in the face of overweening external powers. For example, this has been one of the criticisms levelled against discussions of the "New Scramble for Africa". The emergence of new powers, particularly China and India, but also others such as Turkey and the Gulf States in Africa (Mason & Mabon, 2022) has given African political elites more "balancing" options with Western powers and the ability to strategically play one side against the other, depending on the issue, stage of the economic cycle and the nature of different states extraversion portfolios (Peiffer & Englebert, 2012). Jean-François Bayart (2000) argues that African political elites often pursue a "strategy of extraversion" to create or bolster their own power by being able to draw on the resources of external actors. Thus extraversion, in this instance, is not something which is externally imposed but rather stems, and is driven by domestically-based actors. That is not to say dependence does not exist but that it is co-constituted through alliances of domestic elites and "external" actors. Where it is felt there might be an over-dependence on a particular external state, this may be revised, as has recently been the case in Angola in relation to China (de Carvalho, Kopinsky, & Taylor, 2021).

"African agency" has a positive valence in much of the literature (See Brown & Harman, 2013 for example). However, there is also a debate about whether or not it exists (Carmody & Kragelund, 2016), depending, of course, on definition. A somewhat minimalist definition appears to have gained traction in recent years where agency is considered the intention to do something and its implementation (Anwar & Graham, 2022), rather than, for instance, bespeaking the power to make alternative choices. However, this positive valence is not always justified as there are many "negative" forms of agency, such as corruption, crime, and illegitimate regime maintenance (Taylor, 2015).

In return for various inducements, including market access, China is able to leverage support from many African countries. For example, at the special Sino-African summit on COVID-19 a declaration was issued supporting Chinese positions on Hong Kong and Taiwan and the claims of the zoonotic origin of the virus, rather than the alternative theory of its leaking from a virus lab in Wuhan. African political elites are often powerful, in relation to their own populations in particular, but also in relation to external actors, depending on the particular conjuncture, stage of the commodity cycle and other factors. However, their power waxes and wanes along different axes as they seek to balance internal legitimation, accumulation, and external resource access concerns (Carmody & Taylor, 2003). This political opportunity structure does not generally encourage policies towards economic diversification, unless there are "systemic vulnerabilities" which may encourage the emergence of developmental states as in Rwanda, and Ethiopia (Doner, Ritchie, & Slater, 2005). However, such developmental states are fragile given the omni-present danger of a conflict relapse, as has recently happened in Ethiopia. The Botswana democratic developmental state (Samatar, 1999) is being heavily affected by climate change and domestic resource consumption, engaging in what Livingston (2019) calls "self-devouring growth". For instance, the relative abundance of food is contributing to a shortage of water. This is the case even though most African economies have made a minimal contribution to the climate crisis, except those which use substantial fossil fuel

energy, such as South Africa, or engage in gas flaring and oil export on a substantial scale, such as Nigeria.

The Future of Global Order and Africa

Africa's future will in part depend on the nature of the emergent global (dis)order. The continent has been heavily affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and consequent food price increase and shortages. China is becoming more involved in the continent's security (Alden, Alao, Chun, & Barber, 2017; Barton, 2018; Large, 2021) through increased military cooperation and the opening of its first overseas military base in Djibouti in 2017.

The liberal global order is in a period of flux and challenge. Murphy (2022) argues that China is constructing an alternative set of institutions in case the liberal order fails, even as it has been a major beneficiary of it (I. Taylor, 2017; Ian Taylor & Cheng, 2022). However viewing China as a "risen" power may put a different complexion on the current international conjuncture as China seeks to both insulate itself from economic backlash (Inkster, 2020) and at the same time increase its influence and power to remould the global order towards its continued ascent in the international system.

We are currently in an era of great power competition and conflict through both old (war and proxy war) and new (cyber and artificial intelligence) and hybrid means (Ratto & al., nd). The United States already has a web of tented camps and drone bases across much of Africa, forming a "lily pad" structure (Turse, 2015), with about 6,000 troops on the continent (Cohen, 2020). As Chinese and Russian military engagements increase this may bring these different powers into more direct competition, if not confrontation and conflict. At the same time Djibouti, given its strategic location, hosts multiple bases from many different countries, including Japan, Spain and others without substantial problems49 (Cobbett & Mason, 2021) as all such countries have an interest in maritime security, open sea lanes, and the free flow of natural resources from the continent to power their own economies.

The terminology of the "militarisation of Africa"50 is problematic because it tends to reproduce an imaginary "traditional" continent ruled by force alone rather than liberal governmentality (Baaz & Verweijen, 2018). The rise of populist politics in (parts of) the West may suggest a selective delinking from African security issues (Owusu, Riberedo, & Carmody, 2019). This is particularly the case given widespread disillusionment with the "everywhere" and "forever" wars of the United States through its "war on terror" (Gregory, 2004). It remains to be seen, however, whether climate disruption will lead to existential state-society formation crises on the continent. If so, the imperative or desire for the containment of people may reassert itself even more forcefully and brutally than is currently the case in the Mediterranean (Hayden, 2022) and where European governments pay some Sahelian and North African states for migrant detention camps through, or as part of, the Valetta process (Parshotam, 2017; Urbina, 2021). This represents a securitisation of mobility rather than space and is the antithesis of human security.

In a sense this strategy mirrors neoliberalism, which attempts to create insecurity in livelihoods and the labour market to encourage labour force participation, effort and entrepreneurialism, including of the self (Padraig Carmody, 2007). A largely sedentarist global order has so far outsourced insecurity to less powerful parts of the world. Some envisage a new era of mass migration (Khanna, 2021), however this seems extremely unlikely, particularly as populism appears to continue its uneven rise globally. The current global order faces an existential challenge, not from migrants, but from the omni-crises engulfing it, from global power shifts to climate change, pandemics, and inequality. Africa is the one of crucibles where the current global orders' contradictions and challenges play out. This will undoubtedly be met with new strategies to contain dissent and outsource poverty and conflict to expanded sacrifice zones or blasted landscapes of capitalism (Tsing, 2015). A Pan-African vision of geopolitics which emphasises equality, solidarity, and common humanity may be one way of blunting the current conjuncture's impacts, if not over-coming it.

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49 Although US pilots have been targeted by lasers coming from the Chinese base nearby (Kube & Siemaszko, 2018).

50 Used in the Call for Papers for this volume

Acknowledgements

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Community Protocols: The Legal Framework to Safeguard Biocultural Rights in South Africa Policy Brief

Sobantu Mzwakali

Introduction

This article examines the "biological diversity/cultural diversity" nexus via the lens of international law as understood in the legal context of South Africa. Biocultural Community Protocols (BCP) and biocultural rights herald the arrival of biocultural methods for the protection of biodiversity. They are not, however, limited to the realm of preservation. BCPs get at the very essence of sovereignty and the politics of identity; they bear on land rights; and they touch on issues that could be understood as political ontology. South Africa is breaking new ground as BCPs and biocultural rights have been brought together, largely through the efforts of lawyer and activist Kabir Bavikatte (Bavikatte 2014).

Two major tendencies are apparent in literature aimed at understanding how communities engage with their natural resources and how their policies respond to regional, national, and global impacts. Local and indigenous populations are not opposed to development or policies that try to improve their livelihoods. However, they are dubious of both the process and outcome of policymaking and feel that it does not adequately account for their interests and ways of life. Second, policies frequently fail to reflect the underlying principles of rights-based approaches practiced by communities. This results in conflicts between those policies and the rights asserted by communities in respect of self-determination, territories and land, development, customary law, and cultural heritage.

Thus, the exploitation of natural resources, customs and the traditional knowledge associated with them has been contentious and discriminatory. Consider Hoodia Gordonii, a plant utilized by Khoisan as an appetite suppressant since time immemorial. Someone outside the community discovered the plant's medicinal quality and, without the community's consent, patented it as an appetite suppressant (Foster, 2017). Similar narrative arcs are evident in numerous communities throughout the globe, such as in Madagascar for the rosy periwinkle plant patented for its cancer-fighting properties (Atkinson, Jonathan and Moodie 2013), and in India for the various uses of the Neem tree (Schumacher 2013). This unjust development has been widely criticized and labelled "biopiracy," as well as the misappropriation and "theft" of traditional knowledge (Mukuka 2010).51

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51 "Biopiracy" was first defined by Pat Mooney and made well-known by other scholars such as Vandana Shiva. It refers to the "robbery of the biological raw materials" such as genetic resources and "the knowledge about the use of such resources". It is further defined as "the appropriation of the knowledge and genetic resources of farming and Indigenous

Access and benefit-sharing (ABS) initiatives are central to rectifying the commercial exploitation of indigenous knowledge by outsiders. ABS prioritizes the consent of all actors involved and the distribution of the benefits arising from the exploitation of natural resources as instruments for achieving distributive justice. Under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), an international legal response was negotiated in 2010 through the Nagoya Protocol to regulate the ABS of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. The protocol proposes the establishment of mechanisms to ensure prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms between providers and consumers, as well as a system of monitoring to ensure international compliance. On this basis, it is assumed the benefits derived from ABS agreements play a significant role in financing biodiversity conservation in developing regions of the globe and alleviating poverty in disadvantaged communities (Mainguy 2012).

However, critics assert that ABS initiatives involving traditional knowledge typically fail because they neither adequately reflect the requirements nor the culture of indigenous communities, particularly when the actors are not involved in their formulation. Consequently, one of the safeguards included in the Nagoya Protocol was the recognition of community protocols as local governance schemes.

By entering the realm of international, regional, and national laws to develop a Biocultural Community Protocol (BCP), for example, indigenous people and local communities in South Africa hope to become more aware of their rights and better able to advocate for the respect and implementation of these rights. However, deciding how to pursue rights vindication is not a simple process. Rights regarding access to land, benefit-sharing, traditional knowledge, carbon emissions, protected areas, and much more are established by a growing body of international and domestic laws, policies, court cases, declarations, and guidelines pertaining to indigenous peoples, local communities, and environmental protection. The International Land Coalition (ILC) in 2016 and Payandeh (2015) note that these rights are inherently disjointed because they are dealt with by separate groups, can be found in a variety of places, and are often interpreted in varying ways by different courts. As a result, indigenous peoples and local communities must work with a wide variety of legal sources to secure safeguards for the various facets of their lives that are inextricably intertwined with one another and with the biocultural landscape.

Biocultural Rights: Confluence of the Political Ecology, the Commons and the Indigenous Peoples' Rights

Sanjay Kabir Bavikatte proposes the concept of biocultural rights (2014; Bavikatte & Bennet, 2015). Its purpose is to investigate and address the biocultural landscape of indigenous peoples and wider communities dependent on land-based livelihoods. Biocultural rights combine many of the separate rights that indigenous peoples and other land-based communities need to advance self-governance and preserve cultural identities. Under international law, self-governance and cultural preservation are frequently considered to be two distinct entities. This is due to the fact that their circumstances are similar enough to enable comparison while distinct enough to merit separate treatment.

Bavikatte argues that the emergence of biocultural rights results from the intersection of movements for the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities with movements for political ecology and the commons. There are many points of agreement between these groups. They all concern the state of local ecosystems, and conclude that the best way to do this is to defend the rights of indigenous peoples and local inhabitants.

Therefore, all the rights necessary for indigenous and local communities to take care of their own land and water are collectively known as biocultural rights. This stewardship obligation represents a way of life in which the land and water upon which a community depends are integral to that community's sense of self, culture, religion, as well as its political institutions, and traditional economic activities. The relationship between a group and its territory is comparable to a fiduciary duty to protect and enhance it, rather than to exploit it.

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communities by individuals or institutions who seek exclusive monopoly control (patents and intellectual property) over this knowledge and resources" (Martinez-Alier, 2003, p. 132)

When it comes to protecting human, heritage, and environmental rights, international law is evolving toward a more inclusive and comprehensive stance. However, the precise details of this strategy are rarely discussed (Gillespie, 2000). The idea of biocultural rights is an attempt to respond to the substance of such an all-encompassing method. The current method of conserving indigenous resources approaches the right to natural resources independently from the right to cultural resources—notwithstanding the strong interdependence between these two. There is an inseparable connection between indigenous peoples and local communities' natural and cultural resources, and so biocultural rights are defined as a set of substantive indigenous and biological resource rights that protect both (Nemogá, Appasamy and Romanow 2022).

That indigenous peoples and local communities' cultural resources can only exist because of indigenous and biological natural resources, and vice versa, is a central tenet of the biocultural rights framework. The current disjointed and distinct systems of substantive indigenous rights to natural and cultural resources would be unified by the legal notion of biocultural rights. Numerous works advise caution before establishing new legal protections (Heald & Sherry, 2000). However, biocultural rights are not supplementary rights for indigenous peoples and local communities; rather, they are rights that bring together people's pre-existing rights to resources.

The idea of biocultural rights needs to be broad enough that different people can come to different conclusions about what it means. When a standardizing paradigm is forced on different contexts with vastly varied historical, political, cultural, and economic foundations, the inevitable result is pushback. Indigenous peoples and local communities should be given more weight in the interpretation, and communities should be actively involved in the process. Given the challenges indigenous peoples and local communities are up against, it's clear that a 'pro-people, ecology, and commons' stance is essential.

Biocultural Community Protocols: Customary Norms, Values, and Laws

The United Nations Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing provided the first legal recognition for the concept of a biocultural community protocol, which is now widely used by indigenous peoples in Africa, Asia, and Latin America to convey their local governance structures, assert their longstanding connection to land, and highlight the importance of shared natural resources to their way of life (Delgado 2016).

To assist indigenous peoples and local communities document and articulate their customary norms, values, and laws in a way that ensures their recognition under emerging national and international laws, a new concept in environmental law and policy has emerged: community protocols.

Indigenous communities in Kenya, Ethiopia, and Namibia, for instance, are working on community protocols to define their governance structures, establish shared land management processes, and advocate for both public and private sectors to recognize their rights as custodians of indigenous and community-conserved areas.

The Mo'otz Kuxtal Voluntary Guidelines, adopted by the 13th Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), present community protocols as follows:

> Community protocols is a term that covers a broad array of expressions, articulations, rules and practices generated by communities to set out how they expect other stakeholders to engage with them. They may reference customary as well as national or international laws to affirm their rights to be approached according to a certain set of standards.
>
> Articulating information, relevant factors, and details of customary laws and traditional authorities helps other stakeholders to better understand the community's values and customary laws. Community protocols provide communities an opportunity to focus on their development aspirations vis-a-vis their rights and to articulate, for themselves and for users their understanding of their bio-cultural heritage and therefore on what basis they will engage with a variety of stakeholders.
>
> By considering the interconnections of their land rights, current socio-economic situation, environmental concerns, customary laws and traditional knowledge, communities are better placed to determine for themselves how to negotiate with a variety of actors.

BCPs have been developed throughout Africa and elsewhere in the world since the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol (and in certain cases, before). Communities are employing BCPs to engage in communication and negotiation with a wide variety of external actors, to document their processes for Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) and decision-making, and to protect their rights over resources and information.

When applied to the ABS framework, BCPs have universally increased community members' understanding of ABS and the value of safeguarding indigenous knowledge and practices. Communities have utilized their protocols to successfully negotiate benefits in various instances. Communities have developed and employed BCPs for a variety of purposes, including bargaining with the cosmetics industry, securing access to resources and property within national parks, and, most recently, halting the construction of a coal power plant (Booker, Stephanie, Knight, Rachael & Brinkhurst, Marena, 2015)

By developing BCPs, indigenous and local communities are essentially claiming a locally specific set of rights and duties in regard to the administration of their territories and the conservation and sustainable use of their natural resourcesIndigenous peoples and local communities are demanding to be treated fairly and in accordance with the rules and norms that have been established for them. BCPs are critical for establishing the protocols to be observed by industries and researchers amongst other stakeholders, who seek community consent for access to their resources. BCPs are a successful implementation of the Nagoya Protocol at the national level.

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity is the first legally binding international framework to establish a set of rights for indigenous peoples and local communities over their genetic resources and traditional knowledge as well as recognizing community protocols as a valid legal tool for community consent. The Nagoya Protocol therefore holds significant potential for the valorisation and protection of traditional knowledge, the generation of local benefits, and the recognition of the role of indigenous peoples and local communities as custodians of biodiversity, including through their customary laws and processes. However, the fulfilment of this promise will depend largely on how the Nagoya Protocol is implemented through national ABS frameworks, and through local processes for prior, informed consent, and mutually agreed terms (MAT). Experiences with past ABS cases involving communities reveal a number of key challenges facing indigenous communities in regard to Access and Benefit Sharing. BCPs act as an interface between customary laws and community governance structures on one side, and national and international frameworks on the other.

Intersection of Laws Supporting Development of Community Protocols for Biocultural Rights

The following section will detail international treaties, legislation, and policies that affect biocultural rights in relation to human rights, land rights, environment, conservation, climate change, economic development, and participation. It will offer analysis of how these legal frameworks impact biocultural rights.

Every year South Africa joins the international community to commemorate International Human Rights Day on 10 December, marking the United Nations General Assembly's 1948 adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. On the same day in 1996, former South African President Nelson Mandela signed the Constitution of South Africa into law.

The UDHR is a milestone document which underpins all international human rights law and was drafted by representatives from different legal and cultural backgrounds from across the world. It continues to inspire struggles for freedom, equality and dignity and establishes universal standards for their attainment. Premised on the UDHR, South Africa has included amalgamated human rights in the country's Bill of Rights, Chapter 2 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. The Bill of Rights widely addresses South Africa's history of oppression, colonialism, slavery, racism and sexism and other forms of human violations. It embeds the rights of all people in South Africa as an enduring affirmation of the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.

There are numerous legal instruments which seek to promote and protect the rights of indigenous persons, both domestic as well as international. On an international level, the key instruments which govern the rights of indigenous peoples are the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) and the International Labour Organization's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' Convention No. 169 ("ILO Convention No.169")

However, other instruments also apply to various aspects of the rights of indigenous persons, including, but not limited to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the Convention on Biological Diversity; Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity; the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage; and the Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, amongst others. South Africa is expected to adhere to its international legal obligations by integrating the laws and conventions it is signatory to into its national laws and regulations.

International Treaties Legal and Framework

South Africa adopted UNDRIP in 2016. The Declaration imposes several obligations on member states. It also prohibits discrimination against indigenous peoples and promotes their full and effective participation in all matters that concern them. These pronouncements are also fully in line with the country's democratic constitution.

South Africa has many World Heritage Sites, biosphere reserves, Ramsar sites, (wetlands of international importance - named after the city the 1971 convention was signed in), and World Heritage Sites all included in the definition of protected areas in terms of the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act (NEMPAA). In terms of the World Heritage Convention Act 49 of 1999 (WHCA), the participation of all interested and affected parties in the governance of natural and cultural heritage must be promoted, and all people must have the opportunity to develop the understanding, skills, and capacity necessary for achieving equitable and effective participation (section 4(d), (e), WHCA). World Heritage Sites are managed by an authority, which may be an existing organ of state, or a new authority appointed by the Minister responsible for the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE). In theory, there is nothing to prevent a member of an indigenous people or local community from being appointed as the authority, as long as they are able to channel their authority through a juristic person. Representation of directly affected adjacent communities and affected adjacent tribal authorities on the boards of World Heritage Site Authorities is also specifically allowed (section 14, WHCA).

South Africa is party to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which has three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity; the sustainable use of the components of biological diversity; and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilisation of genetic resources. States have the right to exploit their own resources within the framework of their environmental policies, and they are responsible for ensuring that this exploitation does not cause damage to their environment. Each state that is party to the CBD must develop national strategies, plans, or programmes for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, and they should integrate the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity into programmes, plans, and policies across different governmental sectors. The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilisation is a supplementary agreement to the CBD, which was adopted on 29 October 2010. The Nagoya protocol creates more legal certainty and transparency for both the providers and users of genetic resources. It establishes more predictable conditions for access to genetic resources and ensures benefit-sharing when genetic resources leave the country that they belong to. The Nagoya protocol also covers traditional knowledge that may be associated with certain genetic resources and helps ensure benefit sharing with the communities that may hold the traditional knowledge. The protocol also addresses genetic resources, where indigenous and local communities have established rights to grant and access these resources. The domestic-level obligations for states that are parties to access genetic resources include:

- Create legal certainty, clarity and transparency;
- Provide fair and non-arbitrary rules and procedures;
- Establish rules for prior informed consent and mutually agreed terms;
- Provide issuance of permits or an equivalent when access is granted;
- Create conditions to promote and encourage research contributing to biodiversity,
- conservation and sustainable use, and;
- pay due regard to cases of present or imminent emergencies that threaten human, animal, or plant health.

National laws and Policies in South Africa

Created after the fall of the apartheid regime, the South African constitution was hailed as one of the most progressive in the world, as it specifically set out to redress the injustices of the past and the apartheid system. The Bill of Rights in the Constitution articulates several rights that are of seminal importance to indigenous people and customary communities. These include a right to environment, property, language, and culture, and a right to belong to and practice as a member of a cultural, religious, or linguistic community. In addition to these substantive rights, indigenous and customary communities enjoy procedural rights of access to information, just administrative action, and a right of access to the courts. These rights are relevant to the self-determination of indigenous and customary communities and their protection of cultural systems of control over natural resources.

The right to environment in South Africa is weakly formulated, and does not guarantee the right of access to, control over or use of natural resources. The South African government has enacted an extensive suite of environmental legislation over the past twenty years that does, to some extent, address the concern of the self-determination of indigenous and customary communities as regards control over territories, areas, and natural resources. Customary law is recognised as an independent source of law and any rights conferred by customary law are recognised so long as they are consistent with the Constitution.

The South African government is constitutionally bound to protect the environment, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that, amongst other objectives, promote conservation (section 24(b)). In the democratic era, this responsibility has been exercised through the enactment of the following legislation:

National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) was promulgated to give effect to Section 24 of the Constitution. The aim of NEMA is to create the legal framework in terms of which of the rights encapsulated in section 24 can be implemented. NEMA establishes governmental institutions and processes to ensure proper environmental protection and establishes environmental management principles which apply to all actions that may influence the environment. The principles serve as a contextual backdrop against which all environmental legislation must be interpreted, administered and implemented. Importantly, sections 42 and 42A of NEMA apply to the Biodiversity Act. Under section 42 of NEMA, the Minister has delegated the power to issue bioprospecting permits, and integrated export and bioprospecting permits to the Director-General. It should be noted that the power to approve benefit-sharing agreements and material transfer agreements has not been delegated. This signifies that the involvement of stakeholders especially community members is key in making such agreements.

The National Environmental Management Act (NEMBA) regulates the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. There are certain aspects of the legislation that are of significance to indigenous peoples and local communities. For instance, chapter 6 of NEMBA regulates bioprospecting, access and benefit sharing. Section 82 (1) provides that before a permit referred to in section 5I(l)(a) or (b) is issued, the issuing authority considering the application for the permit must protect any interests in the proposed bioprospecting project held by any of the following stakeholders : (a) A person, including any organ of state or community, providing or giving access to the indigenous biological resources to which the application relates; and (i) whose traditional uses of the indigenous

biological resources to which the application relates have initiated or will contribute to or form part of the proposed bioprospecting; or (ii) whose knowledge of or discoveries about the indigenous biological resources to which the application relates are to be used for the proposed bioprospecting. Section 83 governs benefit sharing agreements.

National Water Act 36 of 1998 (NWA) governs the protection, conservation, use, management, control, and development of the nation's water resources. This legislation was revolutionary in moving freshwater governance away from the riparian principle as a basis for the allocation of water resources, to an administrative system driven by the constitutional imperatives of ensuring equitable access to water resources and the protection of water resources to meet the basic needs of present and future generations.

Marine Living Resources Act 18 of 1998 (MLRA) regulates the subsistence and commercial fishing industry in South Africa. The Act refocuses the governance of the fishing industry on small-scale fisheries. To this end, it allows for the recognition of "small-scale fishing communities".

The Indigenous Knowledge Systems Act 2019 seeks to provide legal protection for indigenous knowledge by recognising prior learning, accreditation of indigenous knowledge 'Assessors' and the designation of certified indigenous knowledge practitioners - creating a register of indigenous knowledge by NIKSO.

National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 (NHRA) provides for a three-tier system of heritage resources management. The NHRA may contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, considering the cultural link of indigenous communities to various fauna and flora.

With respect to land, the underlying assumption of the Interim Protection of Informal Land Rights Act 31 of 1996 (IPILRA), with its recognition of informal rights to land, is that customary laws and procedures are used for local stewardship of communal land. This stewardship is qualified only to the extent that customary laws and procedures must be deemed to include democratic consultation, participation, and decision-making when the community disposes of land or informal rights (section 2(4), IPILRA).

South Africa has no legislation specifically providing for indigenous peoples' or customary communities' stewardship of sacred natural sites. However, 'sacred national sites' may be included in the definition of the "national estate", in terms of the National Heritage Resources Act 25 of 1999 (NHRA). The Act applies to the management and conservation of heritage resources. The NHRA would be relevant to the conservation of biodiversity, considering the cultural link of indigenous communities to various fauna and flora. Cultural heritage resources form part of the natural environment.

Legal and non-legal recognition and support for indigenous peoples and local communities' conserved territories, areas, and natural resources are mutually reinforcing. Unless there is adequate legal recognition, non-legal recognition and support cannot be effectively conceived or implemented. Similarly, unless there is effective non-legal recognition and support through non-legal means, including social recognition, advocacy, developmental help, financial assistance, networking, and legal assistance, legal recognition is hollow.

It is difficult to imagine that external threats, namely systemic pressures on the environment and biodiversity worldwide, the direct pressures on indigenous peoples and local communities and their territories and resources, and inadequacy of legal recognition, will be resolved without a clear legal text on the terms, roles, and responsibilities to achieve this end. Having said that, it is unreasonable to expect that law and policy on their own are enough. The soft platform provided by non-legal means can, at the very least, help to actualise the provisions and commitments under law and policies. This is particularly the case in South Africa, where some laws such as the Restitution of Land Rights Act, 1994; the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, N° 57, 2003; the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act 10, 2004 and the Communal Property Associations Act 28 of 1996 allow for institutions and initiatives that can be engaged with for the recognition, and support of indigenous peoples and local communities' conserved territories, areas and natural resources.

Conclusion

The protection of biocultural rights is not just reasonable but essential. Indigenous peoples and local communities have a right to do so because of the wrongs done to them in the past, wrongs that have resulted in the denial of their rights to land, territory, means of livelihood, language, cultural identity, and ways of life. The plea, however, also looks forward. The unique traits and ways of life of indigenous peoples and local groups contribute greatly to the biocultural diversity of our planet (Guruswamy, Roberts, & Drywater, 2000).

For a comprehensive approach to securing biocultural rights, we must prioritise safeguarding the natural and cultural resources that are intrinsic to indigenous peoples' and local communities' very survival. In other words, the purpose of biocultural rights is to ensure the continued well-being of indigenous peoples and local communities by addressing historical wrongs and securing them for future generations.

The consequences of biocultural rights on policymaking are multifaceted. When it comes to biocultural rights, the United Nations and its operational agencies ought to adopt a new paradigm of biocultural rights and work towards a more comprehensive legal document that codifies this claim. In order to effectively safeguard indigenous peoples and local communities, non-governmental organisations and activists working on human and environmental rights may use biocultural rights as a shared commitment. The concept of biocultural rights could assist national policymakers in establishing more inclusive, respectful policy towards indigenous peoples and local communities, that is in turn consistent with the range of applicable international laws described herein.

The South African government is called upon to support the development of biocultural community protocols (BCPs) of indigenous people and local community, and to take into account community protocols and other community rules and procedures where traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources is concerned. BCPs are critical for communities as they establish the protocol that is to be observed by industries and researchers, amongst other stakeholders, who seek their consent for access to their resources. BCPs are a successful implementation of the Nagoya Protocol at the national level.

A new and exhilarating energy may propel us forward toward a brighter and more just future for indigenous peoples and all of humanity with the introduction of an umbrella right—biocultural rights. For good reason, the United Nations declared in 2007 that "all peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind" (Preamble).

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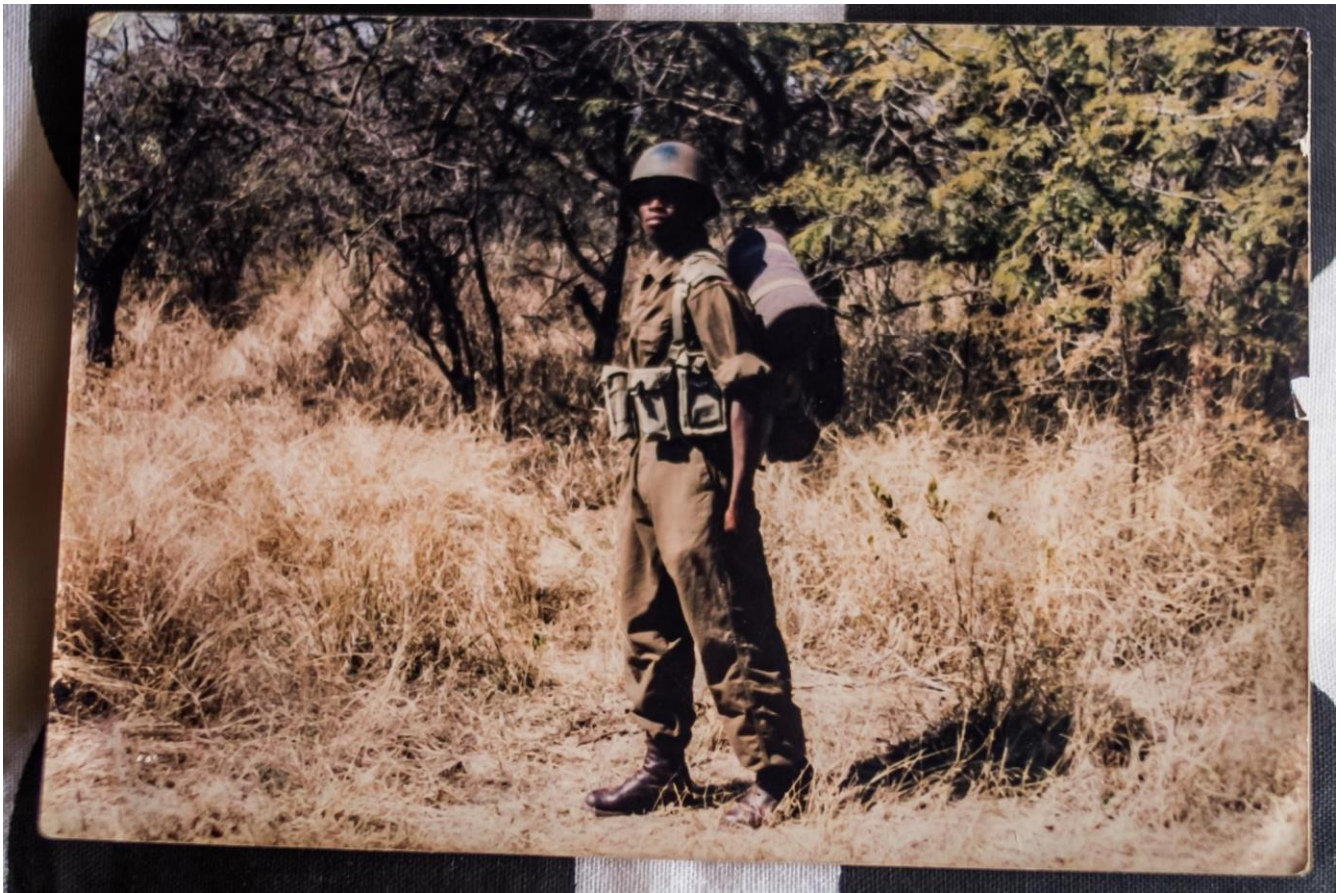
Ukugrumba

Tshepiso Mabula

The grave of my late uncle P. Mabula, a teenager who became a freedomfighter, then a wounded civilian, and finally an ancestor.

Simon Mabula, South African National Defence Force (SANDF) soldier and son of a former freedom fighter.

Ukugrumba

*U*kugrumba, meaning to "dig up" in isiXhosa, is a body of work motivated by my family's trauma as a result of activism in South Africa's struggle against apartheid, towards liberation, and amid present-day reconciliation. I seek to exhume the experiences of foot soldiers that sacrificed their youth by fleeing into exile, to enter the trenches of armed struggle for national liberation. This also includes those who stayed in the country to continue the fight against the brutal regime. More often than not, those who are hailed as heroes of the struggle are well-known political figures. *Ukugrumba* is a visual representation and narrative of the forgotten people who were affected both mentally and physically by the armed struggle against apartheid.

Ukugrumba also examines haunted places that bear memories of a violent past. The work interrogates conversations of the struggle and details testimonies of untold stories of former liberation soldiers and their families. I revisit the past to shed light on the reality of the trauma that apartheid caused. This trauma continues to plague both old and young South Africans. The individual stories in *Ukugrumba* are part of a greater narrative of South Africa's past in relation to the new South Africa of reconciliation.
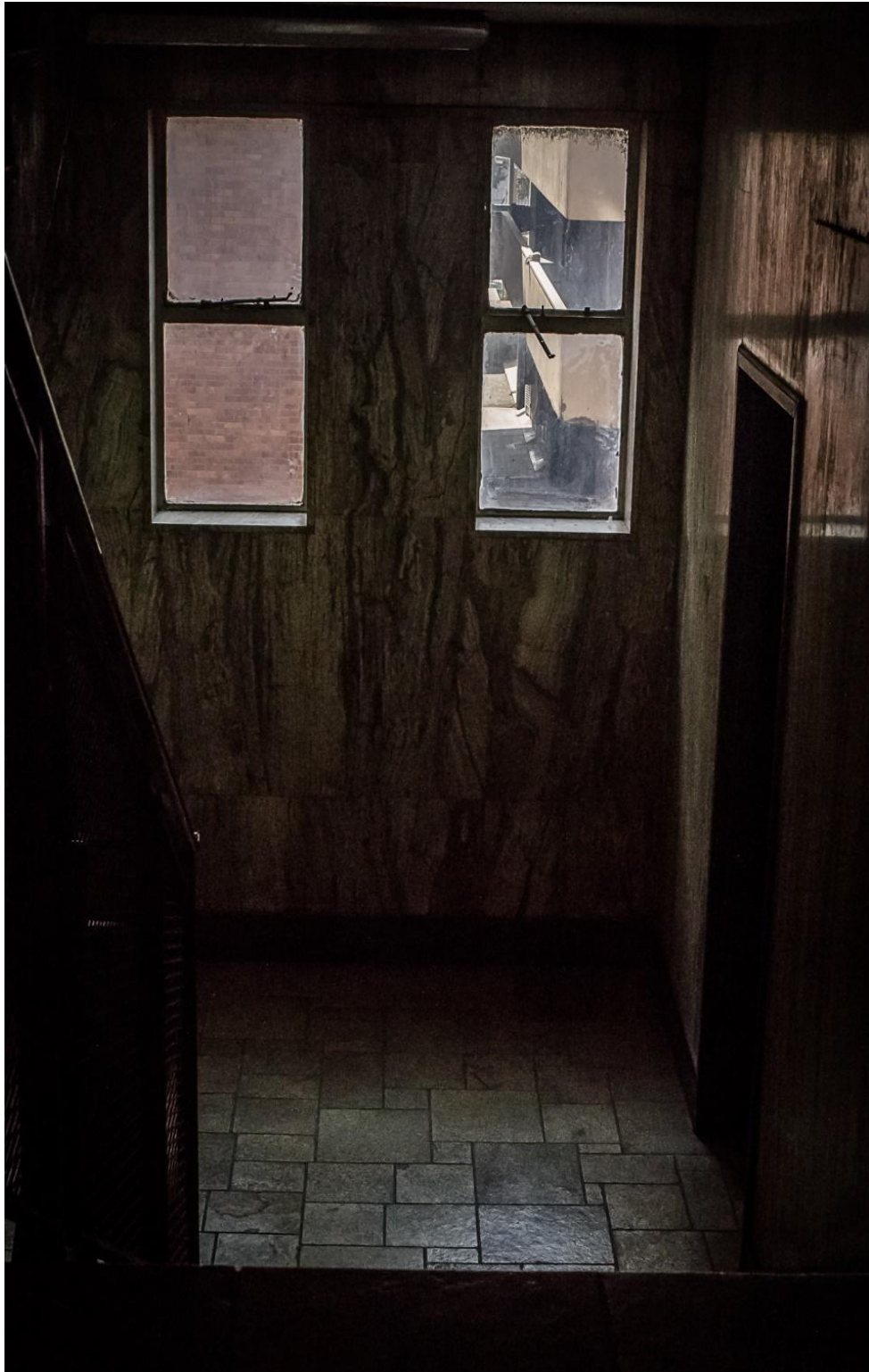
Window – Johannesburg Central Police Station

The grave where former Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) operative, Petrus Ntshole, was buried is left open after his remains were exhumed at the Mamelodi cemetery. It is said that more than 50 APLA,and its predecessor, POQO, members were secretly executed in the 1960s while approximately 24 Umkhonto we Sizwe members were executed in the same period.

From the mouths of storytellers. MyAunt, Martha Mabula, who lost her brother twice.

Lulama Kabane, combat name, GeorgeNaledi.

Samora Machel, former President of Mozambique, died in a plane crash on 19 October 1986. Machel and thirty-three other passengers died after the plane crashedinto the Lebombo Mountains in Mbuzini, South Africa after a false beacon.
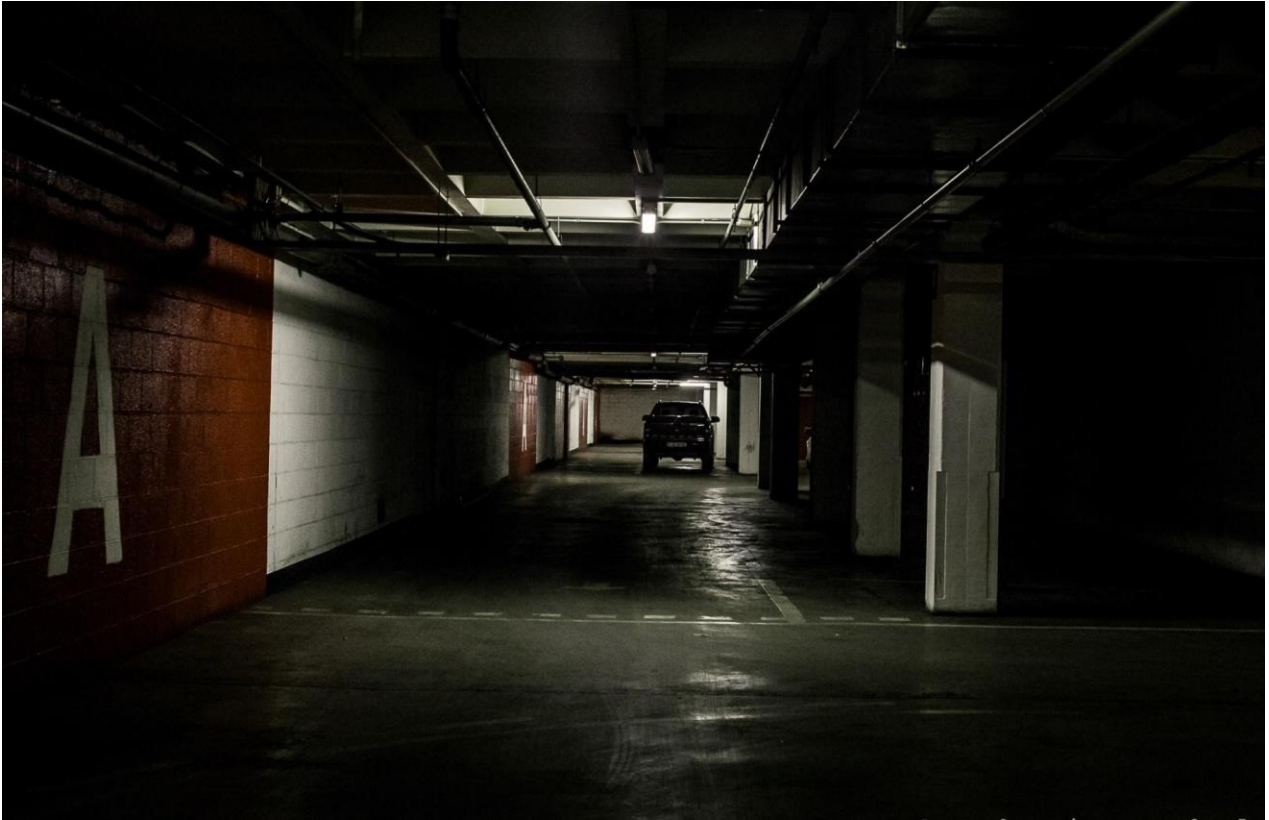
Nokuthula Orela Simelane was 27 years old when security police abducted her inside the parking lot of Johannesburg's Carlton Centre shopping mall. A courier server and freedom fighter, Simelanewas sent on assignment. She had graduated from the University Of Swaziland with a Bachelor in Administration (B.Admin) degree in Social Sciences. The police who abducted Nokuthula stated that she was alive when they last saw her and that the unit had turned her into a spy and redeployedher back to Swaziland.

The Johannesburg Central police station was previously known as John Vorster Square. Located inthe heart of Johannesburg, this police station is where many political prisoners, like Ahmed Timol,were arrested, tortured and killed by apartheid security police. It is alleged that between 1963 and 1990, at least 73 political prisoners died at the police station and that their deaths were all recordedas suicides.

Busisiwe Tedile, combat name, Sibongile. She was a courier of arms and political literature who travelled between Swaziland and South Africa. She was arrested multiple times for her political activities, and served 18 months in solitary confinement.

Nonhlanhla Lucky Mazibuko, combat name,Hazel.

The last known image of Thomas Molatlhegi, his mugshot, held by hisfamily during the exhumation of his remains in Mamelodi.

David Webster was an anthropologist and anti-apartheid activist murdered by security policeoutside his home on 1 May 1989. His murder was planned and plotted by police inside the Oribi Hotel in Kensington, Johannesburg which is located on the same street as Webster's home.

Z. Mtwazi, combat name, Tiger.

Velaphi Lot "Mavela" Mabuza. Combatname, Dick Boyce.

REVIEW ESSAY

The Autobiographical and Feminist Background of Ukamaka Olisakwe's *Ogadinma*

Chibueze Darlington Anuonye

Literature produces ideas that entrench or challenge existing ones. It performs this ideological function through the writer's choice of narrative, linguistic, stylistic and thematic elements, all of which merge into a rhetorical force that works on our feelings and thoughts towards certain cultural and social phenomena. Accordingly, feminist ideas are thematized in literary works that account for the experiences of women and girls from a dignified perspective. This is a deviation from the patriarchal tradition that enabled the stereotypical representation of women as the human "other" in the writings of both male and female authors across cultures and continents. The feminist background of modern African literature was inaugurated by the writings of Flora Nwapa, Efua Sutherland, Mariama Bâ, Nawal El Sadaawi, Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emechata and other women authors, whose writings involve "the creation of female characters who are fascinating in their variety, contrariness and complexity" and who extend "beyond the confines of traditional realities, in order to probe, discover and document extraordinary female experiences" (Acholonu 1990, p.54). The works of these pioneers are consolidated by those of contemporary women authors like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Chika Unigwe and Yewande Omotoso. These women "are unabashedly feminist" and their works "tell of bodies in pain and [ask] pertinent ethical question in that regard" (Eze 2014, p.89). The commitment of generations of African women writers to gender equality and social justice gives their writing the deep moral courage it needs to demand these rights in a vastly patriarchal environment like ours.

From her reading of Bessie Head's fiction, Françoise Lionnet discovers that African "women writers are often especially aware of their task as producers of images that both participate in the dominant representations of their culture and simultaneously undermine and subvert those images by offering a revision of familiar scripts" (1993, p.132). Although the critic Oladele Taiwo (1985) suggests that the unevocative depiction of women in the works of male African writers is not an act of malignity, but a faithful portrayal of the traditional roles women play in society, another Nigerian critic Chinyere Nwahunanya contends that "the reoccurrence of the stereotypical categories may suggest a deliberate masculine attempt to subjugate women, and therefore makes the protest of women against those images understandable" (2003, p.11). African women writers and critics power the struggle for gender equality by demarginalizing women's "spiritual, maternal, domestic and productive locations in an otherwise patriarchal society" (Bestman 2012, p.155).

In their preoccupation with the past, pioneer African feminist writers and critics tend to align with Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's Womanism, an Africanist variation of global feminism concerned about the experiences of Black African women. Their works also deferred to the ideology of cultural feminism, which relies on the biological components of the male and female bodies to highlight the considerable differences between men and women. Privileging the reproductive ability of women as an indication of their proximity

to nature and their significance in society, cultural feminism provides an enabling ground for the sisterhood of women based on their similar biological identity and their peculiar experience of marriage and motherhood. However, contemporary African feminist writers and critics tilt more towards socialist feminism, by identifying the root of women's oppression in the economic inequality that exists between men and women in patriarchal societies.

The feminist literary protest against the dehumanization, domestication and sexualization of women and girls continues even today with the emergence of Ukamaka Olisakwe in the African literary scene. Olisakwe, founding editor of *Isele Magazine*, grew up in Kano, Nigeria, and now lives in Vermilion, South Dakota. She was named one of the continent's most promising writers under the age of 40 by the UNESCO World Book Capital for the Africa39 project in 2014, awarded an honorary fellowship in Writing from the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa in 2016 and won the Vermont College of Fine Arts' Emerging Writer Scholarship for the MFA in Writing and Publishing programme in 2018. In *Ogadinma*, published in 2020 by The Indigo Press, London, Olisakwe writes about the experiences of "navigating the burdens of expectation as a married woman in Nigeria" (Finding My Freedom 2019, p.1). The feminist trope in the novel is a continuity of Olisakwe's ongoing research project on the impact of marriage and motherhood on women's mental health, what she calls "postpartum interiorities." With postpartum interiorities, she intends to reclaim the motherhood experiences of women from the "fringes" of "domestic narratives" where "they are often banished" (Everything is Storytelling 2022, p.35).

Ogadinma is the story of the eponymous character Ogadinma, whose journey through childhood, adolescence and adulthood reflects the tensions of growing up in a suffocating patriarchal society that plunders the bodies and wrecks the minds of women and girls. The novel transcends the particularity of its spatial and temporal settings of 1980s Nigeria to become the story of our time. Ogadinma herself can easily be read as an archetypal character embodying the familiar wounds of several African women and girls who wrestle under the weight of a misogynistic society that insists they matter only to the degree of "their relation to men—as daughters, wives and mothers" (Önal 2011, p.88).

The purpose of this article is to illustrate how Ogadinma overcomes her experience of patriarchal oppression through the feminist agency Olisakwe bequeaths to her and to highlight how Olisakwe's and Ogadinma's narratives as liberated women subvert the patriarchal manifesto for marriage and motherhood. I proceed with the understanding that Olisakwe combines the elements of both socialist and cultural feminisms in her analysis of the female predicament in *Ogadinma*, for although the narrative identifies the economic disempowerment of women and girls as a tool of patriarchal oppression, Olisakwe relies considerably on the sisterhood ideology to create for Ogadinma the feminist agency she envisions for herself.

Patriarchal Oppression and the Feminist Agency in *Ogadinma*

Reviewers of *Ogadinma* have acknowledged the novel's engagement with feminism. For instance, Ugandan poet and journalist Harriet Anena observes that *Ogadinma* "does a thorough job of painting the different shades of patriarchy" (2020, p.1). A Swiss-British writer, Zoë Wells, validates Anena's remark with her comment that the novel embodies "all the makings of a modern feminist classic" (2020, p.5). Likewise, citing Rob Spillman's view that *Ogadinma* is "a stirring, unflinching novel that further cements Olisakwe as an important feminist voice" and Chinelo Okparanta's opinion that the novel is an "engaging story of one woman's journey to independence," Nigerian writer and editor Chukwuebuka Ibeh declares *Ogadinma* "a feminist story" (2020, pp.1-3). But none of these reviews provides an elaborate account of how Olisakwe engages with Ogadinma's experience of patriarchal oppression. What follows now is my attempt to offer that necessary clarification.

Ogadinma opens at Barrister Chima's office. Ogadinma the character goes to the lawyer, on her father's recommendation, to request his assistance to secure admission to the university. This visit marks the beginning of her experience of patriarchal oppression. From the outset, Ogadinma's innocence, the same value her avaricious society is determined to exploit, is glaring. The lawyer's office first engages the mind: "The room was empty. The fan whirled, scattering the papers on the cluttered desk. They floated to the

floor, slid under the table, under the chair, by the door and her feet" (p.9). This disorder may well be a subtle reflection of the man's irresponsibility. Being a teenager, Ogadinma is unable to decipher the suggestiveness of things and situations, instead "she wondered if it would be awkward to walk in" to the office "uninvited and pick [the items] up" (p.9). Ogadinma's confusion is perhaps Olisakwe's portrayal of the female condition in a patriarchal society as a life of inevitable mental struggle.

Ogadinma's first conversation with Barrister Chima is revealing. In response to her greeting, the lawyer asked her how old she was. When she answered, the man retorted, "You don't look seventeenth at all" (p.2). What follows this question are acts of mental and sexual exploitation. From asking Ogadinma to leave and return to his office at 3pm, to telling her to accompany him to have lunch, Barrister Chima plays out his real character, a pedophile and rapist shielded by patriarchy. The rendition of this episode is disturbing and the aching sadness it yields is intensified by Olisakwe's consummate prose, a brilliant and moving writing that ensures readers return to the passage often, either to witness the putrefaction of human decency or to relish the odious joy of a melancholic singing prose:

> There was a moment when a scream came to [Ogadinma's] throat, but she clamped her lips shut. She would be going to the university. She would study Literature, and all of this would no longer matter. She spoke these words to herself even when her body stretched and a sharp pain travelled briefly to her waist. He arched above her, his thrust feverish, his face contorted into a dark ugly mask. Dollops of sweat from his face and neck spattered on her chest, her breasts. The room was so bright; outside the window the sun shone with passionate intensity. A lone bird flew past, and she thought how wonderful it would be to wing into the sky and fly away, away from here. (p.18)

While Ogadinma's rape is anchored on the patriarchal deployment of the phallus as a tool to conquer and despoil the female body, her family's condition of economic and social destitution enables Barrister Chima to wreak such violence on her.

Nigerian writer and publisher Nnorom Azuonye makes a surprising argument to foreground his thought that Ogadinma is complicit in her rape. He suggests that "Ogadinma, though young, knew exactly what she was doing. She may have been a victim of predatory sex, agreed, but she also had a choice... In fact, reading the story some will say she went to Chima willingly" (2020, p.7). Azuonye's opinion exemplifies the misogynistic tendency to absolve men of the transgressions they commit against the bodies and minds of women and girls in patriarchal societies. Considering her teenage status, it is inappropriate to misread Ogadinma's realization of the lawyer's intention as an indication of her culpability. The narrator's testimony that Ogadinma chose not to defy the lawyer's sexual advance for her fear of losing the opportunity to go university establishes her vulnerability. Moreover, Ali Mazuri's (1993) idea of "malignant sexism," which accounts for "the economic manipulation, sexual exploitation, and political marginalization" of women and girls in African societies should offer us an enlightening and sympathetic insight into Ogadinma's predicament (p.92).

Much of Ogadinma's experience of patriarchal oppression happens against the background of a larger social tragedy. For instance, before raping Ogadinma, Barrister Chima engages her in a conversation about the United Nations' involvement in wars. By this, Olisakwe shows the similarity between rape and war, that is their tendency to ruin the lives of their victims. Also, Olisakwe chooses the moment Ogadinma realizes that she is pregnant, and as such terrified, to take the reader into an account of a social unrest in Kano, in which Ogadinma's father's Peugeot pickup was burnt, and he himself narrowly escaped death. It appears Ogadinma's pregnancy is as destructive as the riot and its impact as unforgettable as the burnt car. Incidentally, Ogadinma had become a burnt car by the fact of the pregnancy, for her father brutalized her on realizing that she had had an abortion. The sobering description of this scene compels us to feel for Ogadinma, to share in her pain and shame. Ogadinma's father, Olisakwe writes,

> lifted his hand, his cane reaching for the ceiling, before he brought it down with so much might that it zipped through the air, before landing on her buttocks, the force lifting her skirt. She was numbed by the shock, her knees suddenly soft. And then she screamed. A hoarse cry that tore through the night, ringing through the compound. (p.32)

Unsatisfied with the violence he wreaks on his daughter's body, the man distances himself both physically and emotionally from Ogadinma by exiling her to faraway Lagos,

with this pathetic warning: "I would have sent you to your grandmother in the village, but the shame you have brought will kill that woman… You will go and stay with my brother Ugonna until I decide what to do with you" (p.32). By this act of parental rejection, he inflicts on Ogaidnma such "punishment of a less immediately physical kind," involving "a certain discretion in the art of inflicting pain, a combination of more subtle, more subdued sufferings, deprived of their visible display" and which provokes "deeper changes" in the sufferer (Foucault 1975, p.8). At this point, we may find ourselves lamenting the lack of opportunity to translate our empathy for Ogadinma into actions that could have saved her from misery.

At Lagos, Ogadinma meets and marries Tobe, a younger brother to her uncle's wife, Aunty Ngozi. The language with which Aunty Ngozi introduces Ogadinma to Tobe entrenches the patriarchal representation of women as subordinate to men and shows that women also perpetuate the oppressive culture of patriarchy: "Tobe, meet my niece, Ogadinma. She has home training and she is a great cook" (p.46). Aunty Ngozi is Olisakwe's illustration of the patriarchy princess, a woman who "has internalized the norms and values of patriarchy" and consequently is unable to "see the ways in which women are oppressed by traditional gender roles" (Tyson 2006, pp.85-86). Nneka Otika associates the phenomenon of internalized patriarchy in women with the impact of "benevolent sexism" in her definition of a patriarchy princess as "a female human who upholds… patriarchy for the sole reason of being in the male gaze and enjoying adulation from male folk" (2018, p.7).

Aunty Ngozi fits Otika's description in her justification of Tobe's moral failings. On one occasion, she tells Ogadinma: "My brother is spoiling you silly…, he has a good heart, but he has only one problem: he has a temper. Be a virtuous wife, and you will enjoy him well-well" (p.82). When Tobe is imprisoned by the military government for allegations of money laundering, Ogadinma fears that his beastly nature might become worse when he is back from prison, but she is unable to express her thoughts because "she knew that Aunty Ngozi would not like to hear this, that she would expect her to accept their new reality without questions, like a virtuous woman" (p.128). When Ogadinma's fear becomes real, as Tobe begins again to physically assault her, Aunty Ngozi also comes to Tobe's rescue. She tells Ogadinma: "[Tobe] has lost everything again. So don't be upset that he takes out his frustrations on you; that is the burden we women have to bear" (p.177). When Tobe's misfortunes continue, Aunty Ngozi insists that Ogadinma must visit and remain with Onye Ekpere, an old fake prophet who abused and raped Ogadinma in the guise of delivering her from the captivity of a spirit husband wreaking havoc on Tobe through their marriage. Ogadinma's experience at the church evokes both pity and sadness, pity for her and women like her who contend with the despoliation of their bodies and mind by agents of patriarchy, and sadness for the role religion plays in enabling patriarchal oppression.

Olisakwe offers Ogadinma the support Aunty Ngozi fails to provide her in Ogadinma's friendship with Ejiro, an assertive young woman who lived in the same street with Ogadinma and Tobe when they were newly wedded. Ejiro and Ogadinma's relationship seems to validate Cheri Register's observation that the notion that women hate one another and engage in unnecessary rivalries for the sake of male attention can be viewed as a patriarchal construct intended to consolidate the "belief in female inferiority" (1989, p.21). Clenora Hudson-Weems' elaboration of the sisterhood ideology offers some clarity on the subject:

> This sisterly bond is a reciprocal one, one in which each gives and receives equally. In this community of women, all reach out in support of each other by looking out for one another. They are joined emotionally, as they embody emphatic understanding of each other's shared experiences. Everything is given out of love. Criticism includes, and in the end, the sharing of the common and individual experiences and ideas yields rewards. There is no substitute for sisterhood, and while the traditional family is of key importance to the Africanist womanist, she recognized her need for this genuine connection between women, one that supports her in her search for solace in her time of need, and offers insight in her time of confusion. (1993, p.63)

The following instances illustrate how Ejiro fits Hudson-Weems' portrayal of a "sister" in her relationship with Ogadinma. Ejiro condemns Tobe's abuse of Ogadinma with unreserved honesty. Even when Ogadinma, acting the patriarchal script of a virtuous wife, makes excuses for Tobe, Ejiro warns her about the potentials of abusive husbands to murder their wives: "See, once a man beats you like this, he never stops. He may stop for a

while and apologize and promise never to do it again, but he will do it again and again, until he kills you" (p.155). Throughout Tobe's time in prison, Ejiro becomes Ogadinma's emotional anchor. Ogadinma needed that support so much that before moving out of Tobe's house, which was "put… up for sale" by Uncle Ugonna to raise Tobe's bailout fund, "she gave Ejiro her new contact address and phone number" (p.126). When Ogadinma's suffering becomes intolerable following Tobe's release from prison, she turns to Ejiro for help. The narrator testifies that "it warmed Ogadinma's heart that Ejiro was her succor" (p.179). The help Ejiro offers her friend, "one of those portions… which turned violent men into submissive husbands" grants Ogadinma, "for the first since things fell apart" in her marriage, "a stirring wicked pleasure" that comes from the experience of emasculating Tobe (p.181). Shortly after eating the food Ogadinma prepared with the content, Tobe loses his sexual stamina and becomes a "ten-second" man in bed. By targeting Tobe's penis, Ogadinma and Ejiro seem to demonstrate their awareness of the feminist belief that the phallus is a weapon of patriarchy and the symbol of misogyny. In the narrator's account:

> Ogadinma told [Ejiro] about the ten-second incident, how flustered he had been, that he lowered his head when he told her to return to her room. The ten-second incident happened again this morning and he couldn't even look her in the face. Later, he had sat in the parlour, shrunken like a defeathered cock, staring dolefully at the TV. 'Him don humble by force,' Ogadinma said. (p.181)

But even spirituality has its limits, as Ogadinma's subsequent experience suggests. The trauma of prison life and poverty deepens Tobe's sense of violence and, for someone already inclined to physically abusing his wife, he tortures the pregnant Ogadinma till she experiences forced labour. When Ogadinma finally had her child, "a baby with a penis," as the nurse described him, "she waited for the warmth that was supposed to flood her chest and stomach, the beginning of the bond between mother and child. But she felt nothing" (p.203). By this experience of maternal alienation, Olisakwe depicts Ogadinma's struggle with postpartum depression and subverts the patriarchal myth of "sweet" motherhood that every woman is expected to uphold. Also, Ogadinma's experience of traumatic motherhood derives substantially from her aversion to the "penis," to men. This suggests that there is a limit to what a virtuous wife can endure in the hands of an abusive husband, a patriarchal father who insists that she must remain married to be regarded as a responsible daughter, and a patriarchy princess aunt who justifies marital violence and female oppression. It is then not surprising that Ogadinma garners courage and abandons her husband and child. She, like her mother before her, walks out of her marriage and into the world to live on her own terms. Both Ogadinma's and her mother's choices seem to justify Lionnet's opinion that:

> black women writers in Africa and the Diasporas have, since the 1970s, been equating marriage itself (or other forms of heterosexual alliances) with confinement and captivity, denouncing their culture's failure to offer models of sexual partnership that are not demeaning or degrading to women *and* that allow for the mutual renegotiation of differences" (1993, p.133).

Ogadinma was abandoned by her mother at infancy. But for Ogadinma what is more traumatic than her mother's absence is the constant need to negotiate the fact of that absence, to accept it, to make peace with a past she did not know. Although she is physically unavailable, Ogadinma's mother is a constant emotional presence that tortures her mind. Her attempt to reconstruct her mother's life absolves the woman of the malicious stereotypes that featured in the stories Ogadinma's grandmother and other relatives had told her. Also, her father's refusal to speak about the situation surrounding her mother's departure makes Ogadinma's burden enormous. But Ogadinma's attempt to reconcile the facts of her life led her to reject a life of endless hibernation: "Ogadinma had gathered bits and pieces of the retelling of [her mother's] story, fitting and stitching them together until she constructed a logical narrative" (p.24). To erase her image as a child unworthy of a mother's love and that of her mother as a cruel woman undeserving of dignity, Ogadinma takes up the arduous responsibility of validating her new identity with an imagined but compelling narrative of her mother's past. In her account,

> the war had tired her mother, the burden of caring for a constantly hungry baby tired her, and one morning, the day her town fell to the Nigerian soldiers, she thrust Ogadinma into her mother-in-law's arms and walked out of the compound. She did not hold Ogadinma, and she did not look back." (pp.24-25)

Ogadinma considers the impact of the war on her young mother, something her father is incapable of doing. This is perhaps Olisakwe's effort to emphasize the maturity of Ogadinma's mind and, even more crucially, to foreground her earlier implied notion that African women in abusive marriages, enabled by patriarchy, experience war. Now, we are called to witness Ogadinma's transformation from a conforming teenager to a self-assured young woman determined to reclaim her body and mind. By leaving her husband and child, Ogadinma rejects the cultural expectations around marriage and motherhood, moves away from the patriarchal ideal of a "virtuous wife" and a "sweet mother," which demand absolute self-denial from women. In place of the deposed baggage, Ogadinma reinvents herself, embraces and cares for the reinvented self.

Önal reveals that "within a discourse which defines women only in their relation to men—as daughters, wives and mothers—the female evil connotes 'other' women, who escape this bind and thus, evade societal control mechanisms" (2011, p.88). Her insight is true to the experiences of both Ogadinma and her mother. The reaction of Aunty Okwy—Ogadinma's other aunt who, like Ogadinma, is a victim of teenage pregnancy—to the news of Ogadinma's abandonment of her marriage, clarifies this point. In a conversation with Ogadinma, Aunty Okwy says: "You left your son... You aren't different from your mother" (p.214). Later, she adds commandingly, "you must return to your husband, kneel before him and beg him to take you back" (p.217). Like Aunty Okwy, Ifeoma, Ogadinma's cousin, also shames Ogadinma for her action:

> Why did you dump your son like your mother did? ... Your mates are working to keep their marriages, but you have been so blinded by privilege you think it is an easy world out there, that's why you were heartless enough to leave your son and move into another man's house. (p.243)

Although Ogadinma's transactional sexual relationship with Kelechi, Tobe's old friend, after she left the marriage, may suggest that she is not yet free from patriarchal oppression, her insistence on relating with men only on her terms and her discovery of sexual pleasure all together give her the aura of a liberated woman.

The Autobiographical Background of *Ogadinma*

In writing Ogadinma out of bondage and into freedom, Olisakwe writes about herself. Acknowledging this, Paula Willie-Okafor, a contributing writer for Open Country Magazine, notes that Ogadinma "reads so real that people have asked if it was [Olisakwe's] story" (2021, p.14). The remaining part of this article shall clarify how Olisakwe's private and public experiences feature in *Ogadinma* and shape the protagonist's life. The conceptual framework for the observations I shall make is provided by Allwell Abalogu Onukaogu and Ezechi Onyerionwu's notion that "literature... is necessarily about experiences, human experiences, and these experiences are most of the time, those the author is familiar with, those that have happened around him [or her], and those that have happened to him [or her]" (2010, p.340).

In "Everything is Storytelling," Olisakwe acknowledges the autobiographical background of *Ogadinma* in the following comment:

> I did draw a lot from my life and the lives of the women in my immediate community. We famously married quite early—my mother at 16, me at 19, my aunts at different points in their teenage years. So, yes, there is much truth to that novel. I consider Ogadinma a love letter to my community; it is a hard conversation we must have and a reminder of where we used to be. (2022, p.27)

In an earlier conversation with the writer Uchechukwu Peter Umezurike, Olisakwe explains that the absence of a "variety of topics at the heart of the feminist discourse" in African literature inspired her to tell "the stories of women in [her] community in southeastern Nigeria, who were married off when they were barely teenagers, who were punished for getting pregnant at home" (Q&A 2020, p.7). Fundamentally, *Ogadinma* represents the kind of agency Olisakwe demands for herself and for middle-class women in her community. Olisakwe explains this in detail to Umezurike:

> I had read a lot of stories about women from middle-class families whose circumstances were different, but the women in my community were from low-income earning families and didn't have

the privilege that comes with wealth. So, I thought of creating a composite of these characters and to include their story in the conversation. (Q&A 2020, p.7)

By creating a young female character who lacks the economic empowerment to thrive in a patriarchal society, Olisakwe seems to adhere to Anthonia Kalu's (2012) call for the inclusion of low-class women in the African feminist discourse.

The relationship between Olisakwe and Ogadinma cannot be undermined in studying Ogadinma as a feminist novel. In her interview at *Yalobusa Review*, Olisakwe speaks to Linda Masi, the fiction editor of the journal, about her struggle with authorial interference. She confesses: "My biggest challenge has been to learn how to put a distance between myself and the deeply personal narratives I often write about: How do I tell this story without having it demeaned as overly confessional?" (2020, p.14). Of course, Olisakwe's engagement with the self in her fiction predates *Ogadinma*. Speaking to Ebunoluwa Mordi of *Nolly Silver Screen* in 2015 about her debut screenplay *The Calabash*, Olisakwe reveals: "There is a bit of me in every piece of work I put out" (p.3). A year later, she tells Mikael Mulugeta, editor at *Iowa Now*: "I was able to be the main subject of my writing" by exploring the "realities [of] women living in a deeply patriarchal society" (2016, p.21). If Olisakwe's "personal experiences are always [the] starting point" of her fiction (I Love Writing, 2015 p.3), with the publication of *Ogadinma*, they become its centre, for just as Ogadinma left her marriage to "finally breathe" (260), Olisakwe "found [herself] taking breaks from" writing the novel "to breathe" (Everything is Storytelling 2020, p.13).

Ogadinma inherits Olisakwe's ideal of self-love and her abhorrence of sexism. Ogadinma's reaction when Tobe's consignment of milk was seized by soldiers who demanded a huge amount of money to release it, seems like a lesson drawn from Olisakwe's life. When the narrator tells us that Ogadinma "felt no need to carry any emotional burden on [Tobe's] behalf" since he did not tell her about the business plan before investing his money (p.199), Olisakwe's words lurk within the mind: "I stopped twisting myself into shapes to please people... I stopped enduring bullshit, stopped smiling in the face of daily sexism. I have stopped being grateful and now demand appreciation, because love should not be one-sided" (Being a Woman 2020, p.17). Rather than worry herself when Tobe did not return home that night, Ogadinma "drank a sweating bottle of Maltina and picked her teeth with toothpick. Then she leaned back on her chair and thought of all those times she had served him large portions and ate very little" (p.199). Later, "she read *The Joys of Motherhood* again, without interruption, and the words did not smudge this time" (p.199). Olisakwe's love for Emechata and her novel is well documented. In her interview at *Literary Everything*, Olisakwe says: "Buchi Emechata's *The Joys* is one of the key novels that shaped my writing" (2022, p.2). In another occasion, she underscores the relationship between Ogadinma and Nnu Ego, the protagonist of *The Joys of Motherhood* (Breaking Free 2020, p.3). Also, in "Everything is Storytelling," Olisakwe notes: "I put *Ogadinma* in conversation with Buchi Emechata's *The Joys of Motherhood*; the novel and the legendary writer herself significantly influenced my writing and current thematic interests" (2022, p.24). But even before the publication of *Ogadinma*, Olisakwe proclaims: "*The Joys of Motherhood* remains my all-time favorite book" (I Love Writing 2015, p.4). So, when Ogadinma reads the novel in her moment of self-love, what emerges is the image of Olisakwe bequeathing her most cherished book to her character, with the hope that Ogadinma experiences the freedom of self-expression and the courage of self-assertion that Emechata offered her.

A discernable relationship exists in the economic circumstances of Ogadinma's and Olisakwe's spouses. In *Ogadinma*, Tobe begins to experience financial setback in the months following his marriage to Ogadinma. Olisakwe's husband has a similar story. In the essay, "Finding My Freedom," Olisakwe writes about the economic misfortune that attended the early years of her marriage: "Things had changed over the years. His business was struggling. His store had been broken into, his shipment of mobile phones stolen. It was a difficult time" (2019, p.24). When Tobe blames Ogadinma for his predicament by asking her: "Why have things been going wrong since we married?", it appears Olisakwe sheds light on her own life, an experience she wrote about in "Being a Woman":

I not only take on my husband's identity, I become responsible for his success or failure. And it is a hard burden to bear, a burden I had learned to carry when I was only twenty years old when an in-

law berated me for the state of my husband's car. He said, "Our son was driving this car when he married you, now look at the car he is driving!" (2017, p.33)

Olisakwe's struggle for financial independence is also reflected in Ogadinma's life. When Ogadinma's earnings as a hairstylist at Madam Vonne's saloon offer her financial satisfaction, the picture of young Olisakwe working as a banker to support her family comes to mind. When she earned her first salary and contributed to her family's needs, Olisakwe's life was transformed. She confesses: "I saw then that it was my financial independence that had lifted the sacks off my shoulders, unlocked the yoke around my neck and broke the shackles bounding my limbs" (Finding My Freedom 2019, p.33). In Ogadinma's case, financial freedom gives her the confidence to confront a man in an eatery for hushing a group of women. When the man, Karim, asks her: "How is this any of your business, please?", Ogadinma's replies: "It is my business when you feel you can intimidate women because you are what—a man" (p.254). Ogadinma's response evokes Olisakwe's proclamation in the article "Being a Woman": "I am deeply committed to changing my society... I am a feminist" (2017, p.21).

While Ogadinma and her mother are absent parents, which is not exactly the case for Olisakwe, Olisakwe's aunt provides a model for the characters. Writing about the social stigma that divorced women face in patriarchal societies, Olisakwe uses the case of an unnamed relative to buttress her point:

> When I was ten years old, my aunt packed her things and left her marriage. She did not take her children with her. She was tired of pretending to be happy in a comfortable union. Knowing how dangerously unkind society is to a divorced woman, she travelled far away [from] home. And for two decades, she remained isolated from society that spurns her brave kind. (Being a Woman 2020, p.36)

Like Olisakwe's aunt, Ogadinma and her mother are vilified by society for leaving their marriages and children. That they are considered selfish for placing their lives and happiness above marriage and motherhood suggests that only women who remain married despite the unhappiness the union brings to them are considered virtuous in patriarchal societies. This is the reason Ogadinma and her mother, like Olisakwe's aunt, severed their relationships with their families when they left their marriages. The experience of "[living] among women who pushed back against society's expectations of how a woman should perform womanhood," Olisakwe announces in "Breaking Free," helped her to create *Ogadinma*, the novel, and recreate Ogadinma, the character. (2020, p.3).

Ogadinma's struggle with postpartum depression is a direct reflection of Olisakwe's life. In an interview with Ope Adetayo, Olisakwe speaks about the trauma of birthing her first child, and how writing has helped her to disinherit the silence associated with the experience. Ogadinma's maternal alienation from her son also finds an example in Olisakwe's life. Olisakwe faced enormous pressure as a mother of two daughters expected to produce a son for her husband. When she finally had a male child, she "searched [her] heart for joy and relief but found nothing" (Finding My Freedom 2019, p.25). Moreover, like Olisakwe, much of the trauma Ogadinma faced in her marriage was caused by her relatives. In "Finding my Freedom," Olisakwe writes about an unnamed cousin whose words almost ruined her joy as a new bride:

> Later, after [my wedding] ceremony, she came into my room while I was undressing. She asked if I was sleeping with the man I had just married, and when I gasped and said no, she insisted, quietly, that I must begin to do so, because if I didn't get pregnant by the next Christmas the neighbors would mock me and call me barren. She said I must never, ever fail as a woman. (2019, p.3)

There is also a connection between Ogadinma's memory of her son and Olisakwe's physical distance from her children. Although Olisakwe explains, in her essay "Is It Still Beautiful?", that she "speaks with [her] children via WhatsApp video or voice calls every other day" (2020, p.4), she still suffers the emotional anxiety of her absence, as her other and more recent essay, "Art as an Escape," reveals: "I am living in Montpelier, while my family is in Aba, Nigeria. On most days, I am a bag of mess. I just cry and cry because I want to hold my children to my chest and smell their hair" (2020, p.27). For Ogadinma, the narrator tells us that "she could not keep the swirling thoughts from coming in, the images of her son swaddled up in his cot, him sucking her breasts, his eyes puffy and shut, his fingers bunched into dainty fists" (p.220).

Olisakwe almost did not hold back any part of herself from Ogadinma. She and Ogadinma share the same hometown, Abagana, and they both grew up in Kano (*Ogadinma*, 34 and 87). Ogadinma's father's experience of religious riot in Kano is also evocative of Olisakwe's account of her own father's near-death encounter in the same city:

> My father arrived Kano one cold morning in the 1970s... In December 1980, hope took a terrible blow when Yan Tatsine, a group led by the Islamic preacher Maitatsine, took to the streets in a blaze of violence... My father remembers shuddering in fear alongside other Christians in their neighborhood, Sabon Gari, as the bloodshed snuffed out 4,000 lives. (2014, p.3)

These similarities seem to make Ogadinma a compelling portrait of Olisakwe, a feminist writer courageously creating a future of independence and empowerment for African women and girls by subverting the patriarchal manifesto for marriage and motherhood.

Conclusion

In *Ogadinma*, Olisakwe confronts the marital institution as an agent of women's subjugation in patriarchal societies. In essence, Ogadinma rejects the oppressive uses to which marriage and motherhood are put by leaving her husband and child. Her experiences with men, despite their traumatic tensions, become for her a means of self-discovery. Ogadinma's ability to reclaim her body and mind from patriarchal oppression demonstrates the profundity of her shared feminist vision with Olisakwe. Even the title of the novel, which translates to, everything will be all right, makes it sufficiently clear that Ogadinma's life is a journey of self-reinvention.

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