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Staff



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Aaryan Morrison is a *Publication Editor* with the *Africa Policy Journal*. She is a junior at Harvard College pursuing a concentration in social studies. She is a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow. Her research interests include methods of post-colonial nation building and processes of reclamation and decolonization. She was on the coordinating team for the 2019 Africa Development Conference and interned for the United Nations Development Programme in South Africa. Aaryan is currently working with the Africatown Collaborative in Mobile, Alabama. The project is a multifaceted development plan for the community of Africatown, including researching the history of the Africans aboard the *Clotilda*, the last slave ship to come to the United States.



Victor Ojeah is a *Publication Editor* of the *Africa Policy Journal*. He graduated with high honors in law from the University of Benin, Nigeria, in 2016. Upon admission to the Nigerian Bar, he practiced as a corporate attorney in Nigeria's leading commercial law firm, where he advised on finance, security transactions, and regulatory compliance for three years. He is a former scholar of the African Center of International Criminal Justice and founder of International Law Resource Africa, a platform that provides access to international law information and scholarship for African law students. He volunteers online with the United Nations and routinely gives free legal advisory services on Lawbasket, a virtual legal service firm in Zimbabwe. Victor is passionate about economic development and installment of first-class policy infrastructure in Africa. At Harvard, he is pursuing an LLM degree with a focus on the intersection between public international law and international finance. Specifically, he is exploring possible legal interventions on the looming sovereign debt crises within the Sino-Africa economic spectrum.



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Department of Peace Operations for more than a year; there he assisted with the development of the department's strategy against hate speech and negotiations with member states on peacekeeping-related matters. In spring 2019, Yi spent three months in Rwanda, learning and researching about the post-genocide judicial system. He also has previous work and internship experiences in governmental branches in China, the United States, and Rwanda. Yi is interested in peace and security, nation building, humanitarian aid, and the China-Africa relationship.



Amaya Sizer is the *Social Media Editor* and is a junior at Harvard College concentrating in social studies, with an academic focus of transnational politics around women and poverty and

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Editors' Remarks

It is with great honor that we present to you the 15th edition of the *Africa Policy Journal* (APJ). This year's publication is being released in one of the most perilous and uncertain times that the world has experienced in over a century. The coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) has completely shifted policy discourse and the global economy as we know it. As we write these remarks, the Coronavirus Resource Center of Johns Hopkins University has reported that more than 129 million people have been infected by COVID-19 globally, and over 2.7 million people have died as a result.

On the African continent, over 4 million cases and nearly 107,000 mortalities have been reported according to the BBC Coronavirus in Africa Tracker. At first glance it seems Africa has been the least impacted by this novel virus. However, a closer look shows it is likely that COVID-19 infection rates are being underreported due to a lack of testing capacity. This can be seen clearly in comparing the numbers of confirmed cases in countries like South Africa (1.5 million reported cases), which has a better testing capacity, to countries like Benin (6,500 reported cases), where testing is more scarce, or Tanzania (509 reported cases), which has largely denied the existence of the virus.

In addition to the disparities in testing and reporting, Africa is also grappling with a lack of treatment options and facilities, a high proportion of mortalities among African leaders who have been infected, and lack of access to vaccinations. Harvard Professor Eugene T. Richardson, in his new book *Epidemic Illusions: On the Coloniality of Global Public Health*, would attribute these disparities to structural inequalities in global health and could be interpreted as an extension of colonialism. APJ had the distinct privilege of reviewing this book prior to its release in December 2020. You can find a link to the book review in the endnote below.¹

Beyond the health component of the coronavirus pandemic, the economic impact of COVID-19 is the greatest challenge facing Africa today. The economic impact is seen most prominently in the sectors of education, health, food security, and tourism. According to UNICEF, about 250 million students have been impacted by school closures in sub-Saharan Africa, adding to the 100 million out-of-school children before the pandemic. About 280 million children are suffering from one form of food crises or the other. The tourism market stands to lose up to \$120 billion across the continent, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). Inflation has skyrocketed, and the lockdown has brought many businesses to their knees, thereby increasing unemployment. How long it will take for the continent to achieve full economic recovery is still unknown.

While the challenges are real, it is not all bad news from the African continent. We have seen the spur of more innovation from Africa during COVID-19. As reported by the BBC, some students at a polytechnic in Dakar, Senegal, have invented a robot designed to lower the risk of COVID-19 contamination from patients to caregivers. In Kenya, a nine-year-old boy, Stephen Wamukota, invented a hands-free handwashing machine. In Nigeria, a 20-year-old engineering student, Usman Dalhatu, invented a portable automatic ventilator to help with lack of ventilators in hospitals. A shoemaker in Ghana, Richard Kwarteng, and his brother Jude Osei were inspired during the pandemic to design solar-powered handwashing basin. In Tunisia, some engineers created an online platform that scans lung X-rays to determine whether a person is suffering from coronavirus. These stories have shown us there has indeed been a silver lining to COVID-19 and that one person's innovation can have positive life-changing outcomes that go beyond the shores of Africa. It also illustrates that, with an enabling environment and the right policy prescriptions, Africans are more than capable of lifting themselves up and solving their own problems.

For us on the editorial board of APJ, it has also been a year that has required our own innovation and resilience in the face of everything happening in the world. For the first time in its history, the journal was managed remotely due to the decision by Harvard University to hold all classes online as a result of COVID-19. Despite this shift from the norm, we managed to not only maintain the momentum but to increase engagement with

the journal all around the globe. This year we received an unprecedented number of submissions and launched a stronger digital platform to share updates on current events and content that did not make it into the print edition. Together we have set precedent for what is possible to achieve with collaborators from across the African continent and the African diaspora and among policy experts from other nations.

We extend a heartfelt thanks to our fellow editors who helped to make this year's edition so special. The experience was challenging at times but rewarding beyond measure. We hope in the nearest future, we will meet physically to align real-life figures with the faces we have become accustomed to seeing via computer screen. Achieving this feat would not have been possible without the support we received from several fronts including our families, the Harvard Center for African Studies (CAS), Martha Foley and the Student Services Team, and all of the contributors who have made this year's edition as distinctive and as consequential as the year has been overall.

Again, it is our esteemed pleasure to present to you a diverse array of articles, commentaries, and creative works that we trust you will enjoy in this unique edition of the *Africa Policy Journal*.

Stay Safe. Stay Healthy. Stay Optimistic.

Danielle Callaway Njama

Editor-in-Chief

Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u

Managing Editor

¹ <https://apj.hkspublications.org/book-review-epidemic-illusions-on-the-coloniality-of-global-public-health/>

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Legacy

Asma Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u

Asma Muhammad Jameel Yusha'u is a poet, an aspiring writer, and a lover of history and the arts. She is currently a high school sophomore at Thamer International School, Jeddah, KSA. She previously attended Lydgate Infant School, Sheffield, UK; West Jesmond Primary School, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK; and Jeddah International School, KSA; and in her freshman year of high school, she was a proud member of the philosophy and literature department, the mental health and awareness group, school debate team, and the drama club, and she was a participant and attendee of the Harvard 2020 online model United Nations, Dubai. In addition to being trilingual in English, Arabic, and Hausa, she is currently working on her very own anthology.



I was once in a library
And before me was a book
Its title was quite scandalous
And it would be a lie to say I wasn't shook
'Africa a modern history' is what the title read
It made me sit and ponder
And question what was ahead

Before me was a theory
A quantum one at that
It was a story by Chinua Achebe
And how things started to fall apart

It started with a white man
Who ate and drank our bread
danced with the African horizon
and listened to our tales
in his vicinity was a world
orated to children at the coming of dawn
a fairy-tale land called heaven
though not every soul could reach its shores

so, the white man hurried to his homeland
to the people with skin as white as snow
to tell them about the heaven he had witnessed
and the majestic peoples whose ivory skin never ceased to shone

the people were adamant
jealousy and envy poured from their hearts
they craved all worldly possessions
and sought to sit themselves at the center of the world's heart

so, they let their emotions rule them
forgot about the blessings they had

voyaged on their wooden boats and
started to prosecute our lands
they beat us
and they killed us
took everything we had
stuffed their cloth-made pockets
and took hold of our lands
they stole children from cradles
barely out of birth
forced upon them shackles
and banished them off to foreign lands

the impact of their actions
unfortunately follows us 'til today
they've removed us from their history books
and reduced us to nothing more than slaves.
they claim they want to include us
elevate us from the positions we are in
they make themselves the heroines of every story
saving us from the issue
that they call being a Negro or
to plainly put it being black

I could write for a millennia
The sort of things they do
But then the world would run out of paper
And I'm sure they'd find a way to blame that on us too

The point that was meant to be made
That stretched passed a stanza or two
Is that we will continue the legacy that is Africa
And take back our gleaming jewels.

08.03.2021

Disaggregating the Gap

The Inequalities Hidden in Africa's Startup Funding Gap

Sarah Frandsen

Sarah Frandsen is a public policy student at Harvard University, an MBA student at Stanford University, and a former management consultant at McKinsey & Company. Her recent experience includes working with an East African startup, a West African government, and an impact investor focused on Sub-Saharan Africa.



Structural inequalities are hiding at the heart of Africa's well-known funding gap.

The World Economic Forum,¹ international development banks,² OECD,³ McKinsey,⁴ and local investors⁵ are just some of the actors that have warned of the gap between the need and financing available on the African continent. Yet, as I've worked with startups in the region and become immersed in the Silicon Valley impact investing community that funnels so much of the funding to African startups, I've realized that simply speaking of a startup funding gap in the aggregate masks stark inequalities along the lines of race/ethnicity, gender, and geography.

White and Western Privilege

Zola Electric, Zipline, and Branch International are all familiar names to those following the Africa startup scene. These are also all names of companies that don't have a single African nor a single black member on their founding team.

Most investors in Africa aren't based in Africa, and most founders receiving capital for African ventures aren't from the continent. In 2014–2019, 80 percent of Africa's venture capital (VC) investors were based outside of Africa.⁶ Of the 2019 top ten venture deals⁷ in Africa, fewer than half had African founders. In Kenya in 2017, less than one-third of startups had a local on the founding team, and only 6 percent were founded by an entirely local team.⁸

According to a recent Guardian interview⁹ with

Stephen Gugu, co-founder of ViKtoria Angel Business Network in Kenya, Western funders judge founders based on their ability to communicate according to Western norms—founders are expected to sell an aggressive vision full of opportunity, but not necessarily full of context. Many African founders are more-over disadvantaged from the beginning by not having access to the elite networks, institutions, and brand names that expatriates enjoy. As a White Westerner, currently studying at two of America's top schools, I can testify to the privilege being bestowed on people like me. On a weekly basis, I'm exposed to successful founders to learn from and investors to potentially fund my half-baked ideas.

That Western social entrepreneurs found companies with a significant African presence isn't necessarily problematic. But the relative underinvestment in African entrepreneurs is. It creates a system in which money is invested in expatriates, who in turn deliver returns that are extracted out of Africa and into the hands of Western investors.

Gender Inequality

One in four women in sub-Saharan Africa starts or manages a business.¹⁰ However, female entrepreneurs continue to face disproportional barriers to access finance, and thus to scale their businesses, including higher interest rates and legal/regulatory barriers. The African Development Bank¹¹ estimates that African women face a \$42 billion financing gap.

Beyond the intrinsic value of gender-equal access to capital, promoting female entrepreneurship also has positive spillover effects: a woman's income often generates more developmental value than a man's income—women reinvest up to 90 percent of their income in the education, health, and nutrition of their family and community,¹² compared with 40 percent for men.

The gender gap applies across sectors, including the rapidly emerging tech scene. Of the 2018 VC funding invested in Africa, merely 2 percent was invested in women-owned or women-led businesses.¹³ This gender gap is not unique to Africa—a North American study¹⁴ found that just 15 percent of startups receiving VC investment have a female executive member. Yet, this doesn't mean it should be accepted as a norm. With the entrepreneurship scene still developing, Africa has a chance to develop a financing infrastructure that is fundamentally more inclusive than its Western counterpart, thus unlocking the potential for more equitable African development.

Dominance of Tech Hubs

However, we should be careful when talking about “African development” or “African funding.” These terms mask immense intra-regional differences. WeeTracker¹⁵ estimates that African VC funding was \$1.3 billion in 2019; of that, \$1.28 billion (more than 98 percent) went to just five markets: Nigeria, Kenya, Egypt, South Africa, and Ghana.

This isn't necessarily all bad. A major reason for this variance is the rise of vibrant tech and entrepreneurship communities, like Nigeria's 55 tech hubs¹⁶ or Kenya's “Silicon Savannah.”¹⁷ Yet, developing the continent as a whole and ensuring that solutions are developed that meet the needs of diverse African populations will require that more than just five countries take part in the tech boom.

Where to Go from Here

There are key actions to be taken by policy makers, investors, and entrepreneurs:

Policy makers outside the tech hubs should create

favorable conditions for entrepreneurship through regulatory initiatives and public-private partnerships, e.g., as the Togolese government is attempting with the Djanta Tech Hub.¹⁸

Investors should scrutinize their deal sourcing and investment processes, assessing their role in exacerbating racial, nationality, and gender disparities in the African startup scene.

Entrepreneurs from outside the continent should consider making space for African entrepreneurs, either by partnering with them as co-founders or by joining an African-founded startup. Entrepreneurs from the continent should continue the work they're doing, knowing that it's transforming the future of Africa.

Providing capital to a more diverse pool of entrepreneurs isn't only just; it's a way to allocate capital to the best possible ideas that deliver both profitability and social change.

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Pyramid Schemes 2.0

African Policy Makers Should Be Wary of Internet-Based Pyramid Schemes

James Kuchio Asonga

James Kuchio Asonga is a strategic communications professional based in Nairobi, Kenya, with an interest in public affairs and policy advocacy. From 2016 to 2020, he has worked as a communications and knowledge management officer at the Business Advocacy Fund (BAF), a project that was funded by the Royal Danish Embassy in Kenya. BAF provided support to business memberships organizations, trade unions, and civil society organizations to engage the government of Kenya in policy dialogues towards policies that create an enabling environment for business. James holds a BA in communications from Daystar University, Kenya, and a professional PR diploma from the Chartered Institute of Public Relation, UK.



Internet usage in Africa has been growing steadily over the years. According to the website internet-worldstats.com, internet usage has increased by 11,567 percent from 2000 to 2020.¹ Complementary to this is increased access to mobile phones, which according to a November 2020 report by GSM Association, an industry organization that represents the interests of mobile network operators worldwide, was at 477 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 45 percent of the population.²

Social media platforms and messaging applications have become more commonly used on the continent. Internet access has presented openings for enterprises across sectors that offer new opportunities for creation, collaboration, and commerce. However, in the midst of this boon are opportunists seeking to make a killing by exploiting the naivety of new internet users with products that at a first glance may seem credible.

Offline pyramid schemes and network marketing initiatives have been on the continent for years. They have been in the spheres of health supplements, beauty care, and home care products. Recently, new multi-level marketing (MLM) organizations have emerged that present opportunities in emerging technologies such as cryptocurrencies, social media networks, and applications. These ventures often have an educational element that you can only access after you buy into

them. Examples of these organisations are Onelife/ Onecoin, Crowd1, and FutureNet.

These new schemes boost their credibility with extravagant marketing campaigns across online platforms, social media, and messaging apps. They co-opt the jargon of legitimate recent enterprises such as the “gig economy,” “cryptocurrency,” or “social networks.” These have been touted as opportunities for Africans to cash in on the global technology sphere. While these schemes are global, they have a more pernicious impact in sub-Saharan Africa, where per capita incomes are lower than in the West and parts of Asia. African policy makers need to develop or implement existing policies for consumer protection, develop policies on MLM and pyramid schemes, and begin to explore policies that address the online space.

Nigeria,³ South Africa,⁴ and Kenya,⁵ the three biggest economies in sub-Saharan Africa, have consumer protection policies in place. These policies outline consumer rights and list unfair practices that they seek to protect consumers in their respective territories from. Unfortunately, these may not be fully realized even for businesses that operate in the country. With the internet, it is easy to get drawn into ventures that seem appealing at a first glance. Most of these schemes, because of their nature, circumvent formal business registration requirements that would make

them answerable to the legal jurisdictions beyond where they are domiciled. One such scheme has gained traction in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria by encouraging people that seek to join its network to do so through its mobile phone application, via a link shared by a participant. The joining fees are made online as well. An investigative report on it by BBC News Africa in November 2020, covered on radio and published on its YouTube channel, did not seem to slow down the schemes activities.⁶ If existing policies on consumer protection could be implemented and consumers made more aware of their existence, this could halt or slow the growth of online-based pyramid schemes.

While there are no African countries that have created explicit policies on MLMs, some countries have definitive policies and laws on them. In China,⁷ Bangladesh,⁸ and Saudi Arabia,⁹ network marketing is an illegal business model. Meanwhile, Singapore has the Multi-Level Marketing and Pyramid Selling (Prohibition) Act with allowance for exemption of some businesses under very specific parameters.¹⁰ In America, MLMs are legal but with an acknowledgment that some may be pyramid schemes in disguise. According to America's Federal Trade Commission, the distinguishing difference between MLMs and pyramid schemes is whether the commissions paid to all participants are derived from the sales of products or the recruitment of new participants.¹¹ If commissions are derived from signing up new participants, then it is a pyramid scheme. Beyond wider consumer protection policies, African countries need explicit policies on MLMs and pyramid schemes that will deter their citizens' participation and highlight the liability of running such schemes.

New business models and trends occasioned by new technologies have policy makers playing catch up. The past decade has seen social media platforms proliferate, new business models such as the gig economy have emerged, and cryptocurrencies have arisen as new mediums of exchange. While policy makers seek to understand and contextualize these changes, opportunists are devising schemes to take advantage of the existing policy gaps. From promises of being the early investors in technology companies to new alternative cryptocurrencies, the opportunities presented

are numerous. The combination of the promise of future gains, the fear of missing out, and a lax policy environment presents a recipe for disaster. Examples of these pyramid schemes include Onelife/Onecoin, which was helmed by Dr. Ruja Ignatova. The fake cryptocurrency, which has been dubbed one of the biggest scams in history, duped people from across the world, including over 1,000 victims in Uganda.¹² The Bank of Uganda issued a warning on the use of cryptocurrencies in 2017; it further stated that those that did so were venturing into a space where there was neither investor protection nor regulatory purview.¹³ In lieu of policies for emerging sectors, a more proactive effort by policy makers in observing emerging trends could prevent their citizen from being taken advantage of.

MLMs have been a controversial business model. While some traditional MLMs such as Oriflame, Herbalife, and GNLD have been around for years, there have been numerous MLMs that have had a fervent ascent only to disappear shortly with losses incurred by participants.

Internet-based pyramid schemes have gained traction on the continent with increasing access to technology. Developing and implementing policies for consumer protection, in respect of MLMs and pyramid schemes, and on online products and services could reduce the risks associated with these fraudulent but well-marketed foreign scams aimed at Africans.

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The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

Maximizing Benefits for the Continent

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Abstract

The African continental free trade area (AfCFTA) presents a unique opportunity for trade creation on the continent and possible trade diversion into the continent. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in countries around the world embracing protectionism and “vaccine nationalism.” The impact lingers as vaccine shots in the arm create an opportunity for a shot to the economy although vaccine administration rates differ across the world and Africa still lags the rest of the world. Significant export restrictions arose globally

from the shortage of medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) during the pandemic.

With a potential economic recovery on the horizon in the West, Africa's huge population continues to suffer the economic and health consequences of the global shutdown. Increased debt defaults signal economic trouble ahead, and urgent measures are thus needed to overcome these challenges. Improving the trade deficit to prevent a sudden stop of current account flows is a necessary first step. To achieve this, lowering import barriers for pandemic-related products would have the advantage of providing larger market sizes

for exporters while guaranteeing consumer sufficiency and cheaper alternatives for importers.

The continent-wide Free Trade Agreement provides a potential end in sight. However, for the AfCFTA to achieve its intended impact, the hard and soft infrastructure across the continent must be developed, trade with existing trade partners deepened, protectionism through exclusivity and sensitivity avoided, general rules of origin rather than product-specific measures followed, and currency implications on trade taken into consideration. African countries should also have in sight the potential for a Customs Union arrangement to further the benefits of the free trade area and relax the constraints of complex rules of origin.

The rise of e-commerce, digitalization of payments, and increased service trade on the continent necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic will also require adjustments to regulation to enable investment facilitation across various countries while promoting a pan-African approach. Other far-reaching considerations including regulatory arbitrage, Intellectual property rights, and the role of regional economic communities (RECs) must all be carefully integrated in the implementation process. Labor mobility and impact of tariff liberalization measures on individual country tariffs and revenues will also need to be considered to ensure fiscal equity and enable the full benefits of the free trade area are maximized.

Introduction

In January 2021, 36 state parties (signed, ratified, and submitted instruments of ratification to the African Union [AU]) of the AU's 55 member states operationalized the AfCFTA, following the 5 December 2020 Virtual Summit, whereby African leaders approved trading to start. This will be the world's largest free trade area since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995. The AfCFTA is a significant step toward economic integration by Africa to include 55 countries in a single market of 1.2 billion people with a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion. This vision stems from several generations of African leaders who sought an integrated continent with free movement

of people, goods, capital, services, and infrastructure connections.

The AfCFTA is one of the flagship projects of the AU's Agenda 2063, a key program and initiative that has been identified to accelerate Africa's growth and development, aimed at boosting intra-African trade and the continent's trading position in the global marketplace. The agreement to establish the AfCFTA was signed by 44 AU member states in March 2018 during the 10th extraordinary session of the AU Summit held in Kigali, Rwanda. An extra five member states signed the agreement during the 31st ordinary session of the AU Summit in July 2018, which took place in Nouakchott, Mauritania. The agreement was entered into force on 30 May 2019, and the AfCFTA Secretariat was officially opened in Accra Ghana on 17 August 2020, led by its Secretary-General, Wamkele Mene from South Africa who was duly elected by member states.

If successful, the AfCFTA will provide significant benefits to the continent, and individual countries are being called to make significant sacrifices for collective interest. But tariff liberalization alone is not sufficient in providing genuine market access. Non-tariff barriers often intended to influence competition in export and import markets using measures such as outright border closures, import quotas, sanitary requirements, subsidies, foreign exchange restrictions, and import license requirements are also significant pullbacks to trade. Such measures could, however, have public policy aims, such as protecting health, safety, and the environment. Governments around the world have selectively applied a combination of these non-tariff measures to achieve a number of policy objectives.

Turning Potential Challenges into Opportunities

The world's largest bilateral flows of merchandise trade run between China and the United States and between their respective neighboring economies. In 2019, goods worth US\$472 billion were imported by the United States from China. Goods worth US\$132 billion also travelled in the opposite direction.¹

As seen in *Figure 1* below, Africa does not appear at all on major global trade flows above \$125 billion either

out of or into the continent. The belief is that with the AfCFTA, Africa will build up significant local capacity and economies of scale and scope to increase exports in intra- and extra-African trade.

In this piece, we will examine the opportunities to translate existing challenges into opportunities for building climate-resilient, sustainable systems that meet 21st-century standards and are financed in the most cost-effective way. The pandemic has also affected the continent, as many country growth models are dependent on commodity prices, tourism, and remittances. These have all been impacted negatively by the pandemic, and therefore, trade is looked upon as a means to self-sustenance for cheaper products and a foreign exchange source for others.

Our approach in this paper thus covers the following key areas: eliminating physical barriers, harmonizing rules of origin, lessons from the EU free trade area, and currency and monetary considerations, and unintended consequences.

A. Eliminating Physical Barriers

Markets are integrated when price arbitrage (buying low and selling high in different geographical locations) is eliminated and trade costs are low. For arbitrage to be eliminated, transaction costs have to be minimized. Trading costs for many physical goods are high due to geographical distance, and these costs are minimized when these distances are bridged through efficient and affordable transport costs.

Isaac Newton's theory of gravitation can be applied to the gravity model of international trade, by examining the factors that influence the volume of international trade between two countries or regions as follows:

$$F_{ij} = G \frac{M_i M_j}{D_{ij}^2}$$

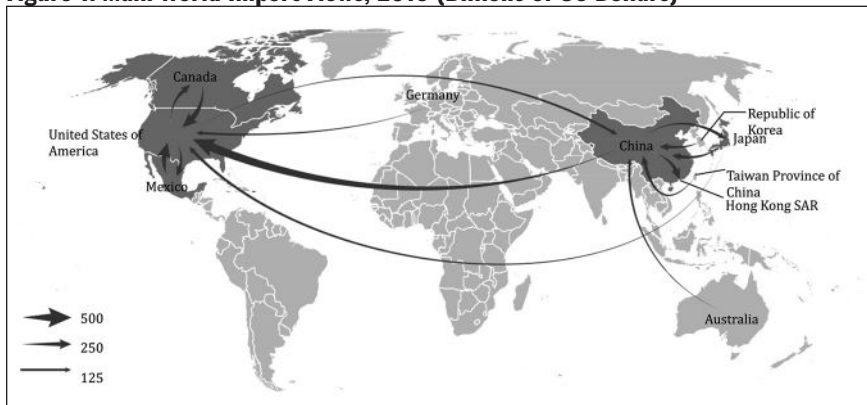
where F is the bilateral trade flow between any two countries i and j , M is the economic mass of each country, D is the physical distance between countries i and j , and G is a constant (which may be expanded to include other forces affecting trade flows, such as language, trade policies, colonial history between the two countries, etc.)

The law shows that physical distance is a critical factor in determining the volume of bilateral trade flow between countries and needs to be bridged to increase the volume of trade. This condition can be extrapolated to reflect the sum total of trade between several countries. In Africa, our economies are not perfectly integrated due to diseconomies of scale caused by poor hard infrastructure and inefficient soft infrastructure. We examine these in detail below.

Hard Infrastructure

Hard infrastructure such as roads, ports, railways, and corridors play an extremely important role for African integration. The African Development Bank in its 2018 African Economic Outlook identified Africa as the least urbanized region in the world. It reports Africa's road density of 3.4 km per 1,000 inhabitants as less than half the global average, and its paved road

Figure 1. Main World Import Flows, 2019 (Billions of US Dollars)



Source: UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2020²

density of 0.7 km per 1,000 inhabitants is just one-fifth the global average. This combination of low urbanization and poor connectivity means that a large chunk of Africa's population does not have access to national and global markets. Providing market access for rural populations is a first-order priority for Africa to raise productivity. *Figure 2* identifies the relationship between hard infrastructure and trade volume.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, African countries in particular have experienced significant dip in GDP growth expectations. Existing infrastructure financing gaps have become exacerbated, and significant investment in infrastructure is needed to overcome the investment deficit estimated at over \$60 billion.⁴ The AU has recently launched an infrastructure investment fund for the continent to advance the goals of bridging the financing gap, which is important in reducing trading costs. This fund will help build roads, railways, and power plants, and the sources of financing for this fund are planned to be largely domestic institutional savings through sovereign wealth funds, insurance companies, and pension funds in view of long-standing donor fatigue. According to Renaissance Capital data (*Figure 3*), oil, minerals, and fuels account on average for at least 40 percent of African country exports over the last seven years. High-value

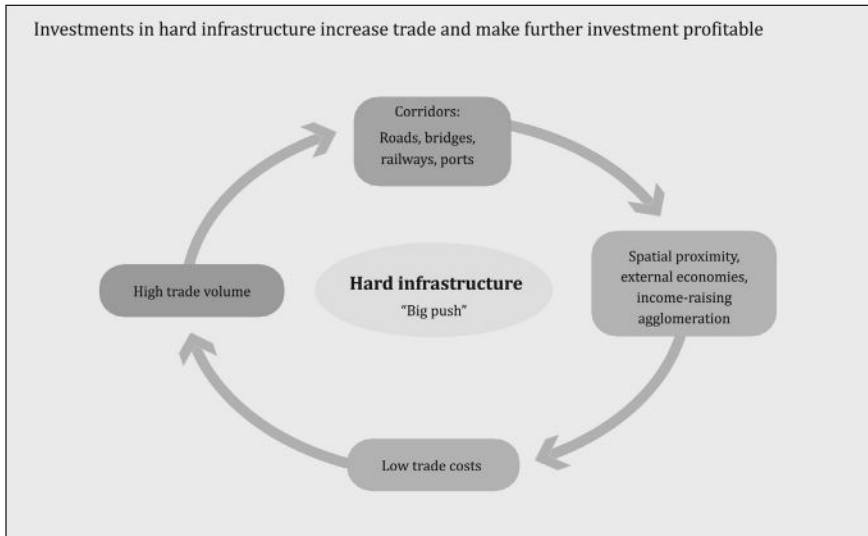
manufacturing and exports of vehicles and electrical machinery represent less than 7 percent of African exports on average over this period. This very low contribution is attributable largely to the lack of reliable cheap electricity, as the demand for these products exist in African markets as seen in imports from other markets. This shows that opportunity still exists for Africa to take advantage of low-cost manufacturing to increase trade within and outside its borders with the advantage of a young population and the opportunity to build sustainable infrastructure.

Soft Infrastructure

Good logistics are necessary to operate the close-to-seamless transport corridors necessary for successful regional integration (see *Figure 4*). Efficient services, including trucking services, freight forwarding, handling, and smooth terminal operation, are all necessary. Logistics markets operate more efficiently when freight forwarding and handling services and terminal operations are opened up to competition regionally and goods are submitted and cleared through customs expeditiously. Trade costs due to poorly functioning logistics markets may be a greater barrier to trade than tariffs and non-tariff barriers.

Lack of well-functioning corridors impedes the development of regional value chains, where goods

Figure 2. Impact of Hard Infrastructure on Trade



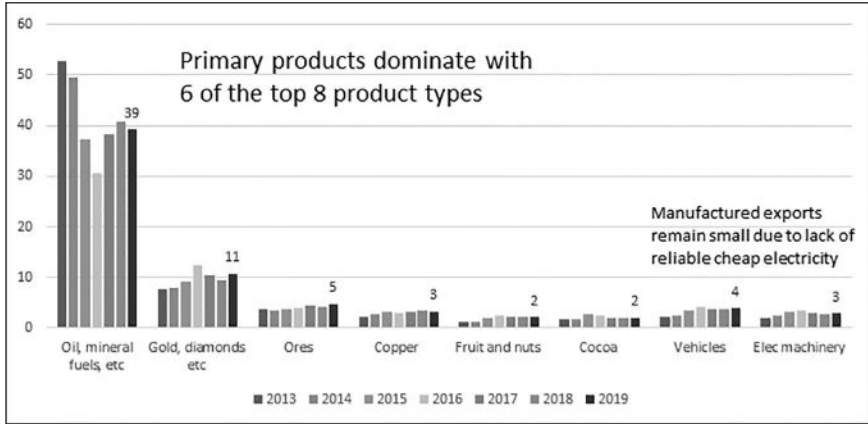
Source: African Development Bank³

can cross borders several times during production. Trade facilitation across Africa can lead to the development of peripheral areas. Low costs for air transport are also important for the supply chains of time-sensitive products.

Rapid development of the African aviation sector

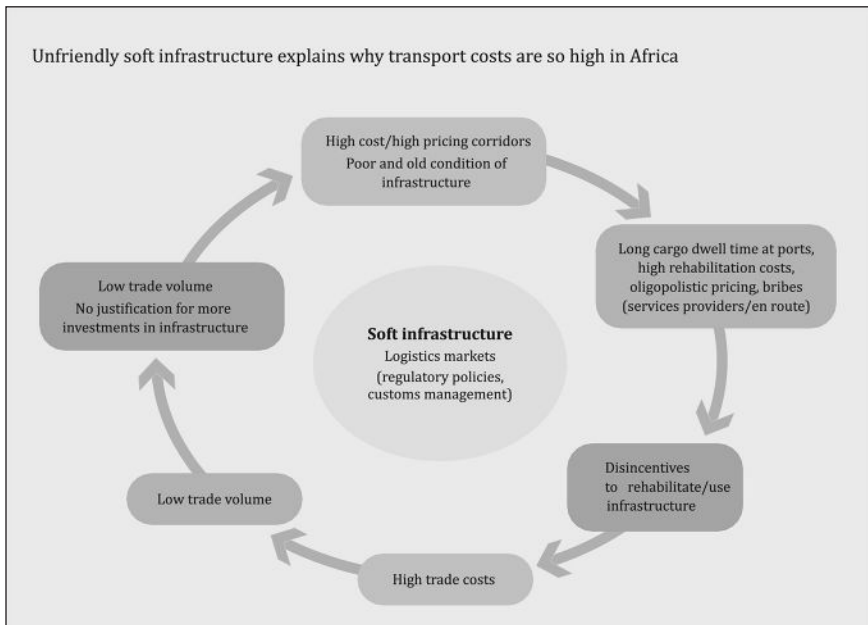
would have positive impact on employment, tourism, regional integration, trade, investment, and productivity. African transport volumes are much lower compared to other continents due to lack of connectivity and high-ticket prices, which dampen passenger demand (see Figure 5) (Africa has a flight ticket per

Figure 3. Africa's Largest Exports (Share of Total Exports 2013–2019)



Source: Renaissance Capital Research (2020)

Figure 4. Benefits of Developed Soft Infrastructure to Facilitating Trade



Source: African Development Bank³

capita of 1.1 annually compared to 5.4 in Latin America and 33 in North America). Also, Africa's underdeveloped ground infrastructure reduces traffic-handling capacity, while airport charges remain high. Other factors that impede growth are safety problems due to poor regulatory oversight, skill shortages, and reliance on overseas technological expertise for maintenance.

According to the 2018 Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) Report, aircraft manufacturer Boeing, for example, explained that a more prosperous Africa will be a region in which air travel rates rise and demand for new aircraft soars: Air traffic for the continent's airplane carriers is forecast to grow at approximately 6 percent annually between 2015 and 2034, outpacing the global average of 4.9 percent. Boeing forecasts that African carriers will need 1,170 new airplanes, valued at approximately \$160 billion at list price over the next 20 years.

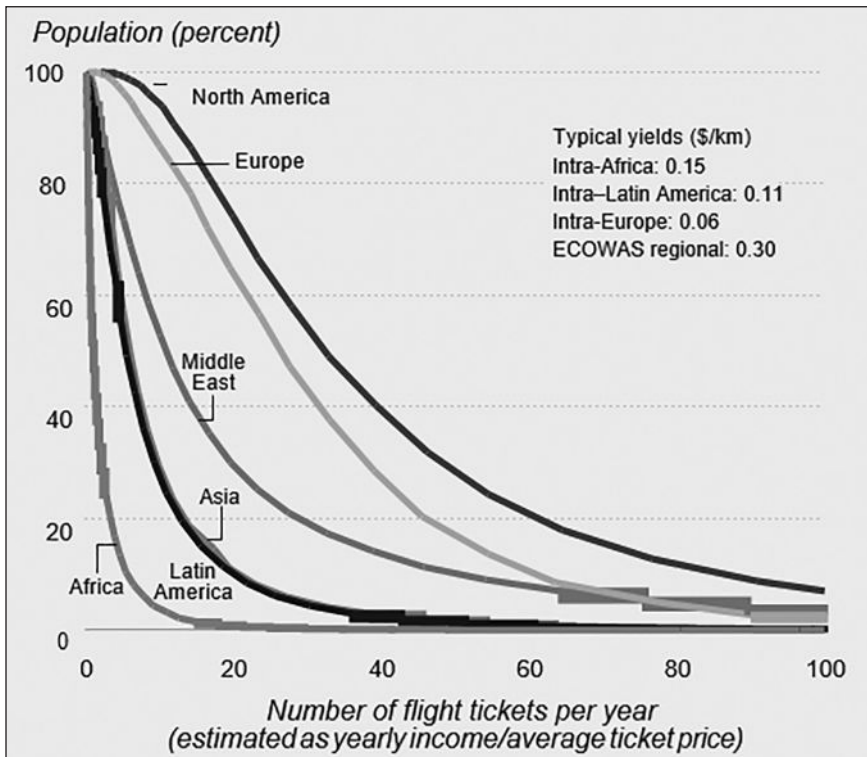
The report also identified the US express delivery

firm United Parcel Service (UPS) as having testified to the rapidly rising demand for just-in-time delivery of both industry and consumer goods across the continent:

We are seeing tremendous opportunity across the continent with its large and young population, improving physical infrastructure, and emerging middle class. With the growth of the middle class comes a greater need for information technology, an automotive sector, machinery and parts, consumer electronics, and new sources of energy. All of these segments are important customer verticals for UPS. We go where our customers tell us they need us to go, and an increasing number are seeing opportunity in Africa.

To buttress the growth opportunity the continent offers, according to data from UNCTAD (see Figure

Figure 5. Flight Ticket Availability (Africa vs Rest of the World)



Source: African Development Bank⁶

6) three-quarters of Africa's merchandise exports are primary goods. In Africa, imports of manufactured goods were at least three times higher than exports. However, the continent experienced surpluses in ores, metals, precious stones, gold, and fuels, with an export deficit of 17 percent. The AfCFTA offers a unique opportunity to grow intra-African trade.

B. Harmonizing Rules of Origin

The convention in international trade is that the first country of unloading, for exports, or the last country of loading, for imports, is considered the trading partner. The criteria for the determination of the country of origin for raw materials and packaged items have now been clearly spelt out for individual countries but have to be agreed upon continent-wide amongst state parties. Under the agreement establishing the AfCFTA, members must phase out 90 percent of tariff lines over the next 5-10 years. Another 7 percent considered sensitive will get more time, while 3 percent will be allowed to be placed on an exclusion list.⁸

Because duties and import restrictions may depend on the origin of imports, criteria are needed to determine the country of origin of a product. These are referred to as rules of origin, and they are an integral part of all trade agreements. Preferential rules of origin are used to enforce preferential schemes by establishing which products can benefit from preferential access. The negotiations on rules of origin for the AfCFTA may be dominated by strong industry lobbying.

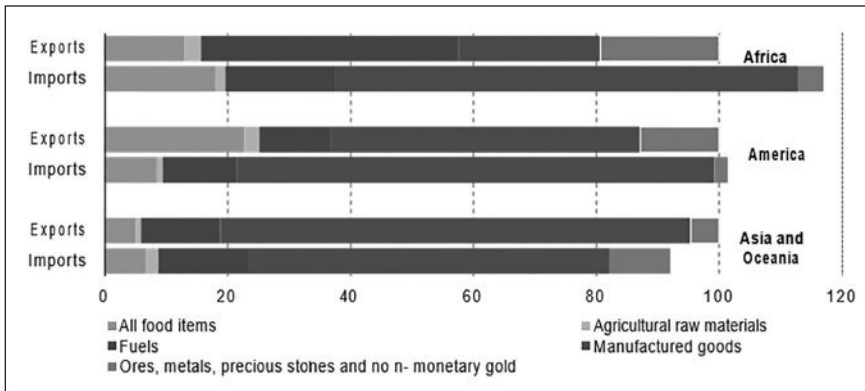
The AfCFTA phase 1 negotiations include tariff concessions, rules of origin, and service sector commitments, and these are currently being firmed up at individual country levels. Phase 2 negotiations address investment, intellectual property rights, and competition policy and should commence before the end of the year 2021.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that full liberalization of trade in goods (manufacturing and agriculture), backed by rules of origin compatible with African productive capacity, could have raised the share of intra-African trade in total African trade from about to 15,5 percent by 2022. This share could be further increased up to 22 percent with the improvement of trade-facilitation measures, especially transportation linkages and customs clearance for intra-African trade.

In a 2003 study, Wacziarg and Horn suggest that over the 1950-1998 period, countries with liberalized trade regimes experienced average annual growth rates about 1,5 percentage points higher than before liberalization. Investment rates also rose 1,5-2,0 percentage points post-liberalization, confirming that liberalization fosters growth in part through its effect on physical capital accumulation. Liberalization also raised the average trade-to-GDP ratio by roughly 5 percentage points. This shows the potential for inclusive growth from greater economic openness.

The WTO estimates that eliminating bureaucratic delays and red tape through improved trade facilitation (simplification, modernization, and harmoniza-

Figure 6. Exports to Africa from the Rest of the World



Source: UNCTAD⁷

tion) would reduce trade costs by an average of 14.3 percent and boost global trade up to \$1 trillion with the greatest gains in the poorest countries.⁹

C. Lessons from the European Union Free Trade Area

The AfCFTA is modelled by the AU after the European Economic Area (EEA). The European example provides for member states in the free trade area to operate as either a customs union or a single market.

A customs union requires common external tariffs (CETs) with accompanying rules of origin to prevent countries in the union from operating zero tariffs with countries outside the union. The customs union also precludes members from negotiating bilateral trade agreements. Hence, Turkey, Andorra, and the Isle of Man are members of the customs union but not the single market.

The AfCFTA seeks to achieve a single-market model rather than a customs union, hence the need for product-specific rules of origin and regulations on standards that would prevent sub-standard and cheaper products dominating a member state's markets.

It was thus not shocking to see Kenya, which is a signatory to the AfCFTA and the first country on the continent to ratify the agreement, attempt to negotiate a bilateral trade agreement with the United States in 2020.¹⁰

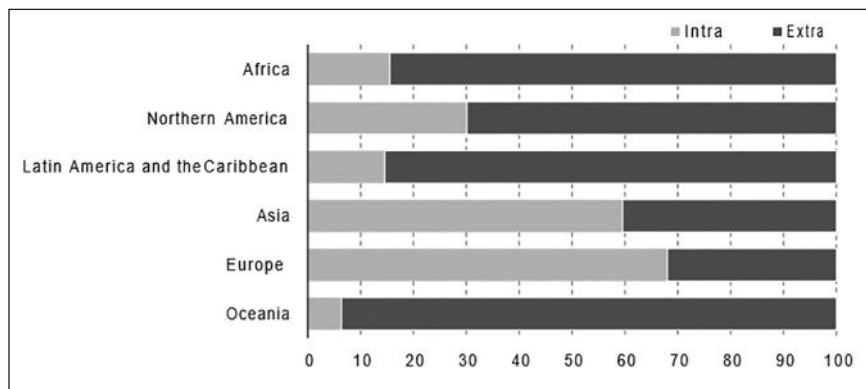
The single market is an internal market allowing the free movement of goods, services, financial capi-

tal, and human capital. The European model of a single market focuses on providing uniform regulation within the single market to ensure standardization of products and services across the region. This will prevent a rush to the poorest quality with a view to using a low-cost strategy in dominating the market. The AU must thus ensure standardization of product quality across the continent and also enable the pan-African passport to ensure free movement of people across the region for the provision of non-tradable goods like baking, catering, etc.

The success of European economic integration is seen in Figure 7, which shows intra- and extra-regional exports in 2019 across various continents. From the graph, it is seen that intra-regional trade is dominant in Europe, with 68 percent of all European exports to trading partners on the same continent. As of 2019, intra-regional trade in Africa was about 16 percent, while in Asia intra-regional trade was 60 percent. By contrast, trade in Oceania, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Northern America was mostly extra-regional.

According to data from UNCTAD, in 2019 (Figure 8) many developing economies shipped a significant portion of their exports to the United States (US\$1.4 trillion) and then China (US\$1.1 trillion) and other Asian economies. They also sourced most of their imports from those economies. African countries had China (US\$59.6 billion) and India (US\$38.0 billion) as major export destinations.

Figure 7. Intra- and Extra-regional Exports, 2019 (as a Percentage of Total Exports)



Source: UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2020¹¹

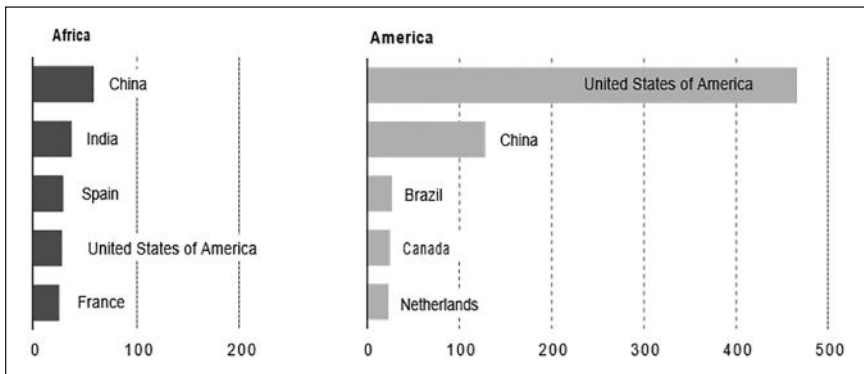
D. Currency and Monetary Considerations

Currency trades in the AfCFTA will likely be denominated in US dollars. The use of the globally dominant trade currency would ease administration and transaction processing and limit traders' return volatility due to currency conversion and uncovered domestic currency interest rate differentials. However, it could also limit the ability of individual countries to respond to

of currency unions increasing trade by between 30% and 90%.”

Therefore, the effects of a monetary union on trade vary. For some countries the impact is small, and for others it is big. However, according to Professor Rivera-Batiz, by joining a currency union, a country gives up two policy options: exchange rate adjustments and an independent monetary policy.

Figure 8. Developing Economies' in Africa and the Americas Main Export Destinations, 2019



Source: UNCTAD Handbook of Statistics 2020²²

individual trade factor fluctuations.

Policy Options for Currency in a Free Trade Area

a. Develop a Monetary Union

This will have the benefits of:

- Reduced transaction costs
- Eased set off and minimized Herstatt risk
- Reduced uncertainty of multiple rate regimes
- Potential for accelerated economic growth through increased trade

Andrew Rose in *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* in 2008 concluded that “there is evidence that currency unions have been associated with increased trade in goods, though its size is much disputed.”

Using data on pre-European Monetary Union (EMU) currency unions (such as the CFA franc zone), Rose (2020) first estimated the effect of currency union on trade and found . . . a tripling of trade.”

“More recent research suggests smaller estimates

b. Retain Existing Currencies and Use a Common Denominated Currency (e.g., USD or EURO) for external trades

This involves the use of a third-party currency for all trade invoicing within the trade union. Despite the wide use of the CFA francs amongst francophone countries and the peg to the South African rand amongst Southern African countries, the US dollar may perhaps remain the preferred choice for trade on the continent as a result of its ubiquitous use as a trade and reserve currency (Figure 9 shows global use of the US dollar for trade invoicing). Using this approach, individual countries lose their ability to adopt currency weakening as a trade tool, and this is further enhanced by the short-term stickiness of the trade balance to currency depreciation and hence slow reaction to external monetary policy. Because trade will be largely invoiced in dollars, the country's export volumes tend to respond little to exchange rates in the short run. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) analyzed the impact of fluctuating exchange rates on the trade bal-

ance, concluding that exchange rates have near-muted effects on the trade balance in the short term.¹³

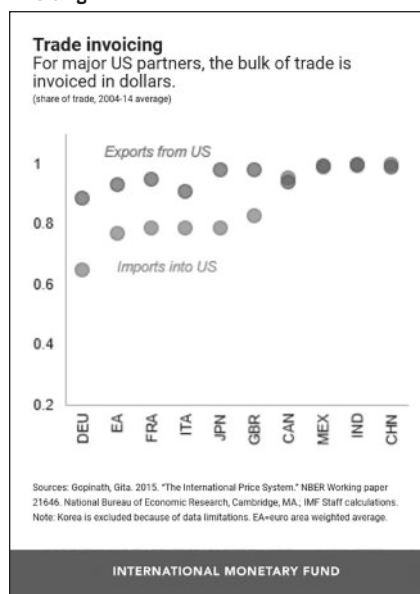
c. Consider Open, Nationally Centralized, Cross-Country Digital Currencies

As an additional option, the Monetary Policy authorities of African countries should consider the use of distributed ledger technologies (DLTs) in central bank digital currencies with built-in inter-operability to enable real-time cross-border foreign exchange payment systems, allowing simultaneous transactions in multiple jurisdictions and operating 24/7. This will further enable additional cross-border use cases for fund transfers, international trade settlement, and capital market transactions.

E. Other Unintended Consequences

The African Development Bank (AfDB) in its African Economic Report reports the analysis by the African Export-Import Bank on four different policy scenarios for implementing AfCFTA using the Global Trade Analysis Project (GTAP) model.

Figure 9. Predominance of US Dollars for Trade Invoicing



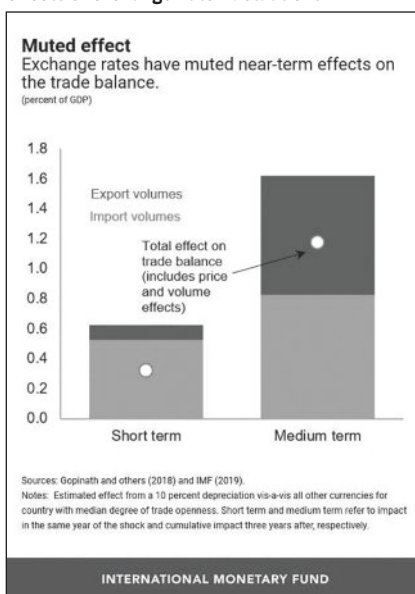
A 10 percent depreciation (vis-à-vis all currencies) improves a country's trade balance by about 0.3 percent of GDP in the near term, on average, with most of the effects coming through a contraction of imports.

The study has evidence on the policy scenario that eliminates tariff on all trade and reduces non-tariff barriers as the most beneficial form of AfCFTA arrangement for Africa in terms of macroeconomic and welfare benefits.

Although there is a net gain from the continental free trade agreement of Africa, African countries will not equally benefit. This will result from differences in GDP, patterns of growth, and efficiency in investment. See Figure 11 for projected tariff income losses in specific countries.¹⁵

Although tariff removals will lead to lower product prices for consumers, it may have negative effects on countries' earnings from tax. Tax revenues currently account for about 17.2 percent of GDP in African countries.¹⁶ Increased trade volumes may create other opportunities for value-added taxes within African countries, which may thus compensate for customs revenue losses due to the AfCFTA.

Figure 10 shows the short- and medium-term effects of exchange-rate fluctuations.



A 10 percent currency depreciation leads, on average, to a 1.2 percent of GDP improvement in the trade balance over a span of three years.

Source : International Monetary Fund¹⁴

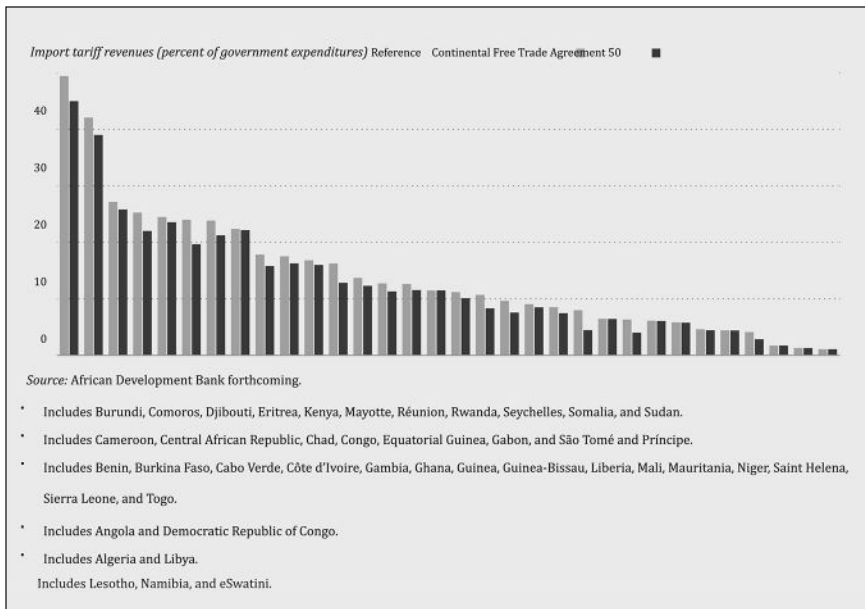
Recommendations

- To achieve the objectives of the AfCFTA, the AU must ensure that decisions will support local production and protect industries. The objectives of the various regional economic commissions (RECs) would have to be aligned to a common continental objective to navigate the existing complexities they pose. This will be most visible in the establishment of rules of origin and the exemption list of products for each individual country. Local political interests, monopoly policies, and economic interests may all pose severe limitations to achieving a common goal for the continent.
- The COVID-19 pandemic poses an economic dilemma for the continent. Although significant volumes of vaccines are expected on the continent through the COVAX facility, a group of countries including South Africa have tried to lobby the WTO to suspend trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS) relating to copyright, industrial designs, patents, and

trade secrets to enable local manufacturing and supply. This is with the aim of meeting the global health needs to enable economic recovery and growth. This request, which was rejected by the more developed economies, could be extremely difficult to implement in view of the significant investments in vaccine research and development, combination of price and volume guarantees for the development of vaccines resulting in vested economic interests, and absence of which is claimed would limit the incentive to invest. Although India's Serum Institute has obtained the rights to manufacture the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines for global distribution, countries with manufacturing capacity should seek concessions and patent freedom to operate through licenses at mutually agreed and favorable economic costs reasonable to compensate licensor and encourage continued research and development while meeting the continent's health needs.

- African governments must not overly worry

Figure 11. Projected Tariff Revenues before and after Eliminating Bilateral Tariffs on Intra-African Trade



Source: African Development Bank¹⁷

about the political implications of conceding national sovereignty to supranational authorities as this is not what the AfCFTA seeks to achieve. Policy makers must instead seek harmonized regulatory policies, build trust, and aim to check the political pressure to non-tariff barriers.

- The effort by the AU to launch an infrastructure fund propelled by sovereign wealth funds, insurance firms, and other long-duration asset providers on the continent is a positive development to bridge the gap necessitated by geographical terrain and lack of investment in prior years. The AfDB has also launched the Africa Investment Forum (AIF), which is positioned as a deal-making event for infrastructure finance deals on the continent. Infrastructure financing must be a continuous process and will ensure the soft infrastructure (logistics) is enhanced to unlock the gains from investments in hard infrastructure (roads, rails, bridges, ports).
- The AU has to implement a system for redistribution of gains from surplus to deficit countries. For example, allowing the transfer and free movement of people and services would allow remittances from manufacturing and export hubs to other countries that may have trade deficits. Also, digitalization, if well enabled, would bring about greater integration of financial services and service sector on the continent.
- Countries should pay attention to the needs of citizens for product security and low-cost products rather than an obsessive focus on self-sufficiency and attendant denial of choices or imposition of high manufacturing costs. This is important as countries seek to protect particular industries.
- The WTO trade facilitation agreement needs to be implemented with exemptions for developing countries fully taken into consideration to enable a reduction in transaction and trading costs.
- The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) suggests that African coun-

tries pool power to tap the enormous potential of cross-border trade in electricity. The Nord Power Pool in Northern Europe shows that, starting with a small number of countries, using external financing to increase capacity, combining generation with transmission, and having enough transmission capacity to stabilize supply and promote competition can have multiplier effects on electricity generation for industrial purposes.¹⁸

- African borders need to be fully opened, encouraging the free movements of people. The instrument for this is the ratification and implementation of the African Union Passport, which was launched in 2016 and is expected to be fully rolled out by 2020. Nigeria has set pace for this by allowing all Africans to travel through its borders whilst obtaining visas on arrival valid for 30 days for businesspersons and short-term visitors.¹⁹
- UNECA also recommends that competition regimes across the continent be fully harmonized. This will help coordinate efforts of RECs such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the East African Community (EAC) toward generalized standards and quality frameworks for the continent's people.
- Public financial management frameworks across the continent have to be standardized to ensure that no country pursues a free-rider approach to policy making at the expense of other countries. Also, micro- and macroprudential policies should be streamlined across the continent, and anti-money laundering, know your customer (KYC), and recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) should be enforced across the continent by monetary authorities.
- African skies should be fully opened to competition, and thus the AU's Single African Air Transport Market launched in January 2019 should be fully implemented to reduce passenger and cargo air transport costs and open new routes across the continent.

Conclusion

The political economy resulting from heterogeneity along economic, cultural, and institutional dimensions will have an impact on the level of integration resulting from the AfCFTA.

The European Economic Area has adopted elements of a customs union whilst allowing some countries within a single market outside the customs union. African countries will be undergoing significant negotiations in the coming months that may not be final but will require common ground, sacrifices, commitment, and room for upgrades in light of events. The regional economic blocs will also have to be carried along in these negotiations as their relevance may become disadvantaged in the long run.

An effective preferential trade agreement will increase trade among members by reducing tariffs between members, eliminating most non-tariff barriers, and promoting trade facilitation. Of these three, the trade facilitation component is the most difficult to accomplish, particularly if the level of integration is shallow.

At a deeper level, integration requires cooperation between governments and people: to foster peace and security, conserve shared natural resources, develop and manage regional infrastructure, and share systems of rules and policy regimes. Integration thus provides regional public goods. These forms of cooperation call for collective action, which requires trust and some supranational delegation of authority.

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Demonetization in a Pandemic?

The Economic Liberalism of Abiy Ahmed

Wyatt Constantine

Wyatt Constantine was born in Austin, Texas, and received a bachelor's in international studies, with a minor in German language at Texas State University-San Marcos. Between 2015 and late 2016, I was a Peace Corps volunteer in Bench Maji, SNNPR zone, Ethiopia. I received my master's in African studies from the University of Leipzig in 2020, with a thesis focusing on the political economy of Ethiopia, with field work carried out in Dire Dawa. I am currently a PhD candidate and research coordinator at the University of Leipzig, working on the ACCESS project, which is investigating African tertiary education and African graduate unemployment. My current research is focused on informal economies and labor in the horn of Africa, with a focus on Hargeisa, Somaliland.



The new Ethiopian administration under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has pursued a vast array of economic reforms since coming into power in 2018. This has included liberalizing vast sectors of the economy, privatization, and recently, the demonetization of the Ethiopian birr. With Ethiopia in the midst of civil war in the northern region of Tigray and the threat of a pandemic threatening the entirety of the nation, the choice to pursue such a policy could have severe consequences and thus requires further analysis. This piece seeks to situate the recent move toward demonetization within the context of the recent change in political power in Ethiopia and the current state of the Ethiopian economy and to explore the potential socio-economic consequences of demonetization.

After conducting a field-work stay in the city of Dire Dawa in late 2019 to examine the socioeconomic circumstances of the citizens, it became clear that the combined pressures of inflation, social instability, and violence and the interruption of supply chains were having immediate and demoralizing effects on the people, even before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the push for demonetization. Having previously served in the Peace Corps in Ethiopia during the waning years of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF)-controlled regime, I had departed after roughly a year and half in late 2016, when the country seemed on the brink of civil war and deep and bitter resentment against the TPLF was growing. The relief

and hopeful expectation of many in Ethiopia and the diaspora when Ahmed assumed the post of prime minister in 2018 was immense. This hope however, has proved to be largely, and sadly, unwarranted.

Recent Developments in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has recently been the focus of international concern, not for the first time in a tumultuous year. It was late in 2019 when Abiy Ahmed accepted his Nobel Peace Prize for brokering peace with neighboring Eritrea. One year later, those who were waiting to see what further course he and his administration would take seem to have gotten their answer. The armed forces is engaged in an all-out war with the region of Tigray, whose TPLF party *de facto* led the country for most of the past 30 years. After the party lost its hold on leadership in 2018, tensions built over the following years to the point that, when the 2020 election was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region of Tigray held one regardless, against the wishes of the federal government. When news broke that the army's northern command in Tigray had been overrun by TPLF-associated militia, a full-scale invasion of the province commenced. The speed and viciousness of the military response, with air power and strategic bombing being utilized against domestic targets, has been astonishing. Though the TPLF has been far from a willing partner in compromise, the speed and

veracity of the military intervention has been a shock. Such action should warrant a thorough reassessment of Ahmed and the nature of his politics.

Alongside military action, and despite not having won an election or being given a clear mandate, Ahmed has relentlessly pursued both economic liberalization and internal control to a degree that is almost Thatcherite in its reach and scope. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, the government announced in September 2020 that a demonetization and re-issuance of the birr (ETB) would be undertaken, with the stated intent of combatting fraud, bringing money back into the banking system, and ending illicit trade. Such an action is not without precedent in Ethiopia, and indeed, many other countries have pursued demonetization, but the unwavering pursuit of such action at this juncture raises troubling questions and requires a deeper understanding of the nature of Ethiopia's recent economic reform.

Since assuming power early in 2018, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has embarked on an ambitious economic agenda, in many ways breaking from the developmentalist approach that previously defined the Ethiopian political economy, which Clapham has described as “the most significant attempt to implement the idea of a ‘developmental state’ in sub-Saharan Africa, and a critical example of the applicability of this form of governance beyond East Asia.” Heavily influenced by the Marxist leanings of the TPLF, the coalition from the northern region of Tigray that led the fight against the Derg regime and whose members would come to largely run the country, the state played a central role in the economic affairs of Ethiopia, maintaining tight control of the banking and finance sector and leaving many key firms in state hands. While the TPLF-led government proved amenable to the interests of foreign capital, leasing thousands of hectares in the southern regions to foreign firms such as Saudi Star, for example,² and privatized certain state-owned enterprises (SOEs), the state was nonetheless seen as playing an important developmental role. When then-Prime Minister Meles Zenawi was questioned at a 2012 meeting of the World Economic Forum as to why he had not yet liberalized its banking sector and admitted foreign banks, Zenawi answered in no uncertain terms: “They

[foreign banks] . . . can wreck a giant economy like the UK. Ours is a flimsy boat. They come in, they use instruments we cannot control. . . . How are we going to regulate them?”³

The Recent Political Economy of Ethiopia

When Ahmed spoke in triumphant tones at the same venue in 2019, it was with a remarkably different platform and vision for the future, one wherein “unleashing the power of the private sector,” “reforming state owned enterprises,” and “opening the economy” were to be the centerpieces of his reformist agenda. Ahmed's unwavering dedication to large-scale liberalization has been both impressive and chilling.⁴ A wave of euphoria from international media, some academics, and the Ethiopian diaspora greeted his arrival to political leadership, while his release of political prisoners and peace with Eritrea, which would earn him a Nobel Prize, seemed to cement his place as a liberal-minded darling of Davos. Economist Paul Collier would eventually pen what in retrospect seems an astoundingly naïve opinion piece in the *Financial Times* entitled “Ethiopia's path to prosperity is opening up under Abiy Ahmed.”⁵ The lessons over the past year should teach us that we should be more cautious in praising Ahmed's reforms—reforms that seem to show an ideological commitment to a neoliberal prescription of privatization, liberalization, and creating a desirable environment for investment as rapidly as possible without regard to the larger population.

By certain aggregate metrics, Ethiopia has performed quite well over the past ten years: GDP growth has been high, largely through mobilizing domestic saving and borrowing, and FDI as a percentage of GDP has increased from less than 1 percent of GDP in 2012, to a high of 5.5 percent in 2016, though that has significantly reduced in the past three years.⁶ To give credit where it is due, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) government did improve many key health and welfare metrics in Ethiopia after their victory in a nearly two-decade-long civil war, such as maternal mortality, primary school enrollment, and access to some basic health care services.⁷

Their brutal and heavy-handed domestic politics, press censorship, and jailing of political opposition, however, led to a series of protests starting in 2015, leading to the eventual downfall of the TPLF cadre that had largely run the country. While the successes should be acknowledged, the macroeconomic fundamentals of Ethiopia remain weak, and the situation of the population has become increasingly precarious. Through most of the last decade, double-digit inflation (15.9 percent in 2019) has eroded the purchasing power of the Ethiopian consumer, driving up the risk of food and housing insecurity, especially in urban areas.⁸ The two growth and transformations plans (GTP I and II) did little to increase Ethiopia's manufacturing performance, which between 2010 and 2018, was a marginal part of Ethiopia's total exports. Government debt-to-GDP ratio has exploded to over 60 percent of GDP as of 2018 (though this is not an extraordinarily high rate in global context). Nonetheless, Moody's reduced Ethiopia's credit rating from B1 to B2 in May 2020 as a result of it seeking debt relief from the G20, with expectations that FDI might fall below 2 percent of GDP.⁹

Highly aware of these macroeconomic imbalances, including high level of inflation, dangerously low level of foreign exchange, and a widening trade deficit, the government announced its Homegrown Economic Reform initiative in 2019.¹⁰ The initiative, however, reads almost like a Berg Report, arguing for a series of measures to foster a more business-friendly climate as well to create a more hospitable environment for foreign investment. The recommendations largely focus on the liberalization of foreign exchange regulations, improving export performance, and deregulation. Outside of addressing a few aggregate indicators, poverty and select health outcomes, there is almost no mention of the wider population in this initiative. Perhaps noteworthy, while the initiative is quick to point to the superficially impressive decrease in overall poverty Ethiopia has experienced, this is based on the World Bank's USD1.90 2013 purchasing power parity (PPP) metric, a most questionable estimation of poverty. The high rate of inflation that Ethiopia has experienced over the past several years should make one especially apprehensive at accepting the degree of

progress expressed here, and the relative precarity of the population should not be understated.

Between an enormous increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs), domestic inflation, and an ever-increasing amount of internal unrest, the situation for the vast majority of the Ethiopian population has been one of increasing precarity, desperation, and insecurity, and the commitment of the Ahmed administration to liberal reform seems to have done little to mitigate these problems. In regards to the policy of demonetization, it could have deep consequences for a country like Ethiopia where the "financial sector is shallow, and the financial services penetration is still weak."¹¹

Toward Demonetization

Demonetization is not uncommon, but its implementation in the 21st century has been fraught with no thoughts of consequences and catastrophe. After the infamous demonetization of high-value rupee notes in India in 2016, GDP collapsed over the course of the following year, a shortage of bank notes plagued the country, ATMs were perpetually short of bills or simply were not programmed to accept the new bills in a timely manner, and long lines at banks became the norm. While the stated goals had been to "seize undeclared income, destroy counterfeit currency, speed up formalization of the economy and increase the tax base,"¹² "the end result was the effect of demonetization in terms of its stated goals were limited at best."¹³ Tharoor noted in the aftermath of the demonetization, "the main victims have been the poor and lower middle classes, who rely on cash for their daily activities."¹⁴ While a Kenyan demonetization of the shilling in the summer of 2019 was noted for the relative ease with which it was carried out, the situation in Ethiopia is in many ways radically different.¹⁵ The nation of 110 million people has over 5,564 bank branches in the country, compared with 1,505 branches in Kenya. It should be noted, though, that 34.6 percent of total banks in Ethiopia were located in the capital. This is relatively unchanged since 2014, when Addis Ababa held 34.4 percent of all branches. Comparably, the Somali region, an area roughly the size of Italy with 6 million people, has

barely 2 percent of all of Ethiopia's branches, which in 2014 was only 47.¹⁶ The Commercial Bank of Ethiopia (CBE), which holds 44 percent of the capital in the Ethiopian banking system and is the largest bank in terms of branches and capital holdings, had just 31 branches in Somali zone. The region of Benshangul Gumez has a mere 13. This vast inequality in access to banking is exacerbated by the near total lack of digital banking and digital payment options in Ethiopia, compared with Kenya where over 80 percent of the population has access to mobile banking and mobile payment options. Not even a 1 percent of Ethiopians use a mobile banking service, and only 35 percent of the Ethiopian population has an account of *any* kind.¹⁷ Ethiopians also have good reason to be wary of placing their money into an account. The country has been highly unstable in the past several years, making access to branch banking services often unreliable in the event of unrest and restrictions on withdrawal's have been instituted, making cash holdings in some ways safer. Transactions within Ethiopia are almost entirely cash based, and the demonetization of the birr in a normal time could spell disaster for the vast majority of the Ethiopian population, which is mostly rural, unbanked, and in many cases, distant from a banking institution. Ethiopia, however, is contending not only with the COVID-19 pandemic but also an internal war that has consumed the northern region of Tigray, pushed tens of thousands of Tigrayan's into neighboring Sudan, and left hundreds of thousands without access to basic services, let alone financial services.

An Economic or Political Choice?

With such a confluence of catastrophic events overshadowing the process of demonetization, it is worth asking whether such a decision is one based purely upon economic logic. While it is indeed true that a huge portion of currency within the country is held outside of the banking system, exacerbating the liquidity shortage that has been plaguing Ethiopia,¹⁸ the pursuance of such a risky strategy begs the question of if ideological or political motivations are not playing a larger role. While perhaps improving the liquidity of

the Ethiopian banking system, demonetization will do nothing to change the fundamental macroeconomic weaknesses, namely, the continued dependence on volatile agricultural exports and the associated problem of foreign currency shortages.

The last time Ethiopia pursued demonetization was in 1998, after the introduction of the Eritrean *Nakfah* in late 1997. Previous to this, both countries had been using the Ethiopian birr, and the decision was made to demonetize during a period of escalating tensions that would eventually result in the Ethiopian-Eritrean border war. The implementation of the *Nakfah* led to a series of seemingly retaliatory measures, not only the demonetization of the ETB but also a series of trade restrictions including the use of only hard currency or letters of credit for trade in goods over ETB2,000 in value.¹⁹ The result was the immediate increase in prices in basic goods and a violent reaction on the part of many Ethiopians to the new currency.

It is therefore the case that Ethiopia's most recent historical attempt at demonetization appears largely as an attempt to discipline Eritrea, and it appears likely that a political motivation underscores the modern one as well. It will not serve to change Ethiopia's relative economic weakness and will likely negatively affect the vast majority of Ethiopians who are employed in the informal sector and who carry out mostly cash-based transactions. Why, then, spend over USD100 million in the middle of a pandemic to pursue such a policy? It is in many ways a largely symbolic action and a demonstration of power, one that professor Asayeghn Desta stated "is specifically tailored for the self-aggrandizement of Abiy's regime."²⁰

While Ahmed's policy is likely to do little to change Ethiopia's vulnerable economic state, it will most certainly have serious consequences for the vast and precarious Ethiopian population. With his country ravaged by war and disease, and still without a clear mandate, Ahmed's decision to pursue a policy with such destructive potential should lead us to seriously reflect on the nature and quality of both his leadership and political calculus.

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Peacebuilding in the Borderland

An Analysis of Shifting Identities and Tactics of Survival as Processes for Peacebuilding in Irob, Post Ethiopia-Eritrea Border Dispute

Zula Afawork

Researcher and activist Zula Afawork coordinated the emergency health responses led by the African Union to fight the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. As a result of the leadership exhibited during the institutionalization of the Africa CDC, she was awarded the Chevening Scholarship to pursue anthropology at the University of Sussex. Currently, due to the deepening humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, she's managing and monitoring refugee assistance and IDP protection interventions. She is passionate about research, as it is one of the most powerful tools to acquire knowledge about the challenges faced by the marginalized and vulnerable and inform national strategies and policies.



Abstract

This paper analyzes how shifting identities enforce tactics for peacebuilding in the borderland. The Ethiopia and Eritrea 1998–2000 border war harbored social implications for the Irob, a community straddled in the borderland. The cessation of hostilities that transpired after international interventions for political mediation mandated negotiations of everyday life in Irob, to survive the subsequent cold war. An internalized hatred toward the Eritrean army, who invaded and desecrated Irob, enforced a shift in their identity to fit the Ethiopian post-war political configurations. Additionally, historically porous borders were hampered, forcing the Irob to use indigenous knowledge to secure their livelihood. A continuous process of interpretation of the socioeconomic and political standing created a space where indigenous tools of peacebuilding ensured the survival of the community. However, the academic conceptualization of peace, as a stale destination antithetic to war, and borderlands as a conjunction of ideational and literal conflicts leave no space to analyze indigenous processes of peacebuilding. This research unpacks the dynamic role of peacebuilding in the border, critically analyzing the borderland community's negotiations of everyday life, managing violence and peace. It sheds light on

local notions of peace and contributes to the debate of peacebuilding as a continuous process, intermingling with shifts of identity and selfhood. This study relied on secondary ethnographic accounts gathered through the archives of the Irob diaspora websites.

Introduction

The mountainous region of Irob, located in the borderland between Ethiopia and Eritrea, was heavily impacted by the conflict between the two countries in 1998–2000 that left 80,000 dead.¹ When the hostilities erupted, Irob was turned into a garrison area where destruction of property and looting of sacred ground occurred. The Irob desperately sought refuge in Ethiopia, perceived as the symbolic guarantor of their security. Young Irob men who could not flee were captured and forcefully conscripted in the Eritrean Army.² Farmers were forced to relinquish their Ethiopian citizenship and accept Eritrean identity cards or else forbidden to cultivate their own fields. The Irob Militia were the last defense, and a sense of security was regained when the Ethiopian army dislodged the Eritrean troops.³ Consecutively, 2000 marked the signing of a United Nations-backed peace agreement that guaranteed the cessation of hostilities yet harbored social implications for borderland communities.⁴

The psycho-social impact in Irob, inflicted by the bloodshed and turmoil of the interstate conflict, triggered an internalized hatred toward the “enemy people”: the Eritreans. Complicated by the socio-economic interdependence with the bordering Saho of Eritrea, with whom they share genealogical ties as well as the Saho language. Surprisingly, the Irob contested such genealogical ties and consolidated an accelerated assimilation with the Tigray Regional State of Ethiopia. This process was complemented by the extension of institutions from the state to the borderland after the conflict.⁵ Notably, the traditional capital and administrative center, Alitena, was replaced by Dawhan, away from the frontline and close to the Tigray region. Consequently, the Irob are recognized under the Ethiopian Constitution as an indigenous minority with a partial right to self-determination.⁶ Nonetheless, to negotiate their historically marginal role and minority-majority gap within the region, customary social organizations and traditional justice systems are reinforced.

The cessation of hostilities also meant that previously porous borders, never before demarcated, were blocked and the border was heavily militarized. The Irob now endure a five-hour walking journey to reach the new market in Adigrat, Ethiopia, rather than a one-hour journey to Senafe, Eritrea.⁷ They also underwent an accelerated sedentarization due to the hampering of seasonal nomadic pastoralist movements and the obstruction of the previously active trade networks.⁸ Especially, production and trade of honey was of high economic and cultural value, historically circulated through safer and shorter routes in Eritrea.⁹ The Irob had to modify their socioeconomic and cultural projections, to survive the closure and militarization of the border as well as the post-conflict no war–no peace state, aggravated by the rugged topography and erratic rainfalls that made them further reliant on indigenous land-management techniques.

Research Questions

The peace industry’s recipe to halt the Ethiopia–Eritrea deadly border dispute consisted of a formal court system and a one-time arbitration decision for

border demarcation,¹⁰ which helped to silence the guns, although the end of war was not actual peace. The two-decades-long cold war that followed was heavily felt by the borderland communities. After the hampering of the previously porous borders and the experience of first-hand violence, the Irob developed tactics to navigate peace and conflict. Indigenous tools to secure their livelihood and indigenous conflict-resolution mechanisms were used to manage the harsh geographic and geopolitical landscape. Indigenous folklore and communication were a tool for active interpretation of the social and cultural values of “Irobness.”

Which begs the questions: What are the processes of peace in Irob? What kinds of peacebuilding tactics have been most effective? Is there tension between those practices? Could some practices that make claim of peacebuilding, and thus contest marginality, work counter to enact peace? This ethnographic research will contribute to critical peacebuilding theories and political geography, through an analysis of identity shifts as a tool for peacebuilding. The research structure entails a geopolitical introduction of the Ethiopia–Eritrea borderland, then clarification of the research’s aim and relevance. Valid research questions are followed by critical border-making theories, locating the research in wider academic debate. Subsequently, ethnographic data are presented around contested genealogies, livelihoods, regional and traditional social organizations, and indigenous survival tactics. To conclude, recommendations for policy change are proposed.

Locating Critical Border-Making Theories in Wider Literature

While the institutionalization and politicization of the border-making process might be at the heart of earlier literature, more recent works point to a critical analysis of the delimitation and demarcation rubric. They critique the unimaginative procedures for boundary setting, historically practiced for imperial conquest.¹¹ To avert subjectivist demarcations, there is an arduous dependence on the accuracy of cartographic imageries and the technical adherence of the delineation demar-

cation rubric.¹² International arbitrations or adjunctions are the favored legal mechanisms to resolve boundary disputes, through lengthy proceedings for legal delimitation and physical demarcation.¹³ Judicial settlement gained popularity amongst feuding governments, as it provides political coverage if questions around the fairness of decisions arise. Despite lacking active efforts of peacebuilding, this method is seen as a peaceful technique of conflict resolution.¹⁴ In fact, this was the international peacebuilding toolkit for the Ethiopia–Eritrea border dispute. Notwithstanding, the war was not just a territorial dispute. In fact, underlying issues of regime legitimacy, state sovereignty, nation-building ideologies, access to port facilities, economic policies, and currencies change exacerbated the tension.¹⁵

The contested Algiers Agreement was a product of international political mediation for Ethiopia and Eritrea to transition from war to peace. The arbitration court mandated the delimitation and demarcation of the border by a boundary commission established under the UN.¹⁶ Paradoxically, the commission was based at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague and delimited a border through colonial treaties and aerial photography, without any physical visits. The disputed border delineation partitioned the borderland Irob into two sovereign states, running through churches, households, and cultivated fields.¹⁷ As a result, the delimitation was never adjusted to the realities on the ground. The utter reliance of state actors to resolve boundary disputes through arbitration has resulted in the demarcation process being left suspended, due to ambiguities on the ground.¹⁸ The demarcation stage is not attributed as equal importance as high-profile arbitration, which is unequivocally the most politically sensible process, requiring unencumbered diplomatic engagement with local actors and neighboring countries.¹⁹

History, Culture, and Shifting Identities of Irob

Irob is a district located in the Agame area, northeast of Tigray. The population is estimated to reach 33,372. Irob occupies a mountainous, semi-arid region with

a wide altitudinal range, divided into seven sub-districts, which are geographically dispersed from the capital, Dawhan. The Irob speak a southern variety of the Saho language, which is a Cushitic language, and Tigrinya, a Semitic language. They border the Saho-speaking Dabri-Mela to the north and Hadoare to the east.²⁰ The genealogy of the Irob is a contested matter. The Irob identify Dejazmach Sabagadis as their ancestor, who is said to be from Hasabala-Are subgroup, a warlord who ascended as governor of Tigray in the 18th century.²¹ They recall how Subagadis, with the help of young Irob soldiers, ruled Tigray and part of Eritrea. They stringently believe that Subagadis is from Irob and oppose vehemently any contestation of such lineage, interpreting it as a forced disassociation of a renowned Ethiopian historical figure from their history.²² As oral history is the prominent method to collect genealogical data, those claims are easily contested.

However, the recent emphasis on the accuracy of the “genealogical myth” was interpreted as a tactic for political ascendance in a region where Tigrayans dominated and controlled the Ethiopian politics. The Irob over the years have strategically embroiled in Tigrayan military, administrative, and political affairs.²³ Furthermore, their post-war national consciousness is stringently aligned with Tigray through renunciation of any historical ties with their Eritrean neighbor the Saho, with whom they share the same language and nomenclatures.²⁴ However, historical records display kinship ties between the Irob and the Saho; in fact, the Irob who live in the central part of the territory, among the Buknayti-care, are partially Saho decedents.²⁵ The ethnogenesis of the Saho is also a contested subject. Scholars claim that the Saho language is the sole binding attribute among the Saho clans, as there are significant distinctions in their indigenous laws and socioeconomic organization. The Saho people comprise the Assaorta, the Minifere, and the Irob and represent a mixture of Danakils (Afar), Arabs, and Abyssinians.²⁶

The border between the Saho and Irob was never demarcated, and there was no constraint or hindrance of movement. The same people lived on both sides of the border. Prior to the war the border communities

did not see themselves as either Ethiopian or Eritrean but as one or the other, almost at will.²⁷ The lowlands historically served as refuge for political and religious dissidents stemming from both sides and a base for political-military operations.²⁸ The towns of Golo and Mako, areas of transition and exchange between the north and south, turned into a battleground where Ethiopian and Eritrean troops faced each other. “I have a sister married to an Eritrean in Monoixioto village. . . . I have not been able to cross into Eritrea from Tigray and visit with my sister and her family. Sadder still, thought is the fact that her eldest son has been conscripted into the Eritrean army to fight against his own people, in the name of nationalism and border claims,” stated an Irob respondent in Giles’ research.²⁹

Economic Transition in Irob

The Irob lived for centuries between two culturally different communities: the pastoralist lowlanders and the agrarian highlanders. Before the war, they were agro-pastoralists, as they did not engage solely in nomadic-pastoralism nor strictly adhere to farming.³⁰ Irob shepherds moved freely in the Eritrean lowlands, during the small rainy season, toward the sea in Wagababo, on the coastal plain between Irhaafalo and Buyya. Clashes over water conduits and pastures characterized these relations, often expressed in the form of raids (*boyla*) and cattle theft.³¹ An Irob respondent reminisces in Dias’s ethnography: “All the people used to go to Senafe, not Ethiopia. Our town before the war was Senafe. We are farmers. We sold honey (*baska*), butter (*subay*), ox (*aurr*), cows (*saga*), goats (*lahe*) and sheep to the market in Senafe. In Senafe we bought clothes, shoes, food and wheat.”³²

The border dispute harbored destruction of civilian infrastructure and massive deforestation, burning of fields and forests to build trenches. Livelihoods were severely impacted due to the halt of active honey trade systems in Massawa, Gondar, and Mekelle. Especially, honey was of high cultural value in the code of food practices, used as food and beverage. Honey farming and trade served as a channel to connect the people of the lowlands with the regional leaders in a stratified society of the plateau, through the collection of taxes

and annuities.³³ Currently, the Irob’s livelihood is reliant on traditional farming and animal husbandry due to cessation of formerly practiced pastoralist and trading activities. A decade ago, the land was fertile and rich in biodiversity, sprouting a variety of wild fruits high in nutritional value and helping spurn famine and malnutrition. Currently, climatic changes and complete reliance on agricultural activities has rendered the land dry and unproductive. In fact, the only edible fruit is the cactus fruit, locally known as *bales*.³⁴ Thus, the rugged topography, erratic rainfall, and poor socioeconomic infrastructure have turned Irob into a chronically food-insecure district. Even so, the Irob employ indigenous knowledge to secure their livelihood and ensure sustainability.

For instance, an Irob innovation is an irrigation technique where water runoff is contained through a silt trap. This technique is used to retain the water flowing off the northeastern Ethiopian highlands down to the Danakil Desert in the trap, while the sediment settles at the bottom. This check-dam system of riverside terracing is locally known as *Deldal* or *Seytan Madwa*.³⁵ The large flat stones, commonly used to build houses, are stacked on top of each other to build a stone wall parallel to the riverbank, to redirect the water and soil into the space behind the wall. *Saytan Madwa* has gained popularity as Irob farmers who live next to the seasonal waters build their own small check-dams on the terraced fields for better land management.³⁶ As a result, in the past ten years the vegetation coverage has increased significantly, and soil erosion has reduced by 31 percent.³⁷ Nevertheless, the vegetation of the area is still very poor, requiring further land-intervention mechanisms by the regional state.

National and Regional Political Systems

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) is an ethnic federal system striving for equality and autonomy of more than 80 ethnic groups while preserving a unified state. The constitution of Ethiopia, which came into force in 1991, recognizes a federal system consisting only of nine regional states, in consider-

ation of the major ethnic groups.³⁸ The regional states have executive, legislative, and judicial authority and decentralize power from the regional state to zones and districts (*woredas*). Zones are ethnically defined local governments, recognized by their regional constitutions as an autonomous tier, with elected councils and executive administrations.³⁹ Therefore, the Tigray regional state has the constitutional responsibility to ensure an equitable political representation of indigenous and non-indigenous groups. Moreover, such identification as “indigenous” and “non-indigenous” is the hallmark of Ethiopian federalism, which strives to classify ethnic boundaries as regional borders.⁴⁰

The inhabitants of the Irob district (*woreda*) are constitutionally recognized as an indigenous minority. Such constitutional recognition should guarantee an equitable executive, legislative, and judicial representation within the region. Nonetheless, there is a dearth of explicit legal or institutional measures within the constitution, enabling indigenous people to exercise their rights freely. In fact, a majority-voting system prevails in Tigray, where the Irob are largely outnumbered in the regional legislative, executive, and judiciary bodies, rendering their political participation superfluous.⁴¹ Furthermore, Tigrigna is the official working, teaching, and learning language in the region, threatening to endanger the Saho language. The constitution lacks measures for regional representation of the Irob, promotion of their language, and preservation of their culture. As a result, policies fail to address the complexities of their livelihood and increase the minority-majority gap, as the influential decision-making bodies exclude minorities.

Traditional Political System in Irob

The Irob community is organized in a traditional political system, led by elected members from three subgroups called *Are*. *Ona* is the leader of each clan and is elected democratically for life.⁴² This self-administrative system is considered egalitarian, as every member has the right to contest the *Ona*'s laws or decisions. The *Ona* and the council of elders govern the community through the traditional Irob law, drafted and ratified to preserve the autonomy and integrity of

the community.⁴³ A comprehensive traditional justice system presides, with customary laws for settlement of disputes and traditional court system called *Melat-Agle*.⁴⁴ Offences of differing magnitude are presented to *Melat-Agle*: abuse, sexual harassment, homicide, vandalism. As punishment is not the ultimate goal, non-coercive mechanisms are established to ensure that agreement among disputants is secured and reprisals are avoided.⁴⁵ Informal methods of conflict resolution gained popularity as formal court systems are lengthy and financially draining. The respondent Tadeleh from Irob stated: “unintended crime cases, are not taken to the police or formal justice systems even when these are murder cases. Other intentional cases may be taken to court and the disputants are made to resolve/settle the dispute by the traditional mechanisms afterwards when the criminal is back after completing his imprisonment” in Gizaw and Gessese's research.⁴⁶

Indigenous Peacebuilding Mechanisms

Warsim

In terms of communication, the Irob opt for folk or traditional media, which guarantee the dispersion of accurate information far and wide. Namely, Warsim is a cultural information exchange system to disseminate *ware*, which are recent occurrences in the surroundings. Warsim entails two people standing face to face and exchanging information regarding what they have seen and heard during the day.⁴⁷ Every member of the Irob community practices Warsim through active listening and concise speaking. The common queries are: “*ba'ado nagaa?*” (“is it safe around you?”) and “*rob litinni?*” (“is it raining in your area?”).⁴⁸ If an outsider is spotted, they will be ordered to reveal their identity with *ware bahee*. “Because we practice Warsim, we are close to each other. That is how we make ourselves informed about events around us and then inform the next person. Warsim for us is serving as a connection and wisdom of togetherness to share different issues. Without it, everything would have been difficult as we are living in distant villages from each other,” stated a respondent in Kahssay's research.⁴⁹

In fact, the post-conflict period harbored violent

incidents in the borderland such as kidnappings of people and livestock. “As we live in a border area to Eritrea, there will be information related to security, which we need to be alerted to. Otherwise, it will have a serious impact on our community,” stated a respondent in Kahsay’s research.⁵⁰ Warsim is practiced not only for its traditional value but also for its practicality as a tool that ascertains the safety of the community. It also reinforces group membership and enables the community to navigate the geographical uncertainty of the borderland, by frequently exchanging accurate and detailed information. Such commitment displays how trust is directly linked with norms of reciprocity and group membership. In fact, *Irob Birsin* is an egalitarian building ideology ascertaining the equality of all members of the community, irrespective of their gender age and social status.⁵¹ Preservation of kinship ties in Irob is central to the Irobness; therefore, these tactics of survival ensure preservation of their genealogical ties and reinforce the idea of sameness within the community and otherness within the larger region.

Aa'dar

Aa'dar is the recital of oral poetry that bestows accolade or reprimand to a person or a situation.⁵² Themes covered during Aa'dar range from political to socio-economic and religious affairs affecting the individual and the community. Composers and reciters of Aa'dar (called Aa'darens) occupy a high status within the community, as the content of their artform is endowed with knowledge and wisdom.⁵³ A community elder in Daya in Kahsay’s ethnography asserted: “To the Irob people, Aa'dar is highly valued and I personally prefer Aa'dar to other forms of folk media. . . . It has all the qualities to express our culture, criticise wrong doings and, reconcile and unite people. This is therefore one of the reasons why we mostly respect our Aa'darens who have the skill to tell our stories. The communicative potential of Aa'dar is that oral poets compose it in local languages and idioms that make it comprehensible by the majority of rural people.”⁵⁴ Most Aa'darens acquire knowledge informally, through Felatat, which are community elders who obtained teachings about the history and culture of Irob from their forefathers.⁵⁵ The Aa'darens through the Felatat acquire historical and cultural knowledge dating back many generations.

The Aa'darens compose verses reminiscent of past glories and present challenges, spreading words of peace and gratitude. An elder in Aiga stated “Aa'darens verse the Aa'dar based on their understanding of the history of our people. Aa'darens in general serve as a bridge to connect what has happened in the past with the present. We gain the knowledge by listening to them and transfer it to the next person reciting the Aa'dars.”⁵⁶ Although *Aa'dar wagaarisa*, *Aa'dar yassegeae*, which means that great convening power should be met with peaceful intentions, as Aa'darens can speak the word of peace or chose to feed vengeful sentiments and instigate retaliation and conflict.⁵⁷ In a post-conflict society, folklore can channel contrasting sentiments based on the experiences of the communities. It can enforce anti-war sentiments of reconciliation or reinforce post-war emotions of anger, grief, and sadness and instigate demands of reparation. In fact, most Aa'dar verses denounce the brutality of the war, commend the Ethiopian victory over Eritrea, praise the mountainous Irob landscape and the sweet Irob honey. Hence, due to the cohesion of the Irob community, Aa'dar not only accelerates identity shifts evoking sentiments of vindication but also reiterates traditional values of reconciliation to foster forgiveness and unity.

Goila

Goila is a traditional music and dancing performed during religious or social festivities that has the potential to end up being the occasion itself.⁵⁸ Goila can be performed to rejoice any occasion the community sees fit. A community elder in Daya Village stated, “Goila is part of our culture to rejoice different events in our villages. At night, we gather in one of the houses in our villages and spend longer time singing and dancing. As elders, we love to perform Goila. It symbolises happiness and unity between people . . . and it is a regular practice in our villages.”⁵⁹ An example of Goila is a song composed to the regional government in response to a voluntary relocation program: “*Adiye maliyoy Dansha atikile liiyo balasa*” (“Instead of moving to Dansha I would rather plant cactus tree in my backyard”).⁶⁰ The regional state organized a voluntary relocation to Dansha town, under the assumption that Dansha harboured productive lands and the resettle-

ment would benefit regional regreening efforts.⁶¹ This Goila displays the Irob's proclivity toward informal mechanisms of securing their livelihood over regional developmental programs. In fact, cactus has helped mitigate food insecurity due to its high nutritional value and its capacity to grow in dry land and integrate with the local diet. Also, Dansha is located in the borderland, where kidnappings and lootings are more frequent, enticing the Irob to forge consensus and refute the relocation program. Essentially, Goila is a medium where socioeconomic decisions are made and community values are strengthened. It is a powerful tool to forge consensus, challenge the dominant structure, and oppose any decisions that are not aligned with the values of Irobness.

Local Peacebuilding Tools versus International Political Mediations

Contemporary borderland theories argue that conflict and contradiction prevail in the borderland due to contentious processes of border making, overlapping shifts of identity, and cultural conflict,⁶² while critical peacebuilding theories unpack the rationale of conflict-entered theories and assert that positive peace is a conscientious process striving for social justice.⁶³ Although borderland theories associate conflict and absence of peace in the borderland, critical peacebuilding theories conceptualize everyday peace through a critical analysis of geopolitical ambiguities and power imbalances in the borderland. As it was illustrated in the previous sections, local peacebuilding tactics are part and parcel of Irob's history, culture, and tradition. The war harbored intangible psycho-social impacts and tangible destruction of property, which accelerated the shift of identity to restore peace. Also, concepts of identity and peacebuilding seem interrelated—both are constantly changing, renegotiated depending on prevailing social relationships and conditions. Both concepts share a dynamic aspect of experiential approach to forge mechanisms to navigate unequal power relations, accommodating at times contradictory notions of peace. Identities can shift during the actual state of war or even in the absence of it, and tactics of peacebuilding are contingent on

such shifts.⁶⁴ Both tactics and identities are receptive to their perceived conditions and continuously assess the present with the past, the indigenous with the contemporary. Thus, values are forged or adjusted according to the predefined direction that anchors the collective identity.

Ethiopia–Eritrea Peace Efforts and the Ethiopia–Tigray Conflict

As such, it appears that the tools of peacebuilding are constantly in communication with the environment, which legitimizes their strategic shifts of identity by forging consensus, whether to import new ideologies or to use their indigenous knowledge of land management and traditional social organization for indigenous justice and reconciliation. A certain level of self-determination and autonomy is secured, anchored by an Irob identity, which is considered indissoluble than the previous genealogical affiliation or current accelerated Tigranization. Yet, such a notion of selfhood navigating sameness and otherness is put to the test in the 2018 sudden reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the 2020 Ethiopia–Tigray war. The unconditional agreement for the demarcation of the delineated border cemented the peace agreement in 2018.⁶⁵ In fact, the Irob would have everything to gain from the normalization of relations and the re-opening of the border. They would be able to finally attend each other's weddings and funerals. An Irob respondent stated, "If the two countries make peace, maybe my husband will come back again" in Plaut's research.⁶⁶ But, the "new" peace endangers their existence and compromises their livelihood as it mandates splitting the community into two. During their peaceful protest marches, the Irob chanted "We reject the Peace Agreement" and "We don't compromise on our Ethiopian identity!"⁶⁷

Moreover, scepticism and uncertainty further lingered in the borderland as the regional government of Tigray was excluded from the peace discussions. Tensions brew between the regional government of Tigray and the central government, exacerbated by the Eritrean authorities suddenly halting recently opened border crossings.⁶⁸ The Irob articulated fears

of displacement and violence as a result of the un-institutionalized fragile peace. On 4 November 2020, war erupted in Tigray, causing killings, massacres of civilians, and sexual violence against women and girls, with growing allegations of Eritrean involvement in human rights violations.⁶⁹ Recent occurrences unveiled how shifting identity as a tactic for peacebuilding is a fragile process that doesn't guarantee a sustainable shift away from the margins, closer to the center. Thus, the Irob must face the bitter consequences and renegotiate all the tightly knit tactics of survival or fight to defend them. Conflict has in fact been a big part of their identity, on a literal and ideational level.

The theory of "state of exception" identifies how complexities are further accentuated by the state to create distinctions earmarking who's at the center and who's at the periphery of the political.⁷⁰ The state projects a contradictory self-image as corrupt and removed yet just and participatory, using such ambiguity to further control the borderland. So, if conflict is intrinsic for hegemonic theoretical frameworks analyzing the borderland and critical peacebuilding theories centralize positive social values (social justice, equity), where do we incorporate locally birthed tactics of peacebuilding, navigating peace and conflict through shifts of identity? The fetishization of conflict and contradiction in borderland literatures essentializes the Irob's fight for survival, who, as per the mentioned evidence, actively engage with their past, current experience, and environment for skillful living. There should be an academic space to engage with such dilemma and analyze the behaviors of such community and conceptualize the influence on identity.

Conclusion

The peace industry's tool to end the Ethiopia-Eritrea war was an arbitration court's decision for border delineation and demarcation, resulting in a two-decades-long cold war. This process excluded the borderland communities during the decision-making process, who use indigenous tools to skillfully navigate conflicts and contradictions of the borderland. Historically inhabiting overlapping shifts in political, cultural, and ethnic boundaries, they have acquired the

skills to renegotiate their identities at will. Moreover, the historically porous borders ensured that borderland inhabitants consolidated trade and pastoralist networks, which ascertained their survival, governed by shared values and customs. Furthermore, borders are eventful places, they materialize and dematerialize, they change, and people try to work with and around them. Contextual negotiations are neglected by state figures, opting for internationally recognized peace-making tools, which endanger the skillful existence of border communities such as the Irob. As a result, exclusionary peace imperils the lived realities and tactics of survival of the Irob and pushes them further into conflict. Peace is a process, not an endpoint, and cultural, political, and economic continuous negotiations to navigate peace and conflict should be recognized as sustainable tools for peacebuilding.

Although the Irob have the constitutional right intended to empower them politically as an indigenous group, due to lack of specific policies that address their fragile livelihoods, they rely on tactics of survival. The Irob are an economic, cultural asset to the region and the nation; therefore, specific implementing bodies should enforce the constitution for the protection of their heritage and legacy. Their traditional knowledge of sustainable land use and natural resources should be embedded in policies for reforestation and regreening. Their indigenous modes of conflict resolution should lead national peacebuilding reforms to forge a sustainable peace process with the Saho of Eritrea. This would entail involving border communities in the border delineation and demarcation process, to ensure their lived realities embodies geopolitical decisions. Efforts made to assimilate with the Tigray region while preserving their core values should be recognized to forge policies that address the minority-majority gap within the region. A system should be established to render their existence less precarious, volatile, and contingent on political machinations of the state. Therefore, contemporary peacebuilding theories should not only focus on the conflict and contradiction but also understand local interpretations and negotiations of identity for a sustainable notion of positive peace.

Endnotes

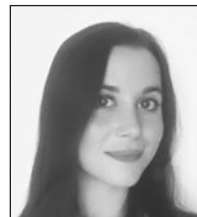
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Safeguarding South Sudan's Peace Agreement

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Resilience is one of the buzzwords of our time. But for good reason: its relevance across contexts has never been more apparent than right now—in the throes of the coronavirus pandemic of 2020.

The Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index (SCORE) is run by the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD).² SCORE assesses the quality and resilience of social cohesion in different contexts and pinpoints the factors responsible for deficiencies. The SCORE methodology guides governments and development partners in their efforts to build the resilience concept into conflict prevention.

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), SeeD recently carried out a SCORE project in South Sudan,³ where a power-sharing agreement was signed in 2018 after years of civil and ethnically charged conflict. Almost two years later, the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) is still a work in progress, with 800 people believed to have died in intercommunal clashes since February.⁴ The fragility of the situation

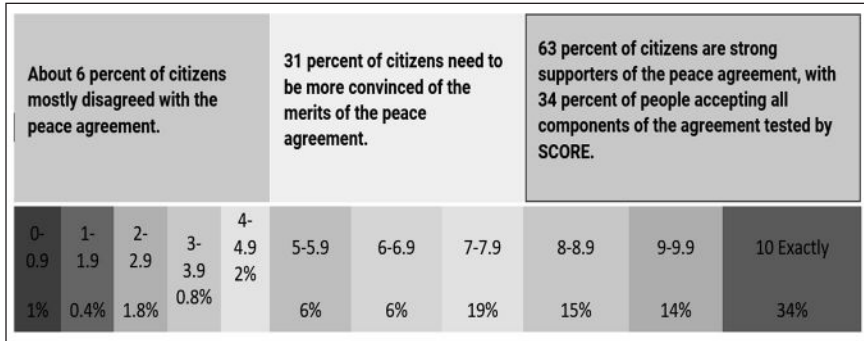
on the ground was evidenced by violent incidents in May 2020 in Jonglei state. The UN Secretary-General dubbed R-ARCSS a priority,⁵ and this sense of urgency is only heightened in light of COVID-19.

To make R-ARCSS a success, support for the agreement needs to remain high throughout its implementation. Building up the resilience of the agreement requires spotting potential weak spots that could threaten the current high levels of support and inoculating against them. SCORE identifies one of R-ARCSS's biggest weak spots: a high percentage of moderate supporters whose support for the agreement could be easy to swing. SCORE then points to the high levels of trust in the existing chieftom governance structure as an untapped resource. In the article that follows, we shall outline how.

Profiling the R-ARCSS supporters

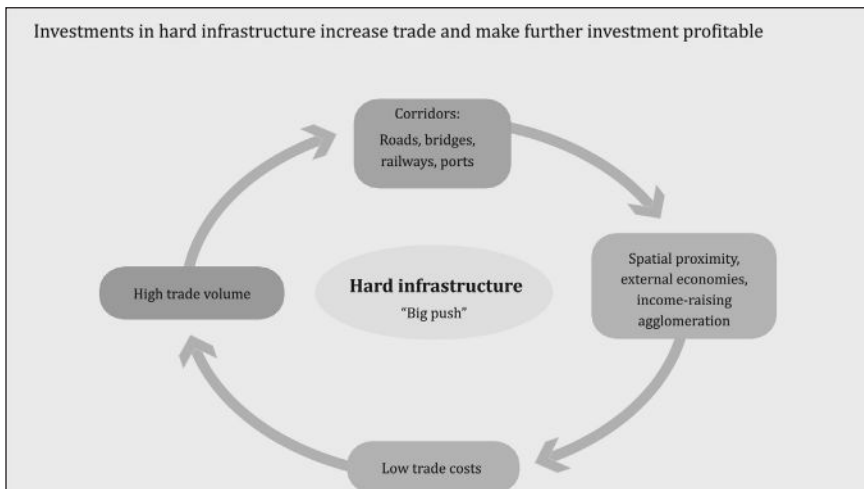
On the whole, R-ARCSS is well supported. SCORE found that only a very small portion of the population (6 percent) are unreservedly *against* the peace agree-

Figure 1



Source: Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development⁶

Figure 2



Source: Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development⁸

ment, whilst a whopping 63 percent of people strongly support the political arrangements for a comprehensive peace. However, an equally significant portion are somewhere in the middle: **31 percent of citizens** have reservations in their support for the agreement, showing they are *not fully convinced*.

Recent history tells us that about half of peace agreements fail in the first five years; normally, this has been because not enough was done to bring all sections of society into the process, including potential spoilers, and including such “half-hearted supporters.”⁷

SCORE reveals that these moderate supporters of

South Sudan’s peace agreement exhibit some noteworthy traits, such as relatively high incomes and land ownership. They also express particularly high levels of loyalty to tribal hierarchies, over and above democratic governance structures and values. The reluctance of their support makes the peace agreement vulnerable. Here’s why.

Why Do Moderate Supporters Make R-ARCSS Vulnerable?

SCORE showed that having “peaceful citizenship qualities” (like neighborliness, being slow to violence, and

being inclusive and collaborative) was the biggest predictor of R-ARCSS support. SCORE also tells us that citizens may turn away from peaceful citizenship behaviors under certain conditions, such as if someone falls victim to crime, food insecurity, or displacement. As it stands then, clearly there is a part of the population who are positive and supportive of the peace agreement at the present time but who could quite plausibly be swayed if exposed to subversion—and especially if there was a crisis or sudden change of circumstances. The violence in Jonglei in May 2020 (which was not the first since R-ARCSS was signed) tells us this is not unlikely.

Reducing crime and violence and increasing food security is a must for locking in support, but that's no small feat; plus, it may not be enough. Fortunately, SCORE uncovered another pathway for bolstering the peace process.

Despite the high support, it turns out that most people have a very poor understanding of R-ARCSS. This means that, while most people support the agreement, in part or in full, they do so without really knowing what it is they endorse. Wavering supporters are left vulnerable to subversion: ignorance of the agreement could become rejection of the agreement. By contrast, **if supporters understand R-ARCSS, it may make them more resilient to forces that potentially undermine people's faith in the agreement, such as food insecurity and high crime rates. SCORE data found that "hope" the peace process will bring tangible benefits is the strongest driver for supporting R-ARCSS.**

Inoculating Support for the Agreement through Boosting Understanding of It

Interestingly, SCORE showed that having a clear grasp of the details of the peace agreement does not *directly* affect likeliness to support it. However, **understanding the agreement does make it more difficult for peace-process detractors to turn people against the agreement if and when times get rough.**⁹ In fact, this same notion came out of a workshop during the very first phase of the SCORE project, in which South Sudanese students proposed that "knowledge

about the peace agreement will allow people to critically assess the arguments of those who try to reject the peace process, and it becomes a defence against fake news."

Indeed, SCORE results show that younger people are more inclined to have better knowledge of the peace agreement. Having a member of the household who is a student often increases knowledge of R-ARCSS, which emphasises the importance of (1) education and (2) the channels of communication that institutions such as schools and universities provide. Clearly there is scope to work through educational institutions to empower young people and disseminate information. However, as with most less-developed countries, rural households are often denied these types of civic connections linking them to the national governance structure and credible sources of knowledge.

Increasing local knowledge and understanding is one tactic policy makers can use to consolidate support for the peace agreement. However, to convince people of the merits of national-level political decisions, citizens will need to see tangible peace dividends in their communities. In pluralistic, fragmented, and politically fragile countries like South Sudan, state building based on Western concepts of legitimacy and authority is unlikely to function in the same way as in developed countries.¹⁰ Moreover, SCORE shows that there is a pre-existing sense of statehood at the local level, which can be leveraged to increase the legitimacy of the modern nation state among the South Sudanese people.

Revisiting Local Governance to Increase Popular Knowledge!

SCORE data show that trust in governance is strongest at the local level. The desire for decentralizing power is strong: 35 percent of people said that central and local governments should share power equally, and 21 percent prefer local state authorities to have more power than the central government. Only 39 percent said that the central government should continue to have more power than local state authorities.

What's even more striking is that 86 percent of cit-

izens consider chiefs (community leaders at the very lowest administrative level of the Boma) the most important authority.

Overall, people trust chiefs ahead of state bodies such as the police and the state justice system. This is particularly important for communicating the benefits of the peace process: chiefs, who unanimously support R-ARCSS, can play an instrumental role in educating their communities about the R-ARCSS specifically. SCORE data show that 56 percent of people want to see the powers of the chief increased so they can play a central role in society. Why not make chiefs advocates of the agreement and channel a communications operation through them?

Chiefs already have the pre-existing architecture in place for communicating to the people in their communities. This also includes those who might otherwise be harder to reach through state institutions like schools or through places of worship like churches or mosques. Moreover, support for the agreement was unanimous among chiefs, which means they're likely to rise to the role with some enthusiasm. This indicates that such a policy could actually be relatively straightforward to implement; increasing popular knowledge of R-ARCSS through the chiefdom governance structure wouldn't just be effective then, it would also be *cost* effective.

Two in One: Utilizing the Chiefdom Governance Structure Will Also Build Local Cohesion

We have established that chiefs lend a channel through which to raise knowledge of R-ARCSS and therefore lock in support for the agreement. Furthermore, utilizing and working alongside the traditional chiefdom governance structure also gives local communities an opportunity to rally around and build local social cohesion in and of itself.

Trust and adherence to chiefs indicate local civic identity. Through leveraging the local civic identities that are already strong, local social cohesion can be built up in order to strengthen governance and increase faith in the system. Faith in the system can be co-opted to increase faith in the pluralistic, national

system—and therefore a national identity going forward.

R-ARCSS itself commits to devolve powers and decentralize decision making (article 4.1.6.), a principle that is also affirmed in the parameters of the Permanent Constitution, which will be drafted during the current transition period. From this perspective, utilizing the chiefs in this way also feeds into the peace agreement itself: balancing the benefits of local government authority with the needs of a coherent and legitimate national political identity is a major project *within* the process of implementing South Sudan's peace agreement.

In conclusion, SCORE lends a compass to policy makers navigating South Sudan's peacebuilding process. It maps out actions to help make R-ARCSS more resilient. First, identify the potential peace process detractors and engage them in the political process. Second, remove social factors that could make people disillusioned with the peace agreement. Reducing crime and improving food security would go a long way to shore up support. Finally, utilize the chiefs as champions of the peace agreement and workable local government that leverages peace dividends. This includes empowering them as local educators and advocates to raise understanding of R-ARCSS, while simultaneously creating the political space so they can play their influential role in the local community.

Though there are parallels between South Sudan and other pluralistic African nations marred with conflict, each one is unique. Across the board, the SCORE approach is a sure way to take a snapshot of the particular social cohesion dynamics, identify weak spots, and uncover the most effective ways to eliminate them.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article belong to the authors and are not attributable to the United Nations Development Programme. The authors wish to thank UNDP South Sudan for funding the SCORE project, which ran July 2019–September 2020.

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Peace Accords and Policy Processes in Fragile and Post-Conflict Situations

Locating South Sudan Peace Agreement (2015) in the Policy Discourse

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ABSTRACT

Public policy in fragile and conflict-affected states is sometimes informed by external mechanisms such as multilateral compacts or externally mediated and supported peace accords. How these provisions interact with the policy process and locate them in the policy discourse are central questions addressed by this article. Peace accords are today becoming part of the public policy discourse, especially in countries with divided political systems. The article argues that peace accords are similar in function to policy transfer theory. The difference is that policy transfers are consensual and framed within larger bilateral obligations, while peace accords are more confined to problem identification and agenda setting with explicit objective of improving future policy processes and contexts. Peace accords usher in solutions based on domestic realities and therefore are well positioned within Africa's desire for endogeneity. Employing qualitative methods and interpretations, this article examines the South Sudan peace agreement (2015). The article concludes that the interfusion of peace accords into public policy processes insulate and place protagonist as adjudicators in resolving conflicting and competing

policy values. It also accords protagonists supra-constitutional and supra-institutional powers that enable government to overcome institutional trappings and fragility.

Introduction

Examining public policy processes in the fragile political context of South Sudan brings out the highly contested political nature in the allocation of value and the contribution they make to the resolution of conflicts. Policy outcomes end up a win-lose equation that is devoid of value neutrality. The article departs from the conflictual nature of policy processes by examining the interaction of policy and politics in peace accords and how they impact policy in terms of upholding values and the instruments of regulation that correct incompatibilities. Certain provisions of peace accords as examined within this article are means to correct certain malpractices and dysfunctional policies. Parties agree to resolve incompatibilities through external policy arrangements contained in a tailored peace agreement. This is only possible due to the deep-seated differences and political divisions that makes the attainment of consensus dependent on outside

support. Peace accord, therefore, is designed as an essentially policy instrument geared toward reforming and establishing a new order that is well placed to manage existing incompatibilities. It provides essential instruments that regulate, distribute, and redistribute values that are either material or ideational. It also provides a forum and an instrument that address the inadequacies of either policy provisions, policy-making processes, or both.

Considering policy contents and processes within fragile and post-conflict situations is often contested along a number of layers. It could be between the incumbent and citizens and between the incumbent and insurgents who challenge the legitimacy and authority of the state policy-making institutions. If these contestations are not resolved through peaceful means, the state would end up in a grievance-based conflict. When incompatibilities persist despite continuous efforts to dislodge them, then the state ends up in a conflict trap.

South Sudan typifies a fragile state that lacks inertia to break the vicious circle of conflict over the allocation of values. This is well manifested in the narrative of conflict that shifted from the question of who should govern into a question of how to govern. This brings criteria on the quality of the government and the content of its policies in addressing incompatibilities in society.

This paper is structured into three parts: the first section offers a theoretical framework of fragility, post-conflict, and public policy, bringing the discourse and the debate within the confines of this paper; the second section conceptualizes South Sudan Peace Agreement, projecting factors relevant in the policy process; and the last section examines the why ARCSS is important to smooth policy processes from a theoretical and empirical perspective.

From the onset, I make a disclaimer that, despite the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018 as a result of the failure of its predecessor. It is important to note that R-ARCSS is deeply anchored on the ARCSS provisions. What was revitalized was “chapter one,” relating to power-sharing provisions and the new schedules for the implementation matrix.¹ The

peace accord remains intact as far as the other chapters and protocols are concerned. The transformative provisions of ARCSS are therefore not affected by signing R-ARCSS; that is why ARCSS is the analytical basis of this article.

Theoretical Framework on Fragility, Post-Conflict, and Public Policy

State fragility is normatively defined in terms of deficiencies in capability, authority, and legitimacy. These deficiencies are along political, economic, societal, and security capabilities.² These challenges are common in many African states, prompting scholarship that problematizes the state and governance in Africa.³ The governance problem challenging the African state comes from a number of factors including among others low population density, large geographies, difficult topographies, and a culture of flight rather than resistance.⁴ Within these epistemologies, the state is challenged in both existential and political functions. It would be difficult for a state with low capability to provide security to vast territories, and scattered populations undermine capabilities of augmenting authority with high costs involved. Herbst⁵ adequately outlined the problem posed by sparse populations, difficult terrains making the people more inclined to flee than put a resistance against a tyranny. This makes the cost higher in terms of security, infrastructure, raising taxes, providing services, and broadcasting power and authority.

Attempts to explain these problems from an African perspective is well captured through consciencism that outlined the essential role that socioeconomic transformation⁶ would impact impoverished societies. Recent scholarship pushed for an endogenous epistemology⁷ that emerges from the realities of these states rather than modelling others. Within extreme critical theory advocating for emancipation of every aspect of life, Ndlovu-Gatshini proposes de-coloniality to deconstruct power relations and get to new knowledge to counter models that are not effective and efficient.⁸

Public policy processes in Africa are therefore different when considering these problems. Policy is located within a broader idea of constructing citi-

zenship as means of managing conflict.⁹ Others conceptualize policy within a nationalist project aspiring for nation building.¹⁰ These views suggest that public policy processes are strangled by a context of discontent, division, and conflict. The process grapples with questions of creating a new public that exists in harmony with a state. It is about reconciling traditions and modernity¹¹ and bearing in mind an existential reality of a system of formal and informal institutions or customary and civic culture within a bifurcated administrative system.¹²

Situating the 2015 South Sudan Peace Accord within Policy Theory

The debates on the contents of the policy orientation bring about the centrality of politics as crucial in decision making and the overall process. These policy-politics relations are important in defining problems that constitute a policy issue by informing perceptions.¹³ This conceptualization process frames the public policy problem as socially defined but rather shifts its solutions from the social realm to the political realm. This is the essence of how and why the process either ends up in a consensus or in conflict. South Sudan policy process falls within a situation where the process does not end in consensus and therefore informs conflict. Observers who examined the quick descent of South Sudan into internal armed conflict fail to see the link between a violently contested policy-making process and the larger violent conflict. Young¹⁴ for example questions why South Sudanese conflict is externally mediated while conflicts experienced elsewhere are resolved independently of others. This argument suggests that violence is initiated with the aim of getting a forum to influence policy.

As argued in the introduction, policy may either gratify public needs or irritate fractions of or the entire society. Within divided societies, including South Sudan, policy reflects divisions in social and political values. This explains why a state may end up prescribing policies reflecting views not only of the elites in power but also the views of what it considers its major constituency. This has created political cultures linked to policy orientation favoring incum-

bents. The policy biases in many sub-Saharan African states are articulated on ethnic grounds.

With multiple actors in the policy process, the end result would be a “persistence of bad policies,” with incumbents making favorable policies that their support base and constituencies.¹⁵ During earlier years of independence, Ghanaian president Nkrumah designed policies on cocoa that hurt Ashanti farmers (his main opposition force); later when Kofi Busia took power, he imitated policies of raising foreign exchange and prices of cocoa in favor of his Ashanti people.¹⁶ Such polarizations that are reflected in policy provisions are common in Africa, with some governments perceived from tribal vantages. These political divisions impact the public sphere and therefore affect policy processes, choices, and orientations and in most instances exacerbate political divisions, leading to conflict.

Peace agreements emerge from such contexts with deep national divisions on the political and policy values affecting the public sphere. Peace accords aspire to restore order that can no longer be restored using existing instruments. Most often, such inefficiencies arise and are not amenable to the existing political and policy processes that are subject to contestation. It is only through externally supported and mediated accords that hopes are restored in addressing long-held grievances. These grievances are part of growing public dissatisfactions with the state of affairs. Such grievances are geared toward inappropriate policy provisions or in demand for policies to address the source of dissatisfaction and grievances. Peace accords therefore are aimed at resolving gaps in policy provisions and a dissatisfaction with a state policy toward certain issues of public interest.

Reverting to the Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS), its contents outline desired policy goals and means for a prosperous South Sudan. For example, its preamble captures the objectives and goals of the peace agreement, indicating that ARCSS aspires to usher in a prosperous South Sudan. Chapter I of ARCSS defines the structure of government and its role in carrying forward the implementation of the agreement with clear actions influencing the decision-making process and how certain policies

would be formulated. Under institutional arrangements, instruments, and mechanisms, ARCSS outlines 18 commissions to be established. These commissions are responsible for regulating fiscal policies and other institutional policies including legal and law enforcement agencies. Chapter IV dealing with resource, economic, and financial Management, ARCSS provides policy guidelines on essential reforms to be carried within fixed timelines specially with regard to how financial institutions should be staffed. This includes the formulation of an economic policy that is to be finalized within nine months. Other policy directives include provision for ascending and ratifying regional and international conventions that impact domestic policy environments in areas of anti-corruption and accession of the African Union Convention on Preventing Corruption and UN Convention against corruption.

This brief summary makes ARCSS not only a blueprint for resolving conflict and violence but provides for reforms and an improved policy environment. The provisions touching on policy processes include a review of crucial bills such as the Investment Promotion Act (2009) and the Banking Act, among others. In chapter IV covering economic resources, ARCSS provides detailed policy directives on oil revenue management and its effect on local communities. This is not only offering a signpost on issues of environmental policies but equally gives directives for having a poverty-reduction instrument specially with populations in oil-producing regions.

Another important policy provision is the section on land tenure, regulations, and giving directives for the formulation of policies to affect agricultural, livestock, fisheries, and wildlife. Even environmental policies are included together with policies on taxation and revenue collection. Apart from addressing questions of decentralization, the peace accord included policy directives on fiscal decentralization and revenue sharing.

This makes ARCSS a sweeping authority over critical policy-formulation processes. The agreement is supreme and has supremacy over other legislations that contravenes its provision (chapter VIII). It is even above the constitution and supplanted many

provisions of South Sudan constitution on procedures and governance. This brings the central question: what are the compelling factors making parties of the peace agreement place much of the policy process as part of a political settlement process? Moreover, what timelines have to be included with a matrix indicating who is accountable, and when should such policy be delivered? This brings the argument posited at the beginning of this paper that the interfusion of policies through peace accords is symptomatic to fragile states that are defined through a deficiency in governance, capacity, and legitimacy.

The role of peace accords is unquestionably central in the process of policy formulation. Government introduces policy instruments to remove the abstraction at the level of goals and means of achieving intended policy.¹⁷ Peace accords make a contribution not only by defining goals and means but by settling differences via conflict management¹⁸ and enhance nation building.¹⁹ In essence, the preamble of ARCSS alludes to the goal of building a peaceful, prosperous, and just South Sudan nation and state. This is not different from what is enshrined in the South Sudan Constitution, but with the political settlement framework, it becomes necessary to consider power relations at both formal and informal manifestation.

Why ARCSS Is Important in Enhancing Public Policy

The argument that peace accords are emerging supra-constitutional and supra-institutional instruments governing behaviors and decisions within fragile context and divided society is more than accurate. First, these accords are meant to restore confidence²⁰ and build institutions and constitutions.²¹ In the case of ARCSS, the intrinsic values and functions are overtly asserted, and ARCSS is held as supreme and therefore supra-constitutional. Based on Howlett's definition that frames policy instrument as a "tool for governance and state authority,"²² this is exactly how ARCSS is operationalized by mediators and negotiators. ARCSS has provisions impacting on governance, policy processes, and institutional function.

How these are carried forward are spelled out in

peace accords that define values and offer the parties a sort of consensus on issues that they were not able to agree upon outside the context of violence and peace agreement. It should be noted that it is not policy values that determine the instrument but how these values are articulated. In the case of South Sudan, with politics of violence and lack of internal policy consensus, the peace reached by the parties constitutes that instrument. In a welfare economy, the choice of intervention would be the market, while within neoclassical perspectives, the emphasis would rest on state intervention in the provision of public goods.²³ Getting back to situations where there are clear divisions over policy with lack of national consensus and weak institutions, the instrument would be to have a binding document governing these relations and providing guidelines for reforms and governance. This brings the question of what are the values informing policy instrument in fragile and conflict-prone societies.

This question outlines the evolution of policy regimes and instruments in public policy within Western polities. Howlett²⁴ offers a matrix of how government makes policy regimes and policy instruments based on an existing political and institutional reality. First, at the level of abstraction, a government should define goals and means. This is very common when considering how peace accords identify problems in terms of inequality, inefficiency, lack of social justice and postulate directives to translate these into provisions and address them. This provision would be the goal that defines the mechanisms through providing means as I shall discuss. Another level identified is the policy regime logic and capacity issues that determine policy objectives and policy mechanisms.²⁵ This brings the choice between using existing institutions and demanding new institutions to achieve these goals by defining certain objectives into institutional reforms.

In the situation where policy processes are informed by peace accords, and at the level of abstraction, the peace agreement is remedial to a dangerous stalemate. It defines the goal of government and conflicting parties in ending violence and conflict and ends up the stalemate in attaining policy consensus. This is an important factor that peace accords bring to the policy process in fragile states by not only

restoring legitimacy of policies but by restoring inclusivity. The process of restoring legitimacy and inclusivity is the deliberative factor that policy actors are not able to attain within a violently contested order. The peace agreement therefore becomes the hope to restore the collapsed order and push for establishing a better constitutional order that safeguards against a relapse to conflict. A successful peace accord therefore addresses root causes and safeguards against a recurrence. Rothchild's thesis that a model peace accord should end conflict and "structure future relations"²⁶ is central when appreciating the policy value inherent in peace processes. Almost all peace processes have transformative elements that are deeply anchored on policy processes, such as judiciary reforms, restructuring security forces, and improving transparency and accountability within financial and economic sectors.

At this juncture it should be acknowledged that, without robust arrangements that permeate power relations and the division in society, it would be difficult for a country such as South Sudan to function with internal consensus. The peace accord, therefore, serves as a catalyst enhancing a smooth public policy process and a transition to a normal policy process within established institutions and structures. It is on the backdrop that no state with capability, authority, and legitimacy ends up in conflict or seeks an externally supported mechanism to augment policy decisions and processes.

South Sudan, with a vicious cycle of conflict, is widely defined as a state that failed to manage diversity,²⁷ to manage differences and expectations,²⁸ and to transform the ruling party into a national liberation movement.²⁹ These indicate a problem in policy processes and choice. The problem is therefore a problem of governance, problem of regulating politics, problem of distributing and redistributing benefits and goods—in short, it is a problem that every government faces but is able to respond to through policy.

Linking peace to policy processes would best be viewed by examining how they function. A study that examined 33 peace accords in various context with the objective of identifying provisions relevant to issues of governance and institutional reforms outlined inter-

esting findings.³⁰ Out of the sample, it found that 65 percent, or 22, of the peace accords emphasized governance. This is an important indicator that peace accords play major roles in informing social and public policy. Corroborating this finding with the teleology of liberal peacebuilding that address constitutional and institutional arrangements, I cannot agree more that liberal peace is part of governance architecture.³¹ Peacebuilding is “. . . a field of external policy intervention with the intention of assisting post-conflict or conflict-prone states to build a sustainable peace on the basis of liberal institutional frameworks of constitutionalism, market freedoms, democracy and the rule of law.”³²

Conclusion

Having discussed the importance of peace agreements to policy processes in a fragile and conflict-affected state such as South Sudan, it is clear that failure to allocate value through internal instruments make external interventions inevitable. ARCSS clearly outlined the importance it has as a policy instrument that is able to achieve national policy consensus for South Sudan through prolonged deliberation mediated by external forces. Regardless of the state of its implementation, this peace accord has ushered in instruments to carry forward public policy in the state. A prospect for better policies and improved governance hinges on this important document. This is due to the argument I am advocating here that peace accords are public policy instruments within a divided society. Acting as a signpost and providing benchmarks for policy formulation that informs policy goals and means, ARCSS offers nodes, necessitating the emergence of an epistemic community and an interest group that not only lobby but serve interests of its members. The accord could be constantly challenged, requiring negotiations, bargains, and compromises. This is the same with policy documents that generate bargains and negotiations between perceived winners and losers. Peace accords like policy documents are not absolute and often re-opened for deliberation, evaluation, and compromise. The major role it plays is in insulating parties from contextual and situational factors of violence.

This enables a culture of deliberation in a context with severe deficiency of dialog and deliberation. ARCSS, like other peace agreements, addresses policy-formulation processes by defining the agenda and ensuring inclusivity not only of what is in the policy but who is part of policy deliberation. This is what makes policy processes in Africa unique, as they are battles against contextual and situational challenges and aim at the basics of removing contextual challenges by managing conflict by incorporating informal power and building states and nations based on consensus achieved through peace accords.

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Understanding the COVID-19 Pandemic and Debt in Burkina Faso Facing a Multidimensional Crisis

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Abstract

Since February 2020, the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), a global health threat, has rapidly emerged in sub-Saharan Africa. The pandemic entailed a lockdown of the global economy, followed by several attempts to gradually reopen national economies threatened by a drastic resurgence of COVID-19 cases. In efforts to tackle the global health crisis, national strategies have been put in place across the world; hence, the indebtedness will increase further. The pandemic has uncovered risks of a major debt crisis for African developing countries, especially Burkina Faso. This paper aims to examine the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the debt situation of Burkina Faso, a G5 Sahel country in turmoil.

Firstly, a health plan and social distancing measures were set up to contain the pandemic. The virus spread continues, as testing capacity remains limited across the country.

Secondly, Burkina Faso set up an immediate crisis response plan, followed by a rescue plan to cope with the socioeconomic effects of the pandemic since 2 April 2020. According to the IMF, the national economy entered into recession in 2020. As a result, the country has faced difficulties in servicing its external debt.

This led to strengthening donors' mobilization. The implementation of a debt standstill could improve the country's fiscal space to address the COVID-19 crisis.

Thirdly, the country has already experienced major exogenous and endogenous shocks such as jihadist threat, which caused a major humanitarian crisis in some regions (Sahel, North, Central North, East, Central East, and Boucle du Mouhoun).

Introduction

Since 2015, Burkina Faso has experienced a gradual degradation of the security situation, which led to a worsening of the humanitarian crisis. The country was on the verge of instability when the COVID-19 pandemic was officially declared on 9 March 2020. The pandemic has negatively impacted Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 relating to human health and well-being but extends far beyond the health sector. It has uncovered the fragility of the national health sector and the economic apparatus.

The paper examines how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the debt situation of Burkina Faso, a G5 Sahel country in turmoil.

First, this paper studies the main features of the continued rise in the COVID-19 cases in Burkina Faso.

This led to examining the responsiveness of the country's health sector.

Then, it points out that in 2020, the country has entered into a COVID-19-induced recession. Burkina Faso has attempted to tackle the pandemic's effects, while experiencing difficulties to service its external debt. Hence, solving the debt situation has become a critical matter in view of restoring fiscal space for saving lives and initiating the country's economic recovery in the post-COVID-19 era.

Finally, this paper studies the multifaceted crisis the country has encountered, beyond the COVID-19 outbreak. The country remains ill equipped to cope with insecurity, which has worsened the humanitarian crisis.

Dynamics of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Government Response in Burkina Faso under Scrutiny

The COVID-19 pandemic led to questioning Burkina Faso's responsiveness in dealing with the global health threat, given the health sector's fragility. In an attempt to tackle the health crisis, the government set up a national plan, which has shown some shortcomings.

Key Features of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Burkina Faso

At the end of 2019, the coronavirus started spreading in China. Later, the European Union (EU) became a hub for its dissemination across the world. Since February 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has been plaguing sub-Saharan Africa, particularly Burkina Faso. On 9 March 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was officially declared in the country. After introducing the first set of containment measures, on 26 March 2020, a state of public health emergency was announced. In early May 2020, containment measures were progressively lifted, which might have allowed the coronavirus to spread even further. On 16 June 2020, the government encouraged the population to participate voluntarily in free-of-charge, large-scale COVID-19 testing to contain the coronavirus spread. Since then, insufficient testing capacity has not contributed to breaking the chain

of infections. From 9 March 2020, to 24 January 2021, 9,967 confirmed cases and 109 deaths from COVID-19 were recorded, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).¹ Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic's dynamics could be underreported in sub-Saharan Africa,² particularly in Burkina Faso.

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to progress around the world, COVID-19 vaccines have been developed in record time. High-income countries started to roll out the COVID-19 vaccines in December 2020. . Nonetheless, the biggest challenge is delivering the COVID-19 vaccines around the world equally. This is the purpose of COVAX, mainly coordinated by WHO in partnership with GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance, and the Centre for Epidemics Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). In December 2020, 189 countries, including Burkina Faso, joined the COVAX facility, which aims to provide 2 billion doses by the end of 2021. On 7 December 2020, Burkinabè authorities created a national committee in charge of introducing COVID-19 vaccines. However, WHO expressed concerns as "equitable access is also threatened by a lack of in-country planning and capacity"³ in low-income countries.

The COVID-19 Outbreak: Testing Health System Responsiveness in Burkina Faso

The COVID-19 crisis has amplified the demand for health services,⁴ challenging the country's health care system. According to the World Bank, in 2018, current health spending stood at 5.62 percent of GDP.⁵ The same year, health spending per capita amounted to only USD40.24,⁶ below the threshold recommended by WHO for low-income countries (USD86). In 2018, out-of-pocket expenses were estimated at 35.83 percent of current health spending.⁷ Furthermore, the health sector is insufficiently equipped.⁸ In 2017, the country only had 0.1 physicians per 1,000 people⁹ as well as 0.9 nurses and midwives per 1,000 people.¹⁰ Finally, hygiene measures are complex to implement due to limited access to safe water and sanitation services in the country. The World Bank estimated that, in 2017, 11.87 percent of the Burkinabè population had access to basic handwashing facilities, including soap and a source of water.¹¹

In February 2020, the country implemented a six-month plan called the *plan de riposte* to support the health response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan amounted to about USD294 million, representing 1.8 percent of GDP.¹² It benefited from donors' support and the private sector. The government then tried to improve COVID-19 preparedness, by increasing health sector-related spending, as stressed in the 2020 supplementary budget.¹³ To this end, on 11 May 2020, it created the *Comité National de Gestion de la Crise de la Pandémie de la COVID-19* (CNGCP-COVID-19), a specific task force in charge of overseeing the national response to the coronavirus spread.

Macroeconomic Developments under COVID-19: Focus on Debt Issue in Burkina Faso.

In 2020, the coronavirus spread has further exposed the country's vulnerability. High public debt and limited fiscal space have constrained the government's ability to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's economy. Building adequate fiscal space requires actions to be taken to tackle debt challenges. At the international level, the pandemic forced a revised policy dialog between creditors and debtors in order to prevent debt distress. Burkina Faso is a low-income country, which is part of this dialog.

Macroeconomic Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

On the socioeconomic front, the national COVID-19 response is based on a significant fiscal stimulus, while also trying to address the health crisis:

- First, Burkina Faso imposed containment measures at the early stage of the COVID-19 outbreak. Meanwhile, on 2 April 2020, President Kaboré announced a three-month socio-economic plan to cushion the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency plan was estimated at approximately USD359 million. The main measures were as follows: (1) social measures such as social safety net (SSN) programs, (2) support measures for enterprises, and (3) measures to support the economy.¹⁴ Regardless

of relief support from the government, the containment measures became unsustainable, most notably for workers in the informal sector. As a result, demonstrations occurred at the end of April 2020.¹⁵

- Second, the country restarted its economy after gradually relaxing the containment measures on 4 May 2020. In this context, the government has implemented a socioeconomic recovery plan covering the period from 1 July 2020 to the end of 2020.

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in 2019, real GDP growth for Burkina Faso stood at 5.7 percent. In the pre-COVID-19 situation, it projected 6 percent of real GDP growth for 2020. However, the IMF reckons that "the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the world into a recession for 2020."¹⁶ On 14 October 2020, the IMF stressed that the country's real GDP growth was projected at -2.8 percent.¹⁷ In April 2020, it forecast an annual inflation of 2.2 percent in 2020,¹⁸ since the country may experience inflationary pressures.

Public finances were already under high pressure due to the weight of the existing crises. In the pre-COVID-19 period, the fiscal space narrowed. The coronavirus outbreak has added another layer to the above-mentioned crises. Among others, pandemic-related public revenue shortfalls have negatively impacted debt sustainability.¹⁹ Therefore, the government had to reprioritize public spending to financially cope with the *plan de riposte*, which comprised the health care plan and the socioeconomic rescue plan. On 9 July 2020, the supplementary budget, known as *Loi de Finances Rectificative* (LFR) was adopted to mainly finance the *plan de riposte*. Consequently, the public deficit was estimated at 5.38 percent of GDP, which is higher than the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) deficit threshold of 3 percent of GDP. It is worth recalling that on 27 April 2020, the WAEMU heads of state temporarily lifted the regional growth and stability pact to tackle the socioeconomic effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. In 2021, the public deficit is likely to reach 5.5 percent of GDP, according to the IMF.²⁰

The Debt Challenges in Burkina Faso

At the end of 2019, Burkina Faso's nominal stock of debt was estimated at 42.7 percent of GDP, below the WAEMU indicative threshold of 70 percent. At the end of 2019, external debt constituted 55.6 percent of the total debt stock. The multilateral creditors detained the country's external debt. However, the debt stock's composition has progressively shifted toward domestic debt over recent years.²¹ From 2014 to 2019, domestic debt gradually rose from 22.9 to 44.4 percent in the overall debt stock (Table 1). The domestic debt mainly comprised treasury bills and bonds issued on the WAEMU regional market in response to the country's rising financing needs. Nonetheless, the IMF reckons that "Burkina Faso's debt is assessed to remain sustainable with a moderate risk of debt distress, even under the COVID-19 pandemic shock."²²

The COVID-19 crisis has led to setting up multilateral assistance to mitigate the socioeconomic impact in Burkina Faso. On 14 April 2020, the IMF provided emergency assistance amounting to USD115.3 million under the Rapid Credit Facility (RCF). The disbursement will help finance the above-mentioned national strategy to contain the COVID-19 outbreak. Moreover, it will contribute to addressing the urgent balance-of-payments (BOP) need. In addition, on 13 April 2020, the IMF granted debt relief service to 25 countries, including Burkina Faso, under the Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT).²⁴ Over the next six months, the country will obtain approximately USD11.9 million in terms of debt relief service. This assistance could be renewed for up to two years.²⁵

On 19 March 2020, the African Ministry of Finance mainly requested the immediate waiver of all interest payments on all debt, estimated for the past year, to restore a fiscal path and liquidity.²⁶ On 25 March 2020, the Bretton Woods institutions put forth a call to action addressed at the G20 to suspend debt payments.²⁷ In response, on 15 April 2020, the G20 agreed to a debt service standstill on bilateral loans, known as the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI), which went into effect on 1 May 2020. The initiative is designed for 76 International Development Association (IDA) countries, as well as for least developed countries (LDCs); so far, 39 countries, including Burkina Faso, are part of this initiative. In reference to the World Bank's International Debt Statistics (IDS) database, Burkina Faso has potential DSSI savings amounting to USD23.3 million, corresponding to 0.2 percent of GDP.²⁸ Given the magnitude of the COVID-19 crisis, on 14 October 2020, the G20 decided to extend the DSSI²⁹ until 30 June 2021. The G20 might decide to further extend the DSSI for another six months at the 2021 IMF and World Bank spring meetings.

In addition, Burkina Faso was eligible for the Paris Club, which is an informal group of creditor countries led by France. The Paris Club and non-Paris Club official creditors, such as China, endorsed the DSSI. On 26 May 2020, Burkina Faso obtained a suspension of debt service due from 1 May 2020 to the end of 2020.³⁰ Overall, the G20 and the Paris Club initiatives are aimed at temporarily freeing resources to help Burkina Faso cope with the health, social, and economic shocks caused by the coronavirus crisis. Moreover, the purpose of these initiatives consists of improving trans-

Table 1: Public Debt Stock in Burkina Faso from 2014 to 2019 (% of GDP)

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Public Debt	26.6	31.4	33.3	33.5	37.7	42.7
External Debt	20.5	23.2	23.7	21.1	21.5	23.7
Share (in % to total debt)	77.1	73.9	71.1	62.8	57.0	55.6
Domestic Debt	6.1	8.2	9.6	12.4	16.2	19.0
Share (in % to total debt)	22.9	26.1	28.9	37.2	43.0	44.4
Memorandum items						
Overall fiscal balance	-1.6	-1.9	-3.0	-6.8	-4.2	-3.2
GDP growth (in %)	4.3	3.9	6.0	6.2	6.8	5.7

Source: IMF, 2020.²³

parency and debt management. Despite the call of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres³¹ on 17 April 2020, for an “across-the-board debt standstill for all developing countries,” the global public health crisis has revealed a lack of cohesion on the part of creditors. Private creditors do not participate in the DSSI, which somehow shows the limit of the G20 initiative.³² In addition, “for the DSSI to be fully effective, there should be a standard minimum set of debt-restructuring information.”³³ As a result, on 22 November 2020, the G20 adopted a common framework for debt treatments beyond the DSSI. Such a framework will allow for restructuring of government debt. It also included China, which is a major creditor in sub-Saharan Africa, as it represents 75 percent of the debt service payments due over the period covered by the DSSI.

The Multifaceted Burkinabè Crisis in the Post-COVID Era

The COVID-19 outbreak has put further pressure on the population, which is exposed to other major challenges. Rebuilding the national economy, stronger and better, implies tackling these simultaneous challenges, i.e., insecurity, humanitarian crisis, climate change, food security crisis, and social crisis, during an election year. The country was already ill prepared to deal with a multidimensional crisis.

Rising Security and Humanitarian Crises

Since 2015, Burkina Faso, one of the G5 Sahel countries, has experienced a mounting security crisis (an exogenous shock) in the Sahel, North, Central North, East, Central East, and Boucle du Mouhoun regions.

Jihadist attacks have intensified in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. From a security standpoint, the country's rising vulnerability constitutes a heavy burden on public finances. In 2019, security sector-related spending amounted to 3.7 percent of GDP. In 2020, it was projected at 4 percent, before the pandemic hit the country.³⁴ Hence, the government's priority remains the restoration of state authority across the country. At both regional and international levels, major initiatives such as the G5 Sahel³⁵ and the UN sustaining

peace³⁶ have been put in place to address the root causes of the conflict in the Liptako-Gourma region.

The surge in jihadist attacks has worsened the humanitarian crisis (an endogenous shock) in Burkina Faso. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the number of internationally displaced persons (IDPs) increased from 81,964 to 843,329, from 27 January 2020 to 22 April 2020.³⁷ Moreover, the *Conseil National de Secours d'Urgence et de Réhabilitation* (CONASUR) reported that the estimated IDP population stood at 1,049,767 on 10 November 2020.³⁸ The IDPs, who have fled conflict-affected areas, are mainly concentrated in the Central North and Sahel regions. Due to insecurity and the COVID-19 outbreak, they have benefited from the urgent assistance of partners such as the UN and NGOs. However, a long-lasting global health crisis is likely to disrupt the vital humanitarian supply chain.³⁹

The 2020 Elections in a Context of Growing Social Tensions

Despite the rising jihadist threat and the COVID-19 pandemic, on 22 November 2020, the presidential and legislative elections took place without the results being contested. Additionally, Burkina Faso was confronted with a severe social crisis⁴⁰ prior to the global health crisis. The pandemic further revealed the country's acute social crisis. It has amplified the dynamics of poverty and inequality, which will be complex issue to tackle in the post-COVID-19 era.

Conclusion and Key Policy Recommendations

From a health standpoint, Burkina Faso must allocate significant funds to the health sector by improving its fiscal space. Since early December 2020, a new surge in the number of the confirmed COVID-19 cases has been observed in the country. Scarcity of testing could contribute to the worsening of the health crisis while the country is simultaneously confronted with several challenges. Whereas high-income countries started rolling out COVID-19 vaccines in December 2020, developing countries, including Burkina Faso, mainly

rely on the COVAX facility to get access to the COVID-19 vaccines.

On the economic front, like other developing economies, Burkina Faso has already experienced financial gaps for implementing the 2030 UN agenda and the African Union (AU) 2063 agenda. Hence, building adequate fiscal space will contribute to achieving a resilient and sustainable recovery from the coronavirus spread, beyond addressing the debt challenges. This also requires the prevention of the fiscal base erosion of Burkina Faso in the post-COVID-19 period.

With regard to security and political issues, donors' mobilization should be further increased. This is in order to support Burkina Faso to restore political stability and consolidate the state's legitimacy, as instability in the Sahel region remains under intense scrutiny.

Taken together, the COVID-19 pandemic has collided with pre-existing crises, increasing uncertainty surrounding the country's future.

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Africa's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

A Reflection of One-Size-Fits-All Approach to Solving Problems in Africa

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Abstract

Prior to the spread of the coronavirus to Africa, the continent was warned about its potential severity. Consequently, when the coronavirus was reported in Africa, African countries also resorted to lockdowns in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the midst of the lockdowns, Europe, the United States, and other countries outside Africa continued to record high numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths compared with African countries. From the standpoints of the historical school of economics and the dependency theory, this paper argues that peculiar structures and mechanisms in Africa fortify the continent against the coronavirus, which is why infections and deaths are relatively low in Africa. Through an examination of the existing body of literature on the historical school of economics, the dependency theory, the coronavirus, and other related literature, this paper identifies high temperatures in Africa, Africa's youthful population, frequent exposure of Africans to diseases, and consumption by Africans of a wide range of herbs and crop plants with curative properties as those peculiar

structures and mechanisms. The paper concludes that the rush by African leaders in adopting lockdowns as responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the midst of the rising numbers of coronavirus infections and its related deaths in the countries from which the lockdowns were borrowed, exemplifies the reluctance of African leaders in breaking away from the one-size-fits-all approach to solving problems in the continent.

Introduction

With the onset of the coronavirus in Africa, almost all African countries emulated Western economies by embarking on lockdowns to curb the spread of the virus. While the lockdowns were in place across the globe, there was a disparity in coronavirus infections and deaths from the disease between Western countries and Africa. While high infections and deaths from the virus were recorded in the former, infections and deaths from the virus were relatively low in the latter. The implication of the relatively low coronavirus infections and deaths from the disease in Africa compared with Western countries is that factors peculiar to the

African continent, other than the lockdowns, account for the disparity in the rates of infections and deaths.

Overview of COVID-19 Pandemic

The novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which causes the respiratory illness called COVID-19, emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. SARS-CoV-2 is the third coronavirus to emerge in the human population in the past two decades, after the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) outbreaks in 2002 and 2012, respectively.¹ Unlike SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV-2 has been assessed by the World Health Organization (WHO) as highly contagious; fast spreading; and capable of causing enormous health, economic, and societal impacts.²

Over 84,430 people contracted the novel coronavirus in China, out of which 4,643 died, with many other people around the world identified with the virus.³ Apart from China, the United States, Europe, and Iran have recorded the largest outbreaks.⁴ As of 10 May 2020, the United States recorded 1,245,775 coronavirus cases and 75,364 deaths. In Western Europe, the total coronavirus cases stood at 1,707,946 with 155,552 deaths. Iran has penciled 106,220 cases of coronavirus with 6,589 deaths, the highest so far in the Eastern

Mediterranean.⁵ Consequently, WHO declared COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern⁶ and a pandemic⁷ on 30 January 2020 and 11 March 2020, respectively.

Figure 1 represents the distribution of the coronavirus disease across the world at the time the disease was declared by WHO a public health emergency and a pandemic.

Africa recorded its first COVID-19 case on 20 February 2020, with the Egypt Health Ministry's announcement of the country's first coronavirus infection involving a Chinese national.⁸ The virus hit sub-Saharan Africa on 28 February 2020, when Nigeria confirmed its first case involving an Australian national.⁹ According to the African Center for Disease Control, as of 2 May 2020, all African countries except Lesotho had reported COVID-19 cases. However, on 13 May 2020, Lesotho recorded its first coronavirus case, making it the last country in Africa to confirm the disease.¹⁰ Contrary to expectations that Africa would import most of its COVID-19 cases from China owing to the large volume of trade between China and Africa,¹¹ it is mostly people from Europe and North America who have brought the disease to Africa.¹²

From Figure 2, almost every country in Africa recorded coronavirus infection as of 10 October 2020, with the rates of infections being high in countries in

Figure 1. Countries, Territories, or Areas with Reported Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 as of 15 March 2020

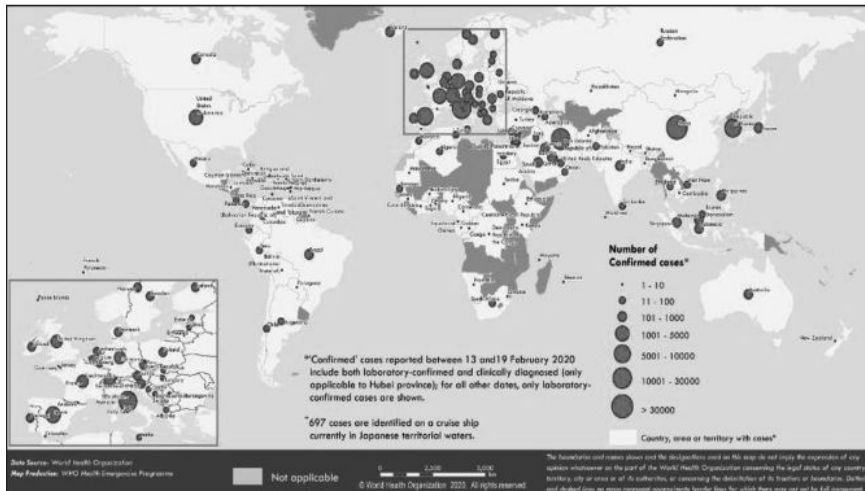
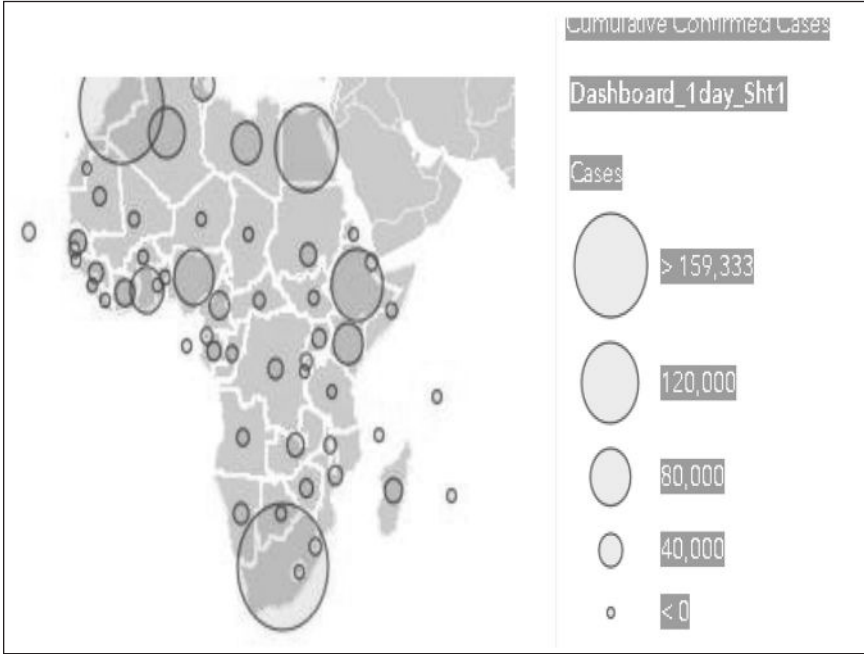


Figure 2. Spread of Coronavirus across Africa



Source: Africa CDC

the northern, eastern, and southern parts of Africa.

While the lockdowns were in place, the numbers of coronavirus infections and deaths from the disease soared amongst Western countries compared with African countries. According to the *WHO Situation Report, 108*, dated 7 May 2020, out of a total of 3,672,238 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 254,045 deaths from the disease worldwide, the Americas (North and South) recorded 1,542,829 cases with 84,804 deaths, while Europe recorded 1,626,037 cases and 150,238 deaths, compared with 35,470 cases and 1,228 deaths in Africa.

As shown in Table 1, North and South America and Europe, where lockdowns were stringent, surprisingly recorded higher infections and deaths rates compared with Africa, where the high levels of poverty made it difficult for effective lockdowns.

This paper identifies and analyzes peculiar structures and mechanisms in Africa that reasonably explain the relatively few COVID-19 cases and related deaths in the continent compared with Western countries. To achieve this, the paper first discusses the

main tenets of the historical school of economics and the dependency theory, bringing out the relationship between the two schools of thought. Second, Africa's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is examined. Third, the peculiar structures and mechanisms that plausibly explain the relatively low number of COVID-19 cases and related deaths in Africa are identified and discussed. Finally, the paper makes recommendations toward getting African leaders to break away from the application of Western tailor-made solutions to problems confronting the African continent.

Main Tenets of Historical School of Economics

Historical economics, with its vibrant German version and a rather marginalized English version, has its roots in with the writings of Adam Müller and Friedrich List in Germany and William Whewell and Richard Jones in Britain.

Both versions of the historical school of economics are critical of classical economists such as Adam

Table 1. Situation in Numbers (by WHO Region)

Globally	3, 672, 238 cases	254, 045 deaths
Africa	35, 470 cases	1,228 deaths
Americas	1, 542, 829 cases	84, 804 deaths
Eastern Mediterranean	229, 198 cases	8,465 deaths
Europe	1, 626, 037 cases	150, 238 deaths
South-East Asia	81, 808 cases	2,936 deaths
Western Pacific	156, 184 cases	6,361 deaths

Source: Modified by author from *WHO Situation Report*, 108

Smith and David Ricardo, who described the political economy purely on economic laws, which they considered valid at all times and places. By this, the political economy is approached by classical economists more or less as a *deductive* science. Ingram, one of the early scholars within the British historical school, for example, described David Ricardo as being relentlessly deductive.¹³ In this deductive context, certain definitions are adopted as universal and therefore applicable to all countries and classes of society worldwide from which a whole system of propositions that are regarded as valid could be deduced.¹⁴ Thus, peculiar circumstances and historical considerations of societies have no place within the thoughts of classical economists.

On the contrary, the historical school of economics lays emphasis on the centrality of history in the study of human conduct, in economic action as in other areas, because the cultural values that lend meanings to human life are created by specific processes of social development.¹⁵ Leslie, who identifies with the British historical school, equates inductivism to historicism.¹⁶ Edwin Cannan also observes that history and economics have always enjoyed a mutually reinforcing relationship.¹⁷ From this standpoint, the historical school of economics, unlike the classical economists, favors an inductive approach to the study of political economy, an approach that allows for a consideration of the history and peculiar circumstances of countries

and societies in understanding and finding solutions to their problems.

The influence of the historical school of economics has been so strong that, since the early 20th century, economists have continued to draw upon historical materials and arguments in their work on practical economic problems such as unemployment, economic development, industrial decline, and poverty.¹⁸

Main Tenets of Dependency Theory

Dependency theory grew influential in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, largely in reaction to the modernization theory and free trade policies, which originated in the West. Proponents of the modernization theory posit that underdevelopment is caused by certain cultural characteristics and the lack of adherence of underdeveloped countries to specific stages of development, which the developed economies have passed through to reach where they are today.¹⁹ One commonality amongst the various versions of the dependency school of thought is the rejection of the modernization theory's ahistorical approach to development and the critique of its failure to account for the importance of the role of global economic and political structures.²⁰

Dependency theorists argue that, beyond the end of formal colonialism, the value transfers of profits have continued to flow from the Global South to the North.

This implies that the core countries of the North continue to benefit from their extraction of wealth from the peripheral countries of the South. Within such a framework, the underdevelopment of countries in the South can be explained through their continued exploitation at the hands of the North, rather than only by way of internal policy failures.²¹

Both the historical school of economics and the dependency theory emphasize the need to take into account history and peculiar circumstance in the study of human phenomenon. Thus, the value of the theoretical lens under which this paper is analyzed lies in its call on Africans to look within the continent for solutions to problems, as solutions should take account of peculiar circumstances in the continent.

The main criticism levelled against the dependency theory is its focus on the role played by wealthy nations in the underdevelopment of poor nations at the neglect of other factors that cause underdevelopment. It is to address this weakness that this paper focuses on how the attitude of Africans account for the many unresolved problems in the continent notwithstanding the continued assistance and guidance from Western countries.

Africa's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

After research by WHO has shown that the virus that causes COVID-19 does not move on its own but is transmitted from one person to another through fluids in the respiratory system,²² China imposed a lockdown in Wuhan to curtail spread. Although the WHO representative in China was categorical that the Wuhan lockdown, as it was referred to, was beyond WHO's guidelines, it commended China for the move and described it as unprecedented in public health history.²³ Later, almost all Western countries resorted to lockdowns to contain the virus when they were hit by it.

Based on the devastating effect of the coronavirus on Western economies, African countries were warned about the potential severity of the virus in the continent due to the continent's weak health infrastructure among other things. For example, Melinda Gates, wife of billionaire Bill Gates, warned that Africa would be

badly hit by the deadly virus, with dead bodies littered in their streets.²⁴ WHO has also admonished that health services in Africa would be overwhelmed unless African countries scaled up their COVID-19 response.²⁵ WHO Regional Office for Africa estimates that 83,000–190,000 people in Africa could die of COVID-19 and 29,000,000–44,000,000 could get infected in the first year of the pandemic.²⁶

When COVID-19 cases rose above 1,000 in Africa, African leaders, in their usual knee-jerk response to problems, embarked on lockdowns to combat the pandemic in their respective countries.²⁷ Airports were closed to all incoming international flights, and unnecessary movements outside homes were also restricted. Countries within the eastern part of Africa instructed all public and private employees to work from their homes. In Ethiopia, as in many other African countries, passengers arriving from other countries were mandatorily quarantined. The Republic of Congo, Angola, and Ghana are among the African countries who closed their borders as part of the lockdown.

Ironically, whereas Western countries continued to record high coronavirus infections and deaths from the disease during their lockdowns, African countries recorded relatively low infection and death rates. Africa lags behind Western countries in terms of health infrastructure. Italy, for example, has 41 doctors per 10,000 people, and yet the country still grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic. This maybe juxtaposed with the African continent, which only spends 1 percent on health care,²⁸ with about one doctor per 5,000 people.²⁹ Therefore, it is reasonably believed that the impacts of the coronavirus would be more severe in Africa. So far, this is not the case given the statistics available on the disease. It is submitted that Africa is endowed with peculiar structures and mechanisms that tend to fortify the continent against the coronavirus, which is why the rates of infections and deaths are relatively low.

Peculiarities of African Continent and Their Impact on the COVID-19 Pandemic

From the standpoints of the historical school of eco-

nomics and the dependency theory, four structures and mechanisms peculiar to the African continent have been identified as plausible explanations for the low rate of coronavirus infections and related deaths in Africa.

First, the high temperatures associated with the weather in Africa account for the less severe impact of the coronavirus in Africa. According to the World Data Center for Meteorology, Africa, in particular the northeastern part, is of one of the sunniest places in the world. Most African countries experience sunny weather with high temperatures, usually from October to March. Temperatures in Africa currently average between 16°C and 44°C.³⁰ Thus, from 20 February 2020, when the coronavirus was first reported in Africa, temperatures were quite high. Against this backdrop is the fact that the virus that causes COVID-19 is killed at temperatures of 26°C–27°C, and when the virus falls on clothes, it can also be killed when they are exposed to the sun for two hours.³¹ The high temperatures in Africa reduce the survival rate of the virus, especially when it comes into contact with exposed surfaces, thereby minimizing its spread in the continent.

It is admitted that some Western countries can be extremely hot—Australia and the southwestern part of the United States are examples. In July 2019, France, the UK, Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium recorded temperatures up to 106°C. The difference here is that, whereas the coronavirus hit Africa when temperatures were extremely high in most countries, the virus struck Western countries during winter, when temperatures are at their lowest.

Second, Africa's youthful population accounts for the less severe impact of the coronavirus in the continent. Data from the United Nations World Population Prospects for 2019 reveal that Africa has a youthful population, with Niger being the country in Africa with the youngest population. This point is buttressed by Adegoke Yinka, who notes that 60 percent of the entire population of Africa is aged below 25, thereby making Africa the youngest continent in the world, in relation to its population makeup.³²

In his 51st situation report on COVID-19, the Director General of WHO revealed that although the coronavirus virus infects people of all ages, evidence

suggests that older people and those with underlying medical conditions are at higher risk of getting severe COVID-19. The less severe COVID-19, the greater the chances of fast recovery. Kapata et al. also reckon that coronavirus mortality rates are generally higher in older populations than in young ones.³³ Thus, with Africa's younger population, the risk of the disease getting severe when Africans contract it is less, which facilitates the rate of recovery, thereby reducing mortality rates in Africa. No doubt the rate of recoveries from the COVID-19 has been impressive within the African continent. As of 3 June 2020, of about 158,030 cases recorded in Africa, around 67,491 have so far recovered from the disease.³⁴

Third, the frequent exposure of Africans to diseases generally has provided a fortress against COVID-19. WHO notes that Africa confronts the most dramatic public health crises. This is due to the presence of a wide range of communicable and noncommunicable diseases in the continent.³⁵ Apart from poverty and weak health infrastructure, the extreme weather conditions in Africa make the continent susceptible to diseases in general. Anytime foreign material such as bacteria, viruses, or any other chemical invades the human body, the immune system produces antibodies that help fight against the foreign invasion.³⁶ The immune system identifies and attacks the foreign matter or modifies it into less harmful form.³⁷ In this way, the body naturally fights the disease.

After a disease is defeated, the antibodies remain in the body as watchdog against future attacks. What this means is that, the more the human body successfully fights diseases, the more immune to diseases the body becomes. New research conducted at the University of Wisconsin points to an interesting link between COVID-19 symptoms and the immunity patients may gain after recovery.³⁸ Another study has shown that some areas in West Africa with a high incidence of malaria are associated with a 30–93 percent decrease in the possibility of developing the disease.³⁹ Thus, the frequent exposure of Africans to diseases has over time enhanced the immune systems of Africans, thereby increasing their resistance to diseases compared with people in Western countries, where there is relatively low prevalence of diseases. Such enhanced

immunity tends to fortify many Africans against contracting diseases in general.

In limited situations where Africans have contracted the coronavirus, such persons were either asymptomatic or exhibited mild-to-moderate symptoms with very impressive recovery rates. The coronavirus situation in the top three countries in Africa in terms of confirmed cases—South Africa, Algeria, and Ghana—illustrate the limited impact of the virus in the continent. South Africa has recorded 7,808 cases and 153 deaths, while Algeria has recorded 4,997 cases with 476 deaths.⁴⁰ Ghana has 5,735 confirmed cases, 29 deaths, and 1,754 recoveries.⁴¹ The deaths in percentage terms for South Africa, Algeria, and Ghana are 1.9, 9.5, and 0.5 percent, respectively. In fact, the high numbers of deaths in Algeria is linked to the country's aged population in view of the high risk of the severity of COVID-19 and, consequently, mortality rates in older people. A study conducted by EUROMED in 2009 postulates that about 30 percent of the total Algerian population were under 30 years, with the remaining 70 percent of the population being over 30 years.⁴²

The coronavirus figures of the top three African countries may be compared to the top three countries in Europe for coronavirus infections and related deaths as of 7 May 2020. Total confirmed cases in Spain stood at 220,325 with 25,857 deaths, constituting 11.7 percent. Italy had recorded 214,457 confirmed cases, out of which 29,684 had died, representing 13.8 percent. And the UK had as a total of 201,205 confirmed cases with 30,076 deaths, or 14.3 percent. Clearly, the rates of coronavirus infections and deaths are lower in Africa compared to Western countries.

The final explanation for the low coronavirus infections and related deaths in Africa is linked to the consumption by Africans of a wide range of herbs, spices, and other edible plants with medicinal properties. Africa is home to a variety of herbs and food crops with medicinal properties—the moringa plant and the seeds of locust beans, popularly known as *dawadawa*; vegetables such as *Amaratus* species; and *Celosia* are some of examples of the food plants in Africa that have medicinal properties. The moringa plant, for example, provides the body with protein, oil, carbohydrates, vitamins, and minerals.⁴³

Apart from the above, Africans rely on a wide range of herbs as preventive and curative therapy for diseases in general. One such is *anif cumins*, which is used in Morocco. *Za'atar* is also commonly used in Egypt, and *mitmita* in Ethiopia. Ginger is widely used across the African continent. The use of these herbs and food plants, a key part of the continent's traditional medicinal practice, is not only beneficial in treating diseases but also maintaining good health.⁴⁴ According to WHO, about 80 percent of Africans rely on medicinal plants for their health care.⁴⁵ This no doubt boosts the immune systems of Africans and prevents diseases, including COVID-19, hence its low rates of infections and deaths in Africa.

Madagascar's coronavirus herbal remedy known as Covid-Organics elucidates the effectiveness of African herbs and plants in combating diseases in Africa. The herbal remedy, which has been approved by the Malagasy government as the cure and prevention treatment for coronavirus, has had significant success in Madagascar's fight against COVID-19. Equatorial Guinea has resorted to the Malagasy Covid-Organics in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Tanzania and other African countries have also expressed interest in the herbal medicine. A new study conducted by EMSKE Phytochem has established a correlation between Covid-Organics and recovery from COVID-19 in Madagascar and Chad among others and advocates for extremely close epidemiological and clinical attention to be paid to Covid-Organics efficacy on COVID-19.⁴⁶

However, WHO refused to recognize Covid-Organics for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19, its impressive results in the fight of the coronavirus in Madagascar notwithstanding. Surprisingly, ECOWAS has also disassociated itself from Covid-Organics. The position taken by ECOWAS is highly disappointing to say the least. It typifies Africans' lack of confidence in the things that originate from Africa. Meanwhile, on 11 August 2020, Russia approved a vaccine called Sputnik V against the novel coronavirus.⁴⁷ Also, on 26 September 2020, China is reported to have administered unproven COVID-19 vaccines to thousands of Chinese with the risks of the vaccines unknown.⁴⁸ The world has yet to hear from WHO whether or not it recognizes the vaccines developed by

Russia and China for the cure of the coronavirus, as it did for the Malagasy Covid-Organics. In the case of the use of unapproved coronavirus vaccines in China, the world is equally interested in hearing from WHO on whether the practice is ethical.

In view of the huge success of Covid-Organics in the fight against COVID-19 in Madagascar, it was expected that the African Center for Disease Control, an affiliate of the African Union (AU), would have taken a bold step to subject the herbal medicine to laboratory scrutiny and analysis to scientifically establish its potency in the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and recommend its use in Africa for combating the novel virus. As its use continues to reduce coronavirus infections and its related deaths in Africa, WHO and the rest of the world would be left with no option but to recognize Covid-Organics as herbal preparation from Africa for the prevention and treatment of COVID-19. As it stands now, the few African countries that have adopted Covid-Organics did so without the backing of WHO, ECOWAS, or the AU.

Another giant stride in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic in Africa is the ongoing clinical trial in Senegal for the development of the \$1 COVID-19 test kit, which is capable of producing results under ten minutes. Unlike Covid-Organics, the \$1 diagnostic kit is making waves and appears to have received some level of acceptance. This is probably due to the fact that the manufacture of the kits is not an entirely African initiative but a collaborative effort of researchers in Senegal and a UK-based company,⁴⁹ with funding support from the UK government and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.⁵⁰ It is doubtful whether the development of the diagnostic kits would have received the same attention if it was an entirely African initiative.

The identification of peculiar internal mechanisms and structures as being responsible for the low rates of coronavirus infections and deaths, rather than the lockdowns, highlights African leaders' penchant for the one-size-fits-all approach to solving problems in Africa. Such an approach fails to take into account the internal dynamics of the African continent, for which reason they are often unable to effectively tackle African problems.

The argument may be advanced that, in the wake of

the pandemic and without the benefit of epidemiological studies and the poor state of health infrastructure in Africa, African leaders had no option but to emulate the Western economies by resorting to lockdowns, especially when WHO added its voice to the need for lockdowns. The issue goes beyond the lack of the benefit of epidemiological studies and WHO's support for lockdowns. The manner in which social sciences are structured and taught in African universities is largely accountable for African leaders' relentless reliance on the one-size-fits-all approach to solving problems in Africa as it does not encourage critical thought. As observed by one of the leading authorities on the political economy of Africa, Samir Amin, current academic programs in social sciences for African universities are prescribed by the West in order to destroy any capacity to develop critical thought.⁵¹

The effects of the limited capacity of educational programming in Africa are evident. University graduates are unable to translate theoretical knowledge acquired from universities into practice. For example, it's very common in Africa for persons who with degrees in mechanical engineering to seek the assistance of wayside mechanics with practical experience in fixing basic problems with their vehicles. The churning out of university graduates with poor initiative and a dependent mindset who prefer to work for others rather than setting up their own businesses and the resultant graduate unemployment rates further illustrate the limited capacity of educational programming in the continent.

Notwithstanding the limited capacity of educational programming in Africa, the AU reports significant progress in technological innovation in the continent regarding COVID-19. There is an ongoing collaboration between a university in South Africa and a biotechnology company toward the development of human therapeutic proteins that will assist in the treatment of patients with severe effects of COVID-19. A team is also working in South Africa to manufacture candidate vaccines and repurposed antibody therapeutics for COVID-19 treatment using local technology. Additionally, scientists from the University of Ghana have successfully sequenced genome of the coronavirus in Ghana.⁵² This feat paves the way for the compi-

lation of comprehensive information on the genetic makeup of the coronavirus.

Recommendations

This paper makes some recommendations toward getting African leaders to break away from the application of Western tailor-made solutions to problems confronting the African continent.

First, African leaders, in their search for solutions to problems confronting their countries, should look within their domestic economies for solutions.

Second, where it becomes extremely necessary to look up Western countries for solutions, African leaders should ensure that such solutions take into account the peculiar circumstances of the domestic economy.

Third, the African Center for Disease Control, as a specialized technical institution of the AU, should as a matter of urgency conduct a laboratory analysis of Covid-Organics to establish its efficacy in the prevention and cure of COVID-19 and recommend its use across the continent and beyond.

Fourth, African countries should embark on a campaign to conscientize their citizens on the need to produce what they need and to accept and patronize what are produced locally with incentives in the form of tax relief and subsidies offered to those who demonstrate adherence.

Fifth, universities in Africa should overhaul the structure and teaching of social sciences such that it focuses on the history and peculiar circumstances of the African continent so as to engender critical thought among the present crop of African students who are the future leaders of Africa.

Finally, African leaders should see the COVID-19 pandemic as a springboard for technological innovations in Africa.

Conclusion

Based on the identification by this paper of the high temperatures in Africa, Africa's youthful population, frequent exposure of Africans to disease, and the use of a variety of herbs and crops plants with medicinal

properties as reasonable explanations for the low rates of COVID-19 infection and death rather than the Western-prescribed lockdowns, this paper posits that African leaders have on many instances similarly applied the one-size-fits-all approach to solve African problems. This, according to the paper, explains why many problems in Africa remain largely unresolved notwithstanding the continued assistance and guidance from Western countries.

The paper made use of the tenets of the historical school of economic and the dependency theory. The value of the theoretical lens under which this paper is analyzed lies in the fact that it brings to the fore the need for Africans to look within the continent for solutions to problems confronting Africa, rather than resorting to Western countries for solutions, which often fail to take account of peculiar circumstances in Africa.

With the development of Covid-Organics in Madagascar, Senegal's \$1 COVID-19 test kit, and other technological innovations in Africa in the fight against the novel coronavirus, it is safe to argue that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented a huge opportunity for African leaders to change their relationship with the one-size-fits-all approach.

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Building Back to Leave No One Behind

Disability-Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery in Africa

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Abstract

Millions of people living with disabilities in Africa already face a heightened risk of poverty, which will likely be exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic unless interventions to address its social and economic impacts are disability inclusive. This paper draws on research on health and living circumstances of people with disabilities in Africa in the context of human and disability rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). The paper also explores the pathways through which the current pandemic may increase the risk of poverty amongst people with disabilities, such as loss of income from disruptions to work, particularly in the informal sector, and higher future spending and productivity losses from disruptions to health care and other key services (e.g., rehabilitation, assistive devices). It also explores how social and economic responses to contain and respond to the pandemic should consider and be inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities.

Introduction

The *World Report on Disability* has estimated that there about 1 billion people with disabilities globally, with over 800 million living in low-income and middle-income countries (LMICs).¹

The global proportion of people with disabilities,

it estimated, will continue to rise as life expectancy increases and trends continue to rise in chronic non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and diabetes.²

Disability is an evolving, complex, and multidimensional concept. Attempts to conceptualize it have seen the concept transition across time from an individual and biomedical perspective to a more social and structural perspective. This paradigm shift has been described as the shift from a “medical model” to a “social model.”³ Notwithstanding the two dominant models, there are other models borrowing from these prevailing ones. The most influential is the human rights model, which seeks to transform the unjust systems and practices prevailing in disability communities. The human rights model takes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) as its core reference point and sees people with disabilities as the “central actors in their own lives as decision-makers.”⁴

The UNCRPD defines disability as people “. . . who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”⁵ UNCRPD aims to ensure the promotion, protection, and enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all people with disabilities and promote respect for their inherent dignity. It has embedded the principle of equality and social inclusion of peo-

ple with disabilities as “right” in global developmental initiatives and the initiatives developed by the UN such as the former Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) efforts⁶ and the Sustainable Development Goals.⁷

Disability is a global development issue because of its critical link to human rights, poverty, and developmental objectives.⁸ An emerging body of evidence from across the world indicates that people with disabilities and households with disabled members are more likely to experience economic and social deprivation than those without a disability.^{9,10,11} The onset of disability is associated with the worsening of social and economic well-being and poverty through many channels, including adverse effects on health, education, employment, and earnings and increased expenditures related to disability.¹²

These inequalities are more likely to increase in a time of humanitarian crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which has caused severe health and economic challenges, particularly in LMICs.¹³ People with disabilities are likely to be further left behind if responses and strategies for containment and recovery from the pandemic are not disability inclusive.¹⁴ Recent research elaborated on how social protection and other responses should consider the needs of people with disabilities in LMICs.¹⁵

This paper draws on research on health and the socioeconomic situations of people with disabilities in Africa and how the COVID-19 pandemic impacts their communities and deepens pre-existing inequalities. The paper argues that, as countries are either using existing institutions, adapting institutions, or creating new ones as part of their COVID-19 response and recovery, the crisis presents a unique opportunity to design and build transformative changes for more disability-inclusive and accessible societies. Finally, the paper suggests a systemic and holistic change underpinned by disability rights and inclusive policies, meaningful consultations with people with disabilities, leadership at the policy level, appropriate budgeting, and monitoring of progress through the systematic collection of data on disability as key for improving access to and impact of economic responses amongst people with disabilities.

The Living Circumstances and Health of People with Disabilities in Africa

Studies on the socioeconomic and living s of people

with disabilities in LMICs and Africa in particular are showing a symbiotic correlation between disability and poverty, with each being a cause and consequence of the other.^{16,17,18} An individual with disability often faces social exclusion and marginalization with less opportunity of accessing necessities such as health care, education, or employment, leading to poverty, which deepens and further escalates deprivations of safe housing conditions, nutritious food, and healthy living among others.^{19,20} Thus, inclusive access to services and social protection are critical and imperative to realizing the rights of disabled people.

Disability rights and inclusion in Africa have transformed since the 1970s, primarily due to activism and advocacy to change the perception of disability from a charity issue to a human rights one.²¹ People with disabilities in Africa have been mainly depending on social charity sustained by their extended families, by the limited social programs provided by the state (when they and their relatives become aware of the existence of such programs and when they succeed in obtaining their benefits), by begging, and by what comes from charitable and religious institutions.^{22,23} However, these networks of social support are underpinned by cultural beliefs about disability that often result in a lack of autonomy, stigma, neglect, and abuse for people with disabilities in the continent.²⁴

There has been steady progress toward state obligation in promoting human rights, the prohibition of discrimination, inclusion in social services, and community-based services for people with disabilities.^{25,26} Many countries in the African region have national and international initiatives with mandates to prohibit discrimination and equalize opportunities—such as the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities of Persons with Disabilities—culminating in the UNCRPD. As of April 2020, 182 countries have ratified the UNCRPD, including most countries in Africa.²⁷ However, despite the progress reported, people with disabilities in Africa continue to face inequalities in several dimensions of well-being.

Individuals and households with disabilities have to outlay additional resources to achieve a reasonable standard of living relative to the population without a disability.²⁸ Some of these expenditures may relate to general household expenses (e.g., health care, food) as well as to disability-specific items (e.g., assistive

devices, rehabilitation, personal assistance, home adaptation). Living costs are influenced by the type of disability, resources, level of interaction with the environment, and availability of services and goods. Understanding how local and state policies and these costs influence well-being among people with disabilities and their households is particularly important for public policies and programs.²⁹

Article 24 of the UNCRPD seeks to establish the right of people with disabilities to education. Inclusive education is effective for providing a quality, affordable education to children with disabilities and helping to build more accommodating, tolerant societies.³⁰ Yet, segregated schools and the exclusion of children with disabilities remain pervasive in most African countries despite the ratification of UNCRPD and similar national policies. Analysis of 14 household surveys in several countries, including in Africa, found that in all countries studied, children 6–17 years of age with disabilities were less likely to start school or be enrolled at school at the time of the survey.³¹

The UNCRPD, through article 27, seeks work inclusion for people with disabilities by ensuring that environments are open, inclusive, and accessible. However, despite the potential individual and societal benefits from inclusion, unemployment among people with disabilities remains widespread. By some estimates, 80–90 percent of people with disabilities in African countries are not participating in the labor force.³² Though opportunities for formal employment in many LMICs are limited for all individuals, people with disabilities are particularly more disadvantaged in the formal sector.³³ A series of studies on people with disabilities' living conditions have shown that they are less likely to be employed in several African countries, including Namibia, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Uganda, and South Africa.³⁴ Even when people with disabilities find work, they tend to have longer hours, lower pay, less job security, and fewer promotion opportunities.³⁵

Article 25 of the UNCRPD expresses people with disabilities' right to the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health without discrimination based on disability." To fulfill this mandate, it highlights the need for countries to ensure that people with disabilities are included within mainstream health services and that disability-specific programs are in place to

address unique health concerns. However, while most African countries have endorsed these principles, people with disabilities still experience exclusion in health care settings. In mainstream health services, people with disabilities may face inequities in access, quality, and delivery of care, leading to poorer treatment outcomes. For example, the 2002–2004 World Health Surveys conducted in 51 countries found that, although people with disabilities reported seeking care more often than people without disabilities, they were more likely to be denied needed treatment.³⁶ Additionally, programs and services intended for people with disabilities are usually not included in setting health sector priorities. For example, lack of investment in rehabilitation: only 5–15 percent of people with disabilities in LMICs receive assistive devices that could significantly improve their participation in life activities.³⁷ Such exclusion practices in health services are associated with many direct and indirect costs to people with disabilities, their households, and larger societies.³⁸ In South Africa, lost earnings averaged about half GDP per capita (US\$4,798) per adult with functioning difficulties resulting from severe depression or anxiety disorder per year, totaling US\$3.6 billion when aggregated to the national level.³⁹

Challenges for Disability Rights and Inclusion in Africa

Despite the various national and international documents signed and ratified by several African countries, the critical situation of people with disabilities highlighted above has shown a substantial gap between current legislation on disability rights and actions to materialize it. A recent study of African Union (AU) documents and policy processes in the domains of well-being (education, health, employment, social protection, and general development) has shown that policy makers and development practitioners, at least as represented in important AU documents, are not prioritizing the importance of addressing disability issues as an inherent component of social and economic policy at the national level, and also at the continental level, particularly as an integral component of international development.⁴⁰

The central argument for lack of disability inclusion and implementation of disability legislation in

Africa is rooted in the very foundations of society, where people with disabilities are disregarded in their symbolic recognition (classified as “abnormal” and in possession of illegitimate bodies)⁴¹ and also excluded from the material distribution of wealth through exclusion from the labor market and the productive system when denied their condition as workers.⁴² Both aspects do not operate separately but constitute two complementary and interwoven ways of effectively denying the civil, socioeconomic, and political rights of persons with disabilities.

In this context of unemployment and prevailing stigma, people with disabilities are entitled to beg; i.e., to solicit money without having to deliver anything in return—a “right” they have never had to struggle for and has remained unquestioned over time. This particular legality is often regarded as the “ideology of charity,” which implies the attribution of rights with no obligations expected or demanded in return.⁴³ By implication, this subverts the status of people with disabilities as citizens in liberal states, where a basic premise is the assumption of rights and guarantees along with obligations.⁴⁴ Another challenge noted for the dismal effort disability rights, particularly in Africa over the past 30 years, is the traditional, hierarchical “top-down” Weberian government structures, whereby government is responsible for the development and implementation of all public policy.⁴⁵

Impact of COVID-19 on People with Disabilities

People with disabilities are at greater risk of contracting COVID-19. People with disabilities in LMICs have less access to information, lack of accessible wash facilities, inaccessible health care facilities, limited health worker capacity, and high costs of access to these services.⁴⁶

It is estimated that the economic impact of COVID-19 will result in GDP drop of about 1.4 percent and a fall of about 7.8 percent in smaller economies.⁴⁷ The contraction is mainly a result of export adjustments affecting primary commodity exporters and the attendant losses to tax revenue that reduce the capacity of government to extend public services necessary to respond to the crisis. Importantly, people with disabilities in African countries may face intensified barriers

due to a higher rate of institutionalization.⁴⁸ Further challenges to assessing the trend and impact of COVID-19 on people with disabilities is identification barriers and poor processes of disability identification in humanitarian settings.⁴⁹

With less than 5 percent of globally confirmed cases occurring in Africa, the continent and people with disabilities in particular are relatively spared the untoward direct health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁰ However, there are genuine fears that COVID-19 triage policies and practices may exclude or disadvantage people with disabilities from gaining intensive care unit (ICU) access and receiving ventilators if they get infected and become ill.⁵¹ The pandemic nonetheless has already triggered economic shocks with a destabilizing effect on the lives of millions of Africans and a disproportionate impact on the vulnerable, poor, and underserved including people with disabilities.⁵² Other epidemics such as Ebola have resulted in severe social consequences and worsening economic deprivation including rising food insecurity among people with disabilities.⁵³ The COVID-19 pandemic and its containment strategies have resulted in severe economic shocks worldwide, and the impacts of these shocks will likely disproportionately affect vulnerable populations at the precipice of poverty.⁵⁴ People with disabilities in African countries maintain a smaller economic margin and consequently will likely experience greater financial and economic impacts than their peers without disabilities.

Income for households with disabilities is likely to be severely affected by COVID-19 containment strategies in profound ways. Households with disabilities with a likelihood of having fewer working (unemployed disabled members) members may find it difficult to offset any income losses if one or more members lose employment.⁵⁵ Other household members may stop working to provide caregiving support for people with disabilities who may also experience disruptions of health and social services they need (e.g., medications, rehabilitation, assistive devices, care for chronic conditions, personal assistance).⁵⁶ Disruption to needed services can result in deteriorating health, leading to higher future health care spending and immediate and long-term losses to functioning and productivity.⁵⁷ Furthermore, COVID-19 containment measures (physical distancing, movement restriction,

and lockdown) portend grave consequences for people with disabilities who are working in the informal sector and base their income on daily activities that involve face-to-face interactions and customer flow to meet basic needs.⁵⁸

Many women and men in the informal economy need to earn an income to feed themselves and their families, as most of them cannot rely on income replacement or savings.⁵⁹ Finally, people with disabilities and their households often have fewer coping mechanisms for managing economic stressors, as many live in poverty.

Disability-Inclusive COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Effective disability-inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery require systemic and holistic changes to address the direct threat from the COVID-19 pandemic and the underlying factors that make people with disabilities disproportionately vulnerable to the disease and its socioeconomic impact. A set of inclusive health programs and policies that improve access to affordable and quality health care together with disability-competent health care providers can help mitigate the immediate threat from COVID-19. Comprehensive disability-inclusive guidelines for emergency and disaster response include disease surveillance, risk tracking, and control.

For example, a combination of mainstream and disability-specific measures can be instituted in the joint external evaluation (JEE) guidelines of the National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS). The JEE is part of a voluntary government approach to identify gaps in their ability to prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats.⁶⁰ Despite African countries' experience of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa in 2014–2016 and the Zika outbreak in 2015–2016, several countries reported significant gaps in their capacity to ensure effective outbreak response, particularly related to vulnerable population, including people with disabilities.⁶¹ Inclusion of disability indicators in the JEE can strengthen surveillance, case finding, and community response.

There is the need to change the negative attitude and perception of the public toward disability into a positive one for an effective human rights-based

approach to disability, which is necessary in the development of inclusive policies. These can be addressed through education and enlightenment campaigns to challenge negative cultural beliefs and social perceptions and promotion of disability rights. Government and other stakeholders should seek the active and non-tokenistic participation of disabled people organizations (DPOs) as key actors from the start of any policy, strategy, or implementation.

A comprehensive disability-inclusive guideline has been developed with clear recommendations for actions and social protection design of COVID-19 recovery.⁶² The recommendations include key actions for implementation, eligibility criteria, and application procedures as well as packages, delivery, and content of benefits. Accessibility is fundamental to the inclusion of people with disabilities in the immediate health and socioeconomic response to COVID-19, especially in the African context where public health information, the built environment, communications and technologies, and goods and services are not accessible.⁶³ Ensuring accessibility of information, the built environment, social and health services, and specialized programs is critical to disability-inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery.⁶⁴

Social and economic policies have been recommended as an intervention for mitigating the effect of COVID-19 in responding to the pandemic and its socioeconomic impact on African nations.⁶⁵ Some countries have begun implementing these interventions such as food assistance, emergency cash transfers, unemployment assistance, or expansions to existing social protection programs.⁶⁶ As these programs are developed, it is essential to ensure their design and delivery are inclusive of people with disabilities. As most of these interventions primarily target formal workers, people with disabilities are more likely to miss out. Similarly, social welfare schemes, such as food assistance and cash transfers, have been inadequate and inefficient.⁶⁷ These palliative measures introduced by governments are mainly failing due to poor coordination and human rights violations. The recently established Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa 2018 presents a unique opportunity to address this gap.⁶⁸

There's an urgent need for African governments to diversify economic responses by promoting dis-

ability-inclusive responses in formal and informal sectors, facilitating surveillance and case tracking, and improving health facilities to avoid the economic recession of the post-Covid-19 pandemic. Finally, African countries should re-examine their respective fiscal and economic policy priorities to enhance health and social support systems, particularly in countries that have failed to implement critical health-related lockdowns due to a lack of social policy safeguards for both rural and urban populations. In the longer term, Africa will need to build productive capacities to address underlying economic vulnerabilities and enhance continental capabilities to manage crises.

Conclusion

The lack of inclusive responses to the recovery efforts from COVID-19 suggest that, unless mitigated, the socioeconomic impacts and the longer-term consequences from the COVID-19 pandemic may be greater for people with disabilities in Africa and lead to increased inequities between people with and without disabilities.⁶⁹ This paper is an urgent call for governmental response to the COVID-19 pandemic to be inclusive of the needs of people with disabilities.

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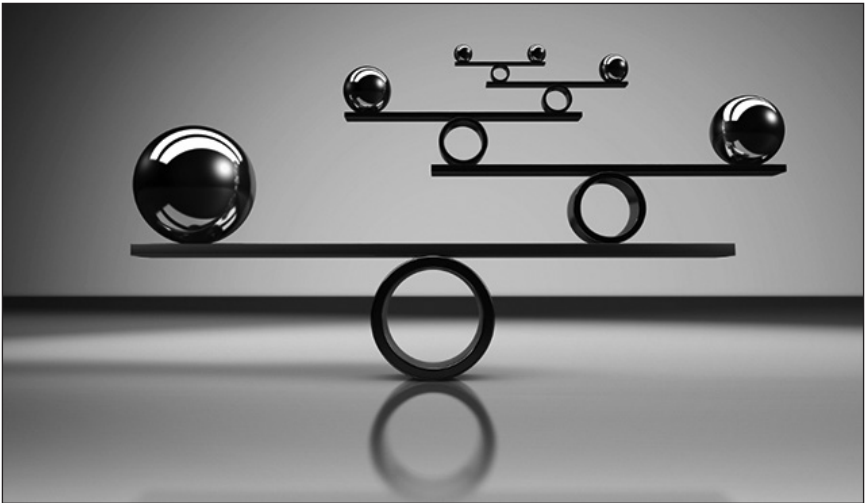
Complexity, Infrastructure, Africa

A Policy Approach

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Abstract

Infrastructure development serves multiple objectives, including policy goals such as growth, productivity, affordability, inclusive development, and environmental objectives potentially being in opposition. How we can solve Africa's infrastructure paradox remains an important conversation in economic growth across the continent.

Despite the ambitious, collective, and positive vision of an integrated African economy by its leaders, adequate national and transnational infrastructure

remains a mirage. An enduring enabling environment for successful infrastructure programmes is important; this includes the need to institutionalize transnational collaboration from project conception stages to delivery and operational stages.

This article focuses on the characterization of complexity, its impact on the delivery of infrastructure projects in Africa, and the policy options available for the future. Examining the context of this paradox and its root causes relies on extensive quantitative research across specific countries within each African region.

An in-depth consideration to contrasting assumptions and complexities that surround infrastructure projects and a balanced theoretical approach has been put forward for debate. A measured solution that could address the paradox and influence a paradigm shift in the way we formulate and implement policies will advance infrastructure development and promote sustainable economic growth.

While this paper was predicated on cooperation among African countries in infrastructure delivery, background literature opposes this idea as the complexities would be more pronounced if African countries were to embark on joint multinational infrastructure programs. Hence, a framework of performance at high levels of best practices is suggested, which helps to dilute the complexities that may arise in the life cycle of multinational infrastructure programs. This framework integrates implementation plans into a regional infrastructure plan within the context of cost-benefit analysis (CBA); this will be supported by mutual agreement among the participating countries, while establishing a harmonized concession framework that has been agreed to. Also, the paper suggests a rigorous, regulatory, and transparent system for multinational infrastructure delivery within Africa.

Introduction

Complexity is a wide-ranging concept that is applicable to any subject, and information relating to it is vast. Literature on complexity is emerging, but there is a dearth of knowledge and understanding of infrastructure complexity, and more so as it relates to Africa. At national and continental levels, infrastructure projects are often characterized as uncertain, complex, and politically sensitive, and it involves a large number of participants.¹ In the delivery of infrastructure projects, policy makers are usually more concerned about understanding how investment in infrastructure can contribute to economic growth, how this contribution varies by different infrastructure types,^{2,3,4} and more recently, how infrastructure improvement can support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).⁵ Within African context, this understanding is essentially shaped by complexity in terms of determin-

ing the policies for supporting financial structures, aligning different technical standards and operating requirements, formulating and enforcing legal agreements and harmonizing procedures, building trusting relationships as well as overcoming differences and barriers (e.g., language and culture), aligning differences in national agendas, and coordinating responsibilities within and between participating countries.^{6,7,8} At industry and practitioner levels, knowledge and understanding of infrastructure complexity are evolving regarding how it impacts policies on individual infrastructure delivery to attain efficiency.^{9,10,11} Hence, complexity has different approaches and has different meanings based on the differences between public and private sector policy practices.

Characterization of Complexity

The characterization of infrastructure delivery in terms of complexity at the continental level has been identified since time immemorial; however, there has been limited application of methods that are based on the concept to support public policy decision making.¹² This is in spite of infrastructure taking on various forms of complexities at local, national, and continental levels and being much more all-encompassing than at organizational or individual project levels. Extant literature reveals that defining complexity has been as complex as complexity itself, Bakhshi et al.¹³ examined 420 articles that were published between 1990 and 2015 and identified 14 different definitions of the concept. Of these, the most-cited definition is that by Hatch and Cunliffe,¹⁴ and they regarded complexity as the existence of several different elements that possess various interactions and feedback loops with each other. From this perspective, complexity in infrastructure refers to those features that make it very difficult for participants to understand, predict, and efficiently control and manage the delivery of individual infrastructure projects in spite of the participants' full knowledge about the smallest parts of the project. This definition has been adopted for the purpose of this paper, and infrastructure delivery policies are being conjectured in specific terms of the concept of complexity at national and transnational infrastructure delivery policies throughout the article.

Complexities Hampering Infrastructure Delivery within African Context

There is a general consensus among the international community and African governments alike regarding the enormous needs gap in African infrastructure, and the gap becomes wider when Africa's infrastructure is compared with those of developed economies, especially the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. Africa consists of 54 countries with an estimated population of 1.2 billion people (which is predicted to double in growth by 2050), making it the second-largest continent in the world. This highlights Africa's vast potential for growth, all other things being equal, and this no doubt underscores huge requirements for infrastructural services. However, despite massive investment opportunities, there are inherent and debilitating complexities within African countries' infrastructure investment environment that are myriad and diverse in nature. There are vast investments requirements for infrastructure in Africa, and this has been identified for some time now. Comprehending and contextualizing these vast requirements and opportunities constitute the complexities that are inherent in African infrastructure projects with severe implications for policy making. According to Forster and Briceno-Garmendia,¹⁵ the minimum investment requirements in Africa's infrastructure is \$93 billion; however, new estimates by the African Development Bank¹⁶ suggest that the continent's annual infrastructure needs range between \$130 billion and \$170 billion, as well as a funding gap in the range of \$68 billion to \$108 billion.

Successfully investing in African infrastructure is essentially determined by the capability of investors, governments, and other stakeholders. To develop policies, and work within them, these various parties must have the full understanding that the environment for infrastructure investment is full of complexities and that there is a need to identify such complexities within infrastructure delivery. Due to their size and substantial financial requirements, infrastructure projects exhibit a high level of complexity and are diverse in nature; infrastructure complexity can be task based, including structural and directional, technical, and organizational

in nature.¹⁷ Rilo et al.¹⁸ identified complexity factors that occur at organizational, national, regional, and continental levels to include requirements for meeting budget, quality standards, and schedule, all of which encapsulate the following:

1. efficient management of capital expenditure;
2. optimization of the value of the infrastructure design;
3. application of rigorous risk management principles;
4. optimization of appropriate procurement and contracting strategies;
5. definition and security of scarce resources; and
6. development of excellence in construction.

Further, the World Economic Forum (WEF)¹⁹ identified five categories of complexity factors that negatively impact transnational- and continental-level infrastructure in Africa, namely financial, technical, regulatory, personnel/cultural, and governance related. Deliberate policies are needed to support the implementation strategies for realizing the infrastructure projects.

Financial Complexities

Four main categories of financial complexity have been identified: the determination of risk-sharing formulas, sharing the costs and benefits, how cross-border agreement will be implemented in a collaborative approach between countries, and demand forecasting and cost risks. These complexities mainly concern the cost of project preparation, the actual construction work, and the framework involved with the operation of the facility during the infrastructure's life cycle. There are also complexities surrounding revenue sharing, which may be determined by the countries' or investing partners' particular investments as well as the comparative benefits that the countries will derive from the particular infrastructure.²⁰ The second category involves the establishment of an optimal financial structure, and this includes raising funds, which can be particularly difficult when multiple countries, project organizations, donors, or lenders are involved.²¹ Of utmost importance

is individual countries' credit worthiness; the donors or lenders will usually impose different terms and conditions, and participating countries' negotiation behavior will always reflect their economic interest. These complexities lead to delays or outright cancellation of infrastructure programs. The third complexity concerns different currencies among African nations. This remains a critical issue of national sovereignty for most nations, essentially because some countries have their currencies tied to that of their colonizing countries, as in the case of the use of CFA francs in West Africa. The emerging issues include agreeable currency for loans and their repayments, and the currency of revenue generation will usually be the local currency, which highlights the complexities of exchange rates and their associated volatilities. The fourth complexity relates to demand forecasting and cost risks. In particular, the complexities identified here are quite challenging, and where the physical asset is owned across countries, complexity is intensified due to the heterogeneity of the area, since forecasting has to be across countries. With regard to project costs, estimation is particularly complex in cross-country prediction given the increased numbers of local subcontractors that will participate in the project implementation and the intricate relationships arising between them. Finding the appropriate mix of financing structures often poses significant complexities, such as the difficulties of implementing transnational transactions.

Technical Complexities

Technical complexities arise from three key areas: (1) aligning varying technical standards, (2) aligning differing operating requirements, and (3) managing larger technical complexities and construction risks.²² Diverse and often conflicting technical specifications and protocols are sources of complexity. For instance, differences in power voltage, programming languages and IT systems, and railway gauges and signaling systems need to be aligned between countries in the quest for interoperability or regional integration. These differences are usually difficult and expensive to resolve, complicating the technical procedure. According to WEF,²³ the design and development of infrastructure

projects can be seriously jeopardized when there are differences in operating requirements. A typical example is different border-operating hours, which creates unnecessary bottlenecks for businesses, tourists, and goods. The third technical complexity is the management of larger technical complexities and construction risks, and this is created by the need to coordinate large numbers of different contractors, subcontractors, and the different technical requirements complexities.²⁴ For instance, rail gauges in African countries differ, and this is a function of colonial history—rail gauges in Southern Africa are based on the cape gauge, the meter is adopted in Eastern and Western Africa, and the standard gauge dominates Northern Africa. These differences in technical standards create complexities that impede cross-country project implementation in Africa.

Regulatory Complexities

Regulatory complexities that influence the delivery of infrastructure projects in Africa fall into three main categories: (1) the need for specific legal and regulatory agreements, (2) the harmonization of different procedures involved in delivering the infrastructure project, and (3) the risk management of regulatory changes from country to country.²⁵ Infrastructure delivery in Africa requires specific legal or regulatory agreements, and during the process, complexities arise in the area of sovereign national interests. Resolving these issues is particularly complex, especially when mutually agreed-upon frameworks for coordination must be fully complied with before project implementation commences.^{26,27} For example, the Unified Border Post proposed for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region took two years to negotiate an operating agreement; also, one of the agreements for the Inga Power Transmission Line (IPTL), which runs between the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Republic of Congo, and Angola, required three cabinet approvals as well as the alignment of three utility systems that have different financial-reporting procedures. Enforcement of these agreements can be affected by the lack of a coordinating supranational authority, and this further

compounds the complexity that is inherent in legal agreements between nations.

Regulatory complexities also arise in the area of harmonizing procedures because countries usually adopt divergent tendering and procurement approaches, and this would lead to serious delays at achieving milestones during the delivery of infrastructure projects.²⁸ Also, countries will have different clearing or emissions requirements on vehicles or travellers, and until these are aligned, misunderstandings will lead to complexities that result in costly delays. Lastly, regulatory complexities in Africa's infrastructure involve frequent regulatory changes, which remain a high risk factor in any long-term investment.²⁹ For instance, infrastructures that traverse more than one country such as the IPTL risk being subject to more than one jurisdictional law, and this increases the complexity.

Personnel/Cultural Complexities

Personnel/cultural complexities affecting infrastructure delivery in Africa are underscored by the continent's multi-ethnic diversity, which includes language obstacles as well as a protracted history of ethnic warfare, interstate conflict, and political instability, all of which hold back the establishment of trust in relationships.³⁰ WEF identified three key complexities within this category. The first is building trusting relationships regardless of political or historical differences. This highlights the fact that contractual agreements are not enough to guarantee smooth infrastructure project implementation in Africa—the human factor needs to be considered as well, and trust is important when dealing with unforeseen complexities. According to Jaafari,³¹ building trust is harder where divergent cultural values are concerned in construction projects. So leaving previous historical or personal prejudices behind while focusing on common objectives is important at all work levels. The second category of complexity here is language barrier—there is a divergence of languages in Africa. Aside from the anglophone, francophone, and the lusophone extracts, several other native languages highlight the distinction among infrastructure program workforces. For instance, the daily relations between site inspectors or passport control and the resulting need for accred-

ited interpreters increase costs while slowing down decision making. The third category of complexity refers to the need to coordinate the diverse numbers of stakeholders who have diverse interests in public and private sectors within African infrastructure projects. Great skill will be needed to balance these divergent interests within the context of transnational infrastructure programs, as the participants will come from more than one country in Africa. Cultural complexity in infrastructure projects in Africa are highlighted by the continent's enormous diversity, which consists of about 34 languages, several lingua francas, local tongues, and dialects.³² In addition, internal conflicts, ethnic warfare, and political unrest negatively affect the building of trusting relationships.³³

Governance-Related Complexities

WEF identified six distinct governance-related complexities influence Africa's infrastructure delivery.³⁴ The first involves aligning distinct national agendas and ensuring that all participating countries have appropriate ownership of the program. For an infrastructure program to achieve successful implementation, the dedicated political, technical, and financial support required from all participating parties must be guaranteed. But this may be difficult to achieve if the objective of the infrastructure project does not align with a participating country's national agenda. The second relates to the coordination of responsibilities between participating countries. This is because the diverse processes and accountabilities will relate to various agencies or ministries, which include the foreign affairs, environment, transport, and energy industries and ministries, and the program manager has to coordinate with these multiple ministries.

The third complexity is the fact that individual countries may feel the need to assert overriding influence over the project by ensuring that their citizens occupy most of the key positions within the organization coordinating the program. This is potentially disadvantageous to the overall success of the program. But then, the proportional representation principle, which involves appointing citizens into positions to represent participating countries equally,³⁵ may not be the best approach for managing such projects either. The right approach is the best candidate principle,

although diplomacy may weigh in on the final selection, but the key issue is to reduce bias to a minimum. The fourth identified governance complexity is the need for structuring a supranational business unit for the preparation, implementation, and operation of the infrastructure program.³⁶ The key complexity here involves the need to relate with different laws and regulations. The fifth is the risk of political changes in participating countries, and the more the countries involved, the higher the risk of the complexity impacting the infrastructure project.³⁷ The last governance-related complexity is the risk of inertia and lengthy decision-making processes. This is because of the numerous stakeholders who have various interests, each seeking to influence strategic aspects of the project's location, design, and operation.³⁸ Since these stakeholders' activities are open to public scrutiny, and some of the decisions may be taken at high level of the political hierarchy, this results in long processes that can be compounded by the need to align civil-society concerns, as well as public and private sector interests, and this must involve all the participating countries.

These complexities are not independent of one another, as they are mostly interwoven and can strongly influence each other. However, it is worthy to note that the relevance of each of the complexities discussed differs from country to country, especially based on the political, economic, social, and regulatory circumstances as will be seen in the next section.

Country Regional Perspectives

East Africa: Kenya

Kenya faces a severe infrastructure delivery gap; expanding infrastructure is key for the country. However, Kenya faces significant financial complexities in terms of inability to obtain funds to finance infrastructure as foreign investors are not open to direct investment in Kenya's infrastructure, leaving the burden on the government with increased debt.³⁹ Kenya also faces technical complexities, which are reflected in the Kenyan Bureau of Standard's (KBS) inability to administer standards due to lack of administrative capacity in terms of legal and supply-chain monitoring

through counterfeit intelligence. Specifically, Kenya suffers from other technical complexities, including weak counterfeit laws, lack of international support in combating counterfeiting, porous borders, and the prevalence of transit corridors that enable the merchandizing of counterfeits into the country.⁴⁰ In the aspect of regulatory complexity in infrastructure, Kenya still regulates its major infrastructure with outdated laws. For instance, the both the Kenya Ports Authority Act 1978 and Kenya Railway Corporation Act 1978 were only last revised in 2012; the progress on these laws is rather slow. The country needs imperatively to review and approve new bills for competitive profit-sharing contracts and review and update legislation on quantity surveyors and architects' acts to enhance professionalism in these sectors. Personnel and cultural complexity confront Kenya in the form of terrorism instigated by the Somalian terror group (Al-Shabaab), ethnic hostilities, armed crime, etc. Governance-related complexity in Kenya relates to the numerous institutions and layers of geographical interventions and competencies, including the intersection between policy formulation, regulation, service provision, and resource consumption.⁴¹ For instance, in the water sector, there are the water resources management office and a water services office, both of which have separate but competing functions in the sector.

West Africa: Nigeria

Nigeria faces significant financial complexities in its quest to deliver infrastructure within the economy. Aside from a delivery gap similar to Kenya, there is a serious shortage of funds in the infrastructure sector in Nigeria. The key issue is that the government budget has been the primary source of infrastructure financing, which is mainly dominated by direct contract awards.⁴² The reason is that required supervision is poor, which often leads to shoddy or unimplemented contracts due to bribery and corruption. Other financial complexities include inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks, very few feasible projects, foreign exchange rate fluctuation as government borrows in foreign currency. Also, contracts are awarded in local currency, and projected revenues are in local currency, but the ensuing debt

from borrowing is financed in foreign currency; this is massive complexity in debt management. Nigeria faces technical complexities in infrastructure delivery in terms of lack of coordination among designers at the early stages of projects, resulting in incomplete designs and early change orders, substandard risk identification and allocation formulae, poor-quality billing of quantities and of estimates, insufficient document preparation, land-acquisition problems, and inadequate social and environmental impact assessment studies.⁴³ Nigeria faces several regulatory complexities because until the early 2000s most infrastructure laws were obsolete, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s. Although revised and new laws are being enacted, more needs to be done in the regulation of infrastructure delivery in Nigeria. For instance, the construction industry, which dominates the delivery of infrastructure in Nigeria, is an all-comers affair as anyone who previously worked as a mason on a construction site with no knowledge of building regulations or codes can claim to be a building or general contractor. The effect of this has rubbed off negatively on the construction industry, as evidenced by buildings frequently collapsing during or after construction, with significant loss of human life.⁴⁴ To prevent these from happening across multinational programs, only certified and recognized professionals with proven track records should be allowed to operate on such projects.

Law enforcement is a huge social and economic issue in Nigeria. Personnel and cultural complexities experienced in Nigeria are exemplified by shortages of skills, competencies, and capabilities; lack of transparency and accountability; incessant collusion between contractors and consultants; and rivalry among government agencies and among construction parties.⁴⁵ Governance-related complexities in Nigeria are myriad; one popular complexity is the general lack of political will to implement the delivery of infrastructure programs for the benefit of people. Also, personnel and cultural complexities are highlighted by unnecessary rivalry among the key ethnic groups regarding the siting and location of infrastructure. There is as yet no unified national agenda for infrastructure delivery as successive governments have been merely engaged in parochial implementation of infrastructure delivery for political purposes.

Southern Africa: Botswana

Botswana is one of the few African countries that has several strong planning institutions, and this is reflected in its National Development Plan, which is currently in its 11th iteration and is based on the government's 2036 strategic vision.⁴⁶ Botswana faces significant financial complexities in infrastructure delivery in terms of the time taken by multilateral development banks (MDBs) active in Botswana to design, review, negotiate, approve, and disburse loans. This inefficiency constitutes a substantial burden to borrowing, as there are different procedures for different types of loans, and long-term loans will usually take longer to process due to the stringent procedures that must be followed.⁴⁷ Also, most government agencies responsible for monitoring delivery do not have clearly defined roles in policy documents.⁴⁸ This potentially leads to rivalry and confusion in infrastructure project supervision among these agencies. Technical complexities manifest in Botswana's infrastructure delivery in terms of standards establishment and alignment. However, there is a shortage of workforce with relevant technical skills and capabilities to administer standards requirements; worse still, industry employers poach staff from the bureau with better pay, which imposes developmental complexities on the bureau's human capital.⁴⁹ In terms of regulatory complexities, the Government of Botswana adopted the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Policy and Implementation Framework in 2009 to create an environment where the private sector can participate in infrastructure delivery of their own freewill, and this was followed up with a PPP unit in the Finance Ministry in 2016.⁵⁰ Structures for international projects are the same for local projects in the country and are usually driven by special purpose vehicles (SPVs), joint ventures (JV), and partnerships. Personnel and cultural complexities present in a general trend of low-skilled labor force and the land-locked nature of its geography. However, Botswana's membership in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) supports the expansion of its market opportunities.

North Africa: Egypt

Egypt has experienced remarkable growth due to its

progressive investment in infrastructure. However, financial complexities present in the form of exchange rate fluctuation negatively affect the Egyptian pound, leading to increases in the cost of construction inputs, and government removal of subsidies has led to increases in the cost of building materials. The key issue becomes cost control.⁵¹ Government-accelerated investment in infrastructure in 2013 was triggered by the instability brought about in 2011 by the Arab Spring, leading to increased support for private sector participation.⁵² Technical complexities present in the form of customs, regulations, and standards. Egypt has strict non-tariff barriers for willing foreign investors who are required to complete a series of registration forms, licenses, and legal status approvals.⁵³ With regard to regulatory complexities, Egypt has performed well in the formulation of robust regulatory frameworks, which are based on capital account openness and scope of competition authority.⁵⁴ The country's planning and selection of projects is reported to provide modest support to domestic and foreign investment activities. Egypt is a country of immense cultural diversity, but the language barrier is minimal as Egypt speaks standard Arabic and, to a lesser extent, English. With regard to governance-related complexities, the Egyptian government has a heavy presence in infrastructure delivery, and the attendant heavy-handed supervision and bureaucracy slows decision making, especially regarding risk sharing between the government and the private sector.

Policy Options for the Future

The conception, development, implementation, and operation of infrastructure programs whether at national or transnational levels will be affected by the complexities identified at country levels, as highlighted in the previous section based on country analysis in the four regions of Africa. African countries have unique differences that potentially impede cooperation on infrastructure delivery at the country level, and the complexities are huge indeed and are of varying degrees from country to country. Although this paper was predicated on multinational cooperation in infrastructure delivery, review of literature and various historical analysis suggests that the complexities

would be more pronounced if African countries were to embark on joint multinational infrastructure program. However, WEF⁵⁵ suggested various optional approaches to respond to and mitigate the different and peculiar identified complexities. They advanced a framework of high-level best practices for managing the complexities arising from and impacting multinational infrastructure programs throughout their life cycles. Generally speaking, the starting point of managing complexities within a multinational infrastructure program will be to integrate implementation plans with a regional infrastructure plan and to establish a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) at a regional level to assess the feasibility of the program. This is because there is the possibility that one infrastructure program may have a negative impact in one country that can be offset by a larger positive impact in another. Also, a conducive and enabling environment needs to be provided to support the multinational infrastructure program for ease of efficient identification, preparation, and implementation of the specific infrastructure. Of necessity, such a project should be implemented exclusively within the context of a regional CBA, and a framework for risk, cost, and benefit allocation that is fair to all countries involved must be agreed upon and the regulations that govern the project implementation well laid out.

There is also the need to secure a mutual agreement among participating countries regarding the infrastructure delivery model and to establish a harmonized concession framework if a concession has been agreed to. From a concurrent perspective, WEF⁵⁶ suggests that the tendering process must be transparent and competitive, while the financing structure must be cognizant of the details of multinational infrastructure programs. It is also important to note that during the construction, operation, and maintenance phases, priority must be accorded to the alignment of processes and requirements across countries through an institutionalized cross-country collaboration framework that covers the entire life cycle of the infrastructure project. Hence, there must be a rigorous regulatory system for the multinational infrastructure programs within Africa, and the mandatory capacities and capabilities for managing such programs in each participating country must be identified and well laid out. The specifications of the elements of trustful rela-

tionships at both political and working levels must as well be identified and transparently explained in a concise format.

Conclusion

Adequate national and transnational infrastructure remains a mirage. Although African leaders in recent past formed the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), with the aim of providing physical support for regional integration, the programs face challenging complexities that have hindered their realization. The complexities vary in intensity, based on program type, program phase, and local conditions that prevail in countries participating in the infrastructure delivery, as highlighted in the regional country discussion. It is generally agreed that transnational infrastructure projects are highly demanding than national megaprojects; the suggested policy options provided above are meant to serve as a guide on the management of infrastructure programs. The provision of enabling environment for the success of these programs is important, as well as the need to institutionalize transnational collaboration from project conception stage to the delivery and operational stages. Policy options are meant to serve as a guide; hence, their relevance will vary from one program to another in Africa. In essence, they are not a one-size-fits-all template; rather, they provide direction to policy makers, program sponsors, and managers to help them get their bearings. But when they are followed with localized adaptations in the individual countries of Africa, they will enable and support the reduction of the inherent complexities, while national and cross-national infrastructure programs will aim to be delivered on schedule, at budgeted cost, and at the promised quality. This will lead to more regional infrastructure programs along with their attendant benefits, such as improved regional and national economy, improvements in regional and national public health, and increased regional integration.

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Survival in the New Decade

A Nudge toward Mandatory Corporate Social Responsibility Regime in Nigeria

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Abstract

This article shows a correlation between corporate ethics and economic stability. It examines specific provisions of Nigerian law relating to corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities by companies, particularly public companies. Nigeria is faced with governance crisis across the various levels of government and sectors, including the business sector. Individuals and companies have through lack of social responsibility contributed significantly to the deplorable state of the Nigerian economy. This paper demonstrates that corporations in Nigeria implement nominal CSR activities, a trend that has remained unchecked due to lack of accountability from the media and government. In making recommendations, this paper makes a case for mandatory CSR activities in public companies and discusses how CSR policies can create positive externalities.

Introduction

The easy part was to blame the COVID-19 pandemic and dwindling oil prices for Nigeria's worst economic recession since the 1980s.¹ The difficult part, however, which many have chosen not to address, is how individuals and corporate bodies can contribute to resolving the economic crisis. Like the old saying

goes: charity begins at home. "Home" here means companies (especially public companies) in Nigeria. Transparency International recently ranked Nigeria 146 out of 180 most corrupt countries with a woeful score of 26 out of 100. What commentators and readers miss is the fact that, although the corruption perceptions index ranks countries by "their perceived levels of public sectors corruption," activities of private individuals and companies contribute to the data. There have been increased cases of bribery and corruption among companies and business executives with ordinary citizens at the receiving end.² Principle 26.1 of the Financial Reporting Council of Nigeria Code of Corporate Governance (NCCG) recommends that companies' board of directors should establish policies and practices regarding their social, ethical, safety, working conditions, health, and environmental responsibilities as well as policies addressing corruption. Critical questions include: How many boards in Nigeria have anti-bribery and corruption (ABC) policies? For those who adopt ABC policies, how are the policies being implemented and monitored, and what sanctions are imposed for violations? The numbers get smaller as these questions are answered (or not!).

This article will establish a correlation between corporate ethics and economic stability. It will also discuss how Nigerian companies have neglected corporate social responsibility (CSR) functions compared to companies in other jurisdictions and the role of the

media and the government in enabling a robust CSR environment. Companies in Nigeria derive economic benefits and maximize profits from communities but “are not appropriately responding to needs of host communities through strategic philanthropy, environmental protection, and community development.”⁷³ While this is not a call for corporate citizens to take on the role of the government, it is a clarion call for corporations to be socially responsible and conscientious in their dealings with citizens of a poor country like Nigeria. Nothing in this paper suggests that a company should give to the society at the detriment of its own economic value.

This paper will also show that engaging in CSR activities is a win-win-win for the company, relevant stakeholders, and Nigerian economy. This is based on the simple logic that credible CSR projects will lead to an increased level of acceptance amongst stakeholders, amount to compliance with environmental regulations, better the lives of stakeholders, and create a more buoyant economy. Finally, this paper will suggest making CSR considerations a matter of positive law in Nigeria, not because other developed countries are doing this but because of the stranded state of the Nigerian economy and the attendant need for urgent remedies.

Current Significance of CSR in Nigeria

Perhaps as a starting point it is important to understand the concept of a corporation’s social responsibility. The combination of ethics, law, and morality necessitate humans to be socially responsible; these factors are also the reason for punishment of crimes and compensation of victims of tortious acts. It has been suggested that “like companies have CSR, mankind also has a social responsibility.”⁷⁴ In Nigeria, like many other countries, human social responsibility is an unspoken principle that governs the everyday life of a socially conscious person. A corporation is a person in law, but being an abstraction, can only function through human beings who are the will and mind of the company. Thus, a socially responsible corporation is composed of equally socially responsible directors and officers.

Like most concepts, there is no generally accepted

definition of CSR. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) defines CSR as “a management concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and interactions with their stakeholders.”⁷⁵ Ijaiya suggests that the concept of CSR means that “organizations have some measure of moral, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities in addition to their responsibilities to earn a fair return for investors and comply with the law.”⁷⁶ According to Mordi et al., it includes a company’s “direction to task itself to be responsible to the people by allocating resources to deal with environmental and general development issues.”⁷⁷

Several questions have been asked in connection with the essence of CSR, including whether the corporation, an abstract entity, has any business being socially responsible. Perhaps promoters of CSR activities are merely putting undue pressure on corporate decision makers. This paper will argue otherwise.

ESG as a Tool for Sustainable Development

ESG is an acronym for environmental, social and governance policies. Some authors have included employees in their discussion of ESG matters.⁸ Ijaiya believes that the concept of CSR includes the consideration of other constituencies including employees, suppliers, consumers, and the local community.⁹ The consideration of ESG in this paper also include constituencies such as employees and suppliers. On the relationship between ESG and CSR, some scholars are of the view that ESG is a dimension of CSR.¹⁰ Others, like Chadwick, believe that “where ESG meets CSR is in the need to think long-term.”¹¹ He is of the view that ESG is a tool “used by managers and investors to evaluate corporate behavior and to determine the future financial performance of companies.”¹² Both submissions are not too far apart. This paper will adopt the reasoning that ESG speaks more to the issue of sustainability and requires a higher level of consideration than general CSR principles.

The focus of this paper is also not to discuss whether Nigerian companies need to be shareholder centric as opposed to stakeholder centric. Perhaps a

more suited question is whether Nigerian companies are management/owner centric. “Owner” as used in this context does not refer to shareholders who are conceptually so described but to the wealthy family, individual, holding company, or affiliate who is usually the controlling shareholder with a lot of influence in the management of a typical Nigerian company.

Although certain Nigerian companies engage in CSR activities and some public companies publish reports of their CSR activities in their annual reports, the level of actual empowerment or contribution made may be negligible. Academics have called for positive law in relation to CSR activities in Nigeria.¹³ No doubt, the adoption of CSR and ESG policies in a country like Nigeria will significantly improve the lives of the citizenry.

Why Do Companies Need to Be Socially Responsible?

Companies in the energy sector have over time been subject to criticism for their contribution to environmental pollution. In Nigeria, oil companies—whether multinational or state owned—are notorious for polluting waterways and the environment in which they operate. The Nigerian National Petroleum Commission (NNPC) has been often accused of environmental pollution¹⁴; so have other multinational oil companies like Shell.¹⁵ There have been reported cases of inferno in areas where oil pipelines are located.¹⁶ While some have argued that these outbreaks are caused by acts of theft and vandalism, others believe that the frequent incidents can be avoided or reduced by effective monitoring and management.¹⁷

The effect of environmental pollution by oil companies has largely been borne by persons living in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Ijaiya rightly submitted that since the discovery of oil in the region, the communities often have been subject to environmental degradation as well other challenges including inadequate infrastructural facilities, high level of unemployment, and abject poverty.¹⁸ According to Amnesty International, “nearly 10 years after a cleanup was urged for areas polluted by Shell and other oil companies in the Niger Delta, work has begun on only 11% of planned sites while vast areas remain heavily con-

taminated.”¹⁹ These challenges are not exclusive to the Niger Delta region. The Nigerian environment is constantly exposed to “disturbances from exploration and drilling activities, gas flares, refiners effluents and refractory products and massive spillages due to handling operations.”²⁰

Although discussions about the (potential) effect of climate change in Africa are not recurring (at least compared to countries in Europe and North America), the issues do exist, and Africa may in fact be more severely affected than the rest of the world.²¹ One may be curious to know how corporations contribute to climate change. A 2017 global carbon report²² listed the NNPC as one of the top 50 fossil fuel companies in 2015 by operational scope, product scope, and greenhouse gas emissions. According to the report, “the scale of historical emissions associated with the producers is large enough to have contributed significantly to climate change.” The report further suggests that the “actions of these producers over the medium-long term can, and should, play a pivotal role on the global energy transition.” What more? A few of the other producers identified in the report, including Chevron, ExxonMobil, Total, Eni, and Shell, are multinational oil companies with presence in Nigeria.

As stated earlier, employees’ considerations are a key part of CSR. Several companies in Nigeria flout the clear provisions of the Labour Act.²³ A lot of private companies do not pay employees up to the required minimum wage. The treatment of contract staff is even more disheartening; they are not adequately remunerated, are denied basic benefits (sometimes including health benefits), and are exploited by their employers.²⁴ According to Fapohunda, casualization (of labor) is detrimental to employees and has grave consequence on the employer and the national economy.²⁵

Misconstruing CSR as PR in Nigeria

Franco accurately opines that public relations (PR) has a narrower focus on creating, preserving, and defending a well-structured corporate image.²⁶ It emphasizes activities such as “publicity, promotions, special events, and issues articulation.”²⁷ In extreme situations where a company’s image requires rebranding, PR may be used as a crisis management tool.²⁸ The

dictionary meaning of PR is “the business of giving the public information about a particular organization or person in order to create a good impression.”³⁹ Simply put, PR is focused on brand building, or the public’s perception of a company. The dictionary meaning of corporate responsibility on the other hand is “the idea that a company has the duty to treat people fairly and to play a positive part in the society.”³⁹ Thus, CSR deals with the interplay of moral, ethical, philanthropic, legal compliance, and other stakeholder considerations by corporate decision makers. And unlike PR, branding is not the primary aim of CSR activities. A study revealed that communications professionals expressed positive perceptions of CSR initiatives “but opposed (PR)’s ownership of the programs.”³⁹ At best, there could be a cross-functional approach in which PR may play a supporting or complementary role.³²

It appears that what Nigerian companies do in the name of CSR is PR. In the words of Collin Roche of Friends of the Earth Europe, while oil companies like Shell spend millions greenwashing their image, tens of thousands of people continue to suffer from their pollution and negligence.³³ Shell has carried out several CSR projects in Nigeria including employing at least 95 percent of Nigerian citizens for its Nigerian operations as of 2017 and granting educational awards to thousands of university and secondary school students.³⁴ However, of what relevance are these projects if the communities directly impacted by the companies’ activities are not duly compensated or efforts are not made to alleviate their suffering? With CSR, no economic benefit should be expected, although in reality, companies get indirect economic benefit from CSR activities. PR is supposed to improve your branding or correct your brand image, or a misconception about your company, and will be recognized in the profit or loss account as an expense. CSR on the other hand is targeted toward other stakeholders but with indirect benefits to the company. Sadly, Nigerian companies have misconstrued CSR as PR. According to Mordi et al., “there is diversity in terms of how CSR is understood and experienced in Nigeria,”³⁵ while Reeves believes PR goals are viewed as secondary consideration, rather than the main driver of CSR initiatives.³⁶ Corporate decision makers in Nigerian companies need to be sensitized against the use of CSR programs for PR purposes—not only is it unethical, but it is

also counterintuitive and shows lack of professionalism. It has been suggested that, notwithstanding the strategy used in organizing CSR activities, emphasis should be placed on the positive impact of CSR initiatives rather than on the publicity.³⁷

To facilitate the corporate sector’s involvement in actual CSR activities (not PR), the media and government agencies have major roles to play. Research has shown that evaluation of CSR programs is often not conducted, thus leading to unsustainability of CSR initiatives themselves.³⁸ Kartikawangi proposed the adoption of a collaborative social responsibility interrelation model,³⁹ elements of which are the company, the government, the society, the environment in which they operate, and the media at the center. She is of the view that “positive and constructive cooperation” among corporations, host communities, government, and the media has a substantial role to play in ensuring the prominence of CSR initiatives.⁴⁰ Indeed, the media is an effective tool of transparency and accountability in developed climes, and public acceptance is quite important to ensure the sustainability of any corporation or organization.

The Ogoni cleanup exercise is an example of collaboration between the corporation, government, and media in relation to CSR activities. In 2011, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was commissioned by the Federal Government of Nigeria to carry out a study and detailed assessment of the oil pollution in Ogoniland.⁴¹ Thereafter, the then-Minister of Environment, Amina J. Mohammed, made the Establishment of the Hydrocarbon Pollution Remediation Project, Federal Ministry of Environment Notice, 2016 (the HYPREP Notice), which among other things, established HYPREP to initiate and develop work programs aimed at restoring all hydrocarbon-impacted communities and sites referred to it.⁴² Although, the cleanup and restoration exercises have over time been questioned by civil groups and the media for sluggishness and politicization,⁴³ this buttresses the point that the media is a necessary transparency and accountability tool in relation to CSR activities. With this sort of “popularity,” members of the public can assess CSR programs and a company’s direct and indirect impact on the society.

What Do Existing Regulations Say about CSR Activities?

The relevant text for consideration here includes the Companies and Allied Matters Act 2020 (CAMA), the Securities and Exchange Commission code of corporate governance (SEC Code), and the NCCG. It is important to state that there are other sectoral codes that contain provisions relating to companies' CSR activities. There are other laws that directly or indirectly require corporations to engage in CSR activities. Environmental laws require companies to comply with best environmental practices, the same way the Labor Act contains minimum requirements must be met by employers in dealing with their employees.

Section 305(3) of CAMA mandates directors to consider the impact of the company's operations on the environment in the community where it carries on business operations, while section 305(4) of CAMA requires directors to include interests of the company's employees in discharging their duties. Principle 1 of the NCCG provides that the board is a link between stakeholders and the company and is required to ensure that management acts in the best interest of the shareholders and other stakeholders while sustaining the prosperity of the company. More specifically, principle 26 of the NCCG recommends that the board should establish policies and practices regarding its social, ethical, safety, working conditions, health, and environmental responsibilities as well as policies addressing corruption.

While there is no law in Nigeria that mandates public companies to execute CSR projects, there are at least three bills before the National Assembly with primary focus on CSR. The bill for an Act to Provide for the Establishment of the Corporate Social Responsibility Commission (CSRC Bill) sponsored by Senator Uche Chukwumerije alludes to the fact that "society is best served by the regulatory hands of the law and political process in protecting a community's right to corporate social responsibility." The CSRC Bill, among other things, empowers the commission to "shut down and suspend operations of an organization, corporation or a company for a minimum of 30 working days as a penalty for non-compliance with statutory requirement of the corporate social responsibility as stipulated in (the) Act."⁴⁴ It also imposes criminal sanctions for noncompliance.

The second bill, for an Act to Establish the Corporate Social Responsibility Act and for Other Matters Connected Therewith (CSR Bill), is sponsored by Hon. Ossai Nicholas Ossai of the Nigerian House of Representatives. The scope of the CSR Bill covers every company registered in Nigeria and every foreign company having a branch office or project office or operational office in Nigeria.⁴⁵ The CSR Bill, amongst other things, mandates companies having net profit or profit turnover of at least ₦500 million during any financial year to have a CSR policy that will form part of the business activities of the company. The third bill, sponsored by Senator Kwari Suleiman Abdu, is the Corporate Social Responsibility Bill 2019.⁴⁶ Both the second and third bills have passed their first reading.

Will Mandatory CSR Amount to Responsibility Shifting?

Nigeria has over the years been reputed for having bad governance. Its public sector has been regarded as highly corrupt and inefficient. Some commentators are of the view that CSR policies should not be mandatory. Some in fact believe that CSR is unnecessary as it creates no economic value for the company. This is a misconception on rounds that have already been addressed in this paper. Firstly, CSR provides indirect economic value to the corporation whether in terms of attracting talent, creating awareness of the company's products and operations, or ensuring compliance with legal provisions. Secondly, Nigerians do not get appropriate value from corporations, whether due to lack of competition, low level of consumer education, or in some cases, exploitation by the companies. It is only ethical for a company to "give back from what it took."

Perhaps in developed countries where policies and governance seem to be efficient, and corporate ethics is highly valued, there may be no need to mandate sustainability reporting. However, in a developing nation such as Nigeria, where citizens lack basic infrastructural facilities and are subject to a struggling consumer-protection regime, all hands must be on deck for the creation of a better and well-functioning society. As evidenced by Nigeria's frequent negative economic reports, the government is not well equipped to solve the country's lingering economic woes. Corporations need to be socially responsible, just as individuals need

to be humanly responsible. Whereas, as seen above, laws and policies in the country contain direct and indirect provisions requiring companies to undertake CSR activities, very few implementations have been recorded. Thus, the suggestion is CSR be made a matter of positive law in Nigeria, at least for the time being.

As enumerated in this paper, one clear advantage of having mandatory laws requiring public companies to undertake CSR activities is the direct benefit of such activities on the economy. However, it is important to note that this positive law requirement is not necessarily something that requires an entirely novel process. It could be restricted to public companies and can be based on existing rules and regulations. For instance, rather than making recommendations, the NCCG may be amended to mandate companies undertake sustainability activities and generate sustainability reports. Such mandatory regulation will not have a one-size-fits-all approach. Section 5(g) of the CSRC Bill, for instance, provides that one of the functions of the commission will be to carry out classification of companies and rank them according to “organizational size and magnitude of investment.” The level of CSR expected of companies will therefore be based on their classification.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Decades ago, the sole purpose of a corporation was to maximize economic benefits in the interest of its owners. Gradually, with industrial revolution and technological advancement, the concept of corporate responsibility toward stakeholders became a norm, particularly in relation to workers’ well-being. Corporate managers in advanced and developing countries have begun to reconsider operational priorities and business models to cater to constituencies other than shareholders.⁴⁷ However, it appears that the current perception of CSR amongst Nigerian companies is that CSR is voluntary and can only be done out of excess funds. Further, as this paper advocates, CSR in Nigeria gravitates toward PR rather than actual empowerment of stakeholders. Engaging the media (including social media) in CSR activities in Nigeria will, among other things, (1) emphasize the importance of CSR, and by extension corporations, to facilitate the development of a better economy; (2)

ensure that bills are passed into law in a timely fashion; (3) help promote and facilitate CSR awareness; (4) promote stakeholder inclusion in CSR; (5) serve as an ethical check on Nigerian corporations; and (6) ensure that CSR is not misconstrued as PR.

The Nigerian government needs to meddle in the affairs of business organizations, especially public companies to monitor their interactions with stakeholders. A common trend following financial crisis globally is for governments to promote corporate responsibility and good corporate governance.⁴⁸ Considering Nigeria’s current economic and financial crisis, it is only logical for the government to implement public policies that are geared toward facilitating CSR activities. Such policies will create a business environment with socially conscious corporations that will function as vehicles for economic development. Strict implementation of CSR policies will require corporations to validate the impact of their CSR programs, as opposed to intensifying PR efforts. This is not to say that the latter is not desirable, but as expounded in the body of this paper, the act of passing off PR activities as CSR initiatives is unethical and counterintuitive.

In summary, this article has shown that a robust implementation of CSR policies will be better for the Nigerian economy, particularly given the current economic recession. The current bills before the legislature need to be passed and perhaps, harmonized to ensure effective compliance and monitoring. This is because one of the main problems of law enforcement in Nigeria is the overlap of legislations.

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Child Begging in Senegal

From Policy Failure to Behavioral Analysis

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Abstract

In 2016, the Senegal launched *Opération Retrait des Enfants de la rue* (“Remove children from the streets,” hereto Retrait) in an effort to crack-down on child begging, return victims to their families, and prosecute those responsible. While at first commendable, months later the initiative lost steam and barely reduced the number of child beggars.¹ Retrait became the latest in a line of failed policy campaigns to end child begging and shut down the *daaras* (religious schools) and *marabouts* (religious teachers) responsible for forcing *talibés* (students) to beg in the streets. This paper argues that the lack of eliminating child begging and closing unregulated *daaras* can be better understood through the behavioral analysis of key players rather than policy failures of the state. Specifically, status quo bias, solution aversion, and poor framing of the issue prevent any credible and sustainable change to eradicate *daara*-related child begging in Senegal. While poor policy planning and execution play an important role, ignorance of the behavioral motivations and barriers faced by the primary stakeholders—parents, *marabouts*, the Senegalese state and society, and international advocacy groups—better illuminate the lack of progress in ending child begging.

Introduction

In the late hours of Sunday, 3 March 2013, flames lit the

night sky in the Medina section of Dakar, the capital of Senegal.² The real horror did not come until early morning. One by one, officers removed body bags from the wreckage containing the remains children believed to be between five and ten years old.³ The nine boys were locked in one of the burning rooms, unable to escape. The nine boys were part of at least 60 *talibés* (students) forced into the one room *daara* (religious school) by their *marabout* (religious teacher). The other children managed to escape the fire or were “lucky” to have been sleeping outside in the first place. The *marabout* in charge of the children was nowhere to be found. Neighbors reported that the *marabout* had left to return to his apartment earlier in the evening, leaving the children alone for the night.⁴

As horrific as the event was, the main characters and the narrative were familiar: young *talibés* abused by their *marabout*, living in cramped and squalid conditions. The fire was the headline; the rest was old news. In the bustling capital, like other major cities throughout the country, children weave in and out of traffic with plastic bins begging for change. One is sure to spot a few children even outside the presidential palace and in the main square, named, ironically, *Place de l'Indépendance* (Independence Square).

This paper argues that the failure of ending child begging and *talibé* abuse is not due to the lack of policy intervention but rather incomplete theories of change that ignore the underlying behavioral motivations that sustain the practice. These blind spots are per-

petuated by INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) and Senegalese leaders.

This paper will delve into the background origins of the *talibé* phenomenon in Senegal and its evolution into modern-day exploitation, providing definitions for the characters involved in child begging. Next, the paper will examine the barriers to success in ending this practice despite numerous policy and social campaigns, both domestic and international. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of the identified behavioral challenges and potential solutions of overcoming those challenges.

It is important to note that the *daaras* examined here refer to those institutions that operate unregulated and exploit well-intentioned social, cultural, and religious principles for the gains of their leaders.⁵ The *marabouts* and *daaras* discussed in this paper are not representative of Senegalese cultural, religious values, expression, or education.⁶

Background

Senegal's religious identity is interwoven with its cultural and national identity. While an ethnically diverse country, nearly 96 percent of the population practices Islam in one form or another.⁷ For centuries, parents entrusted their children to *daaras*, or religious schools that taught the study and memorization of the Qur'an and broader Islamic principles.⁸ Parents would entrust their young boys,⁹ known as *talibés*, to the free care and tutelage of a *marabout*. In exchange for his teaching and guardianship, the *talibés* would perform housework, farm work, and other manual labor:

. . . Their [*talibés*] parents, usually poor, confided them to the holy man, the *marabout*, . . . convinced that their education would thereafter be in good hands. The serigne [*marabout*] requires from them no remuneration. But they must cultivate his fields, procure wood for him, and do all the domestic chores necessary to the functioning of the household.¹⁰

It was typical to also have some *talibés* beg from their local communities for food for themselves and their *marabout*, either in exchange for work or for charity.

The prevalence of *daaras* and the *marabout/talibés* is a reaction to the realities and resources of the time, as *daaras* fulfilled multiple functions. First, in a society with a strong religious identity, *daaras* provided parents with the assurance that their children would receive religious education, guaranteeing security for worldly and eternal success. Since high societal value was placed on memorization of the Qur'an, *marabouts* were valued for having both the knowledge and the time to properly inculcate young *talibés*.

Prior to French colonization, *daaras* were the only educational institutions easily accessible to rural and agrarian communities. Formal schools were primarily reserved for instruction in civil service to the French bureaucracy or were financially prohibitive to most of society. With their rural locations, *daaras* were attractive alternatives for families struggling to provide for their children on their own. The promise of an education, moral upbringing, and provisions for their children made *daaras* a rational choice for parents. While *marabouts* doled out corporeal punishment, these early iterations of *daaras* were not characterized by the level of abuse and neglect some have come to be associated with today.

With the rise of urbanization, the functioning of *daaras* began to change. As people moved away from villages into the city, rural *daaras* found themselves without the support of the communities that they once relied on for sustenance.¹¹ Faced with this loss, *marabouts* who had the means to do so moved their *daaras* to the city. In these new urban centers, absent of close community structure and livelihood from agricultural output, *marabouts* began to almost totally rely upon the street begging of *talibés* to bring in cash. While some *marabouts* worked with the best interest of their *talibés*, others saw the personal economic gain to be made by moving to the city and forcing their students into begging.¹² The widespread systemic exploitation and forced begging prevalent today began to take shape.

Despite its predominant Muslim population, Senegal is a secular state with a secular public education system. After the end of French colonization, private Franco-Arab schools attempted to bridge the gap between religion and secularism by offering supple-

mentary religious education concurrent with a French-language-based curriculum.¹³ For those without access to these private schools, the modern-day *daara* system offers distinct tiers of religious education. There are neighborhood *daaras* in which students remain with their families and only attend religious instruction during weekends and school holidays. There are registered and regulated modern residential *daaras*, which operate similar to boarding schools in which parents pay fees for the housing and education of students. However, parents who want thorough religious education but cannot afford modern *daaras* often resort to informal and unregulated *daaras*. Moving forward, the term *daaras* will be in reference to these unregulated and exploitative schools unless otherwise noted.

Operating outside of the law, it is hard to quantify how many *daaras* exist and the number of students they engage. A 2019 Human Rights Watch report estimated that there were at least 100,000 *talibés* living in *daaras*.¹⁴ These *daaras* provide little-to-no education to students, even in religious subjects. Forced to spend much of the day begging and faced with food insecurity and threats of corporal punishment, it is unlikely that students have the opportunity or capacity to learn.

Barriers to Changes

Status Quo Bias and Moral Trappings

Daaras are a staple of Senegalese history and traditional identity. Recognizing this reality sheds light on why unregulated and abusive *daaras* continue in spite of their exploitation of children.

In their 2008 book *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler expand on the concept of status quo bias as people's "general tendency to stick with their current situation."¹⁵ As identified by earlier work from William Samuelson and Richard Zeckhauser, deferment to the status quo, or things as "usual," is not a conscious behavior:

... the status quo bias is not a mistake ... that once pointed out is easily recognized and corrected.... In the debriefing discussions following the experiments, subjects

expressed surprise at the existence of the bias. Most were readily persuaded of the aggregate pattern of behavior (and the reasons for it), but seemed unaware (and slightly skeptical) that they personally would fall prey to this bias. Furthermore, even if the bias is recognized, there appear to be no obvious ways to avoid it beyond calling on the decision maker to weigh all options evenhandedly.¹⁶

This status quo bias becomes powerful when one factors in the moral and social realities surrounding *daaras*. The *marabout-talibé* relationship is one grounded in a parent's deep concern for their child's moral and spiritual well-being. Recitation of the Qur'an and development of Islamic principles are prioritized, so as to safeguard the child from worldly corruption and eternal damnation. In this light, temporarily relinquishing one's parental right is perceived as one of the highest acts of love. Since the *marabouts* are viewed as possessing the knowledge and capabilities necessary to achieve this moral cultivation in students, the *marabouts* essentially have carte blanche power to train their students as they deem fit. Even in early rural *daaras*, the occasional corporal punishment toward *talibés* was acceptable and viewed as a way to build humility in the student.¹⁷

The implicit status quo bias that pushes parents to maintain centuries-old practices is reinforced by the strong moral underpinnings of those practices. While there are formal *daaras* that provide for the welfare of *talibés*, they remain both scarce and prohibitively expensive for many families. Parents therefore perceive their choices as either forgoing the moral and spiritual development of their child or fostering them to informal *daaras* in the hopes that they will be looked after. This imperfect choice architecture for parents is skewed toward one decision.

The parent's choice to continue with fostering by *daaras*, despite evidence of exploitation, is made more difficult by implicit and explicit social dynamics. *Talibés* are expected to stay with their *marabout* until they memorize the Qur'an, a task typically accomplished around the age of 15 years. Were a child to return to his family without achieving memorization,

it would be seen as a failure on the part of the child and source of shame for the family.¹⁸ It is not unusual for parents to voluntarily return children who have run away from a *daara*.

In light of all this, for some parents the choice to send their child to a *daara* is a foregone conclusion. Even for those parents who are reluctant to make this decision, the social cost of going against the status quo is too high, especially in areas in which one's membership in the community is essential for daily life. In the end, the push factors prove far too strong.

Solution Aversion

Solution aversion theory holds "that certain solutions associated with problems (e.g., government regulation) are more aversive and more threatening to individuals who hold an ideology that is incompatible with or even challenged by the solution, and this increases skepticism of the problems' existence".¹⁹ Simply put, even in the face of inarguable facts, one may object to complying with an action because the solution to the identified problem is in opposition to or threatens one's own beliefs. Individuals' psychological reasoning in the face of a challenge is inherently underpinned by their motivations and interests.²⁰ Therefore, if a change of behavior implies going against their motivations, change is unlikely.²¹ Solution aversion is present in the three major actors in *daaras* and child begging: society (particularly the parents), *marabouts*, and the Senegalese government.

First, let us unpack solution aversion challenges from the perspective of the parents and society. From the most basic understanding of the issue, the solution to ending *talibé* abuse by *marabouts* is for parents to stop sending their children to *daaras*. Yet, this seemingly straightforward solution comes with considerable calculations and strong perceived risks for parents. Parents perceive sending their child to study with a *marabout* as an act of love to nourish the child's spiritual and moral development. From the parent's perspective, if they no longer send their child to study with the *marabout*, what does that say about their concern for the child's worldly and eternal salvation? For a parent to acknowledge the dangers of sending

their child to a *daara*, they would first have to question the moral value of the *marabout*. Viewed through the lens of solution aversion, the certain moral benefits accrued by sending a child to a *daara* far outweigh the potential risks of abuse. The parents may know the risks associated with sending their child to the *daara*, but the alternative of not doing so is perceived as a greater parental failure. Is it not their responsibility as parents to instill moral guidance for their child? Why should they go against the grain at the expense of their child's long-term well-being? Once more, the parent is faced with imperfect choices.

Antoinette Zoumanigui presents an interesting theory on why *daaras* continue despite society's knowledge of their danger. The crux of the argument holds that, in a society that praises almsgiving, the presence of *talibés* allows members to easily fulfill their religious duty of giving to the poor and destitute.²² The sheer number of *talibés* ensures that there is always an opportunity for one to fulfill their charitable obligations. Taken further, the presence of *talibés* provides a convenient opportunity for the economically advantaged city dwellers to assuage their own feelings of guilt while maintaining their self-worth. In this regard, while the intention of charity might have been commendable, almsgiving to *talibés* is reduced to an act intended to re-affirm one's own morality. To eliminate the practice of child begging, therefore, entails the elimination of the outlet in which society can *perform* charity. "Beggars in essence exist to . . . [testify] to one's act of kindness, giving charity affirms one's own sense of self-esteem. It further . . . brings relief to the individual who does not desire to be perceived as a selfish and unconcerned human being."²³

As intriguing as her interpretation on almsgiving is, Zoumanigui's argument rests on questionable assumptions and fails to address why we do not see a similar scale of child begging in other societies that praise almsgiving to the destitute. Regardless, Zoumanigui's observation does question why there is a lack of concerted societal demand to stop *daaras*. In this paper's opening story, neighbors knew that the children were part of a *daara* and were regularly left to fend for themselves at night. In the author's own travel through Senegal, it was relatively easy to iden-

tify where a *daara* was located and which children were *talibés*. Yet no action was taken against the *daara*.

Here again we find that the same solution aversion faced by parents is amplified at the societal level. The *daara* concept is so ingrained within Senegalese history that to acknowledge and act against its current iteration may lead to examining the legitimacy of the practice as a whole. In a society connected with its religious identity, the *marabout-talibé* relationship is seen as an extension and continuation of society's own moral and religious expression. To acknowledge that this dynamic is problematic means re-examining society's religious expression. Since child begging is inextricably tied to *daaras*, ending the practice necessitates confronting and untangling the origins of *daaras* as related to religious and cultural interpretations. If we hold *marabouts* in esteem as religious leaders but they are engaging in misbehavior, is that an indictment on them individually, or are their actions rooted in our cultural traditions? If the latter is the case, what does that say about us—are we also culpable? The prospect of engaging in this reconciliation may be too overwhelming for the public psyche to engage with.

For *marabouts*, ending *talibé* begging is entirely misaligned with their motivations. With a seemingly endless pipeline of *talibés* of which to take charge, *marabouts* have turned a practice once rooted in education and moral upbringing into personal enterprises: “begging no longer functions as a means of instilling a sense of humility in the [*talibé*]. Instead, it is transformed into a meal- and money-producing activity for the benefit of the serigne [*marabout*] and his family”.²⁴

For *marabouts*, change is not only inhibited by their solution aversion but also their loss aversion.²⁵ First, there is the perceived reputational loss in acknowledging problems with the *daara* system. Having held a revered social position as educators and spiritual leaders, admittance of the current exploitative nature of *daaras* threatens the legitimacy and moral integrity of the *marabouts*. Second, *marabouts* fear the loss of income if child begging were to cease. In these circumstances, it is in the best interest of the *marabout* to engage in system justification as an effort to stave off loss of their reputational or material gains. Through

system justification, *marabouts* can fervently “justify, maintain, and otherwise bolster the validity of their current social system”²⁶ in an attempt to divert any criticism of their individual behavior onto larger systemic externalities, absolve themselves of personal responsibility, and in so doing, maintain the broader system.

In its most cynical interpretation, this behavior is merely an effort by *marabouts* to escape blame and shirk their responsibility to *talibés* and society. For others, system justification is an attempt to reconcile the contradiction between their behavior toward *talibés* and their supposed integrity. Whichever the case, similar to the dilemma faced by parents and society, acknowledging the solution may require introspection and behavior change from *marabouts* that they may not want or be ready to perform.

Lastly, solution aversion on the part of the government is rooted in political motivations. Despite Senegal's secularism, wealthy *marabouts* hold considerable public influence among their tens or hundreds of thousands of followers. To understand the relationship between *marabouts* and politics, one needs to understand the very particular expression of religious leadership in Senegal. For the sake of simplicity, imagine that there are multiple sects of Islamic practice (separate from the general Sunni, Shiite, Sufi sects of Islam) and that each sect, or brotherhood, has a prominent *marabout*. Some of these *marabouts* go on to gain large numbers of “disciples” and wield enormous influence and financial resources. Their sect of Islam is then followed by common *marabouts* who teach their interpretation of Islam in the *daaras*.

Political leaders recognize the power of prominent *marabouts* in calling on their followers to vote. In the heated 2012 presidential election, the incumbent Abdoulaye Wade, facing a landslide loss, publicly sought out (and allegedly paid millions of dollars for) the endorsement of one of the most prominent *marabouts*, Cheikh Bethio Thioune, to secure votes from his tens of thousands of disciples.²⁷ Officials fear public criticism from prominent *marabouts* who may weaponize freedom of religion on claims of religious persecution for their sect, heightening the potential for political backlash from their followers. For officials,

the calculus to crack down on *daaras* becomes even trickier as they worry about the consequences to their political aspirations.

Poor Framing Effects

For decades, INGOs have campaigned against child begging in Senegal. A common theme in all of these efforts is the lack of a nuanced understanding of the underlying causes of the continuation of child begging and a propensity to lump the issue into larger overwhelming poverty-alleviation campaigns. These organizations are typically unversed in the cultural nuances in which they operate.

Needing to placate a global audience and funding base, INGOs have the tendency to reduce complex problems like child begging into recognizable “structural” failures such as poverty or poor governance.²⁸ This is poor framing of the issue, which hinders the INGO’s efforts by making the scale of the change too daunting. If the solution to child begging is ending poverty in a country of over 15 million people,²⁹ the prospect of achieving any change in the immediate future diminishes.

Reducing the problem of child begging to broad structural failures hinders change in two major ways. First, it ignores the core motivations that allow the problem to perpetuate. While poverty is a factor in the existence of *daaras*, attributing the problem solely to poverty ignores the centuries long cultural motivation of the practice. Second, the lack of contextual understanding sets up an antagonistic relationship between INGOs and the local populations. A common criticism of international aid work is the “savior” dynamic between aid groups and the local communities where their advocacy focuses. Without investing in genuine understanding and trust building, which involves making the effort to understand the complex historical nuance of *daaras*, INGOs will not be able to engage with society to achieve lasting change.

Underpinning these challenges are fundamental misinterpretations between INGOs and the public with which they work. INGOs risk importing their own ideals of appropriate childhood experiences into a social context where those ideals are not reflected or

held in the same manner. Gone unchecked, these ideals risk morphing into a universal standard by which the society is unduly judged. As argued by Rudolph T. Ware, INGOs risk unfairly measuring standards and progress of Senegalese society against an idealized standard that is unrealistic of any society, “[INGOs] export an idyllic vision of childhood to the rest of the world . . . that has never been realized in their homelands, and was only conceived in the last few decades. This does not prevent them from comparing African ‘realities’ with Western ideals and finding fault with the Africans.”³⁰ This point does not excuse the continuation of child begging or abuse, but it does highlight why decades of advocacy have failed to bring about change toward *daaras*. Rather than engage around a shared cause, advocacy groups unintentionally create a division between themselves and the public. The losing party is the children.

Discussion

Behavioral analysis can explain the continuation of child begging from *daaras*, despite policy reform attempts and general consensus that the practice endangers children. Understanding these motivations is the first step in achieving change. However, in such a complex and nuanced issue like *daaras*, the usual answers to behavioral challenges may not be enough to overcome barriers to change.

When facing challenges such as status quo bias or loss aversion, Thaler and Sunstein recommend overcoming these challenges through “paternalistic libertarian” approaches.³¹ Libertarian paternalism is an attempt by “private and public institutions to affect behavior while also respecting freedom of choice” of the individuals or public in question.³² By creating strategic choice architectures, institutions can “nudge” individuals into increasing the likelihood of choosing a specific path to improve welfare without maliciously manipulating or restricting their freedom to choose an alternative path.³³

We run up against the limits of libertarian paternalism when faced with institutions that themselves have limited capacity or political will to actively promote certain behaviors. Thaler and Sunstein’s libertarian

paternalism takes for granted that the institution has the desire or capacity to influence the public for good. This breaks down when faced with an institution that does not meet one or both assumptions, or when the institution has a vested interest in opposition with the welfare of the public. Senegalese officials themselves have questionable motivations with regard to *daaras*, and there exists little political will to end child begging. Currently, it is unlikely that the state will invest in any measures to “move people in directions that will promote their welfare.”³⁴ A similar conclusion can be made about the other institution that has the influence to change public behavior for the better: *marabouts*.

If institutions do not have the desire or ability to end child begging, behavior changes at the individual and societal level must be sought. In the face of solution aversion, tactics like reframing or clarifying the solution to decrease the perceived ideological threat to the opposing party may help. Unquestionably, Senegal recognizes the damage of *talibé* abuse. However, the current leading solution of ending unregulated *daaras* triggers a defensive reaction from those who perceive this solution as a vilification of their ideology and condemnation of their capacity, especially for parents who choose to foster their children to *daaras*.

Overcoming misinterpretation of the solution requires thorough reframing of the issue. First, to assuage the fears of parents, it is vital that the conversation around *daaras* be described in language that is sensitive to the realities faced by families, so as to not villainize parents. Parental motivation in giving their children to *daaras* is intricate and tied to interpretations of parental duty, love, and only occasionally exogenous factors such as poverty. In fact, in rural communities, sending one’s child to a *daara* is an economic loss, as it means having one less farmhand to help the family. While there are parents who abandon their children to *daaras*, they are the exception. Assuming ill intentions from parents and dismissing their limited choices further disengages them from participating in crafting alternative solutions.

An important player in this reframing, and one often overlooked, is the role of local Senegalese children’s rights groups, especially those focused on *talibés* who are forced to beg. One such local organization

is Maison de la Gare in Saint-Louis, which provides health and emergency shelter for *talibés* and engages with *marabouts* to improve the well-being of the children.³⁵ Unlike INGOs, these groups understand the nuanced sociocultural underpinning of the *daara* practice and have strong credibility and trust in the communities they work. They can be valuable mediators between parents and *marabouts* to influence behavioral change. Greater resource allocation and support from the government can help these organizations scale their work and impact.

Conclusion

This paper has argued that behavioral analysis better explain the continued prevalence of *daara* abuse in Senegal, despite general consensus on the undesirability of the practice. Understanding the behavioral barriers faced by the major stakeholders will better inform solutions to end child begging in Senegal. Admittedly, the solutions to these behavioral challenges are less certain. They entail extended engagement and good-faith dialog with multiple stakeholders that at times may have opposing interests and solution preferences.

Regardless of these challenges, these behavioral changes must happen concurrently and be supported by sustained government action to enforce child protection laws, prosecute offenders, and invest in community- and human-development resources to provide for the educational and financial well-being of society. Failure to achieve progress in child begging is failure to protect the children of Senegal.

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Four Years On

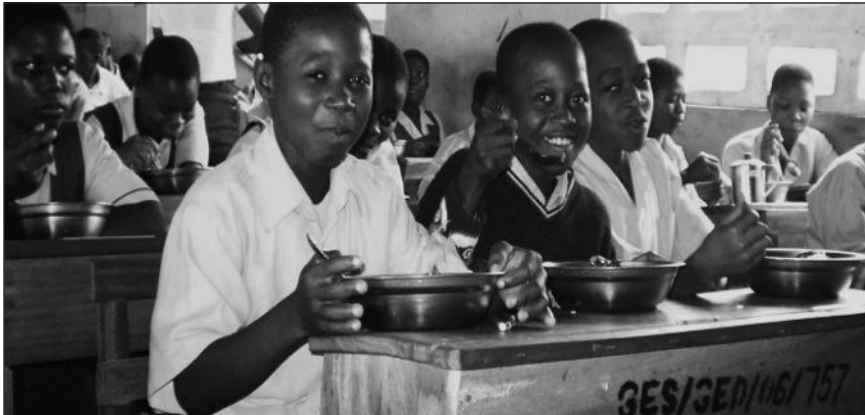
A Formative Evaluation of the Ghana National School Feeding Policy's Sustainability Agenda

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Born and bred in Ghana, Adjoa Kudoadzi is a vivacious female with an ardent interest in development policy. She is a graduate of Wellesley College, Massachusetts, where she obtained a bachelor of arts in economics, with a minor in Africana studies. Adjoa also has experience studying in the London School of Economics as well as the Chicago Booth School of Business.

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In her free time, Adjoa loves to write short stories. She also routinely volunteers with Dislabelled, an Accra-based organization focused on improving pedagogy for people with disabilities in Ghana.



Source: Daily Graphic Online¹

Abstract

In 2005, the government of Ghana instituted a groundbreaking social-protection initiative called the Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP). GSFP aims at improving enrollment and retention and increasing agriculture in Ghana through the provision of hot meals to school children in destitute communities. While the program chalked a lot of successes during its first years of implementation, successive scaling of the GSFP unearthed many challenges and deficiencies. Chief amongst them was the lack of a cogent policy to anchor the gains of GSFP over the years as well as to ensure efficient delivery of the program. This realiza-

tion led to the creation of a National School Feeding Policy (NSFP), which is the focus of this policy brief.

This paper explores a key objective of the NSFP, namely, the sustainable financing of the GSFP. It begins with a detailed overview of the GSFP, presents the need for the NSFP, and then delves into an exploration of the gains the NSFP has made to date in ensuring financial sustainability. The paper concludes with policy recommendations that will be vital to the GSFP as it continues its mandate.

Introduction

Poverty and food insecurity are pressing socioeco-

conomic issues particularly prevalent in many developing nations. In Ghana, estimates show that about 23.4 percent of citizens were living in poverty as of 2016–2017.² In 2019, the Ministry of Food and Agriculture estimated that 1.2 million people in Ghana are food insecure, “with an additional two million people considered extremely vulnerable to food insecurity.”³ These figures, of course, drastically upshoot due to the current context of the COVID-19 pandemic, unearthing an urgent need for the government and policy makers to find workable solutions.

Many social safety net programs have been instituted by consecutive Ghanaian governments in a bid to protect the vulnerable and marginalized in society. The Ghana School Feeding Programme (GSFP) is one such program. Implemented in 2005 under former President John A. Kufuor,⁴ the GSFP is a social-protection initiative that aims to effectively increase enrollment, promote retention, and increase agriculture within the country. By focusing on these goals, the GSFP simultaneously tackles the complex issues of poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, and illiteracy in Ghana. As the World Food Program (WFP) asserts, “school feeding programs can reduce poverty by boosting income for households and communities. For families, the value of meals in school is equivalent to about 10 percent of a household’s income. For families with several children, that can mean substantial savings.”⁵

The GSFP was initiated in the “context of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) Pillar III and in response to the first and second Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),”⁶ which are to eradicate poverty and hunger and achieve universal primary education. The program also emphasizes the Ghanaian government’s commitment to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 1, 2, and 4, which focus on ending poverty and hunger and ensuring inclusive, equitable, quality education opportunities, respectively.⁷ Under the program, the government contracts caterers to provide one hot, nutritiously adequate meal to children in destitute public schools in select communities on every school day.

The immense impact the GSFP has made in the lives of Ghanaian children across the country cannot be over-emphasized. Indeed, in 2011, former President Kufuor was

jointly awarded the World Food Prize to celebrate the poverty- and hunger-alleviation feats of the GSFP.⁸ The GSFP estimates that the program commenced with “2,000 children in 10 pilot schools, one in each administrative region of Ghana.”⁹ As of February 2010, the program scaled up by 32,730 percent, with “1,695 public schools (656,600 children) in all the 170 districts (approximately 25% of all school going children).”¹⁰ Currently, beneficiary pupils are estimated to be over 2,600,000 in about 9,000 schools. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MOGCSP), which currently oversees the GSFP, estimates that, as of September 2020, GSFP has built the capacity of 9,178 caterers and cooks in 11 regions in an innovative nutrition training, which has improved the quality of meals served to pupils.

These gains followed the introduction of a National School Feeding Policy (NSFP) in 2016, to entrench and expand the successes of the GSFP, with the objective of delivering “a well-organised, decentralised intervention providing disadvantaged schoolchildren with nutritionally adequate, locally produced food.”¹¹

In this essay I will cogently explore the financial sustainability gains of the NSFP (as an entrenchment of GSFP) and adopt an evidence-based approach to examine the extent to which the NSFP has met its key objective of improving sustainability of the GSFP. While existing literature on GSFP largely explores GSFP’s challenges and opportunities, there is a gap in available research that focuses on the GSFP, considering the policy that undergirds it (NSFP). Yet this is crucial to the mid-term evaluation mandated in the policy document for 2020–2021.

Understanding the Need for the NSFP

In the first years of its implementation, the GSFP was increasingly fraught with myriad complex issues from political partisanship to caterer-payment challenges, some of which still plague the organization today. Many complexities consistently bog the minds of policy makers and GSFP stakeholders. For instance:

1. How effective is the program’s ability to identify and target poor beneficiaries?
2. How does the GSFP create a watertight financial system that allows the program to work smoothly?

3. How does the management of the GSFP deal with issues of collusion and corruption and actively prevent partisan politics from biasing its work?

Against this backdrop, the NSFP was created to “anchor the gains made over the years as well as underpin effective delivery through adequate and reliable resources, robust management systems, and local and national ownership . . . to insulate school feeding through changing political circumstances and provide a basis for legislation.”¹² Its creation was largely in response to the clarion call by key GSFP stakeholders for the implementation of a policy that would “provide the framework to improve programme design, clarify institutional arrangements and provide the ground for better implementation and coordination.”¹³

The NSFP has four main objectives:

- provide sustainable social development support to children in deprived Ghanaian communities through an efficient and reliable school feeding program;
- strengthen collaboration and coordination between national and sub-national actors in implementing school feeding;
- foster local economic development through capacity support for local enterprises involved in food production, marketing, and processing; and
- promote local collaboration and joint ownership of child nutrition, health promotion, and education, by local authorities, communities, and stakeholders.¹⁴

According to the GSFP National Policy Document, the first phase of the policy will be implemented over a 15-year period from January 2016 to December 2031. In the fourth year, a mid-term evaluation is expected to be conducted to assess the “continued relevance of the rationale vision, objectives and key areas of policy.”¹⁵

The next section will lay out the specific policy measures mandated for the GSFP under the NSFP objective 1, using a critical lens to examine how well these have been implemented.

Entrenching the GSFP into the NSFP

In July 2016, the government under the then-President

John Mahama, together with the GSFP, launched the NSFP. The goal of the policy, as previously stated, is to “deliver a well-organised, decentralised intervention providing disadvantaged schoolchildren with nutritionally adequate, locally produced food, thereby reducing poverty through improved household incomes and effective local economic development.”¹⁶ The NSFP was created in collaboration with GSFP partners, with a crucial focus on integrating the views and opinions of the everyday Ghanaian.

The next section closely examines the NSFP’s goal of ensuring sustainable financing of the GSFP.

Policy Problems: Focus on Financial Sustainability in Ensuring Objective 1

The introduction of the NSFP led to some breakthroughs, including the approval of the 30 percent recommended daily allowance (RDA) standard through the one hot, nutritious meal.¹⁷ This was a crucial move to improve the nutritional value of food provided under the program. Additionally, in 2018, payment grants to caterers increased from GH¢0.80 to GH¢ 1.00 (approximately \$0.13 to \$0.17¹⁸) per child per school day, which allowed caterers to have more money to spend on meals.

These notwithstanding, key challenges remain, especially with regards to the program’s quality and financial sustainability.

For the purposes of this policy brief, the scope of my analysis will be limited to an assessment of the NSFP’s first objective: to provide **sustainable** social development support to children in **deprived** Ghanaian communities through an **efficient and reliable** school feeding programme.”

The main evaluation criteria that will be the basis of this brief are:

1. Consistency in financing of the GSFP
2. Ability of government to meet yearly budget of the GSFP

Below are the key challenges faced by the program.

Irregular Financing of the GSFP

Delays from the government in disbursing largely affect the reliability and efficiency of GSFP operations.

As a 2014, GSFP communique asserts, “the current irregular flow of funds inhibits caterers’ ability to purchase foodstuff directly from smallholder farmers, limiting the well-intended goal to boost local food production and provision of quality meals for our children to improve their nutritional and healthy status.”¹⁹

Although caterers are required to pre-finance the meals under the GSFP contract for at least one term or have the financial capacity to finance the cooking for a term, not every caterer has the funds to pre-finance.²⁰ This, compounded with the government’s late disbursement of funds, has negative implications on the quality and quantity of food served under the program.

Time Lags in Caterer Financing

“The Government of Ghana is trying its best, but the truth is that it doesn’t have the funds for regular payments. The payments come when the government is able to pay.”- Alhaji Inusah Mahama, GSFP Official, Northern Region²¹

While the GSFP was originally funded by the Dutch government from 2005 to 2010, the NSFP mandates the Ghana government have oversight of funding the GSFP as a way of ensuring Ghanaian ownership of the program.

However, under the Ghanaian government, there are significant time lags in payment of caterers. As a WFP 2018 cost-benefit analysis argues, caterers are

“often paid sometimes 3–4 months after vacation from the actual meal delivery date. . . . Some caterers have to borrow money, pay interest to the bank and enjoy lower margins if any.”²²

Inadequate Financing

Discrepancies exist in the amount of funds budgeted by the Ghana government and the actual funds it releases for GSFP operations. As of September 2019, the government paid only 59.3 percent of its 2019 revised goods and services budget to the GSFP, which highlights the insufficiency of GSFP funding.

Collusion and Corruption

In 2018, a Ghana Auditor General’s report revealed financial irregularities amounting to GH¢3,367,965.00 within the GSFP. In certain schools, bloated enrolment figures were used to pay caterers, leading to some caterers being paid as much as twice the amount they should have received.²⁵ Duplication of schools and payments of grants to nonexistent caterers were also prevalent.

Policy Recommendations for Financial Sustainability 2021–2031

As the GSFP looks to improve its operations beyond

Table 1. 2018 Ghana School Feeding Programme Performance

	Approved Budget	Amount Released as at end Sept 2018	% Approved	Actual received	Amount utilized	Projections to the end of the year
GoG Goods & Services	423,795,400	358,330,705	84.55	358,330,705	358,330,705	65,464,685

Source: Parliament of Ghana, *Report of the Joint Committee*²³

Table 2: Ghana School Feeding Programme Performance as of September 2019

Economic Classification	Approved Budget	Revised Budget	Amount Released as at end Sept 2019	Actual received	Amount utilized	Variance
GoG Goods and Services	262,016,517	362,016,517	218,087,353	214,633,232	214,633,232	143,929,164
Non-Road Arrears			123,700,000	123,700,000	123,700,000	(123,700,000)

Source: Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, *Programme Based Budget Estimates for 2020*²⁴

2020, there is a clear need for policy makers to revamp the financial sustainability element of the program.

Streamlined, Clear, Laid-Out Plan for Supplementing Government Funds

While the NSFP encapsulates some policy measures for improving GSFP's financial sustainability, there is no well-laid-out plan for how this should be done. The NSFP should thus be adapted to include a clear, harmonious strategy for supplementing government funds.

Expand Rural Loan Systems for Caterers

In response to irregular payments in the GSFP, in 2014, SNV PG-HGSF piloted a rural loan facility for GSFP caterers in Northern Ghana. Under this facility, each caterer was lent an amount that equaled slightly less than 50 percent of the total amount required for feeding a school for one term.²⁶ This ensured that caterers would not become completely reliant on the loan and reinforced the need for financial planning. An expansion of such rural loan facilities will allow caterers to have dependable sources of funding, while improving their financial planning skills.

Enforce Strict Verification of Payment File prior to Caterer Payment

To prevent bloating of enrollment figures, and duplication of schools in the GSFP payment file, strict balance and checking measures need to be put in place. There should also be strict punitive measures taken against GSFP officials found to be erroneously adjusting payment files.

Conclusion

Improving the financial sustainability of the GSFP requires concerted efforts from the Ghanaian government and GSFP management to gradually eliminate the key bottlenecks to sustainability identified in this brief. If addressed, as recommended above, the GSFP will be closer to achieving its financial sustainability targets.

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#EndSARS: Nigeria, Police Brutality, and the African Movement for Black Lives

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Abstract

This paper will explore the origins of the #EndSARS campaign in Nigeria, with a specific focus on the utilization of social media in bringing domestic and international attention to the brutal police practices of the Nigerian Police Force's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The paper will present a historical examination of law enforcement in Nigeria and contextualize the extent to which corruption, extortion, extrajudicial killings, warrantless arrests and detentions, rape, and other brutalities are rampant. We will then present our LDA analysis of Twitter posts to reveal four topics that capture the framing of the activists' and citizens' posts that mobilized Nigerians to protest to end SARS. The four topics are computed as concepts and are categorized as general perspective, isolation perspective, outrage perspective, and structural perspective.

Introduction

In the early part of October 2020, the Nigerian Police Force announced that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was being dissolved due mainly to pressure brought on by massive protests both in the country and around the globe. Before the announcement, a video purporting to show a SARS officer shooting an unarmed man and taking his luxury automobile surfaced online. The video immediately sparked outrage among Nigerians and the global community at large.¹ President Muhammadu Buhari would go on to promise reforms in the various police units. For ordinary Nigerian citizens, who made up the bulk of those protesting in Lagos and other Nigerian cities' streets, promises from government officials have been made on multiple occasions since 2017, with no real changes since. Many saw the promises as temporary appeasement to quell the voices calling for reform.²

Nigerians in the diaspora joined their brothers and sisters in organizing and protesting under the hashtag #EndSARS. The rallying cry helped to mobilize protests in Toronto, London, Washington, DC, and New York.³ Similarly, celebrities worldwide threw their support behind the movement and the hashtag, using their notoriety and social media influence to highlight the extent to which corruption and brutality had become rampant with law enforcement and military forces in Nigeria. More importantly, many in Nigeria saw the power social media and technology played in the Black Lives Matter movements (BLM) in the United States. Though BLM started in 2013, it experienced a resurgence in 2020 after protests were sparked by the police killings of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd. The 2020 protests touched every major city in the United States, and many celebrities lent their support to the cause through direct action and social media support. Nigerian celebrities utilized their social media accounts to call out the president and other politicians and call for an end to the SARS unit and corruption within the police force.⁴ BLM's framing of a modern Black liberation movement was intentioned on critical feminist thought and intersectionality.⁵ The movement's Black female founders approached their organizing efforts in the Black feminist tradition, including members of marginalized groups that were often kept on the fringes of previous social movements. Likewise, the organizing and funding of #EndSARS protests in Nigeria was largely the work of the Feminist Coalition. The members of the Feminist Coalition employed their social media and business acumen to support the #EndSARS movement, carrying on a long tradition of feminist activism in Nigeria.⁶ It was inevitable that BLM would play a role in influencing the organization and mobilization of #EndSARS protests throughout Nigeria and the diaspora. Specifically, bringing an end to extrajudicial killings and wanton police brutality is a goal shared by both movements; however, like BLM, the #EndSARS movement has expanded their calls for change to include holding rogue officers accountable, compensating victims and their families, and reforming law enforcement practices for all forces within the country.⁷ For some time, BLM in the United States has reaped the same global support and reach that #EndSARS began to enjoy in October 2020. BLM protests in the United States, sparked by the killings of Breonna Taylor

and George Floyd, also morphed and began to bring awareness to issues of voting registration, poverty eradication, education equity, diversity and inclusion, and social justice. Perhaps more importantly, #EndSARS protesters saw their problems with SARS and other law enforcement and military units in the country through a human rights lens. Their demands were the demands of a society beseeched by human rights failures. Their calls for an end to police brutality have also morphed into a social justice and reform movement.⁸

History

The origins of Nigerian police brutality began with British colonial rule and the underlying aims of empire building and domination in West Africa. Brutal tactics by colonial authorities originated when British colonizers developed a police force in 1861 in the Lagos Colony. Violence and other forceful tactics were employed to force the colonizers' political and economic will upon the colonized.⁹ British colonial officials used police to administer their will upon the native population throughout their history. This included but was not limited to quelling independence protests, demonstrations, and labor strikes.¹⁰ British rule created distrust and overall discontent amongst the population for the colonial police and military forces.

After independence from British colonial rule in 1960, Nigeria experienced a civil war, a series of military coups, and over 30 years of military rule. The successive military governments ruled with relative impunity, using brutal tactics to put down any resistance to their control. Corruption by successive administrations was endemic, even as each promised reforms. During the 1970s, Nigeria experienced a boom in oil profits, becoming an OPEC member and taking on debt due to infrastructure investment in the oil production sector. Unfortunately, some profits were skimmed off by military junta leaders, while others were used to service international loan repayments. While the average Nigerian was living on about 1 USD per day, nearly 300 billion dollars in oil profits have not been accounted for.¹¹ Corruption, instability in governance, poverty, and military rule further exacerbated the discontent that Nigerians felt toward their government in general and the police forces in partic-

ular. By 1992, crime, largely a byproduct of endemic poverty, was rampant in Nigeria, particularly in Lagos. SARS was formed to address and respond to the rise in armed robberies, kidnappings, and violent crime plaguing cities like Lagos.¹²

SARS officers operated with impunity as they used unmarked cars, undercover and plain clothing, and other surreptitious tactics. Moreover, they engaged in heavy-handed tactics and practices that further drove a wedge of distrust between the citizens and police. Eventually, SARS developed a reputation for using those heavy-handed tactics to extort bribery payments and detain young men it profiled for having nice cars, phones, or laptops.¹³ Allegations of torture at the hands of SARS officers spread, and by 2017, Nigerians, helped in large part by social media, called for the disbandment of SARS. The #EndSARS social media campaign grew and was spurred on and influenced by BLM.

However, social media mobilization was not new to Nigerians, as one need only reference the #Bringbackourgirls campaign involving the group kidnapping of Muslim girls in northern Nigeria by Boko Haram terrorists.

In early October 2020, protests erupted in various Nigerian cities, as thousands responded to a video showing the alleged killing of a young man and subsequent theft of his luxury automobile by SARS officers. The video was a catalyst for years of pent-up frustration with the brutal and corrupt practices of the SARS units deployed who were there to combat crime otherwise. The youth and other citizens perceive the police generally and SARS specifically as the perpetrators of crimes and extensions of the type of corruption many in Nigeria have come to expect from their government. Much more frustrating to the young protesters was that the current government and previous administrations had promised to disband SARS on three previous occasions.¹⁴

The October 2020 protests began, again, with the online hashtag #EndSARS, and like the 2017 protests, participants used social media outlets to promote their grievances to a global audience. Unfortunately, like previous demands for human and civil rights promotion and development in Nigeria, the government responded with extreme force and utilized the military and police to quell the protests. On 20 October 2020, as the online mobilizations and hashtags gathered steam, protesters gathered at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos and were met

with gunfire by police and military forces. This day will be forever known as Black Tuesday, as approximately 48 protesters were killed and nearly 100 injured by police.¹⁵ The government's response fit the historical pattern of brutal government violence to quell peaceful, nonviolent protests. However, the events only increased advocacy and support for the #EndSARS movement from Nigerians in the diaspora, celebrities, and BLM allies worldwide. Influenced by similar reactions to police brutality experienced by African Americans and the BLM movement in the United States, #EndSARS promised to keep the pressure on the government and force change in a country that has only recently celebrated 60 years of independence from colonial rule.

Methods and Results

To gather insight into the online discourses surrounding the response to SARS, we utilized computational topic modeling. In general, topic modeling refers to processes that identify overarching themes within a corpus or set of documents. For this specific analysis, we utilized a specific topic-modeling algorithm referred to as latent Dirichlet allocation (LDA), a natural language processing (NLP) technique with widespread application in machine learning. Using a probabilistic approach to map individual keywords to a generalized topic allows the researcher to couple these keywords into coherent themes. The algorithm assumes a structure in the text's development; therefore, LDA uses variables like vocabulary size, word frequency, specific words in each document, and the overall number of documents to create an output.¹⁶ Utilizing Twitter's premium API, we queried historical tweets from 3 October 2020, the initial date when SARS' abuse served as an impetus for the social justice movement that sparked protests across Nigeria. Twitter's role in mobilizing and framing the #EndSARS protest movement on October 3, the same day the video of the brutal killing of a young man in southern Nigeria went viral, reveals the importance of online mobilization in pressuring Nigerian authorities to reform their criminal justice system. Understanding the tweets that surfaced on the first day the video of the brutal killing went viral provides insight into the framing strategies that citizens and activists utilized to produce the subsequent mass mobilizations. While recent research has generally captured the sociopolitical and economic

undertones associated with the #EndSARS movement,^{17,18,19} our study provides a space to accentuate the grassroots perspective by highlighting individual tweets and their collective significance in the framing of the #EndSARS protests through a computational lens. This produces a glimpse into the larger themes, sentiments, and underlying constructs that may not be readily available when assessing the data at face value using a NLP topic-modeling algorithm. The #EndSARS hashtag—and all of its slightly modified iterations—were the primary keyword used in the query of historical data. The result was individual 20,048 tweets. After data pre-processing, which includes both the tokenization and lemmatization of the gathered texts, 171,001 non-unique and 161,788 unique words were extracted.

As a result of the application of the LDA algorithm, four topics were computed (Table 1). We captured and referred to the concepts as a general perspective, an isolation perspective, an outrage perspective, and a structural perspective to capture how the tweets posted on 3 October 2020 facilitated the global mobilization online. Keywords for the general perspective include “trend,” “government,” “start,” and “fear.” The first topic viewed the SARS incident as comparable to previous SARS events and actions, therefore expressing a critique of the pattern of brutality within the framework of systematic oppression in Nigerian policing. It also views the event through the lens of an existential crisis, whereby the acknowledgment of a juncture is communicated and immediate demand for reform is explicitly demanded. @Ighotrix issues a stern warning by stating: “Hope SARS know that people will surely retaliate. And the government they feel are backing them will leave them to die. Naso boko haram take start. Naso militant take start. Nigerian government take heed. You guys feel you are safe. #EndSARS” (@Ighotrix, 3 October 2020). Another

user, @JustinUg_, also echoes the same sentiment by tweeting, “The people who should be protecting our people are killing our people, I’ve seen so many videos today and I don’t even know how to feel, I’ve imagined if it was someone I knew getting treated that way, it’s sickening. #EndSARS for Gods sake” (@JustinUg_, 3 October 2020). These tweets’ injustice framing of the SARS brutality critiques their practices as embedded in Nigerian policing history and that people who are now exposed to the brutality will no longer stand for such crimes to occur. Finally, embedded within the tweets under this topic is intentionality behind their tweeting; a conscious effort exists amongst activists to make their grievances well known in the social media sphere. This is important as the first days immediately after the posting of the murderous video on October 3, activists were calling the people to the streets by revealing the government authorities’ and SARS agents’ murderous intentions to the world.

Topic 2 consisted of keywords like “need,” “brutality,” “thief,” and “menace.” Due to the nature of the keywords being strongly attached to the actual event of SARS committing the egregious crimes, the topic was categorized as an isolation perspective, primarily because there’s a strong focus on the incidents, where grievances and public shock are channeled onto the victims of the massacre. One tweet states, “police that is supposed to protect us are the ones killing us. Sars will kill and steal your property. Police is no longer your friend but your end. It is time to stop this madness.” (@dazzy4real2000, 3 October 2020). The emphasis upon SARS and the specific incident gives a narrowed focus on discourse and communication. In the context of the topics mentioned above, this topic provides another layer of analysis, capturing the significance of the killing vis-à-vis the underlying conflict between citizens and police in the area. It

Table 1. Select Five Common Words by LDA Topic

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4
General	Isolation	Outrage	Structural
Trend	Need	Nigerian	Country
Kill	Brutality	Protect	Protest
Government	Theif	Street	Leader
Start	Menace	Young	Change
Fear	Criminal	Scare	Law

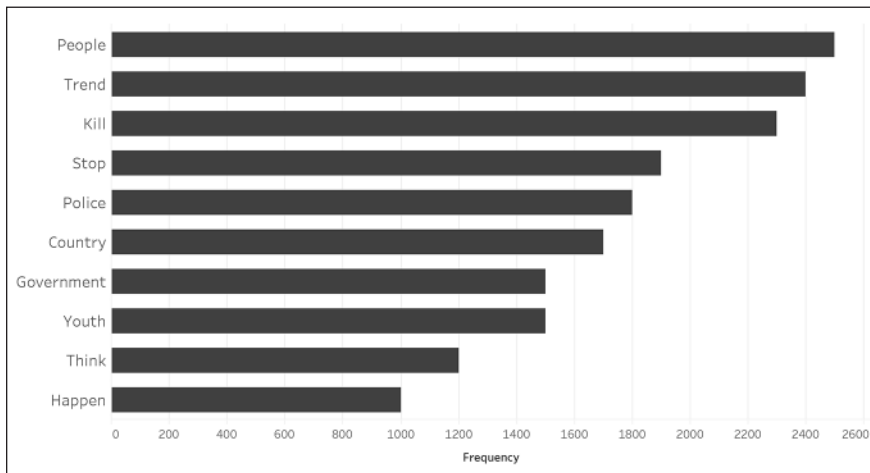
also focuses on empathy for the victims, while directing their attention to the parties responsible, including SARS and the Nigerian government. Moreover, the brutal videos tweeted and retweeted shocked the nation as the brutality of SARS actions revealed young men hanging from rooftops, children and women physically beaten, and men and women imprisoned in unsanitary holding cells for weeks on end. These video and picture tweets, along with government silence and support for such actions, released the festering anger toward the police and authorities.

Topic 3 contained keywords like “kill,” “Nigerian,” “protect,” “street,” and “young.” This topic was categorized as an outrage perspective. Like the murder of unarmed Blacks in the United States, a strong focus was on communicating the appalling nature of the killings and the authorities who are acting on behalf of the government. There is also a strong emphasis on the brutal killing of youth and fellow citizens, whom they empathize with regarding their being fellow Nigerians and their support of the protests. One user tweeted, “Its painful seeing the life of the youth with promising future cut short by our own security operatives who are meant to guide and protect us killing one of us instead and our so call president @MBuhari is doing nothing about it and the @NGRSenate is watching silently. #EndSARS” (@kelvinnax, 3 October 2020). Another user called out Nigerians who actively protested and tweeted in support of BLM but are staying silent when it

comes to #EndSARS, stating, “We have so many George Floyd stories in this country. Our police brutality is the insane craziness of Sars, and it must stop. If we can support BLM and even protest against police brutality, then we must do more to #EndSARS, #EndSarsNow” (@loneafricana, 3 October 2020). This outrage was geared toward the people of Nigeria, who were initially silent on voicing their outrage on the SARS killings but were vocal during the global BLM protests in the summer of 2020. These tweets referenced the similarities between US police brutality and its racialized dimensions to Nigeria. Under this topic, the tweets mobilized users through bridging BLM and #EndSARS frames to equate them as similar processes and actions.

Topic 4 contained terms like “country,” “protest,” “leader,” “change,” and “law.” Like topic 3, this structural perspective expresses outrage over the SARS murder of innocent people; however, it places burden beyond simply the SARS forces and expands the domain of guilt and responsibility to President Buhari, the Nigerian government, and the Nigerian elite. For example, one tweet states, “You are the government. You have voices in the government. Will you have to wait before it affects you directly???? Act now #EndSARS #EndSARS” (@IDinipre, 3 October 2020). Another tweet states, “One day the most top official’s government son or daughter will be victim of this SARS brutality stray bullet, most especially the ones in presidential villa...by then I think they will put an urgent end to this nonsensical SARS brutality in

Figure 1. 10 Frequent Keywords Found in Tweets Related to #EndSARS



this nation. #EndSARSbrutality #EndSars” (@monell_M2R, 3 October 2020). These tweets highlight multiple dimensions related to the overarching themes, namely that the responsibility is distributed to the government, aside from the security forces. Moreover, elites were actively targeted as a focus of the protests as they are entrenched in the powerful institutions responsible for supporting organizations like SARS. Moreover, government officials and elites alike were called out for supporting BLM while ignoring the abuse and suppression that police forces have employed in Nigeria. One tweet stated:

“When it was BLM see the way our Nigerian Celebs jumped on Blackout Tuesday buh its now #EndSars Y’all quiet those random people you think don’t matter are actually the ones streaming and buying your SHIT not your family this young boys go all out to buy concert tickets.... If they can plan a Coup on a whole President of a Country who be You? that’s the same way they will gang up and take you out PERIOD!!!!” (@JUDYWILLZ, 3 October 2020)

These tweets reveal how Nigerians mobilized the population to produce social change by utilizing several framing strategies online. The BLM movement becomes a reference for their mobilizations in both the inspiration and critique for the lack of action displayed by Nigerian officials and elites who mobilized around BLM but not #EndSARS.

Conclusion

Since coming back online, the movement has enjoyed considerable global support. Due mainly to the military’s repressive response to the protests, viral videos and social media posts via Twitter have kept the pressure on the government and have exposed the tactics so many Nigerians had become accustomed to expect from their leaders. For its part, the government has recently responded with a two-pronged approach to the movement, simultaneously agreeing to open inquiries into abuses and work with protesters to entertain reforms while jailing and harassing hundreds who do not abide by government orders.²⁰ This comes off as disingenuous to the throngs of youth who have little to no trust in their government in the

first place. Twitter’s role in mobilizing and framing the #EndSARS protest movement on October 3, the same day the video of the brutal killing of a young man in southern Nigeria went viral, reveals the importance of online mobilization in pressuring Nigerian authorities to reform their criminal justice system. Understanding the tweets that surfaced on the first day the video of the brutal killing went viral provides an insight into the framing strategies that citizens and activists utilized to produce the subsequent mass mobilizations.

The #EndSARS protests, though sparked by an isolated incident, brought global attention to a government system that has mismanaged and failed to protect its citizens from its own institutions. SARS agents charged with protecting civilian life and civil order did the exact opposite in the eyes of the civilian population. Isolated acts of brutality committed by SARS units, such as the aforementioned homicide on October 3, organically led to a recognition of the larger structural issues related to human rights in the country. Twitter users helped to mobilize a human rights discourse, similar in kind to the Arab Spring uprisings and the BLM protests, which ultimately linked SARS abuses with policies and practices emanating from every postcolonial Nigerian administrations. The social media discourse of the protestors and their supporters around the world brought renewed attention to human rights issues beyond the SARS units. Many of these issues had festered decades before #EndSARS began and were very similar to issues of other protest movements happening simultaneously in other countries. These issues included, but were not limited to, extrajudicial killings and torture by police and security forces, violence against women, inadequate rights of children, mistreatment of prisoners, lack of judicial due process, public corruption, official cover up of crimes by police, inadequate investigations of communal violence, and inadequate environmental protections.²¹

The movement to bring attention to the widespread abuses and corruption by SARS officers was further influenced by the mass mobilization of Nigeria’s population of youth (especially citizens between 18 and 35 years of age). Making up roughly half of the electorate, their organizing efforts showed their true political and civil power.²² In addition, the protests crossed ethno-religious lines and brought together marginalized groups throughout the country.²³ Unfortunately, the government responded

lethally to the political will and demands of the youth and their peaceful demonstrations, culminating in the Lekki Toll Gate incident in October 2020, which resulted in the deaths of 12 people at the hands of security personnel. By this point, the government could no longer ignore the growing voices of discontent.

The Twitter-driven mobilizations ultimately sustained the international pressure on Nigerian officials while drawing on continued support in Nigeria and abroad. The utilization of social media by Nigerians may become an ignition point for a West African Spring, drawing inspiration from North African and Middle Eastern countries during the 2010s. It should be noted that police corruption was the catalyst for the Arab Spring in Tunisia but quickly morphed to address oppressive living conditions and the lack of civil and human rights across the Arab world. Similarly, the BLM movement in the United States used social media to mobilize to address extrajudicial police killings but quickly became a voice for reform in the criminal justice system, economics, education, employment, and other fundamental rights. The #EndSARS movement has likewise brought attention to aspects of life in Nigeria, which have made oppressive police practices a norm and not an exception. Although the SARS unit was eventually disbanded on 12 October 2020, nine days after the initial protests, the mobilization of thousands of Nigerians moved beyond the framing surrounding police violence and impunity to critique and challenge the whole of the system. Ultimately, #EndSARS on Twitter became a frame for a coalition of activists and ordinary citizens to mobilize and make known their grievances to Nigerians, Africans, and the world in the hopes of improving Nigerians' lives and daily living conditions.

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