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ELECTION WATCH

Management of democratic elections in Africa

“Creating a community of practice on African elections”



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1. Contents

2. Introduction.....	3
3. Environment Not Conducive to Credible and Peaceful Elections in Burundi	6
by Kealeboga J Maphunye	
4. Nkurunziza’s decision to contest in the June 2015 elections; the incentives and pitfalls for foreign authorities.	12
by Mapopa Kaunda	
5. “Attacks against people with albinism can never be justified”	17
by Phalandwa A Mulaudzi	
6. Tanzania – What are some of the key Challenges as the Country goes to Elections in October 2015?.....	24
by Martin R Rupiya	
7. Sudan Election Postmortem.....	26
by Gwinyai A Dzinesa	

Elections continue to be the litmus test for peace and stability on the African continent.

2. Introduction

In March 2015, the Programme, Management of Democratic Election in Africa (MDEA) in the Institute for African Renaissance Studies (IARS) launched the first Election Watch Quarterly (EWQ), aimed at providing the research and analysis platform for brief Op Eds that reflect on the diverse challenges facing the continent as it embarks upon this great social transformation and political organization of the 54 Member States. The same may serve as early warning, identifying key issues that underlie a particular electoral process or something new and brewing, considered sufficient to have an impact as well as comment on the post-election period, focusing on whether or not an election has served as the panacea to consolidate democracy in a given context.

The phenomenon of regular, transparent and democratic elections is a new social science facing the consolidation of the hitherto, colonial and the immediate independent, post-colonial African state. Democracy as phenomena, previously constrained by the over-arching global international security system of the cold war has only recently become a reality after 2000. The joke is that, in that period protected from 'market' competition in the political arena, the one-party-state system developed the 'imperial' presidential as well as 'ruling party' syndrome. In most instances, the latter also collapsed the distinction and distinguishing features between party and state. This is an inheritance that Africa will continue to deal with over the next decades.

As result, there are still many aspects to be fully understood and integrated into the practice within the African states. Elections are therefore the acceptable route for aspiring political actors to seek power – once appropriately registered and duly credited and then proceed, based on policies that are captured in the party manifestoes, to offer themselves for possible majority support from the voters. Right from the beginning, Elections have emerged as highly sensitive, fiercely contested and in some case, are reduced to do or die events. In these extreme cases, political actors appear not to countenance life outside politics, even where they no longer enjoy the electoral support of the majority. In winning an election, members or parties enjoy legitimacy and are then able to engage with other Democracies far and wide. In so far as the winning candidates and party, subjecting themselves and emerging from an electoral process is a manifestation of the majority within a state to be able to choose leaders of their own choice – an important power-relations phase in the political life of contemporary states.

Hence the purpose of the EWQ is motivate research on the electoral cycle, encourage expert monitoring, and professional observation as well as critical assessment and in the process offer options based on distilled and comparative knowledge to benefit the

continent. It is therefore our hope that the EWQ becomes, yet another platform that ultimately serves to enhance the transformation of the African state into a Democratic entity. A further objective of the EWQ is to assist in our other parallel work: the training of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs), providing graduates with pointers towards problem areas in their work places and succeeds in consolidating democratic values, norms and practices. Taken together, the purpose and objective of the EWQ is towards facilitating the transformation of the post-colonial African state onto a trajectory in which states embrace regular, transparent, constitutional frame works that are characterized by the observance to the rule of law and accountability.

MDEA Alumni-networking platform for the “Community of Practice”

As the EWQ directly supports MDEA – concerned with the actual residential class room training of Candidates drawn from the various EMBs on the continent, it is also useful to note that MDEA has since launched an Alumni programme – designed to provide continuing network opportunities even after graduates return to their home stations. During the first week of December 2014, the first sub-regional, Southern African Development Community (SADC), Chapter of the Alumni was launched in Gaborone, Botswana. In March this year, the next 2 and 3 Chapters for West African Economic Community (ECOWAS) and that of the East African Community (EAC) were launched in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Suggested Phases in the Comprehensive Electoral Cycle

The electoral cycle is organized at least seven phases. These however, run in parallel, simultaneously and even retrospectively and therefore its impact in the phased dimensions may not always be clear to the untrained eye. In each, the evolving can also influence the subsequent or the preceding phase to ultimately render the electoral process obsolete. In an attempt to simply the process, the phase in an election cycle includes:

1. Constitutional mandate for the call for regular elections
2. The Delimitation of constituencies based on population demographics and other considerations
3. Voters Roll and registration of aspiring Candidates
4. Campaigning period
5. Polling – the security of the vote

6. Collation of results –
7. Announcement of the winner and losers/

Filling the Gap: Growing Credibility

The first edition of the EWQ was launched in March 2015 and managed to draw contributions from the African Union's Political Affairs Office responsible for Elections. To this end, these colleagues were able to review the taxing challenges facing the impending Nigerian Election at the time.

This time round, in the second edition, worthwhile contributions have been received from five contributors outside of the issue coordinator. These range from established writers, Lectures and Post-Graduate students demonstrating the existence of a knowledge gap and platform that the launch of the EWQ has been able to occupy. Our suggestion and argument that the EWQ is a research platform that can be taken advantage of by post-graduate students has been taken to heart. Well-done Kaunda! Furthermore, these contributions cast a wide intellectual net, on the challenges facing elections on the continent from Burundi, Sudan and Togo. Lets hope these meets with the reader's expectations as we continue to refine the quality, focus and relevance of EWQ.

Finally, based on strong recommendations by colleagues after the release of the First Edition, this issue now has a new section: that dealing with Electoral Promises versus implementation – measured in the First 100 Days. This is an important innovation where students and post-graduate researchers can begin to isolate parties' manifestoes during the campaign and once ensconced in office, begin to evaluate how much attention, resources and political will is paid towards any of the policies touted during the campaign.

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3. Environment Not Conducive to Credible and Peaceful Elections in Burundi

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Introduction

The African leaders who brokered a ceasefire between Burundi's and warring rebel forces in 2005 may have overlooked the possible recurrence in 2015 of the violence that engulfed Burundi before the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Accord was signed in Tanzania. But what accounts for Burundi's present predicament?

First, like neighbouring Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi became embroiled in a bitter civil war from 1993 to 2005. Ironically, Burundi was gradually addressing the political instability that emanated from ethnic rivalries, leading to disagreements largely between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. The advent of peace led to political stability and a return to normal political processes including elections; these were scheduled for 26 May (Parliamentary) and 26-27 June 2015 (Presidential). Owing to the political volatility and tensions that engulfed the country following the incumbent President Pierre Nkurunziza's declaration to run for another term of office, Burundi's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) postponed these elections. The immediate spin-offs of a peaceful environment in a post-conflict country like Burundi are difficult to quantify; but the peace dividend benefited Burundians and people in the entire Great Lakes region alike. Known to be a volatile region, peace in Burundi brought immense relief to the Great Lakes especially Rwanda, Tanzania and DRC who suffered from an influx of refugees.

Second, the (Hutu-Tutsi) ethnic tensions may have subsided but it appears that the country never overcame its leadership challenges, as is the case with some African countries. Leadership entails selfless duty to people or voters who bestow their trust in a leader through regular and credible elections. Such leadership dedicates all resources towards serving their constituencies according to their electoral mandate and respect for the rule of law and the constitution. Failure to do so undermines duly elected governments and subverts a country's political stability.



Source: <https://www.google.co.za>, Retrieved on 19/05/2014

Third, Burundi's post-independence problems cannot be ascribed solely to leadership and (poor) governance but to complex processes of state formation, nation building, constitutionalism, democratisation through elections and numerous post-colonial dynamics.

Burundi's 2015 Pre-Election Dilemmas

Each of the above factors partially explains the unravelling of the 2005 peace process and outbreak of pre-election violence. These factors are in turn connected to others that might directly explain Burundi's pre-election dilemmas whereby thousands of its citizens have fled to neighbouring countries soon after public demonstrations to protest Nkurunziza's bid for third term began assembling in the capital Bujumbura and elsewhere in the country. To start with, pre-election violence adversely undermines the integrity of an election including relevant preparations; in Africa if violence recurs this can seriously tarnish a country's name and reputation. Burundi's pre-election violence perhaps serves as testimony to the presence of underlying and unresolved socio-economic and political problems in the country particularly poverty and unemployment which typically affect the youth badly. Arguably, any government which overlooks the problems of unemployed youth who roam the streets in towns and villages doing almost nothing on a regular basis risks losing this energetic sector of society to opportunists who can easily mobilise them as a force for public protests against an incumbent. This probably explains the emphasis by the African Union's Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEC) that youth, women and other usually marginalised groups in society should be empowered by member states' governments to address their problems.

Implications of Political Instability and Violence in Burundi

The ACDEG discourages violence as it threatens to reduce the pace of a country's democratisation and undermine development. In Burundi's case, the outbreak of pre-election violence exactly a decade after the signing of the Arusha Peace Accord that resulted in a ceasefire among the CFDD-FDD (Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) and other (rebel) forces is shocking to Burundians and Africans generally. It suggests that the foundation for the peace accord was either weak or not accompanied by strong political will by the leaders. Whatever the explanation for Burundi's violence in 2015, this decade-old problem creates headaches for the African Union since the continental body clearly has to investigate the causes of such violence before looking for alternative solutions and peace-building mechanisms. What this means is that Burundi's situation flouts the conditions of the AU Charter (ACDEG), which urges leaders and governments to abide by the rule of law and respect the provisions of their national constitutions.

This perhaps constitutes the Achilles hill of Burundi's political system and a detonator of the pre-election violence, which saw protesters taking to the streets while alleging that President Nkurunziza contravened the rule of law and constitutionalism. Another probable cause of the Burundian pre-electoral violence is that he agreed to stand for re-election and run for another term of office knowing clearly that this could cause serious disagreements among political parties and citizens alike. Ostensibly, President Nkurunziza's counter argument was that his 2015 candidature would be his second and last, but this presented a false justification before the country's citizens. This action suggests that the rule of law can be easily subverted and that constitutional provisions were not entrenched so as to avoid this situation. To ordinary citizens of Burundi, this apparently became a trigger point towards violence as they took to the streets to object to his move. On the one hand, the argument of the President and his supporters seemed credible despite latching onto a legal technicality: that when he became president after the civil war he was nominated by parliament and not directly elected by the voters as the constitution stipulates. Apparently, the 2015 elections presented him with an opportunity to run for a second term, which the protestors objected to. This legal technical blind spot appears to have opened a loophole for the incumbent to run for another term of office irrespective of public objections and condemnation. In this way, Burundi's presidential term limits seem to have been flouted blatantly though craftily because even the Burundi Constitutional Court which considered the "...matter relating to a bid by the incumbent president, Pierre Nkurunziza, to run for another term [of office]...ultimately ruled that his candidature was constitutional" (Botswana Sunday Standard, 17/05/2015).

Consequently, Africa and the world are confronted with two dilemmas from this scenario. First, if Burundi's constitution prescribes two term limits for incumbent

presidents, why did the national assembly or parliament not intervene to challenge this apparently unconstitutional move? This dilemma suggests that the powers of parliament or national assembly were usurped or undermined by the executive. However, even the judiciary might have colluded with this move by not seriously interrogating the proposed extension of term of office, thus not fulfilling its role in line with the separation of powers principle.

Second, it is still puzzling as to why the governing CNDD-FDD (Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy) endorsed Nkurunziza as its candidate for the 2015 elections without first ascertaining whether this step was constitutional. In fact, this bid for a third term clearly flouts the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which discourages leaders and governments from changing national constitutions haphazardly to extend term limits. In this instance, one wonders as to how serious African leaders and governing political parties are about maintaining constitutional democratic rule and respecting the rule of law.

The complexities of post-independence issues confronting countries such as Burundi probably lend themselves to several factors. One possible explanation of Burundi's 2015 pre-election violence might be the pervasive "president-for-life" syndrome whereby leaders, once firmly in power, become reluctant to vacate the presidential palace when their term expires. Thus, some African leaders, notably recent cases of Nigeria's Olusugun Obasanjo, Cameroon's Paul Biya and Uganda's Yoweri Museveni, successfully extended their (expired) terms of office although others such as the late Bingu wa Mutharika of Malawi did not succeed. Resorting to several tricks in order to extend presidential terms of office has now become a major grievance by African voters who want to see genuine multiparty competition and rotation of leaders and parties in power through credible elections. This would also include the development of independent institutions such as election management bodies that are fairly autonomous and able to run elections that are fair and generally acceptable to all the contenders for power; free media, and independent judiciary and effective legislatures that are capable of providing adequate checks and balances and oversight or scrutiny over the executive.

A key disadvantage of having a "president-for-life" is that it usually stifles basic human rights and curtails constitutionally enshrined freedoms such as the right to protest, freedom of speech and assembly, religious freedom, freedom of association and the role of opposition parties in a political system. This also discourages innovation and fresh ideas and further has the potential to suppress public participation; silence rivals and even adopts unfair or undemocratic measures such as the banning of political parties (Swaziland), indefinite suspension of elections and constitution (Eritrea), and amendment of the constitution to retain the president in power (Cameroon).

Challenges Facing Burundi's Election Management Body (CENI)

Before 2007 when the ACDEG was adopted by AU member states, Africa's elections were identified as a source of violence. Yet, the advent of the Charter was hailed as a new beginning that would usher in adherence to democratic elections and election management best practices in Africa. The Charter was expected to assist countries to address pre-election, Election Day and post-election violence. Its provisions affected virtually all the electoral cycle processes including election systems. Looking at Burundi's May 2015 pre-election violence barely a few weeks before its June elections were to be held, it is clear that Africa must still transcend the embarrassing era of violent elections. Not surprising, the country's (CENI) subsequently postponed the elections "indefinitely". Ironically, in the same month (May 2015) the United Kingdom (UK) elections were conducted peacefully and produced results that were acceptable to all the winners and losers alike. It is acknowledged that Africa may be far from conducting such elections, but the ACDEG clearly urges African countries in this direction.

Lessons from Burundi's 2015 Situation

Burundi's 2015 situation defies the expectations of millions of Africans who thought that the country (together with other Great Lakes region countries) would never return to the ashes of its earlier civil war. Many lessons can therefore be learnt from its current crisis. First, incumbent presidents and leaders must commit to respecting the rule of law and their national constitutions by avoiding knee-jerk, discretionary and unilateral amendments of such laws merely to extend presidential term limits. Second, once elected, a president must stick to prescribed constitutional term limits and other obligations. If citizens perceive that the incumbent has made a detour towards fulfilling their individual self-enrichment desires, they might resort to insurrection and rioting as happened in Burundi in 2015. Third, the AU and other influential regional and international bodies must remind presidents and cabinet ministers that they (leaders and ministers) derive their powers and mandate from citizens only through the ballot and not some Machiavellian scheme to remain in power forever. Fourth, leaders must continuously account to the electorates who elected them to office. In many African countries, the question of accountability and public mandate given by the voters still presents major challenges.

Conclusion

Burundi's problems affect all African countries. Thus, all African countries must sign and ratify the AU Charter (ACDEG); those that have done so must now domesticate or

implement its provisions. Failure to do so might expose them to election-related violence and similar crises confronting Burundi. Such practices undermine Africa's democratisation. Finally, the AU and the East African Community and all relevant role-players in the Great Lakes region's conflict must develop sustainable, peace-building and conflict resolution measures and unapologetically apply the provisions of the AU's Charter and other agreements. Obviously, this calls for effective enforcement, visible and systematic application of such agreements and to ensure full compliance by member states.

4. Nkurunziza's decision to contest in the June 2015 elections; the incentives and pitfalls for foreign authorities.

By Mapopa Kaunda
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Introduction

At the center of 'current events' in Burundi is the incumbent's President Nkurunziza's decision to contest in the forthcoming 2015, June 26 elections. The decision has caused controversy, protests and allegations of a military take-over¹. Central to this internal conflict are the polarized interpretation of the incumbent's decision; whether it is a third term attempt or a second and last attempt.

On the one hand, those opposed to his bid argue that he is contesting for a third term, in violation of the country's constitution, which limits presidential terms to two, as well as to the spirit of the Arusha Peace Agreement that ended twelve years of civil war. On the other hand the incumbent's own camp; argue that he is running for a second term (if not final term). Their argument is also based also on the constitution and the peace agreement.

The context

Without going into details about the causes and dynamics of the civil war in Burundi, suffice it to state that hostilities ceased under the Arusha Peace Agreement fully known as the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi. Of interest for this discussion is to note that Article 7 of the agreement provided that, following the signing of the peace deal, save for the very first election, the President shall be elected by direct universal suffrage. Article 20, section 10 then stated that the first post-transition president would be elected by the National Assembly and the Senate sitting together by a majority of two-thirds of the vote. Finally, under the Peace Agreement, Article 22 compelled the Burundian authorities, through its National Assembly to adopt, without amendment, the substance of the agreement, within four weeks of entering into force. In effect the Peace Agreement became part of the post-2005 legal structure of Burundi. Meanwhile the country's 2005 Constitution, under Article 96 and 102², directs that the

¹ By the time of submitting the article, the coup had ostensibly failed.

² Post-Transition Constitution of Burundi of 2005.

president of the republic be elected by an absolute majority through universal direct suffrage for a mandate of five years renewable once.

The Burundi National Assembly and Senate sitting in August 2005 selected President Pierre Nkurunziza. He went on to contest and wins the 2010 general elections.

That the Arusha Peace Agreement and the 2005 Constitution are key documents in a post-conflict Burundi is not under dispute either by local stakeholders or outsiders. What also is apparent is that any deviation from the spirit and intent of these documents elicits strongly held opinions and views.

However despite the aforementioned point of convergence, polarized interpretations of these two documents have emerged. As will be discussed below, such differences in interpretation are grounded in political, social and legal and constitutional realities. While one camp calls the decision to contest by Nkurunziza a third term attempt, the other calls it a second term. Observably, significant foreign watchers, including international media and some governments, agree with the third-term argument³.

However, and this is the point of departure for this discussion, any foreign government presented with such set of information as above would be forced to make judgments that are at best subjective and at worst biased. It is this articles contention that the current events in Burundi, present a complex if not slippery situation for other countries.

Outside reaction; the incentives and pitfalls

The response by other countries can be argued to have been cautious, limited, measured and compartmentalized. This is not in any way a clarion call for a particular type of response, rather a manifestation of the opportunity for limited intervention available to other states as well as an expression of the slippery ground on which they are likely to find themselves.

As indicated, the current events in Burundi have immense political undertones evolving around power, authority, and access to resource, privilege and prestige. These are scarce resources that are heavily contested for. By declaring his intent to contest in the forthcoming elections President Nkurunziza effectively raised the stakes, in a situation where already the two key documents that are supposed to ensure political sanity in the country are open to differing interpretations.

Nkurunziza's political decision triggered responses spanning three main dimensions; social/civil, constitutional/legal and security. The first manifested itself through the street

³ See statement from US and EU

protests at the behest of parties opposed to the bid. Related to this were activities by private media and civil society organizations, which in the words of the government were inciting the street protests against the government. This reactionary response by those opposed to the ruling group contributed to the second and third broad trajectories. The matter was brought to the attention of the country's constitutional court, which declared that Nkurunziza's bid did not contradict the constitution. In the eyes of those supporting the bid, this should have settled the issue. However, dissatisfaction with the ruling, based on allegations that the judges were either pro-Nkurunziza or were coerced into the decision, as evidenced by the dissenting action of the Vice President of the court to flee the country, led to further unrest. Calling the protestors "criminals, terrorists and enemies of the country", the government shifted the discourse to matters of state security and survival. This was couched, for instance in a grenade attack that had left some security personnel and ordinary citizens dead.

The issue had thus lost its political tenor and was then framed in the context of attempts to acquire power illegally by the oppositions and other elements. The authorities considered it appropriate to use necessary means in their judgment to prevent such seemingly treasonous intentions. The reactions by the government were influenced by its own interpretation of the rule of law, security and national safety. What had originally been a political issue assumed a life of its own, evolving from social unrest, legal contest to state security threat.

These evolving moments in the state of affairs are indicative of and a manifestation of spirited internal attempts to achieve closure to a political dispute in favour of either of the two sides to the matter. Holding constant the violent crackdown on those opposed to the bid and subsequent fleeing from the country by some sections of the population, the preceding sequence of events would have certainly elicited measured responses from other countries and international entities. Underlying them would have been the caution not to be seen to be interfering in domestic matters of a sovereign state. In neighboring Rwanda, there have been active open movements to change the constitution to pave way for the incumbent to stay in office beyond the two-term limit. Perhaps given some quarters⁴ arguments in Rwanda that what is good for Rwanda must be decided by Rwanda and that there is no universally acceptable political term limit direction, other countries have steered clear of involving themselves in the matter.

However, the alleged heavy-handedness by the authorities and the resulting fleeing of some citizens to neighboring countries triggered a different foreign response.

In the first instance, the society of democratic states, in that spirit of liberalism, imbued by the need to promote and protect democracy, rights and rule of law in those countries where they are seen to be under threat, condemned the intimidation, use of force and

⁴ The New Times of Rwanda, January 2015

violence by the Burundian authorities against protestors, opposition parties, the media and civil society organizations. These foreign players included East African countries, the African Union, the UN and EU. The US has gone further to threaten targeted sanctions towards those involved in violence towards the civilian population⁵.

Secondly concern by other countries over events in Burundi was also largely informed by the emergence of refugees springing into neighboring countries. Refugees are usually a sign that the domestic environment is becoming dangerous for its citizens, and thus likely to attract the attention of other countries. According to UNHCR⁶, tens of thousands of Burundians had fled into Rwanda, Tanzania and DRC. Some of the fleeing citizens claimed that they were fleeing intimidation and harassment from the *Imbonerakure*, elements, linked to the governing. Others decided to flee as a precautionary measure based on their past experiences.

It has been seen from the foregoing that the reactions or not by foreign governments have decidedly hinged around the manner in which the political decision by Nkurunziza has evolved. The reactions by foreign governments have been very much towards the reaction to protests by the government, rather than decidedly against the incumbent's bid to contest for office.

Foreign governments and other entities have called for a postponement of the elections in Burundi, arguing that the environment triggered by Nkurunziza's bid is not conducive for a credible contest. The AU expressed worry about going into election in an environment of that is not conducive. The UN calls for all parties to exercise calm and restraint, while the East African Community has called for peaceful, democratic elections in line with the country's electoral laws and the spirit of the Arusha Agreement. Such sentiments are arguably an indication of the diplomatically precarious position that outside governments find themselves in.

First and foremost, the events in Burundi are completely political and domestic in nature. Despite the regrettable loss of life, the latter is yet to be attributed to willful and targeted killing by the government or any of its agents. In addition, those fleeing from the country are being cautionary rather than fleeing actual violence. This of course exacerbates the situation against the authorities. Therefore as indicated earlier, any response by a foreign government would have to be carefully considered so that it is not construed as meddling in domestic affairs of another sovereign state. In addition to this is the glaring, but perhaps less mentioned fact that the incumbent has not attempted or deliberately altered the country's constitution to suit his ambitions.

⁵ US State Department Press Release

⁶ UNHCR Website

Secondly, one of the prevalent measures of democracy is regular, competitive, free and fair election. In making their judgments, foreign countries will have to factor in this aspect in their analysis. Burundi has had one election following the end of the civil conflict and was planning for another one in June 2015. The question of whether Nkurunziza should contest in such an election, despite differing interpretations, has been decided by the country's legal mechanisms. Effectively, beyond legal interpretation, moral if not political arguments have assumed prominence. Making a decision on such a matter by a foreign country entails it to make a value judgment on another country's legal capacity as well as local values.

Conclusion

Regrettable as the loss of life is in Burundi as well as the accompanying displacement of citizens, the events in the country having been triggered by a political decision that has been tested in the streets, in the courts and internationally, calls for a political solution. It is not within this discussion to suggest the type of political settlement. However it is the strong contention of this discussion that the events in Burundi do not present an easy matter for foreign states to make conclusive decisions.

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5. “Attacks against people with albinism can never be justified”

By Phalandwa A Mulaudzi

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Alvaro Rodriguez, the UN coordinator for Tanzania, said: "Attacks against people with albinism can never be justified - not by culture, tradition or religion. "When will people in my country realize that organs of persons with albinism will never make one wealthy, successful and win elections?"
www.omideletoba.blogspot.com/2015/02

Tanzania is scheduled to hold General Elections in October this year and a worrying cultural phenomenon has reared its head: this is the use of body parts from Albinos, traditionally believed to be the strongest “charms, spells to bring wealth and good luck.” As we write, the “going price” of a full Albino body has shot up to US\$ 75 000 or over 750 000 Rands.

On the Tanzanian black market, the entire corpse of an albino person can sell for £49,000.

As a result, gangs of armed people stalking villages and physically snatching babies from the hands of parents and in the process strike and injure the screaming parent. In the last ten years, 70 Albinos have died under this gruesome cultural and traditional belief. This is despite a spirited campaign by the Tanzanian Government to try and stamp out the practice and legislate against what is believed to be the work of witchdoctors. Faced with the impending election, the practice-strongly condemned by the United Nations through the cited comments by Alvaro Rodriguez who is the country resident coordinator-is now believed to be fuelled by “politicians-who are hiring sorcerers to make charms which will improve their chances at the ballot box.”
www.omideletoba.blogspot.com/2015/02

In order to understand the analogue of the quotation and statements above, therefore this article would like shed the light on the persons with albinism, the causes of albinism and the perceptions of Tanzanians on an Albino. It is also pointed out in this article that

cultural traits dictate how the persons with albinism are treated in a humane manner. In addition, this cultural perception can also decide on the fate of the persons with albinism. The discussion on the following sub-topics touches on the issues, which dictates life of persons with albinism:

Persons with Albinism

According to Robinson (2010) Albinism is a rare, non-contagious, genetically inherited difference occurring in both genders regardless of ethnicity, in all countries throughout the world. For this to be genetically inherited, both the father and mother must carry the gene for it to be passed on even if they do not obvious signs of albinism themselves. The condition results in a lack of pigmentation in the hair, skin and eyes, causing vulnerability to sun exposure and bright light. Almost all the people with albinism are visually impaired, with the majority being classified as “legally blind”. While numbers vary, in North America and Europe it is estimated that 1 in every 20,000 people have some form of albinism. In Tanzania, and throughout East Africa, albinism is much more prevalent, with estimates of 1 in 1,400 people being affected. The term “person with albinism” (PWA) is preferred to the term “albino”.

The general causes of albinism

Albinism is caused by a mutation in one of several genes. Each of these genes provides instructions for making one of several proteins involved in the production of melanin. Melanin is produced by cells called melanocytes, which are found in your skin and eyes. A mutation may result in a significant decline in the amount of melanin or no melanin at all. In some types of albinism, a person must inherit two copies of a mutated gene — one from each parent — in order to have, what is referred to as albinism (recessive inheritance).

According to Brian Dunning (2014) there are four basic types of albinism, some of which have subtypes that corresponding to different genetic defects. All are inherited from parents and are recessive traits; if both parents carry the recessive OCA gene, there is a 1 in 4 chance that their child will be an albino. Depending on which type of albinism you have, you might have no pigment at all anywhere in your body, or even brown hair and eyes and skin only slightly lighter than normal. In most types, the performance of the enzyme tyrosinase is affected, which is responsible for the production of melanin.

According to Rose Kiyi and Matthew Solan (2012) It is the most extreme form of albinism, called oculocutaneous albinism type 1 (OCA1 or tyrosinase-related albinism), that results in white hair, white skin, and red eyes.

All these features, normally associated with wealth and power make an albino an extraordinary person among the people of Great Lakes region.

In addition, Mayo Staff says regardless of which gene mutation is present, vision impairment is a key feature of all types of albinism. These impairments are caused by irregular development of the optic nerve pathways from the eye to the brain and from abnormal development of the retina.

There are various types of albinism

According to Mayo Staff, the various types of albinism, based mainly on which mutated gene caused the disorder are as follows:

Oculocutaneous albinism which is caused by mutation in one of four genes. People with oculocutaneous albinism (OCA) type 1 have milky white skin, white hair and blue eyes at birth. Unfortunately, some people with OCA type 1 never experience an increase in pigmentation, but others begin to produce melanin during early childhood. Their hair may become a golden blond, brown or red, and their irises may change color and lose some translucence.

The second type known as (ok-u-low-ku-TAY-nee-us) which is caused by mutation in one of four genes, is most common in sub-Saharan Africans, African-Americans and Native Americans. The hair may be yellow, auburn, ginger or red, the eyes can be blue-gray or tan, and the skin is white at birth. With sun exposure, the skin may, over time, develop freckles, moles or lentigines.

The **third** type is also mainly found in black South Africans, usually have reddish-brown skin, ginger or reddish hair, and hazel or brown eyes. The **fourth** type looks similar to type 2 and is most often found in people of East Asian descent.

There is also another type different from Oculocutaneous albinism called X-linked ocular albinism. The cause of X-linked ocular albinism, which occurs almost exclusively in males, is a gene mutation on the X chromosome. People who have ocular albinism have vision problems, but their skin, hair and eye color are generally in the normal range or slightly lighter than that of others in the family.

Hermansky-Pudlak syndrome type is also different from Oculocutaneous albinism.

This syndrome is a rare albinism disorder caused by a mutation in one of at least eight different genes. The disorder is much more common in South America, mainly in Puerto Rico. People with this disorder have signs and symptoms similar to people with oculocutaneous albinism, but they may also develop lung and bowel diseases, or a bleeding disorder.

Chediak-Higashi syndrome type is also different from Oculocutaneous albinism.

This syndrome is a rare form of albinism associated with a mutation in the LYST gene. With signs and symptoms similar to oculocutaneous albinism, the hair is usually brown or blond with a silvery sheen, and the skin is usually creamy white to grayish. People with this syndrome have a defect in white blood cells that increases their risk of infections.

Although these causes were proven scientific correct, ordinary people have certain beliefs which were passed on from generation to generation. As a result, these are embedded in their philosophical thinking. The discussion of perceptions on persons with albinism reflects this.

Why Tanzania has more albinism?

The mutation first arose in sub-Saharan Africa, and like all genetic conditions, it remained most prevalent among its original population. The rate is highest in Tanzania and Burundi, where albinism affects about 1 in every 1500 people. This is primarily the result of two effects: first, that's the population where the mutation is most common, so it's more likely that both parents are going to be carriers of the recessive gene; and second, social pressures tend to group albinos together, where they're more likely to intermarry, greatly increasing the chances of albinistic offspring.

The perceptions of Albinism in Tanzania and the region based on cultural believes

Culture can be a binding factor and it can be also a diving factor. Among the Tanzanians and other communities around Lake Victoria, culture becomes ethnocentric. The persons with albinism are discriminated against because of lack of pigmentation in their skin. In addition, the existence of persons with albinism has been associated with supernatural powers, hence their body parts are regarded as valuable because they possess good luck charms

The fetishization of albinos begins at birth with rumors circulating about their mothers. With regard to this (Abino united, 2010) says “Many men accuse their wives of infidelity when albinos are born. Some even accuse them of having had sex with a tokolosh, a devil’s imp who is said to be produced by witchcraft from a tree root and live under beds. Mothers are consistently considered to be at fault if an albino child is born. In most instances albino children are murdered at birth because most families still believe that having an albino child is a bad omen or curse. According Isaac Mwaura who is Kenyan parliamentarian almost 90% of albinos living in the region (Lake Victoria) are raised by single mother because the fathers believed that their wives were having affair with white men. In some places people believe that albinism is contagious and should be criminalised. In addition, there is also stereotype that albinos are very intelligent and accomplished scholars. There is even a commonly told rumor that adult albinos do not die, they just simply vanish. On the other hand, there is belief that albinism is a punishment from the gods for somebody who has already passed on but committed some wrongdoings such as engaging in sexual intercourse during menstruation period. In Tanzania, persons with albinism are commonly labelled zeru-zeru meaning a ghost like creatures and this term is also derogatory. The use of this term was officially banned in Tanzania since 2000. In addition, traditionally midwives were well known for killing albinos babies. These babies were declared stillborn and they were buried secretly. These perceptions are now embedded in the Tanzanian cultural world view which has passed from generation to generation.

The persons with Albinism, economic power and power to rule

The belief that albinos possess special powers can possibly be traced to historically old cosmologies in Central Africa. It is unknown how such belief may have migrated to East Africa and Tanzania, but nonetheless the belief in the magical power of albinos is present and real in day to day life. The specific Tanzanian world view influence the use of albino parts in a reemerging of involving supernatural economy and power. According to Ackley (2010: 29) it is believed that around Lake Victoria albinos are a valuable commodity, with their estimated wealth based on specific belief surrounding their body parts, if harnessed properly, can bring wealth and success to those who utilize portions and charms created by witchdoctors from albino body parts depending on economic or social ailment. Furthermore, Ackley (2010:45) says cosmologies surrounding albinos and their power can be traced to the early Congolese kingdom, it is not known how these ideas spread to East Africa. Regardless of how these beliefs came about, they continue to have a very strong and powerful impact in modern Tanzania society. For example, there is strong belief that the red hair from albinos is crucial during fishing. If the albino red hair are weaved into fishing nets, fish will be attracted by golden glimmer. In addition, miners for gold, rubies etc. are reported to pay large sums for juju amulets

which are made up with a portion mixed from albino parts. These amulets are worn around the miner's necks or strapped to their arms.

In addition, the traditional doctors are also said to look for men to hunt and kill albinos for their body parts. These men who are assisting the traditional doctor receive a commission for their work and necessary to involve supernatural powers with the use albino parts in order to boost their economy. Sometimes, these men who assist the traditional doctor to kill albinos also consume of albinos portions and charms. However, it is difficult to identify middle men and those involved in the albino trade due to the secrecy of this specific occult practice.

This is supported very well by Marxist fetishism theory (Robinson:2009) which attempts to explain the notion of fetish as false consciousness based upon an objective illusion. In commodity fetishism, people have an experience of being controlled by the activities and movements of inanimate objects. For instance, people are compelled or bribed to move between jobs by the changing relative values of different commodities. This is not simply false consciousness. We are in fact pressured from outside, people do in fact buy and sell commodities for money, and phenomena such as commodity exchange-value actually exist socially. This pressure does not actually come from commodities, but commodities act as the way in which the pressure appears. In Tanzania, the commoditization of albino body parts is reflected the exploitative social relations between fishermen and the intricate fishing industry. It also does the same between the politician and the power to rule. This explains very well why most albinos are killed during the election campaign and election. Albino parts are associated with good luck and, as the country is getting ready for the elections those not sure of making it in the polls are trying further assists. This development also says something about wealth accumulation in traditionally poor Tanzania – once one achieves political office. Naturally, during period such as this, the demand for good luck charms goes up. Sacrifices are thought by some to be a sure way of guaranteeing victory in polls.

Conclusion

It is clear from the discussion that the cultural belief among Tanzanians specifically and inhabitants around Lake Victoria, persons with albinism are openly hunted persons, in spite of the harsh and restrictive laws put into place by government. In most instances the fathers, mothers and relatives conspire to traffic the body parts of the albino children for money and power – as we had seen earlier with midwives, making it almost impossible for authorities to stamp out the illegal acts. The cultural beliefs are also used to reinforce the justification of killing persons in order to alleviate poverty, which has been caused by economic hardship. Very few people in Tanzania around Lake Victoria

understand the causes of **Albinism** and it is unfortunate that the majority who are poor and not highly educated and continue to hold the misguided view that albinism is a punishment from the gods for somebody who has already passed on but had committed some wrongdoings such as engaging in sexual intercourse during menstruation period. In addition, informed by culture, they continue to hold the view that persons with albinism are ghost like creatures and that their body parts possess good luck charms. These beliefs enriched the traditional doctors and the people conspiring with them to kill and sell body parts of albinos. Although the killing of albinos is part of long practiced cultural belief, it is important to note that culture is not static and continues to evolve. The people around Lake Victoria need education on the persons with albinism. The mythologised of albinism should be corrected in order restore human dignity.

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6. Tanzania – What are some of the key Challenges as the Country goes to Elections in October 2015?

By Martin R Rupiya

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Amongst the many issues facing Tanzania, as the country prepares to go to the polls – for the harmonized Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections in October 2015, there are at least several significant “issues” confronting the consolidation of democracy that we cite below. Tanzania is a country that is still grappling with the transformation from One-Party-State System and the traditional dominance of the ruling party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM)*, since independence in 1964.

Beginning with a reflection on the positive side, thanks to recent discoveries of, offshore hydrocarbons and natural gas in seams that link Tanzania and Mozambique, the outgoing President Jakaya Kikwete has publicly asserted that “he is the last President of a poor Tanzania” with the population set to enjoy a more prosperous experience from hereon.

Given this positive euphoria, there are still significant issues around power sharing and elections that continue to challenge the stability of the state. The first challenge has been the inability of CCM to implement part of the “44 Laws” identified by the late Justice Francis Nyalali Commission of 1990s on the transformation to multipartyism that required some fundamental changes to the constitution and related regulations. Only last year, President Kikwete made a commitment to political players that he would lead and facilitate the transformation required – but as the country goes to the polls – that has still not happened.

In looking at trends, what we see in Tanzania is not unique. More recently in Khartoum, Sudan, the President Al-Bashir had committed to engage meaningfully in a national dialogue before the elections and yet, did not find sufficient political will to go through with the process and instead ran, basically a one man show boycotted by the opposition as documented by the AU, Political Affairs Department *Pre-Election Assessment*, of March 2015.

The second “issue” around the Tanzanian elections is the question of dual citizenship. In a country that suddenly secured a secret deal for Union with the Islands of Zanzibar,

Pemba and Ungunja in April 1964, historically, a number of people who fled into exile at the time lost properties and other assets. These people, survivors and their heirs, have since been agitating for the granting of dual citizenship in order to stake their claims. For now, while Dar es Salaam has acknowledged the issue, there has not been sufficient political will to follow through and deliver on this highly sensitive issue.

The third issue, as Prof Abraham Mulaudzi has drawn our attention to the mythical connection between Albinos, wealth and election charms – Tanzania continues to stand in the dock of human rights abuses by gangs and middle-men (for they are always men) who have snatched and made away with Albinos that have then been hacked to death and body parts sold to highest bidders. The price of an Albino body has been cited on the market to be as high as USD\$75, 000 (seventy-five) thousands. Again in comparative terms – this is not unique to Tanzania. In Togo, witchcraft, sorcery, voodoo and mythical powers have been noted to have been part of the political intercourse that sustained the late President Etienne Gnassimbe Eyadema supporting the other pillars of a bloody military system – under the Forces Armees Togolaise (FAT) and a pliant public service that is populated by ethnic and patronage appointments in an integrated system that enjoyed French support.

Fourth, Tanzania is set to introduce the Bio-metric voting system on the October 2015 Elections. As we witnessed in Nigeria, this technical innovation was a game changer in the relatively close elections between the incumbent, Goodluck Jonathan and retired Major General Mohammed Buhari. In embracing the technical system, it may yet show CCM's confidence and closeness with the voters and its ability to continue to deliver and therefore does not anticipate any serious challenge to its grip on power.

Finally, CCM is in the grip of a fierce battle of succession, given the fact that Kikwete has done two terms and is due to retire this year. In the last year, the party had to suspend seeming overzealous candidates who had begun campaigning. Former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa was caught up in the internal struggle and is therefore not assured that his candidacy will reign supreme – although he appears to be one of the front-runners. This phenomenon of infighting and lack of culture of succession within established ruling parties is therefore likely to undermine the general stability of country until it is settled.

7. Sudan Election Postmortem

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Last month, Sudan held its first national elections after the secession of South Sudan in 2011. The polls took place in a complex context including Sudan's vast geographic size, tenuous security, economic woes, lack of voting history, stalled national dialogue process, political polarization, restrictive political environment, opposition boycotts and public perceptions that the National Electoral Commission (NEC) was biased in favour of the ruling party. Voter turnout was low - about 46% of the country's estimated voting age population of over 13 million – and the African Union (AU) election observer mission partly attributed this to the major opposition snub. Elections were also postponed in Sudan's insecure Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states.

President Omar Al-Bashir of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) garnered a landslide 94 percent of the vote to be re-elected president of Sudan, while the NCP won 323 of the 426 parliamentary seats. This outcome was predictable. Al-Bashir, at the helm since seizing power in a military coup in 1989, was essentially the only candidate. The presence of several relatively unknown competitors on the ballot helped the country's long-serving strongman make it look like a legitimate poll, but the serious opposition candidates had boycotted as they found the electoral playing field stacked against them. Al-Bashir had dealt a bitter blow to the main opposition's hope for political reforms by ignoring internal and external clamor for the conclusion of the national dialogue between the various parties that had been launched a year earlier.

Significantly, the AU's pre-election assessment mission had rebuked the election environment for nonconformity with AU principles governing democratic elections and cautioned against sending an election observer mission when the elections were predictable. It had concluded that the polls would not contribute to democracy building in Sudan as enshrined in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and the OAU/AU Declaration on Principles Governing Democratic Elections in Africa. The pre-election mission had recommended the postponement of the elections so that the AU could mediate the Sudanese parties' revitalization of the stalled national dialogue, which had achieved a Roadmap Agreement by the Sudanese parties to comprehensively address political problems, in order to create a conducive election

environment. In spite of the pre-election assessment report, the AU said it deployed an election observation mission in order to sustain the continental body's crucial role in the Sudanese peace process and national dialogue.

Election observation teams from the AU and other regional organizations such as the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and the League of Arab States (LAS) gave the elections mixed reviews. The AU did not withhold its scolding of the polls, a notable break with tradition. It tellingly echoed the adverse pre-election assessment report in registering that "the freedom and fairness" of the polls could have been enhanced had "basic freedoms and human rights been fully respected". The AU team observed the lack of domestic monitors in most polling stations, save for representatives of the ruling NCP. Although it deemed the vote peaceful and that the outcome "would reflect the expression of the will of the voters of Sudan" the AU noted that the political dynamics of the electoral process highlighted the serious challenges to Sudan's democracy building and national reconciliation.

The IGAD team despite discovering a wide range of irregularities and anomalies - including missing names on voter lists, voter confusion over locations of polling stations, delays, and inadequate privacy provisions to ensure secret ballots during polling - concluded that the elections "were conducted in conformity with international benchmarks for free, fair and credible elections and were conducted in a transparent manner." The LAS monitoring mission said the polls were carried out "transparently and in accordance with international standards".

Election monitoring is an expensive undertaking, even for rich countries and groupings of rich countries. Western nations, whose calls for political reforms fell on deaf ears, withheld funding and support to the predictable elections and did not bother sending monitoring missions over concerns about the credibility of the polls. However, members of the Troika (Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States) issued a joint statement lamenting the Sudanese government's failure to create a free, fair, and conducive elections environment and condemned the elections for not being "a credible expression of the will of the Sudanese people." The European Union (EU) had earlier expressed some serious concern about the credibility of the polls following Al-Bashir's failure to establish genuine national dialogue. Sudan's foreign ministry denounced the criticism that came from the Western nations as "erroneous information and prejudgment of the elections in Sudan" that constituted a "flagrant intervention in Sudan's internal affairs".

Looking forward, the adverse AU observation mission report listed key recommendations for Sudan to strengthen democracy building, respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights, national security, independence and professionalization of

NEC, capacity and independence of human rights protection institutions and national dialogue. Historically, such AU recommendations have been easy enough for countries to ignore, given the lackadaisical promotion of their adequate implementation. Having already broken with the carefully choreographed pattern of un-scathingly legitimizing contentious elections by issuing an adverse report on the Sudanese polls, the AU has an opportunity to strengthen the effective implementation and follow-up of its key recommendations.

Indeed, ensuring the effective implementation of the AU's key recommendations in Sudan's context is a daunting task. Al-Bashir is emboldened by the crushing election victory that suffices to extend his rule until 2020. Some pundits believe that this will shield Sudan's strongman leader from an International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrant, for charges of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, that has been looming over his head since 2009. "By obtaining another five years in office, he will have an entire state structure to help protect him from the ICC – including money, bodyguards, a military and a foreign service with international lawyers," Institute for Security Studies analyst Berouk Mesfin wrote. Logically, Al-Bashir would be inclined towards the perpetuation of the opaque political environment that guarantees his cling to power.

A fundamental question is whether the national dialogue process is going to be revived, whether it will have any credibility and whether it will take along the main opposition with it. The talks had made some limited progress before reaching a stalemate. The various parties had agreed an agenda that outlined issues including peace and national unity, economy, basic rights and freedoms, national identity, constitutional review and governance. They had also signed a Roadmap Agreement resolving that a comprehensive political settlement is the ideal solution to the Sudanese problems and ensuring basic freedoms and human rights. Some opposition political leaders had also been released.

However, agreeing the rules and procedures on which the dialogue would be conducted proved impossible and the talks never really got going. The NCP-led government resisted opposition calls for the elections to be postponed until after the national conversation had achieved a comprehensive political settlement and a conducive election environment. The main opposition subsequently decided to boycott the dialogue and the elections. And critics of the government could argue that hardliners who never wanted the talks in the first place achieved their aim of scuppering the project while placing the blame for its failure on the opposition. It is against this backdrop that Al-Bashir's promise to reinvigorate the national dialogue process has been met with justified skepticism.

Challenges notwithstanding, the AU has opportunities and mechanisms it can seize to push for electoral management reforms and credible national dialogue. Its pre-election assessment mission noted that the NEC submitted a request for technical assistance to the AU Democracy and Electoral Assistance Unit (DEAU). The AU should consider giving its DEAU a comprehensive mandate to effectively support NEC capacitation and professionalization to ensure that Sudan's future electoral processes conform to continental standards for democratic electoral processes. The AU unit should also help NEC create a pool of trained Sudanese electoral experts capable of effectively monitoring the country's future polls.

Furthermore, the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) for Sudan and South Sudan in which IGAD is an active member provides potential auspices under which the Sudanese political stakeholders could be encouraged to revive the hitherto abortive national dialogue. Prior to the elections, the AU Peace and Security Council had mandated the Panel to support the efforts of the Sudanese stakeholders to realize an inclusive and credible process, and in particular to convene a meeting for the stakeholders to agree upon the relevant rules and procedures. However, the AUHIP's efforts to convene the "7+7 mechanism of the National Dialogue", the body that was responsible for steering the dialogue process, were caught up in the parties wrangling. Special responsibility lies with the AU to deploy the Panel as part of continued efforts to galvanize the Sudanese stakeholders, particularly the governing party, to re-commit to the national conversation in order to address Sudan's complex challenges, including democratic transformation and insecurity in Darfur, South Kordofan and the Blue Nile states.

Bilateral and multilateral partners such as China, the Troika and the EU should continue their support to the AU-led efforts at seeking peaceful resolution of the deep-rooted problems of Sudan. Concern has been raised in some quarters about the international community's leverage with Al-Bashir appearing strengthened by an improvement in relations with Gulf countries following his decision to take part in the Saudi-led military campaign against Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. *The Economist* reported, "[o]ne reason for Sudan to switch sides is that Saudi money may rescue its floundering economy, as it did Egypt's". Western sanctions and the loss of oil revenues after the secession of South Sudan are among the reasons for Sudan's economic woes. Renowned for his anti-Western rhetoric, Al-Bashir struck a provocative tone when he told a victory rally that "This is a lesson we present to those who still think they are still trustees over the people of Sudan."

It is against this background that the jury is out on whether the Sudanese who wish to peacefully advance a comprehensive and legitimate political process of national

dialogue, toward an end to the conflict, meaningful governance reform, and long-term stability, will ultimately prevail.

A New Version of Democracy: Imperial African Presidents Beyond the 3rd Term through Elections

A single case shall be used to draw attention towards the plight of the Togolese who have been under the thump and boot of the Monarchy of the Eyademas. Its important we briefly refer to this case as the AU and its sub-regions appear to have accepted the gross governance malfeasance-taking place in Lome and Togo generally.

In Togo, the incumbent President Faure Gnassingbe Eyadema has just one a third term in office – in developments that must begin to raise concerns amongst other democratically included member-states. Faure who had taken over after the sudden death of his father in February 2005 had done two terms – ten years; after he took over from Eyadema Senior who had run the country for 38 years since 1967.

A brief history on Togo reveals that the 13 January 1963 coup in which a group of returning soldiers from the French Legionnaire – that included Sergeant Etienne Eyadema where refused integration by the President, Olympio Gilchrist. Later, a group of soldiers where seen, chasing the president, who desperately tried to scale the high walls of the United States Embassy, before he was shot and killed. After acting in the shadows, in 1967, Eyadema assumed total control, establishing an army – the Forcees Armees Togolese (FAT), a political party, the Togolese Rally for Democracy that was responsible for managing affairs for the next nearly four decades. In that period, most Togolese have been forced into exile or diaspora – called traitors and finding refuge in Benin and Ghana.

It is against this background – that however, free and fair African cannot continue to go along with the political charade facing the Togolese, especially from the south.

The First 100 Days – Nigeria after the May 29th inauguration

Newly elected President Muhammadu Buhari has made a classic revelation on the first 100 Days. On this, in all mature democracies, the incoming regime after winning the poll spends the first year implementing the tail end of its outgoing predecessor. As the triumphant candidate, when coming into office, one theoretically pauses, given time to build a new team, even adopt and refine some of the manifesto policies. However, according to the 72 year-old Nigerian President, he was unable to enjoy this luxury. In his own words, what he “inherited was a scandal of bad management, an empty –

repeat empty Treasury against mounting debts in there millions. One of the continent's giant crude oil producers – for several weeks had run out of refined petrol and diesel, as major suppliers had not been paid. The public service, including the Federal agents had also not been paid for months – creating a situation of possibly people taking to the streets.

In assessing the first 100 days, according to Buhari, “this places unnecessary pressure on the new regime” although he admits to shame with which he discovered the state of affairs when he took over. Clearly from this example of one of our great nations, Africa leaders in office lack the vision to plan and execute viable and credible plans designed to take their countries out of poverty. Even attention to national security features in Nigeria had been neglected for several years – an area that Buhari began by paying urgent attention from day one. To this end, Buhari provided resources to equip the army and provide mobility and capacity to respond to the existing Boko Haram national threat. On this, while engaging the sub-regional leaders and asserting Nigeria's traditional leadership role, Buhari also ordered the military command to relocate to Maiduguri – the epicenter of the Boko Haram challenge and not live comfortably in the capital Abuja.

While this maybe a popular move, politically, this maybe a risky move in the fledgling democracy still to take hold in Nigeria.

Buhari has also expressed his intention to weed out corruption and create an efficient government.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) launched interventions in Madagascar (2009-2014) and Lesotho May 2012-February 2015).

Once the “elections” were completed – as part of that panoply of Arranging A Ceasefire; creating a Transitional Authority; suggesting Constitutional and sometimes Institutional reforms that include the Security Sector; supervising free and fair elections and exit: with an almost hurried closure and departure of the SADC Liaison Offices – the result has been disappointing. There is now a major political impasse in Madagascar with the impeachment of the President and in Maseru – the killings – with impunity continues. What this means is that the palliative of a conflict resolution mechanism tried in the past has failed to work. We need more meaningful and engaging interventions.

Conclusions

In 2015, the following countries were scheduled to hold elections: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Lesotho, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sudan, Libya, Mauritius, Niger,

Togo, Tanzania and Zambia under different and sometimes difficult circumstances. As the record has shown, in Sudan – Juba, the AU is beginning to join those suggesting sanctions on some of the key leaders; the same is true of the AU negative report produced on the elections in Khartoum and in a major break with the past, refusing to be part of observing the charade that is taking place in Burundi.

The work of an EWQ is therefore to articulate the challenges, invite research and commentary on developments with the view that this feeds into the policy making and conflict resolution mechanisms on the Continent.

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