Routledge Studies in Peace, Conflict and Security in Africa

GLOBALISED RESISTANCE AND THE BRING BACK OUR GIRLS MOVEMENT

NEW DIMENSIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVISM

Titilope F. Ajayi

Globalised Resistance and the Bring Back Our Girls Movement

This book uncovers how women's movements in the Global South are changing the face of transnational activism in their mobilisations against militarism and conflict-related gender violence.

Drawing on the case study of the Bring Back Our Girls movement established by Nigerian women for the rescue of Nigerian schoolgirls abducted in 2014 by terror group Boko Haram, the book argues that Bring Back Our Girls is one of several emerging forms of transnational resistance in Africa that are breaking old moulds and forging new directions for social movements globally. The book argues that current research on social movements focuses too much on professional advocacy by formal civil society organisations and networks in the Global North. In doing so, it misses the dynamics and lessons offered by the increasingly spontaneous, mass-based protests initiated and led by Global South actors grounded in Global South contexts. Unpacking the workings of the Bring Back Our Girls movement, both internationally and regarding on-the-ground daily struggles in Nigeria, the book highlights the considerable implications of movements like Bring Back Our Girls for the practice and study of international politics.

This book is an important read for researchers of international relations, decolonisation, social movements, and transnational human rights activism. Activists and leaders of social movements will also find the policy implications highlighted by the book useful.

Titilope F. Ajayi is a pracademic with specialisations in security sector governance, gender/women, conflict, peace and security, civil society, and social movements. With a focus on Africa, her recent work includes scholarly and policy projects on women and violent extremism, gender and humanitarianism, feminist movements, transformative approaches to norm change around gender violence, and new dimensions of transnational activism. During her 20 years of experience in international development, Titilope has led and managed research in regional and international NGOs, and consulted for INGOs and international organisations. A three-time fellow of the Social Science Research Council, Titilope holds a PhD in international affairs from the University of Ghana.

Routledge Studies in Peace, Conflict and Security in Africa
Edited by Cyril Obi, Social Science Research Council, New York, USA

Conflict Management and Resolution in South Sudan
Edited by Nelson Alusala, Emmaculate Asige Liaga and Martin Revai Rupiya

Banditry and the Security Crisis in Nigeria
Edited by Al Chukwuma Okoli and Saliou Ngom

Traditional Authority and Security in Contemporary Nigeria
Edited by David Ehrhardt, David Oladimeji Alao and M. Sani Umar

Mozambique's Cabo Delgado Conflict
International Humanitarian Law and Regional Security
Edited by Marko Svicevic and Martha M Bradley

Human Security and Epidemics in Africa
Learning from COVID-19, Ebola and HIV
Edited by Andreas Velthuizen and Caroline Varin

Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone
Donors, Government and Human Security
Vandy Kanyako

Natural Resource-Based Conflicts in Rural Zimbabwe
Edited by Joshua Matanzima, Patience Chadambuka and Kirk Helliker

Supranational Institutions and Peacebuilding in Africa
The African Union and Regional Economic Communities
Edited by Redie Bereketeab

Globalised Resistance and the Bring Back Our Girls Movement
New Dimensions of Transnational Activism
Titilope F. Ajayi

For more information about this series, please visit: www.routledge.com/Routledge-Studies-in-Peace-Conflict-and-Security-in-Africa/book-series/RSPCSA

Globalised Resistance and the Bring Back Our Girls Movement

New Dimensions of Transnational Activism

Titilope F. Ajayi

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2025
by Routledge
4 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-032-67972-3 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-67973-0 (pbk)
ISBN: 978-1-032-67974-7 (ebk)

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

An electronic version of this book is freely available, thanks to the support of libraries working with Knowledge Unlatched (KU). KU is a collaborative initiative designed to make high quality books Open Access for the public good. The Open Access ISBN for this book is 9781032679747. More information about the initiative and links to the Open Access version can be found at www.knowledgeunlatched.org.

For my daughters
For Leah Sharibu
For the 'Chibok Girls'
For the Aboke Girls
For stolen girlhoods and all girls and women everywhere affected by conflict
For Bring Back Our Girls and all the brave women (and men) who make such movements possible
May you know Dignity. Empowerment. Equality. Impact. Inclusion. Respect. Safety.

Contents

Preface

My primary interest in what I will refer to in this book as the 'Chibok story' was intimate and deeply personal. I remember clearly, I was strolling in my compound one evening when news of the abductions broke in April 2014. Like many all over the world, as various media would publicise, I was shocked and outraged, especially as I had a young daughter at the time. I imagined how I would feel and act if my child had been involved in such an ugly, awful attack. The incident was so extraordinary, I was certain that the Nigerian government would go out of its way to resolve it urgently. Having been born in north-Central Nigeria and schooled in Bauchi State in the northeast, not far from where the abductions took place, I felt a particular pull towards the Chibok students. Knowing the state of girl-child education across the country's vast north, I was even more concerned.

It was my close following of the national and global media coverage of the Chibok story that first brought Bring Back Our Girls to my attention. I remember feeling relieved that prominent Nigerians were demanding action and accountability from their government in scenes reminiscent of many prior instances of civil disobedience in the country's history. As the abductions and protests prolonged, against the backdrop of recent mobilisations like Occupy Nigeria, I began to ask myself what Bring Back Our Girls meant for Nigeria, the culture and politics of resistance and international relations in a militarised world. Two years later when I gained admission to study for a PhD in international affairs, it seemed only logical to pursue my interest further in the context of academic study. While the Bring Back Our Girls story is a central part of the wider story of this book, it is not its main focus. This is eloquently elaborated by other narratives as indicated in the introduction to this book.

I wrote this book for two reasons. First, to pay tribute to and honour the commitment of the founders and members of what turned out to be a tide-turning movement in the history of resistance in Nigeria and across the world, its internal politics notwithstanding. Second, to share the findings of my doctoral research on the social, political and intellectual significance of the activism of Bring Back Our Girls. Third and relatedly, given the politics of knowledge production surrounding transnational activism which I acknowledge throughout the book, I feel a deep and personal sense of responsibility to add my voice to these discourses as a feminist African woman, bringing to bear a gaze that visibilises movements that have been overlooked by biased definitional frameworks and gender-blind academic

discourses for many years. My book is written primarily for international relations scholars and students in and outside Africa, particularly those with interests in decolonisation literature as well as the changing relationships between Global North and South with regard to transnational human rights activism. The book will also be of interest to activists and leaders of social movements, especially those who approach either or both from gendered perspectives.

Acknowledgements

A number of people and institutions made this book possible. My first salute goes to the many women, children, and men all over the world—some of whom were gracious enough to share their stories during research for this book—who made up Bring Back Our Girls and made possible the brave work that they did, often at great personal expense. I also wish to thank the Social Science Research Council Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa programme (NextGen) whose doctoral funding enabled my fieldwork. I am indebted to Dr Cyril Obi, Professor Ismail Rashid, Professors Akosua Adomako Ampofo and Thomas Tieku, Dr Peace Medie, innumerable colleagues at the University of Ghana, and numerous peers and mentors affiliated with NextGen and the International Society for Third-Sector Research for invaluable insights that helped direct my research and enrich its outcomes. Finally, I am grateful to my family and friends for their encouragement and support. As is custom, although every care was taken to be meticulous, I take full responsibility for any errors of fact that may be contained in this book.

Introduction

Introduction

On 14 April 2014, the terror group known as Boko Haram[1] abducted 276 schoolgirls from their government school in Chibok, a town in Borno State, northeast Nigeria. The group had been responsible for extreme acts of violence since the conflict began in 2009, but the abduction, the largest single incident up to that point, marked a watershed moment that catalysed the emergence of Bring Back Our Girls—a campaign for the return of the students which was started and led primarily by Nigerian women in various cities in Nigeria. Their activism began as loosely organised protests across the country accompanied in digital space by the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, which was first tweeted by Nigerian lawyer Ibrahim Abdullahi[2] and not, as some sources claimed, by American supporters of the online movement (Tomchak, 2014). It then spread quickly around the world as thousands of people from at least 50 geographically dispersed countries led related online and offline campaigns. At its peak, the #BringBackOurGirls movement reportedly spread to 69 countries with its strongest external online support coming from the United States, Britain, and Canada (Ibeh, 2014).

Why has there been so much global interest in this movement against war-time violations of girls' and women's human rights in a Nigerian town unknown by many Nigerians outside the Northeast before the abductions? Data indicates that it has to do with the global political context surrounding the Boko Haram war and how the world has responded to and engaged with both this context and the conflict occurring within it. Others suggest that diverse forms of media, including news, music, literature, and art, played a key role in bringing the Chibok abductions to global attention and keeping them and Bring Back Our Girls there (Onah, 2024). The ensuing summary overviews the more detailed explanations that are offered later in this book.

In a global perspective, Bring Back Our Girls emerged in the aftermath of the so-called 'Arab Spring'[3] in 2010. It exemplifies, to some extent, the mass-based, largely individualised resistance, like Los Indignados or the 15 May Movement (or 15-M) in Spain, Black Lives Matter and Me Too in the United States, and People Power in Uganda, that surged in that period as governments across the world tightened restrictions on organised civil society and narrowed the space for civic dissent and disobedience in what came to be termed a 'backlash against democracy'

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-1

(Mamattah, 2014; Elone, 2013). In a national perspective, Bring Back Our Girls marks a continuation of a long history of women-led organising like the Aba Women's 'War' and popular citizen protests like Occupy Nigeria against a range of government excesses and human rights abuses. Moral outrage over the injustices that sparked these protests and growing sentiment about the interconnectedness of a global village fed impulses to support crises, even in faraway places.

Bring Back Our Girls also emerged in the context of the Boko Haram/Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) conflict, rising global militarism and the global war on terror. Following terror attacks on US soil in September 2011, concerns over threats to the United States and its allies gave rise to a global war on terror (de Londras, 2019). In this framing, acts of terror and anyone who supports or prosecutes them are bad and must be dealt with severely—an idea that has attained the status of a global norm. It is worth noting that in 2014, both former Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan and US newspapers' coverage of Bring Back Our Girls framed the ISWAP crisis as 'a potential new front in the US' ongoing war on terror' (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018, p. 2491).[4] Several Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in different countries made statements condemning human rights violations by terror groups and other forms of mass violence, indicating that their support for the protest movement against Boko Haram was motivated by their resistance to terror and an opportunity to partake in the global war on it.

A further axis of global resistance to Boko Haram stems from its use of different forms of systematic violence against women and girls—seen as vulnerable—as a prominent tactic of war throughout the conflict (Zenn & Pearson, 2014; Ajayi, 2020). In addition to the violence of abduction and disappearance, the group has weaponised women and girls as suicide bombers, sex slaves, forced wives, teachers of its ideology, weapon smugglers, combatants, and recruiters. The Chibok abductions were only one among many others that began long before the conflict started in 2009, but they gained international prominence, arguably from being the largest single and most spectacular abduction at the time against persons the world agrees are the most vulnerable to extremist violence: girls (Pereira, 2018; Ajayi, 2020). ISWAP's gendered violence reflects the normalisation of violence against women and girls during conflict which represents the continuation of such everyday violence in militarised non-conflict contexts. Further, states' militarised responses to the threat of terror are creating new forms of insecurity for disempowered groups, especially women, and threaten to revoke the gains of many years of women's rights activism. Evidence of rising militarism abounds across Africa in multiple instances of excessive violence by state security actors against unarmed civilians, particularly women. These include the 2010 public gang rapes of women protesters in Guinea; police killings of striking miners in Marikana, South Africa (2012) and brutalities against students protesting campus rapes and high fees (2015/2016); heavy shows of police force during the Occupy Ghana protests (2014); Burundian police shootings of protesters in 2015; police teargassing of protesters in Kenya and Egypt (2016); police intimidation and harassment of Bring Back Our Girls protesters in Nigeria (2014–2016); arrests and killings of Oromo protesters in Ethiopia (2016), and rapes and further violence in Tigray in 2020/2021. Emerging in this

context, Bring Back Our Girls thus represents an important symbol of female and feminine resistance to a global militarised assault against the female gender and female bodies.

Bring Back Our Girls emerged a few years after an international focus on extremist violations of girls' and women's rights as illustrated by the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan, who was vocal in her support of Bring Back Our Girls and led a solidarity visit to the group in Abuja in July 2014.[5] Global reactions to the Chibok abductions and Malala's shooting were driven by the assumption that access to education will empower girls in the Global South to take decisions that will lead to greater autonomy and 'ultimately bring their nations out of abject poverty and violence' (Khoja-Moolji, 2015b, p. 88). In this context, the Chibok abductions revived historic debates about the educational access and status of girls in northern Nigeria as well as public attitudes to these issues in different parts of the country. The world would naturally be against anyone trying to deprive already disadvantaged schoolgirls of a formal education.

Digital politics has taken different forms since the Internet debuted in the 1970s. However, the extensive use of modern digital and social media in contemporary activism has been remarked as a major characteristic that distinguishes political resistance today (Mutsvairo, 2016; Castells, 2014). Recent forms of digital or cyberactivism, enabled by the growing spread of mobile technology and Internet access, have included hashtag activism, selfie protests, clicktivism, and hacktivism, among many others. Across the world, all the movements that have occurred since the North African uprisings, including Must Fall, Me Too, Occupy, and Women's March, have involved significant online activity to varying effect. The South African Must Fall movement ignited protests against academic racism in the United States and United Kingdom, among other spaces. Tunisian political analyst Youssef Cherif credits Facebook and Twitter with raising awareness and helping supporters of the uprising in that country find their voices and lose their fear, knowing that they could speak without state censure online (Jamjoom, 2015). Bring Back Our Girls used social media to counter false state narratives about the toll of casualties in the ISWAP conflict (Akume, 2014). Me Too similarly used social media to draw attention to movements against gender violence, though broadcast media narratives were dismissive of such movements outside the United States (Ajayi, 2018).

At national levels, Facebook and Twitter discourses helped sack Vice President Sam Sumana in Sierra Leone while in Kenya, Kenyans on Twitter used mockery, condemnation, and humour (Okoth, 2020; Nyabola, 2018), like Nigerians used memes[6] to denounce corruption and confront other political anomalies (Yeku, 2018). In many cases, online activism is believed to have helped mobilise hundreds of thousands of participants globally who made virtual noise and participated in offline protest activities. This has made resistance more global and fluid, and facilitated interpersonal interactions among diverse actors in geographically dispersed spaces. It has also given room to greater citizen power and voice, particularly by persons who would not normally have access to transnational public spheres. Coupled with the significant involvement of internationally known figures

like Michelle Obama, then first lady of the United States, and celebrities all over the world, social media helped attract widespread attention to and support for Bring Back Our Girls.

The Chibok Girls, as they came to be known, and Bring Back Our Girls are to varying degrees the subjects of a growing number of books and other publications, academic and otherwise, as well as documentaries. Among the most recent are Temitope Oriola's *Terrorism, Politics, and Human Rights Advocacy: The #BringBackOurGirls Movement* (July 2024) and *Bring Back Our Girls: The Untold Story of the Global Search for Nigeria's Missing Schoolgirls* (2022), a book by Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, senior journalists with *The Wall Street Journal*. Oriola examines the Bring Back Our Girls movement as 'a study in the interplay of human rights advocacy, terrorism and national and geopolitics' (Oriola, 2024). He discusses Bring Back Our Girls' fashioning of a 'social problem' out of the Chibok crisis and the multilevel politics surrounding the movement and the Nigerian state's responses to it. Oriola also interrogates the impacts of Bring Back Our Girls, Nigerian military involvement in the Boko Haram war, and the systemic dysfunction that scuttled the mission to rescue the Chibok students. Published in 2021 based on intimate insider accounts, Parkinson and Hinshaw's rich and detailed script tells the story of the real, mammoth, and very controversial global effort to rescue the Chibok Girls—what I like to think of as the macro-Bring Back Our Girls—that intersperses but far transcends the group known as Bring Back Our Girls. The crux of their book lies, I believe, in their assertion that it is more than 'just a story about a remote tragedy-stricken town in Nigeria, but a parable, and perhaps a cautionary tale, about the flawed, interconnected workings of our butterfly's-wings world' (p. 316, epub version).

Aina et al.'s 2019 study, *Beyond Tweets and Screams: Action for Empowerment and Accountability in Nigeria – The Case of the #BBOG Movement*, explores the production of new forms of social and political action in African conflict-affected settings, juxtaposing this with movements' representation in scholarship and their impacts on accountability and empowerment. In writing this book, I leaned on this rich and detailed study, a critical contribution to knowledge on social movements, to validate some of my own research findings and arguments. There are overlaps, but my work essentially builds on theirs by examining the implications for knowledge of contemporary activism from a transnational perspective. Isha Sesay's *Beneath the Tamarind Tree: A Story of Courage, Family, and the Lost Schoolgirls of Boko Haram* (2019) is a more personal take on a handful of the students and her own interactions with the story as a journalist. The HBO documentary, *Stolen Daughters: Kidnapped by Boko Haram* (2018), framed as 'a message of hope and survival', features some 103 former captives and their lives after the ordeal.

The Chibok and Bring Back Our Girls stories are intertwined, important, and instructive. In this book, I draw on several of the above narratives and explorations, in addition to my own interviews with 27 Bring Back Our Girls leaders in nine countries and thousands of social media posts. However, and understandably so, Bring Back Our Girls has not been explored to the same depth as the atrocity that gave it cause. In that light, *Globalised Resistance and the Bring Back Our Girls*

Movement: New Dimensions of Transnational Activism offers one of the first book-length explorations of the movement that looks beyond its political impact to its significance for transnational activism (around women's rights) in today's highly globalised world. It adds several multidimensional insights to what is already known about Bring Back Our Girls and transnational activism more broadly.

First, this book offers primary perspectives from real people who led Bring Back Our Girls events on the ground in nine countries: Canada, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States. By so doing, it expands the scope of existing narratives beyond Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria, revealing the connections and disconnections that shaped the movement's engagements and outcomes. This also emphasises the reciprocal nature and transnationality of interactions within Africa and between the continent and other parts of the world.

Second, it is significant that many of these actors are women and African or of African origin, thus contributing towards inverting the Eurocentric and androcentric gaze of both media attention to and scholarship on transnational activism. By privileging the voices of African activists and telling the story of an activism created by Africans, this book normalises the inclusion of African cases in discourses on the subject and helps secure the place of Africa as a purveyor, not just a receiver, of transnational exchanges. This contributes towards a more objective view and holistic understanding of the dynamics of transnational activism. It also contributes towards the growing impulse to decolonise the study of Africa and international relations.

Third, much of the knowledge on transnational activism in international relations scholarship focuses on civil society organisations, particularly NGOs and formal networks. This extends a historic preoccupation with collective entities as primary units of analysis that does not recognise how ordinary people and citizens, specifically women, have become more active on global stages, including through activism. By examining a case of contemporary activism that does not fit neatly within existing typologies of social movement actors, this book expands the categorisation of social movements, illustrating that new forms of transnational activism like Bring Back Our Girls are characterised more by hybrid networks of highly diverse and diffuse individuals and organisations than by collective identities. This finding advances discourses on which actors have legitimacy, agency, power, and presence to lead resistance and pursue social change in international spaces.

This book derives its title, *Globalised Resistance and the Bring Back Our Girls Movement: New Dimensions of Transnational Activism*, from one underlying and several contingent questions: What lessons does Bring Back Our Girls hold about transnational activism today? How and why did a movement about the human rights of African schoolgirls become so highly transnationalised in such a short time? Who supported Bring Back Our Girls and why and what does this say about the state and prospects of globalised support today? What implications does the Bring Back Our Girls story have for transnational alliance and movement building and women's human rights movements globally and for countering abuses of women's human rights? What can be said about the relations between Global South

and north activists and social movements today? What, if anything, has changed about the way we do activism today?

As I wrote in a 2018 reflection on the #MeToo movement, the politics surrounding the Global North uptake of Global South human rights movements is complicated. In the past, the latter have often been co-opted by Global North actors and movements with greater capacity and capital to attract attention and shape debates around saving poor, distressed Africans who could not help themselves. Writer Teju Cole (2012) called it the 'white saviour (industrial) complex' in reference to the Kony 2012 campaign. It is the reason major news outlets like CNN, *The Washington Post*, and the *UK Telegraph* framed #MeToo as the vanguard in the global fight against sexual harassment, overlooking the many significant movements around the world tackling the same issues long before it. The appropriation of protest movements is more challenging today due to digital tools that help track and establish narrative agency as well as intense exchanges enabled by the higher transnational agency of Global South actors who straddle both worlds. Bring Back Our Girls is a remarkable illustration of a Global South movement that inspired support across the world while retaining its identity as African.

Building on this question of political and representational agency, I will digress here momentarily to pre-empt a discussion that I elaborate in the concluding chapter of this book. Among the myriad significances of Bring Back Our Girls is that as a lens into the global-local peace and security nexus, it demonstrates the agency of Global South actors for effective transnational activism. The movement's story and the multiple impacts it had on how policy and security actors in Nigeria and abroad responded to the abductions also illustrate how much more meaningful resistance is when it is done by the people who are most affected or closest to the location of a crisis or conflict. Pseudo-activisms like Invisible Children's 'Make Kony Famous' misstep could never have had the same traction, largely because their failure to understand the core issues surrounding the conflict in northern Uganda eliminated from the onset any possibility of meaningful impact. White saviourism was their other challenge. I revisit this topic in Chapter 7.

To address the questions that inspired this book and unpack the politics and dynamics of transnational activism today, I adopted several approaches. First, I made an intentional choice to study Bring Back Our Girls, an activism begun in Nigeria by Nigerian women that attracted and compelled widespread global attention, action, and support. I did this because women's human rights movements, especially those from the Global South, do not often feature as empirical subjects of study or sources of theory in existing literature. Making Bring Back Our Girls the subject of this book enabled me to highlight its lessons for the increasing global visibility of Global South movements, particularly those led by women around women's human rights.

Second, the firsthand perspectives I obtained from (interviews with) 27 activists and various people who supported Bring Back Our Girls in Canada, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States offer a better sense, beyond narratives of Bring Back Our Girls in Nigeria, of: (a) the diverse cultural, social, and political viewpoints that influenced

their participation in the movement; (b) how Bring Back Our Girls was structured; (c) how its different parts interacted across different geopolitical spaces; and (d) how Bring Back Our Girls travelled, who were key transnational actors, and what roles they played. We see, for instance, the involvement and influence of continental and diasporan Africans and how these intersectional actors used their transnational agency to both further and constrain activism in their home contexts. We also see how important individual identities are to shaping why people get involved in social movements and how social problems in one part of the world become universalised.

Bring Back Our Girls involved representatives of Nigerian civil society organisations and used familiar repertoires of organised resistance, such as protest marches, songs, and petitions, to engage national and international governance institutions. Yet, in many ways, the group symbolises new patterns in the structure, form, and function of transnational activism, defined as political mobilisation across national borders. Cammaerts (2015, p. 7) prepares the ground for theorising these new directions by observing that today's transnational advocacy networks 'are becoming virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global'. Bring Back Our Girls, like the North African uprisings and other contemporary movements, fits this description: it was active online, spread quickly across state borders, did not have a central coordinating or operational structure that covered all of its global representations, and involved actors in many different parts of the world who participated for different reasons. However, a close examination of the campaign offers deeper insights into changing structures of transnational resistance, motivations for engagement in activism, and relations between Global South[7] and international actors.

Firstly, where considerable scholarship focuses on the activities of professional transnational advocacy networks and social movement organisations, Bring Back Our Girls reveals the growing role and importance in transnational relations of individual actors and informal networks, as opposed to states and formal organisations. The individuals who have led Bring Back Our Girls in different spaces have been predominantly Global South actors with international agency, leverage, and presence, who thus had the ability to represent their interests in international contexts. Secondly, while collective identities influenced some people's decision to join Bring Back Our Girls, individual identities, personal values, and interpersonal social relations were important motivating factors that underline the increasing significance of individuality and informality in transnational activism. Thirdly, Bring Back Our Girls' origin in Nigeria and the centrality of Global South actors in its transnational activities illustrate the decline of white saviourism, a corresponding rise in the transnational agencies of Global South actors, and a shift from relations of dependence with Northern actors towards collaboration. All these factors reflect new directions of transnational activism, which are theorised in this study as *multimodal transconnective networks of change* (my emphasis). This new theoretical framework addresses the tendency in scholarship to segment different strands of transnational activism by building on the idea that Bring Back Our Girls is a form of transnational collective action that encompasses a diverse mix of actors and

networks, motives, and modalities of participation and engagement. These new directions in transnational activism do not find resonance in the existing literature for two main reasons: first, they retain a persistent focus on cases in countries of the Global North and second, 'malestream'[8] international relations meta-theories are more interested in collectivist formal organising and give little attention to women's movements, especially those from the Global South.

Transnational activism is a historic phenomenon that dates to the uprisings of enslaved Africans in the 18th and 19th centuries (Santiago-Valles, 2005; David, 2007; Adi, 2018). Since that time, it has been performed by individual and collective actors across the world using varied repertoires to achieve a range of objectives with different outcomes. Since the 2010 North African Spring, whose conceptualisation as the 'Arab Spring' obfuscates the African agency involved (Branch & Mampilly, 2015, pp. 2–3),[9] activism across the world has surged (Branch and Mampilly, 2015, pp. 2, 13), as has mass-based transnational activism by loosely connected individuals (Castells, 2015).[10] Contemporary hyperglobalised contexts have produced new forms of resistance, in Africa and the rest of the world, that differ, as previously stated, from older traditional social movements in location, mobility, function and operation, and structure and scale (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 7). This growing pattern is at odds with theses about transnational advocacy that foreground the role and agency of Global North actors as advocates for Global South activisms, and the collectivist approaches and motives of engagement of professional advocacy institutions and networks.

Frameworks in which Global South actors seek out and rely on the agency of Northern advocates to represent their interests in international contexts, such as the boomerang model (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 1999; De Waal, 2015), are problematic because they propound the idea that norms and political resources and support flow from Global North to South, whereas, in reality, this exchange is more reciprocal and multidimensional (Müller-Funk, 2019; Pallas, 2017; Pallas & Nguyen, 2018; Pallas & Bloodgood, 2019; Petrova, 2013; Rodríguez-Garavito, 2015; Tsutsui and Smith unpublished). Also, the prevailing focus of this scholarship on advocacy networks from the viewpoint of NGOs centres on an institutional level of analysis, overlooking the individual. While these factors remain salient in transnational politics to varied extents, the context in which they occur has changed as have the forms and functions of transnational activism itself. One major difference is that technological advances have collapsed communication barriers, making it easier for people in distant parts of the world to see, hear, and engage with one another. Also, the grievousness of contemporary atrocities is inciting spontaneous responses by individuals compared to the more structured campaigns of NGOs. Further, increasing transnational mobility has expanded the agencies of Global South actors, making them less dependent on Northern advocates to represent them in Northern contexts. This combines with changing global norms about who has the right to speak for 'subalterns'.[11]

Several scholars have noted the limited insights from the non-Global North in international relations that has translated into its overlooking of Global South knowledge (Acharya, 2014; Acharya & Buzan, 2007, 2010, 2017) and, specifically,

African concepts, experiences, and agencies (Bouka, 2018, 2019; Obi, 2012; Odoom & Andrews, 2017; Smith, 2012, 2017, 2018; Tieku, 2012; Zondi, 2018). This questions the internationality of international relations and compels efforts to theorise from the South, rather than engage in cyclical efforts to revalidate Eurocentric theories. It also speaks to the need for greater diversity and representation. This study contributes towards redressing representational deficits in international relations scholarship regarding the agency of individual African as against non-African and female actors that have drawn severe criticism of the limits of its relevance outside the Global North. By so doing, the study helps to invert the Eurocentric gaze of this scholarship and contributes towards decolonising the study of international relations—a key impulse of contemporary knowledge production and theorisation.

By centring the perspectives of activists who supported Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with insights from three other countries, this book contributes to an epistemic shift from reading the transnational as global or vertical to reading it as including regional or horizontal transnationalisation. This illuminates knowledge and ways of knowing, as identified by proponents of epistemologies of the South (e.g., Santos, 2014), that are largely silent in current discourses. In this way, this book also deconstructs the South-North relationship of dependence as presented in existing literature and demonstrates how it is becoming more collaborative.

Finally, although Bring Back Our Girls is the subject of a growing body of scholarship, this book is one of very few studies, if not the first, based on primary data from interviews with Bring Back Our Girls activists in different geospatial contexts outside Nigeria. It thus offers empirical insights from a range of geographically dispersed actors in and outside the Global South that expand the scope of perspectives from either Global North or Global South that characterises extant scholarship on activism. The book highlights the involvement in Bring Back Our Girls of diasporan Africans, a further gap in knowledge within this scholarship, showing how these intersectional actors use their transnational agency to both further and constrain activism in their home contexts.

Data used for this study were collected between March 2019 and September 2020 using semi-structured interviews with 27 women and men who led or took part in Bring Back Our Girls events in Canada, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and the United States, both physically using face-to-face interviews and WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook, and Zoom. Data from supplementary interviews in Sierra Leone was added in May 2023. I identified participants through Internet searches on Google, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter for Bring Back Our Girls or Bring Back Our Girls and the name of each focal country (for example, Bring Back Our Girls Ghana). I also collected and analysed over 600 social media data items posted by and about Bring Back Our Girls activists on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube from April to October 2014—the six months in which Bring Back Our Girls was most active. This filled gaps in information but, more significantly, helped map relationships among the people who took active part in Bring Back Our Girls.

There are eight chapters in this study, beginning with this introduction. Chapter 1 provides a background to the research that consists of the global and African political contexts in which Bring Back Our Girls emerged. Chapter 2 traces the origins and evolution of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement from its creation in Nigeria to the global force for change that it became across the world. Chapter 3 contains a review of international relations literature on transnational activism while Chapter 4 juxtaposes this scholarship with knowledge from African Studies, psychology, sociology, and communications/media studies, drawing on them all to formulate a new model of contemporary transnational activism. Chapters 5 and 6 present detailed findings and discussions in relation to the study's research question: Chapter 5 focuses on the structure, form, and interrelations of contemporary transnational activism, while Chapter 6 centres on the motivations of participants in transnational activism. The study concludes in Chapter 7 by consolidating the theoretical implications of the book's findings and its contributions to knowledge of the transnationalisation of Bring Back Our Girls within the framework of elaborating theory from the South. Chapter 7 also makes suggestions for further research and offers policy-relevant recommendations.

Notes

1 The group has since split into factions. On this and what each splinter group represents, see Edward Stoddard (2019): Revolutionary Warfare? Assessing the Character of Competing Factions within the Boko Haram Insurgency, *African Security*, 12, 3/4: 300–329.

2 Ibeh, N. (2014, May 20). 'Interview: Meet the Man Who Generated #BringBackOurGirls Hashtag', *Premium Times,* 20 May, retrieved 3 July 2024, from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/162803-interview-meet-man-generated-bringbackourgirls-hashtag.html

3 Branch and Mampilly (2015) offer a compelling explanation of why this protest wave was attributed to the Arab world and not to Africa. They argue that Africa has been overlooked in the literature on recent protests and its uprisings dismissed as riots because it is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest.

4 See Maïa de la Baume and Alissa J. Rubin (2014). 'West African Nations Set Aside Their Old Suspicions to Combat Boko Haram', *New York Times*, 17 May 2014, and 'President Jonathan's Speech in France at the Regional Summit on Security in Nigeria', *Vanguard*, 18 May 2014 in Council Special Report No. 70 November 2014 John Campbell U.S. Policy to Counter Nigeria's Boko Haram.

5 Interview, member Bring Back Our Girls strategy team, September 2019. This study discusses the matters of celebrity activism and social media influencers in later chapters.

6 The meme (pronounced meem) is a unit of cultural information spread by imitation that was introduced in 1976 by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (see https://www.britannica.com/topic/meme). In Internet terms, a meme is 'most often associated with an image or video that portrays a particular concept or idea that is then usually spread through online social platforms. That idea goes on to proliferate through social media, forums, instant messaging apps, and even news sites' (Martindale, 2021). One example is the viral mimicry and mockery of an exaggerated bow by Cameroon's Minister for Sports and Physical Education Bidoung Kpwatt to Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, in 2016, that came to be known as the Bidoung Challenge. See https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38290230

7 'Global North' and 'Global South' are contested terms that emanate from the discourses around geographies of development and difference between what have been historically constructed as developed, advanced, or rich states in Euro-America and underdeveloped or developing, backward, and poor states in other parts of the world. These concepts are captured by the use of other terms like West and non-West. This study acknowledges this controversial history, the questionable relevance of such terms given shifting configurations of power and scholarship on the blurring boundaries between 'North' and 'South'. Usage of Global North and South in this paper connotes, per Mohanty (2002 cited in Khoja-Moolji, 2015b, p. 87), a metaphorical separation between parts of the world traditionally distinguished via binaries like 'haves' and 'have-nots'.

8 A term coined by feminist sociologists to describe the privileging of male perspectives in certain disciplines. See Enloe (1990) Hudson (2005); Olonisakin et al., (2011); Hendricks (2015); and Bouka (2018, 2019) are among feminist scholars who have noted historic empirical and citational silences on gender in international relations.

9 The authors offer a compelling explanation of why this protest wave was attributed to the Arab world and not to Africa. They argue that Africa has been overlooked in the literature on recent protests and its uprisings dismissed as riots because it is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest.

10 Alex De Waal (2015, p. 22) notes the difficulty of 'measuring activism' in a commentary on the genealogies of transnational activism, but empirical studies indicate a rise in the frequency of transnational acts of resistance.

11 The 'subaltern' discourse pervades debate on and about agency in transnational activisms vis-à-vis epistemic constructions of 'others' by hegemonic social groups. With the Nigerian transnational activism #BringBackOurGirls, for example, several authors note how depictions of the kidnapped students mutated as the activism transitioned from its Nigerian origins to a more Western hemisphere, converting them into stereotypical 'third world' females after the logic of imperialist justifications for interventions in non-Western societies to save voiceless, powerless others (Loken, 2014; Olson, 2016; Maxfield, 2016; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a, 2015b). Another example is Abu-Lughod's (2002, 2013) work on saving Muslim women where she questions the Western view of the veil as a symbol of oppression and the singular stereotyped image of the oppressed Muslim woman that overlooks the complex subjectivities and multiplicities of narratives that constitute Muslim women's lives. To extend this beyond the West, there are contestations over representation and legitimacy within non-Western activisms too.

References

Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim women really need saving? Anthropological reflections on cultural relativism and its others. *American Anthropologist*, *104*, 783–790.

Abu-Lughod, L. (2013). *Do Muslim women need saving*? Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Acharya, A. (2014). Global international relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, *58*(4), 647–659.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2007). Why is there no non-western international relations theory? An introduction. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *7*(3), 287–312.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2010). *Non-Western international relations theory: Reflections on and beyond Asia*. Oxford and New York: Routledge.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2017). Why is there no Non-Western international relations theory? Ten years on. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *17*(3), 341–370.

Adi, H. (2018). *Pan-Africanism: A global history*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Aina, T. A., Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Dayil, P. B., & Aremu, F. A. (2019). *Beyond tweets and screams: Action for empowerment and accountability in Nigeria – The case of the*

#BBOG movement. https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/14559/Wp529_Online.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1

Ajayi, T. F. (2018). #MeToo, Africa and the politics of transnational activism. *Africa Is a Country*. https://africasacountry.com/2018/07/metoo-africa-and-the-politics-of-transnational-activism

Ajayi, T. F. (2020). Women, internal displacement and the Boko Haram conflict: Broadening the debate. *African Security, 13*(2), 171–194.

Akume, S. (2014). Chronicle of false narratives and inconsistencies by the Nigerian government over the rescue of the abducted Chibok schoolgirls. *Opinion Nigeria*. Retrieved September 9, 2018, from https://opinionnigeria.com/chronicle-of-false-narratives-and-inconsistencies-by-the-nigerian-government-over-the-rescue-of-the-abducted-chibok-schoolgirls-by-sesugh-akume/

Bouka, Y. (2018). Wakanda, afrofuturism, and decolonizing international relations scholarship. *LSE Blog*. Retrieved August 29, 2020, from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/02/12/wakanda-afrofuturism-and-decolonizing-international-relations-scholarship/

Bouka, Y. (2019). Interview – Yolande Bouka. *E-International Relations*. https://www.e-ir.info/2019/10/30/interview-yolande-bouka/

Branch, A., & Mampilly, Z. (2015). *Africa uprising: Popular protest and political change*. London: Zed Books.

Castells, M. (2014). The impact of the Internet on society: A global perspective. *MIT Technology Review*. https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530566/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/

Castells, M. (2015). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Social media and activism. In R. Mansell & P. Hwa (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of digital communication and society*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cole, T. (2012, March 10). The white savior industrial complex. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/

David, H. T. (2007). Transnational advocacy in the Eighteenth century: Transatlantic activism and the anti-slavery movement. *Global Networks, 7*(3), 367–382.

de Londras, F. (2019). The transnational counter-terrorism order: A problematique. *Current Legal Problems 72*(1), 1–49.

De Waal, A. (2015). Genealogies of transnational activism. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Enloe, C. (1990). *Bananas, beaches and bases: Making feminist sense of international politics* (1st ed.). University of California Press.

Elone, J. (2013). Backlash against democracy: The regulation of Civil Society in Africa, *Democracy and Society*, *7*(2).

HBO. (2018). *Stolen daughters: Kidnapped by Boko Haram, documentary*. https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/chibok-girls-struggles-subject-of-hbo-film/

Hendricks, C. (2015). Women, peace and security in Africa: Conceptual and implementation challenges and shifts. *African Security Review*, *24*(4), 364–375.

Hinshaw, D., & Parkinson, J. (2022). *Bring back our girls: The untold story of the global search for Nigeria's missing schoolgirls*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

Hudson, H. (2005). 'Doing' security as though humans matter: A feminist perspective on gender and the politics of human security. *Security Dialogue*, *36*(2), 155–174. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605053720

Ibeh, N. (2014). Interview: Meet the man who generated #BringBackOurGirls hashtag. *Premium Times*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/162803-interview-meet-man-generated-bringbackourgirls-hashtag.html

Jamjoom, M. (2015). How online activism propelled Tunisia's revolution. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved January 6, 2021, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/17/how-online-activism-propelled-tunisias-revolution%20%5b6

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015a). Becoming an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(2), 347–350. Retrieved April 10, 2018 from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14680777.2015.1008747

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015b, April). Suturing together girls and education: An investigation into the social (re)production of girls' education as a hegemonic ideology. *Diaspora Indigenous and Minority Education*, *9*(2), 87–107.

Loken, M. (2014). #BringBackOurGirls and the invisibility of imperialism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *14*(6), 1100–1101.

Mamattah T. 2014. Building civil society in West Africa: Notes from the field: in The handbook of civil society in Africa: Non profit and civil society studies, edited by Obadare Ebenezer. New York: Springer Science and Business Media, pp. 125–144.

Martindale, J. (2021). What is a meme? Here's everything you need to know. *Digital Trends*. https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/what-is-a-meme

Maxfield, M. (2016). History retweeting itself: Imperial feminist appropriations of "bring back our girls". *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 886–900.

Müller-Funk, L. (2019). *Egyptian diaspora activism during the Arab uprisings: Insights from Paris and Vienna*. London: Routledge.

Mutsvairo, B. (Ed.). (2016). *Digital activism in the social media era: Critical reflections on emerging trends in sub-Saharan Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nyabola, N. (2018). *Digital democracy, analogue politics*. London: Zed Books.

Obi, C. (2012). Transnationalism, Africa's "resource curse" and "contested sovereignties": The struggle for Nigeria's niger delta. In T. Murithi (Ed.), *A handbook of Africa's international relations*. London and New York: Routledge.

Odoom, I., & Andrews, N. (2017). What/who is still missing in international relations scholarship? Situating Africa as an agent in IR theorising. *Third World Quarterly*, *38*(1), 42–60.

Ofori-Parku, S. S., & Moscato, D. (2018). Hashtag activism as a form of political action: A qualitative analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign in Nigerian, UK, and U.S. Press. *International Journal of Communication, 12*(3), 269–287.

Okoth, G. B. W. (2020). How Kenyans on Twitter use visuals as a form of political protest. *kommunikation.medien*, *12*, 1–27.

Olonisakin, F., Barnes, K., & Ikpe, E. (2011). *Women, peace and security: Translating policy into practice* (Contemporary security studies). Routledge.

Olson, C. C. (2016). #BringBackOurGirls: Digital communities supporting real-world change and influencing mainstream media agendas. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 772–777.

Onah, C. K. (2024). #BringBackOurGirls: Transnational activism and the remediation of the 2014 Chibok girls' kidnapping in Nigeria. *African Studies Review,* 1–26. doi:10.1017/asr.2024.13

Oriola, T. (2024). A decade after the kidnapping of the Chibok girls in Nigeria, what has the #BringBackOurGirls movement achieved?. *The Conversation Africa*. https://theconversation.com/a-decade-after-the-kidnapping-of-the-chibok-girls-in-nigeria-what-has-the-bringbackourgirls-movement-achieved-22754487.

Oriola, T. (2024, July). *Terrorism, politics, and human rights advocacy: The #BringBackOurGirls movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pallas, C. L. (2017). Inverting the boomerang: Examining the legitimacy of North–South–North campaigns in transnational advocacy. *Global Networks*, *17*(2), 281–299.
Pallas, C. L., & Bloodgood, E. (2019). *Beyond the boomerang: Evolving patterns in transnational advocacy*. Working paper presented at the 2019 International Society for Third-sector Research International Conference, Amsterdam and shared by author.
Pallas, C. L., & Nguyen, L. (2018). Transnational advocacy without Northern NGO partners: Vietnamese NGOs in the HIV/AIDS sector. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *47*(4_suppl), 159S–176S.
Pereira, C. (2018). Beyond the spectacular: Contextualizing gender relations in the wake of the Boko haram insurgency. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, *17*, 246–268.
Petrova, T. (2013). *From solidarity to survival: The motivational life cycle of transnational activism*. Harriman Institute Working Paper No. 3. https://harriman.columbia.edu/files/harriman/newsletter/Petrova%20Working%20Paper%20No%203.pdf
Rodríguez-Garavito, C. (2015). Multiple boomerangs: New models of global human rights advocacy. *Open Democracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openglobalrights-openpage/multiple-boomerangs-new-models-of-global-human-rights-advoc/
Santiago-Valles, K. (2005). World-historical ties among "spontaneous" slave rebellions in the Atlantic. *Review, 28*(1), 51–83.
Santos, B. D. S. (2014). *Epistemologies of the South: Justice against epistemicide* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/978131563487
Sesay, I. (2019). *Beneath the tamarind tree: A story of courage, family, and the lost schoolgirls of Boko Haram* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Dey St., an imprint of William Morrow.
Smith, K. (2012). Africa as an agent of international relations knowledge. In S. Cornelissen & F. Cheru (Eds.), *Africa and international relations in the 21st century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Smith, K. (2017). Reshaping international relations: Theoretical innovations from Africa. *All Azimuth*, 1–12. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203702239-8/reshaping-international-relations-karen-smit
Smith, K. (2018). *The dangers of parochialism in international relations*. https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/30/the-dangers-of-parochialism-in-international-relations/
Stoddard, E. (2019). Revolutionary warfare? Assessing the character of competing factions within the Boko Haram insurgency. *African Security*, *12*(3/4), 300–329.
Tieku T. K. (2012) Collectivist worldview: Its challenge to international relations. In S. Cornelissen, F. Cheru, & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Africa and international relations in the 21st century* (International Political Economy Series). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Tomchak, A. (2014, 7 May). Meet the man behind #BringBackOurGirls. *BBC News*. Retrieved 3 July 2024, from https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-27315124
Tsutsui, K., & Smith, J. (Unpublished). Human rights and social movements: From the boomerang pattern to a sandwich effect. In D. A. Snow, S. A. Soule, H. Kriesi, & H. McCammon (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell companion to social movements*. New York: Wiley Blackwell.
Yeku, J. (2018). The hashtag as archive: Internet memes and nigeria's social media election. In A. Adelakun & T. Falola (Eds.), *Art, creativity, and politics in Africa and the diaspora. African histories and modernities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.
Zenn, J., & Pearson, E. (2014). Women, gender and the evolving tactics of Boko Haram. *Journal for Terrorism Research*, *5*(1). Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.15664/jtr.828
Zondi, S. (2018). Decolonising international relations and its theory: A critical conceptual meditation. *Politikon, 45*(1), 16–31.

1 Mirroring the World

Global Politics and the Evolutions of Contemporary Transnational Activism

Introduction

Using a historical approach, this chapter outlines the multiple national and transnational social and political contexts in which Bring Back Our Girls emerged, focusing on their implications for political resistance, especially from a gendered perspective. By making visible and validating historic instances of transnational activism that have been overlooked over the years by multiple waves of the so-called mainstream literature, this chapter illustrates that Bring Back Our Girls continues a long history of transnational activism initiated and led by Global South actors, including African and Nigerian women. This contextual exploration of the crosscurrents of global politics and their intersections with women's rights shows how their confluence is having multiple impacts on diverse populations and influencing the rise and transnationalisation of movements like Bring Back Our Girls in today's world.

This five-part chapter begins with a historical overview of activism across borders from the 18th century to date, using a wave analysis to denote events in separate eras. A second section highlights key turns and themes in contemporary transnational activism. In a third section, the chapter overviews the history of dissent in Nigeria and the state's responses to it. A fourth section discusses key themes in Nigerian and global politics before the chapter concludes.

A Historical Overview of Transnational Activism

Some analysis suggests that transnational activism is a modern phenomenon that became more visible in the 1980s (Khagram, Riker, & Sikkink, 2002; Pallas, 2017). I debunk this idea on grounds that transnational activism has existed for a long period of time that predates the 20th century, but not all instances have been acknowledged, owing to multiple biases of international relations (discussed further in Chapter 3), a discipline dominated for many years by scholars from the Global North. Its combined biases towards formal advocacy organising, predominantly by actors in the Global North, have obscured its view and validation of other forms of transnational activism occurring in and led by actors in other parts of the world. I discuss some of them below and explore these disciplinary biases and

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-2

broader definitional and epistemological issues surrounding transnational activism in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Anti-Slavery Uprisings

NGOs and NGO-led advocacy may have become more prominent in the 1980s (Obadare, 2012), but transnational activism is a historic phenomenon that dates as far back as the 18th and 19th centuries to the series of uprisings by enslaved Africans—more commonly known as 'rebellions'—in the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020, p. 8). These have not been counted in social movement scholarship because they are characterised as 'the most backward and fragmentary form of social defiance' (Santiago-Valles, 2005, p. 51). Their exclusion is further rationalised on grounds that they were not organised in a 'globally conscious manner' and did not 'include deliberate coordination' across multiple geographic spaces (Santiago-Valles, 2005, p. 51). This appears to be the reason that mainstream literature does not acknowledge what are seen as informal anti-slavery efforts by Africans in Britain or initiatives like the Sons of Africa organisation formed by African abolitionists, Olaudah Equiano and Ottobah Cugoano. The latter was made up of various Western Africans who organised collectively to address common problems and engage British political actors and other abolitionists in the movement to end slavery (Adi, 2018, p. 7). In their assessment of contemporary African protests, Branch and Mampilly (2015) note that even today, mass uprisings on the continent are dismissed as riots that do not warrant scholarly investigation.

Santiago-Valles takes an expansive view, suggesting that beyond institutionalised activism, conscious connectedness is 'only one form that such globally connected resistances can take' (Santiago-Valles, 2005, p. 55). He argues that the uprisings of enslaved people were global and transnationally connected through the multinational identities of participants as well as the global nature of enslavement and the global impact that the resistance of enslaved people had in Africa, the Americas, and Europe (Santiago-Valles, 2005, p. 55). These uprisings or 'subaltern rebellions' represent the earliest form of what Santiago-Valles terms 'Afrodiasporic' resistance (Santiago-Valles, 2005, p. 51) that has recurred throughout history and is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

In the mid-19th century, there emerged an Anti-Slavery Coalition in which diverse actors, mainly from Europe and the Americas, mobilised to bring an end to the horrors of the slave trade (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 92; Anheier & Kaldor, 2001; David, 2007). David (2007, pp. 368–369) distinguishes this from the less formal and structured anti-slave trade network that existed from the mid- to late 18th century and was more transnational in constitution. Despite the latter's active engagement and preceding protests by enslaved peoples, the formal abolitionist and decolonisation movements, or 'imperial initiative', continue to be credited with the liberation of the British empire, defying 'an abundance of histories of resistance' (Gopal, 2019). These biases around what qualifies as activism, and specifically transnational activism, are well-established in relevant literature. Klotz

(2002), for example, foregrounds the idea of social movements as transnational actors using a comparison of the abolitionist and anti-apartheid coalitions which were made up of advocacy networks, international organisations, and corporations. In his study on transnational advocacy in the 18th century, David (2007, pp. 370, 378–379) examines the role of Quakers of which many leaders of the Anti-Slavery Network were members, although the network later expanded to include Anglican and Methodist denominations. David examines how Quaker theology and thought about the moral injustice of slavery informed their involvement and the organisational links among members in America and England. He notes that numeric quasi-parity among members on both sides of the Atlantic meant that neither was superior (David, 2007, p. 372) and marks this 'organised' mobilisation as the onset of modern transnationalism (David, 2007, p. 369). Thus, we see a clear prejudice within this wave of scholarship towards forms of collective action that do not involve multiple countries and actors in the Global North and that are not led by organisations recognised by these authors as formal.

These biases are also evident in Tarrow's (2005, pp. 65–68) questioning of the transnationality of the 146 austerity protests that broke out in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa from 1976 to 1992; he states that there was no evidence of 'transnational networks or solidarities' or 'unified organisation'. Quoting McMichael (1996, p. 386), Santiago-Valles (2005, p. 53) counters Tarrow thus: The problem with this [narrow] perspective is that such linkages 'presume a "whole" that governs its "parts"', rather than an approach that 'progressively constructs a whole as a methodological procedure by giving context to historical phenomena'. In other words, because uprisings by enslaved people were not analysed in historical context, they were not considered to be either transnational or to constitute activism because they did not fit into existing hegemonic frames. This book adopts a less rigid approach to conceptualising transnational activism that recognises the agency of groups like Bring Back Our Girls and normalises their inclusion in related discourses as valid sources of knowledge on how globalised resistance is evolving.

These biases also extend to activism led by individuals, many of whom became famous for their peculiar approaches to political disobedience. Under the rubric of metro-colonial activism, with a focus on humanitarian activism, De Waal (2015, p. 24) cites non-violent resistance by Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa and India; the campaign by Edmund Morel, the French-born British journalist, author, pacifist, and politician, against King Leopold of Belgium's misrule in Congo, and the transnational campaign against the Fascist invasion of Ethiopia. Gandhi and Morel are archetypal figures in the body of historical work on single individuals—political entrepreneurs or norm leaders in Keck and Sikkink's (1998) conception—as transnational activists, which Tarrow (2005) captures in his concept of rooted cosmopolitans. All of this goes to show that definitions of transnational activism that do not recognise the diverse actors, forms, and modalities of mobilisation are inherently incomplete, at odds with reality and of limited relevance and application to this rapidly evolving field of knowledge.

Pan-Africanism and Anti-Colonialism

The next identifiable wave in the trajectory of transnational activism occurred between 1940 and 1960, with intercontinental organising at home and abroad (colonies and metropolitan centres) among anti-colonialists in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, and leaders of the American civil rights movement. De Waal (2015, p. 25) describes the 'ambivalent' relationships between anti-colonial movements and Northern human rights organisations, including between leaders of African and civil rights movements that embodied 'remarkable transcontinental solidarity and shared ownership'. In a model that looks like a precursor of Keck and Sikkink's famous boomerang model, De Waal shows how Southern actors sought the support of Northern actors to pressure colonial governments (De Waal, 2015, p. 25). Yet his depiction of the structure of this relationship in Figure 1.1 shows only relations between Southern independence movements and Northern advocacy organisations; it omits the transversal exchanges among Global South activists documented by Nkrumah (1963, pp. 132–140) and many others.[1]

Pan-Africanism is often discussed as a driver of national independence movements across Africa from the 1940s to 1970s, but it began life as a transatlantic movement in the late 19th century (Abdul-Raheem, 1996) with the agitations of the descendants of enslaved Black people in the diaspora to reunite with Black Africans on the continent (Mboukou, 1983). Adi (2018, pp. 3–4) conceptualises this movement as two distinct strands, with one emerging from the African diaspora and the other arising in the context of the anti-colonial struggle, thereby showing the diversity and transnationality of Pan-Africanism's leaders and supporters. Its early thinkers were diasporan Blacks, including male and female figures like George Padmore, Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. Du Bois, Amy Ashwood, and Amy Jacques Garvey (Blain, Leeds, & Taylor, 2016, p. 140), among others, and initial meetings took place in Europe (Malisa & Nhengeze, 2018).

I take the trouble to highlight women's involvement in and parallel leadership of Pan-Africanism because, even though the women cited above are known as prominent female pillars of this movement, women as a whole have been excised from its

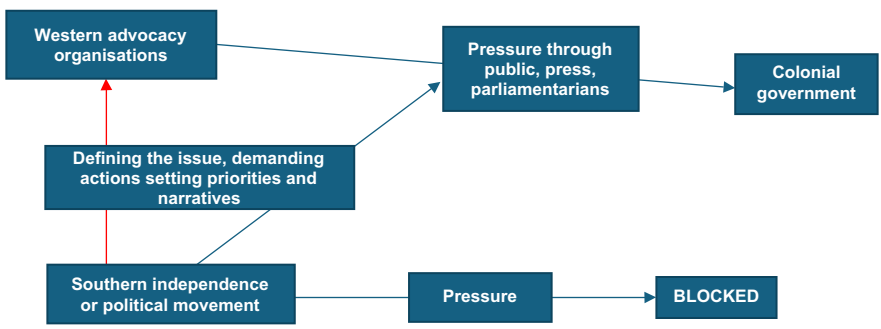

Figure 1.1 Anti-colonial solidarity model.

Source: De Waal, 2015, p. 25.

history. Yet they were and remain vital participants in Pan-Africanist movements across the world (*Feminist Africa* 2014, 2015). The historical invisibilisation of African women from documented political and resistance histories and narratives is the work of embedded gender biases and gendered disparities in the politics of both collective action and knowledge production (see Magadla, 2024; Tsikata, 2014, p. 97; Tamale, 2020, pp. 2–4) that continue to serve to trivialise, overlook, or totally ignore women's movements today. Their erasure serves as an imperative to study movements by women in order to provide accurate records of history as well as enrich knowledge on activism from diverse perspectives—hence the focus of this book.

Anti-colonial transnational activism was succeeded, in turn, by transnational movements against neo-colonialism in the 1970s, and against human rights abuse, war/militarism, and economic hardship and structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s. The anti-apartheid movement is a major pillar of anti-colonialism and has been brought to life through transnational organising by varied organisations, as well as by global protests, such as those against the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 when South African police shot and killed demonstrators in the township of Sharpeville protesting against the Apartheid regime's racist 'pass' laws (Lodge, 2011).

As discussed below, the relationships and power dynamics among Northern and Southern actors, as well as the organisational structure of transnational activism modulated in each period. To cite one example, Italian nuns worked alongside the parents of schoolgirls abducted by the Lord's Resistance Army during Uganda's civil war in the late 1980s in a transnational activism that linked them with the United Nations system and American and European political actors (De Temmerman, 2001; Cook, 2007).[2] During Liberia's protracted wars from 1989 to 2003, religious and diaspora groups were actively involved in the peace processes that ended the war, although, as Afolabi (2017, pp. 3, 158–171, 173–175) points out, the Liberian diaspora role was multifaceted and ambivalent. The transnational women's peace movement led by the Women in Peace Network and the Mano River Women's Peacebuilding Network that was so instrumental in brokering peace talks among warring factions is well documented (Fork Films et al., 2008; Gbowee, 2009; Medie, 2016, p. 3; Afolabi, 2017).

In South America, transnational environmental and human rights organisations supported initial resistance by indigenous communities like the U'wa of Colombia that evolved into transnational political and legal confrontation of state governments over the exploitation of natural resources in their homelands (Rodríguez-Garavito & Arenas, 2005).

Black Lives Matter and Decolonisation

The principles of Pan-Africanism are being rearticulated in Black Lives Matter and a global decolonial movement that gained renewed momentum with the Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa in 2015. The Must Fall movement began in 2015 when Black South African university student Chumani Maxwele threw human

faeces on the statue of Cecil John Rhodes, the imperialist British businessman and politician at the University of Cape Town, in protest against the continued sense of disempowerment among the country's Black population (Luescher, 2016, p. 22; Nyamnjoh, 2015, p. 74). It then inspired other Fallist movements against academic racism across the world, including in the Global North (Nyamnjoh, 2016; Adomako Ampofo, 2016; Wamai, 2016; Ramaru, 2017, p. 94; Kambon and Appiagyei-Atua, 2018; Sagar, 2019). Fallism can be considered an ally movement to Black Lives Matter and thus part of a long and continuing global movement against the racial oppression of Black people everywhere (Adomako Ampofo, 2016). By virtue of their nature—non-institutionalised or formally structured, spontaneous, and digitalised—many of these instances of transglobal mobilisation would not be considered as transnational activism, yet they are clearly significant instances of globalised resistance that greatly enhance knowledge of this phenomenon.

Transnational Activism Today: Rising Global Resistance and a Backlash against Democracy

The most recent wave of transnational activism began in the early 21st century with a range of movements emerging from the Global South and North at the onset of the fourth wave of global democratisation. This period was marked by popular democracy movements (Elone, 2013) and varied efforts by states to become 'functional electoral democracies' (Hussain & Howard, 2013; Abushouk, 2016). Mass-based individualised resistance surged as governments across the world tightened restrictions on organised civil society and narrowed the space for civic dissent and disobedience (Mamattah, 2014). Prominent among these was the so-called Arab Spring—which I prefer to call the North African uprisings[3]—a wave of protests that started in Tunisia in 2009 and spread across parts of the Middle East, driven by renewed fervour against autocratic governments and political leaders across Africa. These uprisings along with Spain's Los Indignados (or the 15 May movement) would later be tagged as inspiration for other landmark movements emerging in the same period.

There followed movements like *Occupy*, which began with the occupation of Wall Street in 2011 in protest against economic inequality in the United States and quickly gained widespread global popularity. In its first four weeks, Occupy protests took place in over 951 cities in 82 countries (Wikipedia, 2020), including Nigeria, which supposedly hosted the largest national Occupy movement worldwide (Mampilly, 2021). Me Too—a US-based movement against sexual violence—was started by activist Tarana Burke in 2006 but became a highly visible global movement in 2017 following a tweet by American actress Alyssa Milano.[4] While I have found no empirical evidence on the total number of #MeToo movements worldwide, data obtained from the app formerly known as Twitter states that the hashtag #MeToo was tweeted by people from at least 85 countries (Fox & Diehm, 2017).

In addition to engaging with the mostly digitalised conversations raised by #MeToo, there were efforts in some countries around the world to leverage the hashtag

to draw renewed attention to longstanding movements against sexual violence. This suggests that the activists involved, despite having mobilised around the same issues for decades, saw the US-led movement as an opportunity to reanimate their advocacy in a way that could attract needed attention and action. In Nigeria, for example, a rape allegation against Biodun Fatoyinbo, a popular church leader, was said to have 'prompted a new #MeToo movement on social media with women sharing stories of sexual assault and calling for justice' and many protesting in cities across Nigeria (Peyton, 2019). Amid these uprisings, stories about alleged abuses by clerics led to a #ChurchToo hashtag (Peyton, 2019; Ajayi, 2019), while #ArewaMeToo highlighted widespread sexual abuse and impunity in northern Nigeria (Hashim 2019, Malefakis, 2022). Me Too protests and events were also held in Ghana to denounce a culture of sexual abuse and government indifference to it, as well as to show solidarity with the leaders of Me Too in the United States (Knott, 2019; Webster University, 2018).

The emergence of these movements led to new theorisation about transnational networks becoming 'more virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global' Cammaerts (2015, p. 7), pointing to their divergence from older social movements in location, mobility, function and operation, and structure and scale. The appearance of movements like Los Indignados or the 15 May Movement in Spain, Black Lives Matter, Me Too, and Fallism compelled research and theorising on the growing global autonomy and agency of individuals as drivers of political change, yet Africa and its movements remained largely out of scholarly view.

Digital Activism in the Internet Age

Digital politics has taken different forms since the Internet debuted in the 1970s. However, the extensive use of modern digital and social media in contemporary activism has been remarked as a major characteristic that distinguishes political resistance today (Castells, 2012, 2014; Mutsvairo, 2016). Recent forms of digital or cyberactivism, enabled by the growing spread of mobile technology and Internet access, have included hashtag activism, selfie protests, clicktivism, and hacktivism, among many others. Across the world, all the movements that have occurred since the North African uprisings, including MustFall, Me Too, Occupy, and Women's March, have involved significant online activity to varying effect. Tunisian political analyst Youssef Cherif credits Facebook and Twitter with raising awareness and helping supporters of the uprising in his country find their voices and lose their fear, knowing that they could speak without state censure online (Jamjoom, 2015). Bring Back Our Girls used social media to counter false state narratives about the toll of casualties in the Boko Haram conflict (Akume, 2014) as well as to canvas for transnational political support. Me Too similarly used social media to draw attention to movements against gender violence (Ajayi, 2018). At national levels, Facebook and Twitter discourses helped sack Vice President Sam Sumana in Sierra Leone while in Kenya, Kenyans on Twitter used mockery, condemnation, and humour (Nyabola, 2018; Okoth, 2020), like Nigerians used memes,[5] to denounce corruption and confront other political anomalies (Yeku, 2018).

In many cases, online activism is believed to have helped mobilise hundreds of thousands of participants globally who made virtual noise and participated in offline protest activities. This has made resistance more global and fluid, and arguably facilitated interpersonal interactions among diverse actors in geographically dispersed spaces. It has also given room to arguably greater citizen power and voice, particularly by persons who would not normally have access to transnational public spheres, notably women and young people. Youth-led movements across the continent have been instrumental in challenging bad governance and galvanising wide-ranging reforms across Africa (Bangura, 2022) as well as globally. Yet, inasmuch as cyberactivism has helped intensify the visibility of, and therefore support for, new transnational movements, the synergy between online and offline activism shows that the digital has not replaced the analogue. In Chapter 3, this book debates the implications for scholarship of this development, noting that it is making more visible the agencies of non-Western actors for initiating political change and influencing transnational contentious action. It is worth noting that in the expanding knowledge production on digital or cyberactivism, African cases remain minimal. There is thus room to explore how digitalised African activism contributes to our understanding of the changing dimensions of activism across borders.

The Politics of Transnational Activism

A striking feature of this period is that while the North African uprisings largely evoked solidarity among participants across the world, Me Too and Occupy took on more localised narratives and nuances as they travelled, assuming the status of rallying cries for long-standing crises in many other parts of the world. This raises questions about why, to what extent, and how people in different parts of the world engage with social movements and uprisings in other geographies. In a 2018 reflection on this topic, I pointed out the disparities in global attention accorded to Me Too compared to many anti-gender violence movements across Africa that preceded it (Ajayi, 2018), such as MyDressMyChoice in Kenya (Nyabola, 2015) and South Africa's NakedProtests. I also queried whether White women in the United States would have supported #MeToo in the same way that thousands of women did globally if it had been started by women elsewhere in the world, noting the controversial role of global media in reporting and assigning agency during such events. Interestingly, despite seeming consensus about #MeToo's global currency, some—including me—have observed that it did not gain much traction in Africa (Peyton, 2019; Ajayi, 2018), a question that merits further research. In fact, I recently realised that the affiliation of some African sexual assault protests with Me Too stems more from global media fabrication than African activists' identification with the hashtag. Nevertheless, the divergent dynamics of the transnationalisation of movements from the Global South and Global North suggest that while both may attract global support, they do not have the same transnational agency (Ajayi, 2018).

The labelling of the 'Arab Spring' has been much discussed and critiqued. Much existing analysis, predominantly by northern and Arab scholars, is unquestioning

of the Arabisation of the uprisings. Some who use the coinage acknowledge the inaccuracy of the Arab labelling but use it for referential convenience, often calling it the 'so-called Arab Spring' (Camozzi, Cherubini, Leccardi, & Rivetti, 2017, p. 1; see also Labidi, 2016, pp. 195–196; Arfaoui, 2016, p. 221). However, African and Afro-Arab scholars are more critical and reflective of the mixed heritage of northern Africa, the intersectional identities and interests of those who took part in the North African uprisings—including native Black groups and Black African migrants who have sought greener pastures or/and transit to Europe through North Africa)—and the orientalist and Eurocentric tendencies of some research to conflate the region with contiguous Middle Eastern countries (Shihade, 2012; Shihade, Fominaya, & Cox, 2012; Sadiqi, 2016; Elattir, El Allame, and Tihm 2016). Others note how the Arab label excises the synchronous uprisings in other parts of Africa, including Zimbabwe, Senegal, Madagascar, Mozambique, and Uganda, that together form a collective response to experiences of multifaceted dispossession shared over many years (Manji, 2011, p. 1, seven, 11). According to Manji (2011, p. 1), the world did not witness an Arab Spring but an 'African awakening', making the Arab labelling an obfuscation of Africans' political agency and a reflection of a historic and continuing dismissal and delegitimisation of the continent's protests as too primitive to constitute valid sites of activism research (Branch & Mampilly, 2015, pp. 2–3).

These arguments find resonance in how the Western left has 'ignored' Occupy Nigeria, despite its significant size and scale within the broader mobilisations (Mampilly, 2021). The politics of transnational activism in this period are also evident in the white saviourism embedded in events like Kony 2012, the campaign by Invisible Children, an American NGO that aimed to 'make Kony famous' with the aim of getting him arrested (Mamdani, 2012; Schomerus, 2015). Mamdani (2012) and Cole (2012) are among observers who have harshly critiqued such attempts to appropriate the agency of Southern actors to organise on their own behalf (Ogunlesi, 2014), as discussed by Khoja-Moolji (2015a, 2015b) in what she calls Western feminists' 'takeover' of Bring Back Our Girls and their subalternisation of the Nigerian activists who started it. They also effect the imposition of Northern cultural and political agendas on other parts of the world, as Mamdani (2009, 2012) discusses in his critique of the Save Darfur Movement, in which he asserts that the Lord's Resistance Army is 'a Ugandan problem calling for a Ugandan political solution' (Mamdani, 2012).

Historicising Resistance in Nigeria

Nigeria has a long history of social protest and resistance movements that fall into four broad phases: pre-colonial, anti-colonial, military rule, and contemporary struggles. This history dates back to pre-colonial times when groupings like the Ekitiparapo Alliance and the Ekumeku movement protested against and resisted domination by national and colonial forces. In the colonial era, Nigerian youth, nationalist politicians, and marketwomen led multiple coalitions and uprisings that contributed to the momentum to end colonialism. The onset of military rule in Nigeria in 1966 ushered in an era of repression, censorship, and human rights

abuses. Despite the draconian measures imposed by successive military regimes, civil society organisations and pro-democracy activists persisted in their quest for freedom and justice. The Campaign for Democracy, founded in the 1990s, emerged as a formidable force against military dictatorship, mobilising Nigerians from all walks of life to demand the restoration of civilian rule. Military rule in Nigeria was also characterised by consistent standoffs between successive military regimes and a range of student movements, notably the National Association of Nigerian Students (Odion-Akhaine, 2009). Popular musicians like Fela Kuti used their art as a tool of resistance, challenging authoritarianism through music and activism.

A fourth wave of resistance emerged at the turn of the 21st century when a return to democratic rule did not yield anticipated dividends. Movements like Occupy Nigeria and Bring Back Our Girls arose to protest economic inequality and the gendered harms against women and girls in the Boko Haram conflict, among other grievances. Other movements like EndSARS, the movement against police brutality that mobilised millions of Nigerian youths to demand police reform and accountability, have since emerged as Nigeria continues to grapple with myriad social justice issues.

As significant as this history of resistance are the trends of response by Nigerian state actors, discernible in the attempts by two civilian regimes to suppress or/and co-opt Bring Back Our Girls. Being no longer able as occurred under military regimes to use the state as an instrument of overt coercion and suppression (Akintola, 2010), the fourth incarnation of the democratic Nigerian state has resorted to more insidious means that characterise its militarisation and are reminiscent of its brutal history (see Akintola, 2010, p. 102). Akintola (2010) describes (student protests in) a military context characterised by rampant suppression and oppression, in which the state wantonly banned CSOs and routinely harassed, arrested, detained, and tortured members of civil society and anyone who dared to criticise state policy and action. This she attributes to the violent colonial roots of the Nigerian state, orchestrated by foreign military conquest and the centrality of coercion to colonial government (Obadare & Adebanwi, 2010, p. 11).

This state transmuted at independence in face, but not in nature, and remained 'an instrument of exploitation and suppression of the popular classes and a tool for primitive accumulation and class consolidation for the hegemonic groups' (Enemuo & Momoh, 1999, p. 76 in Akintola, 2010, p. 104). In this context, many citizens are marginalised but women are especially so and have only had political power and access through their relationships and connections with powerful military [and political] men and co-opted first ladies' women's movements (Mama, 1995).

Discourses about the nature and concept of the postcolonial state and its disposition towards social movements and protests are important. However, as is the case with Obadare and Adebanwi's *Encountering the Nigerian State* (2010), the subject is problematised as though citizenship were a gender-neutral prism without considering, beyond class, how gender differences mediate citizenship experiences and the state-citizen nexus. Para-Mallam (2017) qualifies the citizenship status of Nigerian women as 'quasi', 'pseudo', 'fragmented', 'second class'. Political

leadership is by no means the only prism that visibilises this secondary status, but it is among the most tangible: politics remains seen as a man's prerogative and female aspirants continue to be threatened, harassed, and assaulted into giving up or giving in to male counterparts. In this light, hostile state responses to women's movements are as much a resistance to dissent as they are a continuation of a long history of a politics of suppressing women and broader civil disobedience by military and militarised civilian governments.

As revealed during interviews and by media reports, the antagonistic response of the Jonathan administration formed part of a pattern of repressive tactics that his and Buhari's governments used to try to subdue Bring Back Our Girls that included travel restrictions, sponsoring violent counterprotests and obstructing Bring Back Our Girls events and outright violence against Bring Back Our Girls members. This sabotage culminated in the closure in October 2019 of Unity Fountain where the group was based, allegedly for repairs (Sodiq, 2019).

Key Themes in Nigerian and Global Politics

Following terror attacks on US soil in September 2011, concern over threats to US allies escalated, giving rise to a global war on terror in which an attack on one ally was considered to be an attack on all. Since that time, the United States has worked with other 'counter-terror hegemons' [mainly the United Kingdom] (de Londras, 2019, p. 14) to build a 'transnational counter-terrorism order' or political economy of counter-terrorism (Rosendorff & Sandler, 2005), made up of 'legal, institutional, technical and political manoeuvres'…'intended to instantiate on a global level an arrangement of social life that promotes certain goals or values' (de Londras, 2019). In this framing, acts of terror and anyone who supports or prosecutes them are bad and must be dealt with severely—an idea that has been repeatedly articulated through rhetoric and action until it has attained the status of global norm.

The ideological and geographic boundaries of this war on terror have extended to Nigeria through Boko Haram, its narratives, transnational networks and affiliations (Onuoha, 2014), and the extensive and deadly violence it has inflicted on civilians across the Sahel: tens of thousands have been killed, thousands of women, girls, and men abducted, and millions displaced in Nigeria and neighbouring countries (Ajayi, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2014). US newspapers' coverage of Bring Back Our Girls framed the Boko Haram crisis as 'a potential new front in the US' ongoing war on terror' (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018, p. 2491), mirroring American sentiment and explaining the government's militarised response.

Boko Haram has also directed different systematic violence against women and girls as a prominent tactic of war throughout the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2016, 2019; Matfess, 2017; Ajayi, 2020). In addition to the violence of abduction and disappearance, the group has weaponised women and girls as suicide bombers, sex slaves, forced wives, teachers of its ideology, weapon smugglers, combatants, and recruiters. Wide-ranging violence against women and girls has been a prominent tactic of war by Boko Haram throughout the conflict (International Crisis Group, 2016, 2019; Ajayi, 2020). The Chibok abductions were only one among

estimated thousands that began long before the conflict started in 2009 (Pereira, 2018; Ajayi, 2020),[6] but they gained international prominence, arguably from being the largest single and most spectacular abduction at the time. Boko Haram's gendered violence reflects the normalisation of violence against women and girls during conflict, which represents the continuation of such violence in militarised non-conflict contexts (Oriola, 2017).

Gender, Violence Against Women and Girls, and the Militarisation of Politics

Despite the absence of military rule in many countries, military tactics are apparent in democratic civilian governments' adoption of military tactics, attitudes and mindsets, equipment, and language. Rising global militarisation is both a legacy of historical military trajectories and a symptom of the prevailing global malaise regarding terror(ism). States' militarised responses to this threat are creating new forms of insecurity for disempowered groups, especially women, and threaten to revoke the gains of many years of women's rights activism (Mama, 2012). Nowhere is this more manifest than in northeast Nigeria where the gloomy gender relations that characterise Nigeria are pronounced and entrenched (Pereira, 2018). Evidence of rising militarism abounds across Africa in multiple instances of excessive violence by state security actors against unarmed civilians, particularly women. These include the 2010 public gang rapes of women protesters in Guinea; police killings of striking miners in Marikana, South Africa (2012), and brutalities against students protesting campus rapes and high fees (2015/2016); heavy shows of police force during the Occupy Ghana protests (2014); Burundian police shootings of protesters in 2015; police teargassing of protesters in Kenya and Egypt (2016); police intimidation and harassment of Bring Back Our Girls protesters in Nigeria from 2014 to 2016; arrests and killings of Oromo protesters in Ethiopia (2016), and rapes and further violence in Tigray in 2020/2021.

In Nigeria, such abuses have been occasioned by the secondary status of Nigerian women, evidenced by women's restricted access to political power, high-level political resistance to progressive gender reform, dismal gender indices (education, financial autonomy, etc.), and a "common hatred for women" (Osori, 2023, cited in Adetayo, 2022), among other factors. State-sponsored violence against women is also a symptom of the violent colonial roots of the Nigerian state, orchestrated by foreign military conquest and the centrality of coercion to colonial government (Obadare & Adebanwi, 2010, p. 11). In a recent journal article, Ajayi (2020) argues that the Chibok abductions are emblematic of a systematic campaign of violence against women and girls. In Nigeria, this has been led in the northeast chiefly by Boko Haram and other criminal elements, but also by state security personnel. Successive Nigerian governments have been violent to or/and dismissive of Bring Back Our Girls and other women's mobilisations as well as women's security concerns overall.

Boko Haram's abduction of the 'Chibok Girls', the largest single incident among successive previous abductions by the group, brought into global scrutiny the commonplace abductions of girls and women as part of both cultural practices like

ukuthwala/'bride abduction' in many parts of Africa (Karimakwenda, 2021; Sa, n.d.) and 'alarming and pervasive' (Murtala Muhammed Foundation, 2024, p. 2) broader campaigns of gendered violence during conflict and instability across the world. Thus, the Chibok abductions clearly illustrated 'a local catastrophe' within 'a global crisis' (Murtala Muhammed Foundation, 2024, p. 2), giving credence to the Bring Back Our Girls' chant, 'The fight for our Chibok girls is the fight for the soul of Nigerians and the world!'. The Chibok abductions also exposed a deeper and longer, undetected pattern of girls' abductions within the Boko Haram conflict that date back several years (Ajayi, 2020; Pereira, 2018) and are still continuing today (see Table 1). On one hand, the Chibok abductions centre the instrumentalisation by violent groups of female sexuality as a means of sexual exploitation (slavery)—often to enforce power and inflict shame on male relatives—forced reproduction, and domestic servitude. On the other hand, abductions of women and girls serve to weaponise their gender towards the fulfilment of operational goals in contexts where violence is seen as the preserve of men.

The use of girls as child soldiers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and as suicide bombers in northeast Nigeria, was partly to exploit social norms that do not associate the female sex with violence. The initial profiling of Boko Haram as exclusively male enabled girls to circumvent security structures and inflict substantial damage before intelligence caught up to their involvement. The global policy attention around girls' abductions stems from awareness of their precarity and vulnerability to such violence amid a global crisis of child abductions as noted by UNICEF (2022). Global attention to the Chibok Girls was likely triggered by collective memory and consciousness of common knowledge of the typical roles which girls are abducted for, as well the world's failure to protect girls from such abuse in other prominent conflicts as stated earlier (see Aina, Atela, Ojebode, Dayil, & Aremu, 2019, p. 22). This combination of factors certainly invited scrutiny of global infrastructures for the protection of children, notably girls, from conflict violence. It also exposed the faultlines of the Nigerian state's security capabilities regarding the protection of those most vulnerable to violence within the Boko Haram conflict. As discussed in Chapter 6, each of these threads informed the emergence of Bring Back Our Girls and the global scale of support it received from various countries.

Women's Organising, Feminism and the Girling of Development

In some ways, Bring Back Our Girls continues long histories of women's organising globally across Africa. Women have mobilised against a range of issues—some related specifically to women, like the Aba Women's 'War', and within movements protesting broader rights abuses, such as the Thuku Resistance against colonial injustices (African Feminist Forum, n.d.; Wipper, 2000). In the context of Nigeria, Bring Back Our Girls represented a particular instance of women's resistance against militarism and its gendered harms to women. Notable precedents include protests and other forms of resistance to campaigns of sexual violence against women and girls in the Niger Delta by Nigeria's military government in the

1990s, led by the Federation of Ogoni Women's Organisations and other women's groups (Ekine, 2008).

Bring Back Our Girls emerged in a period characterised by women's activism that is led by younger women and carries forward this legacy in a more aggressive way that some have described as fourth-wave feminism (Ajayi, 2018a). Especially in Africa, the emergence of all-women groups like Female IN (formerly Female in Nigeria) and PepperDem Ministries (in Ghana) by women in their 20s and 30s, and the growing spate of digital feminist platforms like Eyala Blog, msafropolitan .com, AfricanFeminism.com, and the Africa Young Feminist blog, Sauti, signal a change in the doing of feminist politics on the continent (Ajayi, 2018a). These movements arose in response to growing misogyny and have been focused since their formation on countering anti-gender and anti-women narratives, largely through the use of social and digital media. These movements have also functioned as digital publics where young African and Afropolitan women are drawing attention to challenges facing women and girls, and redefining their self-identities as feminists.

Bring Back Our Girls emerged a few years after an international focus on extremist violations of girls' and women's rights, as illustrated by the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan, who was vocal in her support of Bring Back Our Girls and led a solidarity visit to the group in Abuja in July 2014.[7,8] In a comparative analysis of global reactions to the shooting of Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai and the Chibok abductions, Khoja-Moolji (2015b, p. 87) observes that where the development ecosystem has focused since the early 1970s on 'the potential of women in the Global South to combat poverty and promote development', the figure of the girl has recently replaced that of women as catalysts for development and poverty alleviation. In this narrative, girls in the Global South—alternatively, Black and Brown girls—are seen as panaceas to development challenges like poverty and violence if they can access Northern education: girls often appear as "promissory objects" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 38)—that is, a range of promises from the alleviation of poverty, elimination of terrorism, societal progress, to family harmony, egalitarian families, and so forth accumulate in the figure of the girl. Even though the exact content of these promises may differ across cultures, geographies, and socioeconomic classes, it is the figure of the girl that emerges as a broad category that subsumes these differently constituted promises and desires. This transforms girls into objects with which our futures seem to be tied, thereby producing a social consensus around the need to protect and nurture girls (Ahmed, 2010, p. 38, cited in Khoja-Moolji, 2015b, p. 95).

This shift in focus from women to girls in the Global South rests on the assumption that access to education will empower girls to take decisions that will lead to greater autonomy and 'ultimately bring their nations out of abject poverty and violence' (Khoja-Moolji, 2015b, p. 88). This has led to various development actors promoting girls' education as the solution to varied development challenges (Khoja-Moolji, 2015b, p. 88). This is a sea change from colonial Nigeria where concern for the welfare of girl street hawkers led to interventions to make them housewives compared to education and vocational support for boys (George, 2018). Yet it is a

simplistic proposition that does not take into account the structural and systemic nature of gender discrimination in affected societies.

The issue of girls' education in northern Nigeria has long been of interest to activists and policymakers. One-third of all girls are out of school in Nigeria—over 5.5 million school-age girls (British Council, 2014, p. 20). Across the board, girls' literacy and numeracy rates are far lower in the northeast and northwest compared to the southwest, with 'all Southern regions having significantly higher rates than Northern regions' (British Council, 2014, p. 21). Primary-secondary transition rates and dropout rates follow the same patterns (British Council, 2014, pp. 20–22). Educational (e.g., accessibility, safety) and socioeconomic (e.g., poverty, child work) barriers contribute to these disparities. Sociocultural factors (gender norms and stereotypes, early marriage and pregnancy) also play an important role. In this context, the Chibok abductions revived historic debates about the educational access and status of girls in northern Nigeria as well as public attitudes to these issues in different parts of the country.

Conclusion

As discussed in this chapter, transnational activism in any era is a mirror of the geopolitical dispensation of any locale, country, or region where it emerges. This is especially the case in the ongoing digital age where information travels across borders in split seconds, thus multiplying the mobilisational power of social movements across the world. Historicising the evolution of protest affords us as observers insights into the longstanding legacies of protests and uprisings. Adopting a critical view of definitions and conceptualisations of transnational activism reveals the incompleteness—to borrow a concept from Nyamnjoh (2022; see also Wasserman, 2022)—of knowledge production around this subject, and the necessity of expanding our gaze as scholars towards diverse manifestations of transnational activism in the instance that is the subject of this book. As Nyamnjoh explains, incompleteness is multilayered and intersectional, and this chapter has shown how this plays out both in the heretofore dominant focus of scholarship on Global North social movements and its eclipsing of women's protests. All of this further underlines and validates the objective of this book to centre a movement like Bring Back Our Girls as an empirical source of knowledge on contemporary globalised resistance as a way to enrich and nuance, and counter, where necessary, what is already known about this subject.

Notes

1 In his seminal work, *Africa Must Unite*, Nkrumah writes about how he worked alongside WEB DuBois and other early thinkers of Pan-Africanism. He also writes of his elation at welcoming delegates to the first Conference of Independent African States in Accra in 1958, and his feeling that 'at last Pan-Africanism had moved to the African continent where it really belonged' (1963, p. 136).
2 The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) abducted 139 teenage girls from St Mary's School Aboke in Northern Uganda in October 1996. The captors released 109 girls after the

deputy headmistress, Sister Rachele Frassera, an Italian nun, followed and appealed to them. The LRA kept the remaining 30 who became soldiers and sex slaves.

3 Branch and Mampilly (2015) offer a compelling explanation of why this protest wave was attributed to the Arab world and not to Africa. They argue that Africa has been overlooked in the literature on recent protests and its uprisings dismissed as riots because it is considered 'too rural, too traditional and too bound by ethnicity' to be the site of modern political protest.

4 Tarana Burke, an advocate for women in New York, first used the phrase 'Me Too' in 2006 to draw attention to the problem; in 2017, actor Alyssa Milano's tweet encouraging followers to use the #MeToo hashtag went viral, resulting in widespread exposure and adoption across social media.

5 The meme (pronounced Meem) is a unit of cultural information spread by imitation that was introduced in 1976 by British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins (see https://www.britannica.com/topic/meme). In Internet terms, a meme is 'most often associated with an image or video that portrays a particular concept or idea that is then usually spread through online social platforms. That idea goes on to proliferate through social media, forums, instant messaging apps, and even news sites' (Martindale, 2022). One example is the viral mimicry and mockery of an exaggerated bow by Cameroon's Minister for Sports and Physical Education Bidoung Kpwatt to Cameroon's President, Paul Biya, in 2016, that came to be known as the Bidoung Challenge. See https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-38290230

6 Interview, journalist, October 2018, Maiduguri.

7 Interview, member Bring Back Our Girls strategy team, September 2019.

8 This study discusses the matters of celebrity activism and social media influencers in the preceding section.

References

Abdul-Raheem, T. (Ed.). (1996). *Pan Africanism: Politics, economy and social change in the Twenty-first century*. New York: New York University Press.

Abushouk, A. I. (2016). The Arab spring: A fourth wave of democratization? *Digest of Middle East Studies*, *25*(1). Retrieved April 10, 2018, from https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dome.12080#

Adetayo, O. (2022). Nigerian women protest parliament rejection of pro-equality bills. *Al Jazeera*, 22 October. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/2/nigerian-women-protest-parliament-rejection-of-pro-equality-bills

Adi, H. (2018). *Pan-Africanism a global history*. London, UK: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc.

Adomako Ampofo, A. (2016). Re-viewing studies on Africa, Black lives matter, and envisioning the future of African studies. *African Studies Review, 59*(2), 7–29.

Afolabi, B. T. (2017). *The politics of peacemaking: Non-state actors' role in the Liberian civil war*. Suffolk and New York: Boydell and Brewer.

African Feminist Forum. (n.d.). *Kikuyu women in the "Thuku" Revolt*. Retrieved from https://www.africanfeministforum.com/kikuyu-women-in-the-thuku-revolt/

Ahmed, S. (2010). Killing joy: Feminism and the history of happiness. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *35*(3), 571–590. https://doi.org/10.1086/648354

Aina, T. A., Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Dayil, P., & Aremu, F. A. (2019). Beyond tweets and screams: Action for empowerment and accountability in Nigeria—the case of #Bring Back Our Girls movement. *IDS Working Paper No. 529*. https://www.africaportal.org/publications/beyond-tweets-and-screams-action-empowerment-and-accountability-nigeria-case-bbog-movement

Ajayi, T. F. (2018). Peppering patriarchy: Re-imagining/Re-inventing femaleness in Ghana through social media. *CIHA Blog*. Retrieved April 13, 2018, from www.cihablog.com/peppering-patriarchy--re-imaginingre-making-femaleness-ghana-social-media/

Ajayi, T. F. (2019). '#ChurchToo'? The women's rights movement and the sexual emancipation of "sacred" spaces in Nigeria. *Kujenga Amani*. Retrieved from https://bit.ly/2MwcsHw

Ajayi, T. F. (2020) Women, internal displacement and the Boko Haram conflict: Broadening the debate. *African Security*, *13*(2), 171–194.

Akintola, B. (2010). *The perils of protest: State repression and student mobilization in Nigeria*. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230109636_5

Akume, S. (2014). *Chronicle of false narratives and inconsistencies by the Nigerian government over the rescue of the Abducted Chibok schoolgirls*. Retrieved September 9, 2018, from https://opinionnigeria.com/chronicle-of-false-narratives-and-inconsistencies-by-the-nigerian-government-over-the-rescue-of-the-abducted-chibok-schoolgirls-by-sesugh-akume/

Anheier, H., Glasius, M., & Kaldor, M. (2001). *Introducing global civil society*. Retrieved March 28, 2018, from http://www.gcsknowledgebase.org/wp-content/uploads/2001chapter11.pdf

Arfaoui, K. (2016). Women and leadership in the post-Arab Spring: The case of Tunisia. In F. Sadiqi (Ed.), *Women's movements in post-"Arab Spring"* North Africa. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bangura, I. (Ed.). (2022). *Youth-led social movements and peacebuilding in Africa* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003253532

Blain, K. N., Leeds, A., & Taylor, U. Y. (2016). Women, gender politics, and Pan-Africanism. *Women, Gender, and Families of Color, 4*(2), 139–145.

Branch, A., & Mampilly, Z. (2015). *Africa uprising: Popular protest and political change*. London: Zed Books.

British Council. (2014). *Girls education in Nigeria report 2014: Issues, influencers and actions*. Abuja: British Council.

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Social media and activism. In R. Mansell & P. Hwa (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of digital communication and society*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Camozzi, I., Cherubini, D., Leccardi, C., & Rivetti, P. (2017). *Young women and young men of Arab mediterranean background in Italy: Transnational involvement of the second generation youth in the arab uprisings*. SAHWA Scientific Paper Nº 7/2017. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs.

Castells, M, (2012). *Networks of outrage and Hope: Social movements in the internet age.* Cambridge, UK; Malden, MA: Polity Press. 1st edition.

Castells, M. (2014). The impact of the Internet on society: A global perspective. *MIT Technology Review*. https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530566/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/

Cole, T. (2012, March). The white-savior industrial complex. *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/

Cook, K. (2007). *Stolen angels: The kidnapped girls of Uganda*. Toronto: Penguin Global.

David, H. T. (2007). Transnational advocacy in the eighteenth century: Transatlantic activism and the anti-slavery movement. *Global Networks, 7*(3), 367–382.

de Londras, F. (2019). The transnational counter-terrorism order: A Problématique. *Current Legal Problems*, *72*(1), 203–251.

De Temmerman, E (2001). *Aboke girls: Children abducted in Northern Uganda*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers.

De Waal, A. (2015). Genealogies of transnational activism. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Ekine, S. (2008). Women's responses to state violence in the Niger Delta. *Feminist Africa, 10,*67–84.

Elattir, M., El Allame, Y. E. K., & Tihm, Y. (2016). Women's economic empowerment in Morocco: The case of social entrepreneurship. In F. Sadiqi (Ed.), *Women's movements in post-"Arab Spring" North Africa.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Elone, J. (2013). Backlash against democracy: The regulation of civil society in Africa. *Democracy and Society, 7*(2). https://trustafrica.org/publication/backlash-against-democracy-the-regulation-of-civil-society-in-africa

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2020). *Slave rebellions*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/slave-rebellions%20%5b21

Feminist Africa. (2014). *Pan-Africanism and feminism* (Vol. 19). https://feministafrica.net/feminist-africa-19-2014-pan-africanism-and-feminism/

Feminist Africa. (2015). *Feminism and Pan-Africanism* (Vol. 20). https://feministafrica.net/feminist-africa-20-2015-pan-africanism-and-feminism/

Fork Films et al. (2008). *Pray the Devil back to Hell*. Sausalito, CA: Distributed by Roco Films Educational.

Fox, K., & Diehm, J. (2017, November 9). #MeToo's Global Moment: The Anatomy of a Viral Campaign. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/09/world/metoo-hashtag-global-movement/index.html [https://perma.cc/M85F-XMTM].

Gbowee, L. (2009). Effecting change through women's activism in Liberia. *IDS Bulletin, 40*(2), 50–53.

George, A. (2018). Saving Nigerian girls: A critical reflection on girl-saving campaigns in the colonial and neoliberal eras. *Meridians, 17*(2), 309–324.

Gopal, P. (2019). *Insurgent empire*: *Anticolonial resistance and British dissent*. London: Verso.

Hashim, F. (2019). How Nigeria's conservative Northern region came to terms with its MeToo movement. *Quartz Africa*. https://qz.com/africa/1671204/nigeria-metoo-movement-shook-up-north-with-arewametoo

Hussain, M. M., & Howard, P. N. (2013). *Democracy's fourth wave? Digital media and the Arab Spring*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

International Crisis Group. (2014, April 3). *Curbing violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram insurgency*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/curbing-violence-nigeria-ii-boko-haram-insurgency

International Crisis Group. (2016, 5 December). *Nigeria: Women and the Boko Haram Insurgency*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/nigeria-women-and-boko-haram-insurgency

International Crisis Group. (2019, January 14). What would make a woman go back to Boko Haram? *Despair*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/what-would-make-woman-go-back-boko-haram-despair

Jamjoom, M. (2015). How online activism propelled Tunisia's revolution. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved January 6, 2021, from https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/17/how-online-activism-propelled-tunisias-revolution%20%5b6

Kambon, O., & Appiagyei-Atua, K. (2018). The exportation and imposition of statues and why Gandhi still must fall in Ghana. In O. Rhodes Must Fall Movement (Ed.), *Rhodes must fall: The struggle to decolonise the racist heart of empire*. London: Zed Books.

Karimakwenda, N. (2021, September 15). Rethinking Ukuthwala: The South African bride abduction custom. *UCT News*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.news.uct.ac.za/article/-2021-09-15-rethinking-ukuthwala-the-south-african-bride-abduction-custom

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Khagram, S., Riker, S. V., & Sikkink, K. (2002). *Restructuring world politics: Transnational social movements, networks, and norm*s. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Khojaa-Moolji, S. (2015a). Becoming an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*. Retrieved April 10, 2018.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015b, April). Suturing together girls and education: An investigation into the social (Re)Production of girls education as a hegemonic ideology. *Diaspora Indigenous and Minority Education*, *9*(2), 87–107.

Klotz, A. (2002). Transnational activism and global transformations: The anti-apartheid and abolitionist experiences. *European Journal of International Relations, 8*(1), 49–76.

Knott, S. (2019, June 15). Women in Ghana March against sexual violence. *VOA News*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_women-ghana-march-against-sexual-violence/6176427.html

Labidi, L. (2016). Tunisian women's literature and the critique of authority: Sources, contexts, and the Tunisian "arab Spring". In F. Sadiqi (Ed.), *Women's movements in post-"arab Spring" North Africa.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lodge, T. (2011). *Sharpeville, an apartheid massacre and its consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Luescher, T. M. (2016). Frantz fanon and the #MustFall movements in South Africa. *International Higher Education*, *85,* 22–24.

Magadla, S. (2024). *Guerrillas and combative mothers: Women and armed struggles in South Africa*. Oxon: Routledge.

Malefakis, M. (2022). The #ArewaMeToo movement in Northern Nigeria: A collusion of Islam, culture and modernity. *ETH Zurich.* https://www.research-collection.ethz.ch/bitstream/handle/20.500.11850/588259/3/10.1515_9783110733204-004.pdf

Malisa, M., & Nhengeze, P. (2018). Pan-Africanism: A quest for liberation and the Pursuit of a United Africa. *Genealogy, 2*(3). https://doi.org/10.3390/genealogy2030028

Mama, A. (2012). Where we must stand: African women in an age of war. *Open Democracy*. https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/where-we-must-stand-african-women-in-age-of-war/

Mama, A. (1995). Feminism or femocracy? State feminism and democratisation in Nigeria. *Africa Development / Afrique Et Développement*, *20*(1), 37–58. http://www.jstor.org/stable/4365796

Mamattah, T. (2014). Building civil society in West Africa: Notes from the field. In E. Obadare (Ed.), *The handbook of civil Society in Africa* (pp. 143–156). New York, NY: Springer.

Mamdani, M. (2009). *Saviours and survivors: Darfur, politics, and the war on terror*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Mamdani, M. (2012). *What Jason Didn't tell Gavin and his army of invisible children*. Retrieved March 16, 2018, from http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/-/691232/1365090/-/c8l08/-/

Mampilly, Z. (2021). Why did the Western left ignore occupy Nigeria? *Dissent Magazine*. Retrieved 3 July 2024, from https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/why-did-the-western-left-ignore-occupy-nigeria/

Manji, F. (2011). African awakenings: The courage to invent the future. In F. Manji & S. Ekine (Eds.), *African awakening the emerging revolutions*. Cape Town: Fahamu Books and Pambazuka Press.

Martindale, J. (2022, July 13). What is a meme? *Digital Trends*. https://www.digitaltrends.com/computing/what-is-a-meme/

Matfess, H. (2017). *Women and the war on Boko Haram: Wives, weapons, witnesses* (African Arguments Series). London: Zed Books,

Mboukou, A. (1983). The Pan African movement, 1900–1945: A study in leadership conflicts Among the disciples of Pan Africanism. *Journal of Black Studies, 13*(3), 275–287.

McMichael, Philip. 1996. *Development and global change: A global perspective*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Medie, P. (2016). Women's and feminist activism in West Africa. In N. Naples, R. Hoogland, C. Wickramasinghe, W. Maithree, & W. C. Angela (Eds.), *The Wiley Blackwell*

encyclopedia of gender and sexuality studies. Wiley and Blackwell Publishing. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/9781118663219.wbegss182
Murtala Muhammed Foundation. (2024). *The Chibok girls abduction: A turning point in the global fight against girls abduction*. Murtala Muhammed Foundation.
Mutsvairo, B. (Ed.). (2016). *Digital activism in the social media era: Critical reflections on emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.
Nkrumah, K. (1963). *Africa must unite*. London: Heinemann.
Nyabola, N. (2015). My dress, my choice. *New African Magazine*. https://newafricanmagazine.com/kenya-my-dress-my-choice
Nyabola, N. (2018). *Digital democracy, analogue politics*. London: Zed Books.
Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015). Black pain matters: Down with rhodes. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *3 & 4*, 74–93.
Nyamnjoh, F. (2016). *#RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at resilient colonialism in South Africa*. Langaa RPCIG.
Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2022). Transforming African scholarly writing: Politics of knowledge production, mobility, and conviviality. *African Peacebuilding Network*, APN Lecture Series: No. 8. https://www.ssrc.org/publications/transforming-african-scholarly-writing-politics-of-knowledge-production-mobility-and-conviviality/
Obadare, E. (2012). Introduction. *Voluntas, 23*, 1–4.
Obadare, E., & Adebanwi, W. (Eds.). (2010). *Encountering the Nigerian State*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
Odion-Akhaine, S. (2009). The student movement in Nigeria: Antinomies and transformation. *Review of African Political Economy*, *36*(121), 427–433.
Ofori-Parku, S. S., & Moscato, D. (2018). Hashtag activism as a form of political action: A qualitative analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign in Nigerian, UK, and U.S. Press. *International Journal of Communication, 12*(3), 269–287.
Ogunlesi, T. (2014, October 22). Hijacking Nigeria's #BringBackOurGirls campaign. *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved 3 July 2024, from https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/10/22/hijacking-nigerias-bringbackourgirls-campaign
Okoth, G. B. W. (2020). How Kenyans on Twitter use visuals as a form of political protest. *kommunikation.medien*, *12*, 1–27.
Onuoha, F. C. (2014). A danger not to Nigeria alone; Boko Harams transnational reach and regional responses. *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nigeria/11066.pdf
Oriola, T. (2017). Unwilling cocoons: *Boko Haram's w*ar against women. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, 40*(2), 99–121.
Pallas, C. (2017). Inverting the boomerang: Examining the legitimacy of North–South–North campaigns in transnational advocacy. *Global Networks*, *17*(2): 281–299.
Para-Mallam, F. J. (2017). Gender equality in Nigeria. In A. Ortenblad, R. Marling, & S. Vasiljevic (Eds.), *Gender equality in a global perspective* (p. xx). Taylor & Francis. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315639505-2/gender-equality-nigeria-funmi-josephine-para-mallam
Pereira, C. (2018). Beyond the spectacular: Contextualizing gender relations in the wake of the Boko haram insurgency. *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism*, *17*, 246–268.
Peyton, N. (2019). Nigeria has #MeToo moment after popular pastor is accused of rape. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-women-rape/nigeria-has-metoo-moment-after-popular-pastor-is-accused-of-rape-idUSKCN1TW3K
Ramaru, K. (2017). Feminist reflections on the rhodes must fall movement. *Feminist Africa* (22), 89–96.
Rodríguez Garavito, César, and Luis C. Arenas. 2005. Indigenous rights, transnational activism, and legal mobilization: The struggle of the U'wa people in Colombia. In B. De Sousa Santos & C. Rodríguez-Garavito (Eds.), *Law and Globalization from below:*

Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality (pp. 241–266). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Rosendorff, B. P., & Sandler, T. (2005). The political economy of transnational terrorism. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *49*(2), 171–182. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30045106
Sa, M. (n.d.). Stolen Lives: Bride Kidnapping in Africa. *Restless Beings*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://www.restlessbeings.org/articles/stolen-lives-bride-kidnapping-in-africa
Sadiqi, F. (Ed.). (2016). *Women's movements in Post-"Arab Spring" North Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
Sagar. (2019). Give Us a statue of Ambedkar, not Gandhi: Ghana university professor Obadele Kambon. *The Caravan.* Retrieved January 8, 2020, from https://caravanmagazine.in/caste/gandhi-must-fall-interview
Santiago-Valles, K. (2005). World-historical ties among "spontaneous" slave rebellions in the Atlantic. *Review, 28*(1), 51–83.
Schomerus, M. (2015). "Make him famous": The single conflict narrative of Kony 2012. In A. de Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.
Shihade, M., Fominaya, C. F., & Cox, L. (2012). The season of revolution: The Arab Spring and European mobilizations. *Interface, 4*(1), 1–16.
Sodiq, A. (2019). *FG allegedly barricades Unity Fountain Abuja. Oby reacts, threatens lawsuit*. https://leakers.ng/news/2400-fg-allegedly-barricades-unity-fountain-abuja-oby-reacts-threatens-lawsuit/[Accessed January 15, 2020].
Tarrow, S. (2005). *The new transnational activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Tamale, S. (2020). *Decolonization and afro-feminism*. Ottawa: Daraja Press.
Tsikata, D. (2014). Being Pan-African: A continental research agenda. *Feminist Africa, 19,* 94–97.
Wamai, N. (2016). Decolonising the academy—Towards a global movement?. *University World News, 415*. Retrieved April 8, 2018, from http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20160524135416842
Wasserman, H. (2022). The incompleteness of knowledge production: An interview with Francis Nyamnjoh. *African Journalism Studies*, *43*(3), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/23743670.2022.2116587
Webster University. (2018, October 29). #MeToo from an African perspective: Webster Ghana hosts panel discussion. *Webster University News & Events*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://news.webster.edu/webster-life/2018/ghana-metoo-africa-perspective-panel.html
Wikipedia (2020). Occupy movement. In *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*. Retrieved July 3, 2024, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Occupy_movement
Wipper, A. (2000). *Kikuyu women and the Harry Thuku disturbances: Some uniformities of female militancy*. http://www.uoguelph.ca/~terisatu/MauMau/index.htm
Yeku, J. (2018). The hashtag as archive: Internet memes and Nigeria's social media election. In A. Adelakun & T. Falola (Eds.), *Art, creativity, and politics in Africa and the diaspora. African histories and modernities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

2 Bring Back Our Girls

The (Her)Story[1] of a Movement

Introduction

In September 2018, as I conducted the Nigeria leg of the fieldwork that would lead to this book, one of the leading members of Bring Back Our Girls in Abuja was kind enough to invite me to join one of their protests. The offer came at the end of my interview with her and I at first accepted because she said it would be a good opportunity to meet other members. But as I reflected on our conversation later that day, it occurred to me that I was being myopic and that marching with the group would also provide an opportunity to show solidarity, express my resistance to the abductions, and contribute, however immodestly, to the cause of the Chibok students. So it was that what started as an attempt to meet the movement's leaders led to me experiencing firsthand what they were going through in the name of goading political duty-bearers to rescue the Chibok Girls and other abducted Nigerian youth. I ended up joining two protest marches organised by Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria in Abuja in September 2018: one to State House and another to the offices of the United Nations and the International Red Cross. This method of research has been described as 'militant ethnography'—a 'politically engaged participant observation that challenges the divide between researcher and activist' (Juris', 2007; Carroll & Stephan, 2017). The description is apt as I indeed questioned my positionality during the protests several times.

I share this story as a preface to this chapter for several reasons. First, while agreeing to join the protests was easy, my decision to identify with them by wearing their signature colour, red, was difficult as I was very conscious of how the ruling government had tried to violently suppress Bring Back Our Girls more than once. This brought home to me the intentional choice that Bring Back Our Girls' protesters were making every day they went out on the streets. Second, my protest experience was simultaneously illustrative of and exposed me to stories about how people who were not part of the initial mobilisations came to join the movement. One man, a civil servant, told me that he was walking past Unity Fountain one day while Bring Back Our Girls was holding a sit-in protest. Curiosity led him to stop and ask what was going on, and as soon as he was told what it was about, he said his conscience would not let him walk away (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018). This corroborates my discussions later in this book of the rising influence of individuals and individuality as motives for participation activism. Third, I was

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-3

taken aback by the aggressive response of police and army personnel who blocked access to State House and stood ready to fire on unarmed civilians for exercising their civic right to protest. It struck me as ironic that a government would respond, not for the first time, to peaceful protests for the rescue of abducted schoolchildren with the threat of the same violence that caused their captivity. Fourth, and most significantly, I was awed by the determination and commitment of the women, men, and some children I met during my research, among them representatives of the Kibaku Area Development Association in Abuja, and other people from different walks of life who daily took time out from families, busy jobs, and businesses—often in sweltering heat and at risk of violent responses from security forces and angry counterprotesters—to protest one of history's and Nigeria's worst tragedies.

This chapter tells the complex transnational story of the formation and evolution of the Nigerian-led movement for the rescue of the Chibok students known as Bring Back Our Girls. While it is difficult to establish an accurate sequence of events given the proliferation of simultaneous activity in and outside Nigeria in more than 190 countries across the world, interviews with Bring Back Our Girls participants in multiple countries and a content analysis of news and social media data enable an approximate chronology of early events.

A Timeline of Bring Back Our Girls: Early Beginnings

On 15 April 2014, Nigerians awoke to terrible news: an unconfirmed number of female students had been kidnapped from their government school in Chibok,[2] Borno State, in northeast Nigeria by the group then known as Boko Haram. The number was later confirmed to be 276 after a few had escaped during a frightful journey into the Sambisa Forest. In the ensuing pandemonium, as national and global actors shared messages of grief and solidarity, the government of then-president Goodluck Jonathan spread false claims that the kidnapping was a scam (Kawu, 2014) and, later, that the Nigerian military had rescued the Chibok Girls (Ibeh, 2014a). Amid the confusion, a number of Nigerian women began to take the first steps of response. In Maiduguri, capital of the state from where the students were taken, Hamsatu Allamin, an activist, peacemaker, and NGO coordinator, acting on a phone call from a colleague and native of Chibok, telephoned Professor Hauwa Abdu Biu, a civil society colleague, asking her to help coordinate a press conference to draw attention to the abductions (interview, women's rights activist and media personality, Maiduguri, October 2018). Drawing on an interview with Allamin, Diaz (2017) writes that 'The two hoped that the publicity would create international pressure on the government to do more to find the girls and to dialogue with the insurgents to end the rampant violence that threatened the future of their country' (Diaz, 2017).[3]

Six days later, on 20 April 2014, flanked by a mixed group of 18 women that included female politician, Honourable Asabe Bashir and Aisha Wakil alias 'Mama Boko Haram',[4] Biu read a press statement on behalf of the Women Peace and Security Network, the Borno outreach of BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights

and other concerned women in Borno State.[5] The women condemned the abduction as harmful to girl child education, to 'future mothers', and to state and national development. They also condemned other abductions and attacks by Boko Haram, demanded that the group release all captives, and offered their 'motherly support' towards rehabilitating members. The statement drew the attention of global media not only to Chibok but also to happenings in the northeast. This birthed a Northern-led research and humanitarian invasion that has had mixed outcomes for those worst affected by the conflict and led to research fatigue and cynicism about the utility of research outcomes among local residents (interview, RP32, November 2018).

There followed some protests to State House in Maiduguri and a Borno precursor of Bring Back Our Girls that mobilised alongside activists in other states until the relationship broke down (interviews, activists in Maiduguri, September 2018 and New York, June 2019).

Activists in Borno State have since turned their attention more to helping women and girls affected by the conflict. This history is important because, as one member of the Borno-based group shared with me, there is a sense that the 'Abuja group' appropriated the agency for initiating the movement for the Chibok students' return, overshadowing Borno activists, that raises questions about who has the right to protest on behalf of communities that are directly affected by crisis.

In suburban Abuja, female activist and politician Hadiza Bala Usman, stunned by the public silence on the abductions, began to mobilise other female colleagues by email, including Maryam Uwais, lawyer-activist, and Saudatu Mahdi, secretary-general of the Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternative, a long-standing women's rights NGO (Rotinwa, 2016). In a radio interview with Robin Morgan, anchor of the US-based Women's Media Centre radio talk show in February 2015, Bala Usman said this about how Bring Back Our Girls started:

> It was just me being concerned that nobody was raising any awareness about the girls' captivity. I remember over a few days after they were captured, the Nigerian military had come out to say that they had rescued them and I was so elated and excited, but immediately within hours later, it came back that the girls had not been rescued. So that really got a fire burning in me on the need to say these girls need to be rescued. We need to raise awareness for them; we cannot keep quiet about it. So we set up sent group emails, a few of us and we just galvanized and expanded on social media, invited everyone, and we had our first major protest march in Abuja on the 30th of April where we just said the government needs to rescue our Chibok girls … These are 276 young girls being abducted by Boko Haram while they were writing their examination. This is an appalling situation that a country should be at standstill if 200 young girls are kidnapped, but at that point our government was quiet. Our government was in denial. Our government was not doing anything to rescue the girls.
>
> (Women's Media Center, 2015)

Also in Abuja, Obiageli Ezekwesili, former Nigerian education minister and World Bank Vice President for Africa, provided inspiration for the term Bring Back Our Girls when she spoke the words, 'Bring Back Our Daughters', leading the audience in a chant at a UNESCO World Book Capital event in Port Harcourt (Adesanmi, 2014; Ibeh, 2014b; Williamson, Andrews, & Phillips, 2014). Abuja-based Nigerian lawyer Ibrahim Abdullahi tweeted the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls on 23 April 2014 and Ezekwesili retweeted it. His agency is important because some sources claimed that American filmmaker Ramaa Mosley took credit for creating the hashtag (Adesanmi, 2014; Maneater, 2014; Wikipedia, 2020; Williamson et al., 2014), although evidence suggests that she did not claim it as much as she failed to deny it when US media outlets erroneously attributed it to her (NBC News, 2014). Adesanmi's (2014, 2020) discussion of how this scenario illustrates a long-standing appropriation of Africa's agency by Northern actors is elaborated in later chapters of this study.

Bring Back Our Girls subsequently tried to register with the Corporate Affairs Commission that oversees all corporative registrations in the country but the Goodluck Jonathan government frustrated this effort by directing the commission to reject the application (interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018).

> We did not register as an organisation because under the Jonathan administration then, it was like they gave an instruction to the CAC [Corporate Affairs Commission] not to approve our name, so the only time that it became expedient for us to register again was when I think someone was using the Bring Back Our Girls hashtag to raise funds and that was against our norms. When we couldn't register it, what we did was to trademark the name Bring Back Our Girls and also, we didn't want to take the form of an NGO, we just wanted it to be a campaign and that's what it has been all along.
>
> (Interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018)

In any case, its efforts at structuring were moderated by the realisation and hope that the Chibok Girls could soon be rescued and their movement would not last. Notwithstanding, structures were put in place to help administer various areas of activity; early on, the group formed several teams to help oversee strategy, notably mobilisation, resourcing, media, and legal. This team was made up of people appointed to certain positions from within the movement (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018) and others who were invited to join by the leadership because of their socio-political capital as activists (interview, RP7, Abuja, 7 September 2020). This strategy group was responsible for mapping stakeholders and strategies for engagement as well as monitoring responses to Bring Back Our Girls' interventions (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

Bring Back Our Girls continued to engage diverse audiences on social media and in its daily activities. Its leaders mapped stakeholders and corresponding strategies and began holding protests as a strategy to express their grievances and keep the abductions in the spotlight. Bring Back Our Girls and separate coalitions of

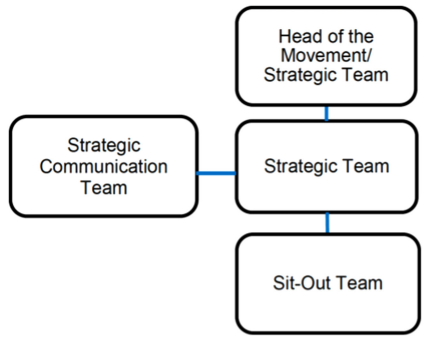

Figure 2.1 Bring Back Our Girls organisational structure.
Source: Aina et al. (2019), p. 22.

Figure 2.2 Bring Back Our Girls' methods of engagement.
Source: Aina et al., 2019, p. 28.

women's rights and other civil society coalitions and networks met with the families of the Chibok students to offer support and find out their views to inform mobilisations (interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018).

Repertoires of Resistance

The group chose the colour red to symbolise 'alarm, danger, a warning' (interview, Abuja, September 2018 and author observation).

It also created a call and response chant that embodied its objectives and demands, which contains tropes of civic responsibility and governmental duty and accountability to citizens.

What are we demanding?
#BringBackOurGirls Now & Alive

What are we asking?
The truth, nothing but the truth!

What do we want?
Our girls back now and alive!

When shall we stop?
Not until our girls are back and alive!
Not without our daughters! (https://bringbackourgirls.ng/, n.d.)

The call evolved over a period of time in response to the group's experiences as its mobilisation prolonged. The call to 'Bring back our girls now and alive!' was framed around both the need for a specific ask to centre the movement and a specification of how the group wanted the students returned home to guide the interventions of all duty-bearers (interview, 25 September 2018). Similarly, the demand call for 'The truth, nothing but the truth!' emerged in response to consistent misinformation by government actors. In this way, the entire chant tells a deeper story of the group's objectives and commitment, its resistance to efforts to suppress and silence it, and the values that guided its mobilisation.

Bring Back Our Girls also decided early on not to fundraise externally for its activities:

> it was decided that, look, we're not going to collect anything, so the movement was going to be a self-funded movement; we put our money where our empathy was. There was some grumbling, but the response or position was, you don't need money; come and be there for the sacrifice. You can't buy that.
>
> (Interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018)

Figure 2.3 Bring Back Our Girls protesters in red clothing during a protest.
Photo credit: Sunday Alamba/AP file.

The first Bring Back Our Girls protest in Nigeria, which held in Abuja on 30 April 2014—two weeks after the abductions, was destined for the National Assembly as elected representatives of the people. However, the activists did not reach their destination as the leadership of the National Assembly met them halfway, promising that they would convey the group's grievances to 'higher powers' (Rotinwa, 2016). Subsequent protests were intermingled with the use of deliberate tactics that included daily sit-outs, social media campaigns, press statements informed by conflict analysis, meetings with policymakers and security forces, support to displaced populations—notably women and children, and media engagement. As one Bring Back Our Girls strategic team member explained:

> What came out into the media mostly that people see are the marches we did. Now, those marches were the activities or were the stakeholder engagement medium that we thought was effective for the kind of stakeholders that we were marching to … we know that the Nigerian government at the time, having denied that the girls had been abducted, it was necessary for us to create some embarrassing and uncomfortable climate—not one that we're going to sit with them behind closed doors and say we're just doing sympathy and all of that. We thought that the more we put it out there when we do marches, media would flood … we would flood the Unity Fountain and then, once the media comes, it's in our local channel and international channel, and it was strategic in passing the message not just that we've not forgotten about the Chibok Girls, but that we want the Nigerian government to act and ensure that the girls were brought back.
>
> (Interview, RP1, Abuja, 19 October 2018)

Initial protests drew crowds of up to 1000 in Abuja which had dwindled to an average of 15–20 persons during my visit to Abuja:

> We've had a march where, oh my God, we were up to a thousand if I'm not exaggerating. If I have to maybe bring it down a bit, maybe 800 and the pictures are there to show online. And that was the beginning, 2014, particularly in 2014 and of course later part of 2014 beginning of 2015. After one year, people just started getting really tired. On the average then, we would have between 300 to 400 people come out daily for the daily sit-out and then it started going down down down, you know, 100, 50, 20 and now it's so bad that we have maybe five people come out.
>
> (Interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018)

At the same time that Nigerians were organising in Abuja, protest groups were forming in other states across the country, notably Lagos, Benin, Borno, Osun, Oyo, Kaduna, Kano, Lagos, and Port Harcourt (Okome, 2017). During interviews,

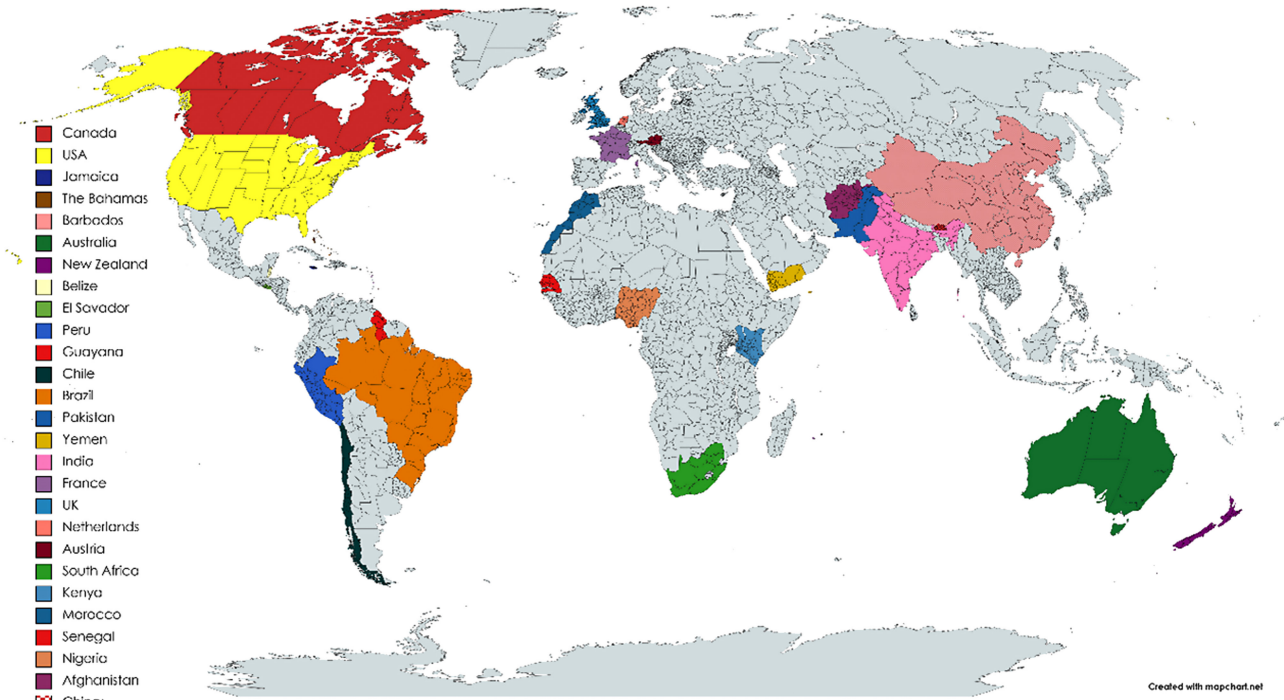

Figure 2.4 Map showing the global reception of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign.

Source: Onah, C. K. (2024, p. 6).

several participants noted the significance, in a country with a history of ethnic division, that Nigerians came together across a wide geographic spread as well as within mobilisations in specific cities. One member of the strategy team told me during interviews, 'It's an indication we could be united with the right kind of leadership and guidance. Bring Back Our Girls has broken that myth' (interview, Bring Back Our Girls strategy team member, Abuja, September 2018). Another point to note is the socioeconomic diversity of Bring Back Our Girls; it was made up of civil servants, students, entrepreneurs, politicians, civil society actors and activists, prominent educated middle-class actors, professionals, and members of the Chibok community.

Bring Back Our Girls had a very active digital life. It spread its message and mobilised support using a website—https://www.bringbackourgirls.ng, a dedicated Twitter account—@Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, and later, a dedicated Facebook page. I found 28 public groups on Facebook that were either named Bring Back Our Girls or supported the campaign through posts on their pages. Participants also used their personal social media profiles to raise awareness of the abductions and to publicise and spread the protest. Various participants used e-petitioning on websites like Change.org, WhatsApp, Google+, and Instagram. Millions of people took part in a 'selfie protest'[6] that involved posting selfies of themselves holding placards bearing the words and hashtag Bring Back Our Girls (Jibril, 2015; Smith, 2015).[7] Based on Twitter analytics, as of 7 May 2014, #BringBackOurGirls had received 1.5 billion impressions and reached 440 million people worldwide (Plumptre, 2014).[8] An estimated 440 million people were reached by the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls.[9] At the time of writing, its Facebook page, Bring Back Our Girls, was liked by 223,000 people and followed by 214,000 (Facebook, n.d.). Its Twitter account has 35,000 followers. In the early days of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls, Abdullahi (2014)[10] said,

> this was not a coordinated campaign. It was a number of individuals in Nigeria tweeting to raise awareness in the hope that the international community would eventually take notice.

This admitted primacy of individuals as drivers of Bring Back Our Girls in and outside Nigeria, as elaborated in Chapters 5 and 6, is a significant identifier of mass movements today compared to more organisation-based, traditional civil society structures and modes of operation.

Transnational Dimensions

Outside Nigeria, the participation of international political and cultural figures, including then-US first lady Michelle Obama and many celebrities drew significant attention (Jibril, 2015; Smith, 2015; Ajayi, 2016).[11] This book focuses on Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, and the United States, but people in at least 190 countries from all the major continents organised or/and took part in Bring Back Our Girls solidarity events online and offline. As knowledge about Bring Back Our Girls grew, several of its Nigerian leaders who can be considered transnational Africans, per Okome

and Vaughn (2011, p. 10), were invited to speak at high-profile events abroad and were interviewed by foreign media, bringing greater visibility to their activism. Bukola Shonibare and Hadiza Bala Usman spoke at special events in the United States, both in person and via telephone.[12] Shonibare addressed the UN General Assembly, Bring Back Our Girls Washington and New York, and the Hudson Institute, while Hadiza spoke at the 65th Annual Department of Public Information Conference in 2014.[13] In 2015, Obiageli Ezekwesili was recognised by TIME magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in recognition of her work with Bring Back Our Girls (Premium Times, 2015).

Transnational and diasporan Nigerians and other Africans co-led and participated in Bring Back Our Girls protests in cities across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Ghana, Kenya, and many other countries. There were events by schoolchildren in Tanzania and Ghana, by parents in multiple countries, feminist activists in Kenya, Nigerian and other African immigrants in Canada, activists in the United Kingdom and the United States, and many other countries around the world. Then based in Germany, Nigerian Ifeyinwa Elueze's Change.org e-petition drew over a million signatures globally.[14] The diffuse nature of these events within and outside Nigeria meant that several groups mobilised independently, making some more visible and easier to trace than others, depending on how much publicity they got and their social media presence. Their visibility depended, at least in part, on the duration and scale of their activism, the profiles of the actors and networks involved, and their ability to draw news and social media attention.

Within Nigeria, several Bring Back Our Girls participants were affiliated with prominent civil society organisations (CSOs) doing work on various aspects of governance and human rights. While they did not join Bring Back Our Girls in their official capacities, a few drew parallels between their organisations' mandates and their reasons for participating in Bring Back Our Girls. RP19, for instance, had set up a CSO on women's and girls' human rights when the abductions happened and supported Bring Back Our Girls out of 'moral conscience' and because it corresponded with her personal and professional objectives to 'amply the voices of women and girls' (interviews, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020). Some members were driven to form CSOs by the suffering they saw during visits to Chibok, but Bring Back Our Girls was not itself an NGO. This was a factor of several things: first, there was no plan for long-term engagement because no one expected the abduction or their activism to last as long as it did. This resonated across this book's four focal countries, with many expressing how unprepared they were. Second, as RP4 stated, the strategic group made a deliberate decision to not become an NGO so as to avoid having to fundraise like most NGOs do. The group's activities were thus resourced internally from financial and in-kind donations by members with no external resource mobilisation.

Members of the strategy group were aware of some Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in other countries which they described as 'movements, not chapters per se' (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018). When asked about the nature of their relations with these groups, RP4 noted that although these formations 'identified with the global campaign and with the hashtag Bring Back Our Girls', they

> had their own individualised kind of Bring Back Our Girls … so it wasn't regulated by us. Their activities were not planned with us. Most of what they do [sic] was to communicate with us here in Abuja, 'we're doing this, we're doing that'.

She shared how Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria once tried to collate the contacts of all Bring Back Our Girls organisers across the world in a bid to ensure that they could communicate certain information without having to put it in public domains, but the level of response was lower than expected. The group subsequently tried to reconcile the efforts of all these people on milestone days to create some coherence and strengthen visibility, but again, there was limited response (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

Perspectives of Bring Back Our Girls organisers outside Nigeria about the campaign's global structure varied according to each participant's own relationship with Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria. Some participants saw themselves as supporting the activism in Nigeria and adopted the same messaging and repertoires, including publicity material like posters, placards, and digital content. In their view, Bring Back Our Girls was coordinated to some extent, though there was some flexibility in approach. When I shared that my sense was that protests were isolated and converged occasionally, RP19 responded:

> I think it was a little bit more coordinated than that. So we had an email chain where some of the leadership from all over were a part of and so efforts were coordinated in that way. So even if we were not doing the exact same thing, so let's say New York was doing a prayer vigil or Nigeria was doing a march, England was doing a sit-in or something like that, everybody still was independent enough to design whatever their mode of activism would be for that particular event, but it was still coordinated as far as the theme, some of the statements that were released and the ultimate demands that we were asking for. So, I would say it wasn't quite as independent, so even when we wrote several letters to the president, we would try to use some of the same language just to keep it as consistent as possible.
>
> (Interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020)

Others had more tenuous linkages with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria or none at all. Organisers in this category tended to be people who did not know about the protests in Nigeria (interview, RP2, Tanzania, 18 December 2019), did not know people on the ground (interview, RP7, Brussels, 4 September 2020), or did not have consistent communication with Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria (interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 October 2019). The intensity of Bring Back Our Girls activism has slowed and many participants have stopped engaging completely, but a small core of dedicated persons in different countries continues to mark milestone days with special events like lectures and to share information on social media to keep the abducted students in the public consciousness.

As noted, Bring Back Our Girls' formations in Nigeria and globally were very active on social media. During my research, there were at least 20 different

Facebook groups and Twitter handles bearing the name Bring Back Our Girls or having some bearing on the campaign for the return of the Chibok students. Also, the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls was one of the major factors that propelled this campaign to international status. I conducted a digital mapping on social media which showed that many of the Nigerian Bring Back Our Girls organisers in various countries are connected to each other and to some non-Nigerian organisers in the study's focal countries. The thickest relationships are between Nigeria, the United Kingdom, and North America. Some participants knew each other before Bring Back Our Girls (interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019); others became connected as a result of it (interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020; interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020). Beyond these connectivities, it was difficult to map the more diverse relationships that occurred temporarily and mainly on social media outside the frameworks of identifiable and more enduring Bring Back Our Girls formations. In subsequent chapters, I discuss in greater detail the structures of Bring Back Our Girls events outside Nigeria and how they interfaced with mobilisations in Nigeria.

The Significance of Bring Back Our Girls

Occurring in the parallel contexts of a militarised, gender-regressive Nigeria and the broader context of a post-globalised world, Bring Back Our Girls embodies multiple significances. The word 'significance' in place of 'impact' here is intentional. Discourses on the significance of activisms tend to centre evaluations of impact or 'success' on the extent to which they attain their objectives, assessed as tangible outcomes. Using this parameter, in the case of Bring Back Our Girls, success would be measured as the rescue and return of all the Chibok students who were abducted. However, as Branch and Mampilly (2015) and others point out (Ofori-Parku & Moscato, 2018), this approach is narrow and counterproductive as it does not account for the often plural implications of single activisms and thereby misrepresents the totality of their contributions to both policy and knowledge. According to Ake (cited in Branch & Mampilly, 2015, p. 6), the real value of protest movements lies in their effect on the political consciousness and imagination of African societies.

> Protest should not be judged according to whether it achieves its explicit demands, for those demands often change in the course of the protest or may never have been directly stated. Instead, protest should be understood according to how it attempts to transform the national political questions that structure state power and how that protest answers, avoids, or is torn apart by the deep political dilemmas that may require resolution for democratic change to take hold.

In this light, I approach this discussion of the significances of the Bring Back Our Girls movement from the contextual point of view of a national environment that has long been hostile to women and women's issues, a militarised state with a long history of repressive violence, and a global war on terror.

A Pro-democracy Citizen Movement

Since it first began in May 2014, Bring Back Our Girls activists have occupied and created space for critical reflection on the Boko Haram crisis and the Nigerian government's handling of it. They have held state actors to account over their responses to successive abductions—including of the Chibok students, pointed out loopholes in their management of information and security resources, and led initiatives that include a missing persons register to help address these. Emerging as it did on the heels of Occupy Nigeria, the first major mass protest against an unpopular government policy decision in the country's Fourth Republic, Bring Back Our Girls can thus be said to be a commentary on the condition and failures of democratic governance in Nigeria, illustrated by its handling of the insecurity occasioned by the Boko Haram war, among other crises, and their particular gendered consequences for women and girls.

Through its critiques of state policy and action, and its own experiences of hostility from the government, Bring Back Our Girls offers a lens through which to view continuities between military and militarised civilian governments' aggressive responses to dissent and resistance, as well as their stance towards the rights of women and girls. The movement helped debunk a lingering legacy of fear of military rule by illustrating the potency of citizen power:

> a lot of people have never seen where people actually took on the government and held it accountable, and where it was done without violence … but by staying on the issue and being strategic about it. And so, we coming from the military where most people have been brought up to be afraid of government, seeing this has broken the chains, the shackles …. And so for me one of the wider impacts is that people are now able to go on to make demands and hold government accountable … because most people have the impression that the moment you demand from government, you will be killed.
>
> (Interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018)

In the absence of other demands for accountability, this is significant because the government's early actions did not signal a willingness to take action or account to Nigerians for its responses to the abductions: according to RP1, "they wanted us off the streets because they knew if we weren't there, no one would be talking about Chibok Girls" (Interview, Abuja, 25 September 2018). Several Bring Back Our Girls participants also raised the question of their accountability to themselves, their own children, Nigeria's children, and future generations if they failed to act to save the Chibok Girls. In one example, RP15 shared: 'I felt it was important to be out there, to speak about it and to protest about it because this kind of situation is unacceptable' (interview, 20 June 2019).

Being able to confront the government effectively for as long as it did, Bring Back Our Girls can be said to have inspired other citizen movements, notably EndSARS, but also other movements for women's rights, including the Market March against sexual harassment in markets (Unah, 2019) and the women-led protests against the rejection of five gender bills in 2022 (Iroanusi & Fadare, 2022).

It is important to note that although there were disagreements over approach between the group's leaders and some members who 'wanted a more militant approach', leaders were intentional about maintaining non-violence, even when the government was being antagonistic and despite opportunities to overrun security forces (RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018). Such divisions contributed to a decline in numbers, interpreted by some as a 'loss of power' that led to the movement losing some of its initial traction (RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018).

Deriving from this democracy discourse, Bring Back Our Girls can also be viewed as a testament to and affirmation of the resilience of Nigeria's civil society and citizenry. As explained by a co-leader of the group, 'we raised awareness and consciousness that as citizens, we have the capacity and ability to do the right thing and hold government accountable and demand answers' (interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018). Similarly, in one of her early speeches, group co-founder, Hadiza Bala-Usman (2015) said:

> Accountability of citizens is what has brought us out, all of us for this number of days. We have sustained our advocacy across all lines and will continue to do that. A lot of us have been vilified in the course of our advocacy. We have been attacked physically, we've been attacked on social media. Our commitment and our sincerity of purpose has been questioned. This has taken a lot of toll on some of our people but we stand resilient. We will not … I will not be intimidated by anyone. I'm a Nigerian citizen, I'm a concerned mother. I will stand up for any vulnerable person. This is not about taking down government; it's about citizen consciousness. We are conscious people, we remain conscious and we will continue to demand for accountability, irrespective of who is in government.

Here, we see Bring Back Our Girls present its claims to political consciousness and accountability as a performance of citizenship in defence of vulnerable people who cannot help themselves. This embraces the idea of democracy and democratic ideals, particularly those that acknowledge citizens' right to participate in and help shape governance through protest. Further, as I wrote in a 2015 opinion on the movement:

> Social movements, like all political events, do not occur in vacuums. In the context of Nigeria's political history, BBOG is easily among the most enduring social movements, especially those led mainly by women. The movement's resilience demonstrates the power of informed citizen action, the consolidation of the country's democracy, and the ability of different cultural, social and religious groups to mobilize and stand together through difficult circumstances to achieve a common goal.
>
> (Ajayi, 2015)

Aina et al. (2019, p. 3) use the conceptual referents of empowerment and accountability to frame how Bring Back Our Girls empowered and gave voice to diverse groups, including by training its activists in political leadership and

communications, among others, and connecting abduction victims and their families to strategic Nigerian and international actors. As I found during fieldwork and Aina et al. (2019) note, several Bring Back Our Girls members set up initiatives to provide support to those affected by the conflict—a fact that they attribute to finding their voices during the course of their involvement with the Chibok activism (interview RP17, DC, 6 March 2020; interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

(En-)Countering Gender Norms and Gendered Injustices

It is significant that Bring Back Our Girls was led primarily by women in a setting where women are considered second-class citizens (Para-Mallam, 2017), and their active involvement in mobilisations like Occupy Nigeria has historically been downplayed, erased, or denounced. Bring Back Our Girls thus simultaneously countered and encountered norms about women's involvement in politics and political action through its activism, its denunciation of gendered violence, and state responses to it, as well as through popular perceptions of the movement. The interplay between gender norms and women in activism is discernible in some people's attitudes towards Aisha Yesufu, for example, a vocal activist and co-leader of Bring Back Our Girls. In casual conversations with people I met during fieldwork, I would ask for opinions on the movement. At least 15 men told me that they admired her tenacity, but found her aggressiveness unbecoming for a woman and thus alienating.

That an activism led by women faced off with a militarised government so persistently for so long defied normative prescriptions about the 'rightful' place of women in Nigerian society and countered the normalisation of violence against women with impunity. The movement has compelled conversations about the Boko Haram conflict and its war on women as entry points into the ways in which war affects women and girls while peacebuilding continues to exclude them from formal resolution processes. Bring Back Our Girls' female leaders have confronted this latter phenomenon by making themselves, as political actors, indispensable to and within the high-level forums where these conversations have taken place among predominantly male government officials and diplomats, many of them with security mandates. The invitation to join a military tour of duty to Sambisa Forest is a major highlight of this assertion.

Although it has been criticised for mobilising only around the Chibok Girls and not over broader questions of governance in the country, the history and structure of mass movements in Nigeria are such that gender and women's issues do not typically feature in mobilisations that are not led by women. The activisms that have drawn attention to women's issues have historically been led by and composed mainly—if not entirely—of women. By this token, Bring Back Our Girls has been a deliberate act to draw attention to a specific gendered matter affecting girls in the context of the Boko Haram conflict.

The question of feminism within Bring Back Our Girls, in light of a long-standing epistemic standoff between what is and is not considered feminist, is one that merits deeper scrutiny and analysis. It is unclear whether Bring Back Our Girls can

be considered feminist solely because it was created and led mainly by women, supported by some feminists, and fought primarily for the rights and rescue of kidnapped schoolgirls. Gouws (2015) and Gouws and Coetzee (2019) note the definitional dilemma involved in framing women's movements and distinguishing them from overtly feminist ones, even though the two are commonly conflated. While they tend to be based on women's gendered experiences of a range of issues, women's movements may or may not be feminist, depending on their stance towards patriarchy and how gender transformational their actions are. In Gouws' (2015) view, a feminist movement 'uses a gendered power analysis and contests political, social and other arrangements of domination based on gender'. Notwithstanding, Bring Back Our Girls does represent an important instance of women-led activism and a lens through which public apathy towards issues concerning women and girls, especially in Nigeria can be observed. This is especially so given the depth of rejection, ridicule, and resistance that many female members faced from family, friends, and broader society because their activism was seen as defying gender stereotypes about appropriate behaviour for women.[15]

By keeping the Chibok and other abductions and injustices at the forefront of Nigerian and global politics, Bring Back Our Girls contributed to efforts by the Nigerian government and other actors that have led to the rescue and release of some of the Chibok students at various intervals since 2014 (see Figure 2.5).

Though perceived as and criticised over having a seemingly narrow focus on the Chibok students, in reality, Bring Back Our Girls gave voice to a wide range of justice and security issues, albeit within what Aina et al. (2019, p. 26) term an 'elastic circle of concern' centred on rights abuses and injustices around the Boko Haram conflict. In addition to advocating for better state responses to other mass abductions in and outside the northeast, the group also drew attention to a lack of transparency over war casualties from the northeast, welfare deficits concerning Nigerian soldiers fighting Boko Haram, allegations of misuse of the defence budget involving Sambo Dasuki, former National Security Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, and the need for greater safety in Nigerian schools (interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018). The movement also helped rouse the conscience of Nigerians and citizens around the world towards not only the Chibok cause, but other similar cases of human rights abuses in many contexts, including Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, and Black America. At the same time, as expressed by one person interviewed for this book who is not a member of Bring Back Our Girls, the group's very existence was one of the events that alerted Boko Haram's leaders to the political value of their captives and has arguably prolonged their captivity (interview, local leader, Maiduguri, October 2018).

Through rhetorical and symbolic acts and action, the group has resolutely propagated in Nigerian and global psyches the dangers of being not only female, but ethnic and religious minority and poor in militarised contexts, as well as the indispensability of gendered perspectives and involvement in conflict planning and interventions. By so doing, notwithstanding its own internal inconsistencies and contradictions, Bring Back Our Girls has confronted patriarchal ideologies that enable extreme abuses of women and girls by state and non-state groups, both

April 14, 2014
The Abduction of 276 girls from the Govemment Secondary School Chibok.

April 14 – 17, 2014
57 of the girls escaped by jumping off the Boko Haram trucks.

April 15, 2014
False claim & Retraction: The Nigerian Army falsely declared that all but eight of the abducted girls had been released and 35 Boko Haram members killed in the process. The claim was later retracted.

2014

May 12, 2014
Boko Haram released a video showing many of the abducted girls covered in hijab from head to toe and chanting Arabic verses. The leader of the terrorists, Abubakar Shekau, said they would be released if the Nigerian government released the group's fighters who were being held in custody.

May 14, 2014
The UN addressed and condemned the abduction of the school girls in a council in Geneva.

May 16, 2016
Amina All Nkekl was rescued by members of the Civilion Joint Task Force, alongside her six-month-old baby and a suspected tenorist, Mohammad Hayyatu, who claimed to be her husband.

August 14, 2016
Another video surfaced on the internet showing some of the Chibok girls, many of them carrying children. A masked man who spoke in the video reiterated Boko Haram's demands for the release of some of its fighters in return for the girls.

2016

October 13, 2016
Twenty-one of the Chibok girts were released following a deal believed to have been brokered by the Swiss government and the international Committee of the Red Cross.

November 5, 2016
Maryam All-Malyanga was found with a child.

January 2, 2017
Raklya Abubakar Gall, was rescued with a child. The BBOG group confirmed her Identity.

2017

May 6, 2017
82 of the abducted girls were negotiated for & released; 83 girls were supposed to have been raleased, but Soraya Paul opted out of the deal at the last minute, choosing to remain with her captors.

January 4, 2018
Salomi Pogu was rescued alongside another young girl whose name was given as Jamila Adams (Not one of the Chibok girls)

2018

January 20, 2021
Mary Amos escaped captivity

January 29, 2021
Halima Ali Malyanga, sister to Ali Maryam Maiyanga, escaped with her son.

2021

July 28, 2021
Ruth Ngiladar (Pogu), alongside her Boko Haram Husband and two children, surrendered to the military.

August 14, 2021
Hassana Adamu was rescued with two children.

August 12, 2022
Aisha Grema was rescued with her child by the military.

June 16, 2022
Mary Dauda Yahi and Hauwa Joseph were found around Gwoza Forest with their children.

July 26, 2022
Serah luka(Kouna) was rescued alongside her child.

July 28, 2022
Hannatu Musa was rescued with her Boko-Haram husband and two children.

2022

September 7, 2022
Asabe Ali, Falta lawan, Jinkai Yama and their fivechildren were rescued by the military.

September 8, 2022
Ruth Bitrus and her child were rescued after escaping captivity.

September 29, 2022
Yana Pogu was rescued with her four children.

October 2, 2022
Rejoice Sanki was rescued with two children.

May 4, 2023
Esther Marcus and Houwa Mutah were both rescued in the Sambisa Forest.

May 6, 2023
Saratu Dauda and her three children were rescued outside the Sambisa Forest.

2023

June 16, 2023
Mary Nkeki was rescued by the military.

August 21, 2023
Rebecca Kabu was found in Cameroon by the military.

Figure 2.5 Timeline of key Chibok-related events since the abductions.

Source: Murtala Muhammed Foundation. (2024, pp. 22–23).

within and outside the context of the Boko Haram conflict as well as the normalisation of such violence in broader everyday society.

Finally, as Habila points out in his commentary on the impact of Bring Back Our Girls, in light of the number of 'Chibok Girls' who have defied Boko Haram violence and achieved academic success: 'This, for me, is perhaps the biggest achievement of the #BBOG movement. They have scuttled Boko Haram's core task, which is to deny girls education' (Habila, 2024).

Enabling and Disenabling Factors

Leadership is seen as one of the strengths of Bring Back Our Girls to the extent that its founders and leaders are well-known personalities within and outside Nigeria. Their identities have been key to their ability to strategise and engage high-level political and diplomatic actors, as well as command the cooperation of movement participants. However, this same strength of leadership would later turn out to be a weak point when one of the founders, originally seen as assertive, began to be seen as autocratic and increasingly intolerant of dissenting opinions, leading to further declines in support and participation on the ground. By several accounts, some prominent members left because they felt that they were being marginalised by the leadership (interview, RP7, 7 September 2020) and not being given enough say in how the activism was being conducted (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

The commitment of the movement's members and participants has also been a major asset, driven by empathy for those worst affected by the Boko Haram conflict and disappointment at the government's indifference and slow responses. This was demonstrated by the large crowds that attended early protest events, although this dwindled significantly over the years as the abductions prolonged and internal politics began to weaken the group's cohesion.

While it has been arguably Nigeria's most enduring social movement with roots in a longer history of popular dissent, Bring Back Our Girls does not seem to have had the same broad traction within Nigeria as mobilisations like Occupy Nigeria, in terms of numbers and gender diversity. I suggest that this is arguably because its core focus has been militarised violence against women and girls in a context with high gender inequality and widespread indifference to its causes and manifestations. There has also been some cynicism around Bring Back Our Girls' motives and speculation that some of its elite members used it as a springboard to political careers. Further, some see Boko Haram as a northern problem and, even today, ten years after the abductions, there is still scepticism about whether they are a farce contrived for political purposes.

In addition to the leadership conflicts noted earlier, Bring Back Our Girls' policy of financial self-reliance and its decision to not fundraise in order to maintain its independence, integrity, and impartiality could have been another contributing factor. The decision went against the grain of many social movements and power patterns in humanitarianism, and has been described as 'naïve' and 'too acquiescent to outsiders' perceptions of bias' (interview, RP15, 20 June 2019). This participant also noted that the decision was contrary to advocacy culture in the Global North

where it is commonplace to mobilise resources for social causes. This difference in perception towards humanitarian financing illustrates some of the power disparities between social movements in the Global South and North that are discussed later in this book. Although resourcing was not a central focus of my fieldwork and was not raised by many participants, Bring Back Our Girls' standpoint limited some participants' ability to sustain their mobilisations beyond the limits of their personal financial capabilities.[16]

Furthermore, as several participants indicated during interviews, there was not enough coordination and cohesion to sustain global participation, although the movement was so diffuse that it would have been difficult to organise effectively without a defined structure. Fatigue was also a major factor as the personal costs of commitment took a heavy toll on many participants and was a strain on their families, some of whom did not support their involvement with Bring Back Our Girls.

At a more global level, as discussed in Chapter 1 of this book, the abductions, the framing of Bring Back Our Girls by activists, and its narrativisation by many who took up the cry for the students' return occurred against a historical canvas of violence and disappearance that evoked strong affective solidarity among populations worldwide. This 'mnemonic currency' (Onah, 2024, p. 18) of Bring Back Our Girls as a symbol of resistance to injustices and abuses (see Murphy, 2017; Smith, 2015; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a, 2015b) accounts for Bring Back Our Girls being a globalised, relatable social problem understood by many around the world where young women and girls had faced similar threats to their safety and security—not least the 'Aboke Girls' of northern Uganda (De Temmerman, 2001; Cook, 2007), the mostly female university students kidnapped in Oromia, Ethiopia,[17] and the African-American girls routinely kidnapped and trafficked for sex in inner-city America (Scott, 2014; interview, RP5, New York, 25 November 2019).

The widespread international support that Bring Back Our Girls attracted—the outcome of 'a complex interplay between digital activism, transnational affiliations, and the dynamics of remediation'[18] (Onah, 2024, p. 7)—is seen as having provided a level of insulation for the group against the Nigerian government's proclivity to violently suppress peaceful protests:

> [the international community] helped in the sense that our government was always afraid of the voice from outside. So, sometimes, if they want to do certain things to us, they know that some people are watching them from outside … So the fact that there was a lot of international outcry for Bring Back Our Girls helped the movement a lot…it made the government more accountable.
>
> (Interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018)

However, the fleeting nature of international attention to social injustices is seen as unfortunate and ironic, given the centrality to global tributaries of Bring Back Our Girls of girls' right to education. In some regard, the global outpouring of support is now seen in hindsight as driven by some form of conformity bias and a desire to be part of something trendy and not by genuine commitment to the cause of seeing

Table 2.1 Attacks on Nigerian schools by Boko Haram and ISWAP since 2014[19]

October 2012	*Adamawa State University, Federal Polytechnic, Mubi Adamawa State*	*At least 26 students killed*
March 2013	Mafoni Day Secondary School, Maiduguri, Borno State	15 students and two teachers killed
March 2013	Yelwa Central School, Maidguri, Borno State	10 students and one teacher killed
March 2013	Shehu Sanda Kyari Secondary School, Maiduguri, Borno State	Five students and one teacher killed
March 2013	Ali Askiri Primary School, Maiduguri, Borno State	Five students and one teacher killed
June 2013	Government Secondary School, Damaturu, Yobe State	At least 24 students and seven teachers killed
June 2013	Ansarudeen School, Maiduguri, Borno State	At least nine students killed
July 2013	Government secondary school, Mamudo, Yobe State	42 students and teachers killed
September 2013	College of Agriculture, Old Maiduguri, Borno State	At least 40 students and staff killed
September 2013	Government Technical College in Potskum, Yobe State	At least 30 students killed
February 2014	Girl's Secondary School, Konduga, Borno State	20 female students abducted
February 2014	Federal Government College in Buni Yadi, Yobe State	At least 29 male students killed
14–15 April 2014	Government Girls' Secondary School, Chikbok, Borno State	Approximately 276 female students abducted
September 2014	School of Hygiene, Kano, Kano State	At least 15 students killed
November 2014	Government Science Secondary School, Potiskum, Yobe State	At least 47 students injured
November 2014	Government Comprehensive Secondary School, Damasak, Borno State	Several students killed, and more than 50 students abducted
February 2018	Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State	110 school girls kidnapped
December 2020	Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State	Over 340 male students abducted
December 2020	No specific name but it's referred to as Islamic Seminary or Madrasa Islamiyya, Dandume, Katsina State	80 Islamic students kidnapped
February 2021	Government Science College Kagara, Niger State	27 students kidnapped
February 2021	Government Girls' Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State	317 students abducted
March 2021	Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Kaduna State	39 students (23 females and 16 males) taken by gunmen
April 2021	Greenfield University, Kaduna State	One staff member killed, at least 20 students kidnapped

(*Continued*)

Table 2.1 (Continued)

October 2012	*Adamawa State University, Federal Polytechnic, Mubi Adamawa State*	*At least 26 students killed*
May 2021	Salihu Tanko Islamiyya School, Tegina, Niger State	100 students abducted but were released upon negotiations
June 2021	Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State	96 students abducted
June 2021	Government Girls' Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State	279 or 300 schoolgirls kidnapped
July 2021	Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna State	140 students kidnapped
August 2021	Faskari Local Council, Katsina State	Seven students, one teacher abducted
August 2021	Islamiyya school in Sakkai village in Faskari LGA, Katsina State	Nine male students abducted
September 2021	Kaya School in Maradun Local Government area, Zamfara State	73 students kidnapped
January 2023	Government Science Secondary School in Kurmi Local Government Area, Nasarawa State	Six students abducted
September 2023	Government Day Secondary School, Kaura Namoda, Zamfara State	24 students abducted
September 2023	Federal Government College, Kano State	20 students and staff abducted
January 2024	Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State	Six students abducted
March 2024	Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna State	287 students abducted
March 2024	Government Girls' Secondary School, Sokoto State	15 students abducted

Sources: Author compilation from Ogunyale, K. (2024) and Onah, C. K. (2024).

all the students return safely home. The upshot of this has been reduced political incentives for the Nigerian government to act:

> When the world just moves on … because the international community is not putting as much pressure on the government, it has relaxed, which is something our government does: the moment it knows there's no pressure anywhere, it just goes back.
>
> (Interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018)

The slide in international attention towards the Chibok abductions is also seen as giving carte blanche to violent extremist groups like Boko Haram to 'take any child from anywhere' (interview, RP1, Abuja, 25 September 2018) and not expect to be held accountable, though it must be said that initial offers of military help from Global North governments were gradually eroded by the Nigerian state's refusals thereof. This inability to tackle effectively threats to children's safety has certainly

been borne out by a drastic upsurge in abductions in the northeast since 2014 (see Table 2.1).

Conclusion

At its peak, Bring Back Our Girls was a highly diffuse movement with diverse actors across the world holding events that were directly and indirectly connected to organising in Nigeria. At the time of my field research in 2018, a vastly diminished core of activists, primarily in Nigeria and the United States, continued to advocate on social media and hold sporadic events on milestone days. Today, ten years after the abductions, Bring Back Our Girls in Nigeria and worldwide is a shadow of its former self, with an even smaller core of activists holding sporadic landmark events on annual anniversaries and making occasional posts on social media. As of April 2014, 82 of the 276 Chibok students abducted in April 2014 remain in captivity (Adejo, 2024; Busari, 2024),[20] their fate rendered even more complex by recent reports that unknown numbers of them are choosing to remain with their Boko Haram husbands and former captors (Nwaubani, 2024).

This chapter has shown that beyond its tangible contributions towards the rescue and return of almost 200 of the Chibok students, Bring Back Our Girls holds far-reaching significance that transcends the abductions and Boko Haram and extends to broader implications for Nigeria. Having focused on this significance for politics in this chapter, I address in the remaining parts of this book the movement's significance for knowledge.

Notes

1 According to the Cambridge Dictionary, 'herstory' means 'history written from the point of view of women, and giving importance to their experiences and activities'. At its root is the idea that history privileges the perspectives of men. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/herstory

2 Chibok Town is considered remote to Nigerians outside the northeast but is situated in a region bordering the Sahel that was once a vibrant trade and cultural hub for people in neighbouring countries (Abubakar, 2017; Hiribarren, 2017).

3 Allamin declined to speak with me during fieldwork in Maiduguri. For her story, I relied on an incisive herstory written by Sue Diaz: 'The Woman Who Talks With Boko Haram—The Life and Work of Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria', https://voicesofwomen.org/podpress_trac/web/2761/0/Sue-Diaz-Interview-.mp3

4 Wakil is a Nigerian woman of Igbo and Christian origin who moved to Maiduguri with her Muslim husband and befriended many original Boko Haram members as a mother figure while they were growing up, hence the moniker 'Mama Boko Haram' (Mother of Boko Haram). She is one of very few people who have access to the group. See Oduah, C. 2020. 'Mama Boko Haram': one woman's extraordinary mission to rescue 'her boys' from terrorism, The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jul/09/mama-boko-haram-nigeria-maiduguri [accessed 9 January 2021].

5 The full text of Allamin's statement can be accessed here: https://womenpeacemakers.atavist.com/the-woman-who-talks-with-boko-haram#chapter-2125302

6 A selfie is 'an image that includes oneself (often with another person or as part of a group) and is taken by oneself using a digital camera especially for posting on social networks' (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfie).
7 The concept of selfie activism is acknowledged, mainly by studies in communication, as a new development in virtual activism made possible by the intersections of new technologies, evolving modes of political engagement, self-expression, and collective organisation that are reconfiguring traditional forms of and ideas about activism. Clare Sheehan, 2015, The Selfie Protest: A Visual Analysis of Activism in the Digital Age, Dissertation submitted to the Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science, August 2014, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the MSc in Media, Communication and Development, http://www.lse.ac.uk/media-and-communications/assets/documents/research/msc-dissertations/2014/Clare-Sheehan-MSc-Dissertation-Series-Formatted-Submission-AF.pdf [accessed19 September 2019].
8 Impressions include mentions and retweets of the hashtag. The hashtag trended in seven countries and 50 cities but was mentioned in many more. #BringBackOurGirls was the No. 1 trend in Accra, Benin City, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kano, Kumasi, Lagos, and Port Harcourt. It was the No. 2 trend in Soweto, Port Elizabeth, Nairobi, and Mobassa; the No. 5 trend in Cape Town, Durban, Washington, Pretoria, Portsmouth, Middleborough, and Hull; and the No. 6 trend in Auckland, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Coventry, Edinburgh, Swansea, Preston, London, Leicester, and Leeds. There were interesting mentions of #BringBackOurGirls in Krasnoyarsk (Russia), Shinjuku (Japan), Causeway Bay (Hong Kong), Guarapuava (Brazil), Havana (Cuba), and Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). Subomi Plumptre, 2014. Accessed 24 June 2019.
9 According to Plumptre (2014), based on Twitter analytics, as of 7 May 2014, #BringBackOurGirls had received 1.5 billion impressions and reached 440 million people worldwide. It trended at varying levels in at least 31 cities across the world, including some in Nigeria. https://twitter.com/BOG_Nigeria?s=20
10 '#BBCtrending: How a million people called to #BringBackOurGirls', 6 May 2014 [accessed 19 June 2019].
11 Olutokunbo et al. (2015 in Jibril, 2015, p. 1–2) state that as part of the on-going global campaign for Bring Back Our Girls, Habila (2014), the National President of the South African Association of Women Graduates (SAAWG) and other international organisations, called on the Nigerian government for the release of the abducted girls. Organisations that are championing the call for the Bring Back Our Girls' global campaign include: Women Arise against Terror, African National Congress of Women's League South Africa, The Global Partnership for Education (GPE), UNICEF, United Nations, Amnesty International, Nigeria's National Orientation Agency, to mention but a few. Aside from organisations, there are world-renowned celebrities and important personalities that joined the campaign. Prominent among them is then-US First Lady, Michelle Obama who held a placard sign, reading 'Bring Back Our Girls'; as solidarity for the global campaign for the safe rescue of the kidnapped Chibok girls. Also celebrities Chris Brown and Kerry Washington, and politicians David Cameron and Hillary Clinton (Chiluwa & Ifukor, 2015, p. 269).
12 A Panel Discussion: Chibok Girls, Not Forgotten, 14 April 2015, Voice of America, https://www.insidevoa.com/a/chibok-girls-not-forgotten/2711645.html [accessed 16 July 2019]
13 Hadiza Bala Usman, 2014, 'I am the future', inspirational speech at the 65th Annual Department of Public Information Conference, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J21-8KVC6ug [accessed 18 June 2019]
14 Ify Elueze, 2025, 'Bring Back Nigeria's 200 Missing School Girls #BringBackOurGirls', https://www.change.org/p/all-world-leaders-bring-back-nigeria-s-200-missing-school-girls-bringbackourgirls
15 Interviews with several Bring Back Our Girls members in Nigeria.
16 Aina et al. (2019) discuss this posture in more detail (pp. 26–27).

17 Associated Press, 2020, 'Growing Outcry in Ethiopia Over Abducted University Students', https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_growing-outcry-ethiopia-over-abducted-university-students/6183247.html
18 The ways in which different forms of media, including the digital, the analogue, and literary, music, and art activism, combined to keep the Chibok abductions and Bring Back Our Girls at the forefront of global consciousness.
19 This list depends on media reports that offer varying levels of accuracy and detail. Thus, some dates are not specific and the list may not be exhaustive.
20 57 escaped in the months following the abduction, two were rescued in May and November 2016 and January 2018, and Boko Haram freed 21 of them in October 2016 and a further 82 in May 2017.

References

Adejo, D. (2024, May 9). Military hands over rescued Chibok girl children to Borno govt. *Radio Nigeria*. Retrieved June 24, 2024, from https://radionigeria.gov.ng/2024/05/09/military-hands-over-rescued-chibok-girl-children-to-borno-govt/

Abubakar, B. (2017). *Origin and meaning of Maiduguri*. Unpublished paper. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/318215637_Origin_and_Meaning_of_Maidugur

Adesanmi, P. (2014). #WhoOwnsTheProblem? *Premium Times*. Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/161783-whoownstheproblem-pius-adesanmi.html

Adesanmi, P. (2020). *Who owns the problem?: Africa and the struggle for agency*. Michigan State University Press.

Aina, T. A., Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Dayil, P. B., & Aremu, F. A. (2019). *Beyond tweets and screams: Action for empowerment and accountability in Nigeria – The case of the #BBOG movement*. Retrieved from https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/14559/Wp529_Online.pdf?isAllowed=y&sequence=1

Ajayi, T. (2015). Taking stock of "Bring Back Our Girls" at Chibok's day 500. *Nonprofit Quarterly.* Retrieved from https://nonprofitquarterly.org/taking-stock-of-bring-back-our-girls-at-chiboks-day-500/

Ajayi, T. (2016). And then there were 197: The bittersweet triumph of #BringBackOurGirls. *Nonprofit Quarterly.* Retrieved from https://nonprofitquarterly.org/197-bittersweet-triumph-bringbackourgirls/

Bala-Usman, H. (2015). Statement during advocacy meeting with Buhari and Osinbajo on 9 July 2015. *Oak TV.* Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Uw5iRbwiM8

#BBCtrending. (2014, May 6). How a million people called to #BringBackOurGirls. *BBC News*. https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-2729869

Branch, A., & Mampilly, Z. (2015). *Africa uprising: Popular protest and political change*. Zed Books.

Busari, S. (2024). They were kidnapped from a boarding school 10 years ago. Hear their stories. *CNN.* Retrieved from https://edition.cnn.com/2024/04/14/africa/chibok-girls-ten-years-as-equals-intl-cmd/index.html

Carroll, E., & Stephan, A. (2017). *Between scholarship and social movements: In conversation with Jeffrey Juris*. Retrieved August 23, 2019, from https://researchmatters.ssrc.org/between-scholarship-and-social-movements-in-conversation-with-jeffrey-juris/

Chiluwa, I., & Ifukor, P. (2015). War against our children: Stance and evaluation in #BringBackOurGirls campaign discourse on Twitter and Facebook. *Discourse and Society*, *26*(3), 267–296. http://eprints.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/7182/1/Chiluwa%20%26%20Ifukor_%202015_D%26S1.pdf

Cook, K. (2007). *Stolen angels: The kidnapped girls of Uganda*. Penguin Global.

De Temmerman, E. (2001). *Aboke girls: Children abducted in Northern Uganda*. Fountain Publishers.

Diaz, S. (2017). *The woman who talks with Boko Haram: The life and work of Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria*. Retrieved June 19, 2019, from https://womenpeacemakers.atavist.com/the-woman-who-talks-with-boko-haram no date?

Facebook (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/bringbackourgirls/?ti=as

Gouws, A. (2015). Unpacking the difference between feminist and women's movements in Africa. *The Conversation Africa*. https://theconversation.com/unpacking-the-difference-between-feminist-and-womens-movements-in-africa-4525

Gouws, A., & Coetzee, A. (2019). Women's movements and feminist activism. *Agenda*, *33*(2), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1080/10130950.2019.161926

Habila, H. (2024, April 17). #BringBackOurGirls fought to keep global attention on Nigeria's stolen Chibok girls. Ten years on, it is still fighting. *The Guardian*. Retrieved June 24, 2024, from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/apr/17/bringbackourgirls-fought-to-keep-global-attention-on-nigerias-stolen-chibok-girls-ten-years-on-it-is-still-fighting

Hiribarren, V. (2017). *A history of Borno: Trans-Saharan African empire to failing Nigerian state*. Hurst and Co.

Ibeh, N. (2014a). *INTERVIEW: Meet the man who generated #BringBackOurGirls hashtag*. Retrieved April 10, 2018, from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/162803-interview-meet-man-generated-bringbackourgirls-hashtag.html

Ibeh, N. (2014b). Nigerian military retracts claim it freed 107 abducted schoolgirls, says students are still missing. *Premium Times.* Retrieved June 19, 2019, from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/158970-nigerian-military-retracts-claim-freed-107-abducted-schoolgirls-says-students-still-missing.html

Iroanusi, Q., & Fadare, T. (2022). UPDATED: Nigerian women protest after lawmakers reject bills seeking gender equality. *Premium Times.* Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/514778-nigerian-women-protest-after-lawmakers-reject-bills-seeking-gender-equality.html

Jibril, A. (2015). *Online newspaper coverage of the "bring back our girls" Campaign in Nigeria* (MA Thesis). University of Ghana.

Juris, J. S. (2007). Constituent imagination: Militant investigations, collective theorization. In S. Shukaitis & D. Graeber (Eds.), *Constituent imagination: Militant investigations/collective theorization* (pp. 164–167). Oakland, CA: AK Press.

Kawu, I. M. (2014). Asari-Dokubo insists Chibok abduction is a scam, stages protest [PHOTOS]. *Vanguard Newspaper.* Retrieved from https://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/05/president-goodluck-jonathans-fallouts-chibok/

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015a). Becoming an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*. Retrieved April 10, 2018.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015b). Suturing together girls and education: An investigation into the social (re)production of girls' education as a hegemonic ideology. *Diaspora, Indigenous and Minority Education*, 9(2), 87–107.

Maneater, R. (2014). *How ramaa mosley and girl rising tried to co-opt a movement*. Retrieved April 11, 2018, from http://powderroom.kinja.com/how-ramaa-mosley-and-girl-rising-tried-to-co-opt-a-move-1574111776

Murtala Muhammed Foundation. (2024). The chibok girls abduction: A turning point in the global fight against girls. *Abduction*. Retrieved June 24, 2024, from https://mmfglobal.org/events/chibok-girls-abduction/

Murphy, E. (2017). *#BringBackOurGirls: Solidarity or self-interest? Online feminist movements and third world women* [Master's thesis, University of Canterbury].

NBC News. (2014). *Hashtag wars: Who's behind the Nigeria #BringBackOurGirls movement?* Retrieved from https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/social-media/hashtag-wars-whos-behind-nigeria-bringbackourgirls-movement-n100771

Nwaubani, A. T. (2024). Nigeria's Chibok girls: Parents of kidnapped children heartbroken - again. *BBC.* Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-68680541

Ofori-Parku, S. S., & Moscato, D. (2018). Hashtag activism as a form of political action: A qualitative analysis of the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign in Nigerian, UK, and U.S. Press. *International Journal of Communication, 12*(3), 269–287.

Ogunyale, K. (2024). TIMELINE: Over 1000 schoolchildren kidnapped since Chibok incident. *International Centre for Investigative Reporting*. Retrieved from https://www.icirnigeria.org/timeline-over-1000-schoolchildren-kidnapped-in-10-years/

Okome, M. O. (2017). *Fleeing Boko Haram: The Trauma of captivity and challenge of freedom*. African Peacebuilding Network, APN Working Papers: No. 11.

Okome, M. O., & Vaughn, O. (Eds.). (2011). *Globalization and transnational Africa*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Onah, C. K. (2024). #BringBackOurGirls: Transnational activism and the remediation of the 2014 Chibok girls kidnapping in Nigeria. *African Studies Review, 6,*1–26.

Plumptre, S. (2014). *#BringBackOurGirls: A case for online advocacy*. Retrieved from https://subomiplumptre.com/bringbackourgirls1

Premium Times. (2015). *TIME magazine names Buhari, Ezekwesili, Shekau among world's most influential people*. Retrieved July 16, 2019, from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/top-news/181541-time-magazine-names-buhari-ezekwesili-shekau-among-worlds-most-influential-people.html

Rotinwa, A. (2016). *Inside a #BringBackOurGirls protest*. Retrieved September 10, 2019, from https://thisisafrica.me/politics-and-society/inside-a-bringbackourgirls-protest/

Scott, B. M. (2014). #Save (Bring Back) Our Girls: Race, gender, age, and the plight of African American girls. *Issues in Race and Society*, *2*(2), 7–24.

Smith, C. (2015). *The technology of hope: Twitter and the #BringBackOurGirls campaign* (MA Thesis). Royal Roads University, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Para-Mallam, F. J. (2017). Gender equality in Nigeria. In R. C. Ezeani & C. M. Onwuegbuchulam (Eds.), *Global gender equality: Social and economic perspectives* (pp. 21–34). Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315639505

Unah, L. (2019). Normalised but not normal: Nigerian women call out gropers and catcallers. *The Guardian UK*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/04/normalised-but-not-normal-nigerian-women-call-out-gropers-and-catcallers-market-march-movement-yaba-market-lagos

Wikipedia. (2020). *Ramaa Mosley*. Retrieved September 10, 2020, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramaa_Mosley

Williamson, E., Andrews, N., & Phillips, M. M. (2014). In push to free Nigerian girls, a tangled web. *Wall Street Journal.* Retrieved September 10, 2020, from https://www.wsj.com/articles/social-media-campaign-to-free-nigerian-girls-turns-tangled-web-1399592819

Women's Media Center. (2015). WMC live #114: Sharon Isbin, Rossana D'Antonio, Hadiza Bala Usman. *Original Airdate.* Retrieved from http://wmclive.libsyn.com/wmc-live-114-sharon-isbin-rossana-dantonio-hadiza-bala-usman-original-airdate-2142015

3 A Historical Overview of Theoretical Approaches to Transnational Activism

Introduction

This book contains two chapters on theoretical approaches to transnational activism. This first chapter explores dominant theories and concepts of transnational activism, focusing mainly on literature in international relations (IR). The chapter juxtaposes these frameworks with Bring Back Our Girls as an episode of contemporary transnational activism that is observed as 'becoming virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global' (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 7). This chapter suggests that because established conceptual frameworks and approaches to the study of transnational activism are preoccupied with the mobilisational agency of formal non-state groups—predominantly NGOs and NGO networks—the new dimensions signalled by contemporary activisms like Bring Back Our Girls find limited resonance within them. This necessitates a re-viewing of transnational activism today and an engagement with knowledge from other disciplines that is more open, and thus more attuned, to new and evolving dimensions of transnational activism.

The chapter is structured into four main parts. I begin by exploring various constructions and models of what constitutes transnational activism, from which I formulate a taxonomy of typologies. This is followed by a discussion of how IR scholarship frames the relationships and power dynamics among the actors that make up dominant forms of activism.[1] In a third section, I consider the factors that influence participation in transnational activism, noting that IR has focused more on normative and strategic motivations of formal collective actors, overlooking the motivations of looser, mass-based groups and their individual members. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of gaps derived from this discussion and indications for new theorisation.

Conceptualising Transnational Activism

Five factors are common to definitions of transnational activism: (i) contention or political action, (ii) typically by nonstate actors, (iii) directed against powerful actors, (iv) who are coordinated and connected—often in networks, and (v) which operate in international or cross-border spatiality. Della Porta and Tarrow (2005, p. 7) describe what they call 'transnational collective action' as 'coordinated

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-4

international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions'. Similarly, Ilcan and Lacey (2013, p. 1) define transnational activism as a 'range of synchronized cross-border activities, campaigns, and movements on the part of networks of activists working counter to various state actors, international actors, or international institutions'. Keck and Sikkink (1999, p. 90) emphasise the 'structured and structuring' dimensions of transnational advocacy networks. Their mapping of transnational actors foregrounds groups and organisations with collective identities, like churches, foundations, and regional and intergovernmental organisations, and they identify NGOs as playing a central role and initiating actions.

These framings contain an implied assumption of cohesion, coordination, and homogeneity among people and organisations that participate in transnational activism. The concept of networks is central to each definition. However, these concepts are an uneasy fit for conceptualising Bring Back Our Girls—a multilayered collective of different formations of diverse individuals and organisations with varying connections, whose activism was not closely coordinated among everyone who took part in various countries across the world. Bring Back Our Girls was started and led by a core of individual activists with intermittent support from individual members of some civil society organisations (CSOs), like the African Women's Development and Communication Network (aka FEMNET), and solidarity by numerous other individuals across the world. I represent these layers of relationship as parts of a matrix as illustrated in Figure 3.1. Although Bring Back Our Girls operated with a loose, fluid structure, the level of looseness varied depending on how closely other actors communicated with and copied their repertoires. The core thus comprised the structure on the ground in Nigeria and others outside who were in close communication with the group and helped plan and accompany protest events. The semi-periphery was made up of those who were loosely connected albeit using similar repertoires, and the periphery comprised

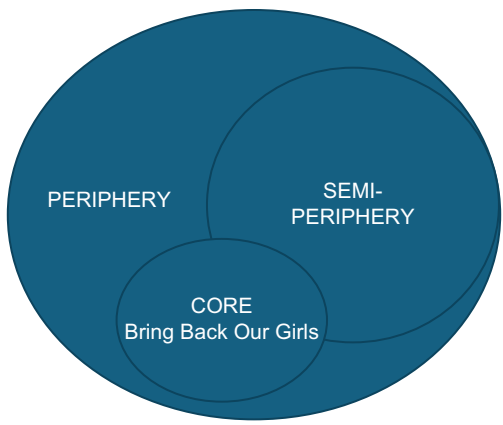

Figure 3.1 A taxonomy of transnational activism.

Source: Author construct from fieldwork data.

those not connected at all in terms of direct exchanges of communication but who advocated the same cause.

Several Bring Back Our Girls activists had personal transnational capital that did not depend on the agencies of transnational NGO networks. For example, co-founder Obiageli Ezekwesili, a former Nigerian minister of solid minerals and education, and former vice president of the World Bank's Africa region, is a well-known global figure whose involvement and outspokenness drew widespread attention to the Chibok story. Also, the identities and worldviews of Bring Back Our Girls' participants whom I interviewed in the five focal countries were as intersectional as their locations were diverse. Third, and relatedly, while Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria shared a lot of information via social media and email, including informational material that they urged participants to use for their activities, research conducted for this book indicates that not every person who participated had access to this information or knew about the campaign. This contradicts Keck and Sikkink's indicator of 'dense webs of exchange of information, funding and other resources' (1998, p. 2), as well as their idea that members of transnational advocacy networks are differently situated individuals who become acquainted over a considerable period of time and develop similar worldviews.

Diani's (1992) conception of social movement, one of several actors of transnational activism, centres more on function and relationship than structure. He defines it as 'a distinct social process, consisting of the mechanisms through which actors engaged in collective action: are involved in conflictual relations with clearly identified opponents, are linked by dense informal networks; share a distinct collective identity'. The notion of distinct collective identity sets social movements apart from other forms of transnational collective action. Its absence from parallel anti-austerity protests across Latin America in the 1980s leads Tarrow (2005, p. 68) to conclude that these did not constitute a social movement. Some participants in Bring Back Our Girls were connected through multiple personal and professional networks, and were conscious of being part of a collective. Others had more amorphous relationships outside these networks that trouble Diani's notion of collective identity.

The multiconnective structure of Bring Back Our Girls resonates somewhat with Zajak, Egels-Zanden, and Piper's (2019) concept of networks of labour activism (NOLAs) as cross-border, cross-organisational forms of transnational labour activism that bring together 'a multitude' of local and global groups with 'very different organizational structures, ideological backgrounds, interests and access to resources' (Zajak et al., 2019, p. 905). Though their units of analysis are labour activist groups—as opposed to individuals and different types of activist organisations in Bring Back Our Girls—the concept of multiple, at times conflicting, agencies of different types of actors is salient. The novelty of NOLAs is that unlike the scholarly representation of transnational advocacy networks, they tend to originate in the Global South, and intra-network relations are multilayered and multidimensional (p. 904). Ideological and other affinities do not guarantee cooperation, just as conflict and differences may not prevent it. The structures of NOLAs are not fixed and modulate over time in tandem with their internal dynamics (Zajak et al., 2019, p. 904).

Tarrow (2005, pp. 163–164) critiques the construct of network on grounds that it has both structural and purposive meanings that span opposite ends of a spectrum of, for example, strangers who have similar preferences but no connection and people who take coordinated action. He argues that networks offer 'mobilisation potential' for more purposive structures like coalitions, which he defines as 'collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change'. His typology of event coalitions and other types examines different structures that vary in purpose and duration but are based on participants' consciousness of shared identities that do not reflect the realities of all Bring Back Our Girls participants.

With reference to online-based 'social collectives' and how the Internet is altering the structures and modalities of collective action, Dolata and Schrape (2016, p. 2) distinguish loosely between 'non-organized collectives and collective actors capable of intentional, strategic action'. Activity in the first category constitutes an 'aggregation of similar decisions and behaviors of individuals', which may lead to mass activity and, eventually, to more organised collectives (Dolata & Schrape, 2016, p. 24). There is no organising core or deliberate intent to act together. In contrast, organised collectives are 'based on implicit and explicit rules, their members share a conscious feeling of togetherness, and they form regularly around formal organizational units' (Dolata & Schrape, 2016, p. 4). Dolata and Schrape distinguish masses (incidental collectives such as mass preference for Facebook), crowds (event-related, for example clicktivism), and partial-issue publics (such as temporary e-discussions on Twitter about viral issues) as three variants of both types of collective behaviour that illustrate momentary 'situational forms of the collective' (Dolata & Schrape, 2016, p. 5). As elaborated later in this chapter, Dolata and Schrape (2016, pp. 5–8) counter thinking about these collectives as 'spontaneous and volatile', arguing that technological infrastructures, particularly those of social media networks, influence how social collectives are formed and the ways in which they function.

The agency and structure of Bring Back Our Girls make it a complex blend of multiple forms of collective and connective action that do not conform neatly with dominant forms of activist organisations. It was started by individual activists in different states in Nigeria whose activities at that level were coordinated. Outside the country, different individuals and groups of people took part in different ways and for different reasons. In other countries, individuals led multiple protests that employed some of the same repertoires (red clothing, banners with similar messaging, marches, vigils, and social media, among others) but had no or limited communication with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria where the campaign started. Thus, while Bring Back Our Girls can be said to have operated like a social movement and an advocacy network to varying extents at different times, it did not (consistently) take either form. Yet, it is clearly more than a collection of protests, given the symmetry of framing and repertoires, and the fact that all Bring Back Our Girls protests were about a specific incident in a single country. Herein lies the justification, in line with Keck and Sikkink, for this book's use of the grounded theory approach to explore Bring Back Our Girls and induce from empirical data possible

new theoretical directions from a new form of transnational activism, given the shortcomings in IR scholarship.

During fieldwork, I observed that participant activists alternately used different words to describe Bring Back Our Girls, with campaign, movement, and advocacy being used most frequently. In light of long histories of collective action in Nigeria and Africa, and given the Northern derivations and etymologies of these terms, Bring Back Our Girls could be said to be all and none of these things. On one hand, Bring Back Our Girls possesses some characteristics associated with these external articulations of collective action.[2] On the other hand, these terms essentially encapsulate varying forms of social mobilisations in contexts different to Africa's and may thus not be the most accurate conveyors of this growing reality.

It must also be noted that Bring Back Our Girls had a distinct and active digital presence which was co-constitutive with its offline personality and activity. In both incarnations, its Nigerian creators liaised directly with a core group of actors in and outside the country. Their activism was also supported by diverse other actors who had no direct or sustained relationship with either the core collective or its founders. A layered perspective thus permits recognition of the multiple forms of collectives and collective action that took place within the ambit of Bring Back Our Girls. This suggests that new transnational activism is not as binary as scholarship suggests, nor does it transition neatly from one collective form to another, but different forms can co-occur and this is made possible by increasing levels of digital collectivism and collectivisation.

A Taxonomy of Transnational Activism Actors

Transnational Advocacy Networks

One of the most studied and theorised forms of transnational activism in IR is the transnational advocacy network, first propounded by Keck and Sikkink (1998a, 1999), though the idea and its practice predate their conceptualisation. In their work on transnational advocacy in international and regional politics, Keck and Sikkink (1999, p. 89) define transnational advocacy networks as 'includes those actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services'. NGOs play a 'central role' in transnational advocacy networks, which are made up of a range of mainly organisational actors (Keck & Sikkink 1999, pp. 91–92). transnational advocacy networks usually form and emerge around particular campaigns or claims (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 93) and are driven by values or norms and activists' motives to further their organisational objectives (Keck & Sikkink 1999, p. 93).

This early attempt to describe the structures of transnational activism is regarded by many in and outside IR as important (Murdie & Polizzi, 2017; Tarrow, 2019). It has been widely cited and is viewed as foundational to much consequent theorising of the actors who drive activism across borders. The network concept retains salience in the study of transnational activism, including in recent work on resistance by transnational labour collectives. From the vantage point of collective

organising by informal economy workers in Africa, Lindell (2010, p. 209) suggests that transnational activism by these actors today involves alliances with multiple actors, positions, agendas, and identities that make up a complex 'networked politics of informality', occurring in different spatial contexts and with multiple layers and connections. Writing about networks of labour activism in Asia, Zajak et al. (2019) also note the eclectic nature of these actors and their exchanges. Both works embody a caution to not essentialise transnational actors or the ways in which they engage politically. Wong and Brown (2013) highlight how the Internet has given way to networks of disembodied activists who connect fluidly through loose social media digital networks of people who share common interests, as opposed to through NGOs or other formal organisations. Thus, we see that transnational activist networks are still active, but becoming increasingly diverse, which necessitates the expansion of existing labels and concepts to accommodate new and evolving forms of activism.

Rooted Cosmopolitans, Networks, Coalitions, and Social Movements

Amid the historic preoccupation of relevant literature on collective activism, Tarrow's (2005, p. 164) *New Transnational Activism* is one of the first to provide expansive theoretical coverage of a range of forms of transnational contention that includes individuals (Bob, 2006, p. 346). Tarrow is a professor of political science, but his book is cited here because it draws heavily on IR scholarship and speaks to Keck and Sikkink's work in his attempt to broaden the constitution of transnational activism actors. He identifies four forms of transnational activism/transnational activist actors: rooted cosmopolitans, networks, coalitions, and social movements. The latter three have received far greater scholarly attention. Rooted cosmopolitans are individuals who simultaneously straddle their home contexts and engage in political contention in transnational contexts. This would include figures like Wangari Maathai, Nelson Mandela, many of the leaders of Bring Back Our Girls, and, most recently, individual youth activists for climate change across the world (Mogoatlhe, 2020). In the context of Africa, this concept resonates with Selasi's (2005) 'Afropolitans'—a contested referent to African cosmopolitan emigrants—and Nyamnjoh's (2017, pp. 258–259) 'frontier Africans'—construed as straddling 'physical and cultural geographies', and navigating 'myriad margins of identity and belonging'. Both encapsulate the intersections between growing global mobilities and the changing politics of identity and belonging of African actors.

In *The New Transnational Activism*, Tarrow (2005, pp. 4–5) asserts that quantitative and qualitative factors separate new and old forms of activism. Activism has increased and involves a wide range of ordinary people and elites, and domestic and international concerns. According to Tarrow, although globalisation accounts for some of these changes, it offers only a partial explanation; at the time that he wrote, there had been protests against economic injustice as well as successful ones against autocratic governance and human rights and for democracy (Tarrow, 2005, p. 6). Amid the changing configuration of international society, Tarrow credits the growth of transnational activism to the growth of rooted cosmopolitans, 'a stratum

of individuals who travel regularly, read foreign books and journals, and become involved in networks of transactions abroad'. Rosenau et al. (2003) refer to this group as 'cutting-edgers', individuals who contribute to diverse transnational processes and operate on the cutting edge of globalisation.

Social movements are conscious collectives of shared identities that make claims on target authorities using tested methods, typically within an identifiable structure (Tarrow, 2005, pp. 6–7). Tarrow adopts Levi and Murphy's (2004, p. 5) definition of coalitions as 'Collaborative, means-oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change'. He identifies four types of coalitions that are determined and vary by depth and duration of cooperation among their constituents: instrumental coalitions, event coalitions, federated coalitions, and campaign coalitions (Tarrow, 2005, pp. 167–168). Instrumental coalitions are characterised by short-term duration and low involvement. They exist only as long as the 'conjuncture of interest' that brings them together lasts (Tarrow, 2005, pp. 167–168). Event coalitions like the Battle of Seattle are short-term too, but with a higher level of involvement among groups with shared identities. Federated coalitions combine low involvement with long-term duration, while campaign coalitions like the international landmines campaign combine high involvement with long-term cooperation.

Tarrow's conceptualisation of coalitions hints at an ascending scalar relationship among networks, coalitions, and social movements—the three types of transnational activism that he discusses. Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink (2002, pp. 6–10) explicitly theorise the relationships among four types or forms of transnational activism: international/transnational NGOs, transnational advocacy networks, transnational coalitions/campaigns, and social movements. In their model, transnational advocacy networks are groupings of cross-border actors who are connected by shared values or concerns, dense exchanges and use of information, and a common discourse (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 1999). Transnational coalitions or campaigns and social movements are more structured. Coalitions or campaigns involve deeper transnational coordination and a greater degree of interaction about how to implement campaigns (strategies or tactics). Transnational social movements have the capacity for sustained and coordinated social mobilisation in more than one country to influence social change, often through protest or disruptive action (Khagram et al., 2002, p. 8).

The 'structured and structuring' function of networks, and synchronisation or coordination are considered key aspects of transnational activism by other influential scholars, notably Della Porta and Tarrow (2005, p. 7), in their work on 'transnational collective action', and Ilcan and Lacey (2013, p. 1). This does not reflect the more diffuse and multimodal forms of activism occurring across the world today which demand new conceptual frameworks and methodological approaches that are being signalled by scholarship outside IR, specifically sociology and communication/media studies. Wong and Brown (2013), for instance, introduce the concept of extraordinary bandits (e-bandits), using the cases of WikiLeaks[3] and Anonymous[4] to illustrate the emergence of a new political actor that transgresses traditional conceptions of activism as street protests and opens up participation in ways that

show that 'activism has outgrown organizations as the way by which individuals connect'. E-bandits are 'principled actors who capitalize on the Internet and other information technologies to lead disembodied, virtual attacks against physical targets in order to encourage political change'. Wong and Brown's groundbreaking work signals a growing recognition by IR scholars of the growing significance of individual actors in transnational activism.

An Expanding Typology of Actors

The foregoing are actors traditionally recognised by a second generation of IR scholarship on transnational activism from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. A third generation, writing since the mid-2000s, documents the increasing involvement of new actors as well as new forms of activism by existing actors. Pallas and Bloodgood (2019, p. 10)[5] note that transnational advocacy is 'no longer primarily about network relationships between Northern and Southern NGOs or CSOs', but now involves a wider range of types of actors, including local government actors, grassroots associations, churches, unions, professional associations, and commercial enterprises. They recognise the increasing agency of all actors in the Global South and the ability of 'networked individuals connected via social media platforms' to mobilise effectively without formal network or organisational structures. Pallas and Bloodgood (2019) do not discuss them in detail.

Voller (2019, 2020) focuses attention on the 'emerging role of diaspora communities as a transnational civil society and the role they play as activists and campaigners'. His typology of diasporan activists bears some resemblance to Tarrow's rooted cosmopolitans as transnational nationalists, but Voller discusses them as part of larger collectives as opposed to individuals. He notes that diasporas have gone beyond their traditional role of economic participation through remittances, and that young diasporans want to be more involved in improving life in their home countries and can be found working jobs that can help fulfil this objective in various practical ways (Voller, 2019). This idea is embodied in Müller-Funk's (2019, pp. 1113–1114) use of the concept of political remittances, defined as the political transmission of 'political principles, vocabulary and practices between two or more places', to describe contemporary diasporan transnationalism.

According to Voller (2019, 2020), this shift has been neglected by IR scholarship. It is interesting that Voller's examples of diaspora activism involve not protests or other forms of resistance and confrontation, but varied actions to improve living conditions, particularly for the most vulnerable, in communities in their home countries. This signals a shift in the construction of activism from confrontation through protests to transformation through hands-on engagement. Müller-Funk (2019) echoes this idea by distinguishing between Egyptian diasporans' participation in 'direct activism'—protests in Egypt—and 'indirect activism'—actions targeted at migrant communities in host countries. It is also important to note that diaspora activism is not always cohesive or positive; Afolabi (2017) notes the prominent role played by Liberian diasporans in the United States in both ending and fomenting conflict during the country's long civil war.

Diasporan activism, particularly by youth, is also the focus of Müller-Funk's (2019, 2020) work on Egypt. She proposes six categories of transnational activists, namely: the Revolutionary Traveller, the Politicised Student, the Coptic Community Leader, the R4bia Activist,[6] the Second-Generation Diaspora Activist, and the Female Transnational Activist—all individual types who were involved in diaspora activism during Egypt's 2011 uprisings. Her schema expands the range and diversity of individual activists beyond rooted cosmopolitans and celebrity activists. She also notes the importance of personal networks of individuals founded based on family ties and close social relations (Müller-Funk, 2019, pp. 1116, 1125), broadening the discourses around how transnational networks form and whom they comprise.

The pyramid in Figure 3.2 brings together multiple forms of transnational activism from across several generations of IR scholarship, dating from Keck and Sikkink (1998a, 1999) to Voller (2019) and Müller-Funk (2019). It represents the known structured organisational forms of activism but excludes the more individualised and loose, mass-based forms that characterise campaigns like the Women's March and Bring Back Our Girls. Citing Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery (2009), Murdie and Polizzi (2017, p. 8) suggest that preoccupation with NGOs, particularly international ones, is a function of the difficulty of collecting data on non-international NGOs, exposing a methodological gap in the choice of cases on which

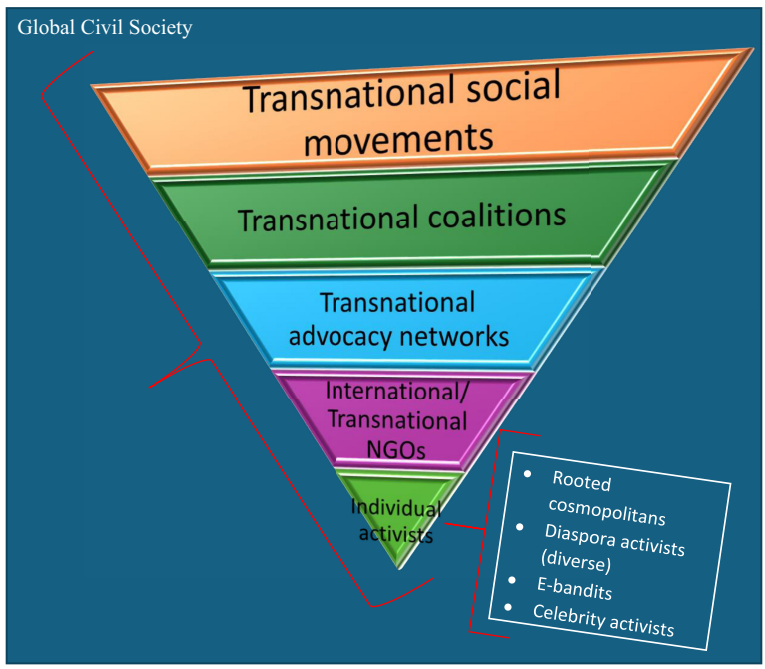

Figure 3.2 Taxonomy of transnational activism.

Source: Author construct from consulted literature.

this body of work is based. A further deficit that is not mentioned often is that much IR literature explores the impact of non-state transnationalism on states and is thus oriented more towards studying what can be considered tangible policy changes that are brought about over a period of time by durable organisational networks and coalitions. Compared to these, mobilisations without rigid structures tend to not last as long: they either become obsolete or transition into formal organisations.

As Tarrow (2005, p. 7) rightly notes, each of the forms represented in Figure 3.2 exists on a spectrum. However, I argue, with Khagram et al. (2002, p. 9), that these categories and their associated modalities are not fixed or mutually exclusive and can modulate from one form to another in either direction (i.e., from collective to individual and vice versa). I also argue that contemporary activism is increasingly multimodal with different forms occurring simultaneously around the same issues and objectives.

The taxonomy of forms of transnational activism is presented within the broad context of global civil society, a contested yet prevalent analytical framework that pervades much IR scholarship on this subject. The changing meanings and forms of global civil society were the focus of a ten-year project led by Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor (2001 to 2012). While admitting that the concept means different things to different people, the authors (2001, p. 2) offer several descriptive definitions, including that it 'posits the existence of a social sphere...above and beyond national, regional, or local societies'; it represents 'a supranational sphere of social and political participation in which citizens groups, social movements, and individuals engage in dialogue, debate, confrontation, and negotiation with each other and with various governmental actors—international, national, and local—as well as the business world'. This idea of a sociopolitical space where a plethora of actors engage in vibrant exchanges is common to most definitions of global civil society (Anheier et al., 2001; Taylor, 2002; Kaldor, 2003).

Anheier et al. (2001, p. 3) acknowledge that global civil society has changed in form and substance over the years. They acknowledge the existence of divergent perspectives of the concept from a 'counterweight' to global capitalism, through to the growth of professional advocacy and interest groups, to global humanitarianism and the 'growing connectedness of citizens' occasioned by traditional and social media, among other factors. On this point, Jordan (2011) queries whether the fact of cross-border activism is actually synonymous with the growth and consolidation of 'a genuine sense of global community, a global civic culture, or the emergence of global citizenship' or is it just a sign of 'national interests that are increasingly active in the global arena'. Global civil society or civic space is nonetheless a useful analytical framework within which to situate the diverse forms of transnational activism.

Relations among Transnational Activism Actors

The Boomerang Model and Its Variants

Although the boomerang was first theorised by Keck and Sikkink (1998a, 1999), I discuss it here alongside a broad category of knowledge by scholars, including De

Waal (2015) and Rodríguez-Garavito (2015), that critically engages the boomerang model in different contexts.

In Keck and Sikkink's framing, transnational advocacy networks are spaces that connect domestic activists from 'less developed' countries (Southern) with those from 'developed' countries (Northern) in situations where domestic governments are unresponsive to local actors. They call this the boomerang model (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 93, see also Figure 3.2) in which Northern activists help to amplify Southern activists' demands—in response to requests from the latter—and provide material and symbolic resources, while deriving legitimacy for their involvement (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, p. 93). Keck and Sikkink (1999, p. 91) present the relationships among these actors as 'voluntary, reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange, implying the absence of power relations'.

In Keck and Sikkink's framing and De Waal's (2015, p. 30) illustration of the boomerang model (Figure 3), transnational activism is presented as a process that transpires between Southern and Northern actors, with the relationship between them depicted as vertical and Northern advocacy organisations placed atop Southern NGOs and activists, indicating the flow of power as viewed by boomerang advocates. De Waal (2015) depicts the South-North relationship as one of client and patron, in which Southern actors depend for their image and wellbeing on foreign sponsors. The empirical basis of this, as noted by Pallas and Bloodgood (2019, p. 1), is the erstwhile domination of transnational advocacy by international NGOs and the low capacity, expertise, and resources of Southern civil society organisations to engage and access transnational political actors that created a need for and dependence on Northern actors. The agency of Southern actors in initiating transnational activisms by seeking out Northern actors is also assumed by Bob (2005) in his work on Ogoniland protests and by Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) in their work on the forging of North-South alliances.

And yet the same scholars present the boomerang model as one in which relations are equitable and Southern actors have a say in the agenda and repertoires of action of the advocacy that derives from their appeals for help to Northern actors.

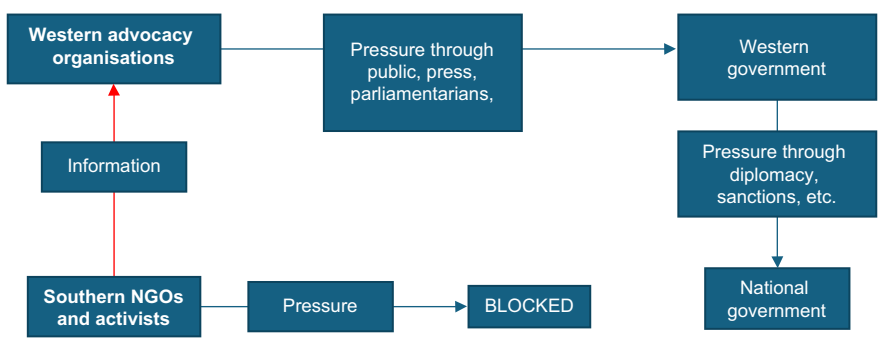

Figure 3.3 The insider policy lobby model of transnational activism.

Source: De Waal (2015, p. 38).

But this assumption has been critiqued on several grounds. According to Routledge (2003), transnational advocacy networks are embedded in 'place-specific configurations of social relations and particular local histories, as well as local cultural and political contexts'. He also states in a co-authored work that transnational advocacy networks do not adequately problematise issues of power (Routledge, Cumbers, & Nativel, 2007). Collectively, these factors create room for contestations within TANs. Further, the fact that material and symbolic resources are constructed as flowing from North to South—what Sampson (2002, p. 4 in Murdie & Polizzi, 2017, p. 7) terms 'benevolent colonialism'—defies the possibility of equality. As Carpenter (2007, p. 114) notes, this 'colonial' view (see also Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019, p. 268) on the historical structural inequities that led to this is optimistic and masks the politics that occur within and between Southern NGOs and activists networks. She argues that transnational network actors are better understood and analysed as ideational figures that operate in bureaucratic and coalitional politics (Carpenter, 2007, p. 116). Petrova (2013, p. 2) also remarks the bias in IR literature's framing of non-Global North actors primarily as recipients of activism when, in reality, it is multidirectional.

Allied to the boomerang are three models conceptualised by De Waal (2015, pp. 25, 26, 38): the anti-colonial solidarity model, the anti-neocolonial solidarity model, and the insider policy lobby model. The first two are presented as antecedents of the boomerang model with the only differences being that the colonial government gave way to Western government and national governments replaced occupier/settler authorities. The insider policy lobby model is one in which 'advocacy is driven by a dominant Western NGO or network, run by specialised lobbyists who act as brokers with policymakers, adapting their agenda and methods to accord with the practicalities of that lobbying process' (De Waal, 2015, p. 37). Here, we see transnationalism flowing in parallel from North to South between state and non-state actors, but still within a hierarchy with the North on top and the South beneath. This model thus updates the boomerang without critiquing it or recognising how the power dynamics of transnational activism have changed.

However, like the boomerang model, de Waal's anti-colonial, anti-neocolonial, and humanitarian models all emphasise the dependence of southern activist organisations on northern ones, a relationship that does not reflect contemporary southern actors' increasingly more direct participation in northern contexts which does not depend on proxy northern actors—a change made possible in part by technological innovations that facilitate global access.

The stated thrust of De Waal's (2015) edited volume, *Advocacy in Conflict: Critical Perspectives on Transnational Activism*, is to show up how some Northern actors appropriate non-Northern campaigns, as reflected in the insider policy lobby model, and to propound that this be done more ethically by ensuring that affected populations are included in activisms conducted on their behalf. However, the book does not confront the necessity of Northern advocates, their entitlement, or their saviourist arrogation of the right to mobilise on behalf of others from other parts of the world. Writing on African perspectives on transnational feminist organising, Tripp (2005, p. 1) opines that this is because transnational

is 'sometimes used as shorthand for Northern involvement in and influence on activism in other parts of the world'. Global North leadership of an involvement in Global South activism has been shown to be controversial in situations where Northern and non-Northern norms clash among actors within the same movement, for example the movements against female genital cutting (Musalo, 1997; Oba, 2008; Cloward, 2016) and homophobia (Ayoub, 2014). Each of these scholars demonstrates the tensions that can exist between purportedly universal international human rights norms and the conflicting domestic cultural norms that influence behaviour in Southern contexts. Northern involvement is also seen as illogical and counterproductive in scenarios where Northern actors are implicated in the oppressions that have led to the emergence of movements (Ndlovu, 2017): Fallism is a case in point.[7] Further, Northern appropriation of Southern activism, as occurred with Kony 2012 and Save Darfur, lays bare the destructive power of simplistic narratives and the marginalisation of those most affected by unrest (Mamdani, 2009, 2012). As Temper (2019) argues, campaigns that are not grounded among those most affected by the issues that gave rise to them are not likely to last.

Building on De Waal's policy lobby model, Pallas (2017, 2018, 2019) is among scholars who argue that the boomerang is not mono-directional: it can originate in the North and fly towards the South. He theorises that in the inverted boomerang, also theorised by Temper as the catapult model (2019, pp. 19–21), Northern NGOs that face blockages in their efforts to influence Northern policymakers recruit Southern partners (who were not previously active on the issue), who then undertake advocacy as part of global campaigns. The principal actors in this framing remain NGOs. Northern actors determine the advocacy agenda and repertoires of action, and issues are presented from their perspectives, meaning that although Southern NGOs are positioned above international actors, the latter hold the reins of power and their Southern collaborators are seen more as victims than substantive partners.

Pallas suggests that the geographic timbres of relationships between Southern and Northern actors exist on a spectrum where the location of each actor determines the power that they hold within an activism. His key argument is that contextual analysis is central to understanding that historical assumptions about transnational advocacy reflect a set of relationships and power structures that have become notably less common over time. This applies to Bring Back Our Girls which is a case of activism initiated and led primarily by Global South actors based mainly in Africa. Their agency as initiators and their autonomy ensured that they constructed the narratives around the Chibok abductions and their own resistance thereto in their own words and on their own terms, while Northern actors provided support. Bring Back Our Girls illustrates clearly a shift in the relations between South and North from dependence to collaboration that makes the boomerang concept redundant.

Tsutsui and Smith (unpublished, p. 1, 20) advance the inverted boomerang thesis by theorising that relations among Northern and local (i.e., subnational) actors have changed from the boomerang or inverted boomerang to a double boomerang or sandwich effect in which both 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' advocacy by

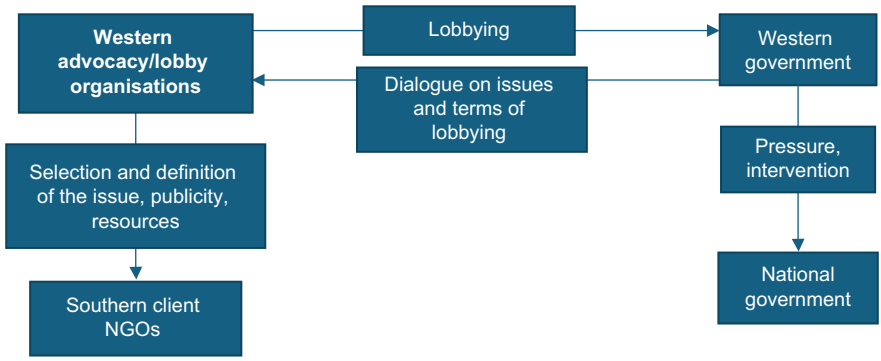

Figure 3.4 The inverse boomerang model.

Source: Pallas (2017).

Southern and Northern activists are mutually constitutive and jointly promote global human rights. They note that while the traditional boomerang still exists, albeit at a weaker capacity than in previous years (Tsutsui and Smith unpublished, p. 19–20), bottom-up mobilisations at local and municipal levels are increasingly 'working to translate global norms into local practices, producing more immediate small-scale changes with a view to accumulating these changes across different locales to achieve global level transformation'. The sandwich effect is the combination of political pressure from above by global institutions and from below by grassroots mobilisations. Though this framing recognises the agency of Southern actors in influencing global political change, it does so from the premise that they are motivated chiefly by norms from the Global North, thereby dismissing the role of ideas, beliefs, and practices from the Global South.

Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) develops the boomerang concept even further by suggesting that beyond the traditional model by Keck and Sikkink (1998a, 1999), the rise of social media and organisations in the Global South has created multiple boomerangs in which political pressure (for human rights change) flows 'from multiple geographic locations, and is simultaneously mobilized and directed towards different and multiple targets'. He distinguishes the 'internal boomerang' in which transnational NGOs based in the Global North like Amnesty International are expanding their institutional presence in the Global South, thereby internalising North-South channels of political power. In this model, though transnational actors are decentralising, they relate primarily with Southern affiliates of their brands. He also discusses the global virtual network in which e-activists and online advocacy platforms like Change.org mobilise pressure from decentralised crowds towards a variety of targets, both state and non-state. While power in this model is 'open, participatory, and peer-driven', this characteristic also makes it vulnerable to being short-lived, as exemplified by the Occupy Movement. The final model proposed by Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) is the 'multiple boomerang' in which domestic NGOs mobilise political pressure from different geographic locations, often excluding actors from the Global North, towards different and multiple targets. He uses

the example of Dejusticia, a coalition of Latin American NGOs that mobilised regional pressure for their governments to support the Inter-American Human Rights Commission. Multiple boomerangs are also occurring between Southern and Northern NGOs.

The main difference between this conceptualisation and Bring Back Our Girls is that Rodríguez-Garavito (2015) focuses on NGOs whereas Bring Back Our Girls is an eclectic mix of organisational and individual actors, with the latter clearly holding the reins of leadership. His work reinforces the growing multipolarity of international politics and the diminishing centrality of the North in transnational activism. Müller-Funk (2019, pp. 1113–1114) uses the concept of political remittances to capture 'the potentially multidirectional flows of principles, vocabulary and practices taking place in transnational social fields, of which diaspora activists are a part'. She documents how Egyptian diasporan activism was led primarily by migrants living in Austria and France—albeit motivated by political remittances from Egypt—and directed from these host countries towards Egyptian migrants' home country, thereby disrupting both the boomerang model and its framing of transnationalism as flowing from Northern actors in the North to non-Northern actors in other parts of the world. The flow of transnational activism in the context of Egypt's uprisings was reciprocal. Such recent work and the political events that they describe can be said to be decolonising the study of transnational activism.

The Decreasing Influence of NGOs and Changing Patterns of North-South Collaboration

Recent work in IR builds on this recognition of the changing configuration of transnational activism, recognising the decreasing influence of Northern NGOs. Pallas and Nguyen (2018) show in their study of Vietnamese HIV/AIDS NGOs that their increased 'expertise, credibility, and high organisational capacity', advanced communication technology and increasing democratisation (p. 6), and, by extension, their increasing agency and power are enabling them to conduct transnational advocacy independently of Northern partners. These factors are also facilitating South-South advocacy. In the authors' view, this indicates that Southern NGOs' dependence on Western partners is decreasing, which leads them to predict that Southern actors in other contexts will rely increasingly less on Northern actors as their own capacities and positionalities continue to improve. In practice, as Pallas and Bloodgood (2019, p. 12) observe in their theory of transcalar advocacy—advocacy that occurs simultaneously at different geographic levels, both national and international activist organisations are shaped by interactions among diverse actors working at multiple scales, albeit their work retains the idea of a power hierarchy with the North on top and the South beneath it.

Pallas and Bloodgood's (2019) work on the future of transnational advocacy suggests that changing socioeconomic patterns are expanding North-North and South-South collaborations. Using the cases of Vietnamese HIV/AIDS NGOs, the Nuclear Abolition Network (Past and Present), and the Anti-deforestation Advocacy Networks after Activists Beyond Borders, the authors hypothesise

that Northern NGOs will retain leadership because of the structure and history of transnational activism. They also predict a growth in domestic Southern opposition to international NGOs as the former grow stronger and develop policy positions that conflict with those hitherto advocated by Northern actors as a function of new restrictions on international NGO activities. These factors further explain the declining centrality and power of Northern actors.

One factor that they do not consider is how changing norms about representativity and who has the right and legitimacy to speak for whom in international politics, coupled with a renewed turn, notably in Africa, towards the paradigm of African Solutions to African Problems, are inflecting Southern perspectives towards Northern involvement. Ndiaye's (2020) work on neo-Pan-Africanism examines how African movements like Senegal's Y'en a marre (French for 'Enough is enough') are advocating for a new Pan-Africanist philosophy that is populist instead of statist and bottom-up instead of top-down that enables ordinary Africans to partake in their own liberation. The principle of 'Nothing for/about Us Without Us' that anchors Ambrose, Hogle, Taneja, and Yohannes (2015) essay on the need to reclaim responsible activism may be an additional influencing factor. They explain it thus (2015, p. 1): 'People affected by conflict, rights and other injustices should play the leading role in movements that advocate on their behalf'.

'Nothing for/about us without us' is invoked in response to advocacy campaigns like Kony 2012, created by an American NGO, Invisible Children, to make Joseph Kony famous in order to get him arrested. The principle's influence is visible in the backlash against the campaign and demands for its termination on grounds that included the absence of Ugandans who were most affected by the conflict in their country. The Save Darfur Coalition/Movement was also an American-led and focused campaign to end genocide in South Sudan. Mamdani (2009) critiques it fiercely for distorting the conflict's narratives in order to justify the campaign's political agenda and for excluding those most affected by the conflict. Both campaigns embody a new form of transnational activism in which Northern actors not only focus their advocacy for others in Northern contexts but also arrogate to themselves the right to advocate on behalf of those distant others. The dominant actors in this framing are also NGOs. This differs from Bring Back Our Girls which included beneficiaries in its activism and engaged with war-affected communities to provide relief support.

Here, again, the narrowness of view comes through as South-South activism is not a new phenomenon; there are many Southern activist networks that have been operating across the Global South for decades. One example is the African Women's Development and Communication Network (or FEMNET)—some of whose members took part in Bring Back Our Girls in multiple countries in and outside Africa—a pan-African network that was set up by national women's networks in 1988 to coordinate African women's preparations for, and participation in, the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China, in 1995 (Wanyeki, 2005; Badri & Tripp, 2017). As Ajayi (2018b) states in a reflection on the politics of transnational activism in the Me Too movement, non-Northern events do not derive their substance or existence from being acknowledged by Northern eyes and worldviews; they exist in spite of them.

Motivations for Participation in Transnational Activism by NGO Actors

The focus of the foregoing body of work on groups of actors means that it foregrounds the collective reasons why transnational activist groups emerge and why member NGOs opt to join them. These explanations fall into three main categories: ideological-normative reasons (global norms), political opportunity, and rational/strategic/instrumental motives that are seen as furthering organisational aims.

Ideological-Normative Motivations

Scholars in this group suggest that transnational activism by NGOs or social movements is driven mainly by solidarity with oppressed people and moral obligations to fight injustice that derive from shared identities and global norms—'collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity' (Klotz, 1995; Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998, 2001; Keck & Sikkink, 1998b). Keck and Sikkink (1998, pp. 98–99) foreground human rights activism and note that transnational advocacy networks have 'organised most effectively around' issues involving 'bodily harm to vulnerable individuals' (normative) and 'legal equality of opportunity' (institutional). I discuss the latter further in the next section.

One of the problems with this view is the assumption that norms that are accepted in the Global North have universal legitimacy and acceptance. As Okech and Musindarwezo (2019) note in their article on the African Women's Development and Communication Network and transnational feminist organising in Africa, African women differ on what equality should look like. The authors note the 'tensions caused by the assertion that the pursuit of certain women's rights is elite based', a term 'often used as a placeholder for … externally generated interests that are disconnected from the real needs of women on the ground' (Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019, p. 257). The issues of contention include sexual and reproductive health rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity (also Njoroge, 2016, p. 314). Transnational feminism is an interesting case because it is one within which there has been consistent resistance against the 'production of "Third World women"' (Mohanty, 1988) 'as the collective "Other"' through universal categories that position them as 'poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, and victimised' (Okech & Musindarwezo, 2019, p. 258). It illustrates that norms are subjective and that even intra-network actors who seem to share a collective identity do not always view them the same way or consider them to be universally tenable—what Okech and Musindarwezo (2019, p. 267) refer to as 'politics of difference'.

In their constructs, notably the norm life cycle first propounded by Finnemore and Sikkink (1998), these norms develop and diffuse from North to South. In contrast, critical scholars like Acharya (2004) and Coleman and Tieku (2018) argue that local and regional norms are equally potent and that Global South actors have and use their agency to adapt and counter Northern norms, and to develop and diffuse new ones based on local beliefs, values, and practices. As Tieku points out in his review of informal IR (n.d., p. 10), early scholarship on norms gave the impression that they were written, arguably formal rules, whereas the definition

cited earlier 'implicitly touched on informal normative practices'. He argues that the concept and practice of informality has been a pervasive subtext across several generations of IR scholars that has been marginalised in favour of ideas that help explain the actions of formal actors, mainly states and international institutions, and those primarily in the Global North.

Some scholars have advanced the related concepts of global consciousness and global citizenship as explanations of why transnational activism occurs. Pallas (2012, p. 176) defines global citizenship as, 'a self-declared association with the peoples of the world that motivates its adherents to act to address global needs as identified by their own individual moral or ethical codes, using ad hoc networks of like-minded individuals'. For him, it is an attitude and a 'post-national' identity that has historically created links among geographically dispersed people on the basis of shared interests and a common humanity. The inherent moral impulse of global citizenship rationalises transnational activism regarding matters that are normally considered to be of national interest. Global citizenship is not 'available to all' (Pallas, 2012, p. 170) as current global power disparities limit claims to this identity to individual elites, primarily from the Global North. On global consciousness, Smith (2015, p. 37) speaks to the cognition of belonging to an international community and sharing in its norms and values: a global citizen connotes 'global responsibility and ownership of an issue'. It is this consciousness that accounts for whether external groups 'adopt' or are willing to support domestic activisms. Again, this conceptualisation assumes a level of universality in perspectives of global norms and cohesion among transnational actors that is not fully borne out by existing evidence. Smith's framing overlooks how diversities of identity, class, context, location and spatiality, and power inflect how diverse actors engage in transnational spaces.

Pallas' arguments do not take cognisance of shifts in identity patterns that see growing numbers of Africans who either hold citizenships of Northern countries or have increased access to the North and form cosmopolitan subgroups known in African and Cultural Studies as 'Afropolitans' (Mbembe, 2007; Eze, 2013; Dabiri, 2016; Mbembe & Balakrishnan, 2016; Adjepong, 2018; Balakrishnan, 2017) or anthropology as 'frontier Africans' (Nyamnjoh, 2015). These global citizens differ from Pallas' construct in the sense that they do not conceptualise their political action as proxy activism on behalf of others but as being in their own self-interest because they self-identify as belonging to multiple spaces. Further, although global citizenship is seen as an antecedent of transnational collective action (Pallas, 2012, p. 175), global citizens, as he admits, are not a homogeneous group. This is illustrated later in this study's findings by alleged contestations over agency between Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria and American activists.

According to De Waal (2015), three motivations define the ideational and practical space for transnational advocacy: personal salvation or fulfilment, preserving social order and power relations, and collective action for transforming society in pursuit of a more just order. The latter correlates with Pallas and Urpelainen's (2013) discussion of organisational missions of international NGOs as motivation for forming alliances with Southern domestic organisations. This notion has been critiqued on grounds that the motivations of international NGOs, seen as tools of

neoliberalism (Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Kamat, 2004; Sadaqat, 2017) and imperialism (Bennett, 2005, p. 215), are too complex to be framed as impartial (Leebaw, 2007). Keohane and Nye (2001) state that some NGOs are 'self-selected and elite-driven', even though they claim to represent the public interest.

The point to make here is that formal norms and the framing of norms as formal do not take into account the factors that drive informal, primarily non-state actors that are not bound by such rules. Neither of these approaches considers the motivations of the individuals who make up both activist organisations and networks but more importantly the more diffuse forms of activism occurring globally today. This restates the imperative noted earlier for new concepts and methodologies that better reflect contemporary dimensions of transnational activism, which brings us back to Wong and Brown's concept of e-bandits. As they note, anyone can join e-banditry and many 'atypical activists' have joined hacktivist campaigns like Anonymous and WikiLeaks. The authors also rightly observe that the nature of this new political actor 'creates problems of coherence, lack of directed action, and multiple and multiplying goals'. In other words, it is difficult to identify who is involved in e-banditry, since hacktivism thrives on disguising identities, and because multiple actors join for varied reasons and it is not clear who is leading what, such political activity tends to lack coherence and strategic direction. Further, Wong and Brown (2013) discuss the disjuncture created by e-bandits' actions and motivations to keep the Internet free, which are denounced by states as criminality. This shows that what are considered norms are fluid and subjective, and it calls for further exploration of new non-state forms of transnational activism as well as the factors that influence their participation.

Wong and Brown's (2013) theory of e-banditry signals a recognition in IR of how activists are connecting outside of organisations, which is the case with Bring Back Our Girls, as well as how the Internet is changing activism. It also signals that individual activists are not a coherent group. Of special note is their focus on the anonymising power of digital technologies—what they term the 'politics of no one'—and how this changes our ideas about who uses these tools and for what purposes. They also note the eclectic ideological appeal that e-bandit groups have, a common factor with Bring Back Our Girls whose cause had global resonance for diverse actors in multiple geographic contexts, many of whom were not professional activists. Again, it is arguably as difficult to identify a coherent group or network with anonymised identities (Wong & Brown, 2013, p. 1019) as it is for groups like Bring Back Our Girls whose followership is so intersectional as to defy fixed identities. However, Wong and Brown's (2013) work does not fully apply to Bring Back Our Girls for several reasons. First, Bring Back Our Girls actors do not hide their identities, which are in fact key to the activism's validity. Second and relatedly, the visibility of individual actors and the connectivities among them is important for groups like Bring Back Our Girls that thrive on depth and breadth of visible political support. Third, while confronting political authority, Bring Back Our Girls was not subversive but sought to work alongside it to achieve its aims. There is thus room for further study and theorising in IR of the different types of individual actors leading and participating in transnational activism today.

In her studies of Egyptian diasporan youth activists' involvement in the country's 2011 uprisings, Müller-Funk (2019, pp. 1120–1121) suggests that this kind of activism can be motivated by major political events in diasporans' home countries. For some Egyptian diasporans, the uprisings 'led to a renegotiation of their relationship to Egypt' while others saw their activism as 'a way to claim their right to multiple identity constructions' (see also Müller-Funk, 2014, pp. 33–34). In other words, their activism was closely linked to their sense of self and their relationship with their country of origin, with their identity construction being shaped in part by events in their personal lives, among other factors (Müller-Funk, 2019, pp. 1120–1121). Their experiences of the host country (discrimination and otherisation, for example), were also a contributing factor. Müller-Funk adds four other major motivations: symbolic support for activists on the ground in Egypt; the desire to serve as advocates for political activists and movements abroad by influencing public opinion in the receiving country; the urge to provide the European—and sometimes Egyptian—public with alternative information about Egypt; and the desire to participate in shaping the image of Egyptians living in the host country (Müller-Funk, 2020).

In an earlier work, Müller-Funk (2014, p. 49) notes that personal motivations, such as wanting to support politically active family members, were especially important for Egyptian women who took part in the uprisings. They were also influenced by their desire to 'create a more equal and just society'. We thus see a mix of emotional and aspirational factors that contrast with the more meta-level motivations of formal civil society groups and coalitions.

Rational, Strategic, or Instrumental Motivations

A separate body of work points to less idealistic and more material incentives, such as strategic alignment, organisational survival, resourcing, prestige, and other perceived benefits: otherwise put, transnational actors are motivated to engage in activism because of perceived benefits to them and their organisations.

Keck and Sikkink (1998, p. 90) are often cited for naming transnational advocacy networks as normative actors, but their work describes these networks as 'simultaneously principled and strategic' actors. The authors state that transnational advocacy networks are moved to action by both normative and legal-judicial logics, and that one of the reasons that they form is that members believe that networking will help achieve their campaign missions and goals (p. 93). However, they focus more on normative motivations. Keck and Sikkink (1999, pp. 92–94) state that advocacy networks in international politics are most likely to emerge when: (1) fractured state-civil society relations compel domestic activists to turn to external actors (the 'boomerang' model; (2) activists or 'political entrepreneurs' view networking as a means to promote their work; and (3) international opportunities exist to form networks. The authors suggest that domestic and international NGOs take part in transnational advocacy networks in order to actualise the calculated benefits of collective action. In the boomerang model, domestic actors from 'less developed' countries link up with actors in 'developed' countries who can amplify their claims and 'provide access, leverage and information (and often money)' that they might not otherwise have.

Bob (2002, 2005) builds on these arguments, asserting that strategic alignment is the greater rationale. In his view, global civil society—the main audience of transnational activism—'is not an open forum marked by altruism, but a harsh, Darwinian marketplace where legions of desperate groups vie for scarce attention, sympathy, and money' (2002, p. 37). On this basis, people—in this case, mostly specialist advocacy organisations—support one activism over another according to how well their leaders 'market' their causes in a global marketplace of morality, how deeply these framings resonate with their organisational purposes ('missions and interests'), and whether they have the human and material capacity to provide adequate support. He discusses, for example, how Greenpeace and other international environmental organisations initially rejected the Ogoni movement's entreaties for support on grounds that the Niger Delta crisis was too political until Saro Wiwa's group reoriented its agitations away from 'contentious claims about minority rights in a poor, multiethnic developing state' and towards 'environmental grievances', with an emphasis on Shell's 'ecological warfare' (2002, p. 40).

One challenge with Bob's framework is that he does not establish parameters for determining when national activists are making deliberate efforts to 'sell' their cause or simply expressing their motives. Further, his concepts emerge from studies of northern support for foreign activism and do not explain the involvement of actors from contexts that offer more moral than material support where relative power disparities are less pronounced. This premise of why Northern organisation actors form alliances recurs in Tarrow's (2005, p. 164) model, in which he suggests, using a threats and opportunities model, that they form coalitions to 'take advantage of pooling resources' (Staggenborg, 1986) and 'the joint political influence that they will gain from cooperation' (Hathaway & Meyer, 1997, p. 64 in Tarrow, 2005). Cooperation is also incentivised by 'the need to combine against common threats' (McCammon & Campbell, 2002 in Tarrow (2005).

In his 'inverse' boomerang model, Pallas (2017) argues that international actors derive legitimacy for their political actions on behalf of others from advocacy networks. This is important, given his point about the growing transnational agency of Southern actors (see also Pallas & Bloodgood, 2019, p. 10), which suggests a correlation between the context and motives of transnational activism, with the latter being not static but dynamic in nature and varying by actor. In their work on the formation of North-South campaigns, Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) state that both Northern and Southern NGOs have different missions and interests, with Northern NGOs more likely to have 'well-defined' missions and Southern ones to be more flexible about options to further their cause. In Pallas and Urpelainen's (2013) model, NGOs are motivated either by participation, i.e., they value involvement, or outcome, i.e., driven by the need to successfully conclude a campaign. The missions of Northern advocacy NGOs depend on the 'incentives' offered by their constituents or supporters: incentives of 'participation' value the fact of taking part in an activity while incentives of 'outcome' reward the successful completion of an activity (Pallas & Urpelainen, 2013, p. 402). Northern NGOs further choose to support Southern campaigns that suit their agendas of achieving change in 'northern-authored policy' (Pallas & Urpelainen, 2013, p. 404) and attracting competitive

donor funding. Though helpful for analysing institutional motives for participation in activism, neither Keck and Sikkink, nor Tarrow, nor Pallas and Urpelainen give insight into subgroup motives. Thus, NGOs' missions and interests determine their involvement in campaigns and their choice of partners.

Pallas and Bloodgood (2018, p. 10) extend this idea, noting that advocacy is 'largely a strategic activity' in which organisations aim to maximise impact by working with 'powerful partners'. They argue, however, that power in the changing context of transnational advocacy is not the preserve of Northern actors, nor does it consist only of material considerations, but includes legitimacy, persuasiveness, and capacity. The effect of this is to broaden the scope of which partners will be selected. Thus, while advocacy is motivated by strategic considerations, it is no longer a zero-sum power game between mainly helpless Southern actors and powerful Northern partners. Petrova (2013) offers a different view in which both normative and material motivations coexist and are not mutually exclusive. Using a lifecycle analogy, she describes them as occurring along a spectrum in which early motivations are primarily normative but shift towards sustainability over a movement's lifecycle as its constituent actors grow in stature, influence, and prominence. Petrova (2013, p. 8) suggests that the nature of the mostly professional organisations that anchor transnational activism makes them likely to be resource-dependent and focused on organisational development. Such organisations which she terms 'the survival-driven kind' owe accountability more to 'the concerns and priorities of patrons' (i.e., donors) compared to 'the solidarity-driven type', which are motivated more by the needs and concerns of beneficiary constituents (Petrova, 2013, p. 7). She uses the example of Slovak and Polish organisations doing democracy promotion and human rights work in Eastern Europe to show how activists in both countries were moved to act by 'a strongly felt normative "obligation," a "sense of responsibility," and "a duty" to assist' that were borne of transnational contacts to other people struggling for democracy who shared the same values and challenges, and the shared pain of having lived under dictatorships (Petrova, 2013, p. 12). However, as resources dwindled and inter-organisational competition grew, some existing organisations began to privilege access to funding while others joined the movement because of money and prestige (Petrova, 2013, pp. 14–20). She explains that this shift is not always intentional, driven as it is by a global governance system increasingly subject to fiscal uncertainty that compels competition for donor funding and imposes organisational pressures. In the same vein, Mitchell and Schmitz (2014, p. 489) propound the concept of 'principled instrumentalism', which suggests that rational-strategic and normative-ideological considerations are not mutually exclusive.

Petrova (2013) widens the scope of explanations of why transnational actors become involved with activism by advancing the discourse beyond single-theory frameworks. She also notes the need for further exploration of this nexus, illustrating that women's rights activism as a subset of human rights shares some of these broader characteristics, but may have different motivations that need to be studied. Her rationale is that women's activism represents the needs of a specific oppressed group compared with movements that seek 'collective goods' for a more generic

collective (Petrova, 2013, p. 23). Yet she focuses, like much IR scholarship, on the motivations of formal civil society groups and organisations, and not looser mass-based movements that do not rely on organised civil society and are emerging owing to declining public trust in just such organisations (Mamattah, 2014, pp. 5, 14), as evidenced by a vast body of work on the decline of civil society that is happening in the Global South and North (Cardinali, 2018). Petrova further makes a case for recognising the agency of non-Northern actors as drivers and not only recipients of transnational activism, thus correcting the EuroAmerican bias of boomerang advocates. This objective helps fill the gap in knowledge regarding how non-Northern actors and organisations view transnational collaborations and why they engage in them (van Wessel, Naz, & Sahoo, 2021). In all, the foregoing works together compel an examination of what drives transnational activism by less structured civil society actors, depicted in this study as informal actors, that are the focus of this study.

In theorising how South-North NGO alliances form, Pallas and Urpelainen (2013) suggest that these are driven by a combination of organisational missions and interests. However, Southern NGOs tend to be more focused on outcomes because they are driven by the need to resolve specific local problems and are flexible about available options, while Northern NGOs, which are better-resourced and have more defined missions, tend to prioritise partnering with Southern organisations that share their interests.

Informality in IR

The concept and practice of informality are a common thread in several generations of IR literature (Tieku, n.d.). With reference to transnational activism, informal governance is represented, albeit not explicitly in those terms, in a number of works on a range of transnational actors. According to Tieku, with reference to transnational activism, these include work on transnational advocacy networks (Keck & Sikkink, 1998a; Murdie & Polizzi, 2017), transgovernmental networks (Raustiala, 2002; Slaughter, 2015), epistemic communities (Haas, 1992; Cross, 2013), and transnational public-private partnerships and governance entrepreneurs (Börzel & Risse, 2005; Andonova, 2017). Tieku (n.d., pp. 12–13) discusses how Cooper's (2012) work on 'celebrity activists' like Bono and Bob Geldof documents their increasing 'soft power' influence and involvement in international politics. It also illustrates how the informal positionality of these actors, a heterogenous group that he disaggregates, has a major bearing on how they operate, i.e., with flexibility and no obligation to follow official or formal protocols.

That informal transnational actors are not strictly guided by formal rules implies a need to study more closely their activities, how they operate, and what influences their political engagement. This case is reinforced by the demonstrated influence of informality not only on informal actors but also on formal ones (Tieku, n.d., p. 16). As Pauwelyn (2014) notes in his work on the World Trade Organization, formal actors are driven as much by informal influences as by formal ones. Similarly, Pauwelyn, Wessel, and Wouters (2014) observe in their work on the structures of

international lawmaking that informal factors are becoming as weighty as formal ones in the process of international lawmaking. Likewise, in scholarship by Börzel and Risse (2005) on transnational public-private partnerships and Andonova (2017) on governance entrepreneurs, we see the growing fusion of the so-called informal and the formal in various spheres of transnational activity. Tieku (2019a, 2019b) cautions against viewing this relationship through a binary lens, arguing that it is co-dependent.

Each of these works expands the discursive space for the targeted study of informal transnationalism. However, except for Cooper (2012), none of them focuses on activism. Again, many of these scholars explore the influence of informality on formal actors, overlooking the importance of studying informality in itself and how informality influences informal actors. Further, many of these works are based on empirical cases of individuals and organisations in the Global North (Tieku, n.d., pp. 19, 26, 29), creating a gap in IR knowledge from Global South actors and contexts. These and other conceptual, methodological, and epistemological gaps identified earlier in this chapter provided a fitting segue into the exploration in Chapter 4 of non-IR knowledge that addresses new dimensions of transnational activism with informality as a key focus.

It is worth briefly noting the body of IR work that discusses relationships between state/formal and non-state/informal actors that are not confrontational and oppositional, but aimed at jointly addressing governance problems through cooperation and partnership. For example, though they do not use the term informality—they refer to non-state actors as 'private organisations'—Börzel and Risse (2005, p. 1) observe that non-state actors have long been part of public-private partnerships, but IR only recently began to study them as partners as opposed to antagonists of states. Though this is not a core focus of this study, it attests to the historical importance of informal actors and the imperative to document their involvement in transnational politics in greater and more diverse detail.

There is an observable shift in approach in IR scholars' choice of cases from the non-North. For example, in their work on networks of labour activism in Asia, Zajak et al. (2019) argue that Global South labour activists are 'pioneering … new forms of networked labour agency' that involve multiple actors—labour rights NGOs, social movements, self-organised worker groups, or grassroots community organisations. Though these actors jointly advocate on labour rights, their respective missions and interests are intersectional. Pallas and Nguyen's (2018) article on HIV-AIDS NGO advocacy in Vietnam argues that Vietnamese NGOs led successful advocacy without depending on Northern actors or allies. The growing presence and voice of non-Northern scholars in this field is also to be remarked. Yet, NGO and NGO coalitions remain the empirical subjects of choice, leaving out activism by less structured entities.

Conclusion: Continuities and Discontinuities in Transnational Activism

This chapter has discussed IR's treatment of transnational activism, looking at which actors are seen to have legitimacy, the nature of their relations, and the

geographies of power among them, as well as their motivations for engaging in transnational political action. In so doing, it observed the prominence of collective organised actors in IR scholarship on transnational activism, including in recent work. It also remarked the preoccupation of IR scholarship with Northern empirical cases, with few exceptions. This chapter further describes how geographies of power in transnational activism are constructed within a global hierarchy headed by the Global North with the Global South beneath it. This is so even in frameworks that recognise that exchanges among actors in both contexts are increasingly flowing not just from North to South, but in both directions. Erstwhile relationships of dependence have weakened as southern actors have gained economic and technical agency, and technological advances have afforded greater global mobility. The motivations for participating in transnational activism of organised civil societies in the Global South and North have evolved from solidarity based on global norms and shared identities to a blend of solidarity and strategic, which coexist in many instances. Though these two have been dominant frameworks in knowledge on participation, there is room to explore other causal factors, including the influence of sociopolitical environments and informal drivers of activism in looser mass-based groups. Further research on this topic should prioritise those groups that have not hitherto featured much in 'mainstream' discourses, notably the Global South and women.

Based on the foregoing, this chapter concludes that no single model encapsulates the diverse and complex forms of transnational activism that occur around the world, regardless of where they originate or the identities and positionalities of those who create and support them. It also concludes that the inadequacy of IR knowledge to accommodate new dimensions of transnational activism signals a need for further research on informal relationships and motivations as against NGOs and NGO coalitions. The next chapter looks beyond IR knowledge towards theoretical approaches offered by non-IR scholarship, specifically sociology, communications studies, and African Studies.

Notes

1 Power here is conceived as soft power, e.g., power to set agendas, construct narratives, engage and persuade in policy circles, etc.
2 I thank Dr Gideon Onuoha of Princeton University for bringing this to my attention at the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Doctoral Methodology Workshop in Accra, Ghana, in June 2019.
3 'A multi-national media organization and associated library founded by Julian Assange in 2006. WikiLeaks specializes in the analysis and publication of large datasets of censored or otherwise restricted official materials involving war, spying and corruption. It has so far published more than 10 million documents and associated analyses'. Source: https://wikileaks.org/What-is-WikiLeaks.html
4 'A decentralized international activist/hacktivist collective/movement that is widely known for its various cyber-attacks against several governments, government institutions and government agencies, corporations, and the Church of Scientology'. Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anonymous_(group)
5 Unpublished version shared with author by Pallas by email following his presentation at the International Society for Third-Sector Research international meeting in June 2018.

6 R4bia is the name of the hand sign that became the symbol of the Egyptian uprisings in 2010/11. It simultaneously represents Rabia, the name of a respected female Muslim leader in Islamic history and the fourth child of her family, and Mohamed Morsi's being Egypt's fourth president. See https://www.aa.com.tr/en/world/multilingual-website-devoted-to-r4bia-sign-now-running/222902

7 Point made during an interview with Dr Hlengiwe Ndlovu, one of the leaders of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement via WhatsApp on 22 September 2019.

References

Acharya, A. (2004). How ideas spread: Whose norms matter? Norm localization and institutional change in Asian regionalism. *International Organization*, *58*(2), 239–275. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818304582024

Acharya, A. (2014). Global international relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, *58*(4), 647–659.

Adjepong, A. (2018). Afropolitan projects: African immigrant identities and solidarities in the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 41*(2), 248–266.

Afolabi, B. T. (2017). *The politics of peacemaking: Non-state actors role in the Liberian civil war*. Suffolk and New York: Boydell and Brewer.

Ajayi, T. F. (2018b). #MeToo, Africa and the politics of transnational activism. *Africa Is a Country.* Retrieved from https://africasacountry.com/2018/07/metoo-africa-and-the-politics-of-transnational-activism

Ambrose, J., Hogle, C., Taneja, T., & Yohannes, K. (2015). Introduction: Transnational advocacy in contention. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Andonova, L. (2017). *Governance entrepreneurs: International organizations and the rise of global public-private partnerships*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Anheier, H., Glasius, M., & Kaldor, M. (2001). *Introducing global civil society*. Retrieved March 28, 2018, from http://www.gcsknowledgebase.org/wp-content/uploads/2001chapter11.pdf

Ayoub, P. M. (2014). With arms wide shut: Threat perception, norm reception, and mobilized resistance to LGBT rights. *Journal of Human Rights*, *13*(3), 337–362.

Badri, B., & Tripp, A. M. (2017). *Women's activism in Africa: Struggles for rights and representation*. London: Zed Books.

Balakrishnan, S. (2017). The afropolitan idea: New perspectives on cosmopolitanism in African studies. *History Compass, 15*(2), e12362.

Bennett, W. L. (2005). Social movements beyond borders: Understanding two eras of transnational activism. In D. della Porta & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *Transnational activism and world politics*. Rowman and Littlefield.

Bob, C. (2002). Merchants of morality. *Foreign Policy*, *129*, 36–45.

Bob, C. (2005). *The marketing of rebellion: Insurgents, media, and international activism.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bob, C. (2006). Transnational activism: What's new, what's not. *International Studies Review, 8*(2), 346–348. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/3880247

Börzel, T., & Risse, T. (2005). Public-private partnerships: Effective and legitimate tools of transnational governance?. *Complex Sovereignty: Reconstituting Political Authority in the Twenty-First Century* (pp. 195–216). Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Social media and activism. In R. Mansell & P. Hwa (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of digital communication and society*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Cardinali, D. (2018). *The adaptive challenge of restoring trust in civil society*. Retrieved from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_adaptive_challenge_of_restoring_trust_in_civil_society

Carpenter, R. C. (2007). Setting the advocacy agenda: Theorizing issue emergence and nonemergence in transnational advocacy networks. *International Studies Quarterly, 51*, 99–120.

Cloward, K. (2016). *When norms collide: Local responses to activism against female genital mutilation and early marriage*. Retrieved March 26, 2018, from http://www.oxfordscholarship.com/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780190274917.001.0001/acprof-9780190274917-miscMatter-1

Coleman, K. P., & Tieku, T. K. (2018). African actors in international security: Four pathways to influence. In K. P. Coleman & T. K. Tieku (Eds.), *African* actors in international security*: Shaping contemporary norms* (pp. 1–19). Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press.

Cooper, A. F. (2012). *Beyond activism: Emerging models of celebrity diplomacy*. Retrieved from https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12062/beyond-activism-emerging-models-of-celebrity-diplomacy

Cross, M. K. D. (2013). The military dimension of European security: An epistemic community approach. *Millennium*, *42*(1), 45–64.

Dabiri, E. (2016). Why I am (still) not an afropolitan. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *28*(1), 104–108.

della Porta, D., & Tarrow, S. (Eds.). (2005). *Transnational activism and world politics*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256044592_Transnational_Activism_and_World_Politics

De Waal, A. (2015). Genealogies of transnational activism. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. Zed Books.

Diani, M. (1992). The concept of social movement. *The Sociological Review*, *40*(1), 1–25.

Dolata, U., & Schrape, J. (2016). Masses, crowds, communities, movements: Collective action in the internet age. *Social Movement Studies, 15*(1), 1–18.

Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (1998). International norm dynamics and political change. *International Organization*, *52*(4), 887–917.

Finnemore, M., & Sikkink, K. (2001). Taking stock: The constructivist research program in international relations and comparative politics. *Annual Review of Political Science*, *4*, 391–416.

Haas, P. M. (1992). Introduction: Epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *International Organization*, *46*(1), 1–35.

Hafner-Burton, E. M., Kahler, M., & Montgomery, A. H. (2009). Network analysis for international relations. *International organization*, *63*(3), 559–592.

Ilcan, S., & Lacey, Anita. (2013). *Networks of social justice: Transnational activism and social change*. Brock University.

Jordan, L. (2011). Global civil society. In M. Edwards (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of civil society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kaldor, M. (2003). The idea of global civil society. *International Affairs, 79*(3), 583–593.

Kamat, S. (2004). The privatization of public interest: Theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era. *Review of International Political Economy*, *11*(1), 155–176.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998a). Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keohane, R. O., & Nye, J. S. (2001). *Power and interdependence* (3rd ed.). New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Khagram, S., Riker, S. V., & Sikkink, K. (2002). *Restructuring world politics: Transnational social movements, networks, and norms*. University of Minnesota Press.

Klotz, A. (1995). *Norms in international relations: Rrelations: The struggle against apartheid*. London, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Leebaw, B. (2007). The politics of impartial activism: Humanitarianism and human rights. *Perspectives on Politics*, *5*(2), 223–239.

Levi, M., & Murphy, G. (2004). *Coalitions of contention: The case of the WTO protests in Seattle* (Unpublished thesis). University of Washington, Department of Political Science.

Lindell, I. (2010). Informality and collective organising: Identities, alliances and transnational activism in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, *31*(2), 207–222.

Lynch, C. (2019). The moral aporia of race in international relations. *International Relations, 33*(2), 267–285.

Mamattah, T (2014). Building civil society in West Africa: Notes from the field. In Obadare Ebenezer (Ed.), *The handbook of civil society in Africa*: *Non profit and civil society studies* (pp. 125–144). New York, NY: Springer Science and Business Media.

Mamdani, M. (2009). *Saviours and survivors: Darfur, politics, and the war on terror*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Mamdani, M. (2012). *What Jason didn't tell gavin and his army of invisible children*. http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/-/691232/1365090/-/c8l08/-/ [accessed 16 March 2018].

Manji, F., & O'Coill, C. (2002). The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa. *International Affairs, 78*(3), 567–583.

Mbembe, A. (2007). Afropolitanism. In S. Njami (Ed.), *Africa remix: Contemporary art of a continent*. Johannesburg: Jacana Media.

Mbembe, A., & Balakrishnan, S. (2016). Pan-African legacies, afropolitan futures. *Transition, 120*, 28–37.

Mitchell, G., & Schmitz, H. (2014). Principled instrumentalism: A theory of transnational NGO behaviour. *Review of International Studies*, *40*(3), 487–504.

Mogoatlhe, L. (2020). 5 youth activists who are demanding urgent climate action in Africa. *Global Citizen*. https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/youth-climate-change-activists-in-africa/

Mohanty, C. (1988). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Feminist Review*, *30*(1), 61–88. https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1988.42

Müller-Funk, L. (2014). Transnational politics, women and the Egyptian revolution: Examples from Paris. *Mashriq and Mahjar*, *2*(1), 29–55.

Müller-Funk, L. (2019). *Egyptian diaspora activism during the arab uprisings: Insights from Paris and Vienna*. London: Routledge.

Müller-Funk, L. (2020). Fluid identities, diaspora youth activists and the (post-)Arab Spring: How narratives of belonging can change over time. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *46*(6), 1112–1128.

Murdie, A., & Polizzi, M. (2017). Human rights and transnational advocacy networks. In J. N. Victor, A. H. Montgomery, & M. Lubell (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political networks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Musalo, K. (1997). When rights and cultures collide. *Issues in Ethics, 8*(3), 2–4.

Ndiaye, C. A. M. (2020). *Contemporary francophone West African social movements in the rise of neo-Pan-Africanism: A case study of Y en a marre in Senegal*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. Paper 3414.

Ndlovu, H. (2017). Women's bodies reclaiming the picket line: The "Nude" protest during #FeesMustFall. *Agenda*, *31*(3–4), 68–77.

Njoroge, D. (2016). Global activism or media spectacle? An exploration of bring back our girls campaign. In B. Mutsvairo (Ed.), *Digital activism in the social media era*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015). Black pain matters: Down with rhodes. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, *3 & 4*, 74–93.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2017). Incompleteness: Frontier Africa and the currency of conviviality. *Journal of Asian and African Studies, 52*(3), 253–270.

Oba, A. A. (2008). Female circumcision as female genital mutilation: Human rights or cultural imperialism? *Global Jurist*, *8*(3), 0–38.

Okech, A., & Musindarwezo, D. (2019). Building transnational feminist alliances: Reflections on the post 2015 development agenda. *Contexto Internacional*, *41*(2), 255–272.

Pallas, C. L. (2012). Identity, individualism, and activism beyond the state: Examining the impacts of global citizenship. *Global Society*, *26*(2), 169–189.

Pallas, C. L. (2017). Inverting the boomerang: Examining the legitimacy of North–South–North campaigns in transnational advocacy. *Global Networks*, *17*(2), 281–299.

Pallas, C. L., & Bloodgood, E. (2019). *Beyond the boomerang: Evolving patterns in transnational advocacy*. Working paper presented at the 2019 International Society for Third-sector Research International Conference, Amsterdam and shared by author.

Pallas, C. L., & Nguyen, L. (2018). Transnational advocacy without Northern NGO partners: Vietnamese NGOs in the HIV/AIDS Sector. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, *47*(4_suppl), 159S–176S.

Pallas, C. L., & Urpelainen, J. (2013). Mission and interests: The strategic formation and function of North-South NGO campaigns. *Global Governance*, *19*(3), 401–423.

Pauwelyn, J. (2014). Rule-based trade 2.0? The rise of informal rules and international standards and how they may outcompete WTO treaties. *Journal of International Economic Law*, *17*(4), 739–751. https://doi.org/10.1093/jiel/jgu042

Pauwelyn, J., Wessel, R. A., & Wouters, J. (2014). When structures become shackles: Stagnation and dynamics in international lawmaking. *European Journal of International Law*, *25*(3), 733–763.

Petrova, T. (2013). *From solidarity to survival: The motivational life cycle of transnational activism* (Harriman Institute Working Paper No. 3). Retrieved from https://harriman.columbia.edu/files/harriman/newsletter/Petrova%20Working%20Paper%20No%203.pdf

Raustiala, K. (2002). The architecture of international cooperation: Transgovernmental networks and the future of international law. *Virginia Journal of International Law*, 43(1), 2–51.

Rodríguez-Garavito, C. (2015). Multiple boomerangs: new models of global human rights advocacy. *Open Democracy.* https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/openglobalrights-openpage/multiple-boomerangs-new-models-of-global-human-rights-advoc/

Rosenau, J. N., et al. (2003). *The cutting edge of globalization*. Paper prepared for delivery at the 2003 Annual Convention of the American Political Science Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, August 28–31, 2003.

Routledge, P. (2003). Convergence space: Process geographies of grassroots globalization networks. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS, 28, 333–349.

Routledge, P., Cumbers, A., & Nativel, C. (2007). Grassrooting network imaginaries: Relationality, power, and mutual solidarity in global justice networks. *Environment and Planning A*, *39*, 2575–2592.

Sadaqat, A. (2017). INGOs: Tools for the promotion of neoliberalism in developing countries. *International Journal of Research and Development in Social Sciences, 3*(2), 1–11.

Selasi, T. (2005). *Bye-Bye Babar*, http://thelip.robertsharp.co.uk/?p=76

Slaughter, S. (2015). Building G20 outreach: The role of transnational policy networks in sustaining effective and legitimate summitry. *Global Summitry*, *1*(2), 171–186.

Smith, C. (2015). *The technology of hope: Twitter and the #BringBackOurGirls Campaign* (MA Thesis). Royal Roads University, Victoria, British Columbia, Canada.

Staggenborg, S. (1986). Coalition work in the pro-choice movement: Organizational and environmental opportunities and obstacles. *Social Problems*, *33*(5), 374–390. https://doi.org/10.2307/800657

Tarrow, S. (2005). *The New Transnational Activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Tarrow, S. (2019). A landmark in scholarly activism beyond borders: A review of Keck and Sikkink's Transnational advocacy networks in international and regional politics.

International Social Science Journal, *68*(227–228), 89–101. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/issj.12171?af=R

Taylor, R. (2002). *Interpreting global civil society*. *13*(4), 339–347. http://publish.uwo.ca/~jnewman/Rupert%20Taylor.pdf

Temper, L. (2019). From boomerangs to minefields and catapults: Dynamics of trans-local resistance to land grabs. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, *46*(1), 188–216.

Tieku, T. K. (2019a). *Informality and global IR: A research agenda*. Millennium Conference, unpublished working paper shared by author.

Tieku, T. K. (2019b). Ruling from the shadows: The nature and functions of informal international rules in world politics. *International Studies Review*, *21*(2), 225–243.

Tieku, T. K. (n.d.). *Informal international relations*. unpublished working paper shared by author.

Tripp, A, M. (2005). Regional Networking as Transnational Feminism: African Experiences in Feminist Africa Issue 4, https://feministafrica.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/fa_4_feature_article_3.pdf

Voller, Y. (2019). Transnational civil society and diaspora activism in Somaliland, South Sudan, and Iraqi Kurdistan. *LSE Blogs*. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2019/08/21/transnational-civil-society-diaspora-activism-somaliland-south-sudan/

Voller, Y. (2020). *Advantages and challenges to diaspora transnational civil society activism in the homeland: Examples from Iraqi Kurdistan, Somaliland, and South Sudan*. London, UK: LSE Conflict Research Programme. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/104138/

Wanyeki, L. M. (2005). The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET): Experiences of feminist continental organizing. *Feminist Africa*, *4*.

van Wessel, M., Naz, F., & Sahoo, S. (2021). Complementarities in CSO collaborations: How working with diversity produces advantages. *Voluntas*, *32*(4), 717–730.

Wong, W. H., & Brown, P. H. (2013). E-bandits in global activism: WikiLeaks, Anonymous, and the politics of no one. *Perspectives on Politics*, 11(4), 1015–1033.

Zajak, S., Egels-Zanden, N., & Piper, N. (2019). Networks of labour activism: Collective action across Asia and beyond. An introduction to the debate. *Development and Change*, *48*(5), 899–921.

4 (Re)Situating Non-NGO Agency in Transnational Activism

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I reviewed the international relations (IR) literature on transnational activism and established that, taken alone, it provides an incomplete picture of a vast and dynamic phenomenon. In this second chapter on theoretical approaches to transnational activism, I draw on knowledge from other disciplines that speaks more closely to new dimensions of transnational activism, looking at three main foci: structure and form, processes and relations, and pathways and motivations.

The literature on transnational activism is vast and multidisciplinary (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, pp. 233–234), spanning political economy, economic and institutional sociology, and anthropology, among others. This chapter uncovers past transdisciplinary research by leading IR scholars which recognises the deeper, more holistic insights to be gained from multidisciplinary research (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, pp. 234, 245; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999). Given their sociocultural orientation, this chapter concludes that theories from sociology, psychology, African Studies, and communications studies respond better to knowledge gaps in IR regarding new dimensions of transnational activism.

This chapter is structured in five parts. It begins by discussing how advances in digital communications are altering the context of transnational activism across the world. In a second section, I discuss new forms of transnational activism and who constitutes them as represented in non-IR literature. The concept of 'newness' is problematised in this section. Third, I examine relations among these new transnational actors, followed by an exploration of pathways and motivations in Section Four. In a final section, I outline a conceptual-analytical framework that draws on key concepts from the reviewed literature before concluding.

The Changing Context of Transnational Activism

Several scholars, many in media and communication studies, have noted the emergence of a technologically driven society in which all forms of public and private interactions, including activism (Mutsvairo, 2016, p. 3), are driven by digital communication and other technologies. Castells (2005, p. 7) calls this the 'network society', defined as:

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-5

> a social structure based on networks operated by information and communication technologies based in microelectronics and digital computer networks that generate, process, and distribute information on the basis of the knowledge accumulated in the nodes of the networks.

This new society has several key features. It is marked by 'networked individualism' (Castells, 2005, p. 12) or 'networked sociality' (Srinavasan, Diepeveen, & Karekwaivanane, 2019, p. 9), a pattern of individualism as the dominant culture, and sociability that occurs within 'self-selected communication networks' or 'echo chambers' (Sunstein, 2018); in other words, Internet users can choose who they interact with online based on their interests. Network societies are also marked by 'hypersocialism' (Castells, 2005, pp. 11–12), with individuals being more socially active both online and offline because of Internet-facilitated virtual engagements. A third characteristic of network societies is 'self-driven mass communication', wherein individuals and groups are usurping the traditional role of mass media using horizontal communication networks like blogs, vlogs, pods, streaming, and other forms of interactive, computer-to-computer communication that enable them to bypass older forms of communication and socialisation (Castells, 2005, p. 13; Cammaerts, 2015, p. 3). A fourth feature of a networked society that tends to be discussed as an outcome of the foregoing three, but is a substantive aspect in itself, is increased or hyper-transnationality, which manifests as a more diverse and broader spread of activism participants around the world.

Examples of rising transnationalism abound across the Global South, but the same phenomenon is occurring in the rest of the world, albeit with different implications. In both spaces, more frequent uprisings point to declining trust in organised civil society, but in the South in particular, this indicates resurgent agency and autonomy. However, while Northern and Southern scholars are writing about this, not many of them use transnationality as a central concept, suggesting a lingering bias in framings of transnationalism as involving North and South while South-South activism is constructed as regional. This disjuncture is noted by Pallas and Bloodgood's (2019, p. 1) observation that (a) scholars of transnational advocacy outside the North are not commonly cited in the literature, and (b) where unilateral action by Northern NGOs' on international issues is seen as transnational advocacy, action by non-Northern NGOs is only considered transnational if it involves Northern actors (Pallas & Bloodgood, 2018, pp. 9–10). This exposes an epistemic gap in terms of how identity and race determine who is a legitimate transnational activist, but it also partly explains why activism taking place outside the Global North is not visible in 'mainstream' transnational activism literature.

Sociologist Cardoso (2005) suggests that some countries like the United States, Finland, and Singapore can already be considered network societies, while some others are in transition, but a multi-author volume edited by Mutsvairo (2016) illustrates the growing importance of social media across Africa, as attested by its 'vibrant digital cultures and practices' (Mabewazara, 2015, p. 1). Independent writer and researcher, Nyabola (2018, p. 5) notes that in Kenya, digital spaces—especially social media—are one of the most politically active. To back this, she

cites a 2016 study that found that Twitter in Africa tends to be more political than in other parts of the world (Portland Communications, 2018). Nyabola (2018, pp. 127–156) discusses the pivotal role of social media in feminist activism in Kenya across a range of issues, including sexual violence and women's political involvement. This bears out in Nigerian English scholar, Yeku's (2018) work on how social media is enabling 'everyday citizens' in Nigeria to overcome marginality and subalternity by expressing and performing their political agency in less restricted online public spaces.

Against this background, the growing digitalisation of transnational activism is self-evident, although the nexus between digitalism and activism has been studied more widely at national than global levels. It is important to state that digital activism has not supplanted traditional physical activism; rather, they are mutually constitutive (Nyabola, 2018). The first thing to note is the construction of cyberspace as a public sphere (Papacharissi, 2009), a virtual 'counter-public' (Sabao & Chikara, 2018), and the expanding locus of transnational politics (Endong, 2018), building on Habermas' (1992) original concept. This is important because it alters conceptions of what constitutes transnationality, strengthening the case to look beyond the traditional thresholds of geographic state borders to the borderless space of the Internet which is organised more by interests and identities. Second, scholars have noted that the Internet has changed the constitution of transnational activism as well as the nature and structure of relations among those who take part in it.

According to Cammaerts (2015), transnationalisation is one of several important impacts of social media on social movements and protest. In his view, networked technologies offer new opportunities for activists and their organisations to mobilise transnationally, making transnational networks become 'more virtual, more fluid, more decentralised, more de-institutionalised and more global' (Cammaerts, 2015, p. 7). Other scholars recognise and reiterate these changing aspects of transnational activism, but have made limited effort to theorise the identities of the actors driving these changes, ostensibly because they are so diverse that it is difficult to condense them into neat categories.

Transnational Activism: 'New' Directions or New Forms?

It is admittedly difficult to identify a verifiable starting point of the phenomenon of transnational activism and separating purportedly old from new social movement actors, many of which have co-existed throughout history. Scholars disagree over whether the changing context of transnational activism has produced new forms or merely changed the ways that existing forms operate. While it is difficult to conclude authoritatively without further research, the literature reviewed so far indicates that older forms of transnational activism prevail, albeit in different processes and alliances with other actors, but environmental factors have also produced new hybrid actors that are qualitatively different in structure, inter-group relations, and motivations, and thus require new theories.

Recent work on transnational activism is turning towards the changing forms of activism and exploring a qualitative departure from the institutionalised advocacy

that dominates IR scholarship. Without essentialising current trends, non-IR literature has noted a resurgence of mass-based activism that involves loosely connected networks of actors in multiple geographic contexts doing activism simultaneously around the same issues, but in ways that are structurally different from older forms of activism. Based on his study of two cases of social justice activism, Bennett (2005, p. 203), a professor of communication and political science, distinguishes two eras of transnational activism: a first generation of centralised coalitions of NGOs and social movements, and a second generation of 'inclusive organization models' that are 'relatively decentralized' and loosely interconnected, 'leaderless', and operate through technologically enhanced networks that help expand the scale of their transnationalism. They consist of 'organizations and individuals who are more resistant to conventional social movement practices of coalition-formation, brokerage, framing, and establishing straightforward institutional relationships to influence policy'. He further states that first-generation forms of transnational activism are embedded in second-generation forms, thus forming hybrids that require the reformulation of older concepts of transnational activism as framed by Keck and Sikkink's generation (Bennett, 2005, p. 213).

Bennett (2005) uses the case of a protest in Washington against the Iraq war in which an estimated 100,000 people who participated, out of seven to 30 million people worldwide, expressed divergent opinions to illustrate that contemporary movements value diversity and subjectivity over ideology and conformity. Compared with older, though still active, movements that centre on specific issues and tend to comprise organisational actors with shared collective identities, new ones are more likely to include a wide range of individual actors who engage directly (i.e., not through organisations) and bring diverse issues to the same protest event (Bennett, 2005). The main attributes of both eras of activism are summarised in Table 4.1. Technology is enhancing activists' ability to reach new and wider audiences, but it is also producing new forms, e.g., meta- or hyper-organisations, that exist mainly in digital form and processes, and are a common feature of transnational protest networks (Bennett, 2005, p. 218).

Table 4.1 Defining differences in two eras of transnatinal activism

	NGO Advocacy Order	*Direct Activism*
Scope	Policy—issue—advocacy	Diverse social justice agenda
Organisation	NGO-centred issue networks	Mass activism—multi-issue
Scale	Limited by brokered coalitions	Expanded by technology networks
Targets	Government (all levels) and some corporations	Corporations, industrial sectors, econ blocs (G7, WEF, IMF, WTO)
Tactics	Strategic campaigns —limited political goals —turned on and off by lead orgs	Permanent campaigns —diverse political goals —difficult to turn on and off
Goals	Gov't (nat. and int'l regulation) establish information regimes, maintain organizational identity	Personal involvement in direct action, establish communication networks, hyper-orgs to empower individuals
Capacity	Reform and crisis intervention	Mass protest, value change

Bennett explores in some depth the benefits and risks of the hybridity embodied by new forms of transnational activism, which include greater potential combined power and impact, and tensions and disengagement arising from differences in approach, political capital, and values. However, his analysis of both sets of actors as groups does not permit him to look more closely at relationships within them, particularly among individuals within direct action movements. Bennett seems to assume, arguably because he engages from the perspective of US- and Europe-based actors, that new forms of activism are cohesive, and thus do not address geographies of power and disparities in agency and representation between participants situated either mainly in the Global North or South.

In the same edited volume, drawing on Tarrow's (2005) earlier work and a term coined by Ghanaian-British philosopher Anthony Appiah (1996), Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) note the growing transnational importance of 'rooted cosmopolitans', defined as 'ordinary citizens' with multiple belongings and flexible identities, who are 'more commonly involved in domestic politics or movements', and who 'reach beyond their own home bases to join with millions of others around the world' (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, p. 228). This is evidenced by the millions of ordinary citizens who marched against the US' war on Iraq in cities across Europe, the United States, and other continents—Africa and other Global South countries are not mentioned. However, Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) use the term as a catch-all for a range of actors that includes immigrant activists actively involved in transnational politics, Global South labour activists who form alliances with Northern counterparts, and transnational advocacy networks. Multiple identities are defined as 'overlapping memberships of loosely structured polycentric networks' and flexible identities are characterised by 'inclusiveness and a positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilisation' (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005, p. 237).

Though they use the term 'emerging movements', the authors think it inutile to demonstrate their 'newness', preferring to identify novel characteristics, partly in recognition of the historic nature of transnational activism, as seen in the anti-slavery movement of the early 19th century (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). For them, the most outstanding aspect of new transnationalism is the emergence of a group of people who are able to build linkages between resources and opportunities offered by their societies and those available in transnational contexts (Della Porta & Tarrow, 2005). Della Porta and Tarrow (2005) thus recognise the growing transnational agency of individuals, but, like many Northern scholars, their focus is on Global North actors and contexts, some of whose actions are directed towards non-Northern issues. This is unexpected, given that Della Porta and Tarrow admit the eurocentric weakness of previous scholarship on transnational activism—including them.

The wave of uprisings that have come to be known as the 'Arab Spring'—a misnomer given their situation mainly in North Africa—took the form of spontaneous, diffuse protests and events with no clear central coordinating point. This trend of diffusion meant that vast groups and generations of 'ordinary' people took part, compared with the closed groups of professional transnational advocacy organisations and networks examined in the previous chapter. It is worth noting

here an observation by communications scholar Mutsvairo (2016, p. 6) that while activism has traditionally been the preserve of 'activists', ordinary citizens using social media and other technologies now self-identify as activists too. This speaks to the new agency ordinary citizens have to participate in political resistance both at home and abroad.

The actors in the North African protests were mixed groups of multiracial-multicultural Black and Arab citizens (Amazigh/Berber, Copt, etc.) living across North Africa and its diasporas. Young people of North African origin joined protests with fellow citizens in North America and Europe (Camozzi, Cherubini, Leccardi, & Rivetti, 2017), among other Northern countries. The participation of second-generation youth of North African descent, many of whom had been born in the West and identified as both North African and North American or European, obscured the binary conceived between Northern and non-Northern identities in earlier activism research. Many participants were connected through personal social relations of family and friends (Smith, Krishna, & Al-Sinan, 2019), many of which were facilitated by social media networks, depicting the importance of informality in driving contemporary activism. Events took place in multiple geographic spaces in and outside North Africa that were either consciously coordinated or held in solidarity (Temlali, 2011, p. 47).

Participation ranged from embodied—i.e., being physically present at real-time events, to digital—liking and sharing posts on social media (Facebook, Twitter), and coordinating e-groups of organisers and protesters (Smith et al., 2019). Technological tools like social media facilitated global communication and mobilisation, but the location and situation of the protests in cyberspace are significant to the idea of the digital sphere as an emerging virtual 'counter-public' that expands or pluralises physical spheres of political interaction and participation (Lee, Mcquarrie, & Walker, 2015; Nyabola, 2018; Sabao & Chikara, 2018). Similar patterns are discernible in movements like Fallism, the South African-led movement to decolonise education and other aspects of everyday life in South Africa, that has been extensively researched by scholars of African Studies, sociology, and anthropology, notably, Adomako Ampofo (2015, 2016), Nyamnjoh (2015), Luescher (2016), and Wamai (2016). Participants in Fallism were nationally and racially diverse in and outside South Africa and the Internet played a significant role in aiding mobilisation, documentation, and communication. Its creative use of social media (Twitter and Facebook), according to Luescher (2016, p. 23), attracted solidarity messages from other student populations worldwide (Sosibo, 2015), including from the West Indies and the United States (Nyamnjoh, 2015).

In addition to embodying a new pattern of mass-based, deinstitutionalised transnational activism, Fallism is also instructive because of its global trajectory. It spread to the Global North and other parts of the world, not because it appealed for foreign support, but because its framing resonated with other actors facing similar challenges (Ramaru, 2017; Nyamnjoh, 2015). Nyamnjoh (2015) suggests that the activism's framing of Black pain was instrumental in its spread to Europe and North America. As some have argued, because the help needed by Fallists was internal, it would have been counterintuitive to seek it from the same imperialist

powers that contributed to the prevailing state of things in South Africa. Thus, we see a shift in the power relations between North and South in the context of activism that influences political action by Northern actors but does not depend on their support.

Reconstructing Transnational Advocacy Networks

Sociologist Castells' latest work, *Networks of Outrage and Hope* (2012a), brings to light his observations about common patterns among what he terms 'new' transnational social movements, which he theorises as part of a global wave of activism that began in Iceland and Tunisia and is travelling around the world (Castells, 2012a, 2012b). Drawing on the ideas of Touraine (1977) and Melucci (1985), Castells (2014, p. 97) de-emphasises the role of structure; he defines social movements more broadly by purpose, stating that they 'challenge the values and institutions of society outside of established institutional channels'—although they are not always progressive (Castells, 2012a). In his view, these movements are characterised and connected by how physical place and mobile networks combine within them, as well as their horizontality, leaderlessness, and rhizomatic (fluid, unfixed) nature, among other factors (Castells, 2014).

Contrary to older movements that form around normative and instrumental motives, Castells sees new movements as driven by emotions or affective intelligence, which centre on outrage at varied social conflict and optimism or hope about the prospects of a different future reality. Technological advancements are giving more agency and autonomy to individuals through self-communication and altering the form and functionality of social networks, making them more multimodal—they include online and offline groups and members of multiple personal (family, friends, hobby groups) networks that are interactive and global-local (Castells, 2012a). This approach allows for analysis that is inclusive and holistic and transcends the strictures created by assigning specific features to constructed forms of activism that are, in reality, not rigid. Castells' work resonates with Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connective action, which comes to the fore through what they describe as the personalisation of contentious politics by the ways in which communication occurs across social media networks. They contrast this with the logic of collective action that characterises the deep organisation and development of collective identities associated with older, more traditional movements. They identify three ideal types of networks: (1) self-organising, (2) organisationally enabled networks which are defined by connective action, and (3) organisationally brokered networks which form around collective action (see Figure 4.1). This framework advances the discourse on networks beyond Keck and Sikkink's original framing. However—and this may be partly because Bennett and Segerberg's empirical case referents are all European or American—it presumes some amount of cohesion and singularity of model that do not fully explain the multimodal nature of social groups like Bring Back Our Girls occurring in other parts of the world.

This concept of connectiveness echoes anthropologist Nyamnjoh's (2015, pp. 258–259) notion of frontier Africans, a group that straddles 'myriad margins

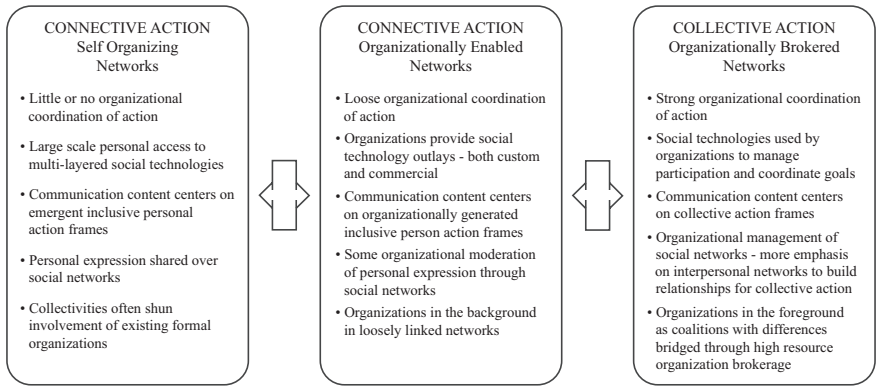

Figure 4 1 Elements of connective and collective action networks.

Source: Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 757).

of identity and belonging … physical and cultural geographies', by virtue of the 'accelerated physical and social mobility afforded Africans and others by their creativity and technological innovations'. This speaks to the point made earlier about the futility of rigid binary categories of Northern and Southern actors. Related to Nyamnjoh's work is the controversial concept of Afropolitans first propounded by the Nigerian-American writer Taiye Selasi (2005), a contested referent to African cosmopolitan emigrants. Selasi defines this group as a racially and culturally eclectic group of young people, born mostly outside Africa to parents who migrated in the 1960s and 1970s, and who now straddle multiple geographic and cultural worlds with diluted concepts of self and home. The concept has been strongly critiqued for being reductive and elitist (Tveit, 2013; Dabiri, 2016), and suggesting that cosmopolitanism is a quality bestowed by the North (Musila, 2016). It has support among some scholars who view it as 'a new phenomenology of Africanness and a way of being African in the world' (Gikandi, 2011, p. 9). Nevertheless, African diasporic identities and personalities play an important role in today's transnational activism.

In addition to the cases cited above, we find further evidence of this connectiveness in new feminist movements, many of which are digitalised and have come to be known as cyberfeminism. In her profile of Female IN (FIN), a movement that evolved from the hashtag #BeingFemaleinNigeria to a transnational Facebook group with over a million members in 2017, queer feminist activist and writer Olofintuade (2017, p. 163) details how its founder, Lola Omolola, a Nigerian woman living in the United States, started the group by drawing on women in her circles, who in turn invited women in their own circles, including on social media. Thus, we see the importance of personal social and social media networks in new forms of transnational activism. The group was led by Omolola with the support of selected Facebook administrators and moderators who enforced group rules, but FIN was not a formal structured organisation; it was a community of individual women characterised by varying depths of social ties or connectivities among its members. Olofintuade (2017) shows that these women joined the movement as

individuals who shared the common identity of being Nigerian women and the common experience of gender discrimination by virtue of being Nigerian. Yet their varied values and religious beliefs over matters like sexuality caused tensions that showed that their collective identity did not outweigh their individual intersectionality.

Olofintuade (2017) further notes that although the group started as a safe space to give voice to oppressed women, its leadership grew increasingly authoritarian and intolerant of contrary opinion as more women joined. This shows that tensions over identity and power exist in all activist groups—even those whose members share cultural, racial, and gender identities. It also strengthens the case for intersectionality as an analytical tool of transnational activism. Further, it counters Castells' (2014) notion that new social movements are characterised by horizontality. Though his work suggests that new movements are less rigidly structured than NGO networks, emerging evidence shows that in some digital groups and interactions, there are clear hierarchies, albeit informal, that defy his concept.

Motivations for Participation in Transnational Activism by Individual Actors

Individual participation is a broad concept that is widely theorised across different disciplines and in relation to different events, including conflict and violence, institutionalised politics, organisations, sport, religion, development, and a range of collective activities. Building on its usage in democratic theory, this book conceptualises participation to mean the active involvement of individuals in social or political action across borders with the intent to achieve set outcomes. The word 'active' is included to indicate that there are layers of involvement; these range from 'slacktivism', defined by Morozov (2009) as the 'lazy ineffectiveness of online activism', inferring the minimal effort, risk, and time of online participation in activism (Smith et al., 2019, pp. 183–184). The other end of this scale of participation is characterised as active and involving investments in online activities or physical offline protests. In its focus on the micro-level, person-specific reasons why people get involved in activism, the concept of participation stands in contrast to group-based approaches, predominantly in IR and sociology.

This chapter builds on the theoretical impulses around political and civic participation and engagement elaborated by Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) and Barrett (2015), which recognise that both concepts emanate from 'complex interactions between macro, demographic, and psychological factors' and thus necessitate multi-level integrative theories to understand what drives them. Participation is construed in behavioural terms and used to denote 'participatory behaviours' that are conventional (including voting and electioneering) and 'unconventional' (i.e., taking part in political protests). Engagement is constructed as psychological and indicates 'having an interest in, paying attention to, or having knowledge, beliefs, opinions, attitudes, or feelings about either political or civic matters' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 6). Engagement also takes different forms, like membership of civic organisations, the consumption of news through different media

(newspapers Internet, etc.), and 'holding opinions about and attitudes towards political or civic matters' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 6).

Political participation is 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing either regional, national, or supranational governance' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 6). Four multi-level factors inform individual participation and engagement in collective action: macro factors (contextual factors like a country's characteristics), demographic factors (includes ethnicity and gender), social factors (related to membership of diverse social groups), and psychological factors (such as cognition, emotions, and identification) (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, pp. 8–18). This chapter expands on the latter three in light of persistent knowledge gaps in micro- or individual-level theories and the dominance of structural-institutional frameworks in relevant scholarship. I use this framework because, in contrast to existing knowledge on the predictors and incentives for individual participation in activism, Barrett's work adopts a holistic view that enables analysis of a wide range of factors at the national, regional, and international levels that inform the dependent variable in this study. This integrative ethic is important because the participants interviewed during research for this book are situated at each geographic level, with some of them operating transnationally. The relationship between engagement and participation is constructed in literature as mutually reinforcing, whereby engagement leads to participation, but participation also enhances engagement.

Demographic Factors

Individual demographic factors have hitherto not received extensive scholarly attention in IR because of a preponderance of research on group-level participation theories. In addition to the examples of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, migrant generational status, and gender that Barrett and Brunton-Smith observe (2014:9), data for this book points to the relevance of race, nationality, profession, and parental status (this includes whether participants have children and the gender of their children, as having girls seems to be correlated with the depth of parents' empathy with the families of the Chibok students).

Activists with higher socioeconomic status are considered to have higher levels of political and civic knowledge, which translates to higher levels of participation as informed by the nexus between socioeconomic status, education, and skills gained through formal employment (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 9). This book suggests, in addition to this, that higher socioeconomic status facilitates transnational participation in activism but in protests related to inequality of opportunity, lower socioeconomic status might be the stronger factor.

One example of how ethnicity influences participation is ethnic groups' involvement with issues relating to their own groups or those of other ethnicities. For instance, ethnicity was one motive for participation in Bring Back Our Girls for African-origin migrant participants in the United States who regularly engage in Nigerian and African diaspora activities. This was driven by their consciousness of geographic distance from 'motherlands', as well as their consciousness

of belonging differently in foreign, racially polarised societies where they are profiled as Black with no regard to any cultural differentiations. This is closely tied to the concepts of nationality which this book introduces to Barrett and Brunton-Smith's framework. Nationality is important to the extent that it informs individual identification with a particular state or states if people have multiple nationalities. However, at a transnational level, the consciousness of belonging to a nationality that itself belongs to a broader collective ethnicity or identity, for example Africa(n), also influences participation. In this regard, this book introduces the concept of neo-Pan Africanism, operationalised as the transnational consciousness among ordinary people of the interconnectedness of African histories, knowledges, and experiences. The emphasis on ordinary people distinguishes this idea from its state-dominated antecedent first advocated by Nkrumah (1963).

Gender has structural and cultural effects on participation. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014, p. 10) suggest that higher education and labour force participation may mean that men are more likely to have the resources and capital needed for participation, though they do not explain how this translates into actual action. Their stance is not corroborated by the greater involvement of women compared to men transnationally in Bring Back Our Girls which scholarship on women's activism suggests is enabled by women's comparatively greater interests in issues involving the female gender. This book upholds the authors' assertion, per Galligan (2012, p. 10), that in order to interpret gendered 'patterns of participation', it is important to understand the 'cultural, social, and religious norms that determine gender roles within a society', and the differential opportunities to engage politically that are made available to women and to men. Research shows that women from societies where women and girls are oppressed, and who have themselves experienced gender-based oppression, are more likely to participate in actions that address gender inequity and injustice.

Race is not included as a factor in the models discussed earlier, but it appears to be important in contexts of prevalent racial injustice, especially where correlations can be made among violent events in geographically disparate spaces. Parallels have been drawn, for instance, between racialised violence against Brown and Black bodies in the United States and South Africa that led to the Must Fall and Black Lives Matter movements, and transnational connections among those who took part in them (Adomako Ampofo, 2016).

Barrett and Brunton-Smith state that professional work can impart skills that inform participation. This book adds, in line with research on membership of activist organisations and previous activism as predictors of participation (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 1999), that being a professional activist influences participation by heightening awareness of social justice issues and facilitating mobilisation through established activist networks.

Parental status can be construed as a measure of socioeconomic status, but in the particular case of Bring Back Our Girls (and other girls' rights activism), being a parent to a child of the same gender as those who are the subjects of political action is a determinant of participation.

Social Factors

Social factors include the 'beliefs, attitudes, values, norms, discourses, and practices that individuals are susceptible to by virtue of their connections with different social actors' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 13), what Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2013) call social embeddedness. These include family, schools, workplaces, peer groups, mass media, and organisations to which people belong. Barrett and Brunton-Smith state that these social connections affect the knowledge that people are exposed to, including the normativity of political action itself, as well as their exposure to mobilisation efforts. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014, p. 14) emphasise that these connections represent only potential influences on prospective participants who are not passive recipients of social factors but 'agentic social actors' who actively construct their own systems of beliefs and attitudes from among the web of information offered by their environment (Bandura and National Inst of Mental Health, 1986). Although activist organisations create campaigns to mobilise participation, increasingly easier access to international news is making it easier for individuals to self-mobilise even when they have not been targeted by activist groups. While they do not specify the content of these social factors, some examples from Bring Back Our Girls include anti-extremism, injustice, violence against women and girls, and solidarity.

The concept of social capital, disaggregated into structural, relational, and cognitive components, is key to understanding how social embeddedness influences individuals' decisions to participate in activism. Structural social capital 'refers to the presence or absence of network ties between actors and it essentially defines who people can reach' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 894). These are seen as more formal ties compared with relational capital which arises from the kinds of personal relationships built through historical interactions. Cognitive capital, also known as raised consciousness, is defined as 'a set of political beliefs and action orientations arising out of an awareness of similarity'. Della Porta and Diani (2006) disaggregate this into the identification of social actors with certain sets of principles and concerns (values), and 'how social actors assign meaning to their experience' (cognition). Thus, the gender consciousness of Bring Back Our Girls' female activists is a form of cognitive capital, based on shared understandings of belonging to a group that faces gendered oppression around the world, including that which led to the Chibok abductions.

Social stake or embeddedness, a concept also discussed by Della Porta and Diani (2006, p. 117), influences protest primarily according to the amount of political discussion and types of information exchanged within networks. This makes it easier to share targeted messages that compel action. The influence of social network membership also features in (Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 114), and Keck and Sikkink's (1999) work on transnational advocacy networks, wherein they observe that activists were identified as having been involved in previous actions by virtue of 'shared pasts of activism' made possible by their memberships of activist social networks. In sum, although individuals have varying motives for engaging in protests, these motives are shaped by their embeddedness in diverse social

networks whose values and information exchanges have a bearing on how they self-identify (identities), who they relate with, their moral or normative worldviews and their willingness to take action in furtherance of their beliefs. Although Barrett and Brunton-Smith do not explicitly theorise identity as a factor of participation, their ideas about the nexuses between group membership and attitudes and values speak to how individuals self-identify based on diverse social experiences in line with social identification theory.

Identity has to do with how people see themselves, including in relation to others, and comprises perceptions of sameness and difference (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 890; Della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 15). People have personal and social identities based on individual attributes and social memberships (Della Porta and Diani, 2006, p. 15). Social identity theory posits that people are moved to engage in collective action to the extent that they identify with the attributes of particular social groups. In addition to the conventional categories of the personal and social selves, this study introduces the concept of the digital self which denotes the ways in which participants in activism portray themselves in digital spaces. A second key identity category which has not been explored in discourses on transnational activism is the figure of the 'Afropolitan', a compound term first coined by writer Taye Selasi to denote cosmopolitan Africans who are equally situated in the continent and the Global North and play a role in transnational exchanges. This echoes Tarrow's (2005) concept of 'rooted cosmopolitans'.

Psychological Factors

Psychological factors comprise cognitive factors, including 'political and civic knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, opinions, and social and cultural values' (Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 15). At the national level, Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) talk about beliefs about good citizenship or civic duty which at a global level translate to ideas about global citizenship and the consciousness of interconnectedness and how this compels action on behalf of oppressed others. Barrett and Brunton-Smith (2014) also discuss the concept of efficacy which conveys individuals' perceptions of the potential impact of their participation in activism. This is similar to Kollmuss and Agyeman's (2002, pp. 255–256) concept of the locus of control which represents an individual's perception of whether s/he has 'the ability to bring about change through his or her own behavior'.

Negative and positive emotions have a bearing on participation (2014, p. 16), as recognised by several sociologists (Jasper, 1998; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Della Porta & Diani, 2006). Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002, pp. 254–255) also acknowledge the influence of emotions on people's environmental actions. Jasper's (1998) theoretical schema consists of three principal types of emotions: reactive emotions, affective loyalties, and moods. Reactive emotions are conceptualised as 'automatic physiological reactions experienced in the body' that inform individual participation in protest. They include transitory individual responses to what Walsh (1981) terms 'an unexpected threat or inroad upon people's rights or circumstances', like anger at a government decision, grief at deaths,

outrage at a development plan, and shame (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 406). Reactive emotions are seen as subjective and difficult to measure methodologically, especially with retroactive research.

In contrast, affective loyalties develop during protest, are more enduring, and 'include affective ties among protest members and feelings toward institutions, people and practices outside the movement and its constituent groups' (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 405). Examples are hatred, love, solidarity, trust, and respect (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 406). Affective ties reflect constructionist notions of emotions as cognitive because they depend on cognitive understandings of events, and also as deriving from shared social meanings. In this view, affective emotions are a 'socially prescribed set of responses' determined by 'social norms or shared expectations regarding appropriate behaviour' (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 400). Such emotions arise from perceived infractions of moral rules (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 401).

Moods fit on a continuum between reactive and affective emotions and include compassion, sympathy, pity, defiance, fear, and hope (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 406). Social identifications have to do with 'experiencing a sense of belonging to a social group' which is embedded in having a 'sense of community' that itself includes people feeling that the community offers opportunities for participation (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013, p. 26).

The final psychological factor in the integrative model is personal motivations and goals which are wide-ranging and include the need to express personal values and concern for a community. Kollmuss and Agyeman (2002, pp. 259–250) define motivations as 'the reason for a behavior or a strong internal stimulus around which behavior is organized'.

This framework is comprehensive because it reconciles into a single model different concepts that have been studied separately by different scholars across disciplines. However, unlike the boomerang model and other models identified by de Waal (2015, pp. 18–44) and Pallas (2017), among others, Barrett and Brunton-Smith's framework does not consider or represent the dynamics of interaction among activists in different parts of the world. Also, their model seems to assume a linear relationship between individual characteristics and the iterative processes of engagement and participation.

Digital Activism and New Theories of Engagement

Changes in the forms and locus of activism are forcing scholars to rethink their conceptualisations of the concepts of engagement and participation. Emerging research on the relationship between computer-mediated communication and social media and activism highlights the ways in which technological advances have altered and continue to alter the practice of engagement in digital contexts. This is important in light of the increasing digitalisation of activism. Smith et al. (2019, p. 185) suggest that individual social media engagement, 'a psychological state through which an individual "becomes cognitively and emotionally absorbed" in the experience', leads to political action. Engagement can be cognitive, affective, or behavioural

(Smith et al. 2019, p. 186) and is distinguished from regular social media activity or slacktivism ('lazy' activism that does not require much of users) (Smith et al., 2019, p. 185). Social media engagement is constructed not as a fixed quality that is easily measured by the frequency and ways that social media users engage with digital content, but as a process comprising antecedents, attributes, and outcomes (Smith et al., 2019, p. 190).

Antecedents are factors that precede and lead to engagement which 'comprise the needs and conditions of social media users'. Antecedents 'may originate either online or offline and are primarily social and informational'. People's emotional state and self-image, as well as their communicative competence (their ability to contribute digitally to protests using social media know-how), also function as antecedents. Attributes are 'the qualities of the social media experience that engender engagement', like the aesthetic appeal and perceived usability by which social media users measure their digital experiences (Smith et al., 2019, p. 191). Outcomes transcend social media likes or shares and can include factors like establishing and maintaining social connections. This chapter suggests that this type of outcome indicates that participation is influenced by normative as well as strategic considerations.

In addition to social media engagement, empowerment and social stake also inform participation. Empowerment can derive from several factors, including the consciousness of being part of a collective and having the competence to be actively involved in curating information as part of digital activism. The idea of social stake or investment mirrors social embeddedness in digital contexts. It has to do with people's sense of belonging to digitally connected communities and the sense that their membership confers responsibilities on them to these social groups and commands support from them in the form of participation in activism in which these groups are involved.

Modelling New Forms of Transnational Activism

Based on the concepts and patterns discussed earlier, this section presents a theoretical model that presents salient factors that inform the changing structure and form, and motivations for participation of individuals in transnational activism. The model contains concepts that are present in IR, sociology, communication/media studies, environmental studies, African Studies, and social psychology, with varying effects on the dependent variable, and is thus multidisciplinary. The model is also multilevel as it depicts the involvement of different actors. It is integrative, being based on multiple scholars' theories of the structures and forms, interrelations, and motives for participation of the different 'actor constellations' (Zajak, 2017, p. 241) involved in contemporary transnational activism.

The model shows three main sets of actors driving contemporary transnational activism. The first set consists of domestic and transnational individual ordinary citizens or rooted cosmopolitans or Afropolitans or frontier Africans, in the context of Africa, who are placed at the top because in the literature, they are increasingly portrayed as the main agents who are initiating, organising, mobilising, and leading

transnational resistance. The second group of actors comprises transnational advocacy networks as seen across IR literature. They remain active although no longer in a leading capacity. They are embedded in a third group of actors of mainly individual social networks known as inclusive or hybrid distributed networks, so called because they are dispersed and not as cohesive or coordinated as TANs. Compared to previous models of transnational activism that place Southern actors beneath Northern ones in a contrived hierarchy, the current model collapses this power geography, distinguishing only between the agency of individual against collective actors. Relations between Southern and Northern activists are seen as horizontal, not vertical.

The second part of this model presents motivations for participating in transnational activism and the factors that influence them. We see that individual actors are motivated by a range of demographic and psychosocial attributes, including ethnicity, gender, personal beliefs and values, social media engagement, and emotions, while transnational advocacy networks are influenced mainly by both collective global norms and strategic considerations. Hybrid inclusive networks of individual activists and transnational advocacy networks are motivated by both individual and collective attributes.

The third part of this model features a scale of engagement and participation as theorised across IR and non-IR literature. Active engagement and participation involve all activity that shows commitment and a willingness to undergo some amount of risk. This is typically framed as physical or offline participation, though there is growing recognition that digital participation can be regarded as active and is instrumental to effective offline mobilisation. Loose engagement and participation are typically conceived in terms of digital activity and include slacktivism and

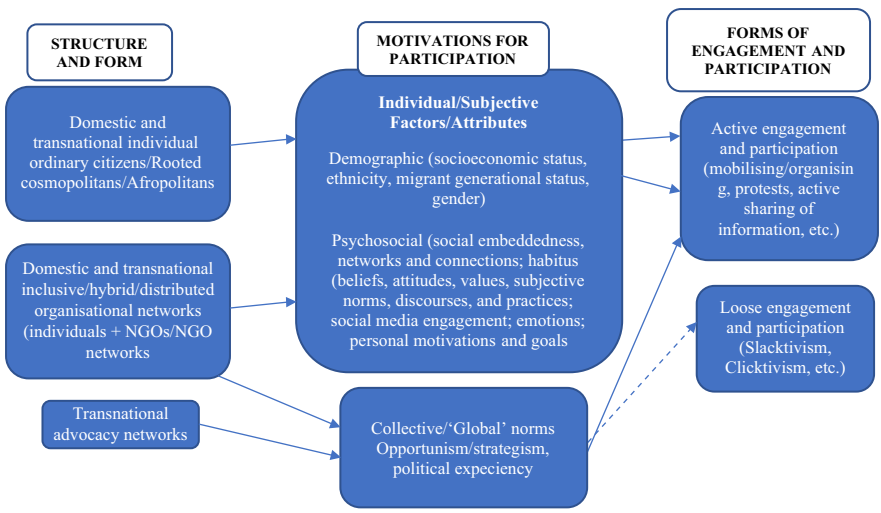

Figure 4.2 Integrative model of multimodal transconnective networks of change.

Source: Author construction from IR and non-IR literature reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4.

clicktivism. Both are often conflated but do not mean the same thing. The term clicktivism emanates from a bias against digital activism which is seen by some as half-hearted compared with intense physical involvement, whereas slacktivism describes digital activism that is not consistent. Individual forms of transnational activism can lead to either or both active and loose participation, but online activism is seen as more likely to lead to the latter. NGO activism is seen as more likely to be active but can also be loose, depending on its motivations. This model does not attempt to explain how or why the intensity of participation of different actors varies, nor how their attributes explain their involvement at different scales. Though an interesting subject of research, it is beyond the scope of this book. The model also does not view different scales of participation as static but as dynamic and evolving, depending on the motivations of separate actors.

Conclusion

IR scholars have laid an important foundation of knowledge on transnational advocacy networks and what informs their actions. Though this field is increasingly cognisant of the transnational agency of non-state, non-formal organised actors, it retains two biases that make its narratives incomplete: a bias towards collective organised actors (NGOs and NGO coalitions) and another towards Northern actors, contexts, and theories. Changing contexts of transnational activism as marked by hyperdigitality, declining trust in organised civil society, and increasing Southern transnational agency, among other factors, mean that IR literature does not reflect accurately the current state of transnational activism, which necessitates a rethinking of its frameworks through knowledge from other disciplines.

This chapter's exploration of knowledge from sociology, communications studies, psychology, and African Studies builds on IR's theorising about the growing transnational involvement and agency of informal individual actors, showing how they mobilise and interact with each other as well as with formal transnational advocacy networks. This knowledge shows that these individuals are 'ordinary' citizens who do not necessarily identify as professional activists and are motivated by a wide range of personal attributes that do not feature in explanations of collective motivations. While there are commonalities, individual motivations are largely subjective and explain why diverse individuals holding divergent beliefs and identities can come together within a single protest but for different reasons. The chapter draws on both IR and non-IR literature to construct a model that brings together all this information in a coherent way. This model is subsequently tested against Bring Back Our Girls in Chapters 5 and 6.

While non-IR disciplines advance knowledge on transnational activism beyond the boundaries and limitations of IR, they too tend to be centred on Northern actors and contexts, creating gaps regarding their relevance for non-Northern actors and contexts. This reinforces this chapter's premise that a multidisciplinary, decolonial approach offers a maximal understanding of diverse aspects of the state of contemporary transnational activism as no single disciplinary or theoretical framework suffices by itself.

References

Adomako Ampofo, A. (2015). *Re-viewing studies on Africa, #Black Lives Matter, and envisioning the future of African studies*. ASR Distinguished Lecture at the 58th Annual Meeting of the African Studies Association, San Diego, California.

Adomako Ampofo, A. (2016). Re-viewing studies on Africa, black lives matter, and envisioning the future of African studies. *African Studies Review, 59*(2), 7–29.

Appiah, K. A. (1996). Cosmopolitan patriots. In J. Cohen (Ed.), *For love of country: Debating the limits of patriotism*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Bandura, A., & National Inst of Mental Health. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory.* Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Barrett, M. (2015). An integrative model of political and civic participation: Linking the macro, social and psychological levels of explanation. In M. Barrett & B. Zani (Eds.), *Political and civic engagement: Multidisciplinary perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Barrett, M., & Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, *10*(1), 5–28.

Bennett, W. L. (2005). Social movements beyond borders: Understanding Two Eras of Transnational activism. In D. della Porta & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *Transnational activism and world politics*. USA: Rowman and Littlefield.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: The personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication and Society*, *15*(5), 739–768.

Cammaerts, B. (2015). Social media and activism. In R. Mansell & P. Hwa (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of digital communication and society*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Camozzi, I., Cherubini, D., Leccardi, C., & Rivetti, P. (2017). *Young women and young men of arab mediterranean background in Italy: Transnational involvement of the second generation youth in the arab uprisings*. SAHWA Scientific Paper Nº 7/2017. Barcelona Centre for International Affairs.

Cardoso, G. (2005). Societies in transition to the network society. In M. Castells & G. Cardoso (Eds.), *The network society: From knowledge to policy.* Washington, DC: Johns Hopkins Center for Transatlantic Relations.

Castells, M. (2005). Global governance and global politics. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *38*(1), 9–16.

Castells, M. (2012a). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. The Library of Congress, Washington, DC, 23 August 2012, (01:25:25 h.). Retrieved August 31, 2020, from https://www.loc.gov/item/webcast-5619

Castells, M. (2012b). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the internet age*. Cambridge, UK and Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Castells, M. (2014). *The impact of the internet on society: A global perspective*. https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530566/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/

Dabiri, E. (2016). 'Why I am (still) not an afropolitan. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *28*(1), 104–108.

De Waal, A. (2015). Genealogies of transnational activism. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

della Porta, D., & Tarrow, S. (Eds.). (2005). *Transnational activism and world politics*. Retrieved April 4, 2018, from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256044592_Transnational_Activism_and_World_Politics

Endong, F. P. C. (2018). Hashtag activism and the transnationalization of Nigerian-born movements against terrorism: A critical appraisal of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign. In F. P. C. Endong (Ed.), *Exploring the role of social media in transnational advocac*y. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.

Galligan, Y. (2012). *The contextual and individual determinants of women's civic engagement and political participation*. Unpublished paper, Work Package 3, The PIDOP Project.

Gikandi, S. (2011). On afropolitanism. In J. Wawrzinek & J. K. S. Makokha (Eds.), *Negotiating afropolitanism: Essays on borders and spaces in contemporary African literature and folklore*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Habermas, J. (1992). *The structural transformation of the public sphere*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Jasper, J. M. (1998). The emotions of protest: Affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements. *Sociological Forum*, *13*(3), 397–424.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. 1998. Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Kollmuss A., & Agyeman, J. (2002). Mind the gap: Why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior?. *Environmental Education Research*, *8*(3), 239–260.

Lee, C. W., Mcquarrie, M., & Walker, E. T. (2015). *Democratizing inequalities: Dilemmas of the new public participation*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

Luescher, T. M. (2016). Frantz fanon and the #MustFall movements in South Africa. *International Higher Education*, *85*, 22–24.

Mabewazara, H. M. (2015). Mainstreaming African digital cultures, practices and emerging forms of citizen engagement. *African Journalism Studies, 36*(4), 1–11.

Melucci A., (1985), The symbolic challenge of contemporary movements. *Social Research*, *52*, 789–816.

Morozov, E. (2009). The brave new world of slacktivism. *Foreign Policy.* Retrieved from https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-new-world-of-slacktivism/.

Musila, G. A. (2016). Part-time Africans, Europolitans and Africa lite. *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, *28*(1), 109–113.

Mutsvairo, B. (Ed.). (2016). *Digital Activism in the social media Era: Critical reflections on emerging trends in Sub-Saharan Africa*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nkrumah, K. (1963). *Africa must unite*. Heinemann.

Nyabola, N. (2018). *Digital democracy, analogue politics*. London: Zed Books.

Nyamnjoh, F. B. (2015). Black pain matters: Down with rhodes. *CODESRIA Bulletin*, 3 and 4:74–93.

Olofintuade, A. (2017). Female in Nigeria: Profile. *Feminist Africa, 22*, 163–173.

Pallas, C. L. (2017). Inverting the boomerang: Examining the legitimacy of North–South–North campaigns in transnational advocacy. *Global Networks*, *17*(2), 281–299.

Pallas, C. L., & Bloodgood, E. (2019). *Beyond the boomerang: Evolving patterns in transnational advocacy*. Working paper presented at the 2019 International Society for Third-sector Research International Conference, Amsterdam and shared by author.

Papacharissi, Z. (2009). The virtual geographies of social networks: A comparative analysis of Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld. *New Media and Society, 11*(1–2), 199–220.

Portland Communications. (2018). *How Africa tweets 2018*. https://portland-communications.com/publications/how-africa-tweets-2018/

Ramaru, K. (2017). Feminist reflections on the rhodes must fall movement. *Feminist Africa* (22), 89–96.

Risse, T., Ropp, S., & Sikkink, K. (Eds.). (1999). *The power of human rights: International norms and domestic change* (Cambridge Studies in International Relations). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sabao, C., & Chikara, O. (2018). Social media as an alternative public sphere for citizen participation and protest in national politics in Zimbabwe: The case of #thisflag. In F. C. Endong (Ed.), *Exploring the role of social media in transnational advocacy*.

Selasi, T. (2005). *Bye-bye babar*. http://thelip.robertsharp.co.uk/?p=76

Smith, B. G., Krishna, A., & Al-Sinan, R. (2019). Beyond slacktivism: Examining the entanglement between social media engagement, empowerment, and participation in activism. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *13*(3), 182–196.

Sosibo, K. (2015). Xenophobia: What did we learn from 2008? *Mail & Guardian*. https://mg.co.za/article/2015-04-23-xenophobia-what-did-we-learn-from-200

Srinavasan, S., Diepeveen, D., & Karekwaivanane, G. (2019). Rethinking publics in Africa in a digital age. *Journal of Eastern African Studies, 13*(1), 2–17.

Sunstein, C. R. (2018). *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media* (NED-New edition). Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv8xnhtd

Tarrow, S. (2005). *The new transnational activism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Temlali, Y. (2011). *The "Arab Spring" Rebirth or final throes of pan—Arabism?*. Germany: Heinrich Boll Stiftung.

Touraine, A. (1977). *The self-production of society*. The University of Chicago Press.

Tveit, M. (2013). The afropolitan must go. *Africa Is a Country.* https://africasacountry.com/2013/11/the-afropolitan-must-go

Van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2013). The social psychology of protest. *Current Sociology Review, 61*(5–6), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392113479314

Walsh E. J. (1981). Resource mobilization and citizen protest in communities around three Mile Island. *Social Problems, 29*, 1–21.

Wamai, N. (2016). Decolonising the academy—Towards a global movement?. *University World News, 415*. Retrieved from http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20160524135416842

Yeku, J. (2018). The hashtag as archive: Internet memes and Nigeria's social media election. In A. Adelakun & T. Falola (Eds.), *Art, creativity, and politics in Africa and the diaspora. African histories and modernities*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Zajak, S. (2017). *Pathways of transnational activism: A conceptual framework.* MPIfG Discussion Paper 14/5 Max-Planck-Institut für Gesellschaftsforschung, Köln Max Planck

5 'New' Structures and Forms of Transnational Activism

Introduction

This is the first of two chapters that discuss what the study of Bring Back Our Girls reveals about the structure and form, interrelations, and motivations for participation in transnational activism today. Both Chapters 5 and 6 speak, in turn, to the structures and forms of contemporary transnational activism (Chapter 5), and the motives of participation as seen in Bring Back Our Girls (Chapter 6), drawing on interviews with key informants and content analysis and digital ethnographies of their social media engagement on Twitter and Facebook.

In this chapter, I provide a mapping of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations and discuss the forms of activism that occurred in this book's four focal countries—Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and the United States, and include highlights from Canada, Germany, South Africa, and Tanzania to aid analysis of where or whether Bring Back Our Girls fits into taxonomies of transnational activism as constructed from my review of social movement literature. The chapter begins by looking at the interactions and relationships between Bring Back Our Girls participants in each focal country before proceeding to discuss relationships between participants in these countries and Bring Back Our Girls' core in Nigeria. It ends with a discussion of what forms of activism Bring Back Our Girls represents vis-à-vis existing typologies.

The events discussed here are not an exhaustive repertoire of all the Bring Back Our Girls events that occurred in these countries. The most common forms of events were physical gatherings of participants in symbolic places commonly known as protests, although participants employed mixed methods in their activism (various field interviews 2018–2020; Aina, Atela, Ojebode, Dayil, & Aremu, 2019). In this book, using the reported speech of the research participants, these events are variously referred to as protests, rallies, or marches. These formations were neither monodirectional nor linear; there were multiple crosscurrents of exchange among diverse actors within each focal country and between each one and the campaign's root in Nigeria. These are presented as sequentially as possible based on available data. Having discussed the structuring of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in Nigeria and the outlook of the coordinating core on events in other parts of the world, I focus here on the latter looking at how they were formed and structured, and who took part.

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-6

Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana

There were several Bring Back Our Girls events in Accra, Ghana. The ones discussed in this section were identified using a Facebook search for Bring Back Our Girls Ghana and an Internet search on Google using the same terms. The former search led me to two pages: Bring Back Our Girls Ghana[1] and Bring Back Our Girls Ghana-Candlelight Vigil, Sunday May 18th, 2014.[2] The Internet/Google search yielded media articles for events by Ghanaian celebrities, media, and school children. There was also an event by a group called Nigerians in Ghana which did not appear in the search but which I know about from having been invited to participate by one of the organisers with whom I was working at an Accra-based civil society organisation at the time.

'Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana'

This heading is in quote marks because although this group identified with the cause of Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, its name does not indicate any formal affiliation beyond its intent to show solidarity. I found the organiser of Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana, RP10, a self-described educator, activist, and founder of an NGO on youth education, through the group's Facebook page. She coordinated a Bring Back Our Girls Mothers' Solidarity March in Accra in May 2014 for which she mobilised participants on her personal Facebook page and through a group account that was created by someone in her social media networks (interview, RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020).[3] The rally was attended by mixed groups of friends and professional contacts, many of them connected through Facebook. Members of the West Africa chapter of the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) also attended so as to not duplicate efforts, though they had been planning a separate protest as part of a global coordinated effort by FEMNET members (interview, RP6, Accra, 11 June 2020). According to RP6 (interview, Accra, 11 June 2020), random people joined the rally as it progressed through Accra who did not appear to be part of the organising group or FEMNET. Other participants included Ghanaian celebrities, Gifty Anti and Becca, female political figures, and transnational actors, including Ambassador Erieka Bennett (director of the Diaspora African Network) and multiple nationalities resident in Ghana at the time. The march was the group's only physical event; all subsequent activities were mainly online on its Facebook page (interview, RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020).

Its page description reads: 'When 200+ girls in one country have been kidnapped and their whereabouts unknown, that is a matter that affects everyone in the world. #233for234'.[4] During the 2.5 years in which the page was active (May 2014 to October 2016), its manager-administrator shared original and secondary informative posts and news articles about the Boko Haram crisis, posts from Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, and related events in France. She also shared motivational words, posts, and quotes about the 'power of one' and urging people to take action. The page also marked milestone days like Day 590 on 25 November 2015, which

it used to link Bring Back Our Girls with the annual global 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence,[5] a Global North-initiated cultural event.

Bring Back Our Girls Ghana—Candlelight Vigil

About a month after the Bring Back Our Girls Ghana protest, a group made up of mostly academics held a candlelight vigil at the Central Cafeteria on the campus of the University of Ghana. It was sponsored by the African Women's Development Fund, an African feminist organisation and member of FEMNET that organised networked protests across Africa. The organisers' stated purpose, as described on its Facebook page, was to hold a vigil 'in continued solidarity with our Nigerian sisters and daughters … to demand action to bring them home'.

Bring Back Our Girls Protests by School Children

A Google search for Bring Back Our Girls Ghana yielded an archived media report by *Junior Graphic* newspaper, the youth version of the popular Ghanaian daily, *Daily Graphic*, in which it reported that 1,420 students of the Ghana International School, a prestigious private school in Ghana with a multinational student representation from 47 countries.[6] According to the article, then-principal Mrs. Diana Nyatepe-Coo initiated the 'demonstration'. In the same week (2 June), Education International (2014) reported that the Ghana National Association of Teachers, its national affiliate, had arranged an event to demand the release of the Chibok girls and to support their right to education. In all, 500 pupils and 52 teachers marched and prayed, and officials of the association made speeches framing the abductions as an obstacle to Education for All (Education International, 2014). Both events are examples of one-off activities by individuals who came together solely for the purpose of lending their voices to the cause and were typical of many such events by schoolchildren across the world.

Nigerians in Ghana

Nigerians living in Ghana held a protest at the Nigeria High Commission in Accra on 20 May tagged #BringBackOurGirlsRallyGH. The invitation email was sent by Omolara Balogun, a Nigerian activist and civil society employee to all her colleague staff in an NGO where I was employed at the time. It read: 'We invite you to join Nigerians—living in Ghana—and other well-meaning citizens across the globe to show your love, support and solidarity to the agonizing parents of these girls at the #BringBackOurGirlsRallyGH…' (Balogun, 2014). I was unable to attend because of travel commitments but I received a red t-shirt printed with the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls and an image of an African girl with a tear in her eye. Wearing these t-shirts, a group of about 20 mostly Nigerians and a few Ghanaians marched to the Nigerian High Commission in Accra where they read a statement to the high commissioner. Thereafter, individual participants continued their activism in individual capacities on Facebook and Twitter. Apart from one

tweet by Balogun, there were no concerted digital efforts by this group (interview, RP18, 15 January 2020).

Other Bring Back Our Girls Episodes

On 23 May 2014, Ghanafilmindustry.com reported that Ghanaian actors and actresses had chanted 'Bring Back Our Girls!' at the 2014 Vodafone Ghana Movie Awards (Sakib, 2014). An Internet search did not yield any further information to suggest that this was anything but a short-lived episode, as were many celebrity interventions with this activism worldwide. The *Daily Graphic*, one of the most widely read daily newspapers with an active digital platform, started a Change.o rg petition urging the swift rescue of the Chibok students and inviting Ghanaians to mobilise around this (Daily Graphic, 2013). It is not clear why only 39 people signed but the reasons they give range from the humanity of the Chibok students to the immorality of the abductions and the need to protect women and girls from violence. Apart from the Mothers' rally which involved FEMNET and the vigil by the African Women's Development Fund, most Bring Back Our Girls events in Ghana were fleeting and organised by loosely connected individuals who organised separately, albeit for the same cause and using similar symbolic and performative repertoires.

Bring Back Our Girls in Kenya

Bring Back Our Girls events in Kenya were organised by the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET), an African transnational NGO comprising mainly women's network or umbrella organisations[7] and some individual members. FEMNET's involvement began with conversations on Facebook Messenger when RP13, a Kenyan woman and member of FEMNET, sent messages to several Facebook contacts suggesting that they take urgent and immediate collective action. In the ensuing spate of emails among women's and girls' rights organisations in Kenya, she suggested that FEMNET provide leadership of the efforts being discussed because of its advocacy experience and the reach of its networks. Some of the women and men in this email conversation had collaborated in 2013 under the Justice for Liz campaign, a widespread protest over Kenyan police mishandling of the case of a 16-year-old brutally gang-raped by six men and left for dead in June 2013 (Rugene, 2013 in Nyabola, 2018, pp. 141–142).

FEMNET accepted to lead the process and RP16 began to send emails to members and co-coordinate with RP13 the planning of a solidarity march that formed part of a series of coordinated protests by its members across Africa during the week of 15 May 2014. During email conversations, it emerged that an independent group of activists had scheduled a separate same-day solidarity march for 8 May (interviews with the organisers were pending at the time of writing) (Musangi, 2014a, 2014b).[8] The solidarity march and day of action took place in Nairobi on 15 May 2014 and was led by the UNITE NGOs Africa Kenya, Akili Dada, Equality Now (an international NGO with offices in the US, Kenya, the UK and Lebanon),

the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition, and FEMNET. Similar FEMNET configurations mobilised in over 20 African countries and globally as part of this event.[9] While this bears some similarity to the transnational advocacy networks theorised by Northern scholars, there are two significant differences.

First, compared to vertical Southern requests for help to Northern advocates in transnational advocacy networks, in this case, African actors offered solidarity to fellow Africans in what could be construed as a horizontal relationship. Second, the nature of this relationship was more collegial than dependent. This corroborates critics of the boomerang model (Keck & Sikkink, 1998, 1999; De Waal, 2015) and its presumption that Southern actors are always dependent on Northern ones for help and support. It also highlights Pan-Africanism and gender as identity-based motives for activism, which are discussed further in Chapter 6. The FEMNET example expands the typology of transnational advocacy networks and legitimises African transnational networks as members of this category of transnational actors. It further shows that although NGOs are seen as a colonial construct and imperialist tool (Manji & O'Coill, 2002; Kamat, 2004; Shivji, 2006, 2007; Sadaqat, 2017), the identities of the persons who run them can make ideational motives as important as fulfilling organisational missions. In other words, to use Pallas and Urpelainen's (2013) schema and Mitchell and Schmitz's (2014, p. 489) concept of 'principled instrumentalism', missions, interests, and values are not mutually exclusive.

In Nairobi, 'hundreds from all walks of life' joined the march, including members of the Nigerian Students Association in Kenya, represented by Felix Anene (Musambi, 2014; interview, RP13, Nairobi, 7 October 2019) whom I contacted but did not participate in an interview. He and RP13 had met at a police station in Nairobi the day before the march where he went to get a police permit for a protest by the association (interview, RP13, Nairobi, 7 October 2019). RP13 informed him by email about the FEMNET march and he agreed to participate (interview, RP13, Nairobi, 7 October 2019).[10] While many participants were FEMNET members, they were joined by individual non-member Kenyans and Africans and other expatriates in Kenya, again reinforcing the point about individual transnational agency as well as the hybrid nature of contemporary transnational activism, given that organised civil society worked alongside independent activists to support Bring Back Our Girls. It also illustrates how increased migration has expanded the substance of transnationalism, such that protests anywhere today are likely to involve multiple nationalities living in national spaces other than their own.

In addition to individual activism by its members on the Internet and via social media, FEMNET also ran a blog titled #BringBackOurGirls where activists contributed written pieces until February 2016. FEMNET invited the Kenyan and global publics to submit creative pieces and take action, and provided sample social media messages and images. One post by Norah Felogene Anumo, 'Education Under Attack: #147NotJustaNumber #BringBackOurGirls', decries the killings of 20 teachers in Mandera and the terror attack on Garissa in which 213 people were killed in April 2015, linking both incidents with the Chibok abductions and an assault on education (FEMNET, 2015). Her piece makes linkages between militarism as performed by violent armed groups and highlights its particular gendered

effects on women and girls. The group also used Google Groups, Google Forms and Docs, and listservs, e.g., the Post-2015 Women's Coalition, showing just how vital digital communication has become to social mobilisations of this nature, especially those involving persons situated in dispersed geographic locations. Social media mappings show that Bring Back Our Girls activists in Kenya followed media reports on the Chibok abductions and what other activists were doing.

Transnational Linkages

There is evidence of early email communication between FEMNET and several Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria co-founders. Some of the latter are directors of FEMNET-member women's rights organisations in Nigeria and benefit from structured advocacy support from the mother FEMNET organisation.[11] This direct communication does not seem to have been sustained as the activism intensified. Pending further interviews, FEMNET appears to have liaised more with one Nigerian women's rights activist and NGO leader whose organisation worked more closely with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria on the ground. This individual 'gave the FEMNET individual and organisational members updates on what was going on, on the ground' (RP13, email, 8 October 2019). Although the relationships were enabled by FEMNET membership, members in Kenya offered their solidarity to the larger Bring Back Our Girls activism which preceded FEMNET's involvement and comprised several broader social and professional networks, some of which overlapped. Although it was not directly affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria, FEMNET tried to ensure some degree of consistency with activities in Nigeria in appearance, messaging, and the designs of publicity material. In an email to the group, their graphic designer writes: 'We hope this, and the general aesthetic, are seen as consistent with what's been employed at other Bring Back Our Girls marches'.[12] The Kenya experience illustrates the departure in structure and form from transnational advocacy networks that are 'bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services', and in which NGOs play a 'central role' (Keck & Sikkink, 1999, pp. 91–92), to more dispersed forms that co-exist in looser albeit complementary transnational relationships.

Bring Back Our Girls in the United States

In the United States, I identified Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Atlanta, and Utah that took either of two main forms: recurrent protests by loose but cohesive groups and civil society organisations that formed out of these events, and one-off physical events by individuals who did much of their activism on social media. There was some synergy among them to the extent that they used similar repertoires (i.e., red clothing and social media messaging), for example, activists from New York attended some joint events with their colleagues in Washington. They jointly picketed then-Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan during his visit to collect a humanitarian award from Barack

Obama in 2016. However, mobilisations in the United States were largely independent of each other, albeit targeted at the same objectives.

Bring Back Our Girls in New York

There were three Bring Back Our Girls groups in New York: Bring Back Our Girls-New York City and Bring Back Our Girls-New York, which were both started by Nigerian-Americans living in the United States, and RockACrownfor234 which was started by a Haitian and a South African, also resident in the United States. As stated, Bring Back Our Girls-New York City was started by RP15, a professor and activist with two young Nigerian men whom she had met at a Bring Back Our Girls protest in New York by a South African woman (later identified as Gugulethu Mlambo), which informed her decision to take action (interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019). She knew some of the women in Bring Back Our Girls Abuja and Lagos professionally, so when she heard that they were mobilising, she expressed interest and took part in joint strategising, mainly through conference calls and emails. Hers was an eclectic group of 150–200 diverse nationalities, races, and religions that held protests at the United Nations (UN) headquarters and Nigeria House, among other venues, and conducted advocacy with UN agencies like UN Women and the UN Population Fund, New York State and City officials, including the New York attorney-general, legislators like Nancy Pelosi and Karen Bach (some of whom joined protests), and congress members. Here, we see that Bring Back Our Girls mobilised some of the same state actors as transnational advocacy networks by leveraging personal relationships.

This indicates the power and influence of informal individual involvement in transnational politics. Also, the higher mobility of Africans, their presence in diaspora spaces, and their multinationality enabled them to take up direct interactions with foreign political actors and representatives without needing to pass through Northern advocates, as depicted in old constructions of transnational advocacy networks. Northern advocates were involved but in a more associated capacity. After disbanding the group over personal fatigue and an unsustainable drain on her personal finances, RP15 continued to do much of her activism by herself, much of it online, with occasional media interviews on milestone days (interview, RP15, 20 June 2019).

While the above points to a shift in the use and location of agency and power dynamics between Global North and Global South actors, it also problematises the hitherto binary notions of North and South that now converge in the minds, bodies, and identities of multiple generations of Nigerian-Americans who self-identify as belonging to both spaces. This increased use of transnational activist agency by such actors and their ability to attract global media attention also offers an antithesis to campaigns like Kony 2012 that are arguably made possible by the absence of strong activism in transnational spaces by actors who are rooted in the contexts where the problems that give rise to them occur. Compared with the American masterminds of Kony 2012 who proceeded on distorted assumptions about Joseph Kony and the Ugandan conflict, the diaspora Africans whom I interviewed were

conscious of the contextual nuances of the Boko Haram conflict and its historical and broader ramifications for women's and girls' rights, and governance and citizenship in Nigeria. This consciousness is reflected in a media commentary on the Boko Haram crisis by a Nigerian-American women's rights advocate:

> What I genuinely want the West to appreciate is the fact that this fight goes beyond whether or not girls have the right to be educated in schools. It permeates into the warped mindset, into the antediluvian thinking and belief that women are less valuable than men and thus should be subjugated and disrespected. It is that mindset, that inequality of thought, that needs to be re-evaluated and condemned.
>
> (Idahosa, 2014)

RP17 noted that Boko Haram was "part of a bigger conversation" while RP4 remarked that although Bring Back Our Girls began in Nigeria with a focus on the Chibok abductions, it ultimately 'became that entry point into the conversation on the broader insurgency and insecurity, not just in the northeast as a region, but across Nigeria as well' (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018; interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020). Both RP15 and RP17 had cause to correct attempts by American media and political actors to distort narratives of the Boko Haram conflict into anti-Christian violence by Muslim fundamentalists.

Bring Back Our Girls-New York emerged after RP19 reached out to an African-American female friend who had posted on Facebook that she wanted to organise a march. Other people in and outside their social networks joined as the two women publicised their activities, but the group 'ultimately became a combination of Muslim, Jewish and Christian women and then people who were just spiritual but didn't associate with any kind of religion' (interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020). Among the multiple nationalities who took part, Nigerians were 'the least represented in all of those events' (interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020). At some point following the backlash faced by RP20 over the authenticity of her motives for supporting Bring Back Our Girls, Bring Back Our Girls-New York took over the administration of a page that had been set up by RP20 at the start of her activism (interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020).

This group merged briefly with Bring Back Our Girls-NYC but separated over disagreements about the approach. Like Bring Back Our Girls-NYC, Bring Back Our Girls-New York was closely affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls-Abuja and conducted joint strategy and advocacy (interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020). This is another case in which loosely connected groups within groups of friends came together to protest after being mobilised by individuals on Facebook. The organiser was running an NGO for women's and girls' rights which she used to support her organising, but she was more centrally involved in her personal capacity. The identities of participants were intersectional and transcended womanhood, maternality (Oriola, 2020, pp. 6–7), spirituality, and global citizenship, as opposed to single interest groups, as indicated by transnational activism scholarship.

In Washington DC, a Nigerian-American woman and architect organised a protest with her best friend and her mother that was organised via Facebook and

attended by some 300 'people who were fired up, who were ready to be part of calling on the government to do something'. In my interview with her, she shared her surprise at being designated as the protest leader because she had seen herself as merely coordinating, so she was taken aback when CNN's Athena Cage asked her what her group was about: 'She's like so what is this group? I said, group? We're not a group, I just posted something' (interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020). Her reaction underscores the involvement of 'ordinary' people who did not identify as activists when they became involved with Bring Back Our Girls, marking another difference with the professional advocates who make up old transnational advocacy networks. RP17's explanation to journalists at that protest that the people present were "acting for accountability" regarding the Chibok students morphed into a now-defunct NGO set up to address broad issues of governance and rights in Nigeria that included the Chibok abductions. The group went on to organise further protests, engage with diaspora and US government actors, and partner with organisations set up by other Bring Back Our Girls leaders in Nigeria to support humanitarian relief efforts by fundraising for learning aids for displaced schoolchildren and teachers (interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020). This type of engagement with conflict-affected communities was common among Bring Back Our Girls participants in Nigeria. It simultaneously signals a performance of resistance against a government defaulting in its responsibilities to its disadvantaged citizens and a form of activism that seeks to help and to transform, not just to confront and resist.

Related to the point made earlier about diaspora transnational activism as a counter to White saviourist advocacy in Northern contexts, RP17 envisioned her NGO as filling a representational void in African diasporan politics in the United States:

> Everybody was asking me what the plan is and I was just like I'm just winging it at this point, but I realised that one thing was missing: there was the need for an organisation that could, without fear of impunity, actually be more of an activist group here that is willing to champion Africa issues, because as many Africa this Africa that groups that are in DC, there really isn't an activist group anymore that is championing Africa civil rights/Africa human rights injustice work. A lot of them have become more just policy and so I saw that a lot of people—the older people who were [in] the Anti-Apartheid movement—people were excited that there seems to be a new movement and younger people willing to champion this movement.
>
> (Interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020).

Marches organised by RP20 in Los Angeles illustrate another instance of activism by groups of individuals who had diverse types of connections. She held initial marches with her daughter and her daughter's school friends, other young people whom she did not previously know, and 'a large group across LA that came together and helped … with the logistics of helping people plan their marches around the world' (interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020):

> I helped to organise a number of marches in L.A., and I also participated in other people's marches. There was [sic] a number of groups that were young [Nigerian] college kids and so I attended their marches, so we held marches, my daughter's school held marches.
>
> (Interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

In addition to marches that RP20 co-organised, she helped to facilitate at least 1200 marches in other countries that included

> the smallest little groups, like people who were like three people on a street corner and it included bigger ones like Paris, and they did probably easily 20 different marches in Paris.[13] There was a lot of countries where they didn't do just one, but they did multiple.
>
> (Interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

She served as a liaison, helped to set up other Bring Back Our Girls Facebook groups for many countries, and provided information and protest material to Bring Back Our Girls participants from around the world, essentially playing the same role that the secretariat of an NGO network would in similar circumstances.

> As these events were happening, I realised that there needed to be a central place for people to find information from the US specifically and so I started a Facebook page, Bring Back Our Girls and it became like a central hub. So I like spent most of my days just helping people to organise, like someone in Sweden in Stockholm wants to have a march and there was another person in Sweden, so I would connect them. I ended up doing a lot of just introducing people and creating little spaces where people could do the work they could do in their country. So that became my focus, to try to help amplify what the leaders in Abuja were doing by helping people in other parts of the world organise their marches and so they hopefully would make more impact.
>
> (Interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

This scenario gives some insights into the ways in which individual social media facilitated concentric circles of connections among people in different countries who did not know each other prior to becoming involved in Bring Back Our Girls. This illustrates Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) concept of connectivity, not collectivity, as the basis of new transnational activism. Otherwise stated, although masses of individuals held Bring Back Our Girls events in their countries that were facilitated by individuals like RP20, these events were not centrally coordinated in the manner of older, more cohesive, and organisationally based forms. This indicates that Bring Back Our Girls represents a form of activism that is not accounted for by extant literature. It also reinforces the centrality of the individual in transnational mobilisation, as noted in Wong and Brown's (2013) study of e-bandits.

This pattern of recurrent protests by loosely connected groups of individuals also occurred in Canada where RP22 co-organised Bring Back Our Girls protests in Toronto and Ottawa, and used Facebook and Twitter to mobilise diverse groups

that included her NGO and artiste colleagues (African and non-African Blacks), the Nigerian community, women's organisations, university students, politicians, and various members of the diaspora. While she contacted Bring Back Our Girls Abuja early in her activism, this communication was not sustained and she did not connect with other Bring Back Our Girls activists in other countries because her focus was on getting people in local communities in Canada to engage: 'if we had like scattered the whole resource on [an] international level, maybe we might not be able to achieve the result that we achieved because we are super busy' (interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 September 2019).

The second type of activism that took place in the United States is exemplified by two protests; a one-day #RockACrownfor234 rally co-organised in New York by South African Gugulethu Mlambo and Haitian Paola Mathé, and a one-day rally co-organised in Atlanta by three young Nigerian women (KokoAtDawn Productions, 2014). Both events began with Facebook posts by their organisers that were shared and acted on by friends and friends of friends as well as other contacts. Among the hundreds of mostly women who took part in both events were people who knew each other as well as total strangers. Also in New York, Nkechie Ogbodo, president of Kechie's Project, an NGO that empowers underprivileged girls in Nigeria, organised vigils for the students (Frazier, 2014; interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019). There were protests by other groups, including Nigerians in the Diaspora, a government-affiliated organisation and the Organisation to Save Nigeria.[14] In Washington, the international NGOs and advocacy organisations, Amnesty International US, the Africa Faith and Justice Network, and the Institute for Policy Studies sponsored a vigil involving Nigerian protesters.

Each of the Bring Back Our Girls groupings discussed previously were active on social media to varying extents and group leaders were instrumental in using their personal and group accounts to mobilise participants and share information. However, one of the factors that attracted expansive global following to Bring Back Our Girls was the mass of online support that it received from around the world, even though much of it was transitory and has been critiqued as slacktivism or clicktivism (unsustained digital participation in activism).

The foregoing discussion shows that there were different relationships between and among Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations within and across each focal country. The activism's Nigerian leaders developed and shared material (including logo and strategy documents) with activists within and outside Nigeria to facilitate, support, and direct their efforts. This was part of efforts to embrace and work with mobilisations outside Nigeria to create some form of coherence and global pressure force (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018). The group shared this material directly with people identified from mobilisations as well as on its website and social media for public use. Some activists were able to see and access this material by following Bring Back Our Girls 's accounts. However, not all activists outside Nigeria used this material or responded to communications from Nigeria, suggesting that while they wanted to identify with the activism, they preferred to do it independently (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018).

This explains why some groups appended their country name to Bring Back Our Girls, for example, Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana, while others simply used the name in their events. RP13 addressed the FEMNET Kenya group in one email as the 'Bring Back Our Girls Organising Family' and in another as 'Bring Back Our Girls 254', but said members declined to use the name formally as they did not see themselves as an appendage of the Nigerian group but as African sisters and brothers in solidarity (interview, RP13, Kisii, 7 October 2019). This points to an altered conceptualisation of social networks from professional advocacy organisations working cohesively to looser configurations of diverse actors working towards the same goal in less structured ways.

This point is buttressed by the disparate nature of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations in Nigeria and abroad. In each country, there were individual and group protests, but each mobilisation was initiated by individuals, indicating the central role that non-state actors now play in transnational politics. Some of these were single events while others were more durable, although many except Nigeria stopped completely at varying intervals. In each country, independent activists worked alongside civil society organisations and international organisations to organise and finance protests. People mobilised and protested both online and offline, though more often than not their activities in both spaces were synchronised. They became involved through multiple intersectional social and professional relationships and networks constituted by nationality, migration status, personal values, gender, race, skill, and class.

Unlike other African movements like Must Fall that focused more on issues that were local to respective contexts as they spread from South Africa to Europe, North America, and eventually Ghana, Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations globally have been centred almost exclusively on the Chibok abductions with some references to similar incidents in respective contexts. What this suggests is that although violence against girls, particularly Black ones, is an issue that resonates globally, the specific incident of the mass abduction of a group of Nigerian girls in an African country remained the key focus of all forms of support around the world. In Chapter 6, I discuss how this problematises questions of ownership and agency and what this reveals about the motivations and worldviews of the different individuals who participated in Bring Back Our Girls in different parts of the world.

Pathways to Participation

In this section, I adapt Zajak's (2014, p. 241) concepts of 'actor constellations' and pathways as the processes or paths of influence that lead to political outcomes (141–142) to illustrate what the book indicates about the ways in which Bring Back Our Girls participants came to be involved with this campaign. I identify two broad groups of actors that are made up of what I call concentric social networks: tightly connected individuals made up of personal (family and friends) contacts, loosely connected individuals made up of professional contacts, and unconnected individuals who may or may not know one another. The second broad category is made up of national and international NGOs and CSO advocacy networks.

The nature of these relationships and connections already provides some insights into how these actors' participation comes into being. Social media has been the main mobilisation space for all actors with many organisers stating that they galvanised interest by sharing both their grievances at the abductions and their intentions to hold events via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr, and WhatsApp. Beyond this, personal contacts tended to become involved because they were invited by people close to them who shared similar values. As RP24 succinctly stated, individuals' 'circles of interaction and influence determine participation' (interview, Atlanta, 28 September 2020). Unconnected individuals who made up the majority of the thousands of people who shared social media content were users who viewed Bring Back Our Girls posts by virtue of being in digital spaces where they were shared.

Professional contacts, notably fellow members of advocacy NGOs and networks, became involved not as a personal decision, even though they had strong personal convictions about the need for action, but because the leadership of their network made a decision to take action as a body that required collective compliance.

Transnational Power Relations

In focusing on the relations among the transnational actors who took part in Bring Back Our Girls in this book's focal countries, this section departs from existing research on the transnational purchase of Bring Back Our Girls (Oriola, 2020) and the import of the involvement of what have been described as "imperial" Northern feminist actors (Loken, 2014; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a, 2015b; Olson, 2016; Maxfield, 2016; Murphy, 2017). In this section, I discuss the power dynamics between Northern and Southern Bring Back Our Girls participants before considering the broader ties among participants in the four focal countries.

Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria engaged with two broad sets of transnational actors (keeping in mind several leaders were transnational themselves): Nigerians in the diaspora on one hand, and, on the other, actors in respective local contexts with whom contact was sometimes facilitated by diasporan Nigerians. Recalling that the relationships between Southern and Northern activists are depicted in transnational activism scholarship as dependent in the boomerang model or peripheral in inverted boomerangs, Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria's relationships with diasporan actors were more equitable: beyond minimal micro-level tensions, these actors complemented one another's work both online and in their respective geographic spaces. Their shared Nigerianness provided a sense of shared purpose towards and ownership of the social and political problem posed by the abductions, and their involvement with Bring Back Our Girls led many to develop personal friendships that have outlived their activism. This is not to say that all diasporan Nigerians were connected to Bring Back Our Girls Nigeria. RP7 independently created an e-petition that attracted over a million signatures and RP22 connected briefly with Nigeria but continued to mobilise after communication had ceased (interview RP7, Brussels, 4 September 2020; interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 September 2019). It also does not preclude differences that occurred, for example, over the group's policy to not fundraise or accept external funding, which RP15 suggested was naïve, too

acquiescent to outsiders' perceptions of bias, and contrary to Northern advocacy culture.

Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria's relationships with other actors were more diverse and determined by the nature of engagement: the group engaged directly with foreign actors who provided tangible forms of support. Group leaders Hadiza Bala Usman, Obiageli Ezekwesili, and Bukola Shonibare were among those invited to speak at high-profile events in the Global North, some of which were co-coordinated by diasporic Nigerians, and interviewed by foreign media. Bala Usman and Ezekwesili were among prominent Nigerian and other personalities who spoke at a conference at the City University of New York in December 2014. Bala Usman spoke at the 65th annual Department of Public Information Conference in 2014 while Shonibare addressed the UN General Assembly, Bring Back Our Girls-Washington and -New York, and the Hudson Institute, a prominent and influential American think tank.[15] Shonibare and Bala Usman spoke at special events in the United States both in person and via telephone. Ezekwesili was selected by TIME magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in 2015 in recognition of her work with Bring Back Our Girls (Premium Times, 2015). Florence Ozor addressed audiences in Colorado as part of a State Department global women's mentoring programme in Uganda during a women's leadership retreat and in Brussels at the conference on political empowerment of women in Africa in 2017 (Lunes, 2017).

In Africa, Bring Back Our Girls had situational relationships with African actors. Some of the women who participated in protests in Nigeria were members of the Pan-African feminist network FEMNET. They shared information with fellow members who organised protests in Kenya although this was on an individual basis and does not reflect a more formal relationship between both groups.

Bring Back Our Girls also engaged more remotely with persons who liked and shared content on Twitter and Facebook but did not deepen their participation by organising events or engaging physically with other Bring Back Our Girls sympathisers. Some scholars have critiqued this as being clicktivism/slacktivism, a form of lazy activism, but recent work conceptualises it as one of the multiple forms of digital engagement that occur on a spectrum that should be measured using indicators of what actions people take and how they make meaning of them. In this situation, there was no direct consistent relationship between Bring Back Our Girls organisers and the thousands of people worldwide who engaged peripherally with the cause, but there was a transitory relationship between the latter and the digital messaging that Bring Back Our Girls used to promote its activism. In his study of narrative agency in #BlackLivesMatter, Yang (2016, p. 14) conceptualises as 'serial' relationships like this in which 'Individuals … have no set of attributes in common except their shared relationship to an external object, event, or, in other cases, to a law, an institution, a norm, a stereotype and so on'.

Situating Agency within Transnational Bring Back Our Girls

As previously stated, the agencies of African transnational actors have varied depending on who started the activism and how dependent they were on foreign

support. An analysis of transnational agency in Bring Back Our Girls presents a mixed picture. While Bring Back Our Girls actors in Nigeria appealed to and welcomed foreign support, the profiles of the group's Nigerian leaders on the ground were such that they had strong local leverage that made foreign support auxiliary. This was partly a function of the elite profiles of the women who frontlined Bring Back Our Girls in Nigeria and their ability to mobilise international attention and action through their equally elite personal and professional networks.

The retention of agency was also partly the upshot of a social media archive that allows actors like women who might otherwise be marginalised to own their narratives by representing their interests in global cyberspace which are documented and archived in their names. The particular form of digital activism that has become known as hashtag activism comprises the collectivisation of digital content that is unified by its use of identifiers known as hashtags that occur in temporal sequence and confer narrative agency on their users (Yang, 2016). Digital research tools permit the mapping of hashtag users and their tracing to identify who first used what. Bring Back Our Girls' policy to not fundraise from external actors should not be discounted as a further marker of autonomy given the experiences of most Global South NGOs in this regard (Petras, 1999; Shivji, 2006, 2007).

Feminist scholars have contested Bring Back Our Girls-Nigeria's narrative agency over its campaign and responses to its cause once it attained global virality. Maxfield (2016) notes the differences between what she identifies as 'two versions' of Bring Back Our Girls, one each by Nigerian and diasporan actors, and White activists, respectively. Essentially, she argues that actors in both groups worked counterpurposively: the first group was more aware of the complexities of the Boko Haram conflict and advocated for multifaceted responses led by Nigerian actors. These included the need for post-rescue rehabilitation for the students, security reforms, and the improvement of girls' rights in Nigeria. In comparison, the second group is seen as having acted out a simplistic imperialist script in which the Chibok students and Nigerians—women especially—at risk of violence from Muslim terrorists were oppressed others who needed to be saved through foreign military interventions (Spivak, 1988; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a; Maxfield, 2016, pp. 889–890).

Conclusion: Towards a New Typology of Transnational Activism

Scholarship on transnational activism discusses typologies of actors as though they were distinct categories that occur in ascending sequence from one form to another. As depicted in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3, the archetypal forms of activism documented in this literature are: transnational and international NGOs, transnational advocacy networks, transnational coalitions, and transnational social movements. As noted, these are group and organisation-based formations that, while still active in transnational political landscapes, are not at the forefront of the most visible forms of activism occurring across the world today.

Bring Back Our Girls was a complex mix of different forms of activism operating in different ways in different national and transnational contexts. At its core were cohorts of individuals with varying relationships with one another. The leaders of

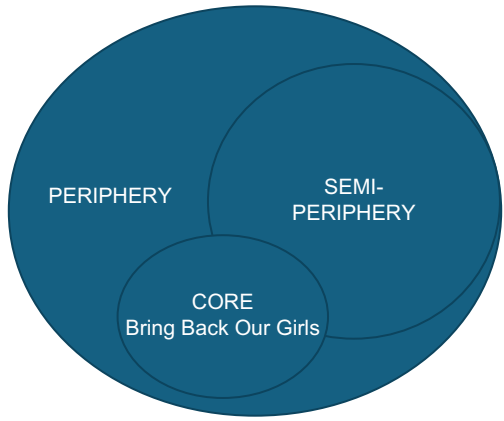

Figure 5.1 Matrix of Bring Back Our Girls networks.

Source: Author construct from fieldwork data.

Bring Back Our Girls Abuja, Hadiza Bala-Usman, and Obiageli Ezekwesili invited friends and professional contacts whom they knew from their careers in civil society and politics. At this level, Bring Back Our Girls' core was made up of concentric circles of elite social and professional networks. Once Bring Back Our Girls began to hold protests and other public events, random passersby joined them, as well as people who had heard of them over the news and social media. This layer of individuals was looser and less connected to the core of activists.

I conceptualise in Figure 5.1 the structure of Bring Back Our Girls as follows. It consisted of a core of those connected to Bring Back Our Girls and using similar repertoires, a semi-periphery made up of those who were loosely connected albeit using similar repertoires, and a periphery of those not connected at all in terms of direct exchanges of communication but who were advocating the same cause. Those accused of being clicktivists belong in this category. While there are overlaps with the taxonomy in Figure 3.1 in Chapter 3 in terms of the involvement of specific types of actors, Bring Back Our Girls is a hybrid and multimodal form of activism that is not represented in this model, and the interactions among the different types of activism that occurred within Bring Back Our Girls did not follow an ascending pattern of transitions from one form to another; they all occurred simultaneously.

Notes

1 https://www.facebook.com/bringbackourgirlsghana/?ti=as first accessed early 2017. [accessed 7 January 2020]. Liked by 783 people including Abdul Karim, a mutual Facebook contact.
2 https://www.facebook.com/Bring-Back-Our-Girls-Ghana-Candlelight-Vigil-Sunday-May-18th-2014-1402274813390094/?ti+as Liked by 639 people as at 7 January 2019, including Mawuli Dake, a known Ghanaian women's rights activist and mutual Facebook contact.
3 At the time of writing, she had not honoured a follow-up interview scheduled for 14 January 2020. Subsequent attempts to reach her were unsuccessful.

4 Organisers used the international dialing codes for both countries to symbolise Ghanaian support for Nigeria.
5 16 Days is an annual international campaign used to mobilise individuals and organisations around the world for the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls. UN Women, '16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence', http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/take-action/16-days-of-activism [accessed 12 January 2020].
6 Ghana International School website: https://gis.edu.gh/about/history/
7 https://femnet.org/about/
8 The second post was retweeted on Speak Ghana, a now defunct blog by 'young creative Ghanaians': https://speakghana.wordpress.com [accessed 8 October 2019].
9 http://bringbackourgirls.us/school-girl-march/ (this link is no longer accessible).
10 Also email exchanges between RP13 and RP10 dated 21 and 22 July 2014 [accessed 8 October 2019].
11 Email correspondences among Bring Back Our Girls members in Kenya and Nigeria shared confidentially with me during fieldwork.
12 Anonymous, 'Re: Strategising Meeting—#BringBackOurGirls—Flyer Update', email to organizing group, 14 May 2014 [accessed 8 October 2019].
13 In the Facebook page that she created, I found a list of 390 events that she helped to facilitate in 49 countries across the world. Some of these events held simultaneously in multiple countries. She mentioned 100 countries which suggests that not all events are listed on the Facebook page.
14 Efforts to contact them were abortive.
15 A think tank and research centre focused on nonpartisan analysis of US and international economic, security, and political issues.

References

Aina, T. A., Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Dayil, P., & Aremu, F. A. (2019). *Beyond tweets and screams: Action for empowerment and accountability in Nigeria-the case of #Bring back our girls movement* (IDS Working Paper No 529). Retrieved from https://www.africaportal.org/publications/beyond-tweets-and-screams-action-empowerment-and-accountability-nigeria-case-bbog-movement/

Balogun, O. (2014). *#BRING back our girls rally in ghana – MAY 20, 2014*. email to staff at the West Africa Civil Society Institute, Accra.

Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: The personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication and Society*, *15*(5), 739–768.

Bring Back Our Girls – Candlelight Vigil, Sunday May 18, 2014. Retrieved January 7, 2020, from https://www.facebook.com/Bring-Back-Our-Girls-Ghana-Candlelight-Vigil-Sunday-May-18th-2014-1402274813390094/?ti=as. Campbell (2015)

Daily Graphic. (2013). *Rescue Nigeria's abducted girls #BringBackOurGirls*. Retrieved January 7, 2020, from http://chng.ge/TJXmji; also Retrieved January 7, 2020, from https://www.graphic.com.gh/daily-graphic-editorials/bring-our-girls-back-now.html$sthash.Mzznk28d.gbpl

de Waal, A. (ed.) (2015). *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Education International. (2014). *Ghana: Education unionists solidarity with abducted Nigerian school girls*. Retrieved January 6, 2020, from https://ei-ie.org/en/detail/2745/ghana-education-unionists%E2%80%99-solidarity-with-abducted-nigerian-school--girls

FEMNET. (2015). Internal communication shared with author.

Frazier, C. D. (2014), Vigils held for kidnapped girls. *The Washington Informer*. Retrieved January 17, 2020, from https://www.washingtoninformer.com/vigils-held-for-kidnapped-nigerian-girls/

Idahosa, R. E. (2014). My fight to bring back our girls continues. *Amsterdam News*. Retrieved July 23, 2020, from amsterdamnews.com/news/2014/jul/17/my-fight-bring-back-our-girls-continues/?page=2

Kamat, S. (2004). The privatization of public interest: Theorizing NGO discourse in a neoliberal era. *Review of International Political Economy*, *11*(1), 155–176.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015a). Becoming an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *15*(2), 347–350. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2015.1008747

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015b, April). Suturing together girls and education: An investigation into the social (Re)Production of girls' education as a hegemonic ideology. *Diaspora Indigenous and Minority Education*, *9*(2), 87–107.

KokoAtDawn Productions. (2014). *Bring back our girls rally even-Atlanta, GA*. Retrieved September 27, 2020, from https://yotu.be/XCkOLeVSudE

Loken, M. (2014). #BringBackOurGirls and the invisibility of imperialism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *14*(6), 1100–1101.

Lunés, A. (2017). Meet Florence Ozor, fighting for women and girls caught in conflict. *Global Progressive Forum.* Retrieved October 3, 2020, from https://www.globalprogressiveforum.org/es/content/meet-florence-ozor-fighting-women-and-girls-caught-conflict

Manji, F., & O'Coill, C. (2002). The missionary position: NGOs and development in Africa. *International Affairs, 78*(3), 567–583.

Maxfield, M. (2016). History retweeting itself: Imperial feminist appropriations of "Bring Back Our Girls." *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 886–900.

Mitchell, G., & Schmitz, H. (2014). Principled instrumentalism: A theory of transnational NGO behaviour. *Review of International Studies*, *40*(3), 487–504.

Murphy, E. (2017). *#BringBackOurGirls: Solidarity or self-interest? Online feminist movements and third world women* [Master's thesis, University of Canterbury].

Musambi, E. (2014). Nigerians in Nairobi join #BringBackOurGirls campaign. *Nairobi News*. https://nairobinews.nation.co.ke/news/nigerians-in-nairobi-join-bringbackourgirls-campaign [Accessed January 10, 2020].

Musangi, N. (2014a). *Call for action: Continent-wide solidarity marches for abducted Nigerian school girls*. Retrieved October 8, 2020, from https://neomusangi.wordpress.com/2014/05/05/call-for-action-continent-wide-solidarity-marches-for-abducted-nigerian-school-girls/

Musangi, N. (2014b). *Press release: Bring back our girls*. Retrieved October 8, 2019, from https://neomusangi.wordpress.com/2014/05/06/press-release-bring-back-our-girls/

Nyabola, N. (2018). *Digital democracy, analogue politics*. Zed Books.

Olson, C. C. (2016). #BringBackOurGirls: Digital communities supporting real-world change and influencing mainstream media agendas. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 772–787.

Oriola, T. B. (2020). Framing and movement outcomes: The #BringBackOurGirls movement. *Third World Quarterly*, *42*(4), 641–660.

Pallas, C. L., & Urpelainen, J. (2013). Mission and interests: The strategic formation and function of North-South NGO campaigns. *Global Governance*, *19*(3), 401–423.

Petras, J. (1999). NGOs: In the service of imperialism. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, *29*(4), 429–440. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472339980000221

Premium Times. (2015). *TIME magazine names Buhari, Ezekwesili, Shekau among world's most influential people*. Retrieved July 16, 2019, from https://www.premiumtimesng

.com/news/top-news/181541-time-magazine-names-buhari-ezekwesili-shekau-among-worlds-most-influential-people.html

Rugene, N. (2013). Brave busia girl battles as her rapists go scott [sic] free. *Daily Nation.* Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/DN2/When-rapists-go-scot-free/-/957860/2022572/-/skd9s8z/-/index.html

Sadaqat, A. (2017). INGOs: Tools for the promotion of neoliberalism in developing countries. *International Journal of Research and Development in Social Sciences, 3*(2), 1–11.

Sakib, M. (2014). *Bring back our girls Campaign in Ghana: Star power*. Retrieved January 6, 2020, from https://www.ghanafilmindustry.com/bring-back-our-girls-campaign-ghana-star-power/

Shivji, I. G. (2006). The silences in the NGO discourse: The role and future of NGOs in Africa. *Africa Development*, *XXXI*(4), 22–51.

Shivji, I. G. (2007). *Silences in NGO discourse: The role and future of NGOs in Africa*. London: Fahamu Books.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Wong, W. H., & Brown, P. H. (2013). E-bandits in global activism: WikiLeaks, anonymous, and the politics of no one. *Perspectives on Politics*, *11*(4), 1015–1033.

Yang, G. (2016). Narrative agency in hashtag activism: The case of #BlackLivesMatter. *Media and Communication, 4*(4), 13–17.

Zajak, S. (2014). Pathways of transnational activism: A conceptual framework. MPIfG Discussion Paper 14/5. Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies. https://ideas.repec.org/p/zbw/mpifgd/145.htm

6 Motives of Participation in Transnational Activism

Introduction

Following on from the discussion of the multiple forms of activism that occurred within Bring Back Our Girls in Chapter 5, I now present and discuss the motives of participation in Bring Back Our Girls of the various actors identified therein . In addition to some shared beliefs about what constituted moral action, participants were mostly influenced by subjective individual factors, including identity, religion and personal upbringing, and social embeddedness. This chapter explores each of the recurrent identity themes emanating from the research conducted for this book, noting how they informed participants' decisions to participate in Bring Back Our Girls using their own words and voices.

As with previous chapters, participants are unnamed and represented as anonymised research participants (RP), except where express permission was given during fieldwork.

Social and Self-Identities

A focus on the identities of the persons who took part in Bring Back Our Girls in geographically dispersed spaces is apt in light of what is remarked throughout this book as the historic and continuing denial by White Western scholars on transnational activism of the agencies of Africans in representing Africa's political problems on international stages—what Adesanmi (2014, 2020) describes as 'owning' such problems. A focus on identities is also merited because of the diverse mixed-race and gender groups of people who took part in Bring Back Our Girls across the world that consisted of academics, politicians, civil servants, professional activists, creatives, lawyers, clerics, students, and entrepreneurs from all over the world. Pointing to initial conflict over the ownership of the hashtag #BringBackOurGirls in which Ramaa Mosley, a White American who led protests in Los Angeles and played a central role in coordinating global events, was accused of claiming ownership of Bring Back Our Girls (Maneater, 2014), Adesanmi invokes the imperative to disaggregate all the voices affiliated with Bring Back Our Girls in order to unpack their varied perspectives. This tension over ownership is also addressed by feminist scholars who argue that judging by their calls for military intervention in Nigeria, 'imperial feminists' appropriation' of Bring Back Our Girls did not constitute solidarity, but subalternised the Chibok students as stereotypical 'third-world' females in need of saving by

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-7

Northern actors (Loken, 2014; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a, 2015b; 2016; Maxfield, 2016; Murphy, 2017), as is discussed in more detail later in this book.

This chapter takes an intersectional approach that enables mappings of different identity clusters, and deep analysis of individuals' motives for participation. The categorisation of social and self-identities is guided by two conceptual frameworks: Tajfel and Turner's (1986) work on social identity theory, and Crenshaw's (1991) notion of intersectionality help to dissect and understand the plural selves (Kahane, 2009) that converged in the women and men interviewed for this book and collectively motivated their participation in Bring Back Our Girls.

Womanhood

For almost all participants, their identities, constructed intersectionally, were an important reason why they participated in Bring Back Our Girls events. The foremost of these identities was womanhood. Twenty-five out of 27 participants selected mainly through snowballing were women, which demonstrated a trend in the dominant gender of Bring Back Our Girls participants in the four focal countries and globally. It also reflects a historic pattern of women advocating for women's rights independently of broad-interest activist groups because these often do not centre women's interests and can reinscribe discriminatory norms and practices. This was the case with African independence and liberation movements in which women participated actively but did not receive the benefits of changes in women's rights and were erased from the narratives of those movements. The organiser of one Bring Back Our Girls-Ghana event told me, 'In our culture, it's usually women who lead these things' (interview RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020), expressing a sense of collective moral obligation and invoking a performative norm to advocate as women for issues concerning other women in keeping with cultural habitus in her context.

As Ramaru (2017) writes about the Rhodes Must Fall protests in South Africa:

> Being a Black feminist in South Africa and within the movement was never easy. Very often, we had to deal with being told that we are 'Black first' and we should leave our gender issues and feminist politics at the door. We were told that feminism is unAfrican and we needed to stop appropriating Western ideals if we were serious about decolonisation. This obviously meant that we constantly had to defend our right to exist within the space, and for Black feminism to be taken seriously in the movement.

She goes on to say that the movement became increasingly hostile as it expanded and that male members had sexually assaulted at least five womxn[1] members by the end of 2015 (Ramaru, 2017, p. 95), leading them to 'start organising and opening our own spaces', including through the use of naked protests (Ndlovu, 2017). Ndelu, Dlakavu, and Boswell (2017) also note how sexism and other vectors of discrimination and exclusion obstructed the collective of Fallist movements.

With Bring Back Our Girls, almost all the women interviewed expressed that they participated because, as women, they could not conceive of experiencing

the kind of violence they heard or/and imagined that Boko Haram inflicted on the Chibok students. One participant's statement, 'I was compelled to do this because I felt as a woman, it could be me' (interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 September 2019), encapsulates the sentiments of many women who took part in Bring Back Our Girls.

Femaleness was also a motive for participation to the extent that many women viewed Boko Haram as an emblem of contextual sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls and saw Bring Back Our Girls as an opportunity to resist this in other contexts. One African-American woman participant said:

> When they had the story with the [Chibok] girls, I was like, it's like our girls, 'cos we have a problem here in America. We have Black and Brown girls that are being sex trafficked too. They're being kidnapped and everything too every day. And nobody, you know, they talk about it but it's not a national thing because, you know, this is America. In this country, they used to bring enslaved women here to breed them, to basically rape them and force them to have children and when you read the stories about these young ladies, they're coming back with a baby. What do you mean? She left here a virgin, like you've forced my daughter to give birth, like this is unbelievable. So it's something for us to be concerned about, yes.
>
> (Interview, RP5, New York, 25 November 2019)

By likening Boko Haram's violence to colonial violations of the bodies of enslaved Black women, she and Scott (2014) interpolated the historic sexual exploitation of the bodies of Black women and girls and its historic motive for activism by Black women. She also rationalised her participation as a symbolic resistance to violence against African-American girls and the racialised silence that surrounds it, which is akin to the inattention to and silencing of advocacy around the Chibok students because they are not children of prominent Nigerians.

A Nigerian participant based in the US told me:

> as if there was something to what I was saying that look, if we allow other people's children to be abducted, one day they're going to come and abduct ours, the school where my niece graduated from in Lagos State, actually some children were abducted from there.
>
> (Interview, RP15, 20 June 2019)

Both these women believed that their participation transcended the immediate cause of Bring Back Our Girls and provided an opportunity and presented a moral obligation for them to take a stand against violence against women and girls in other spaces. Using similar rhetoric, the gender unit at the University of the Western Cape announced ongoing protests as resistance against gender violence and opportunity to 'build solidarity and make people conscious of what is happening locally and on the rest of the African continent':

> Gender violence is an on-going plight—the Nigerian girls are not the only girls whose rights have been violated. There is the practice of ukuThwala in

> South Africa where young girls are abducted and forced into marriage with older men—often with the consent of their parents—and in many cases it is not what the girls want. We have staff and students originating from Nigeria, and through showing solidarity we build community.
>
> (Hanes, 2014)[2]

In like manner, Barbara Scott (2014), an African-American scholar-activist, drew parallels with long-running abductions and trafficking of African-American girls in urban America.

Only a few women participants identified as feminist but almost all participants, men inclusive, saw themselves as being gender-aware and supporting the rights of women and girls.

Maternality

Parental status was a recurrent marker of personal identity that came up during interviews and was the collective logic of mobilisation for several Bring Back Our Girls events. In this sense, Bring Back Our Girls can be likened to the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, a group of mothers who mobilised against disappearances of their children during prolonged military rule in Argentina starting in the 1970s (Torre, 1996). The difference is that Bring Back Our Girls members' allusions to motherhood as a motive for participating were allegoric, given that their own children were not directly affected.

Participants with children, especially women, often referred to their status as parents, notably of girls, as part of their intersectional motives for participating in Bring Back Our Girls. A Ghanaian protest organiser told me:

> I was a fairly new mother. I know as a mother not knowing where your child is … It's happened to me before that I lost my child in a supermarket. It was only for a few seconds, but it felt like a lifetime. I could identify with what the [Chibok] parents were going through. Mother's Day was coming and I remember thinking how would anyone commemorate without their child.
>
> (Interview RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020)

The significance of a Northern commemorative day in contexts like northeast Nigeria is debatable, but this participant identified with the universal maternal sense of anguish that accompanies the loss of a child.

Some participants linked their status as mothers to other aspects of their lives and identities that influenced their participation in Bring Back Our Girls. A US-based Nigerian woman participant said:

> I have a young daughter who was a little bit younger than the girls at the time they were kidnapped and I was like this girl, she's gonna ask me one day, 'Mum, this Bring Back Our Girls movement, what did you do? Cos this is what you claim to be about.'
>
> (Interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020)

Implicit here are her consciousness of generational accountability to her own child as a mother but also her fidelity to her vocation as a known advocate for the rights of women and girls. She had previously identified herself as 'someone who creates space for women. Generally, that's what I do and most of my work is focused on amplifying the voices of women, bringing them to the table' (interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020).

In the same vein, a Jewish-American woman shared:

> How could I look at my at the time 3-year-old son when he grows up and says, 'What did you do when you found that out, mama?' I couldn't say, 'I read the next article, I cried and prayed, and I left it alone.' I couldn't do that.
>
> (Interview, RP23, New York, 25–26 August 2020)

Commenting in an interview on why she became involved with Bring Back Our Girls, Bukola Shonibare, one of the leaders of Bring Back Our Girls in Abuja, said:

> Being a girl in Nigeria is very difficult. I have a 6-year-old daughter and want to protect her from the fate of the Chibok girls, and from my own experiences, which include sexual assault and homelessness. I had to leave school and then fight my way to get an education in my 20s, all on my own. The government does nothing to protect the rights of women to have an education—and the one-year anniversary of the Chibok girls' abduction makes the world think that they don't care about girls, period.
>
> (Welch, 2015)

This participant introduces the tropes of being a survivor of sexual violence and a woman who, having benefitted from education, believes in girls' rights to be educated. A White American mother also said, 'I decided to continue to stand up because I needed to set a good example for my children' (Mosley, 2016). Fathers expressed similar views. Andy Iheanacho, a Nigerian who took part in a protest in Utah, said: 'As a father it makes me angry. Words cannot describe … It's a terror against humanity (and) we need to speak up and stand'.[3]

Nationality, Diasporicity, and Other Tropes of Belonging

Participants cited their respective nationalities as motives for participating in Bring Back Our Girls, albeit from different standpoints. Some Nigerians said they took part because they felt connected and therefore affected as citizens. As one Nigerian-Canadian woman said:

> I'm a Nigerian, you know. I'm a Nigerian-born artist though I've lived … outside the country since I was 18, but I mean, that is my root. I feel connected to my country and whatever affects people in my country, even if I don't live there, affects me as well.
>
> (Interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 September 2019)

A Nigerian-American woman based in the United States described herself as a 'reluctant immigrant' who has 'never really left Nigeria and left Nigeria' and has remained involved in various activities over the years (Interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019). In addition to her nationality, she interpreted her participation as resistance to governance deficits caused by the government's inability to fulfil its responsibilities to Nigerian citizens under the social contract:

> I just find it unacceptable that we have a state and that state would allow citizens to be fair game to bandits and then throw up their arms and make all kinds of excuses as to why it is impossible to rescue them. For me, it caused agitation immediately and I felt that if this situation was not arrested immediately, Nigeria was going to be the worse for it.
>
> (Interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019)

This disappointment in the Nigerian government was echoed by another Nigerian-American participant:

> I never thought when I posted this thing on Facebook that I would end up dedicating five years of my life almost squarely towards calling for them to find these young women. And even though right now I'm not actively in that space anymore, it hasn't still stopped. I'm on the board of [NGO] of Nigeria so I do what I can to be able to continue the message as we need to have engaged citizens. We need to have informed citizens and we need to maybe, in some ways, redefine and reshape the social contract between us as Nigerian citizens and the Federal Government of Nigeria.

The motive of being affected as Nigerians translated into the idea that Nigerians had a duty to participate in Bring Back Our Girls: 'I was thinking that all of us should do that, all of us Nigerians' (Interview, RP15, 20 June 2019), echoing Adesanmi's (2014, 2020) thesis that those closest to a situation should retain agency over not only the problem but also the response. Referring to two young men with whom she started Bring Back Our Girls-NYC, RP15 said:

> So I said to them, look, people who are not Nigerian are organising protests and we're participating. That's well and good but we also need to organise this thing and advocate for our people.
>
> (Interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019)

A Ghanaian participant similarly shared that 'At that time, most of the noise was coming from outside, from people like Michelle Obama. I wondered if we were going to just sit down for others to do it for us' (interview, RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020).

This expectation that Nigerians should lead the response to a Nigerian problem was reflected in some Nigerian participants' disappointment at the low levels of Nigerians' participation both in and outside the country, both of which were attributed to what one diasporan Nigerian participant described as a 'frayed constitution of compassion':

> I think this is one of those things that, you know, it's the same as it is in Nigeria. Even when we had marches in Nigeria, when I was in Nigeria I would attend, there's something that's been frayed in the constitution of compassion in Nigeria. It's as if this thing has to be affecting you personally before you're willing to come out and take a stand. I think that unfortunately is also reflected the same way that we're very tribalistic, very 'what about me first?' Most Nigerians are their particular tribe first before they're Nigerians as opposed to America where people are proud to say … you know you don't hear people say I'm Texan-American or I'm Californian-American. People are proud to say I'm just American.
>
> (Interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020)

Another diasporan Nigerian suggested that some citizens are so disillusioned with the anomalies in the country that when they migrate to diasporas, they find ways to disconnect (interview, RP24, Atlanta, 28 September 2020). Those who retain a strong sense of and relationship with their home country have typically been raised in families that cultivated this consciousness and maintained relationships that nurtured this awareness (interview, RP24, Atlanta, 28 September 2020). Thus, we see that while some Nigerians were deeply grounded in Nigeria and evinced a strong sense of Nigeria as home and were invested in transnational activities there, others had a more distant relationship and were less inclined to participate in certain political activities. This attitudinal disparity of diasporic Nigerians towards Bring Back Our Girls shows that diaspora constructions of identity and approaches to activism are heterogeneous and informed in part by identity constructs, which are in turn shaped by the politics of identity in their home spaces.

Some Africans explained their participation as a way of showing solidarity with Nigerians as fellow Africans; women referred to Bring Back Our Girls activists in Nigeria as 'African sisters' and Nigeria as 'basically a sister country' (interview RP10, Accra, 6 January 2020). A Kenyan participant shared that she felt connected to the Chibok students and the Nigerian protesters as the mother of a young daughter, former wife to a Nigerian man, and as an African woman and women's rights activist who is familiar with the dynamics of gender violence by men against women in African societies. In repeated interviews and emails, she referred to Nigerian women as 'sisters' and said she felt the need to support their efforts to rescue the students (interviews, RP13, Kisii, 7 October 2019 and 13 January 2020).

African solidarity was the main motive for the involvement of individual participants like South African Gugulethu Mlambo[4] who led an early protest in New York's Union Square and the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) which self-identifies as a Pan-African feminist network (interview, RP16, Nairobi, February 2020). Their conceptualisation of solidarity, a complex and multifaceted concept, connoted relationships between self and other that are shaped by feelings and perceptions of unity, sameness, and interconnectedness. This contrasts with scholarly ascriptions of participation as pity by White participants towards voiceless and powerless subalternised 'third world women' (Loken, 2014; Khoja-Moolji, 2015a, 2015b; Olson, 2016; Maxfield, 2016; Murphy, 2017).

The discourse of subalternity, a concept propounded by Spivak (1988), pervades debate on and about agency in transnational activism vis-à-vis epistemic constructions of 'others' by social groups that perceive themselves to be more powerful. It finds particular resonance in scholarship about campaigns like Kony 2012 and Save Darfur (Mamdani, 2009; de Waal, 2015; Schomerus, 2015) that foreground the presumptive agencies of predominantly White Northern actors in intervening in conflict situations, often without consulting and including people affected by or already taking action on the ground.

Humanitarianism and Global Citizenship

Some Africans and other nationalities self-identified as global citizens who joined Bring Back Our Girls because they saw it as 'the right thing to do', even though it affected people different from them in a faraway place. Two White American women explained their participation thus:

> These girls are my sisters. Yeah, I'm here in Utah and they're in Africa, but I'm a global citizen. These girls are my sisters, they're my daughters, they're my friends and I can't live in a world where stuff like this happens and we don't do anything about it.
>
> (Morgan, 2014)[5]

> I decided to speak out because you don't need to be from a country to care about people of that country. You don't need to be Nigerian to care about 276 Nigerian schoolgirls. You don't need to be Syrian to care about Syrian refugees. You don't need to be Black to care about Black Lives Matter. You don't need to be Native American to care about Native American rights.
>
> (Mosley, 2016)[6]

In a similar vein, when asked in an interview by BBC World 'why an American woman cared about the Nigerian girls', Ramaa Mosley answered, 'My answer was simple: because I am human' (Mosley, 2016).

For diasporan Nigerians who identified as global citizens, all of whom were involved in transnational practices like sending money home and supporting community work, participating in Bring Back Our Girls was a way for them a way to remain connected with home. For one woman, this was reinforced by her consciousness of not being seen as belonging in her adopted home of America: 'I never have forgotten first and foremost I'm Nigerian, but when I meet people here, I just am … I'm Black' (interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020).

The identity of the global citizen is defined as 'someone who identifies as being part of an emerging world community and whose actions contribute to building this community's values and practices' (Israel, 2013). It is troubled by the Fanonian (1952) idea that the colonial tangent of relations between Global North and South is so entrenched that offers of help by the former can only take the form of pity framed as salvationism towards weaker others. While Nigerian Bring Back Our Girls activists welcomed the participation of multiple nationalities and other

identities, one White American participant suffered backlash when she was perceived to have gotten involved for unaltruistic reasons. She adduced this resistance to anti-white saviourism although deeper analysis suggests that this may have been a tactic adopted by Bring Back Our Girls dissidents to delegitimise her participation as an outsider in a situation that they constructed to be domestic:

> I kept being told I don't belong here, I don't belong in this … I felt that there was a part of the work that I was doing that became too much about me personally and there was like a conflict between the colour of my skin and me wanting to advocate for this cause and so even though people didn't know anything about me, my father or my mother or anything about my background, it just became really … I just started to feel that I needed to support other leaders in the cause to be the ones to really be speaking up.
>
> (interview RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

The term white saviour industrial complex or white saviourism was coined by Nigerian-American author Teju Cole (2012) in response to the video of Kony 2012, a campaign by American NGO Invisible Children that aimed to 'make Kony famous' in the aim of getting him arrested (Schomerus, 2015). The campaign has been condemned by Mamdani (2009, 2012) for distorting by oversimplifying the narratives of the Ugandan conflict and excluding those worst affected by it. Mengistu (2012) calls the campaign a 'self-serving omission of the extensive efforts' made by transnational actors over decades to solve the crisis. As he aptly notes, the name Invisible Children is akin to 'the sentiments of the first colonists who claimed to have discovered the New World and Africa: We didn't know about it, therefore it didn't exist', and the solution to make Kony famous in America in order to bring him to justice is rightly derided as lacking nuance and depth.

Kony 2012 and white saviourism have been critiqued by White scholars too. De Waal (2015), a White British researcher on African politics is among authors in an edited volume who critique the campaign's removedness from the realities and nuances of Uganda's prolonged battle with the Lord's Resistance Army. Yet they do this from the premise that Invisible Children was acting on an inherent right to save the people of Uganda from Joseph Kony. The stated thrust of De Waal's book is to show up how Western activisms appropriate non-Western campaigns and to propound that this be done in a more 'ethical' way that is more inclusive of domestic societies. However, the book does not confront Western advocates' arrogation of the right to mobilise on behalf of others from other parts of the world.

Applying this to RP20's experience, her desire to help was plain enough. However, being unaware of the power dynamics in which she became enmeshed by not defining more strongly her positionality as a supporter of Nigerian activists as opposed to an independent advocate, she ended up playing into the narrative of White saviourism and its tendency to erase the agencies of those who own the problem that is the subject of their activism. In her own words, although she was hurt by the backlash, she later came to understand/better appreciate the impact of her actions:

> I think in advocacy you have to examine your ego really carefully and I think that in the process of everything I went through, I don't know that I'm perfect but I think I've examined it and it's one of the reasons why with the Black Lives Matter movement that is happening here in the US, I've really been careful about what I do and how I do it is really to elevate the voices of the leaders of that movement and not try to in any way make it about something that is about me. That's the thing with advocacy and I just didn't recognise it until it took me years to finally understand this better but true advocacy is not just stepping in and acting but it's also really listening and learning and asking for guidance. And of course, you can't always do that, sometimes you have to … you can't just sit there if someone's drowning and be like somebody tell me if it's OK to rescue this child who's in the water, of course that would be ridiculous. But I think that it's really important for activists, especially if they're either not from the country or not intimately involved, to really pause and listen and learn. I knew nothing about Nigeria before this whole thing happened and I jumped in in a way that was really kind of ignorant and naïve. I don't regret being involved; I really regret how I did it.
>
> (Interview RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

Although much of the focus of saviourist discourse has been on the philanthropic overtures of White advocates towards non-White populations and parts of the world, particularly Africa, there are aspects of saviourist ethics at play within the latter. Parents of the abducted Chibok students were the first to organise protests in Maiduguri after the incident. During fieldwork in Maiduguri in late 2018, I learned that the next set of protests against the abductions were not in Abuja as is popularly believed, but in Maiduguri by women native to the state,[7] some of whom now feel that they were sidelined by those in Abuja.

As one woman activist in Maiduguri remarked,[8] and several others supported, 'Those in Abuja didn't start Bring Back Our Girls; it started here … Allamin was the first to march to Government House'. As another women's rights activist said:

> Where is Hadiza Bala? She was among those who started Bring Back Our Girls, the one they hijacked from Borno State and bring [sic] it to Abuja. When she was given the appointment with the Nigerian Ports Authority have you heard her voice again? No! These are people who are looking for relevance so that the federal government will give them some appointment.
>
> (Interview, RP27, Maiduguri, October 2020)

A further manifestation of saviourism is seen in Bring Back Our Girls' continued activism after some parents of the abducted Chibok students distanced themselves in an attempt to not antagonise the government so as to facilitate the rescue of their daughters (interview, RP4, Abuja, 19 September 2018; Oriola, 2020, p. 15). Given that these parents are the most directly affected by the abductions and Bring Back Our Girls purported to be acting on their behalf, it resurfaces Adesanmi's question about who owns the problem of the abductions and who has agency to act on it. It also further problematises the 'our' in Bring Back Our Girls and illustrates the

enactment at a national level of the transnational appropriations of agency and distortions of narratives that are associated with the white saviour industrial complex.

Race

The question of race and identity in this discourse extends to Blackness as a motive for some African Americans who participated in Bring Back Our Girls. An African-American participant and professor of history identified herself as 'an American citizen of African origin, a descendant of enslaved Africans' who uses the collective referent 'we' when teaching about Africa and sees herself and the African-African community as a 'chapter in the book [of Africa] and belonging to what she calls the "old African diaspora' (interview, RP15, New York, 25 November 2019). This correlates with research that suggests that Black US House Representatives are far more likely to vocalize support for Black-centred social movements like #BlackLivesMatter and #BringBackOurGirls than White representatives, and that Black female representatives are more likely to support Black female-centred movements than all other racial and gender groups (Stout et al., 2017). Representative Frederica Wilson, an African-American woman, was committed to Bring Back Our Girls from the start and still hosts a weekly event on her Twitter page where she brings together other congress people to advocate for the students' return (Faul, 2015; interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2020).

The connections and disconnections between African movements like Bring Back Our Girls and movements against violence on Black bodies like Black Lives Matter are discussed by Maxfield (2016, p. 893) who notes that for some Bring Back Our Girls participants in the United States, this racial trope 'served as a foundation for solidarity and support'. She cites one Nigerian who identifies with the Black Lives' movement but views subsuming Bring Back Our Girls under it as obscuring the latter's focus.

Profession

As diverse as their identities and motivations for participation were, participants interviewed for this book were united by their self-identities as supporters of justice, particularly for people who are not in a position to defend themselves. Several participants said they were motivated to participate in Bring Back Our Girls in order to be 'a voice for the voiceless' (interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020) or because the [Chibok] girls 'needed my voice' (Mosley, 2016). Some participants were professional activists who worked for civil society organisations and networks whose work include regular advocacy. As discussed in Chapter 5, Bring Back Our Girls events in Kenya were organised by the African feminist network, FEMNET, which regularly leads and supports advocacy on diverse aspects of women's and girls' rights. One such activism was the #JusticeforLiz campaign in 2013 over Kenyan police mishandling of the case of a 16-year-old girl brutally gang-raped by six men (Rugene, 2013 in Nyabola, 2018, pp. 141–142). Such people viewed their decisions to participate in Bring Back Our Girls as both a

performance of their personal values and an extension of work that they do regularly to fight injustice in general and help women in particular.

According to RP22, a Nigerian-Canadian founder of a women's rights NGO that empowers women through the arts who co-organised protests in Toronto and Ottawa, 'as founder of [unnamed nonprofit][9]…and an artist-activist, I am compelled to do something because this is me' (interview, RP22, Toronto, 2 September 2019). RP24, also a singer and creative artiste, viewed her art (writing, storytelling, and music) as a tool that she used in her activism and uses to 'reconcile the diaspora with their home in Africa' (interview, RP24, Atlanta, 28 September 2020). I found her through her blog which she used to share information about Bring Back Our Girls events, including one that she attended in Atlanta (interview, RP24, 28 September 2020).

One participant, an academic, said:

> As a historian, I specialise in world history, African history and African American history and I've also taught world politics … these massive movements in world history and it was the intellectuals that played a major part—the universities, the professors, the students—and some of them were bold enough and courageous enough to step outside the four walls of the classroom and let those ideas circulate among society to spark. It's also a shift in the US in higher ed where we don't have that many full-time tenure track jobs so a lot of us more recent entries into academia, we're mostly part-time, so I think a lot of people are looking for alternative avenues for their scholarship and for me it was like this activism number one being concerned but two maybe I could just this is something that I could … use my scholarship in that way.
>
> (Interview, RP5, New York, 25 November 2019)

Though not many participants self-identified as activists nor were professional activists in the sense of working or having worked with non-governmental advocacy organisations, all evinced a strong sense of resistance to injustice. For some, this derived from having been raised by parents with community advocacy experience and strong social justice ethics:

> I was interested in activism from a young age, in issues like equality and climate change. I grew up in a family that was socially and politically active. My grandparents were communist. In the 1970s, my mum protested with students for democratic society, against the Vietnam War and for civil rights movements.
>
> (interview, RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

Another Nigerian-American participant said:

> I would not be who I am today or move through the world the way I do without having been born into the family I was born into. I grew up with parents (Archbishops Margaret and Benson Idahosa) who taught me that one's life

> was not fully realised until it was grounded in the service and upliftment of others. I saw my parents move through their lives with both compassion and activism—it was what fueled their existence. Although neither formally referred to themselves as 'activists', that is what they were/are. They stood against injustice….
>
> (Ijewere, 2017)

Likewise, a Nigerian-American participant noted that her activism has been influenced by the activism and community engagement of her mother and grandmother (interview, RP24, 28 September 2020).

Despite having strong feelings about injustice and self-identifying as advocates for social justice, some leaders of Bring Back Our Girls events had no prior formal organising experience, as is evident in their surprise at the scale of response to their mobilisation efforts which took place mainly on social media. Gugulethu Mlambo said in an interview that she was 'amazed' at the 500+ turnout to her co-organised Rock A Crown rally in New York; 'I thought it was just going to be me and my friends. I was expecting about 10 people at most … I'm overwhelmed'.[10] For some such participants, Bring Back Our Girls was their first time organising physical protest events and represented an opportunity to crystallise their activist inclinations:

> I know that this was a pivotal point of helping me get used to being out there and being vocal because I felt that the families, the people of that community and those girls, those young ladies, deserved somebody to stand up and speak for them because they could have been anybody and nobody because they're trying to be educated deserves to be threatened, to live in fear and also deserves to be treated like chattel. I'm a vehement defender of women, girls and human rights and when there's injustice anywhere in the world, it gets right under my skin.
>
> (Interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020)

For such persons, their participation in Bring Back Our Girls was a catalyst that motivated them to create NGOs aimed at providing varied forms of relief to the families of the Chibok students as well as others affected by the Boko Haram conflict, even though this was not part of their original motives.

Faith

For some participants, their faith influenced their use of prayer and other religious ritual practices as part of their activism (interview, RP15, New York, 20 June 2019). For others, faith was a central organising logic that brought people together to support Bring Back Our Girls. The Bring Back Our Girls group in New York City

> ultimately became a combination of Muslim, Jewish and Christian women and people who were just spiritual but didn't associate with any kind of

> religion. And so it was always very important for us, because most of the women in the group were of one of those three faiths, to incorporate our faith into it. So we would also have prayer rallies where we'd meet in all three spaces and pray for the girls and things like that.
>
> (Interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020)

For RP19, the Christian co-organiser of this group,

> my faith is the underlying factor that guides most of my decisions, but I wouldn't say it was the underlining determining factor here. I would've gotten involved as a matter of moral conscience. My faith is what kept me connected to the cause.
>
> (Interview, RP19, New York, 30 June 2020)

A Jewish-American woman who created a faith-based group that merged with the secular one created by RP19 shared that her support of Bring Back Our Girls may have been influenced by her personal knowledge of the history of persecution of Jews in certain parts of the world. She shared that she comes 'from a strong narrative about the holocaust in eastern Europe' and mentioned the facticity of her and her husband growing up in communities that were 'very aware' of the oppression of soviet Jewry who could not practise their faith or leave the country unless they left everything behind (interview, RP23, New York, 25–26 August 2020). What this reveals is that even though activists identified with certain global motives for participating, in this case faith, they did so for reasons that were mediated by their lived realities of their respective creeds.

Emotions

Participants expressed that emotions were a strong influence of their decisions to participate in Bring Back Our Girls. Feelings of anger, outrage, horror, sadness, grief, frustration, worry, shock, confusion, distress, and disbelief at the abductions but also hope at the prospect of the students being rescued drove many participants to take some form of action. A few people, women notably, expressed that they had had initial physiological reactions that included the inability to sleep (interview RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020). The role of emotions in human behaviour, including activism, has been highlighted by sociologists who theorise that negative and positive emotions have a bearing on participation (Jasper, 1998; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Barrett & Brunton-Smith, 2014, p. 16; Della Porta & Diani, 2006). The responses of the participants validate this and reveal the range of emotional reactions that they experienced to the Chibok abductions as individuals.

Embodied Resistance

Outside of their identities, participation in Bring Back Our Girls was informed by the need to take action that corresponded in weight with the gravity of the Chibok abductions. For several participants, this meant using their bodies as social objects of resistance in physical protests in public spaces. The symbolism and significance

of women protesting in public or embodied feminine resistance, particularly if they are seen to be aggressive, is arguably more provocative in the African context where women's participation in politics is still suboptimal, owing in part to the prevalence of gender norms in Nigeria's heavily male-dominated politics that centre the significance of women on private life and their reproductive abilities and expected gender roles. Several participants felt a strong urge to 'do something', driven largely by the Nigerian government's initial inertia and the limited early coverage of the abduction by national and international media. As noted earlier, several participants said they could not see themselves letting the situation pass without taking action:

> Unlike most people who thought that maybe the most effective way I could get involved is maybe to write op-eds, I felt it was important to be out there, to speak about it and to protest about it because this kind of situation is unacceptable and I thought about it as a mother, if these were my children, am I going to sit here and say I'm fasting and praying? Or am I going to sit here and say I'm writing op-ed? Would I not be making as much noise as possible to make sure that nobody forgets that my children are in captivity?
>
> (Interview, RP15, 20 June 2019)

> I felt like we can't just do things on social media, we have to show up in our physical bodies and be somewhere and so I helped to organise a number of marches in LA [Los Angeles] and I also participated in other people's marches.
>
> (Interview RP20, Los Angeles, 25 July 2020)

Both these participants expressed an ethic of embodied resistance that was reflected in many participants' responses:

> I simply was sort of a body, a person there in support. I paid attention to the issue and I just wanted to, when the opportunity was there, to just lend my voice to that, just have my presence speak that I was a concerned global citizen.
>
> (Interview, RP5, New York, 25 November 2019)

Allied to this was the belief shared by individual participants about the power of one—the ideal that one voice or person can make a difference. In the context of the culture of violence against women and girls, embodied resistance holds special significance for feminine defiance of the complacency that has previously characterised responses to gender violence (Aina, Atela, Ojebode, Dayil, & Aremu, 2019).

Norms

Oriola (2020) and Aina et al. (2019) have written about the collective normative framings of Bring Back Our Girls which comprise mainly motherism, human rights, girls' rights to education, and state failure. Many participants' responses indicated that there were overlaps between individual and group-level normative

motivations. However, participants mentioned normative frames that influenced them as individuals that reflected in their approaches to participating in Bring Back Our Girls which have not received much attention in scholarly explorations of this campaign. In addition to invoking and acting upon individual beliefs in norms that coincide with the group framings listed above, Bring Back Our Girls participants interpellated several values through their actions. These included the performative norm of women advocating for women's issues as explained earlier, Africans doing the same for African 'problems' and resistance to injustice even under threat of harm.

Regarding the latter, several Bring Back Our Girls participants reported having been threatened because of their activism. One Nigerian-American woman said: 'For most of the time most of what we got were [sic] a lot of abuse. I got death threats, oh gosh I got death threats many different times' (interview, RP17, Washington DC, 6 March 2020). In a TedX Talk on her involvement with Bring Back Our Girls, Ramaa Mosley, a White American woman shared how she almost gave up until a Nigerian colleague told her, 'not one of us who has been an outspoken member of this group has not received cyberbullying. This is what happens when you stop being a spectator to an injustice and you stand up' (Mosley, 2016).

Conclusion

This chapter surfaces the individual identity frames that influenced many Bring Back Our Girls participants across the world. Through their own voices, we see how mostly women and a few men made meaning of their decisions to engage with the movement and how this determined the depth of their involvement, either in their home countries or transnationally. We see how individual factors and identities combine with norms of collective action against human rights abuses—especially of women and girls, colonial domination of Black bodies, the protection of children, and religious values to influence transnationalised resistance by diverse persons.

These findings signal a need to look beyond the surface of other contemporary activisms and theories about collective motives of activism in order to better understand the dynamics of current waves of globalised social movements.

Notes

1 An 'intersectional alternative spelling of "woman"/"women" meant to include transwomen and non-white women'. Urban Dictionary, https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=womxn [accessed 5 October 2020].
2 https://www.uwc.ac.za/News/Pages/-Bring-back-our-girls.aspx
3 Andy Iheanacho cited in KSL report on Utah Bring Back Our Girls rally https://www.ksl.com/article/29844955/bring-back-our-girls-utahns-rally-in-support-of-abducted-nigerians [accessed 30 September 2020].
4 Gugulethu co-organised a 'Rock A Crown' rally at Union Square Park in New York City in May 2014 where participants wore African-style headwraps in honour of the Chibok

students. Zanab Akande (2014), 'Bring Back Our Girls' Come to Union Square', *Voices of New York*, http://voicesofny.org/2014/05/bringbackourgirls-comes-union-square/; https://youtu.be/J_hXMnc-Au8 in Ruth Morrison (2014), 'Bring Back Our Girls Hits New York City', *What's the 411*, https://www.whatsthe411.com/411tv2/on-the-town/item.601-bring-back-our-girls-rally-hits-new-york-city.html

5 Brittany Plothow who co-organised a Bring Back Our Girls rally in front of the Utah State Capitol with her friend, Erin Page. Cited in Emiley Morgan (2014), 'Bring Back Our Girls: Utahns Rally in Support of Abducted Nigerians', *KSL*, https://www.ksl.com/article/29844955/bring-back-our-girls-utahns-rally-in-support-of-abducted-nigerians

6 At this point in the video of her talk, she bursts into tears.

7 Interview, RP36, Maiduguri, October 2020.

8 Interview, RP36, Maiduguri, October 2020. Radio lady

9 The name of her NGO is deliberately omitted to protect her identity.

10 Zainab Akande (2014), '"Bring Back Our Girls" Comes to Union Square', *Voices of New York*, http://voicesofny.org/2014/05/bringbackourgirls-comes-union-square/

References

Adesanmi, P. (2014). #WhoOwnsTheProblem? *Premium Times*. Retrieved from https://www.premiumtimesng.com/opinion/161783-whoownstheproblem-pius-adesanmi.html

Adesanmi, P. (2020). *Who owns the problem?: Africa and the struggle for agency*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.

Aina, Tade A., Atela, M., Ojebode, A., Dayil, P., & Aremu, F. A. (2019). *Beyond tweets and screams: Action for empowerment and accountability in - Nigeria: The case of the #BBOG movement* (IDS Working Paper No 29). Retrieved from https://www.africaportal.org/publications/beyond-tweets-and-screams-action-empowerment-and-accountability-nigeria-case-bbog-movement/

Barrett, M., & Brunton-Smith, I. (2014). Political and civic engagement and participation: Towards an integrative perspective. *Journal of Civil Society*, *10*(1), 5–28.

Cole, T. (2012). The white-savior industrial complex. *The Atlanti*c. Retrieved March 28, 2018, from https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241–1299.

De Waal, A. (2015). Genealogies of transnational activism. In A. De Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2006). *Social movements: An introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Fanon, F. (1952). *Black skin, White masks.* New York: Grove Press/Atlantic Monthly Press.

Faul, M. (2015). 2 US Congresswomen Support #Bringbackourgirls Campaigners. *The San Diego Union Tribune.* Retrieved from https://www.sandiegotribune.com/sdut-2-us-congresswomen-support-bringbackourgirls-2015aug05-story.html

Ijewere, E. (2017). *"Activism chose me": R. Evon Benson Idahosa – activist and founder Pathfinders*. Retrieved July 23, 2020, from https://guardian.ng/guardian-woman/activism-chose-me-r-evon-benson-idahosa-activist-founder-pathfinders/

Israel, R. (2013). *What does it mean to be a global citizen?* https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/what-does-it-mean-to-be-global-citizen/

Jasper, J. M. (1998). The emotions of protest: Affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements. *Sociological Forum*, *13*(3), 397–424.

Kahane, M. (2009). The plural self and the social: Some considerations for political theory. In T. Rahimy (Ed.), *Representation, expression and identity: Interdisciplinary insights on multiculturalism, conflict and belonging*. Oxford: Inter Disciplinary Press.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015a [2018, April 10]). Becoming an "intimate publics": Exploring the affective intensities of hashtag feminism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *5*(2), 347–350.

Khoja-Moolji, S. (2015b, April). Suturing together girls and education: An investigation into the social (Re)Production of girls' education as a hegemonic ideology. *Diaspora Indigenous and Minority Education*, *9*(2), 87–107.

Loken, M. (2014). #BringBackOurGirls and the invisibility of imperialism. *Feminist Media Studies*, *14*(6), 1100–1101.

Mamdani, M. (2009). *Saviours and survivors: Darfur, politics, and the war on terror*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

Mamdani, M. (2012). *What Jason didn't tell gavin and his army of invisible children*. Retrieved March 16, 2018, from http://www.monitor.co.ug/artsculture/Reviews/-/691232/1365090/-/c8l08/-/

Maneater, R. (2014). *How Ramaa Mosley and girl rising tried to co-opt a movement*. Retrieved April 11, 2018, from http://powderroom.kinja.com/how-ramaa-mosley-and-girl-rising-tried-to-co-opt-a-move-1574111776

Maxfield, M. (2016). History retweeting itself: Imperial feminist appropriations of "bring back our girls". *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 886–900.

Mengistu, D. (2012, March 12). Not a click away: Joseph Kony in the real world. *Warscapes*. Retrieved from http://www.warscapes.com/reportage/not-click-away-joseph-kony-real-world

Morgan, E. (2014). Bring Back Our Girls: Utahns rally in support of abducted Nigerians. *KSL*. Retrieved from https://www.ksl.com/article/29844955/bring-back-our-girls-utahns-rally-in-support-of-abducted-nigerians

Mosley, R. (2016). *Tedx Manhattan Beach talk*. Retrieved from http://tedxmanhattanbeach.com/speakers-2016/ramaa-mosley/

Murphy, E. (2017). *#BringBackOurGirls: Solidarity or self-interest? Online feminist movements and third world women* (MA Thesis), University of Canterbury.

Ndelu, S., Dlakavu, S., & Boswell, B. (2017). Womxn's and nonbinary activists' contribution to the RhodesMustFall and FeesMustFall student movements: 2015 and 2016. *Agenda*, *31*(3–4), 1–4.

Ndlovu, H. (2017). Womxn's bodies reclaiming the picket line: The "nude" protest during #FeesMustFall. *Agenda, 31*(3–4), 68–77.

Nyabola, N. (2018). *Digital democracy, analogue politics*.London: Zed Books.

Olson, C. C. (2016). '#BringBackOurGirls: Digital communities supporting real-world change and influencing mainstream media agendas. *Feminist Media Studies*, *16*(5), 772–787.

Oriola, T. B. (2020). Framing and movement outcomes: The #BringBackOurGirls movement. *Third World Quarterly, 42*(4), 641–660.

Ramaru, K. (2017). Feminist reflections on the Rhodes Must Fall movement. *Feminist Africa,* (22), 89–96.

Rugene, N. (2013). Brave Busia girl battles as her rapists go scott [sic] free. *Daily Nation*. Retrieved from http://www.nation.co.ke/lifestyle/DN2/When-rapists-go-scot-free/-/957860/2022572/-/skd9s8z/-/index.html

Schomerus, M. (2015). "Make him famous": The single conflict narrative of Kony 2012. In A. de Waal (Ed.), *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Scott, B. M. (2014). #Save (bring back) our girls: Race, gender, age and the plight of African American girls. *Issues in Race and Society*, *2*(2), 7–24.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*. Urbana: University of Illinois.

Stout, C. T., Coulter, K., & Edwards, B. (2017). #Blackrepresentation, intersectionality, and politicians' responses to black social movements on twitter. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, *22*(4), 493–509.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour. In S. Worchel & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *Psychology of intergroup relations*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Torre, S. (1996). Claiming the public space. In D. Agrest, P. Conway, & L. Weisman (Eds.), *The sex of architecture*. New York: Abrams.

Van Stekelenburg, J., & Klandermans, B. (2013). The social psychology of protest. *Current Sociology Review*, *61*(5–6), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392113479314

Welch, L. (2015). *1 year after the kidnapping in Nigeria, why are more than 200 girls still missing?* Retrieved September 14, 2020, from https://www.cosmopolitan.com/politics/news/a39087/bringbackourgirls-nigeria-kidnapping/

7 Conclusion

Lessons from Bring Back Our Girls and Some Policy Considerations

Introduction

I set out at the beginning of this book to update the literature on transnational activism with a focus on disrupting the hegemony of Northern perspectives on the structure and functions of transnational activism as well as the limited focus on Global South activism, notably from Africa, as sources of theory and knowledge building. The rationale for this was an observed disjuncture between the extant literature on transnational activism and recent occurrences of protests across borders, beginning from the North African uprisings that began in Tunisia in 2010. To achieve this, I selected the case of Bring Back Our Girls, an activism begun in Nigeria in 2014 by Nigerian women that attracted and compelled widespread global attention, action, and support. This provided an opportunity to study a recent instance of activism that became transnationalised from Global South to Global North, in order to examine what insights it offers for scholarship on this subject regarding new directions and dimensions of transnational activism. These lessons were extracted and have been presented throughout this book from the standpoint of an African campaign led by women—two perspectives that are underrepresented in international relations and transnational activism scholarship.

Using interviews with 27 Bring Back Our Girls participants representing mixed nationalities and other identities, and multiply situated in several countries across the world, including locations in Africa, North America, and Europe, I set out to examine new dimensions of transnational activism, focusing on the structure and form, and the motivations for participation in Bring Back Our Girls of geographically dispersed individuals. I also analysed the identities of and interactions among the transnational actors who took part in Bring Back Our Girls, with a focus on activist perspectives from four focal countries—Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and the United States—with insights from five other countries, as a way of comparing diverse cultural, social, and political viewpoints and enabling theorisation from the Global South.

In Chapter 5, I discussed in-depth the structure and form of Bring Back Our Girls mobilisations within and between these contexts using data from fieldwork. Using the same source, in Chapter 6, I unpacked the motives for participation of individuals in each focal country, explaining how multiple personal identity factors influenced their decision to support Bring Back Our Girls. In this concluding

DOI: 10.4324/9781032679747-8

chapter, I draw on those research outcomes to collate analysis regarding the significance of Bring Back Our Girls for the study of transnational activism today and conclude with some policy reflections regarding how policy and security actors can better integrate and leverage the rich resource that social movements, particularly those led by women, represent in conflict-affected contexts. This chapter begins with a discussion of key findings and contributions to knowledge and theory that speak to the book's main objectives as summarised earlier. In a second section, I discuss implications for policy and further research, alongside recommendations for actualising these research and policy considerations.

Key Findings and Contributions to Knowledge and Theory

'New' Dimensions of Transnational Activism

As observed in Chapters 3 and 4, knowledge on transnational activism in international relations (IR) scholarship by scholars like Keck and Sikkink (1998, 1999) and De Waal (2015) has historically focused on mobilisations by civil society organisations, particularly NGOs and formal advocacy networks. For a long time, scholarship on organised forms of collective action, by transnational advocacy networks, in particular, dominated these discussions. This included research by the likes of Pallas (2012, 2013, 2017) that acknowledged the changing patterns of power and agency, notably that Southern actors were becoming more active transnationally and less dependent on Northern ones. However, they remained focused on formal and collective actors and their mobilisations as central empirical cases. A third stream of scholars like Wong and Brown (2013) have begun to draw attention to the growing transnational presence and influence of individuals and looser forms of activism by e-bandits, for example, who are distinguished by the diffuse character of their unknown members. Yet such new forms of transnationality remain understudied in IR. Further, IR scholarship has been and remains centred on activism in the Global North and by Northern actors and organisations. In Chapter 1, I showed how a critical lens helped unpack a history of collective resistance by people of African descent that has been hitherto overlooked for not meeting the criteria of what was for long defined as activism—transnational or otherwise.

These gaps in IR knowledge warranted an examination in this book of relevant knowledge from Sociology, African Studies, Social Psychology, and Media/Communication Studies. The studies consulted across these disciplines showed a recognition of the growing digitalisation of social action, the increased and intense connections that this is facilitating, and the changing nature of activism from formal to informal and coordinated to loosely structured. This scholarship also recognises the growing transnational agency of individuals and the greater influence of personal values compared with the rational-strategic and normative-ideological motives for NGO-led advocacy. Though these works collectively offer an analytical framework that better reflects the changing context and dynamics of transnational activism, it shares IR scholars' biases of Eurocentric empirical focus, buttressing the case for not only multidisciplinary study of transnational activism but also new, more inclusive theoretical frameworks.

Examining the structures and forms of Bring Back Our Girls events in the four focal countries and the five additional ones made clear that compared to the dominance of single forms of mobilisation, whether NGOs or mass crowds, Bring Back Our Girls did not consist of any single dominant forms of activism, whether in terms of mobilisation, operation, or typology, but was multimodal, involving multiple forms of activism occurring simultaneously. This multimodality comprised online and offline protests, prolonged and one-off participations, loose and networked NGO groupings, personal and professional connectivities, and indigenous and global identities. It is important to note that these typologies were not static and that in some countries, some of these forms transmuted into different forms (e.g., in some cases, what began as spontaneous, loose protests transitioned into NGOs using the lessons learned from mobilising to inform targeted and more structured and sustained work).

Pathways to participation in Bring Back Our Girls were more informal and digitalised than transnational advocacy networks. NGOs and NGO networks organised and supported events in some countries, but individual agency in mobilising people in social networks, including on social media, meant that many of the individuals who participated in different spaces geopolitical spaces were part of concentric circles of friends and family members, and some professional contacts of Bring Back Our Girls' leaders.

Finally, transnational relations between what was previously conceived in scholarship as a binary Global South and North, with the latter being dependent on the former for material and symbolic resources, were more equitable in Bring Back Our Girls. This was observed through the participation of other Global South actors which was made possible by expanding the geographic scope of transnationality outside of the Global North. In other words, contrary to the notion that only those movements that have traction in the Global North can be considered transnational, those that find solidarity even within the Global South are too. This shift in power dynamics was also seen to be a factor of the agency of Bring Back Our Girls' African leaders in starting this activism and leading its narratives as well as the role of social media in collectivising archives that can be searched in order to establish the narrative agency of the movement's content. The nexus between increased global mobility and growths in complex national identities serves to blur further the fluid boundary between North and South.

Participants in Bring Back Our Girls had multifarious motives for participation that included self- and social identities, norms, and emotions. Where existing literature has privileged motives that derive from mass social identities like race, the intersectional approach used in this book revealed that of Bring Back Our Girls participants hold multiple identities that converged to influence their decisions to participate.

By examining Bring Back Our Girls, a case of contemporary activism that does not fit neatly within existing typologies of social movement actors, this book expands categorisations of recognised forms of transnational activism. The book first propounds the idea that the concept of activism as social action for change does not adequately capture the full spectrum of what Bring Back Our Girls

participants did, which included confrontation through protests as well as direct engagement and support to conflict-affected communities. Compared to traditional forms of activism and professional activists, and beyond the small circle of elite personalities who began the movement in Nigeria and helped to transnationalise it, the larger bulk of Bring Back Our Girls participants were ordinary people who saw themselves as connected to and affected by the causes that they were advocating for diverse reasons. I believe that this is a significant part of the reason that Bring Back Our Girls lasted as long as it did—over seven years: its leaders and supporters did not see themselves as advocating on behalf of distant others. This was possible because many of the women (and men) were products of the social, political, and economic system that both enabled the Chibok abductions and numerous other instances of gendered violence against women as well as informed the widespread indifference towards them. This extends to a second key finding that unlike traditional forms of transnational activism that were and remain led primarily by organised, highly coordinated, and cohesive professionals and formal networks, newer forms like Bring Back Our Girls are more informal, diffuse, fluid, digital, and populated by diverse types of actors who pursue the same causes but co-exist in networks with varying levels of connectedness to one another.

I theorise these as *multimodal transconnective networks of change* (my emphasis). Multimodality embodies the involvement of different actors and the multiple ways in which these networks engage, both online and offline, and with state (formal) and non-state (informal) actors. It also captures the fact that their activities transcend resistance and include the performance of actions that reflect their values as individuals and position them to help facilitate social change through a range of interventions, not just protest and resistance. Transconnectivity refers to how social actors have shifted from connecting across borders to connecting through highly diverse networks of people from different countries, but who also represent different and multiple identities, and mobilise increasingly in borderless spaces like the Internet. Finally, networks of change acknowledge that groups like Bring Back Our Girls are not just activists but networks of actors that coalesce around the desire to effect positive change and who act on this through protest and resistance as well as direct transformative action and engagement with affected communities.

Theorising from the South and Decolonising International Relations

As noted earlier, the limited insights in IR from non-Global North perspectives and, specifically, African concepts, experiences, and agency, are well established (Acharya & Buzan, 2007, 2010, 2017; Obi, 2012; Tieku, 2012; Acharya, 2014; Odoom & Andrews, 2017; Bouka, 2018, 2019; Smith, 2012, 2017, 2018; Zondi, 2018). For this reason, many scholars have questioned the internationality of international relations and advocated for greater efforts to theorise from the South, rather than engage in cyclical efforts to revalidate Eurocentric theories. Without essentialising Africa or activism led by Africans and other Global South actors, this study has contributed towards redressing representational deficits in IR scholarship regarding the agency for social mobilisation and change of individual

Africans as against non-African and female actors. By so doing, this book has contributed towards inverting the Eurocentric gaze of this scholarship and decolonising the study of IR—a key impulse of contemporary knowledge production and theorisation.

By privileging the voices of African and African diasporan activists, and by telling the story of an activism created by Africans, this book has brought African activisms into the purview of 'mainstream' scholarship and helped secure the place of Africa as a purveyor, not just a receiver, of transnational exchanges. This has contributed towards a more objective view and holistic understanding of the dynamics of transnational activism. By centering the perspectives of activists who supported Bring Back Our Girls in Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, diasporan Africans in the United States, and four other countries, this book has illuminated the importance of Black identity, particularly Pan Africanism, as a motivation for participating in transnational activism for the rights of Black people and people of African descent. The book has also contributed to an epistemic shift from reading the transnational as global or vertical to reading it as including regional or horizontal transnationalisation, i.e., transnationalisation within the Global South as opposed to between Global South and North. This was done by showing the level of transnational activity that occurred within Africa compared to Northern media narratives that gave more publicity to Bring Back Our Girls activities in the Global North.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

This book's findings have a number of policy implications. I discuss three relating to the agency of Global South actors for taking action to address social problems in their own contexts, managing transnational capital and support, and knowledge production. I end with a reflection on the significance of movements like Bring Back Our Girls for peacebuilding and relevant policy and security actors.

Bring Back Our Girls is an indication that individual Global South actors are increasingly exercising their collective agency to address problems that may be specific to their domestic contexts but have global resonance and ramifications. In addition to increasing ownership of informed responses from the ground, this has had the effect of allowing the construction and diffusion of comprehensive situational narratives that capture the complexities of conflict situations which tend to be oversimplified by external actors. These processes are facilitated by the increasing digitisation of all aspects of life. This has broadened avenues and scopes of participation, and deepened cross-communication and connection, but it has also made activism prone to inflated support and visibility, and the distortion of narratives. To forestall these challenges and leverage opportunities, it is important that Global South activists develop clear messaging and objectives that can be communicated and used to filter stakeholders and assess the relevance of offers of support. Strategies that succeeded with Bring Back Our Girls included creating a presence in cyberspace using a website and on social media to define what participants were about and who to contact to offer support. The movement's use of a

specific hashtag further helped to map engagements online which assisted the identification and confrontation of contrary narratives and actions. This required specific communications and digital skillsets which should be considered in assigning responsibilities during such mobilisations.

As demonstrated by the wide scale of transnational participation in Bring Back Our Girls, international support can play an important role in escalating activism. However, it can also create false hope about participants' depths of engagement and potential impacts. External actors, especially in the Global North, have a responsibility to ensure that offers of help are subsumed under the leadership of those affected and who are closest to a conflict situation who understand contextual nuances, see the bigger picture, and are positioned to engage local as well as global actors. Global South activists can facilitate this by creating structures and strategies that help advance their mobilisation without getting in the way to help pursue their objectives effectively. Spontaneous protests have their merits, but some structure and strategy can help ensure better sustainability, coherence, and impact, as demonstrated by Bring Back Our Girls. Global South activists should also diversify the targets of their mobilising beyond the Global North as shifting power dynamics mean that there are influential actors and political spaces in other parts of the world that can help to enhance visibility, at least, and achieve activisms' objectives, at best.

Finally, more research is needed on how contemporary transnational activism is functioning in different contexts, specifically those that are militarised, because they have particular implications for the safety and security of women and girls. It should be a norm for scholarship to include and focus on protests and movements from the Global South as part of global discourses, not to essentialise or orientalise them, but in order to obtain holistic insights into the prospects of emerging dimensions of civil society and civic engagement as forces against all manifestations of militarisation, including violence.

Some Reflections on Social Movements and Peacebuilding

Within the long history of social movements in Africa that dates back to the anti-slavery era, if not earlier, there is also a long history of indigenous peace and human rights movements that have had significant and positive impacts on situations of conflict and crisis. To cite one example, the catalytic role of the decisive activism of the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace in bringing to an end decades of a brutal civil war in Liberia is well-documented (Fork Films et al., 2008, Gbowee, 2009). Their peacebuilding legacy further extends to their accompaniment of the post-war establishment and institutionalisation of infrastructures i response to the widespread problem of violence against women and girls that began during the war (Medie, 2020). What the Liberian women's peace movement has in common with Bring Back Our Girls and numerous other instances of women's peace activism is that among the reasons that their activism was so transformative are: (a) their embeddedness in conflict contexts which informs their nuanced understanding of conflict factors; (b) their lived experiences of violence which galvanise their resolve to bring

an end to it, and (c) their goal to not only end physical violence, but to also engender social justice by transforming everyday forms of structural violence (Gbowee, 2009).

Although it was not yet as central a theme in the 1970/1980s as it has become today, the ethic or norm of the localisation of humanitarianism, peacebuilding, and development writ large is gaining increasing currency for some of the reasons stated earlier. It is hard to recommend policy support for movements that are distinguished by their spontaneity and independence; however, movements like Bring Back Our Girls are an undeniably crucial part of global and local peace, security, and peacebuilding infrastructures and must be included or integrated into formal mechanisms and interventions for many of the reasons that their activism is often effective and successful.

References

Acharya, A. (2014). Global international relations (IR) and regional worlds: A new agenda for international studies. *International Studies Quarterly*, *58*(4), 647–659.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2007). Why is there no non-western international relations theory? An introduction. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *7*(3), 287–312.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2010). *Non-Western international relations theory: Reflections on and beyond Asia*. Oxford and New York: Routledge.

Acharya, A., & Buzan, B. (2017). Why is there no Non-Western international relations theory? Ten years on. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, *17*(3), 341–370.

Bouka, Y. (2018). Wakanda, afrofuturism, and decolonizing international relations scholarship. *LSE Blog*. Retrieved August 29, 2020, from https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2018/02/12/wakanda-afrofuturism-and-decolonizing-international-relations-scholarship/

Bouka, Y. (2019). Interview – Yolande Bouka. *E-International Relations*. Retrieved from https://www.e-ir.info/2019/10/30/interview-yolande-bouka/

de Waal, A. (Ed.). (2015). *Advocacy in conflict: Critical perspectives on transnational activism*. London: Zed Books.

Fork Films et al. (2008). *Pray the devil back to Hell*. Sausalito, CA: Distributed by Roco Films Educational.

Gbowee, L. (2009). Effecting change through women's activism in Liberia. *IDS Bulletin, 40*(2), 50–53.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1998). Transnational advocacy networks in the movement society. In D. S. Meyer & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *The social movement society: Contentious politics for a new century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Keck, M. E., & Sikkink, K. (1999). *Transnational advocacy networks in international politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Medie, P. (2020). *Global norms and local action*. Oxford University Press.

Obi, C. (2012). Transnationalism, Africa's 'resource curse' and 'contested sovereignties': The struggle for Nigeria's Niger Delta. In Scarlett Cornelissen, Fantu Cheru, & Timothy M. Shaw (Eds.), *Africa and International Relations in the 21st Century* (pp. 147–161). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Odoom, I., & Andrews, N. (2017). 'What/who is still missing in international relations scholarship? Situating Africa as an agent in IR theorising. *Third World Quarterly*, *38*(1), 42–60.

Pallas, C. L. (2012). Identity, individualism, and activism beyond the state: Examining the impacts of global citizenship. *Global Society*, *26*(2), 169–189.

Pallas, C. L. (2013). *Transnational civil society and the world bank: Investigating civil society's potential to democratize global governance*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pallas, C. L. (2017). Inverting the boomerang: Examining the legitimacy of North–South–North campaigns in transnational advocacy. *Global Networks*, *17*(2), 281–299.
Smith, K. (2012). Africa as an agent of international relations knowledge. In C. Cornelissen & F. Cheru (Eds.), *Africa and international relations in the 21st century*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Smith, K. (2017). Reshaping international relations: Theoretical innovations from Africa. *All Azimuth*, 0(0), 1–12. https://www.allazimuth.com/2017/09/19/reshaping-international-relations-theoretical-innovations-from-africa/
Smith, K. (2018). *The dangers of parochialism in international relations*. https://www.e-ir.info/2018/08/30/the-dangers-of-parochialism-in-international-relations/
Tieku T. K. (2012). Collectivist worldview: Its challenge to international relations. In S. Cornelissen, F. Cheru, & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Africa and international relations in the 21st century* (International Political Economy Series). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
Wong, W. H., & Brown, P. H. (2013). E-bandits in global activism: WikiLeaks, anonymous, and the politics of no one. *Perspectives on Politics*, *11*(4), 1015–1033.
Zondi, S. (2018). Decolonising international relations and its theory: A critical conceptual meditation. *Politikon, 45*(1), 16–31.

Index

Note: Pages in *italics* indicates figures
Pages in **bold** indicates tables