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POPULAR PROTEST, POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHANGE IN AFRICA

Edited by Edalina Rodrigues Sanches

Popular Protest, Political Opportunities, and Change in Africa

This book offers a fresh analysis of third wave popular protests in Africa, shedding light on the complex dynamics between political change and continuity in contemporary Africa.

The book argues that protests are simultaneously products and generators of change in that they are triggered by micro-and-macrosocial changes, but they also have the capacity to transform the nature of politics. By examining the triggers, actors, political opportunities, resources, and framing strategies, the contributors shed light onto tangible (e.g. policy implementation, liberal reforms, political alternation) and intangible (e.g. perceptions, imagination, awareness) forms of change elicited by protests. It reveals the relevant role of African protests as engines of democracy, accountability, and collective knowledge.

Bringing popular protests in authoritarian and democratic settings into discussion, this book will be of interest to scholars of African politics, democracy, and protest movements.

Edalina Rodrigues Sanches is a Research Fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences – University of Lisbon.

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1 INTRODUCTION

ZOOMING IN ON PROTEST AND CHANGE IN AFRICA

Edalina Rodrigues Sanches

Introduction

The first two decades of the 21st century have witnessed an extraordinary intensification of mass demonstrations around the world. This has been particularly visible since the 2007 global financial crisis which triggered protests against state responses to economic hardships, the implementation of austerity measures, and the perceived decline in the quality of representative democracy (Della Porta, 2015; Della Porta *et al*., 2018). Post-materialist issues, such as environmental rights and the climate crisis, have gained new impetus with strikes and demonstrations generating high turnouts and uniting millions of citizens across space, time, and generations.[1] Currently, the COVID-19 pandemic is causing extraordinary and multidimensional challenges that have triggered further protests, despite government restrictions on freedom of assembly (OECD, 2021). While Europe has been the stage of most of the protests worldwide in the new millennium, there has also been a marked increase in protest levels in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well other regions (OECD, 2021).

As shown in Figure 1.1, protests have risen exponentially in Africa, notably since 2010. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), 90% of the 86486 protests and riots registered in the continent between 1997 and 2021 have taken place since 2010. Strikingly, the COVID-19 pandemic did not demobilise protesters, as the number of events reached 13980 in 2020, the highest since 1997, and there were about 9400 protests between 1 January and 3 September 2021.

About 67% of all the protests and riots since 1997 are concentrated in a handful of countries, namely South Africa (16.2%), Algeria (9.6%), Tunisia (8.9%), Nigeria (8.5%), Egypt (6.6%), Morocco (5.1%), Democratic Republic of Congo (4.3%), Kenya (4.3%), and Sudan (4.3%). In contrast, less than 0.5% of the total protests were in authoritarian countries such as Eritrea, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda and Djibouti, and the democratic Botswana (Figure 1.2). This data is illustrative of the quantitative dimension of protest but hides its qualitative dimension, in particular, the protesters' motivations and world views, and how micro- and meso-level factors (e.g. identities, emotions, grievances, resources, networks) and macro-level factors (e.g. the nature of the regime, the political culture, or the strength of civil

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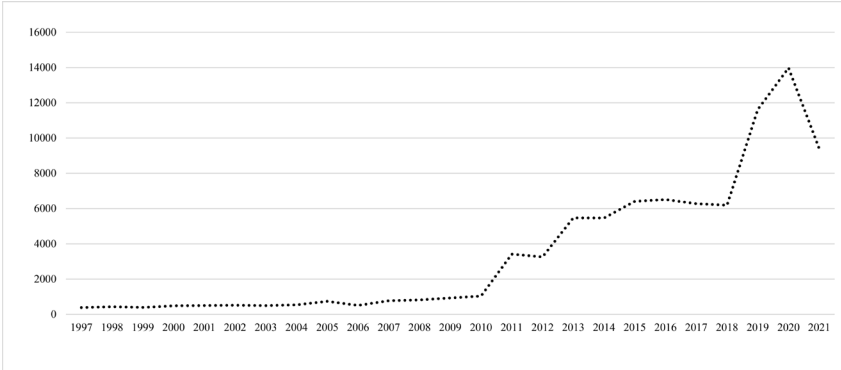

Figure 1.1 Protests and riots in Africa between 1997 and 2021

Source: Author's elaboration with data retrieved from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). Accessed: 13 September 2021.

society) shape the emergence and outcomes of protest within and across countries over time.

Extant research illuminates the constellation of material and non-material issues that have taken African citizens to the streets in the new millennium, notably high cost of living, bad government performance, political and civil rights and authoritarianism (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Mueller, 2018; Mateos and Erro, 2020). Youth have been strongly mobilised into these causes (Honwana, 2012), as have coalitions of different social groups, and they have used various resources and networks (both online and offline) to maximise their reach and political success (Loudon, 2010; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Engels, 2015a; Bosch, 2017;

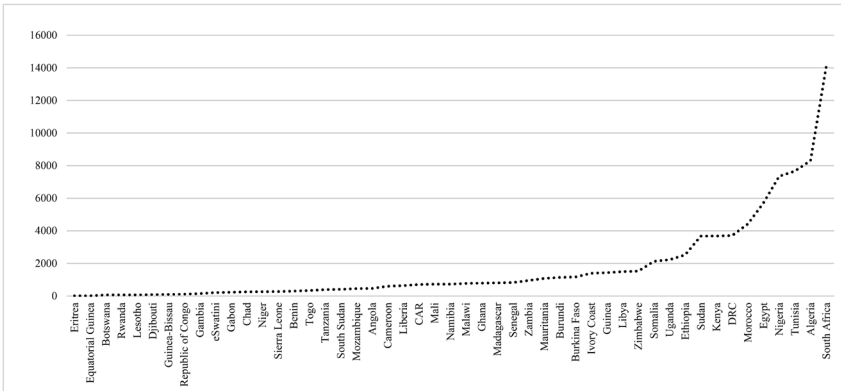

Figure 1.2 Protests and riots in Africa between 1997 and 2021 (per country)

Source: Author's elaboration with data retrieved from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED). Accessed: 13 September 2021.

Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017; Mueller, 2018). While protests are a conspicuous element in African societies in the new millennium, the extent of their influence is less evident; are they provoking any cracks in the *status quo*, or are they just pointless (White, 2017)?

How transformative are protests? Do they really matter and, if so, how? How can we explain varying outcomes of protests? These are the questions that animate the collection of essays herein and, by examining them, this book makes a three-fold contribution to scholarly and societal debates on the role of protest and collective action for social and political change. First, it builds on an open-ended conception of political change and transformation. It argues that protests are simultaneously products and generators of change in that they are triggered by micro-and-macrosocial changes, but they also have the capacity to transform the nature of social and political life. Arguably, protests may or may not entail the significant short-term changes desired by their entrepreneurs and participants – e.g. democratic reforms, leadership, regime, or policy change – however, even when they fail to attain these tangible but difficult-to-get goals, they can produce new emotional and cognitive spaces. In other words, the protest experience can engender feelings of empowerment, solidarities, new ways of thinking and imagining the future which will continue to fuel protest. This echoes what Sheldrake (2006) defined as *morphic fields*, which tend to repeat over time. According to this hypothesis "once a new morphic field, a new pattern of organisation, has come into being, through repetition the field becomes stronger. The same pattern becomes more likely to happen again" (Sheldrake, 2006, p. 33). Thus, change can mean attaining concrete political goals, as well as the formation of new *morphic fields* composed of memories, identities, and shared experiences, that become available over time and space and generate new protest waves. Building on this discussion, here change is framed in an open-ended and multi-layered manner. More on this follows below.

Second, the book contends that in order to ascertain the conditions under which transformative outcomes are more likely to occur, it is paramount to consider the political opportunity structures and how they intersect with the other dimensions – frames, organisations, resources, networks, emotions, etc. – that concur to affect the origin, development, and outcome of protests (Della Porta, 2014b). Political opportunity structures are breaches or openings in the social and political environment that are *perceived* and *exploited* by movement actors to maximise their political goals (Tarrow, 1998; Giugni, 2009). As such, this concept is diffuse by nature; it often refers to concrete institutional and political incentives or constraints, but it has also been equated with cultural factors, such as discursive opportunities that make certain frames resonate more with larger audiences (Meyer, 2004; Giugni, 2009). The book builds on recent scholarship that advances towards a more dynamic relational approach of collective action (Giugni, 2011), and it surveys the explanatory relevance of political opportunity in conjunction with other factors. The chapters in the book reveal both the potential and the limits of the political opportunity approach to understand political change in contemporary Africa.

Third, the book contributes to scholarly work that seeks to chart the importance of political opportunity in protest, drawing on the experiences of 11 case studies that range from democratic to autocratic on the political spectrum. Democratic settings tend to offer more institutional incentives for protest because, in theory, they provide greater access to the political system, political and civil rights are protected, there is less control over the media and the internet, and less state repression. However, in authoritarian regimes, citizens must transcend formidable obstacles to engage in collective action as governments rely more often on repression (Carey, 2006), internet connectivity restrictions (Shahbaz and Funk, 2021), and anti-nongovernmental organisation legislation to narrow the space of civil society (Musila, 2019). Therefore, investigating protest dynamics in both autocratic and democratic settings sheds light on variance in protest outcomes within and across regime types; as well as on the factors that account for that variance.

Protest waves in Africa

Protest waves or "cycles of protest occur when multiple social movements or social groups engage in sustained protest clustered in time and spanning across a wide geographical boundary" (Almeida, 2016). In this sense, a protest wave contains many different kinds of collective action, from ephemeral protest events to structured social movements.[2] For some scholars with whom we agree, it is not productive to define an *a priori* approach or to apply a western conception of civic mobilisation in Africa, but rather to locate the meaning of protest and social movements in concrete African experiences (Ellis and Kessel, 2009; Larmer, 2010; De Waal and Ibreck, 2013; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). Thus, we avoided such delimitation and follow a more inductive path throughout this book.

The protest wave that has been unfolding in Africa since the 2000s, known as the "third wave" (Branch and Mampilly, 2015) or "fourth wave" depending on the author (Larmer, 2010; Lodge, 2013) – has unique features when compared to the preceding waves that hit the African continent.[3] The first protest wave marked the emergence of national political movements that brought independence to most African countries between the 1950s and 1960s (Branch and Mampilly, 2015). However, in the post-colonial period, movements were either suppressed or incorporated in the authoritarian regime when they contested the state developmental model (Larmer, 2010). The second wave of protests resulted largely from the global economic crisis triggered by the first oil crisis in the 1970s, and eventually led to the start of political liberalisation reforms in the late 1980s–early 1990s (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Mueller, 2018). The protesters were not only targeting the governments which adopted austerity policies under structural adjustment plans, but also international financial agencies such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005, p. 17). In countries across Sub-Saharan Africa, like Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria,

and Zambia, citizens took to the streets to express discontent with economic hardship, political repression, and to demand political rights (Bratton and van de Walle, 1997, p. 286). Yet during this period, "bread riots" were present in virtually all North Africa (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005, p. 17).

Protest was crucial for the start of political liberalisation and the introduction of multiparty elections, even if only few countries transitioned to a fully fledged democracy in the short and long term. In fact, a 30-year lag reveals that most countries fell into the hybrid or the authoritarian category which means democracy is an unfinished business (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Cheeseman, 2015; Sanches, Macuane and Dendere, 2019). The third wave of protests unfolds in the 2000s in a context underpinned by rapid urbanisation (Bertelsen, 2016), rising levels of literacy among young people, decreasing costs of participation with the territorial expansion of ICT and telecommunications (Ekine, 2010; Loudon, 2010), and growing demands for democracy (Bratton and Houessou, 2014). However, unlike the prior waves, these protests are less cohesive in terms of goals and ideologies and also in the forms of contention (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

Research on the third wave of protests has mainly revolved around three questions: *why do people protest? who protests? and what are the forms of protest?* In answer to the first question, *why do people protest?*, grievances towards consumption/material issues and production/identity issues seem to be the key drivers (Adam Habib and Opoku-Mensah, 2008; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). Following the 2007 global financial crisis and the subsequent escalation of commodity prices, "food riots" swept across countries like Egypt, Tunisia, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Madagascar, and Mozambique (Maccatory, Oumarou and Poncelet, 2010; Berazneva and Lee, 2013; Engels, 2015b; Bertelsen, 2016; Brito, 2017; Sánchez and Namhata, 2019). While socio-economic grievances were prominent in many of these protests, the goal was also to bring down the governments in some of these countries and to establish more representative regimes (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005; Brandes and Engels, 2011). The Arab spring which led to the overthrow of dictators in Tunisia and Egypt, the protests in Sub-Saharan Africa against authoritarian rule (e.g. in Gabon and Sudan), and presidents' attempts to outstay their mandates (e.g. in Senegal, Burkina Faso or Democratic Republic of Congo) clearly exemplify the anti-regime/anti-government nature of protests (De Waal and Ibreck, 2013; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Yarwood, 2016; Mateos and Erro, 2020). Other non-material issues found in protesters' agendas included women's rights (Leslie, 2006; Tripp, 2016) and LGBT rights which became a new source of civil society and movement activity in several African contexts (Currier and Cruz, 2014). While the current protest wave brought in new issues, there are some continuities with the prior waves. In fact, the food riots experienced in the post-2007 global economic crisis period are reminiscent of the "bread riots" and "IMF riots" that erupted in the 1970s and 1980s (Seddon, 2021); and the pro-democratic movements that remerged, particularly after the "Arab Spring" pick up from the broken promises of the 1990s (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

As for the second question, *who protests?*, young people have definitely played a large role in politics (Honwana, 2012) as well as a multitude of social groups

(Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Engels, 2015a; Mueller, 2018; Seddon, 2021). Seddon and Zeilig (2005, p. 25) argue that class struggles across protest waves have been shaped by:

> a permanently fluctuating configuration of different elements of the popular classes combined on occasion with elements of the 'middle classes', including students, public sector workers and members of the petty bourgeoisie working in the informal economy.

Engels' analysis of the protests triggered by the 2007–2008 food and fuel price crisis in Burkina Faso reveals that an alliance of the trade unions, student groups, human rights, and other organisations shaped the intensity and duration of protest in the country (Engels, 2015a). Similarly, Mueller (2018) argues that it was a coalition between the interests of the middle-class and those of the lower-class that gave rise to the third wave of popular protests. In Mueller's view, the middle-classes acted as protest initiators as they had the resources to pursue political goals such as representation or democratic renewal, while the lower classes were the suppliers, joining the protests on the bases of economic grievances. Hence, by and large, protests involved all social strata and forms of inter-class cooperation, which means that a specific protest event may represent different demands. A shared anti-regime or anti-government sentiment seems to be the necessary condition to trigger protest at a particular space/time, even if movement actors "want" different things.

The answers to the final question, "*what are the forms of protest?*", point to diverse tools and types of action. A number of studies highlight the importance of ICTs, internet, and mobile phones as devices for organising both online and offline mass mobilisations (Ekine, 2010; Bosch, 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017). Using the case of Tunisia as an illustration, Ruijgrok (2017) argues that internet has played a major role in protests in authoritarian settings because it reduces the costs for participation, creates a fertile ground for the proliferation of alternative views, decreases informational uncertainty on who and how many protesters are involved, and gives access to powerful images and videos that can have a strong mobilising effect. Nigeria's #ENDSARS movement which emerged in 2017 is also a clear exemplification of that. After a video of police brutality against civilians was shared widely across the internet, Nigerians (particularly the youth) began using social media to share their experiences at the hands of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), and to organise mass mobilisations. Soon protests hit the streets, unifying citizens from all social quadrants.[4] South Africa's hashtag student movements, which blossomed over the course of 2015 – #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall, and so forth – maximised their networks and communication strategies through the use of several social media platforms (Bosch, 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017).

Musicians, particularly hip hop artists, have used their charisma, popularity, and pungent words to weave anti-regime activism in several contexts. Boum (2021), for instance, observes that hip hop has been a form of contestation against

social and political authorities for North African youth since the 1990s; and highlights the fact that the post-1990 generation of musicians is unique since it benefited from satellite communication and the internet revolution, settling on hip-hop and rap as global modes of expression (Boum, 2021). In Uganda, popstar Bobi Wine became the face of anti-regime contestation. Elected to parliament in 2017, he then formed the People Power movement in mid-2018 with a group of musicians to advocate for change. Later, the movement was transformed into a political party (the National Unity Platform) to challenge the long-term President Yoweri Museveni in the 2021 elections (Friesinger, 2021). Though Bobi Wine lost the election, he gained international visibility and continued to call protests against the regime.

Senegal's *Y'en a Marre* (we're fed up) and Burkina Faso's *Le Balai Citoyen* (civic broom) were largely formed by musicians (rappers, reggae artists), and gained international projection after helping vote out their countries' presidents – Abdoulaye Wade, and Blaise Compaoré, respectively (Yarwood, 2016). In Cabo Verde and Mozambique, to name just two additional examples, rappers have also acquired an increasing role in protest, presenting themselves as heirs of the legacy of the revolutionary leaders Amílcar Cabral and Samora Machel, respectively (Rantala, 2016; Lima and Vicente, 2021). The bulk of these studies advance our knowledge on the motivations, actors, and strategies of protest; however, they are less informative of the transformative power of protests, and of the factors that account for it. The main driver of this book is precisely to offer answers to these hitherto little researched topics.

Zooming in on protest and change: Political opportunities structures and beyond

The present book offers a fresh analysis of third wave popular protests in Africa. The study of popular protests in this era is crucial to understand how citizens react to critical events and, more broadly, the complex dynamics between political change and continuity in contemporary Africa. The aim is to investigate and explain how multiple social movements or social groups engage in protest and how that impacts varying aspects of social and political life.

Investigating the outcomes of protests is a daunting task because change is contingent on several factors, such as the issues at stake, the interactions between those that benefit from the *status quo* and those proposing an alternative order, existing power configurations or the state capacity to repress activists. In addition, change comes at different degrees and levels, and this is not always easily identifiable or measured. To be more specific, a protest outcome can be understood along a metric of change, for example, from "limited change" to "significant change", but also in terms of the type of change it provokes – if it is material changes (e.g. shifts in public policies, in political leadership or in the nature of the regime) or non-material changes (e.g. new identities, new visions, perceptions, imaginations). With this said, the African continent offers plenty of variation allowing for the analysis of different protest outcomes.

In North Africa, protest did help oust (or forced the resignation of) the heads of states who had seized power for decades, namely Ben Ali in Tunisia, and Mubarak in Egypt in 2011, Omar al-Bashir in Sudan 2018, and Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria (2019). However, with the exception of Tunisia, changes in the executive leadership have not yet elicited the desired democratic reforms (Haseeb, 2012). Similarly, protests helped block presidents' third-term bids in places like Niger (President Mamadou Tandja, 2009) and Burkina Faso (President Blaise Compaoré, 2014) but were unable to obtain similar outcomes in Cameroon (President Paul Biya, 2008); Burundi (President Pierre Nkurunziza, 2015); or Guinea (President Alpha Condé, 2011), to name but a few examples. However, not attaining the desired political goal does not mean that there was no change at all. In fact, citizens in many of these places have transposed the barrier of fear to engage in collective action and imagine new political futures (Haseeb, 2012; Bertelsen, 2016; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). These emotions and sentiments are important for the continuous engagement in political protest, beyond space and time. As mentioned earlier, this reflection is evocative of what Sheldrake (2006) defined as *morphic fields*. This biology-inspired hypothesis suggests that once a new *morphic field* or pattern of organisation comes into being, it tends to become recurrent because such fields "contain a kind of cumulative memory" (Sheldrake, 2006, p. 33). Furthermore, through *morphic resonance*, they are able to pass information from a prior system to the subsequent system of the same kind "through or across space and time from past to present" (Sheldrake, 2006, p. 33.). Thus, the book explores the concrete meanings of change in Africa rather than thinking of change and transformation in an *a priori* and fixed manner, or generalising from definitions derived from the western societies.

The book takes a dynamic political opportunity structures approach to clarify change in Africa. It questions whether or not protests affect the social and political life of a country if they take place under favourable environmental circumstances. As previously mentioned, opportunities are openings or breaches in the *status quo* that can help leverage actors' options. They cover a wide set of unstandardised factors such as the openness of – and access to the – political system, intra-elite (in)stability, presence of elite allies, political turnover, or the state propensity to repression (Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1996; Meyer, 2004; Giugni, 2009). Though widely diffused, the political opportunity approach has been criticised for being vague and applicable to nearly everything in the movement's context and for overlooking the role of agency, discourses, and frames (Goodwin and Jasper, 1999; Fligstein and McAdam, 2011; Giugni, 2011). This book filiates with recent scholarship that proposes more dynamic and relational uses of the political opportunity approach. In this sense, three basic premises were taken into consideration.

First, "the space in which movement actors operate is structured not only in terms of political institutional design and power distributions, but also in terms of predominant discourses of political culture and so on", which means discursive opportunities are also extremely important (Lindekilde, 2014, p. 209). The cultural setting defines the visibility and resonance of the issues, but also the

legitimacy of certain actors, identities, and claims (Giugni, 2011, p. 275). Second, opportunities may be provided by the political and cultural context, but they may not be perceived by movement actors, which means incentives and constraints are contingent upon agency and reflexivity (Tarrow, 1998; Giugni, 2011). Third, "political opportunities may vary from one political field to the other, from one sector to the other. In other words, political opportunities are movement-specific, field-specific, and issue-specific" (Giugni, 2011, p. 276). Fourth, opportunities are not fixed and they certainly do not act alone; they interact with activists' resources, organisational capacity or framing strategies (Benford and Snow, 2000; Ellis and Kessel, 2009; Della Porta, 2014a).

In sum, the authors in this book were invited to take a dynamic approach in their analysis of protest and change in Africa, and to consider the role of opportunities, as well as other factors, in explaining protest outcome.

Plan of the book

The book examines Africa's third wave of protests, which constitutes the liveliest protest period since the inception of the democratic experiments in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The introduction is followed by 11 chapters that cover the experiences of protest in (semi) democratic regimes and in authoritarian regimes, and a conclusion. It is an impressive collection of protest experiences and draws on several types of data, including semi-structured interviews, press reviews, documental, and online analysis. This book was prepared at a time of unparalleled challenges given the COVID-19 pandemic and the authors' faced additional constraints (political conflict, strikes, and demonstrations in their countries) so, as editor, I want to thank them all for their outstanding endeavours.

First, a set of studies focuses on (semi) democratic regimes and encompasses three fully fledged democracies (Cabo Verde, Ghana, and Senegal) and two hybrid regimes which combine both democratic and authoritarian principles and practices (Burkina Faso, Morocco, and Mozambique). The cases herein exemplify how protests can flourish and bring about significant change, benefiting from the conjunction of favourable political opportunities alongside other dimensions such as resources and framing strategies. Then, protest in authoritarian settings is analysed with the cases of Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, Eswatini, and Ethiopia. Investigating these authoritarian scenarios allows us to explore how protesters take advantage of the arguably fewer opportunities to protest and build on perceived threats to mobilise and send strong anti-regime messages. These cases also reveal the government's ability to co-opt opposition forces and to use massive force against protesters.

In Chapter 2, Sanches and Lopes focus on Cabo Verde, a beacon of democracy and stability but that has experienced uprisings in recent years. The chapter investigates two case studies: the movement for regionalisation in Cabo Verde and autonomy for São Vicente (MRCV), which emerged in 2010 and has been able to push the agenda for decentralisation over the years; and the movement against the approval of the new statute of political office holders (led by MAC#114),

which emerged in 2015 and brought about the withdrawal of the bill in just a few months. To understand these different policy outcomes, the authors combine political opportunity and framing approaches, and show how both movements used instrumental framing and perceived openings to achieve their goals. On the one hand, they drew on disruptive catchwords, metaphors, and provocative visuals to diffuse and amplify their frames beyond national frontiers. On the other, both movements took advantage of the proximity to elections to pressure the government and president, and to persuade political parties to include their demands in the political debates. However, MAC#114 profited from more favourable media coverage and public opinion and was able to capitalise on societal consensus and the bill was ultimately withdrawn. Indeed, regionalisation was a more contested issue and divided the political elites and the movement actors. So even when a new bill made its way into the parliament, it did not get the necessary support. Though with varying outcomes, both cases confirm the pivotal role of social movements in advancing policies and change in African democracies.

In Chapter 3, Nollan and Budniok investigate the dynamics of Occupy Ghana, a movement that emerged in 2014 in the context of rising contestation against the government's poor management of the economy, corruption, and soaring fuel prices. The study reveals the importance of both resources and political opportunities to understanding protest dynamics. The middle-class, the main movement entrepreneur, employed its resources – e.g. expertise on how to organise demonstrations, political knowledge and technical expertise, communication strategies, and the power to put pressure on the government – to mobilise effectively. Additionally, it benefited from existing opportunities, namely the openness of the regime, free media, and discursive opportunities on the issue of corruption, to maximise their political goals. Occupy Ghana contributed to increased public accountability relying on several types of action, but most importantly, using the courts to sue politicians involved in corruption or illegal activities. One of the movement's most important feats was the lobbying campaign for the introduction of a special prosecutor, which it achieved in 2016. The authors' findings reveal the importance of the middle-class resources for both sustained social movement activity and their transformative impact.

Chapter 4, by Dimé, is one of three chapters in the book focusing on protests against presidents' third-term bids. Dimé looks at the paradigmatic case of Senegal's *Y'en a marre* (we're fed up), a movement formed in January 2011 by a group of Senegalese rappers and journalists that mobilised against Abdoulaye Wade's third candidacy and bad government performance. While the movement did not impede the President from running in the presidential elections in 2012, they were an active force in his defeat and the coming of the new President Macky Sall. To achieve this goal, *Y'en a marre* used strategic framing and exploited favourable opportunities. On the one hand, they amplified their messages using innovative framing strategies, such as iconoclastic discursive positioning and the manipulation of dissonant, captivating, and mobilising slogans. The movement also drew on the Wolof language for a good part of its striking slogan formulas (which the author frames as *wolofisation*). On the other hand,

the movement's actors benefited from structural opportunities, namely the country's history of youth protest which provided discursive opportunities for protest (namely resonance with a pro-democracy and good governance agenda), as well as political openness, and favourable media coverage. This chapter is interesting for its emphasis on framing and communication strategies, rather than on political opportunities. Moreover, it points to the continuity in the protest activity under Macky Sall's government, as he too failed to meet protesters' expectations.

Entering the cluster of hybrid democracies, Chapter 5, by Bertrand, sheds light on the 2013–2014 uprising that ousted President Blaise Compaoré of Burkina Faso. Blaise Compaoré attempted to modify the constitution to extend his stay in power, and this prompted immediate opposition from parties to ordinary citizens. The chapter advances three inter-related political opportunities that shaped the outcome of the protest. First, an historical legacy of protests around issues of impunity and socio-economic grievances which on the one hand helped create network and entrenched the democratic principles that are instrumental in making insurrection possible, and on the other provided discursive opportunities that nourished popular mobilisation. Second, opposition parties were able to benefit from institutional incentives – notably an institutional status for the political opposition and a less repressive environment – to cooperate and build a common platform to work alongside civil society against Compaoré's regime. Finally, despite internal squabbles, opposition parties and civil society cooperated on a single common objective – political alternation. This case study is illustrative of the transformative impact of protests, as it not only led to the ousting of President Compaoré but also to a more inclusive form of transition ahead of the 2015 elections. As Bertrand notes, the uprising revealed that protests can succeed, a sentiment that has continued to feed protests, even if they have not been as successful as in the past.

Chapter 6, by Badran, engages political opportunity and social movement framing literature in order to examine gender dynamics within the February 20 Movement (F20), the principal organiser of protests during the Arab Spring in Morocco. The author's main puzzle is how the F20 framing strategies were able to strongly affect the degree of salience of feminist and gender issues. The analysis shows that women benefited from political opportunities that had been ongoing since the 1990s; specifically, many strides had been taken in the expansion of women's rights, the reform of the Moroccan family law (*Mudawwana*) and, finally, the Arab Spring which led to increased protest for democratisation and widened opportunities for feminist causes. However, women's demands for gender equality, along with other "sensitive topics", were strategically downgraded so as to maintain narrative fidelity, the internal consistency of the movement's justice frames and the overarching goal of a democratic parliamentary monarchy. The findings illuminate a crucial paradox: while the F20 silenced gender issues, it also facilitated brokerage among like-minded feminist-activists who eventually formed their own separate movements which rejected the "old school" reformist and institutionalised women's movements. In this sense, political opportunities

generate movements which create new opportunities for protest (as proposed by Tarrow, 1998).

Chapter 7, by Bussoti and Nhaueleque, explores the halting of the ProSavana agriculture development programme in Northern Mozambique, after sustained action by civil society groups. In a time marked by strong foreign investment in intensive agricultural development programmes and rural protest in Africa, the poor rural communities, considered passive and controllable by local institutions, were able to stop what was perceived as a land-grabbing scheme. So how was this possible? The chapter reveals that Mozambican organisations mobilised effectively and attained this extraordinary result by their ability to exploit political opportunities. On the one side, the presence of strong local and international networks allowed both access to information on the ProSavana programme and also the spread of information to local communities. On the other side, international allies played a crucial role in exerting incremental pressure on the Mozambican government. Mozambican associations and nongovernmental organisations in association with social movements in Japan and Brazil, paradoxically the two major partners of the ProSavana programme, were able to influence the Japanese Parliament, inducing it to interrupt the flow of finance to the ProSavana programme. The halting of the programme was a major win and rural communities succeeded where others had failed in the past. This case shows how rural communities (David) can leverage giant actors (Goliath).

Entering the realm of authoritarian countries, Chapter 8, by Almeida, Sá and Faria, examine the case of Angola where the leadership change in 2017 and the inauguration of President João Lourenço created new opportunities for protest. The authors base their explanation of the surge on four conditions: the extent of the new leader's openness to protest, the unfulfilment of electoral pledges, the degree of repression, and the change of perceptions by the protesters. The combination of these four conditions, the authors argue, contributed to the emergence of a new cognitive frame where citizens "gained the taste for protest". The findings reveal that even though the president presented himself as a reformist and seemed more open to dialogue with civil society than his predecessor, he did not fulfil his promises to reform the regime, and this triggered anti-government contestation. To offset societal pressures, the regime became more repressive as the events unfolded. Even though the protesters did not accomplish their goals, these events operated important transformations; more specifically, the formation of a new cognitive frame in which the movement actors' perceptions of their role and their capacity to engage in politics were transformed. This is an important change that speaks of the non-material sources of change in autocratic settings.

Chapter 9, by Polet, revisits the issue of protest against presidents' third-term bids. It focuses on President Joseph Kabila's move to extend his rule by employing political manoeuvres to delay the electoral calendar – a strategy known as *glissement* or slippage – and the subsequent spiral of protest between 2015 and 2016. Kabila's move created an opportunity for protest, as activists perceived and framed his actions as a threat to democracy in the country. At the national level, the political parties were the main movement entrepreneurs, they called

the demonstration, provided the resources and networks and the dominant frames, and had access to national and international prime-time channels that were decisive in disseminating their demands. But students, jobless, and citizens' movements joined the protests at different stages. To neutralise political protest, President Joseph Kabila used repression, co-optation, and "staged dialogues". However, amid strong international pressure, President Joseph Kabila decided to step down and nominated a "dauphin" to succeed him as candidate in the 2018 elections. Polet argues that the protest and the political opportunities had a limited impact on the unfolding of events: the international pressure was more important to Kabila's decision to step down as candidate in the 2018 elections.

Chapter 10, by Mutyaba, analyses the "Walk-to-Work" protests in Uganda, which took place in the aftermath of the 2011 general elections. The protesters complained about long-term authoritarianism and corruption by the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM), the sky-rocketing prices of fuel and daily commodities, as well as the extravagant spending of state resources in the 2011 general election campaigns – considered the most expensive ever by international observers. "Walk-to-Work" was mobilised by opposition parties and civic groups, and it invited the people to boycott public transport and walk to their workplaces instead – hence the name. Mutyaba shows the importance of both political opportunities and framing strategies. First, the structure of alliances between opposition parties, and between them and civic groups was crucial for mobilisation. Plus, the activists were able to count on a public opinion that supported the anti-regime frames. Second, activists combined different framing strategies such as amplification, bridging and transformation, to make their demands more salient, to connect different frames – cost of living, corruption, poor quality elections, democracy, – and to produce new understandings about the politics of opposition and protest in the country, in which confrontation and uprisal seemed more effective than elections. Though the protests were ephemeral and strongly repressed by the government, they emboldened popular demands for government accountability and democratic reform in subsequent years, illustrating that even when protests do not result in regime change, they can still contribute positively to democratisation.

In Chapter 11, Dias and Yetena zoom in on the case of Ethiopia which experienced a new cycle of anti-regime protests between 2015 and 2018, involving the Oromo youth (Qeerroo) and the Amhara youth (Fano). Qeerroo protests broke out after the announcement in 2014 of the Addis Ababa Master Plan which planned to evict Oromo farmers to create a new economic zone in the Oromia region. In 2016, the Fano joined the Oromo protest following the arrest of several members of the Welkait Identity Restoration Committee, and the attempted arrest of the Committee's chairperson without a court order. The authors contend that three political opportunity structures were crucial for protest emergence and (limited) outcome. First, the death of Meles Zenawi in 2012 created a vacuum of power and divisions within the incumbent party. The arrival of a new (and weaker) leader with a collective style of leadership led to elite competition and inefficiency in the exercise of power. Second, an unprecedented alliance between Qeerroo and Fano groups represented a break with an historical legacy of ethnic rivalry and

united youth, who, despite their differences, shared an anti-regime sentiment. Third, actors had easy access to the internet – at least initially – which allowed them to mobilise large crowds and popularise hashtags such as #OromoProtest, #AmharaResistance, and #OroMara. The protest outcomes were mixed. The government withdrew the Addis Ababa Master Plan in 2017, and there were hopes of democratic reform in 2018 particularly after the election of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. However, the momentum vanished and there was a return to authoritarianism and conflict.

Chapter 12 by Mthembu, examines protest in Eswatini, an absolute monarchy that has been experiencing increasing societal contestation in the 2010s. In Eswatini, parties have been banned since 1973 and citizens are virtually excluded from power; however, civil society organisations – in particular trade unions – have become the focal point of pro-democratic demands. Focusing on the 2018–2019 pro-democracy protests in Eswatini, this chapter argues that both organisational resources and political opportunity structures were important to explain the emergence and the limited impact of protest in the country. First, trade unions were able to build on their resources, organisational capacity, and legitimacy to organise and sustain protest. Second, discursive opportunities, particularly the legacies of union activism throughout the 1990s and first decade 2000s helped create resonance with pro-democratic frames. Third, the presence of allies – namely political parties and international actors – contributed to the creation of further pressure for change. As change is not yet forthcoming, the people of Eswatini continue to protest against the regime. The government has been able to offset these pressures, albeit temporarily: in fact, since June 2021 pro-democracy protests have broken out again across the country.

Finally, Chapter 13 concludes the book by summarising the main findings and making a comparative analysis of the 11 case studies. The findings reveal that protest matters in Africa beyond their tangible goals. They contribute to improving the material (laws, policies, institutions, etc.) and non-material (social capital, perceptions, visions) buildings of democracy and good governance. Second, the cultural and political settings in which protests unfold create favourable opportunities for protest and determine their outcome. Yet other factors such as resources, frames, level of state repression, international factors – cannot be ignored. The findings inform future research agendas by highlighting the importance of analysing change beyond materialistic terms, and by suggesting the need to move towards more dynamic protest analysis that combines the political opportunity approach with other classical social movement theories. Finally, it stresses the need for more comparative work, and for focus on protest in rural Africa.

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Notes

1. Climate crisis: 6 million people join latest wave of global protests, *Guardian*, 27 September 2019, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/sep/27/climate-crisis-6-million-people-join-latest-wave-of-worldwide-protests (Accessed: 1 September 2021).
2. Social movements are connected strings of events consisting of groups and organisations that campaign for common goals and are linked in complex webs of exchange (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).
3. For instance Larmer (2010) identifies a first wave during the African nationalist struggles (1950s–1960s), a second wave in the first years after independence, when movements opposed the states' developmental agenda (1960–1975), a third wave that led to political liberalisation (1975–1989), and a fourth wave shaped by pro-democracy movements (1990–2010). While Lodge (2013, p. 147) saw the surge in protest in North Africa as part of new phase in the global history of movements to democracy.
4. EndSARS, workers' power, and war, *Africa is a Country*, 10 June 2021, available at: https://africasacountry.com/2021/10/endsars-workers-power-and-war (Accessed: 7 October 2021).

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2 SHAKING UP DEMOCRACY FROM BELOW

PROTEST AND CHANGE IN CABO VERDE

Edalina Rodrigues Sanches and José Lopes

Introduction

Descentralização já![1] – This was what a group of demonstrators from Sokols 2017 movement shouted as they barred the way of the government delegation, led by Prime Minister Ulisses Correia, to the city of Mindelo on 5 September 2017. Sokols 2017, a movement based on the island of São Vicente[2], calls for political autonomy and the implementation of regional governments in Cabo Verde. These demands remain timely as a law proposal presented to parliament in 2018 failed to get the necessary support. Despite the outcome, Sokols 2017 and other organisations exerted sufficient pressure for the issue to remain salient in the public agenda.

Cabo Verde is often hailed as a beacon of democracy in Africa, characterised by strong political institutions, free and fair elections and the alternation in power of highly institutionalised political parties (Sanches, 2020). Democratic politics has essentially been shaped from above with few uprisings in civil society. However, the country has witnessed new forms of political contestation seeking to influence policy decisions, particularly since the 2010s (Furtado, 2014; Lopes, 2017). So how effective have these protests been?

Linking agency and structural approaches, this chapter argues that the differential outcomes result from framing strategies, i.e. activists' ability to amplify and diffuse their messages effectively, and political opportunity structures (POS), i.e. activists' ability to perceive and exploit breaches in the political and social environment (Tarrow, 1998; Benford and Snow, 2000; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). These arguments are tested in the context of two cases in Cabo Verde. The first is the *Movimento para Regionalização em Cabo Verde e a Autonomia para São Vicente* (Movement for Regionalisation in Cabo Verde and Autonomy for São Vicente – MRCV), which started in 2010 with civic groups in the diaspora but gained new momentum in 2017 with the emergence of Sokols 2017. The second is the *Movimento para a Acção Cívica* (Movement for Civic Action, abbreviated to MAC#114), which burst onto the scene in 2015 to campaign against the imminent approval of the Statute of Political Office Holders (SPOH). The Statute anticipated outstanding privileges for the political elite and sparked an immediate backlash. Amidst growing popular pressure, and with the 2016 presidential

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elections on the horizon, the president vetoed the bill, and it soon disappeared from the political agenda.

This study untangles the paths behind these trajectories using a process tracing methodology that mixes different types of qualitative sources (interviews, printed and online newspapers, social media post and blogs, manifestos). The empirical analysis reveals that amplification and diffusion were key framing strategies used by both movements to maximise their reach. Activists were also able to take advantage of POS related to the political context (e.g. proximity of elections, political allies) to achieve their goals. However, whereas MAC#114 benefited from favourable media coverage and public opinion, regionalisation was a more controversial issue. In fact, extreme party polarisation around the issue ultimately prevented policy adoption. The findings contribute to a burgeoning discussion on the varying impacts of collective action in Africa and highlight the relevance of both agency and structure. Indeed, beyond the contextual and structural conditions that can propel or hinder collective action, we find different degrees of scheming and agency whereby movement actors voice discontent and alternatives to the *status quo*.

After outlining the framework for analysis and describing the methods and data, the chapter presents a brief overview of protests and movements in Cabo Verde. The empirical section then analyses the framing strategies and POS of relevance in each case. The conclusion discusses the study's main findings and implications.

Explaining the outcomes of social movements and collective action: The role of framing and political opportunity structures

Explaining the emergence, endurance, and outcomes of movements and collective action is both complex and fascinating. A plethora of factors such as resources, political opportunities, framing strategies, networks, identities, and emotions seem to matter at different stages of the process (Snow and Benford, 1999; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009; Sanches 2022). The research on these topics has been mainly driven by North Atlantic experiences, yet Africa offers an excellent laboratory to test and refine extant theories. Protests and movements brought about landmark political changes during the fight for independence in the 1950s–1960s and political liberalisation in the late 1980s–early 1990s, and re-emerged strongly in the new millennium (Larmer, 2010; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Mueller, 2018).

Since the 2000s, Africa has been facing the third wave of protests that only partly aligns with the global cycle of anti-austerity protests following the 2007 global financial crisis (Della Porta, 2012; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Mueller, 2018). Whereas material issues fuelled foods riots in places like Burkina Faso (Engels, 2015) and Mozambique (Brito, 2017), they did not completely dominate the protesters' agendas. Demonstrations on identity issues – e.g. rights, liberties, and democracy – were seen in Niger, Tunisia, and

Senegal, to mention just a few examples (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Yarwood, 2016; Mueller, 2018).

Classical social movement theories, e.g. those focusing on resources and material deprivation, help explain the rise in protests levels as resourceful individuals (urban, higher social strata, more educated and socially engaged) and those living in countries hardest hit by the economic crisis or with more illiberal or oppressive regimes have a greater tendency to protest (Berazneva and Lee, 2013; Mueller, 2018; Sánchez and Namhata, 2019). In terms of outcomes, while some scholars argue that protests have been "amorphous and disorganised" and inconsequential to political change (De Waal and Ibreck, 2013, p. 303), others highlight their role in ousting autocrats and in the overall pursuit of democracy (Dulani, 2011; Yarwood, 2016). Although both depictions have been confirmed with anecdotal evidence, few studies offer a systematic analysis of the varying outcomes of African protests. This study begins to address this gap by advancing an explanatory model that links framing and POS approaches to explain protest outcomes.

Framing is a socially interactive process by which activists signify issues or problems and construct meaning to guide their actions and achieve a specific purpose (Benford and Snow, 2000). "It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement organisations or movement activists" (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 614). Frames are spread through a variety of disruptive and creative words and images; and framing strategies such as *amplification* (making an issue salient), *bridging* (linking unconnected frames), *transformation* (challenging the status quo, producing new understandings), *extension* (encompassing issues beyond primary interests), and *diffusion* (transfer of frames over national borders) help maximise the reach and outcomes of contestation (Snow and Benford, 1999; Benford and Snow, 2000; Noakes and Johnston, 2005). Frames encompass both a cognitive (as carriers of identities and symbols) and interactional dimension related to the strategies used to attain political goals.

To analyse the instrumental use of frames, the study relies on the interpretative package matrix which considers how different actors (the interpretative entrepreneurs) put forward alternative policy packages to gain the sympathy of the wider public and ultimately the attention of political actors (Gamson and Lasch, 1981; Aukes, Lulofs, and Bressers, 2018). As presented in Table 2.1, the analysis seeks to clarify *how the issues were framed* (core frame, position, metaphors and catch-phrases, roots and consequences) and *which framing strategies* were employed (amplification, bridging, extension transformation, or diffusion) in the selected case studies.

If framing strategies exemplify agency mechanisms, POS refer to the structural causes for collective action. POS are openings in the *status quo* that movement actors may use to enhance their chance of success (Tarrow, 1998; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). POS may ensue from the political and/or the social context. Examples of the former include the openness of the political system, ideological shifts within ruling elites, electoral instability, and presence/absence of elite allies (Tarrow, 1998; Meyer, 2004; Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Giugni, 2009; Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). The social context may include discursive

Table 2.1 Interpretive package matrix applied to the analyses of framing process

Core Frame	The issue around which the message is framed
Core position	The main argument in support of the policy position
Metaphors	Depictions associated with the issue subject to "enhance our understanding"
Catch-phrases, and visual images	Single theme statements, tag-lines, title, or slogan intended to suggest a general frame
Roots	Characteristic analysis of the causal dynamics underlying the series of events
Consequences	A characteristic analysis of the consequences resulting from different policies
Appeals to principle	Characteristic moral appeals
Strategic framing[a]	Which strategies were used? Amplification, bridging, extension, transformation or diffusion?

Source: Adapted from Gamson and Lasch (1981).

[a]Added by the authors, drawing on Benford and Snow (2000).

opportunities, namely cultural environments that facilitate the resonance of movements' demands, but also favourable media and public opinion (Mcadam and Su, 2002; Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Hence, POS comprise a wide set of unstandardised variables that are perceived and exploited by movement actors. Since POS are context-dependent and vary within a country and over time, we do not depart from a fixed set of pre-established variables. Instead, our goal is to uncover which POS mattered in the selected case studies. As later shown, there are similarities and differences in the amount and nature of POS available for each case.

Arguably, framing and POS do not fully reflect the richness of current debates on social movement and collective action but they allow us to reconcile agency and structural approaches in a dynamic way and thus look for the mechanisms and processes that lead to different outcomes in different contexts (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009).

Methods and data

The study uncovers the framing strategies and the POS in two distinct protest movements in Cabo Verde. First, the MRCV, which clusters groups in the diaspora and the islands that have been calling for the implementation of regionalisation reforms since 2010. This movement exerted enough pressure for the issue to remain salient in the public agenda and influenced bill formulation and discussion. However, while the government bill proposal was appreciated in parliament in 2018 it was withdrawn in 2019 due to lack of consensus between the major parties. Secondly, the MAC#114 which appeared unexpectedly in 2015 to campaign against the approval of the new SPOH that anticipated privileges for the political elite. Pressure was so effective that the president was forced to veto the bill. Shortly after, MAC#114 disappeared from the public sphere. The two cases

exemplify the varying outcomes of protest in Cabo Verde, while underscoring their role in shaping the political agenda (MRCV) and policy change (MAC#114). The cases additionally reveal the trade-offs between sustained and endured social movement activity (MRCV) and more ephemeral forms of protest (MAC#114).

The empirical analysis follows a process tracing methodology to untangle the paths behind each outcome. The specific tests associated with process tracing methods rely on the "straws in the wind" tests, providing evidence that strengthens our confidence in the validity of our arguments (Collier, 2011). Passing a "straw in the wind" test means using empirical evidence to demonstrate that framing strategies and POS were influential in protest outcomes. Although insufficient to reject alternative hypotheses, this increases the plausibility of our arguments. Since process tracing does not include particular steps, methods and data, the study resorts to the normal range of tools and methods of data collection (Collier, 2011), thus combining interviews (held in 2017 in Cabo Verde), analysis of social media (Facebook and blogs), electoral manifestos, and printed and online newspapers. Three national newspapers with countrywide coverage were reviewed for the period between 2010 and 2018: *A Nação*, *Expresso das Ilhas* and *A Semana*. Online magazines consulted include Mindel Insite and Santiago Magazine. As all this material was in Portuguese, all quotes included in the empirical part have been translated into English by the authors. The data was qualitatively assessed and used to produce descriptive inferences on the role of framing and POS in protest outcomes. Our findings emerged iteratively, by moving back and forth between theoretical categories and individual stories and experiences.

Protests and movements in Cabo Verde

Cabo Verde has a long history of protest and rebellion tracing back to the colonial years (Mascarenhas, 2014; Pereira, 2014; Lima, 2020). Peasants in the island of Santiago, mired in abject poverty and subjected to constant exploitative economic and administrative control, congregated to collectively challenge, disobey and revolt against local authorities. The revolts of *Engenhos* in 1822, *Achada Falcão* in 1841 and *Ribeirão Manuel* in 1910 are often cited as illustrative cases of people's uprisings against the colonial regime (Pereira, 2014).

In the first decades of the 20th century, movements of intellectuals in urban centres, such as nativists, began to germinate in the country, reaching their apogee in the 1930s with the creation of a prominent literary movement known as *Movimento Claridoso*. Other movements followed suit with their protests against colonial hegemonic symbols and demanding better treatment of the natives (Semedo, 2006) and respect for the Cabo Verdean roots. These demands fuelled the birth of independence movements, which evolved into the *Partido Africano para a Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde* (PAIGC), a party formed by Amílcar Cabral, Luís Cabral, Aristides Pereira, and others in 1956 in Guinea Bissau. This party fiercely challenged the Portuguese colonial regime by engaging in direct military confrontation, namely in the soil of Guinea Bissau, to fight for the independence of both Guinea Bissau and Cabo Verde.

The independence of Cabo Verde in 1975 created favourable circumstances for the incorporation of local demands in the policy-making process. The single party regime – first the PAIGC, and from 1980 following a split, the *Partido Africano da Independência de Cabo Verde* (PAICV) – proposed a platform for the "reconstruction of the nation" through popular democracy and political participation from below (Foy, 1988, p. 3). Despite the regime being formally labelled as a "revolutionary democracy" mass organisations were only permitted to help extend party control over society; and those that opposed the regime faced repression (Furtado, 2016). It was only in the late 1980s that social movements against the regime re-emerged, culminating with the formation of the *Movimento Para a Democracia* (MPD) in 1990, which won the country's first ever multi-party election held in January 1991 (Sanches, 2018; Lopes, 2018).

The new POS arising from the inauguration of liberal democracy with the 1991 multi-party parliamentary elections, propelled the (re)emergence of numerous social movements. On one hand, civic organisations grew quickly throughout the country as the new liberal government and economic policies created social vacuums due to the state's inability to meet the increased demand for social services (Furtado, 2016; Lopes, 2018). On the other hand, the growing discontentment among youth and urban groups about ineffective and unresponsive public institutions evolved quickly into social movements, notably in the urban centres (Furtado, 2014; Borges, 2019; Lima, 2020). An interesting aspect of these protests is their mix of urban culture (rap) and counter-colonial narratives, inspired by historical figures such as Amilcar Cabral (Lima, 2020). This is a trend that has been observed in places like Mozambique (Brito, 2017), and Burkina Faso (Bertrand, 2022).

In the early 2000s, Cabo Verde saw a surge of civic organisations and later, by the 2010s, anti-government social movements, which became strong oppositional forces capable of influencing the government agenda and shaking up politics from below (Lopes, 2018). The following pages analyse two of the most recent examples of civil society uprising: MRCV and MAC#114.

Movement for regionalisation in Cabo Verde and autonomy for São Vicente (MRCV)

"I voted for [regionalisation] because the islands cannot continue as they are. There is an urgent need to rebalance power and redistribute wealth"[1]. These were the words of Filomena Martins, a parliamentarian from the PAICV (then opposition party) to explain her support for the regionalisation bill on its general approval in parliament on 26 October 2018. Coincidently or not, Filomena is from São Vicente and defied her party discipline line to vote in favour of the bill.

A myriad of variables such as drought and uneven distribution of rainfall, an inadequate transport system, among others, have led to the asymmetrical development of Cabo Verde's islands. The state's and successive governments' inability to overcome this challenge has nurtured harsh criticisms and distrust in the centralised government structure. It is against this backdrop that the movement for

regionalisation emerged in 2010, demanding a thorough reform of the state and government structure. The movement actors soon framed their demand around the decentralisation and autonomy of São Vicente in an attempt to extend their demands to the entire country, and therefore gain the necessary support to achieve their goals. As the leading movement actors were based in the island of São Vicente, they were often labelled separatists and *bairristas* (parochial). However, by using strategic framing and benefiting from occasional POS, they succeeded in taking the regionalisation issue to the top of the country's political agenda despite being challenged by rising counter frames and narratives of state unity.

Framing processes

The regionalisation movement was first launched by the diasporic civic group – *Grupo de Reflexão na Diáspora* (GRD) in 2010, and soon diffused within the cultural and political elites of São Vicente. Its visibility increased with its local appropriation by the *Grupo de Reflexão para a Regionalização de Cabo Verde* (GRRCV) and Sokols 2017, established in 2012 and 2017 respectively. While other groups and prominent political figures joined the cause, including in other islands, the GRD, GRRCV, and Sokols 2017 became the leading entrepreneurs behind the MRCV. They are all based or have roots in the island of São Vicente, and since 2010 they have been the leading advocators and sponsors of the regionalisation policy package, putting constant pressure on the government for its adoption.

The GRD blog had 117 entries between 2012 and 2019 featuring the movement's events (e.g. interviews in the media, holding of round tables), opinions praising the political and cultural centrality of São Vicente, the benefits of regionalisation and critiquing the government. Whereas GRD and GRRCV recruit on a higher social stratum, made up of intellectuals and political elites, and use milder intervention methods, the actions of Sokols 2017 are more heterogeneous and disruptive, resorting more often to street demonstrations, provocative videos and catch-words. Their Facebook page presents them as "heirs" of *Sokols of Cabo Verde*, a youth movement created in 1932 by Júlio Bento de Oliveira inspired by a similar democratic movement in Czechoslovakia[3]. Sokols 2017 offered new dynamics and further public visibility to the movement. On 5 July 2017, it organised one of the biggest street demonstrations ever led by a civic movement in Cabo Verde, denouncing the newly elected MPD government for having failed to keep its promise on regionalisation policy and for being too apathetic about implementing policies to boost socioeconomic development, notably in São Vicente.

Despite their differences, the GRD, GRRCV, and Sokols 2017 made intelligent use of visual images, catch phrases, and metaphors to portray how the country's islands have been victims of government centralism (Table 2.2). Whereas the island of São Vicente is depicted as being the greatest victim of this centralism, the island of Santiago is seen as the main beneficiary. Onésimo Silveira, an eminent GRRCV intellectual and politician from São Vicente, hurled harsh criticisms at the country's political and government elites, calling them "fundamentalists

Table 2.2 Regionalisation vs. "Republic of Santiago"

Core Frame	How to structure a decentralised government model as opposed to the current over-centralised and bureaucratic government based in Santiago island
Core position	Central Government should be decentralised in regional governments to bring power closer to the people, thus promoting the equitable socio-economic development of the islands
Metaphors	Republic of Santiago vs. the other islands Centre vs. periphery/ unity vs. state fragmentation
Catch-phrases, and visual images	Autonomy now! Regionalisation Now! "São Vicente is Cabo Verde too"; The Elite from Praia as Vampires
Roots	Asymmetric development of the islands/The Cabo Verdean government is over-centralised, Macrocephaly of the state
Appeals to Moral principle	Regionalisation as an act of Constitutionalism and social justice
Consequences	Regionalisation would unleash resources and power for regional governments to promote inclusive socio-economic development as opposed to the reigning asymmetric development
Strategic framing	Amplification and diffusion

of a utopic Republic of Santiago". These fundamentalists, he argued, have been astutely engaging themselves in promoting policies that had only benefited the "Santiago tribe", while pushing the other islands to the peripheries of the country's development, and treating its people as less Cabo Verdeans[4]. This quote from a Sokols 2017 activist is also illustrative:

> We want more respect and dignity because at this moment Cabo Verde is developing at two speeds: one for the island of Santiago and the other for the rest of the country (*Mindel Insite*, 26 June 2017).

MRCV successfully managed to *amplify* the "regionalisation vs. Republic of Santiago" frame by mobilising public sentiment in their support through the use of pungent catch words and metaphors (Table 2.2). As this frame gained resonance within the wider culture of the island of São Vicente and won sympathy from some key figures from other islands and in the diaspora, it became evident that the movement leaders and political elites were engaging in *diffusion strategies* to take the issue of regionalisation to the top of political parties' agendas. These strategies were made possible through persistent social media activity (Facebook and blogs), online media presence, and mobilisation events; and were crucial to keep the issue of regionalisation salient over the years.

Political Opportunity Structures

The relative success and endurance of MRCV has been determined by three streams of POS: the proximity of legislative elections (in 2011 and 2016), the

political turnover in 2016, and the parties' dispute over issue ownership. The movement emerged in 2010 just months before the 2011 legislative elections, benefiting therefore from the opportunity to influence political parties to raise the issue of regionalisation in the campaigns. Smaller parties, such as the *União Caboverdiana Independente e Democrática* (UCID), and the *Partido do Trabalho e Solidariedade* (PTS) largely based in São Vicente[5], included regionalisation in their manifestos and campaign messages. Although the issue lost some public attention after the election, as mentioned above, the movement continued to amplify and diffuse its frames across the country and in the diaspora.

In April 2015, the PAICV government organised a high-level conference to debate the regionalisation policy. The conference brought together leaders of local governments, academics, national and international experts as well as representatives from civil society; however, some members from GDR and GRRCV were critical of the underrepresentation of the latter segment[6]. The conference had the ambitious objective of finding the required consensus on the best working models for this reform. However, due to the fragmented nature of the issue, no coherent and conclusive proposal was produced. Indeed, by 2015, regionalisation was clearly a polarised issue, with members of Cabo Verdean intelligentsia, political and civil society actors taking different stands.

With the 2016 legislative election just around the corner, the movement actors intensified their campaign to influence the upcoming political events. Thus, the two major political parties, PAICV and MPD, and the minority party UCID, were well aware of the feeling in civil society, so they willingly stood as the main sponsors of regionalisation. Despite their different positions on the issue, they compromised to take measures conducive to state and government reforms, focusing on power decentralisation in Cabo Verde. For example, PAICV stated in its electoral platform that, if elected to be government, the party would "promote a debate on regionalisation, free of taboos, to ascertain the true national interest and gains" (PAICV, 2016). MPD went further, stating that if the party won the election, it would approve and implement a regionalisation bill in its first year of mandate. Thus, both the 2011 and 2016 legislative elections were approached and successfully exploited to put the issue on the agenda and commit the parties to reform.

The second POS was the triumph of MPD in the legislative election held on 20 March 2016. Given the promises made by the party during the campaign, the movement actors believed they had won a *strategic ally* for the implementation of regionalisation reforms and sought to explore this opening. However, the government did not fulfil its promise to design and implement a regionalisation bill in its first year of mandate. This fuelled more protest, being the most symbolic the one held on 5 September 2018 in Mindelo – capital of São Vicente. On this day a group of demonstrators led by the Sokols 2017 movement shouted, "Autonomy now! Decentralisation! A Promise is a Debt!", as they barred the way of the government delegation led by the Prime Minister Ulisses Correia to the city of Mindelo. On that occasion, one of the movement's leaders stated:

> He [the Prime Minister] has deceived us by failing to move forward, treating us as if we were children, and we cannot continue to accept such things. We are fighting for decentralisation, a planned and scheduled regionalisation. Yeah, it's the lives of the people that are at stake.
>
> (*Santiago Magazine*, 5 September 2017)

So, while the incoming government appeared to be a valuable ally of the protesters cause, its sluggish moves propelled new demonstrations. A third POS was the dispute over issue ownership by the two leading political parties in Cabo Verde, PAICV and MPD. In fact, both parties drafted and presented their own bills for regionalisation, which were widely publicised and debated across the country. The civic groups involved in MRCV failed to draft and present their own bill, but used all their pressure and advocacy to ensure its approval. Additionally, they had hopes that the three parties in parliament would come up with a bill that would meet their demands and interests. However, the parliament only tabled the government (MPD) proposal for debate in the October 2018 session, infuriating PAICV and UCID parliamentarians. The MPD bill received general approval with votes from the MPD bench, three parliamentarians from UCID, and two from PAICV, the latter breaching the party line of abstention. Although the MPD and the government declared victory, they were counting their chickens too soon, as the bill failed to be approved in the speciality debates in April 2019 due to lack of consensus between the two major parties. Unlike what happened in the general approval, the PAICV parliamentary group all towed the party line. Nevertheless, Parliament's failure to pass the regionalisation bill did not mean the end of the movements' demands; on the contrary. The GRDC, GRRCV and Sokols 2017 had successfully managed to influence the political agenda and forced political parties to legislate on the topic, and they pledged not to let their cause die: "It is a long and hard struggle but we will not give up because it is our very existence and identity that is at stake. Long live Cabo Verde!" (Sokols 2017 Facebook post, 24 November 2018).

"Standing up to the vampires": The people against the new Statute of the Political Office Holders

In March 2015, the Cabo Verdean Parliament debated and unanimously approved a new SPOH that would grant political office holders a wide range of special socioeconomic privileges. The approval of the SPOH was the culmination of a long debate over the remuneration of political office holders. Their wages had been frozen since 1997, and attempts to update them had failed due to fear of public discontent. However, with the approach of the 2016 legislative and presidential election, the politicians felt it was the perfect timing to approve the SPOH, given that some parliamentarians and other political officers would soon end their political careers, and some were unsure about re-election. The SPOH would increase politicians' salaries by 64%, among other benefits. Therefore, there was a tacit consensus among the political parties to move on with the bill.

However, while the parliamentarians thought they were right about the chances of approving the bill, they were unaware of the backlash they would face. The new SPOH appeared at a moment of considerable political tension and social stress. Several unions had been leading strikes and street protests, demanding higher wages and better working conditions. Hence, the bill caused national anger and parliamentarians and their parties were harshly criticised by all quadrants. The people felt betrayed by politicians and were determined to stand up to the "Vampires" who "eat everything". These words were from a song entitled "Vampires" by José Afonso, a Portuguese musician whose songs gave voice to the resistance against the Portuguese fascist regime.

Framing processes

The leading entrepreneur behind the frame "Standing up to the vampires" was MAC#114. Rony Moreira, the most visible face of the movement, explained that 114 is the number of the article in the National Assembly Regiment that parliamentarians can activate to react to offenses[7]. In an interview with the authors, he added that the movement had no leadership but rather coordinators who volunteered to take on certain tasks. MAC#114 made its first public appearance on 20 January 2015, during the official ceremony of the 40th anniversary of Amílcar Cabral's death, when a small group of young people in their twenties and mid-thirties marched silently towards the venue where the ceremony was taking place. They followed all the ceremony without a word. This flash mob style initiative created some buzz, but the objective of the participants was unclear. Although active on social media[8], MAC#114 was almost an unknown organisation and its cause unfamiliar to many. A Facebook post on 27 January shared José Afonso's music "Vampires" without any accompanying message, and another post on 30 January stated vaguely: "MAC#114 is a youth organisation whose mission is to awaken other young people to participate in the decisions of their country".

With the start of debate on the SPOH bill in early 2015, MAC#114 came out as the main representative of civil society to condemn and vehemently oppose its approval. MAC#114 activists used social media campaigns to harshly criticise the proposal, focusing their anger on the 64% increase in politicians' salaries in addition to other special benefits that no other professional class or segment of population enjoyed. The frame "Standing up to the vampires" evolved quickly on the core argument that there should be no special privileges in Cabo Verde for politicians, who already enjoy so many benefits while the population remains in poverty.

Soon after the Parliamentary approval of the SPOH, the frame spread but gained momentum on 30 March when the MAC#114 organised island-wide protests that gathered thousands of mainly young people in the islands of Santiago (Praia, the capital, and Assomada), Sal and São Vicente (Mindelo). According to Ronny Moreira, the movement actors were able to recruit participants from local civic associations to help spread the message, and also used the internet and personal networks in diaspora to amplify their messages[9]. Thus, protest actions sprang up across the diaspora, particularly in Portugal where, on the same day,

dozens of Cabo Verdeans protested in front of the Cabo Verdean Embassy in Lisbon, and in front of the School of Arts in Coimbra.

The participants in the protests were from all social quadrants, but mainly the middle class and youth[10]. The MAC#114 Facebook page and media reports of the events show pictures where participants held up posters depicting the three parliamentary parties – PAICV, MPD, and UCID – as "The Beagle Boys", and the parliamentarians as "72 Thugs in the Parliament" "Alibaba and the 72 thieves"[11]. Images and words of the historical pan-Africanist Amílcar Cabral were used on several occasions as shown in social media posts, but also in other youth protests held in the country around the same period (Lima, 2020).

The most repeated catch phrases uttered by the protesters and disseminated in the media included: "we need leaders with heart", "Je suis Povo criolo", "Je suis Pobre", "we all have to tighten the belts", and the "vampires who eat everything and leave nothing" (Table 2.3). These catch phrases were an attempt to mobilise cultural resonance and to appeal to collective public solidarity and actions against the corrupt politicians.

MAC#114 combined additional framing strategies to achieve its political goal. First, frame amplification through the organisation of protest events, intense Facebook activity, interviews in the media and the creation of an online petition that was signed by over 5000 people[12]. Second, frame diffusion through the transfer of claims over island-borders, and in the diaspora. The pursuit of these strategies helped augment the reach of the demands, create popular resonance and led to a successful outcome as the president eventually vetoed the bill in April 2015. According to MAC#114 activist Lina Gonçalves:

> The act [veto] itself represents a qualitative leap in strengthening democracy in Cabo Verde and recognises the role of civil society as a viable and powerful actor in deepening and extending democratic culture
>
> (*A Nação*, 10 April 2015)

Table 2.3 "Standing up to the vampires"

Core Frame	How to stop politicians "stealing" from and impoverishing the people
Core position	There should be no special benefits for politicians while the general population remains impoverished
Metaphors	"The Beagle Boys"; "Thugs in the Parliament"
Catch-phrases, and visual images	"We need leaders with heart", "We all have to tighten the belt", "Je suis Povo criolo", "Je suis Pobre", "basta aos políticos desta terra"
Roots	The practice of dishonest and corrupt politicians, who act in defence of their own self-interest rather looking out for the population
Consequence	The president veto of the bill
Appeals to moral principle	Equality and fairness in wealth distribution, (The Unions), Respect for the people
Strategic framing	Amplification and diffusion

To fully understand this unprecedented outcome which altered politicians' and citizens' perceptions and interactions, it is essential to consider how movement actors used POS to their advantage.

Political opportunity structures

The political context provided significant opportunities for a successful outcome. The first was the proximity of elections. The presidential elections were to be held in 2016, and the incumbent president was expected to run as candidate. According to Rony Moreira, the President knew his re-election was at stake, and they wanted to take advantage of this:

> Never have so many people been out on the streets in Cabo Verde, so the pressure was enormous. We hijacked the political game through Facebook posts and images, we took advantage of any error in the system, commentary, and speeches from the elites. (…) There was no room for the President to choose otherwise. [The President knew this could cost his re-election]
>
> (Personal Interview, 26 January 2017)

Second, MAC#114 had important *political allies*; its demands were sponsored by some of the leading figures in civil society, such as the former President António Mascarenhas, leaders of trade unions, religious figures, and academics. Surprisingly, Janira Almada, who had been elected leader of PAICV in 2014, then the ruling party, sponsored the demands to stop the bill, going against the position of the then Prime Minister who had supported it[13]. However, as she was not yet in control of her party agenda, she had little influence on the party's parliamentarians and so could not prevent them from approving the SPOH. MAC#114 encountered harsh opposition from parliamentary parties, mainly the opposition party, MPD, whose key leaders had officially supported the bill. Counter narratives from politicians treated the activists as mere "discontented kids" who are simply looking for a "space" in the country's political system.

Finally, activists took advantage of POS from the social context – namely favourable public opinion and media coverage. An opinion poll published around the time of the approval of the SPOH indicated that 70% of Cabo Verdeans believed the large majority of local politicians were more concerned about serving their personal interests than those of the country[14]. Additionally, the context of crisis and the growing distrust in political elites created common ground to which citizens from all quadrants could relate[15]. In an interview to *A Nação*, Corsino Tolentino, a former minister of education, stated that the elites had underestimated the people, that "nothing would be as before" and that the protests in Cabo Verde represented a "spring" "an unprecedented awakening of civil society" that would tilt the balance of power (*A Nação*, 5 April 2015). Headlines such as "Jorge Carlos Fonseca between a rock and a hard place: Dissolution of Parliament may be an alternative" (*A Nação*, 6 April 2015) and "MAC # 114, the movement that made the Cabo Verdean political class tremble" (*A Semana*, 15 May 2015),

and Rony Moreira's strong media presence are revealing of the favourable social environment surrounding MAC#114.

MAC#114 used political and social opportunities efficiently and achieved its goals (withdrawal of the SPOH). Nevertheless, the movement has ever since faded away and has not been able to lead any other significant protest initiatives. It has practically vanished from the national public sphere, failing to channel further social demands (Lima, 2020). MAC #114 emerged unexpectedly, disconnected from other social structures, and lacked clear "action-oriented cultural frames" and the effective structures that usually characterise social movements (Tarrow, 1998). In this sense it differs from MRCV, which displays the organizational and ideological resources that allow movements to endure.

Discussion

The preceding analysis shows that both MRCV and MAC#114 used instrumental framing to resonate with the wider public and capture the attention of the political elite. Through disruptive catch words and metaphors, they were not only able to provocatively present their messages to the world, but also to amplify and disseminate them efficiently to enhance their chance of success (Table 2.4). Besides gathering support across the islands, the movements also resorted to personal networks in the diaspora to spread their demands and recruit sympathisers. MRCV originated in the diaspora but gained local ownership and brought together several groups and organisations which used forms of pressure that ranged from milder to more direct contentious actions. Through mass protests (albeit mainly localised on the island of São Vicente), publications of studies, conferences, and other focusing events held both in Cabo Verde and abroad, activists were able to give their fight meaning, and therefore attracted public support. MAC#114 quickly emerged as the leading civil society movement arguing against the implementation of the SPOH. By interpreting the bill as an immoral assault on poor Cabo Verdeans, it successfully mobilised the spirit of "we the people" against the "unscrupulous, corrupt and greedy politicians".

POS played different roles in each movement. In the case of the MRCV, activists used the proximity of elections (2011 and 2016) to lobby in favour of

Table 2.4 Summary

	MRCV	*MAC#114*
Framing strategies	Disruptive catch words, and metaphors, amplification and diffusion	Disruptive catch words, and metaphors, provocative visuals, amplification and diffusion
POS	Proximity of elections Power transfer/political allies Party polarisation	Proximity of elections Political allies Favourable public opinion Favourable media coverage
Outcomes	Bill initiation	Bill withdrawal

regionalisation and persuade parties to include the issue on their agendas. While the issue was vaguely presented in the electoral manifestos of the major parties in 2011, more concrete and bold promises were made to the voters in 2016. The MPD, in particular, promised to approve a bill within one year in cabinet. Although the MPD's election in 2016 was an important POS as the activists now had an ally with power to help implement the reforms, its sluggish reaction fuelled more protests. In face of this, the political elite had no alternative but to accept the people's demands to debate and enact policies conducive to the implementation of regional governments. However, the regionalisation bill was highly polarised with the major parties (MPD and PAICV) racing to advance their own proposals. The withdrawal of the draft law in 2019 from Parliament's agenda does not change the fact that the movement helped the issue to remain salient in the public agenda.

MAC#114 benefited from more POS: proximity of elections, political allies, favourable public opinion, and media coverage. MAC#114 activists were aware of these incentives and how to make the most use of them. It was also clear that the movement could also rely on more consensual public opinion than the regionalisation movement, which was more divisive and originated counter-frames from the outset. Yet excessive mediatisation and the personalisation of MAC#114 activists obscured more anonymous voices that also contributed to the outcomes; moreover, MAC#114 was unable to effectively coordinate an agenda and bridge with other groups in a sustainable way (Lima, 2020). Its "disappearance" left a vacuum that failed to be filled by other movements (Ibid). In contrast, MRCV's longevity and relative success shows that long term policy development requires protest to be rooted in civil society.

Conclusion

Even though Cabo Verde is an exemplary democracy where politics is essentially shaped from above, it has been experiencing high protest levels since the 2010s. But how effective have these protests been?

Drawing on two of the most recent examples of protest movements in the country – MRCV and the MAC#114 – this chapter tested and demonstrated the importance of two sets of factors to explain the outcome of protests. On the one hand, instrumental framing, through which words were creatively amplified and disseminated on the islands and beyond. MAC#114 made the most use of provocative catch words, images, visuals, and street demonstrations, while the MRCV – formed by a larger coalition of groups – combined multiple forms of pressure, from books and conferences to protest actions. While the MAC#114 benefited from more favourable circumstances (in both the political and social context) that made the President veto the SPOH about one month after its parliamentary approval, MRCV managed to put the issue of regionalisation on the political agenda after it emerged in 2010. Despite having distinct outcomes, both movements have helped transform the interactions between the state and civil society: citizens increasingly use the internet and other tools to voice their

demands and shape politics from below. Exemplary cases that highlight the transformation are the protests led by professional drivers' union, cultural agents, and Sokols 17 demanding state support and softening of lockdown restrictions because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study's findings help nuance prior works characterising the Cabo Verdean civil society as amorphous and lethargic (Costa, 2013) and adds to the blossoming scholarship that charts the new forms of protest taking place in the country as part of a global cycle of protest (Lima, 2020). The study also contributes to the wider literature on movements and protest in Africa in four ways. First, it confirms the importance of framing strategies for understanding protest outcomes in Africa – thus, adding to the cases of Morocco (Badran, 2022) and Senegal (Dimé, 2022) also analysed in this book. Second, it reveals the importance of youth and social coalitions to the emergence and success of protests. MAC#114 fits into the wave of youth urban protests in Africa that engage in more creative and disruptive forms of protest to advance democratic norms, as observed in Tunisia, Egypt, and Senegal, among others (Lima, 2020; Maganga, 2020). The MRCV emerged from a more established social class (social and political elite) and later encompassed lower strata. It is illustrative of the class-coalitions model discussed by Mueller (2018) in the case of Niger. According to Mueller, it is the coalition between a politically motivated middle class and an economically motivated lower class that brings popular protest to existence. This is crucial as it has been argued that a movement's level of inclusivity helps explain its endurance and relative level of success (Faupel and Wojtanik, 2020), which clearly is the case of MRCV.

Third, the analysis reveals that structure and agency are relevant to understand the various outcomes of protests. Activists' ability to use instrumental framing and take advantage of POS helps them achieve their goals, particularly when demands are more consensual (MAC#114). Even though, movements may only succeed in keeping issues on the agenda when they are highly polarised (MRCV), this remains a meaningful demonstration of public accountability and responsiveness. Finally, the study demonstrates the importance of going beyond materialistic approaches in order to observe how citizens are trying to improve democratic governance and, in some countries, thwart autocratic drifts. It points to intangible changes that result from the interactions between citizens and the political elites, in which the former increasingly see themselves as agents of change. Future studies should compare the outcomes of protest in democratic African countries and explore their territorial diffusion and networks – both online and offline. Other promising avenues include the way movements combine formal and informal mechanisms to challenge the *status quo*; and how they promote intangible changes.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

1. In English "Decentralization Now!"
2. One of the country's ten islands, the second in population size.
3. Expresso das Ilhas, Esquina do Tempo: Os Sokols de Cabo Verde, 22/08/2016: https://expressodasilhas.cv/cultura/2016/08/22/esquina-do-tempo-os-sokols-de-cabo-verde/49863
4. Recado Para a República de Santiago, *A Semana*, 27/04/2012.
5. Eleições Cabo Verde: UCID quer constituir grupo parlamentar, *Voa Notícias*, 26/11/2011: https://www.voaportugues.com/a/eleicoes-cabo-verde—ucid-114645614/1259426.html.
6. Movimento para a Regionalizaçâo em Cabo Verde (Diáspora) http://movimentoparaaregionalizaoeautonomias.blogspot.com/2014/11/reaccao-do-grupo-de-reflexao-sobre.html.
7. Mac # 114, o movimento que fez "tremer" a classe política caboverdiana, *A semana*, 20/07/2016.
8. Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/MAC-114-1049093538439572/
9. Interview with Rony Moreira.
10. Interview with Rony Moreira.
11. See MAC #114 Facebook Page; Políticos "obrigados" a repensar consensos em Cabo Verde, VOA, 31/03/2015: https://www.voaportugues.com/a/politicos-obrigados-a-repensar-consensos-em-cabo-verde/2701549.html?fbclid=IwAR3yS7XNTc_J–KgEEmUuezOUfccXtuS8s7BOu8cZNgLkHL7EJj2cpDGoIQ
12. Available at: https://peticaopublica.com/pview.aspx?pi=PT76658
13. Interview with Rony Moreira.
14. Não haverá nenhuma crise em Cabo Verde por causa do estatuto dos políticos, Expresso das Ilhas, 07/04/2015: https://expressodasilhas.cv/politica/2015/04/07/nao-havera-nenhuma-crise-em-cabo-verde-por-causa-do-estatuto-dos-politicos-pr/44354
15. Interview with Rony Moreira.

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3 POPULAR PROTEST, RESOURCES, AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES IN GHANA

CONTEXTUALISING THE CASE OF OCCUPY GHANA

Andrea Noll and Jan Budniok

Introduction

Analysts often describe Ghana as a West African development success story, based on its stable democracy since the mid-1990s and, since the 2000s, a fast-developing economy. However, the relatively long period of economic growth was interjected by temporary crisis and International Monetary Fund (IMF) intervention. In 2014, the country had already faced difficulties in expanding its infrastructure for a few years and public disgust about rampant corruption was widespread. Many Ghanaians were frustrated by the impact of severe currency fluctuations on their daily life, a high rate of inflation, and a rapidly increasing national debt. Rising fuel prices and constant power cuts, called *dumsor* (from Twi, meaning on-off) were specific causes that triggered protests in 2014.

These grievances led in July 2014 to a protest event named #OccupyFlagstaff House, from where the pressure group Occupy Ghana, consisting of established middle-class women and men and tech-savvy young professionals from urban Accra, emerged. With their actions, members of Occupy Ghana criticised current economic policies and tried to put pressure on the incumbent National Democratic Congress (NDC) government to improve life conditions for all Ghanaians and abide to existing laws and regulations. The group that remains active as of 2021 was able to amplify their frames by regularly publishing on social media, and daily newspapers frequently reported their actions. Yet, one of Occupy Ghana's key tools in exerting pressure on the government was not protesting in the streets of the capital Accra but going to court. What is more, the activists developed a broader agenda: through their various actions, they wanted more than just to criticise the government and express their frustrations about missed development opportunities of the past fifty years and point to the failures of the political class. In fact, Occupy Ghana's transformative agenda went beyond a critique of neoliberalism practices and principles and exposed a fundamental crisis of democracy and political culture, a general crisis of disenchantment with the political life, and with its moral and ethical standards.

This chapter asks two fundamental questions: did Occupy Ghana help transform the nature of politics in Ghana? And which factors explain the group's dynamics

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and outcomes? We argue that both resource mobilisation and POS help to explain the emergence and outcomes of Occupy Ghana. As later shown most participants of this group were middle-class people who possessed resources to sustain protest activities, namely, office space, technical expertise, communication skills, and legal and political knowledge. Moreover, some of them (older activists) had already participated in the student protests in the 1970s and 1980s, which means they had the knowledge on how to organise protests. The older activists worked alongside a newer generation of activists who were mainly tech-savvy young professionals that disposed the necessary technical expertise to amplify the movement's claims. Adding to this, we argue that the POS in Ghana since re-democratisation is favourable for political protest by members of the middle class. Indeed, democratisation brought about a rising number of civil society organisations, social movements, and local actors of international NGOs. Freedom of expression, and a well-developed legal system are among the features that provide ample opportunity for activism and that are especially conducive for middle-class activism. Legal opportunities and occasionally receptive judges further the causes and provide new scope for activists and put pressure on the government. In this study, we find that the openness of the political system, free media and discursive opportunities (public concern with corruption) helped maximise the movement effectiveness.

The empirical analysis builds on ethnographic fieldwork in Ghana over the past decade[1], focusing primarily on material collected in 2015 and 2016. We combined various approaches of ethnographic fieldwork, including biographic narratives, informal conversations, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews that we conducted in Accra. Moreover, we collected and analysed newspaper articles on Occupy Ghana that were published in the Ghanaian Newspapers Daily Graphic and The Ghanaian Times, analysed Twitter and Facebook accounts, and spoke with representatives of the NDC and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the two major political parties in Ghana. We decided to keep the identities of our interviewees anonymous. The case of Ghana helps to understand how especially middle-class members may successfully exploit POS to their advantage.

The chapter starts overviewing the connection between middle classes and social movement studies and briefly discusses resource mobilisation and POS in social movement studies. This discussion underpins our framework for analysis which combines both aspects. The chapter describes how Occupy Ghana emerged, analyses who its activists are and what actions they took. It also tackles the question how political opportunities mattered for the outcome of popular protest, and how popular protest may have affected political agendas. It also explores the relevance of resources and POS. The conclusion summarises the study's main findings and reflects on its contributions to the studies on social classes and popular protest in Africa.

Middle class, social movements, resource mobilisation, and POS

In the past decade, the middle classes and their relevance for social change have been a focus of new debates in African studies (Lentz, 2016, p. 17; Kodila-Tedika, Asongu, and Kayembe, 2016; Kroeker, O'Kane and Scharrer, 2018; Melber, 2016;

Southall, 2018, p. 467). Even though the boundaries of middle classes are blurred, the term has become an important concept for people in many African countries to describe their own position in society (Lentz, 2016, p. 17). Our own research has shown that this heterogonous category shares specific characteristics, values, and beliefs (Budniok and Noll, 2017). In Ghana, members of the middle-class connect this concept to ideas of personal achievements, moral obligations as well as to appropriate lifestyles and life courses (Budniok and Noll, 2017). Moreover, middle-class men and women who are politically active often use the term as a self-image and political self-legitimation to state their social responsibility within society (Sumich 2016, p. 828). Building on Carola Lentz (2016, p. 46) we understand middle class as "a multi-dimensional concept that refers to a socio-economic category, a cultural world, and a political discourse".

Studies on social movements underline the historical continuities of protest in African countries (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009, p. 12; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). Scholars note that movements similar to American and European old social movements and new social movements, as widely documented in the literature (Della Porta und Diani 2006, p. 55f, Eggert and Giugni 2015, p. 22), were also present in in African history (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). However, it may be the case that some of these social manifestations were not initially termed or treated as social movements. In fact, the concept of social movements has hardly been applied to African realities, as Mamdani (1995, p. 3f) argues, because civil society was the dominant concept to understand associational life in Africa (1995, p. 3f). However, the notions of social movement and civil society, while conceptually distinct, can often overlap, precisely because social movements exist within the boundaries of civil society. In this sense both concepts can be jointly utilised to describe and explain empirical realities (e.g. forms of activism, societal demands), and the involvement of actors and organisations in the political life of a community or country (Brandes and Engels, 2011, p. 6). Whereas the notion of civil society in Africa often highlights cooperation and developmental aspects, the notion of social movement emphasises confrontation. Today's social movements build upon a history of African protest that leads back to the anti-colonial struggle (Branch and Mampilly, 2015, p. 3; Ellis and van Kessel, 2009, p. 13).

Research on African movements gained new momentum following the "Arab spring" and the third wave of protest in the continent (Branch and Mampilly 2015). As Ellis and Van Kessel (2009, p. 15) note, movements in Africa "never did fit into the sketch of a neat chronological succession from working-class to middle-class activism". Seddon and Zeilig (2005) note that a variety of social groups was usually involved in strikes and demonstrations in the wave of widespread popular protest and resistance that sparked around the world, including Africa from the late 1970s. These protests did not always encompass the working class or working-class leadership. Lisa Mueller (2018) argues that the third wave of protests in Sub-Saharan Africa arises from coalitions between a politically motivated middle class and an economically motivated lower class. She argues that middle-class activists reacted to political shocks exploiting their resources to mobilise lower-class men and women suffering from economic grievances.

Resources and POS are classical drivers for collective action (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009, p. 17–43). They depend on structural circumstances, but also on activists' position in society. In principle, privileged groups will have more resources (e.g. material stability, social networks, and political influence) to devote to social movement activity. However, this does not mean that they will eventually do so or that they will be better able to perceive and exploit POS to engage in political action. In Ghana, there has recently been a debate about the political apathy of the middle class in online commentaries and newspaper articles (Lentz and Noll, 2021; Noll and Budniok, 2021). While some middle-class women and men – like the activists of Occupy Ghana – decide to protest as an investment in their own status, others come to an arrangement with the circumstances, using individualistic strategies of betterment like educating their children in international schools and procuring private health insurance (Lentz and Noll, 2021). As members of the urban middle class, the activists of Occupy Ghana were able to build on various resources and POS (the level of the regime openness, access to political power, and favourable media) to influence and ultimately transform policies.

To answer this study's research questions, we propose a theoretical framework that combines both resource mobilisation and POS. The resource mobilisation approach emphasises the significance of organisational structures and resource accumulation for collective action (McCarthy and Zald 2001). Thus, the level of organisation of a group and its capability of mobilising resources are decisive for the course and the outcome of a movement (Kitschelt, 1991, p. 327). These resources may include, e.g. sympathetic or solidaristic support by external organisations, material resources, knowledge capital relevant to conducting collective actions, knowledge about building and maintaining the organisation, and knowledge about potential supporters (Cress and Snow, 1996).

Whereas this approach focuses on the actors of the movement, the approach of POS concentrates on endogenous resources outside of a social movement that may be relevant for its mobilisation (Hellmann, 1998, p. 25). This approach argues that the political context is decisive for the emergence, the development and the success or failure of social movements (Meyer, 2004, p. 126; Tarrow, 1994, p. 18f; Sanches, 2022). According to Giugni (2009), four main dimensions of political opportunity have been stressed in the literature: The relative openness or closeness of the institutionalised political system (Eisinger, 1973, p. 25), the presence or absence of elite allies, the stability or instability of elite networks and the capability or readiness of the state for repression may play a major role (Rucht, 1998, p. 113; McAdam, 1996).

Such political opportunities, succinctly discussed by Giugni (2009, p. 361), are those aspects of a political system that affect the possibilities that challenging groups have to mobilise effectively. "In this sense, opportunities are 'options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend on factors outside the mobilizing group' (Koopmans, 2004, p. 65)". According to Giugni (2009, p. 364), recent theorisations have stressed that opportunities for mobilisation have two sides: an institutional side referring to the access challengers have

to the institutionalised political system, and a discursive side relating to the public visibility and resonance as well as the political legitimacy of certain actors, identities, and claims (Koopmans et al, 2005). The "discursive opportunity" examines the extent to which social movements' claims and identities relate to prevailing discourses in the public domain (Giugni 2009, p. 364). In our analysis, we will show how the activists of Occupy Ghana made use of their resources and these POS to attain their political goals.

#OccupyFlagstaffHouse and the emergence of Occupy Ghana

Ghana has a long history of civilian protest by students, workers, the middle class, and members of different professions (Asante and Helbrecht, 2018; Noll and Budniok, 2021; Eberlei and Pac, 2014, p. 192). According to Owusu (1989, p. 374), nurtured by the impact of colonialism, there exists a strong tradition of resistance, revolt, and rebellion against any form of injustice in African societies. In Ghana, early and later forms of nationalism grew out of this tradition of popular consciousness, "at once combining communal and emergent class elements" (Owusu 1989, p. 374). Members of the middle class were often key agents to exert pressure on respective governments. Occupy Ghana somehow reflects this historical legacy, as the main actors defined themselves as members of the Ghanaian middle class and, at the same time, claimed to represent all Ghanaians. Their emergence in 2014 is noteworthy for its continuity with prior movements (some participants had prior experience in student protests in the 1970s), but also its distinctiveness (the utilisation of different frames, resources, and tools). However, before addressing this in more detail, it is crucial to briefly depict the environment that triggered the protest in 2014.

Ghana's democratic elections, regular changes in the presidency, and the party in government, with a rotation between the NPP and the NDC, as well as its high level of freedom of expression draw observers' attention. In the 2000s, income grew in the private sector and in the public sector; the creation of differentiated occupations brought about new employment opportunities for the middle class, and even absolute poverty was reduced significantly. The discovery of oil in 2007 and the beginning of its extraction in late 2011 added to a double-digit growth rate of Ghana's GDP, which was for several years among the highest in the world.

However, in 2014 the country had faced difficulties in expanding its infrastructure for several years, and many Ghanaians were frustrated by the effects of severe currency fluctuations, a high rate of inflation and a rapidly increasing national debt. The government was also under public pressure for its increasing dependence on revenues from natural resources (gold, oil, cocoa) and for doing too little to expand the manufacturing sector where jobs ought to be generated for the growing and increasingly better educated work force. The Ghanaian manufacturing sector was particularly affected by the power shortages, but also telecommunication companies, the media sector, and agriculture as well as commerce suffered from insufficient power supply and water shortages. Moreover, government spent a substantial part of state revenues on increasing wages of civil servants and on

creating new positions in the public service. Constant power cuts, fuel shortages, and rising fuel prices triggered popular protests in 2014.

Contrary to the energy crisis in 2007, these power shortages were, according to the Ministry of Energy, no longer predictable. Using the hashtag #OccupyFlagstaffHouse on Twitter, a group of young activists called for a public protest on the 1 July 2014[2] in Ghana's capital Accra. Among the various organisers of this protest was a group called Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance several gender and civil rights activists as well as social media commentators. The Concerned Ghanaians for Responsible Governance were solely founded for the purpose of this demonstration by a group of tech-savvy young professionals. The demonstration was to take place directly in front of Ghana's presidential palace, the seat of the Ghanaian government, the so-called Flagstaff House. Its aim was the handing over of a petition to the then President John Dramani Mahama, from the National Democratic Congress (NDC). The petition called for action against the power cuts, the fuel shortage, the loss of purchasing power, the monetary crisis, the high costs of living, the increasing unemployment, and social inequality. The petition was also published on a website where supporters digitally signed it.[3]

The group of protesters was relatively small, yet the resonance in the Ghanaian news as well as on social media was huge. According to media reports between 200 and 500 people participated in the protest march.[4] Many of the protesters were clad in black and red, using these colours to express their anger and frustration as some of them explained to us later.[5] The protesters met in the early morning hours at Efua Sutherland Children's Park in Accra, about three kilometres away from the Flagstaff House, from where they started to march. The police prohibited the protesters from demonstrating in front of the Flagstaff House and blocked some of the ways leading there. The petition was finally handed over to the then Deputy Chief of Staff, Valery Sawyer at the entrance of the Flagstaff House.

Overall, the demonstration was relatively peaceful, despite a few incidents: the police forced protesters to take a different route to the Flagstaff House since the initially intended route was prohibited by law. At one point, some protesters had started a sit-in protest on their way to the Flagstaff House. The police also made sure that only a small delegation entered the Flagstaff House to hand over the petition. Some of the police officers wore riot suits and were equipped with batons and water cannons. However, compared to many other protest events in Ghana, they were relatively careful at dealing with the protesters and only one person was arrested.[6] This contrasts with other demonstrations in Ghana when the police made use of water cannons and tear gas and seriously injured some of the demonstrators. In our view, this careful handling of protesters at the Flagstaff House demonstration can partly be attributed to the activists' middle-class status.

The activists and the resources behind Occupy Ghana

#OccupyFlagstaffHouse was a one-day street protest event, but it quickly institutionalised after the initial protest. In September 2014, just a few months after the demonstration, Occupy Ghana registered as an NGO. Not all activists who later

became active within Occupy Ghana were involved in #OccupyFlagstaffHouse and not all of those who had participated in #OccupyFlagstaffHouse became involved with Occupy Ghana. One of our interviewees, a young structural engineer, explained how two different groups emerged from the initial protest:

> So, there are two separate groups already, and some of us [those who took part in the initial protest] joined Occupy Ghana. But Concerned Ghanaians also metamorphosed into a new group so, we are two different groups, but we have one common goal, you know, we all want good governance.

Many people engaged in #OccupyFlagstaffHouse and its spin-offs Occupy Ghana and the Citizen Ghana Movement come from similar social backgrounds, some of them have known each other for years and they cooperated with each other. Many of the activists were from middle-class backgrounds. They did not only dispose of the financial means but also had the necessary expertise to organise demonstrations, they had legal and political knowledge as well as excellent communication skills. What is more, the event #OccupyFlagstaffHouse already made quite clear that this group of middle-class activists intimidated the police. The police were rather irritated when they saw people arriving in big cars in the early morning hours of the 1 July for the demonstration.

The core group of Occupy Ghana was intentionally kept small; it consisted of only twelve activists who would discuss their strategies privately. Apart from these private meetings of the core group however, anybody is free to join Occupy Ghana as our interviewee continued to explain:

> We don't create a membership. So, you can't join Occupy Ghana as a member and get a membership form and pay membership dues. We don't do that. But anybody who believes strongly in what we do, is, it is open to come and join us any time, and any time we have any sessions, you are willing, we love you to come, and we publicize what we stand for and what we do all the time.

Two members of the core group worked as the movement's secretary and coordinator; the latter organised and coordinated all movement-related events. Other key members included: a chartered accountant, a very eloquent person who was present in many of the media reports about the movement; a prominent Ghanaian lawyer who was also very much present in the media, and who represented Occupy Ghana's causes in court; and finally, an investment banker, a lawyer, an IT consultant, a digital media strategist, and journalists.

All core members were university graduates and had strong communication skills. Basically, two groups worked hand in hand: one group included older and the other younger activists. The older activists, in their mid-fifties to mid-sixties were established members of the Ghanaian middle class. They were affluent and disposed of vast political expertise. Some of them had already organised student protests in the 1970s and 1980s. At Occupy Ghana, they worked hand in hand with a second group of people: tech-savvy young professionals who were highly

active on social media. Some of the latter, a group of six friends, originally initiated the event #OccupyFlagstaffHouse via their posts on Twitter and Facebook. They disposed of the necessary technical expertise to reach many people through mass media. As one of the older activists explained, the two groups were united by their ideologies and came together based on their beliefs:

> Occupy Ghana has evolved from a whole set of ideologies from individuals, who were concerned about governance, concerned about corruption, concerned about the key things that we thought were important in the society: our education, our energy, our power problems, legal issues, and generally governance. Governance was the key problem we wanted to attack and to just change the way the country is being governed, so that there would be a lot more equitable arrangements, and then everybody would do things in a better way. So, we didn't come together as a group of people within an age group. We came together based rather on what we believed in, and it didn't matter whether you were young or middle-aged or old. I think I am the oldest person.

Among the organisers of #OccupyFlagstaffHouse was a young civil and structural engineer in his late twenties. He was also one of the first core members of Occupy Ghana, being responsible for coordinating activities, handling media relations, and acting as one of the group's spokespersons. When we met in March 2016 at a small Café opposite to the Ghana National Theatre, the engineer explained his tremendous surprise in the early morning of the #OccupyFlagstaffHouse event, when business owners, investment bankers, entrepreneurs, doctors, and journalists showed up for the demonstration that he and his friends had initiated. Some of them were nationwide known people, the young engineer had never met before in person. These men and women had heard about #OccupyFlagstaffHouse through social media, and later through regular media. Many of the older activists knew each other very well. In their inner circles, they had been discussing for a very long time how to become publicly active to address the political shortcomings and economic grievances in the country. One of the younger activists explained:

> The idea was also there with [the group of established middle-class women and men]. They said they had also been thinking about doing a movement for some time now but with what we did it gave them the edge to actually move into action. So, a few days later they called us to a meeting, you know, got some people to talk to us, got some people to make us realize the kind of damage we actually did cost the government (laughs), because I mean, we were just doing our bit but, for some of them, they knew people in government, so they actually knew the kind of damage it actually caused to government's reputation. So, that was when they actually started bringing our minds to it that, it's something that we started, it's gotten a life of its own, you cannot allow it to die.

So, when these established middle-class women and men heard about the preparations for the demonstration #OccupyFlagstaffHouse, they decided to act. The young engineer remembered the arrival of these influential people at Efua Sutherland Children's Park on the 1 July 2014:

> […]within the hour, people started trickling in, in their cars. They were middle-class people, they weren't the regular, ordinary guys who sell on the streets, but they were business owners. So, I remember one policeman remarked that, 'Hey, what kind of bourgeoisie or rich people demonstration is this?' Because, I mean, demonstration, people are coming in Jaguar's, Mercedes Benz, Nissan Patrol's, Landcruisers, so what kind of demonstration is this? So, that's when the police realised that these were not the ordinary, the usual people they are used to in demonstrating.[7]

This quote as well as other statements by members of Occupy Ghana on the group's activities express that the term middle class is indeed an important self-designation for members of Occupy Ghana and an important concept to position oneself within society. It also demonstrates that the concept is blurred in its emic usage. Our interviewee equates the middle class with "business owners", "bourgeoisie", and "rich people". At the same time, he differentiates the middle class from the "regular, ordinary guys". Indeed, some of the protesters could, measured by their income, also be allocated to the Ghanaian upper class.

That the concept is used in emic language usage points out its appeal in Ghana. Through this self-designation, the activists differentiate themselves from the ruling elite and position themselves between this political elite and the "ordinary, the usual people". Using a middle-class discourse, the activists define themselves as intermediaries fighting for the concerns of all Ghanaians. Contrary to this, however, some representatives of the then party in power, the NDC argued that #OccupyFlagstaffHouse was a staged event, and that Occupy Ghana was led by members of the liberal-conservative opposition party at that time.

They alleged that protesters just pretended to be members of the middle class but were in fact part of a lying and two-faced NPP elite. It is true that some members of Occupy Ghana became politically active and were running for a seat in parliament in 2016 on the NPP ticket. Other members of Occupy Ghana however claimed to be impartial political activists. From their point of view, this meant that they may occasionally share corresponding views with political parties, but that they do not support one particular political party.

The older activists were quite affluent, had the necessary material resources, money but also, e.g. office spaces, at their disposal. What is more, the activists of Occupy Ghana disposed of the necessary knowledge capital to conduct collective actions. They knew how to build and maintain organisations and disposed of legal knowledge. The older activists possessed political experience, financial resources, and professional expertise to become active in a more sustained way, but also had the power to exert pressure on the government. Some of them were already politically active in the 1980s and some could even look back on a long

history of political activism within their families from the early 20th century on. The younger generation was very skilled with social media and knew very well how to get their protest public through social media. All activists within the core group had excellent communication skills. We argued that the group's level of organisation and its capability of mobilising resources were decisive for the outcome of their protest activities. As members of the Ghanaian middle class, the activists' political interest was however not to overthrow the current political system. Through their protest, they rather intended to make the neoliberal economic system work efficiently. By doing so, they hoped to secure their social status and improve the means and mechanism for their social reproduction. Yet, instead of being selfish, they claimed and believed to fight these grievances for the betterment of the entire Ghanaian society.

By and large, and as mentioned earlier, the activists' resources were crucial for the movement's public visibility, further organisation and endurance. Due to their professional and political experience, the activists disposed of knowledge on how to organise demonstrations and maximise the impact of internet activism. Adding to this #OccupyFlagstaffHouse was followed by several other events, seminars, and press conferences. An important mobilising event is the "Red Friday" called through social media since 2014. On Red Fridays, Occupy Ghana calls supporters to express their protest on specific current grievances by wearing anything red, e.g. clothes or accessories, to work. Occupy Ghana also supports other Ghanaians who are committed to political activism and tend towards anti-corruption and good governance but who do not dispose of the necessary resources to act. In 2015, Occupy Ghana helped a group of students who considered the National Service Secretariat's selection mechanisms to be inaccurate and probably corrupt. The National Service Secretariat is an organisation that helps school and university graduates to find a position for their obligatory civil service. Occupy Ghana supports a whole range of such groups and activities. In 2016 and 2017, the group, e.g. supported a wide front of activists fighting illegal working in the mines, using the hashtag #AntiGalamsey.

According to our interviewees, Occupy Ghana's aim is to motivate all Ghanaians to join the struggle for good governance. They argued that there is a lot of political apathy and ignorance within the population:

> We realise that there is a lot of apathy in Ghanaians. You know, people do not like to test the laws, people do not like to challenge the current system as it is. So, we want to Occupy their minds, make them aware that they actually have a lot more power than these people who have been put in power.

Occupy Ghana intends to inform the population about how to become actively engaged in fighting corruption, poor governance, and systematic errors of the administration. Differently than expected, Occupy Ghana did not disappear after the change of government following the elections in December 2016. Rather, Occupy Ghana continued to exert pressure on the newly elected NPP government and is still doing so after the NPPs re-election in December 2020.

Occupy Ghana: How POS shaped the protest outcomes

So, what was the role of POS on the outcomes of Occupy Ghana's activities? Were the activists able to perceive and exploit them to their advantage? Building on McAdam (1996) and Giugni (2009) we concentrate on three streams of POS: the relative openness or closure of the political system; free media and discursive opportunities.

In Ghana, the state's capacity and propensity for repression is certainly limited within the rather open Ghanaian democracy with broad freedom of expression. At the same time, Ghana is a two-party system with, e.g. primaries that are often costly, and MPs with limited influence; politics is limited by political culture, the patronage systems and a moral economy of corruption, and certain expectations of the "big men" who become politicians. As mentioned above, the openness of Ghana's political system since redemocratisation is favourable for political protest, especially by members of the middle class. As indicated, while protests by the lower class may often elicit robust police reactions, members of the middle class were not prone to be victims of police repression or violence. Despite the political apathy of some members of the Ghanaian middle class, the activists of Occupy Ghana – among others – decided to protest and to make use of this Ghanaian POS. Against this background we identified two important opportunities within the political system: a judicial and legal system that was open for a corruption crusade via the courts; and a free media, including newspaper and radio stations, that need to attract readers and listeners.

Political issues in Ghana were brought into court for decades. Access to the legal system is but one example for the institutional landscape, one of the public institutions members of Occupy Ghana could use for their activism, to stage protest on a national level. In many cases, Occupy Ghana made sure that rules and control mechanisms that already existed were indeed observed. So, in these cases the activists did not intend to transform the nature of politics in Ghana but rather to make sure that politicians abide by the existing laws.

After the #OccupyFlagstaffHouse event and the foundation of Occupy Ghana as an NGO, the activists hardly used sit-ins and demonstrations in public as a means of protest. The activists felt they could achieve more by bringing their protest into the legal system. The group has used legal actions to exert pressure on public officers and government institutions who did not act according to the principles of 'good governance' and legal requirements. The group has, e.g. sued a former Energy Minister for keeping for months a luxury vehicle the Ministry bought for a rural electrification project.[8] Occupy Ghana identified several areas in the Ghanaian political system where according to their understanding practices strongly deviated from norms. At the same time, the group wanted to show that not in all cases, legal gaps or missing rules of procedure should be claimed by public officers as an excuse for inaction, but that in many cases, rules and control mechanisms did already exist but were, for political reasons, not used. The group's aim was to get as many people arrested as possible who were proven guilty of fraud or corruption. In this way, Occupy Ghana claimed to carry out duties that should be undertaken by the public prosecutor's office.

The public prosecutor's office in Ghana was, however considered as highly politicised and directly dependent on the government. Public prosecution is one part of the ministry of justice, and the minister of justice is the attorney general at the same time. For years, discussions went on about obstacles to a swift and thorough fight against corruption, the independence of prosecution in Ghana and the introduction of an independent special prosecutor. In 2018, Martin Amidu, a lawyer and politician connected to the NDC, the party in opposition since 2016, was appointed by the NPP government as the first special prosecutor[9]. Mr. Amidu was a former public prosecutor, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice who had become renowned as a private anti-corruption activist. Occupy Ghana regarded the implementation of an autonomous special prosecutor, who was supposed to fight corruption, bribery, and other criminal acts in the public and private sector independently, as one of the group's major achievements. The list of the movement's future projects is long. However, they touched upon the very core of the political system. The activists are aware that their endeavours may be expensive and that it may probably take them a long time to achieve some of their goals; but they 'have deep enough pockets and time to spend'. Occupy Ghana certainly benefits from the interaction and cooperation with numerous other activists and institutions; and from the personal social networks of the core activists of the group.

The legal system and its use (as a stage) for political activism and protest in Ghana dates to the colonial era, but courtrooms were also a space for individual and group protest in the various democratic, autocratic, and military governments that followed since independence in 1957 (Israel, 1992). Also, today, many laws, political and administrative decisions as well as the behaviour of public servants are protested and "re-negotiated" in court. The activists of Occupy Ghana made use of this POS, as one of them elucidated in an interview:

> So, as much as possible, we use legal methods, legal mechanisms to change things. We also look at regulations and procedures, for things that institutions are supposed to do, which they are not doing, we insist that they should do them.

As mentioned above, Occupy Ghana regarded the implementation of an autonomous special prosecutor, as one of the group's major achievements, as a result of Occupy Ghana's work. Moreover, the activists made use of the POS of a relatively free media landscape. As one of the activists explained to us, they made use of the media to get known in other regions outside of the capital Accra. In this, especially radio stations played a major role: "so far through the radio stations and television stations we're able to reach out to the other regions with our message. So, I would say, basically we are getting far".

As one of the activists further explained, radio stations regularly called the activists of Occupy Ghana to get their opinion on current political issues, a proof for the activists' successful use of this POS:

> That's why most of the times, when an issue comes up, the radio stations always seek to get the views of Occupy Ghana, what we think about. And

> even if we've not even written a statement on it, they want to hear what Occupy Ghana thinks about it.

Radio stations, TV/and YouTube channels, and other new media became reliable avenues to distribute the group's protest. Thus, the group's messages proved communicable to other activists and institutions and led to further pressure. The activists did analyse the opportunity structure and realised how to wield influence most.

Concerning the presence or absence of elite allies, there exists in Ghana an alleged ideological closure of the political elite (that is often recruited from within the middle class). Occupy Ghana did not have allies within the political parties, including the opposition party since politicians regarded Occupy Ghana and their activities in a negative way. Politicians saw their middle-class protest, where people tried to wield power from the sideline of party politics, as a kind of parachuting. However, the activists had plenty allies within the organised middle class and cooperated with various institutions run by middle-class members.

The activists were involved in numerous political and professional networks that they mobilised for their actions. In the past, they had worked with different groups, associations, and NGOs. They had worked with other Ghanaian organisations like, e.g. the Ghana Anti-Corruption Coalition, the Centre for Democratic Development, the Ghana Institute for Public Policy, the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs, the Institute for Chartered Accountants, IMANI Ghana, Oxfam Ghana, the Financial Accountability, and Transparency Africa and the Ghana Integrity Initiative. In their endeavours, Occupy Ghana activists cooperated with and strengthened activities of likeminded actors, e.g. the highly publicised corruption crusade of the investigation team Tiger Eye P.I., headed by the journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas. So, as members of the middle class, the activists were in a privileged position to manoeuvre within the Ghanaian political system, to make use of opportunities, to connect and to voice protest, to make proposals and to usher threats.

Finally, we argue that movement actors were able to take advantage of discursive opportunities, namely the discourse about corruption, a theme that is popular in the general populace and an issue dear to foreign donors, and the discourse about the state's shortcomings, in short bad governance. The activists claim that Occupy Ghana is an anti-corruption group. While democratic structures have been there for many years in Ghana, activists made use of the discursive opportunity, the popularity of the anti-corruption discourse at the time of their protest. Many Ghanaians were increasingly frustrated by the general impact of corruption and acute power shortages at that point, as one of our interviewees explained:

> I mean, they [the older group of protesters] realised that at that point in time, the way that the country was going, it was being difficult running their organisations and they had to let the government to be aware. So that makes it very different from any other demonstration that happened in Ghana here. Because you never find such a thing. I am an engineer myself, you wouldn't usually find me doing such a thing.

The discursive structure at the time contributed to the emergence of middle-class protest, which is against political but ultimately societal structures, and not against a regime.

Conclusion

Did Occupy Ghana help transform the nature of politics in Ghana? And which factors explain the movement's dynamics and outcomes? This chapter has argued that both resource and POS mattered for the outcome of popular protest in Ghana. This argument is demonstrated using a mix of qualitative data collected in Ghana in 2015 and 2016.

In 2014, the Ghanaian population was already frustrated for years by the government's mismanagement and a temporary economic crisis triggered the protest discussed earlier. As one of our interviewees argued, usually, the middle class would not protest in the streets. However, at this particular point in time, they deemed it necessary to act.

Our material produced the following findings: In the case of Occupy Ghana, the outcome of the protest was very much linked to the main actors' middle-class status and their resources. The activists did not only have the financial means to engage in popular protest but also disposed of the expertise on how to organise demonstrations, had the necessary legal and political knowledge, technical expertise as well as communication skills and the power to exert pressure on the government.

In 2014, Ghana's POS was very favourable for the emergence of popular protest. The country had a stable democracy since the mid-1990s with mostly peaceful democratic elections and changes of government, as well as a mostly fast developing economy since the 2000s. This openness of the political system created a favourable environment for political activism, especially by members of the middle class. Ghana has a long history of popular protest and of middle-class actors who make use of the legal system. The activists of Occupy Ghana were able to make use of a legal system that was open for a corruption crusade and took advantage of a relatively free media landscape. The activists of Occupy Ghana were involved in numerous middle-class networks that could be activated for their activities. Finally, the activists took advantage of the current discourse about corruption. Yet, activists did agree, that while the social structure is not easy to change, political and policy goals could be changed, and might have long-term effects. We therefore argued to combine the two approaches of POS and resource mobilisation to evaluate the successful outcome of the protest and the capability of the movement's leaders to affect political agendas.

This analysis has important implications for research of protest in Africa. First it shows the importance of the middle-class for protest in Africa, by featuring their resources as key drivers for the engaging in collective action, and for the institutionalisation and endurance of protests. This resonates with other cases studies in this book, such as Cabo Verde (Sanches and Lopes, 2022) where the middle-class has played a large role in recent protests (for the implementation

of regionalisation policy), and to a wider literature that highlights social class theories of mobilising (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005; Mueller, 2018) class-coalition. Second, Occupy Ghana reveals how the institutional and democratic credentials of the regime are relevant for protest and allow the use of a broad range of tools and forms of pressure – from internet to the courts.

Future research should try to better understand feedback (positive and negative) between protests' impact on POS and effects on further mobilisation or demobilisation within protest and broader movement alliances.

Notes

1. Before working on Occupy Ghana, we conducted ethnographic research on the middle class in several urban spaces in southern Ghana. Since 2006, Jan Budniok has conducted research on the biographies of Ghanaian judges and lawyers (Budniok 2014). Andrea Noll has been working on social differentiation and integration of extended families since 2011 (Noll 2016; Noll 2019).
2. On the 1 July 1960, Kwame Nkrumah proclaimed Ghana a republic and became its first president.
3. https://www.modernghana.com/news/553063/occupy-flagstaff-house-full-petition-to-president.html, 20 May 2021.
4. See, e.g. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/occupy-flagstaff-house-demo-rocks-accra.html and https://www.okayafrica.com/ghana-occupy-flagstaff-house-movement-republic-day/, both 21 May 2021.
5. On the ritual significance of red and black in Akan funerals see, e.g. Breidenbach (1976).
6. E.g. in June 2015, the police have used tear gas on residents demonstrating against the demolition of their slum in Accra, see https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33226618, 20 May 2021.
7. Interview, 16 March 2016.
8. https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/occupy-ghana-sues-dr-oteng-adjei-for-keeping-luxury-cars.html, 21 May 2021.
9. Mr. Amidu stepped down in November 2020.

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4 Y'EN A MARRE
CATALYST FOR AN INDOCILITY GRAMMAR IN SENEGAL

Mamadou Dimé

Introduction

The current decade is marked, in many African countries, by the irruption on the socio-political scene of citizen movements. Their novelty, the singularity of their modes of action and influence, the scope of their demands, and the figures that gave birth to them have attracted the media spotlight but also the attention of researchers (Siméant, 2013; Dimé, 2017; Gellar, 2013; Haeringer, 2012; Havard, 2013). Citizens' movements are becoming increasingly relevant in episodes of socio-political protest and mobilisation. As collective organisations, they are defined by the way they articulate and denounce social, cultural, and political issues. They demand greater freedom and the advent of public policies that are better articulated with the aspirations of the people. They demand governance models that preserve the economic interests of African populations by breaking with the neo-colonial logic of resource predation (UPEC, 2018). Young people are the initiators of these new social movements (Kelly, 2012; Gellar, 2013; Dimé, 2018; Dieng, 2015; Dalberto, 2011).

Faced with the emergence of new forms of collective action, the response of the authorities has oscillated between violent repression, bribing, infiltration within the movements, demonisation, instrumentalisation, and ostracisation of activists (Dimé, Kapagama, Soré and Touré, 2020). But these movements are inventive being distinguished by their ability to use the opportunities offered by information and communication technologies to bypass the political authorities. Their mobilisation strategies, their influence, the dissemination of their slogans, and their territorial organisation are fully based on the strategic use of social networks. Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the strategies regimes use to repress social action is precisely to cut off the Internet in the hope of blocking any attempt at contestation through social networks (Jacquemot, 2020; Linzer, 2019).

With these citizen movements, African youth seem to be taking yet another step in the long tradition of dissent and indocility whose roots go back to the colonial period (Mamdani and Wamba Dia Wamba, 1995; Mbembe, 1986; Siméant, 2013). The dynamics of contestation gained momentum during the reign of single parties, in the early 1990s with demand for the establishment of democracy but also more recently, since 2000s, with demands for further democratisation across

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Africa more recently in protest (Larmer, 2010). In Senegal, these past struggles served as the basis for the formation of citizens' movements with the emergence, from 2011 onwards, of a new generation of activists with diverse socio-professional profiles but united by their desire to find an ideological anchorage in pan-Africanism, the "Sankarist" utopia and the revitalisation of the dreams of the founding fathers (Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Cheikh Anta Diop, etc.) as well as their desire to build a trans-African network of political activism (UPEC, 2018).

The trans-African dynamic of indocility and dissidence is primarily driven by *Y'en a marre* (we're fed up), which boasts a major socio-political role in Senegal since its birth in 2011 (Dimé, 2017; Dieng, 2015). The movement strongly opposed the incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade third-term bid, and had a decisive political role in Senegal's second political changeover in March 2012 with the election of Macky Sall. As a movement that contests the socio-political order, *Y'en a marre* is part of a long tradition of citizen mobilisation and political participation of young people in Senegal. As later shown, *the Y'en a marre* movement perpetuates a tradition of political contestation by young people whose past goes back a long way in the colonial period and the early years of the postcolonial era, but also through the many student movements (Mbembe, 1986; Diouf, 2002).

This study examines the origins, outcomes, and trajectories of the *Y'en a marre* building on qualitative sources (statements in social media, press reviews) and interviews held with some leaders and members of the movement in 2019. The analysis combines framing and political opportunity approaches to account for both the structural and relational dimensions of social movements and show how the *Y'en a marre* movement was able to develop an effective contestation strategy by managing to channel the anger expressed by Senegalese youth. It argues that movement actors took advantage of political opportunity structures (political openness, favourable media coverage, discursive opportunities resulting from a long tradition of youth protest in the country) to engage in collective action and achieve their goals. Second, that they relied on innovative framing strategies (grammar of indocility, slogans, and *wolofisation* of the vocabulary) to amplify, and create resonance with, their key messages.

The chapter starts by advancing the framework for analysis, which brings together opportunities and framing strategies to understand protest in Senegal. Then it explores *Y'en a marre* dominant frames, that is the meanings and implications of what we label a grammar of indocility in Senegal. Then the political opportunity structures (discursive opportunities resulting from a long tradition of youth protest, political openness and favourable media coverage) that helped the movement influence political outcomes, in particular President Wade defeat in 2012, are discussed. Lastly, we investigate how *Y'en a marre* trajectory illustrates the tensions, permanence and ruptures in the dynamics of socio-political mobilisation among young people in Senegal. After several years of existence, *Y'en a marre* is at a crossroads in terms of its meaning and future directions. The study presents Senegal as a relevant case study to understand the transformative power of protest in Africa and explore new avenues for the relationship between young

people and politics. It also contributes to broader discussions on the implications of protests for political turnover at the executive level in Africa.

Framing the analysis of protest in Senegal

Across of Africa, there have been multiple protests against presidents. In West Africa, the last second years were full of socio-political turbulence. Whether in Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Togo, Nigeria, Niger, or Guinea, the news is generally dominated by socio-political tensions, electoral disputes, demonstrations that lead to violence (Sakor and Soko, 2020). In Burkina Faso perhaps the most paradigmatic case the *Balai Citoyen* were crucial in preventing President Blaise Compaoré from pursuing a third term (Bertrand, 2022); in DRC they influenced President Joseph Kabila's strategies, and contributed to his withdraw from the presidential race, even if international pressures played a larger role (Polet, 2022). Whether protests succeed in blocking presidents third-term bid has been a subject of discussion, and the evidence is mixed (Dulani, 2011; Tull and Simons, 2017; Yarwood, 2016). In fact, while in some countries, the protests helped block the President's attempt to change the constitution, in other countries they were unsuccessful – e.g. Cameroon (Paul Biya, 2008); Burundi (Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015), Guinea (Alpha Condé in 2011), Djibouti (Ismaïl Omar Guellah in 2010) and Republic of Congo (Denis Sa Sou Nguesso in 2015). The varying scenarios across Africa suggest that there are several factors that come into play and that affect presidents' endeavours to extend their hold on power. Power balances within the executive and the ruling party, the strength of the parliamentary majority (particularly in cases of coalition cabinets), the role of the military, and the pressures from the international community and from the civil society all have a bearing on whether a president succeeds or fails (Dulani, 2011; Tull and Simons, 2017; Yarwood, 2016; Posner and Young, 2018).

Research is clearly needed to identify the frames, resources, and political opportunity structures that contribute to enhance the success of pro-democracy movements. Senegal is a relevant case for such an endeavour. It is one of Africa's few liberal democracies until recently, and is part of the larger continental trend of protest against presidential third-bid. Furthermore, it is a case worthy of study given its long tradition of mobilisation youth political participation. Indeed, the socio-political history of Senegal is marked by episodes of youth protests against how various president since independence have handled public policies, and major political and social crisis (Diouf and Fredericks, 2013; Diop, 2013a, 2013b; Dahou and Foucher, 2004).

This was the case with the student movement of May 1968, during which the foundations of President Léopold Sédar Senghor's regime were strongly shaken. His successor, President Abdou Diouf, faced several major social and political crises during his 19 years as head of state, notably in 1988, 1989, 1993, and culminating in 2000 with his electoral defeat that marked the first democratic changeover in Senegal. For example, the *set setal* phenomenon[1] followed the tragic events arising from the Senegalese-Mauritanian dispute of 1989, when there was a need

to somehow "cleanse the Senegalese space" that had been soiled by the killings (Diouf, 2002; Diouf and Fredericks, 2013). This period was marked by dynamics of contestation and mistrust of political powers, a latent form of criticism, of sensitisation through the language of rap in the context of the *bul faale* (don't worry) years (1990s) and through a more direct and active engagement in reaction to a clearer rejection of political power, in the image of the "unhealthy youth" that seriously shook the foundations of Abdou Diouf's power in the elections of 1988 and of 1993, before overthrowing them in 2000. Young people played a leading role in all the episodes of contestation against Abdou Diouf's regime. His years in power can be described as the "years of fire", so strong was the protest of young people against him in a context of generalised economic crisis accentuated by the application of structural adjustment policies.

During his long conquest of power, Abdoulaye Wade always presented himself as the "candidate of the youth". In 2000, after a long period of protest and mobilisation in which pupils, students and urban youth paid a heavy price, Wade was elected by the youth (Dimé, 2018). It is therefore not surprising that his accession to power raised high hopes among students, the unemployed, young people working in the informal sector, unemployed graduates, etc. Yet, after two terms in office during which a flourishing of programmes and structures targeting youth were created with disappointing results, the rupture quickly set in and culminated in the strong opposition to his candidacy for a third term in 2011. Wade's inability to respond to the huge social demand from young people was one of the elements that generated a strong sense of disillusionment and exasperation among this segment of his historical and loyal electorate. He was therefore "defeated" in 2012 by young people whose anger and disenchantment with his regime were captured, channelled, and amplified by the *Y'en a marre* movement.

In this context, the emergence of *Y'en a marre* is part of a long tradition of citizen's mobilisation and youth political involvement in politics. The protest they led against Wade administration were extremely important, and had a deep impact in the course of events including the relationship between the state and young people, modes of political engagement, and civic mobilisation among young people.

This chapter combines framing and political opportunity approaches to better understand the emergence and outcome of the *Y'en a marre*. Framing refers to the way movement actors present their message to the world and create resonance to attain their political goals (Benford and Snow, 2000). In this sense movement actors may engage in strategic framing actions such as making an issue more salient (amplification), connecting issues that were previously unrelated (bridging), producing new world views (transformation), or embracing new agendas (extension) to attain their political goals (Benford and Snow, 2000).

Political opportunity structures refer to a broad range of conditions that may encourage or discourage collective and thus, they affect the repertoires of action, the level of mobilisation, and the outcomes of social movements (Tarrow, 1998; Meyer, 2004; Giugni, 2009). Some examples include degree of openness or closure of the political system, the state of alliances within the political field, the relays available to the protesting groups within the political-administrative system, and

the type of response provided by the political system (Neveu, 2015; Sanches, 2022).

Building on these two approaches our argument is two-fold. First, *Y'en a marre* benefited from the political opportunities resulting from political openness, favourable media coverage, a legacy of institutionalised pro-democracy movements that created discursive opportunities that is cultural resonance, with the activist demands. Second, we argue that framing strategies, in particular the grammar of indocility, the slogans, and the *wolofisaton* of the vocabulary helped amplify and create resonance with the movement's goals.

To test this claim, we rely on qualitative data and methods. It was based on direct observation during various activities of the *Y'en a marre* since 2011 (public demonstrations, meetings, awareness campaigns, mobilisations at the time of elections, etc.). Another source of data is the written production of *Y'en a marre* (press releases, proceedings of the popular university of citizen engagement) as well as its "digital footprint" (tweets, Facebook messages, YouTube videos). However, the bulk of the material comes from a series of individual semi-structured interviews with leaders and members of the *Y'en a marre* movement over a period from 2018 to 2020. The interviews were held in French and Wolof and translated by the author.

Y'en a marre, a catalyst for socio-political protest in Senegal

23 June 2011 is a landmark date in Senegal's young and tumultuous socio-political history. On this day, violent urban riots set fire to Dakar as well as inland cities such as Thiès, Mbour, Saint-Louis, Kaolack, or Louga. They forced the ruling power to back down on a constitutional reform project rejected by its detractors because it was designed to pave the way for what the media, opposition parties, and a fringe of civil society have described as a "monarchical devolution of power scheme". This violent protest took the Wade regime by surprise because of its suddenness, its scale, and its mode of organisation. It served as an outlet for the frustration that was widely expressed on websites devoted to Senegalese news. A group of rappers and journalists who called themselves the *Y'en a marre* movement emerged in January 2011 (Demarest, 2016; Veilleux, 2021) and quickly took centre stage to capture the anger that the people wanted to express through this mobilisation against Abdoulaye Wade's third candidacy. *Y'en a marre* is a collective of young rappers, most of whom were at the foundation of the movement, which had given itself the mandate to be the catalyst of the youth revolt against the power of Abdoulaye Wade and eventually his departure from power because, in their opinion, he was constitutionally disqualified from participating in the presidential election scheduled in February 2012.

A powerful cry of anger and revolt has thus risen from June 2011 among the urban youth to decline its disillusionment with President Wade on whom it had placed a lot of hope at the time of his election after several decades of socialist management of power. This youthful feeling of being "fed up" was also expressed in order to express the frustration of being forced to work in a perpetual galley

(Diop, 2013a, 2013b) but also to declare their struggle for the birth of what the rappers Keur Gui, Fou Malade and Simon, the movement's flag-bearers, call the New Type of Senegalese (NTS), the New National Order (NON), in short, the emergence of a new and strong citizen consciousness among young Senegalese.

The riots were repeated a week later in reaction to the unbearable power cuts in what the Dakar press dubbed "electricity riots". These popular uprisings, which caused fears of the worst during the end of June 2011, were only the beginning of a socio-political protest whose violent character only faded after the proclamation of the results of the first round. The election campaign for the first round was marked by a climate of tension and scenes of violence, especially in Dakar. This had a strong influence on the results of the first round, which showed a disavowal of President Wade and the transfer of hopes for change to candidate Macky Sall. The latter was to face President Wade in a second round that was largely won by Macky Sall. Rather than a vote for change, it was above all a vote of rejection of a system and of not respecting one's word.

The young people of *Y'en a marre* have assumed a decisive responsibility in the occurrence of this second alternation in Senegal even if we can already point out the "absence of chemistry" between them and the new president Macky Sall. It must be noted that the intrusion of *Y'en a marre* in the political game and its desire to play a major role in it, symbolise for the current Senegalese youth its desire to be the catalyst of social, political and generational changes, especially in the mode of governance, especially in a context of the double failure of the traditional elites – political and maraboutic (Diop and Diouf, 1999) – and the inefficiency of development programmes to overcome the many challenges facing young people: the persistent problem of unemployment, recurrent disruptions in the education system, especially in universities (numerous strikes, student violence, etc.), and the lack of a clear vision of the future of the country (Kassé, 2011).

Y'a en a marre was a reaction born of an awareness that has arisen in an urban context marked by electricity cuts and a series of land and financial scandals. The founders of the movement highlight these elements when they retrace the events of its birth. Fadel Barro, a journalist by profession and one of the founding members of *Y'a en a marre*, recounts the conditions, at first sight banal, in which the movement was founded:

> One evening in January 2011, […]. I was with Thiat and Kilifeu, the rappers from Keur Gui with other friends, drinking tea and discussing things of life… when suddenly we found ourselves in the dark because the electricity had just been cut off. It was another one of those many power cuts at SENELEC [the national electricity company of Senegal]. Nobody could work in Dakar any more. Everyone was fed up. Even the imams, elderly people, mobilized against these cuts. Our discussions soon turned to the cuts and what needed to be done to put an end to them. I reproached the rappers for doing nothing but singing and for not getting involved to make things change. My rapper friends fought back and the discussion was very passionate. We came to the

> conclusion that it is the power in place that is responsible for this situation and that something had to be done to change things. We told ourselves that we were fed up with sitting on our hands. That's how *Y'en a marre* was born. When the electricity came back around 4 in the morning, we sent our first communiqué by email as the *Y'en a marre* collective. I knew how things worked with the media.

Following its birth in January 2011, it is the urban riots of June that will provide the collective *Y'en a marre* with the opportunity to make itself known to the Senegalese, to pose as "intrepid opponents" of the Wade regime and the intention that is then lent to him to transfer power to his son, Karim Wade, but also the opportunity to broaden its recruitment bases for their movement and to decline the "new citizen consciousness" (interview with a leader of *Y'en a marre* in September 2018 in Dakar) of which they claim to be the bearers.

The conditions in which *Y'en a marre* was born and the clear objectives of political and citizen demands that its founders set themselves, put it in a position of clear break with the *bul faale* generation[2] (Havard, 2001) in which the rappers associated with it were more in a position of social criticism and awareness of young people through their lyrics. With *Y'en marre*, we are faced with organised initiatives of political demand which, very quickly, find allies in certain parts of Dakar civil society mobilised against a third candidacy of Abdoulaye Wade.

Wade's power, aware of the threat posed by *Y'en a marre*, tried to thwart it very early on by unsuccessful attempts at recovery (attempts at corruption), by the strategy of intimidation (arrests, beating up leaders in police stations, accusations of disturbing public order, etc.) but above all by the creation of a movement of young people favourable to the president called *Y'en a envie* (we feel like it) and the promotion of rappers such as Pacotille to counter the protest speech of *Y'en a marre*. The infiltration within *Y'en a marre* and the strategies to discredit it did not give the expected results: *Y'en a envie* never succeeded in creating a real mobilising impact despite the financial means allocated to young people, rappers, and musicians chosen to carry this discourse of interference by *Y'en a marrists*. On the contrary, the tense context of the presidential election will provide him with the opportunity to radicalise it and to arouse greater support among urban youth.

The *Y'en marre* movement did not prevent Wade from running in the 2012 elections, it profoundly shaped the election outcomes and contributed to his defeat by Macky Sall. The following section explores the framing strategies and POS that help explain this outcome.

Wrong! Not forced! *Lu ëpp turu*[3]*! Pareel*[4]**: Idioms and mobilisation practices of the *Y'en a marre* movement**

Based on an analysis of the trajectory of *Y'en a marre* in Senegal, we analyse its linguistic practices, framing, and mobilisation strategies in the field through the prism of crossbreeding and hybridity. These two categories represent a kind of expression in Dakar which is territorially marked and which spreads to other

Senegalese urban centres, thus creating an urban culture of dissent based on two levers: the young people who are its actors and the Wolof language which is its tool of expression.

Declensions of a grammar of indocility

Y'en a marre's vocabulary of indocility, as expressed by its eponymous slogan, is perceived as revealing the mutations underway among urban youth in the sense of a cosmopolitanism that can be explained by a multiplicity of identities and the plurality of their referential schemas. Therefore, going beyond the slogan, what does the vocalisation of *Y'en a marre*. Casting and exploring this question are a way of emphasising the modes of declination and the verbalisation praxis of citizen engagement by paying attention to the linguistic practices of the movement through its linguistic alternation, its communication strategy, the content of its speeches, and the choice of its slogans. The idioms of contestation are articulated with street practices based on the art of staging and the search for the "buzz effect".

The double mastery of the art of staging and verbal truculence by the *Y'en a marre* movement undoubtedly comes from the profile of the core of its founding members, mainly journalists, artists, and rappers. Moreover, *Y'en a marre* is seen as a dynamic of affirmation of the socio-political role of rappers. This posture of contestation crystallises in an art of "spectacularization" as well as in an anti-conformist discursive positioning and a rejection of the "system" and the "establishment". *Y'en a marre* has opted for a strategy of systematic media presence, with a propensity to create a "buzz effect" around its slogans, its critical discourse and its acts of defiance towards the ruling power. The media are thus used to relay the demands and positions of the movement and guarantee it a notoriety that may not reflect its real political representation. An illustration of this situation can be found in the mobilisation activity organised by *Y'en a marre* on Friday 7 April 2017 which targeted the gathering of one million Senegalese dressed in black to express their anger towards the policies of President Macky Sall's regime. The demonstration also aimed to castigate the use of justice for partisan purposes because *yoon angi jèng* (justice is no longer impartial) and finally to forcefully underline that *lu ëppe tuuru* (too much is too much).

In the end, the demonstration did not reach the figure of one million, with the most realistic estimates putting the number of demonstrators in Obelisk Square at one hundred thousand, but the desired media effect had been achieved since the movement was able to occupy the front pages of most newspapers and broadcast media. In this way, it seeks to pose as a figure of "counter-power, as opponents of principle, opponents of conscience aiming to conquer and safeguard democratic gains" in the words of a leader of the movement during an interview in August 2018 in Dakar.

As a mode of citizen protest, *Y'en a marre* has distinguished itself by its ability to create idioms of dissent and citizen affirmation drawn from the French and Wolof languages. The most popular is certainly its eponymous slogan *Y'en a marre*.

The slogans launched by the movement also flourish, especially at the height of the protest against President Wade's candidacy, which was the spark plug of the movement: *Faux! Not forced! My card, my weapon! New Type of Senegalese (NTS), Don't touch the Constitution, Citizen's Worksites, Esprit Y'a en a marre* (members of the movement), *Dafa doy* (Enough!), *Gor ca wax ja* (Keep your word).

The art of staging was expressed through campaigns designed to move public opinion. This is for example the case of the campaign called "Complaint against the Government of Senegal" through which the movement wanted to express and denounce vigorously the evils that afflict the Senegalese people. At the same time, the movement is broad enough to include the different social strata on whose behalf the movement justifies its citizen involvement: street vendors, the unemployed, young people, housewives, students and pupils, farmers, families who are victims of floods, etc. The movement is also active in the field of education and training. These are field projects carried out by the professional structure set up within *Y'en a marre* to implement development projects in partnership with NGOs thanks to funding from the European Union or NGOs such as OXFAM. One of the movement's flagship projects was the one entitled *Sunu Gox* (my community in Wolof) which was implemented from 2016 to 2019 in neighbourhoods in the suburbs of Pikine and Guediawaye. The main objective of this project was to support the *Y'en a marre* movement in its capacity to contribute to the strengthening of citizenship, by mobilising the population of the Dakar suburbs, particularly young people to improve the living environment, enhance public spaces, and raise awareness on the environment thanks to the use of social media and urban cultures (street art, hip-hop).

"Wolofising" the vocabulary of civic engagement

Most of the slogans of the *Y'en a marre* movement are in Wolof: *Dox ak sa gox* (to be in tune with one's city); *Sama askan, sama bakkan* (my people, my life); *Lu ëpp tuuru* (too much is too much); *Daas fanaanal* (*to make* weapons ready); *Fanaane daas* (to make sure weapons are ready); *Jaay sa carte jaay sa ngor la* (to mint one's *card*, to sell one's conscience); *Gor sa wax ja, dige bor la* (to keep one's word), *Leul* (foundation of the movement), *Baatu askan wi* (the voice of the people), *Wallu askan wi* (the people's share); and so on.

The movement has drawn on the Wolof language for a good part of its striking formulas to certainly stick to the linguistic mutations under way in Senegal, which show a decline in French and a growing dynamic of *wolofisation*. However, it is an urban Wolof which, in addition to its abundant lexical creativity, alternates and borrows from French, English, Arabic and other local languages in varying structures. All these parameters speak volumes about the reception instance targeted by *Y'en a marre*. Through its choice of Wolof expressions, *Y'en a marre* undoubtedly wanted to establish a kind of complicity and convergence with young people from working-class backgrounds, suburban dwellers, resourceful people, etc. The latter undoubtedly wanted to establish a kind of complicity and convergence with young people from working-class backgrounds, suburban

dwellers, resourceful people, etc. It is also a question of distancing oneself from the elite "system". This symbolic break is completed by the choice of clothing around Amilcar Cabral's cap, ostensibly worn by the movement's coordinator, who even made it his distinctive attire.

The linguistic practices adopted by *Y'en a marre* show the testing logic of hybridity, crossbreeding, and cosmopolitanism. The vocabulary of *Y'en a marre's* dissent can be read as a marker of the mutations in the linguistic practices of urban youth in the sense of a linguistic cosmopolitanism which can be explained by a piling up of their belongings, a superimposition of their identities, and an entanglement of their referential schemas.

Y'en a marre is mainly made up of rappers whose fascination with "world culture" and the expression of their ideas in English is well known. However, this movement did not use idioms drawn from the English language. This contrasts with the language of young urban people and the compositions of some Senegalese rappers who do not hesitate to fill their texts and speeches with English expressions. This is perhaps a dividing line between this movement and the hip-hop movement. Contrary to the latter, *Y'en a marre* is aimed at a sought-after audience which, in this case, is rather made up of the politicised social stratum, the more or less politically aware middle class, and the Senegalese social class whose precarious living conditions divert attention from political life.

Y'en a marre has always endeavoured to launch short, imaginative, and punchy formulas that facilitate the conditions for their revival and circulation in the public space. In its mobilisation strategies, *Y'en a marre* values the creative and interactive involvement of the public. This is done through participatory events such as *Problem Fair and Solutions Fair.* This event is based on generally allegorical staging and speeches by corporations, groups, and individuals who expose the social and professional problems they encounter and the possible solutions they propose. The activity thus serves as a symbolic outlet to denounce the responsibility of public authorities for these problems and their inertia in finding lasting solutions.

Political opportunity structures: Discursive opportunities, political openness, and favourable media coverage

Y'en a marre is a movement that has taken advantage of political opportunities to express and defend political demands.

First, an historical analysis allows us to observe discursive political opportunities, generated by prior pro-democracy movements. As previously shown Senegal has a track record of protest against the incumbent president, which the movement inherited. Additionally, we find that prevailing notions of citizenship and national identity created discursive opportunities to increase the public resonance with the movements' key messages. These activist movements tried to find an ideological anchor in pan-Africanism, the utopia embodied by Thomas Sankara and the revitalisation of the dreams of the founding fathers and heralds of pan-Africanism: Kwame Nkrumah, Patrice Lumumba, Julius Nyerere, Amilcar Cabral, Cheikh Anta Diop, etc. (Dimé, Kapagama, Soré and Touré, 2021).

Second, the political openness was also crucial: freedom of expression, a tradition of protest, the democratic regime, freedom of the press created a friendlier environment for protest when compared to authoritarian regimes. This combined with youth fatigue with the political offer, and the wear and tear of political parties created favourable circumstance for protesters aspirations. Movement leaders have been able to capture this anger in an attempt to transform the ways in which young people are engaged through spaces other than political parties in order to organise a "moral economy of protest" (Fassin, 2015).

Finally, we observe that a typical form of urban mobilisation, *Y'en a marre* based its mobilisation on an unbridled use of information and communication technologies and on its ability to seize the awareness and mobilisation opportunities provided by social networks (Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube). The movement has also relied on a thunderous presence in the so-called "traditional" media (radio, television). This has provided it with media coverage that has greatly contributed to its popularity even beyond the Senegalese borders[5]. *Y'en a marre* continues to arouse the curiosity of the media, even the international media, as many reports are devoted to it by the foreign press for what was originally presented as an unprecedented experience of citizen engagement on the African continent. This contributes to the notoriety of the movement on the international scene.

Thus, citizen engagement can then be analysed as a means of social and political ascension that confers media visibility and international fame. Some critics of *Y'en a marre* consider its citizen mobilisation has never been totally disinterested because, in a context of scarce jobs, they appear to be a means of access to social success, which has enabled some members to gain notoriety, travel abroad, and even hold lucrative professional positions so as not to remain confined to the status of "eternal penniless activists".

Y'en a marre: From protest to institutionalised movement

Since 2019 the movement has been a regular presence in civil society. For instance, resorting to their repertoire of action (e.g. staging) during the campaign for the presidential election of 27 February 2019. But here *Y'en a marre* utilised a more conventional approach, mimicking other civil society organisations. It invited the five presidential candidates to discuss their position on issues such as agriculture, gender mainstreaming, or education. With a lot of publicity because of the notoriety of its leaders and their mediatic exposure, *Y'en a marre* has for a long time presented its programme called *Wallu askan wi* (the people's share) as a key moment in the 2019's election campaign. The five candidates were thus expected to come and engage in a citizen dialogue with the participants in this event. In the end, only two of the candidates stood, namely Ousmane Sonko and Madické Niang. The activity had been programmed at the Obelisk Square, which had become the Place de la Nation before being relocated to the Douta Seck House of Culture.

A constant in *Y'en a marre's* strategies of action is to tactically occupy symbolic sites such as Obelisk Square, Independence Square, Soweto Square, African

Remembrance Square, while at the same time being territorially anchored in the suburbs. In addition to this spatial investment, another break in the emergence of the new type of Senegalese that the movement wants to bring about is the appropriation of national symbols such as the national flag. It is noteworthy that it was at the very moment when politicians seemed to renounce patriotic rhetoric that the protest activists of *Y'en a marre* multiplied the displays in the public space with the national flag and the national anthem.

All of this may ultimately lead one to think that the movement emerged by secreting a "counter-culture" that holds to this: with *Y'en a marre,* the spectacle of protest is inseparable from protest, as highlighted by the musically-charged processions that have been deployed to incite young people to massively withdraw their electoral cards. Entitled *pareel* (be ready), this campaign was organised on the eve of the start of the electoral campaign before it was quickly banned by the authorities.

After several years that have enabled it to establish itself as a leading player on the Senegalese socio-political scene and to contribute to the consolidation of a dynamic of citizen affirmation in Africa, *Y'en a marre* is currently at crossroads. The movement gives the impression that it is undergoing a backlash from the waves of its protest positioning. It seems that it has to fight against the perverse effects of a trivialisation and professionalisation of its action. The movement currently gives the impression that it is moving in a dynamic of *NGOization*[6] and in a role as a broker of citizen engagement. *Y'en a marre* continues to reap the rewards of its investment in protest through the mobilisation of funding from international NGOs and programmes to promote democracy and citizenship in Africa. Some of the movement's critics draw their arguments from this position of financial resource capture. With the accumulation of fund-raising and redistribution operations, the leaders of *Y'en a marre* are less and less perceived as legitimate indignant but rather as rentiers of citizen engagement. When interviewed, a leader of *Y'en a marre* stated:

> Today, our generation is facing with the same problems and we must invent our own answers. How can we formulate and articulate a project capable of leading African peoples towards fulfilment in a daily life that does not allow them to dream? How can African youth, who are underemployed and uneducated, who are hungry and thirsty, and who do not have access to medical care, formulate anything other than a protest against the unjust order in which they are kept by their own governments in complicity with imperialist powers of all kinds?

A spontaneous reaction following an awareness, then a cry of protest against a regime and its excesses, *Y'en a marre* inaugurates a new chapter in its short history, that of institutionalisation as a structure of civil society, with its burdens, the risks that a massification of its bases inexorably engenders in terms of internal power struggles. Conflicting logics as to the meanings and expectations linked to this citizen engagement, not to mention the risks linked to attempts to reclaim it by

the new power and the appetites that the funds allocated to support this experience of citizen organisation may arise.

The collective currently seems to be in the good graces of donors and NGOs supporting African civil society and is increasingly arousing the curiosity of outsiders (embassies of Western countries, media, human rights organisations, researchers, African activists, etc.). *Y'en a marre* officials are thus proud to have had the current French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laurent Fabius, moved to their premises located in the popular district named *Parcelles assainies* in Dakar. They are also proud to have had audiences with personalities such as the billionaire Georges Soros but above all to have been part of the short list of civil society actors to have met President Obama during his visit to Senegal in June 2013. The leaders of the movement are also regularly consulted by the media to express themselves on current socio-political issues. Recent events in Dakar, such as the water shortage and the controversies arising from the decision to authorise the construction of the Turkish embassy on the Western Corniche, have led the movement to break out of the silence in which its leaders were walled in and to return to the posture of criticism of government action.

This criticism focuses on President Sall's failure to keep his promises and the feeling that "things have not really changed" since Wade's departure. Having lost, with the fall of Wade, what was the quintessence of its mobilisation dynamic, *Y'en a marre* finds itself in a posture of procrastination, of updating its demands, but above all in a phase of reactivating its protest strategy in the face of the difficulty of identifying a unifying and mobilising theme while disillusionment and frustration seem to be winning over most of its members. In history, popular youth initiatives aimed at changing behaviour, such as *set setal*, did not last long despite the ambitious objectives associated with their birth.

Y'en a marre seemed to find at the beginning of 2020 the protest flame that made its popularity thanks to the mobilisations against the increase in the cost of electricity that affected the majority of Senegalese households in early December 2019 despite the promises of public authorities against such an increase. These mobilisations gave birth to a struggle collective called *Nio lank* (we say no) *nio bagne* (we refuse) of which *Y'en a marre* is an active member. The weekly marches to denounce the rise provided *Y'en a marre* with an opportunity to come out of its "torpor", to rediscover the virulence of its critical discourse and thus to revive activism on the ground. These mobilisations, as well as the denunciations of the scandals surrounding the oil and gas exploitation contracts within the framework of a civil society platform called *Aar li ñu bokk* (preserving our common goods), offered *Y'en a marre* a marvellous opportunity for its new coordinator, Aliou Sané[7], to return to the logic of protest at the heart of the movement's history, identity, and strategy.

Conclusion

Y'en a marre powerful revolt against Abdoulaye Wade eventually influenced his departure from power and reshaped the relationship between the youth and politics. Taking into account the movement's popularity and the originality of its

action, it must be recognised that it became a major actor in Senegal and even beyond thanks to its capacity to be the catalyst of a trans-African dynamic of citizen mobilisation. *Y'en a marre* form of mobilisation and the background of its members contributed to arousing the sympathy and support of different sections of the population. This, in turn, has increased its capacity for mobilisation. The fear that the movement inspires other countries is quite revealing of the nuisance capacities that are rightly or wrongly attributed to it.

Adding to these factors we found that political opportunity structures and framing strategies were crucial in their political endeavours. Those in charge of *Y'en a marre* explored political opening, discursive opportunities, and media cover to their advantage and used iconoclastic discursive positioning, the manipulation of dissonant, captivating, and mobilising slogans to further amplify their message.

After 2011 the movement would face divergent developments. On the one side, external support was crucial for their institutionalisation as an organisation. *Y'en a marre* members managed to mobilise significant international support and/or attention from world leaders such as Barak Obama, or billionaire George Soros. The multiplication of research on *Y'en a marre* and the financial resources that its leaders manage to attract from NGOs and donors seduced by, in particular, the originality of its modes and repertoire of collective action, are other indicators of the movement's success.

On the other side, Y'en *a marre* seems to be looking for a new lease of life. The movement thus seems to be exposed to the repercussions of a trivialisation and institutionalisation of its action. It gives the impression of moving in a position of "rentier of citizen engagement" as well as in a process of *NGOization*. This trend is particularly embodied by the *Y'en a marre* movement, which has succeeded in positioning itself as a prime contractor for social mobilisation projects for young people in the framework of partnerships with NGOs such as GRET, OXFAM, and LEAD Africa.

At the beginning of March 2021, Senegal experienced unprecedented riots that surprised by their violence and suddenness. A cry of anger has thus arisen from young people exasperated by both the restrictive measures and the multidimensional hardship to which they are exposed. As in the episodes of socio-political crisis that Senegal has experienced since the birth of the movement, the members of *Y'en a marre* have been at the forefront. Its leaders showed great visibility at the time of the riots in order to decipher the message sent by the demonstrators, as if to show that *Y'en a marre* has lost none of its virulence and its capacity to mobilise and cause socio-political harm. The upcoming elections in 2022 and 2023 and particularly the presidential election of 2024 will constitute other decisive moments in the evolution of the movement and in the socio-political roles it seeks to play on the Senegalese socio-political scene.

The case of Senegal offers important lessons to understand the dynamics of protests against president's third-term bid in Africa. It reveals the importance of creative communication strategies –buzz words, mix of languages, permanent media presence, and use of social media – for effective mobilisation. Arguably activists also benefited from conditions that favour collective action, such as a

long history of youth activism, political openness, and media pluralism. If Macky Sall decides to run for a third-term in 2024, this would once again represent a serious test for Senegalese democracy but also for the mobilisation and action capacities of political parties: *Y'en a marre* and other movements have clearly expressed their opposition to his candidature in 2024. Everything seems to be in place to relive the scenario of 2012.

Notes

1. *Set setal* literally means "to be clean and make clean" in Wolof. The expression refers to community activities of street cleaning and neighbourhood beautification. The phenomenon was particularly widespread in 1989 and 1990. During this period, young people, especially in Dakar, were in a spirit of competition to initiate cleanliness activities in their neighbourhood.
2. In Wolof *bul faale* can be literally translated as "let it be" or "don't worry".
3. *Lu ëpp turu*: Proverb from the Wolof language meaning "too much is too much".
4. Pareel: Wolof word which means: "be ready".
5. 'Au Sénégal, les rappeurs de "Y'en a marre" se veulent les porte-parole de la contestation', *Le Monde*, 4 July 2011. Available at: https://www.lemonde.fr/international/article/2011/07/04/au-senegal-les-rappeurs-de-y-en-a-marre-se-veulent-les-porte-paroles-de-la-contestation_1543169_3210.html (Accessed: 2 October 2021). 'Y'en a marre, le Balai Citoyen et Lucha primés', *BBC News*, 4 May 2016. Available at: https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region/2016/05/160504_consience_awards_amnesty_international (Accessed: 2 October 2021).
6. By this term, we seek to designate the process of institutionalisation that leads citizen movements to become a professional structure oriented towards the capture of resources, especially financial resources, circulating in the development market.
7. Aliou Sané became the new coordinator of *Y'en a marre* in place of Fadel Barro on the occasion of the *leul* (assizes) of the movement that took place on 23 and 24 March 2019. Barro has been the best-known face of the movement since its birth in 2011. Before being elected as coordinator of *Y'en a marre*, Aliou Sané was the movement's executive secretary. He was therefore in charge of the professional structure that dealt with development actions in collaboration with NGOs.

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5 NOTHING WILL BE AS BEFORE? THE 2014 INSURRECTION IN BURKINA FASO AND ITS POLITICAL IMPACT

Eloïse Bertrand

Introduction

In the early morning of 30 October 2014, a crowd of protestors marched on the National Assembly of Burkina Faso and set it on fire. That day, legislators were due to vote on a bill amending the Constitution's Article 37 – setting presidential term limits – to allow Blaise Compaoré to run for re-election the following year. Compaoré's attempt to tamper with term limits was not uncommon: between 1990 and 2010, fifteen African presidents made similar attempts, with only three failing to get the legislation through (Dulani, 2011). In stark contrast, Compaoré's move not only failed – it significantly backfired. After nearly three decades in power, a popular uprising forced him to resign on 31 October 2014, paving the way for a political transition.

This chapter analyses the 2014 insurrection in Burkina Faso and answers three key questions: how did these protests overthrow Compaoré's regime? How transformative has this insurrection been? What does that tell us about popular protests and their transformative power more broadly? My contribution focuses on three inter-connected factors, which I analyse following a political opportunity approach. Political opportunity structures cover a wide range of formal and informal factors – cultural, political, historical, etc. – which are perceived and exploited by movement actors, therefore opening a "window of opportunity" in which protest stakeholders act to achieve their political goals (see Sanches, 2022, in this volume).

The first political opportunity structure I identify is the historical legacy of past social movements. Previous anti-Compaoré protests – starting in the late 1990s – contributed to cumulative learning and alliances, and created political openings, while more ancient experiences provided discursive political opportunity structures that were seized by protestors in 2014. The second political opportunity structure I analyse is the increased cooperation among opposition parties and between them and new civil society groups. This was facilitated by historical legacies, but also by the establishment of an institutional framework for the political opposition: the *Chef de File de l'Opposition Politique* (CFOP). The third political opportunity structure I address is the emergence of a consensual agenda, building upon broad grievances but spear-headed by a single issue: preventing Compaoré

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from extending his rule again. The combination of these three dynamics fostered cooperation along a strong anti-incumbent cleavage simultaneously grounded in long-standing grievances and powerful ideals, and catalysed in a single-issue: protecting the term limits blocking Compaoré's way. Ultimately, this chapter argues that the 2014 insurrection allowed significant, if incremental, strides towards more democratic and inclusive politics, and can provide valuable lessons for political protests elsewhere in Africa and beyond.

This contribution draws from extensive qualitative fieldwork in Burkina Faso. It involved over sixty semi-structured interviews conducted between 2017 and 2020 in Ouagadougou and by phone with opposition politicians and civil society activists. This was complemented by a review of media coverage and written accounts of the events before, during, and after the 2014 insurrection. Quotes from interviews were translated from French by the author and anonymised.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, I briefly recount the events that led to the Burkinabè insurrection, and place these events within the context of term limit protests across the continent. The second section identifies three political opportunity structures that best explain how the uprising prevented the constitutional revision, and forced Compaoré to resign. I then look at the longer-term impact of the insurrection, focusing on what the subsequent political transition was able to achieve (or not) and its legacies on political dynamics and institutions. The chapter's conclusion briefly places the case of Burkina Faso in comparative perspective.

From term limit protests to an insurrection

Term limits became a common feature across Africa in the early 1990s as new constitutions were adopted, in order to tackle the presidentialism and incumbency advantage that had prevented democratic consolidation in many countries (Dulani, 2011). Since then, many incumbents have attempted – with more or less success – to alter these provisions and extend their tenure. This trend is far from unique to Africa, though it is particularly prevalent on the continent (Baturo and Elgie, 2019). A first generation of incumbents repealed term limits in the early 2000s, including Yoweri Museveni in Uganda and Omar Bongo in Gabon, or attempted to do so (e.g. Frederick Chiluba in Malawi and Olusegun Obasanjo in Nigeria).

A decade later, a new cohort of presidents considered, attempted, and (in some cases) succeeded in altering or bypassing this provision in a number of countries, generally triggering popular protests (Yarwood, 2016; Mangala, 2020). The Burkinabè protests were successful in preventing Compaoré from seeking another term – contrary to the cases of Rwanda, Burundi, and Côte d'Ivoire, where incumbents were re-elected, and Senegal and (at least on paper) the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where they were defeated at the polls (on the particular case of DRC, see Berwouts and Reyntjens, 2019, and Polet, 2022, in this volume).

In Burkina Faso, debates over the term limit issues started long before the 2014 insurrection. The modification of the Constitution's Article 37 was already

discussed even before Compaoré was re-elected for his fourth – and legally last – term in 2010, prompting opposition parties and civil society activists to organise against these plans (Eizenga and Villalón, 2020, pp. 155–156). Earnest popular mobilisation was triggered in June 2013 when the government announced the creation of a senate (Harsch, 2017, p. 196). This senate was, at best, seen as a costly and superfluous institution in a context of stark economic disparities and pressing development needs. At worst, it was considered a ploy by Compaoré to extend his presidential tenure yet again, through securing a legislative path to amend the Constitution (as his control over the nomination of senators, either appointed by Compaoré or indirectly elected, would guarantee him a parliamentary super-majority) or positioning his unpopular brother as President of the Senate, making him his institutional successor (*Jeune Afrique*, 2013).

At that rally, two musicians stood on a podium, brandished brooms, and called upon protestors to rise up and clean the country of corruption. These were Serge Bambara (better known as Smockey) and Karim Sama (Sams'K Le Jah). Their action prefaced the creation of *Balai Citoyen* (literally "Citizen's Broom") a new movement mobilising young people in the capital and across the country against Compaoré's regime (Wienkoop, 2020, p. 7). Though *Balai Citoyen* was the most prominent anti-Compaoré movement, in large part due to the popularity and international visibility of its founders, other civil society movements and coalitions emerged with a similar agenda, including the *Comité Anti-Référendum* (CAR), the *Mouvement du 21 Avril* (M21), and the *Front de Résistance Citoyenne* (FRC).

Over the following year, opposition parties and civil society activists held a series of protest against the creation of a senate, the organisation of a constitutional referendum, and the modification of term limits. Despite their differences, they agreed on one thing: Compaoré had overstayed his welcome and had to leave power. Some of his long-term allies concurred. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré and several other key figures from the ruling *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (CDP) defected, created the *Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès* (MPP), and joined the opposition in January 2014.

On 21 October 2014, the government tabled a vote to revise the Constitution's Article 37 setting presidential term limits. The *Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Fédération/Rassemblement Démocratique Africain* (ADF/RDA), a moderate party allied with Compaoré that had until then opposed the constitutional amendment, announced they would be supporting the bill. This guaranteed the two-third majority Compaoré needed to alter term limits, without a referendum. This prompted an escalation of protests, which culminated on 30 October 2014 in the seizure and ransacking of the National Assembly, the CDP headquarters, and other buildings associated with the regime.

That day, Compaoré announced he was pulling the bill, and promised to step down at the end of his term. This proved to be too little, too late. Emboldened by their success and hardened by the death of several "martyrs" shot by the presidential guard, protestors kept pushing until Compaoré resigned on 31 October 2014. Having lost the support of the army, he fled to neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire. This

opened the door to a political transition, which made inroads into Compaoré's flawed regime, resisted a reactionary coup attempt in September 2015, and organised free elections in November 2015.

The case of Burkina Faso provides an opportunity to unpack how protests can be successful and lead to regime change. Recent research on these events has highlighted the role of several explanatory factors. Ernest Harsch (2016) and Nina-Kathrin Wienkoop (2020) have argued that strategic alliances between opposition parties and social movements were instrumental in allowing this outcome. Sarah Andrews and Lauren Honig (2019) focused on elite defection within the ruling CDP and how it precipitated Compaoré's fall. Vincent Bonnecase (2015), Stan Hagberg and his colleagues (2015), and Peter Brett (2021) highlighted the contradictions between the moral registers of legitimacy and legality that fuelled popular mobilisation. Augustin Loada (2020) showed that democratic institutions were incrementally strengthened, allowing popular resistance to grow against Compaoré's constitutional meddling. These authors shed significant light on these events from different angles. In this chapter, I make a further contribution by analysing what allowed the insurrection to occur – using a political opportunity approach – but also by discussing its longer-term political consequences.

A successful insurrection driven by three key political opportunity structures

An uprising rooted in historical social movements

The occurrence and outcome of the 2014 uprising cannot be fully understood without considering Burkina Faso's historical legacy of activism dating back years, even decades. Previous social movements nurtured networks of activists, entrenched democratic principles, and set up institutional safeguards. All these were instrumental in making the insurrection possible. These legacies were of two sorts. On the one hand, the insurrection was really the culmination of a longer series of protests against Compaoré's regime starting with the assassination of a journalist, Norbert Zongo, in 1998. These past protests allowed the creation of political openings and the organisational strengthening of the anti-Compaoré movement. On the other hand, more ancient events – notably the general strike of January 1966 that ousted the country's first president, and the revolutionary regime of Thomas Sankara (1983–1987) – provided symbols, values, and lessons that nourished the popular mobilisation of 2013–2014. These can be seen as discursive opportunities that increased the movement's chance of success (Giugni, 2009, p. 364).

The protests leading to the 2014 insurrection were not the first significant movement against Compaoré's regime. In fact, an analysis of the insurrection must take previous episodes of popular mobilisation into account. As an international analyst argued, "it is a long crisis that ended in 2014, but started on 13 December 1998 with the death of Norbert Zongo", a well-known investigative

journalist assassinated by the regime.[1] The founder and managing editor of a reputable newspaper, *L'Indépendant*, Zongo had been investigating Compaoré's brother and adviser, François.

Zongo's assassination triggered an unprecedented wave of protests led by a coalition of civil society organisations and opposition parties known as the *Collectif d'Organisations Démocratiques de Masse et de Partis Politiques* (CODMPP). This coalition launched a series of protests demanding the truth in the "Zongo affair" and the end of impunity for the regime's crimes (Loada, 1999; Hilgers and Mazzocchetti, 2006). Even though it did not bring justice for Zongo, this movement dramatically shifted the political ground in Burkina Faso. For the first time, civil society and opposition parties were working together. Zongo's assassination shed light on the repressive face of the regime, forcing so-called apolitical organisations working on democracy promotion to become more engaged. It also led the more radical organisations to agree to work with political parties they did not really trust (Loada 1999).

During the 1990s, opposition parties remained weak and fragmented. They faced severe repression from the regime, illustrated by a human rights activist who stated that "there was no space for the opposition during the first ten years" of Compaoré's regime.[2] The regime also used co-optation, bribes, and infiltrators to foster divisions and discredit opposition politicians. The social movement triggered by Zongo's death gave the political opposition an opportunity to bounce back (Loada, 1999; Sanou, 2010). An activist from a small opposition party explained that "the popular contestation forced the regime to step back, it allowed the opposition to come forward, alongside civil society".[3]

These protests and their aftermath significantly laid the ground for the 2014 events. The movement triggered by the Zongo affair forced Compaoré to undertake some liberalising reforms. This constituted political opening by introducing institutional constraints on the regime and allowing dissenters to organise and operate more effectively. A reform package, negotiated to appease social unrest, modified the proportional representation rules used to allocate parliamentary seats in order to provide a fairer representation of smaller parties, which benefitted the opposition. It also restored the limit of presidential terms to two, a provision which had been included in the 1991 Constitution but removed in 1997 by the CDP-dominated legislature.

Admittedly, Compaoré was soon able to back-track on some of these reforms. As soon as he regained the upper hand, the electoral reform – which had allowed opposition parties to make unprecedented gains in the National Assembly in 2002 and to threaten Compaoré's absolute majority – was quickly reversed (Santiso and Loada, 2003). Yet, the provision of term limits which had been reinstated in the Constitution in 2001 remained untouched. This bought time for Compaoré, who was able to run for a third and fourth term in 2005 and 2010 – on the basis that the 2001 constitutional revision could not apply retroactively. However, the term limits inscribed in the Constitution's Article 37 set a major hurdle to overcome on the longer run, laying the ground for the events unfolding in 2014 (Eizenga and Villalón, 2020).

The Zongo affair also created an opening in the political space, which allowed new actors to come forward. New civil society actors emerged among the urban intellectual and liberal professions, including journalists, scholars, and lawyers. While their tactics were less confrontational than those of older unions and movements, they played an important part in promoting attachment to democratic norms and processes among the population, and making use of existing institutions. The entry of many opposition parties in the National Assembly following the 2002 elections also energised political activity. By the end of the decade, the opposition had secured an institutional status – the CFOP – which provided resources and fostered some degree of united action.

The 2000s were marked by frequent strikes and protests against the rising cost of living, mainly driven by a powerful trade union movement (Engels, 2015). Yet the second real test for Compaoré's regime was the disparate wave of protests and mutinies that broke out in 2011, implicating a wide range of social sectors, including students, magistrates, petty traders, and soldiers (Chouli, 2012). Without coordination or a common platform of demands, protests were disorganised riots at first, then union marches, and finally mutinies within military barracks. Triggers were diverse, but revolved around impunity and economic grievances. This echoed the protests that followed Norbert Zongo's assassination, and built upon the discursive opportunities that had emerged at that time. Compaoré's regime was briefly shaken when his presidential guard started a mutiny, but he ultimately restored his grasp on power through a mix of coercion and co-optation. Opposition parties played only a minor role in this mobilisation, even though they were accused – by the government and protest activists alike – of taking advantage of the crisis to promote themselves. Illustratively, a rally called by the CFOP in Ouagadougou in April 2011 to link up these disparate grievances into a call for Compaoré's resignation only gathered a few hundred people.

Despite this failure, the 2011 crisis can still be considered as a key event foretelling the 2014 uprising. It laid bare the necessity for opposition parties to create synergies with other movements with a high mobilisation capacity, and to connect their political demands to the social and economic grievances running deep among the population. The 2011 crisis also led the regime to open a political dialogue. The government presented this dialogue as a way to ease tensions following the social crisis, but its real purpose appeared to push through a set of political reforms favouring Compaoré, including the creation of a senate and the revision of the Constitution's Article 37. These debates – boycotted by the political parties affiliated with the CFOP – triggered the chain of events leading to the 2014 uprising.

The 2014 insurrection was also shaped by older legacies of uprisings, activism, and revolution at the heart of Burkina Faso's history as a nation. Young activists taking to the streets in 2013–2014 wore T-shirts bearing pictures of former president Thomas Sankara, and *Balai Citoyen* leaders regularly borrowed slogans and imagery from his register (Soré, 2018). Sankara was a young captain that led the Burkinabè Revolution (1983–1987) until he was killed in the coup that brought Compaoré to power (Englebert, 1986; Peterson, 2021). The values of hard work, integrity, and patriotism embodied by the revolutionary leader, and transmitted

through his inflamed speeches (recorded on tape) and the recollection of his numerous initiatives in favour of Burkina Faso's self-development and dignity, were embraced by a new generation of activists, too young to have lived through the revolution but inspired by its ideals (Dragstra, 2018).

Other activists drew parallels with the country's first insurrection, decades earlier: on 3 January 1966, a general strike and massive union-led protests toppled the corrupt regime of Maurice Yaméogo, the first president of what was then Upper Volta (Guirma, 2004; Phelan, 2016). The general strike of 1966 was a key moment in the Burkinabè labour movement's collective memory, and is commemorated by trade unions each year. Though labour organisations were mostly sceptical of the anti-Compaoré protests about the term limits' issue – they advocated for a more radical overhaul of the regime in line with their revolutionary credentials – their parallel mobilisation increased pressure on Compaoré. For example, a union-led general strike over educational reform on 29 October 2014 – scheduled weeks earlier, before the parliamentary vote was tabled for the next day – saw protestors call for Compaoré's resignation. More significantly, unions played a key role in mobilising against a military take-over after the uprising. They had learned the lesson from 1966: when Yaméogo was ousted, the army stepped in to fill the political void – with support from the streets – and never stepped back. In 2014, unions and other civil society organisations rejected the army's attempt to usurp the people's insurrection, and fought off the reactionary coup d'état the following year.

The 2014 insurrection was therefore shaped by historical legacies, which created discursive opportunities, from the revival of Thomas Sankara's historical ideals to the mobilisation of long-standing grievances around impunity and corruption. These legacies also triggered political openings, by setting up institutional constraints to Compaoré's regime, but also by strengthening the movements facing him and fostering cooperation among various forces.

Political allies: Opposition coordination and cooperation

A second political opportunity structure that facilitated the 2014 uprising is the increased coordination and collaboration of disparate opposition forces. In particular, opposition parties were able to leverage a newly established institution, the CFOP, to build a common platform and work alongside new civil society movements against Compaoré's regime.

As previously stated, Burkinabè opposition parties were extremely divided and prone to internal splits. These divisions ran along ideological lines, personal enmities, and strategic disagreements (Harsch, 2017, p. 137). Few electoral coalitions were attempted, and none was able to pose a real challenge to Compaoré's dominance. Personal ambitions and leadership disputes regularly caused party splits, fuelling a proliferation of political parties (CGD, 2009). As a Burkinabè saying goes, "one would rather be the head of a rat, than the tail of a lion": politicians prefer to create and lead their own party, however small it may be, than to be a lower figure in a larger party – a dynamic openly fuelled by the ruling elite through the co-optation of politicians into the government and the distribution

of money to opposition parties (Loada, 2010). Even parties describing themselves as sankarist – borrowing from the political legacy of Thomas Sankara – have proven unable to unite despite supposedly sharing common values and objectives. An official from the *Union pour la Renaissance – Parti Sankariste* (UNIR-PS) despaired that among opposition parties, "there wasn't one month, two months without a split with the creation of a new party".[4] Another acknowledged that this led them to "neutralise each other on the ground".[5]

These divisions did not disappear in the lead up to the 2014 uprising. However, the establishment of the CFOP provided a platform to foster a certain degree of unity, allowing parties to coordinate around a common agenda despite their conflicting interests and internal divisions. The CFOP designates both an institution and a person. The institution regroups all registered political parties – with or without a parliamentary representation – who declare to be opposed to the ruling majority. The person is the opposition's designated spokesperson, a role attributed to the head of the opposition party with the most seats in the National Assembly. This position was occupied by Bénéwendé Sankara, leader of the UNIR-PS, between 2009 and 2012; then by Zéphirin Diabré of the *Union pour le Progrès et le Changement* (UPC) from January 2013 to the insurrection of October 2014.

At the time of its creation, analysts argued that "it [was] useless to institute an opposition's head of rank when the opposition is spread out" (CGD, 2008, p. 37). Yet, I find that the CFOP served as a palliative for the opposition's fragmentation. It did so by increasing polarisation between the majority and the opposition and by amplifying the opposition's voice and reach. It proved to be an important framework for these various parties to come together, coordinate strategies, and build a united front on key issues. As a sankarist politician explained, "it was a setting where the opposition, regardless of their political leanings, came together and could talk about how Blaise [Compaoré] was going to leave".[6] The CFOP also removed individual ambitions and electoral considerations from the equation by laying out clear rules on who should serve as CFOP, rather than leaving it to inter-party negotiations, and by constraining this role as that of a spokesperson and facilitator, rather than a leader.

This institutionalised framework was also able to accommodate new parties formed by CDP defectors, such as the MPP. The resignation of key CDP figures and the creation of the MPP was a "tipping point" (Andrews and Honig, 2019, p. 627) that shook Compaoré's base, signalled to the opposition that victory was possible, and provided increased resources to the movement. A UNIR-PS official acknowledged that "if the MPP hadn't come to exist, there wouldn't have been an insurrection".[7] Elite defection is widely considered a relevant political opportunity structure that can explain the success of social movements and the fall of autocratic regimes (Meyer, 2004). Yet, this defection alone does not account for the uprising, and in fact would likely not have occurred if there had not already been a movement underway that made it strategically sound for these cadres to jump ship. As Andrews and Honig (2019) argue, broad popular support for democratic principles shifted the cost-benefit analysis of CDP figures, for whom defection had become a better bet for their future electoral prospects.

The CFOP also fostered cooperation with civil society organisations, who would have otherwise been wary of aligning themselves with the political interests of individual parties. The old guard within civil society, which had been at the forefront of the mobilisation that followed the death of Norbert Zongo, have often shown contempt for opposition parties. Their mistrust grew when opposition parties decided to discard the boycott strategy adopted by the CODMPP at the time, and to run in the legislative elections of 2002. Newer movements, such as *Balai Citoyen* and the FRC, also wanted to remain independent and distinguishable from the political opposition, though other organisations were more closely associated with the CFOP or individual parties. Thanks to the collective nature of the CFOP's institution, civil society stakeholders were able to work with political parties and mobilise their ranks to heed the CFOP's calls for action, without being associated with a particular party (which could discredit them). An activist from the FRC explained that they refused to have a formal agreement with opposition parties because they "did not know how long the struggle against the modification of Article 37 was going to last, so people thought it was risky to get involved in such a process and to lose our independence".[8] This collaboration among opposition parties and between them and civil society organisations proved key in mobilising the population, because it established a credible opportunity to resist Compaoré's plans, and to remove him from office.

A single-issue agenda

Cooperation among opposition parties and between them and civil society was made easier by a third political opportunity structure: a single common objective that took precedence over their internal squabbles and mutual mistrust. Indeed, impunity and economic injustices had been powerful mobilisation triggers in the past, but debates over the senate issue and the modification of Article 37 allowed activists to link these issues with political demands, a good recipe to create a strong anti-incumbent cleavage (Mueller, 2018).

Term limits became a catalysing issue drawing technical and moral arguments over the legality and legitimacy of Compaoré's attempt to modify their provision (Moestrup, 2019). Yet, this focus on a technical aspect – the limitation of presidential terms to two – tends to obscure a broader, more significant aspiration: that of political *alternance*. Meaning "turnover" or "rotation", *alternance* refers to the transfer of power from one party to another. It became an important political issue across francophone West Africa within the context of entrenched, and seemingly immovable presidents such as Abdou Diouf in Senegal or Compaoré in Burkina Faso (Cheeseman et al, 2019).

After the 2002 legislative elections in Burkina Faso – which saw unprecedented gains for the opposition – Loada and Santiso (2002, p. 5) believed that political alternance had become "not only possible, but also feasible as a strategy for conducting opposition politics and, eventually, conquering power". Yet in 2006, a year after Compaoré successfully ran for his third term, the French journal *Politique Africaine* published a special issue entitled "Burkina Faso: the impossible

alternance". In 2009, Diabré, a former figure of the ruling party who had gone on to have a successful international career, came back to Burkina Faso and organised a public forum about *alternance*, bringing together civil society activists and political actors in Ouagadougou. In his opening speech, Diabré stated: "Any democracy remains incomplete as long as it has not produced a transfer of power. Our democracy belongs in that category" (*L'Observateur Paalga*, 2009). Following this forum, the UPC was founded in March 2010 to directly engage the fight for *alternance* and the conquest of power. A women's leader from the party explained: "the first time we talked about *alternance* was in 2009. People didn't believe in it, they thought we were kidding, or that we were bought-off".[9]

This struggle for *alternance* made the issues of the senate and Article 37 rallying points for activists. The provision of term limits was seen as the only thing preventing Compaoré from becoming a president-for-life: it appeared unavoidable that he would win should he be allowed to stand for re-election. Presidential elections had never been competitive, and as such never represented a relevant political opportunity for opponents – be it in the ballot box or in the streets. Illustratively, the two largest episodes of social unrest during the Compaoré era (the protests triggered by Norbert Zongo's assassination in December 1998, and the wave of protests and mutinies in 2011) each started not long after Compaoré had been re-elected with over 80% of the vote (in 1998 and 2010). The constitutional revision was therefore a key moment for mobilisation because it represented the last obstacle blocking Compaoré's path to extending his rule indefinitely.

Though the struggle for *alternance* brought together a large section of the political opposition and civil society, it should be noted that the radical leftist organisations – including the powerful trade unions – did not associate with this particular fight. They claimed to be seeking an *alternative*, a real systemic change, rather than *alternance,* a mere change of guards. Accordingly, trade unions never called their members to join the protests organised by the CFOP, but held their own marches around sectorial grievances in parallel (Wienkoop, 2020). We should also be wary of taking for granted that *alternance* was truly driving the participation of individual protestors ("foot soldiers"): it is likely that, as Lisa Mueller (2018) convincingly argued, demand for democracy was rather a chief consideration for the middle-class leaders and spokespeople of the movement, who capitalised on economic grievances among lower classes to mobilise support. Still, according to Afrobarometer data collected in 2012, 64% of Burkinabè citizens were in favour of presidential term limits – and this figure grew to a staggering 91% in 2015, following the insurrection – clearly demonstrating the salience of this question at the time.

The transformative impact of the 2014 uprising

The protests against the creation of a senate and the alteration of term limits in Burkina Faso ultimately led to Compaoré's ousting. Some proclaimed the country had just experienced its second "revolution". Others, seeing the army's taking

control of the state, dismissed it as "just another coup d'état" (Hagberg *et al.*, 2015). When the dust settled, what was the longer-term political impact of the 2014 insurrection?

In themselves, the nature and short-term successes of the transition are significant post-insurrection achievements that should not be minimised. The army, which at first had stepped in to fill the void left by Compaoré's resignation, was forced to step back and to agree to an inclusive, civilian-led transition due to pressure from domestic forces and foreign partners. This contrasts sharply with more recent events in Mali. The successful push-back against a reactionary coup attempt in 2015 preserved the gains made during the uprising and subsequent transition (Saidou, 2018a), contrary to how the Sudanese revolution unfolded. The elections organised within a year proved to be the freest and most transparent in the country (Ariotti, 2016), even though the newly elected political elite were not starkly different from the old one. Roch Kaboré, elected as President in November 2015, had been a key figure of Compaoré's regime, having presided over the CDP and the National Assembly. His party, the MPP, employed the CDP's old local networks and clientelist strategies to mobilise support. The UPC's Diabré, despite his pivotal role as the CFOP, was beaten in the first round. Sankarist parties made disappointing scores and had to come to terms with the fact they were not as representative of the insurgents and their aspirations as they believed.

The political transition that opened in November 2015 was a window of opportunity to push through substantial reforms to redress the most pressing wrongs of Compaoré's regime, and to establish safeguards constraining future elites (Dakuyo, 2019; Saidou, 2020b). According to an activist from *Balai Citoyen*, "the transition was the best period to implement in-depth reforms, and to impose them on the ruling class".[10] An ex-member of the transition government explained that civil society's ambition was to "clean up before going to the elections", tackling deep-rooted democratic defects such as corruption and impunity. Though some organisations, such as *Balai Citoyen*, stayed out of the transition's decision-making institutions to monitor their work from the outside, others joined the transition government and legislature to influence change from within. Under the proactive leadership of its President, Cheriff Sy – a journalist and prominent activist – the *Conseil National de la Transition* (CNT) embraced its legislative prerogatives, adopting 108 laws in a year – more than any previous Burkinabè legislature (Saidou, 2020b).

These reforms addressed popular demands that had transpired during the uprising, and responded to a diagnostic established by civil society stakeholders who wanted to lay the ground for democratic consolidation. The transition authorities drew legitimacy from the insurrection and persistent popular mobilisation, which made them both better able and more willing to achieve important changes than either past or future elected governments (Bertrand, 2021). Substantial reforms were adopted to strengthen the anti-corruption institution and improve judiciary independence (Saidou, 2020b). An emergency plan for youth employment was launched. Important legal cases that had been ignored or closed during the Compaoré era, and symbolised the former regime's impunity, were re-opened,

including those related to the deaths of Thomas Sankara and Norbert Zongo (Dakuyo, 2019).

Another key area in need of reform was the army, which had had a hold on Burkinabè politics since 1966. In particular, civil society pushed for the dissolution of the presidential guard, the *Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle* (RSP) and the reintegration of its troops within the regular army. Often described as "an army within the army", the RSP was particularly loyal to Compaoré, and received better pay, training, and equipment than other soldiers (Balima, 2019). The unit was also infamous among the population due to its implication in the assassination of Norbert Zongo in 1998, and the death of protestors during the 2014 insurrection. Attempts to dissolve the unit during the transition were systematically met with violent reactions of the RSP, culminating in the coup d'état of September 2015 (Dakuyo, 2019). Following renewed popular mobilisation across the country fuelled by civil society organisations, a failed mediation attempt by the West African regional organisation – the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) – and ultimately, an ultimatum given by the rest of the army, the coup was folded after a week (Saidou, 2018a) – paving the way for an unprecedented trial in 2019 (Balima, 2019). Once restored, the transition authorities disbanded the RSP – an important step in reforming the security forces. However, despite the recognition that substantial changes within the army were necessary in order to "demilitarise" political power (Sampana, 2015) and in the face of the unprecedented security threat posed by jihadist groups (Eizenga, 2019), these reforms have been limited and incremental at best (Saidou, 2020a).

The transition adopted substantial reforms, but what it achieved was heavily dependent on negotiations between the various forces involved, and on the mobilisation power of activists and protestors. Illustratively, the promise of a new constitution, paving the way for a more balanced division of power and safeguards against democratic backsliding, has not come to fruition. Civil society actors' initial ambition was to adopt a new constitution during the transition, in order to make a clean break from Compaoré's regime and address the institutional defects blocking democratic consolidation. This was resisted by political parties, who hoped to come to power in the following elections and control the process. In the end, the transition conducted a minimal revision of the existing constitution which "locked" the Article 37, making it impossible to alter presidential term limits, and authorised independent candidates to take part in elections. After the 2015 elections, an inclusive and representative commission drafted a new constitution (Saidou, 2018b). Despite an apparent consensus over its content, political parties have failed to agree on the ratification process, and appeared to have dropped this issue from the political agenda. Another expected reform which has not been implemented is that aiming at depoliticising the administration. These shortcomings have led some stakeholders to tamper the transformational impact of the transition. For example, a figure from the CAR argued that "old defects are starting to creep back, because the institutions we built are not solid enough".[11]

Popular mobilisation played a huge part in the uprising and throughout the transition, which, according to a *Balai Citoyen* activist, left behind "a lesson that when the People mobilises, it can succeed".[12] During the transition, persistent mobilisation steered what the authorities achieved and how they behaved (Bertrand, 2021). For example, protests erupted over the nomination of controversial figures in the transition government (who were forced to resign), or against the high salaries given to legislators (which were subsequently reduced by half). Popular mobilisation greatly contributed to defeating the coup d'état in September 2015, as crowds gathered in front of military barracks across the country to demand that soldiers marched on Ouagadougou to depose the RSP (Bertrand, 2015; Saidou, 2018a). Yet, as an FRC activist observed, "paradoxically, in terms of civic monitoring, the legacy is very poor. […]. [It] continues, but really below what we could have expected".[13] Since the end of the transition, trade unions and civil society organisations have mobilised around sectorial grievances and against the government's poor handling of the security crisis, but they have been much less successful than they were during the transition.

A number of prominent civil society figures, encouraged by their participation in the transition institutions, set up political parties or joined the government after the 2015 election – highlighting the necessity for new figures to take over as independent counter-powers. The young and active movements that emerged around the issue of term limits have had difficulties re-inventing themselves around new objectives, or have become more institutionalised and less grassroots (Touré, 2017, p. 69). After 2015, the new ruling elite contributed to eroding the civil society's mobilisation capacity, notably by throwing corruption accusations at figures of the transition to weaken these potential opponents. An M21 activist argued that the new government "saw the strength of civil society organisations [and] started to contest the transition's management and to discredit civil society", which played a part in "cooling down" mobilisation.[14]

In the post-transition elections of November 2015, the party system was also reshuffled. The MPP – made up of former cadres of Compaoré's regime who defected to the opposition in January 2014 – became the head of a ruling coalition including a number of small parties which had consistently been in Compaoré's opposition. Meanwhile, in the CFOP, the UPC had to coexist with the CDP and its former allies, creating an internal polarisation within the CFOP – which lost its ability to serve as a uniting platform for the opposition. This institution was further damaged when, following the 2020 elections, the UPC and other parties opted to join Kaboré's majority for his second term. Ultimately, the factors explaining this party system configuration remain clientelist in nature, leading Natielse (2020, p. 26) to conclude that "the basic characteristics of political parties have not changed following the popular insurrection and the fall of Blaise Compaoré".

Still, the insurrection and transition have left a mark on the Burkinabè institutions. This period contributed to strengthening the democratic roots that had been nurtured during Compaoré's regime, from the principle of alternance to anti-corruption legislation. Term limits for the presidency finally appear set in

stone, putting an end to what was a major obstacle to democratic consolidation during the Compaoré era. This opens the door to a first peaceful transfer of power between two democratically elected leaders in 2025. While turnovers themselves do not make a democracy, they do promote a healthy circulation of elites and equalise the political playing field (Moehler and Lindberg, 2009).

Meanwhile, the rich legislation passed during the transition is a crucial legacy. A striking example is the impact of the anti-corruption bill and the judiciary reforms, which are being implemented now – illustrated, for example, by the unprecedented incarceration of a former government official on corruption charges (*Jeune Afrique*, 2020). Such reforms were impossible to imagine during the Compaoré era and may not have been achieved in another setting.

Conclusion

This chapter highlighted a series of political opportunity structures that allowed the anti-regime protests in Burkina Faso in 2013–2014 to turn into a fully-fledged insurrection, toppling Compaoré, and opening the door to a political transition. These inter-connected factors are three-fold: a historical legacy of social movements that created discursive opportunities, boosted organisational strength, and opened the political space, while setting up some institutional constraints on Compaoré's long-term prospects; increased collaboration among opposition parties and between them and civil society organisations, facilitated by informal networks and formal institutions, notably the CFOP; and a common short-term objective which provided a reason to rally forces and an ultimatum: preventing Compaoré from lifting term limits in order to force him out.

Yet this shared objective hid important divergences in terms of the stakeholders' longer-term agenda, making the insurrection a rather "catch-all" event (Saidou, 2020a). A section of civil society led by intellectuals wanted to uproot the authoritarian legacies of Compaoré's regime and set up institutional safeguards to ensure democratic consolidation could take hold. Another, including grassroots movements such as *Balai Citoyen*, was hoping that the social and economic lives of Burkinabè people would be improved. Political parties were focused on the upcoming elections, wishing to finally obtain power for themselves. The unity and collaboration which made the insurrection possible in 2014 did not last after Compaoré was gone, and made it difficult to achieve deep, transformative reforms during the transition.

Yet, the 2014 insurrection in Burkina Faso and its shortcomings must be analysed in comparative perspective. In other countries, social movements against the alteration of term limits either failed (Rwanda), or descended into deadly electoral violence and civil conflicts (Burundi). Broader anti-incumbent protests elsewhere either met violent repression (e.g. Uganda, Ethiopia) or were circumvented by palace coups that removed old autocrats but merely reorganised the ruling clique (Zimbabwe, Algeria).

The Burkinabè uprising sheds some light on how anti-incumbent protests can succeed. In particular, it demonstrates the relevance of domestic political

opportunity structures for political change, as opposed to international alliances highlighted in other cases such as that of the DRC (Polet, 2022, in this volume). International actors, including bilateral partners such as France and the United States, and regional organisations, certainly contributed to shaping the insurrection and its aftermath. Yet domestic stakeholders were the main drivers of the contestation – illustrated by the popular rejection of the ECOWAS mediation team's approach during the 2015 coup (Saidou, 2018a). The case of Burkina Faso also resonates with the case of Senegal (Dimé, 2022, in this volume) where domestic activists played paid a huge contribution to the ousting of Abdoulaye Wade.

Just like the insurrection should not be analysed in isolation but rather placed in historical perspective, its effects should be assessed with nuance and on the long run. Its qualification as a "revolution" by many Burkinabè appears to have been an over-statement, but the incremental changes it brought – both in terms of formal legislation and informal norms and practices – must be seen as part of a trajectory towards a more open, inclusive, and democratic future for the country.

Notes

1. Interview, international analyst, by phone, 23 March 2017.
2. Interview, human rights activist, Ouagadougou, 28 March 2017.
3. Interview, PDS-Metba activist, Ouagadougou, 26 April 2017.
4. Interview, UNIR-PS official, Ouagadougou, 17 April 2018.
5. Interview, UNIR-PS official, Ouagadougou, 9 February 2018.
6. Interview, FFS official, Ouagadougou, 2 July 2018.
7. Interview, UNIR-PS official, Ouagadougou, 9 February 2018.
8. Interview, FRC activist, Ouagadougou, 5 April 2017.
9. Interview, UPC official, Ouagadougou, 14 December 2018.
10. Interview, Balai Citoyen activist, by phone, 19 August 2020.
11. Interview, CAR activist, by phone, 20 August 2020.
12. Interview, Balai Citoyen activist, by phone, 19 August 2020.
13. Interview, FRC activist, by phone, 06 July 2020.
14. Interview, M21 activist, by phone, 27 August 2020.

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6 FEMINIST DEMANDS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND FRAMES

STRATEGIC SILENCING WITHIN MOROCCO'S FEBRUARY 20 MOVEMENT?

Sammy Zeyad Badran

Introduction

Morocco, like many other Middle East and North African (MENA) countries, witnessed a surge of mass protests during the so called "Arab Spring". In Morocco, the February 20 Movement (F20) started with a successful online campaign that promoted protests for a variety of reasons ranging from calls for more freedoms to more minority rights. The F20 typically held weekly peaceful demonstrations throughout Morocco, but as we will see, many diverse political organisations were represented in the movement. Some activists called for gender equality, but the movement primarily focused on fighting for devolution of power from King Mohammed VI. Specifically, the F20 tended to focus demands on reforming the constitution, including a transition from an executive monarchy to a democratic parliamentary monarchy. The movement was supported by an array of political parties and organisations, including many left-wing parties like the United Socialist Party (USP), the Marxist Democratic Way Party (DWP), and the Socialist Union of Popular Forces (USFP). Islamist organisations were critical to the movement as well. The Justice and Spirituality Organization (JCO) was the largest Islamist organisation to join F20 and worked with leftists to organise mass protests in over 50 cities throughout Morocco. Similarly, women and independent feminist-activists were integral to this movement from the beginning.[1] Members of the pro-personal liberties feminist movement, *Le Mouvement alternatif pour les libertés individuelles* (MALI), were perhaps the most outspoken proponents of explicitly calling for gender equality, among other demands. Activists from MALI, along with other women I interviewed, felt that their demands were not represented, and often silenced, within the F20. In the words of the MALI's co-founder[2]:

> I had a lot of problems with F20 because the movement called for freedom, dignity, and social justice, but it was false. Because the movement had another definition of liberty and freedom. For me human rights are universal. So, when we talk about liberty and dignity etc., it's a universal thing and about all human rights and all individual liberties and equality between women and men. So, it was very complicated and it still is now, because a lot of activists in Morocco – male and female – don't think about universality.[3]

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Despite direct calls for gender equality on social media by the F20, activists on the ground claimed that feminist demands were absent from the movement. Combining framing and political opportunity structure approaches, this chapter will shed light on how certain demands within the F20 were silenced in order to better resonate with a conservative public.[4] The chapter will demonstrate that women's demand for gender equality, along with other "culturally sensitive topics", were strategically relegated to the broad demand of freedom. In essence, the F20's human rights and justice frame included these culturally sensitive issues.[5] The findings for this chapter are informed by semi-structured interviews with participants from the F20 – primarily independent feminist activists and women from MALI, USP, DWP, and the USFP.[6] The findings shed light on the transformative impact of protests in North Africa's semi-authoritarian regimes from an innovative angle. Instead of focusing only on the external impact of protests, the present case study focuses on the inner and more hidden logic of transformation – how certain issues are prioritised vis-à-vis others. This emphasis on internal social movement dynamics will open avenues for further research in the field.

The chapter will start by outlining why focusing solely on political opportunity structures may overlook critical internal dynamics within social movements. I will make the case that focusing on *narrative fidelity* and *internal consistency* of frames is important for understanding which voices are silenced and why. The chapter will then cover the institutional strives towards gender equality prior to 2011 and show how the Arab Spring widened political opportunities for new feminist causes that explicitly demanded gender equality, among other things. The rest of the chapter will use interview data to focus on women within the F20 and how their voices were often silenced and how they challenged this strategic silencing within the F20.

Researching feminist protest in Morocco: Moving from political opportunity structures to framing

Social movement studies adhering to the structural approach focus on how political opportunity structures may either facilitate or suppress social movements (Aminzade, McAdam, et al., 2001; McAdam, 1983; Tarrow, 2011; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Meyer, 2004; Iyekekpolo, 2016). Structural perspectives focus on environmental drivers that facilitate or suppress social movements (Aminzade, McAdam, et al., 2001, p. 14). For instance, McCarthy and Zald (1977) argue that incentives, structures, and cost-reducing mechanisms all play a role in social movement formations. Resources here imply money and labour from constituents and organisations, other than the "aggrieved". In essence, other actors have control of resources like legitimacy, facilities, labour, as well as money, which play a crucial role in the development and success of social movements. McCarthy and Zald use a supply and demand model to study the flow of resources "toward and away from specific social movements (1977, p. 1216)". Therefore, constituents give resources to those that have social change preferences (adherents) in hopes of changing bystanders into adherents and constituents. In essence, social

mobilisation theorists believe that social movements mobilise resources (often from elites) in their favour.

Political process and opportunity theories don't completely discount the effects of resource mobilisation, but rather add another layer of analysis by shifting focus to more environmental factors in which movements operate. Political process theorists argue that an advantageous or disadvantageous political environment (openness or closure of political system, presence of elite allies, or a state's capacity for repression, among others) along with organisational strength are better predictors of successful social movements (McAdam, 1983; Tarrow, 2011; Meyer and Minkoff, 2004; Sanches, 2022). The main argument can be found in Tarrow's *Power in Movement* (2011), which argues that political opportunities lead to the creation of social movements and that these movements create future opportunities.

Similarly, McAdam claims that institutions like the Black Church aided the "indigenous organizational strength" of the Civil Rights Movement (McAdam, 1983). There is an element of rationality to political process and opportunity theories as they claim that *recognition* and *perception* play a vital role in the personal decision to join a movement: "people rise in contention under the most discouraging circumstances, as long as they recognize collective interests, join others like themselves, and think there is a chance their protests will succeed (Tarrow, 2011, p. 198)". Nevertheless, despite their groundbreaking findings, McCarthy's and Zald's resource mobilisation theory, along with political process and opportunity theories, all overlook important internal dynamics of social movements. Some of these approaches have been utilised to understand the dynamics of protest during the Arab Spring (Dupont and Passy, 2011; Alimi and Meyer, 2011; Badran, 2014). In essence, these studies overlook how the cultural environment (not just the state/resources) internally affects movement framing.

An important observation within social movements is that while some demands are heard, others are not. Social movement framing offers us a lens to investigate why movements may – strategically – silence certain voices within a movement.[7] Cultural approaches argue that frames are created to better resonate within the context they are deployed. Benford and Snow (2000) argue that successful motivational framing attracts bystanders to participate. Benford (1993) finds that internal conflicts about how to portray the movement often occur. As Gamson (2004, p. 242) makes clear, social movements know that "bystanders don't necessarily stay bystanders" and paying attention to how movements are portrayed in the media and public perceptions of movements is important to understanding what movement's demand and how they frame their demands. Framing can also deter bystanders from joining and this was a concern for many within the F20 (Badran, 2020). Benford and Snow (2000) claim, that movements highlight frames that suggest an urgency to act in light of perceived threat and as an empowering duty. Berbrier (2002) finds how three district movements strategically try to distance their movements from stigmatised statuses and frame their causes in ways that resonate with the U.S. public. For instance, Berbrier finds that members from the Deaf Culture Movement adopt a "minority status"

frame and assert similarity to the Civil Rights Movement. These claims allow such movements to "claim legitimacy" and assert "normalcy" with the U.S. public (Berbrier, 2002, p. 553). Holzhacker (2014) also finds that framing gay rights as human rights led to a broader appeal and ultimately made the movement more successful. Williams (2004, p. 101) effectively outlines the relationship between movement framing and cultural resonance:

> The salience and applicability of the various symbolic elements will vary. Some cultural elements will be more important and held more dearly. Even within the boundaries of the legitimate, cultural effectiveness will vary. The variation will occur across groups within the general population, across issue areas or arenas of social life, and over time, depending on events. In social movement terms, some cultural resources – such as frames, or symbols, or ideologies – will resonate and others will not. When and where this is so involves resonance.

In relation to "culturally sensitive" issues, the F20 was concerned with what Benford and Snow (2000) term *narrative fidelity* and *internal consistency* of frames. Narrative fidelity refers to the "extent to which a frame fits within existing cultural narratives and meanings", while internal consistency refers to whether the movement's framing is consistent (Williams, 2004, p. 105). Framing literature tends to overlook why and when certain frames and voices within movements are silenced and excised. In other words, past cultural approaches tend to overlook why certain voices are *strategically* silenced within social movements.[8]

This chapter focuses on framing strategies, while also engaging with political opportunity structures, to understand the role of women in Morocco's uprising. While extant literature focuses on grievances and tools (social media) leading to mobilisation, much less attention has been devoted to understanding the functioning of social movements from within. This analysis will show that some political opportunities existed leading up to 2011. These political openings include a wave of feminists within civil society that focused on reforming the family code law and the Arab Spring. However, as we will see, some controversial elements within the F20 were silenced to be more culturally compatible with the Moroccan public.

Opportunities for a new feminism: From the institutional realm to the streets

Morocco has made strides in expanding women's rights since the early 1990s. Women's rights in Morocco are often tied to a family law that encompasses marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody. As may be clear, legislation regarding women's rights applies overwhelmingly to married women. Said differently, women's rights, freedoms, and identities are tied to the family.[9] The societal view of women and their ties to the family is evident in both feminist discourses and legal reforms aimed at expanding women's rights and freedoms. Most

discourse surrounding women's rights have focused on reforming the Moroccan family law code, the *Mudawwana*. Feminist organisations have traditionally focused on reforming the *Mudawwana*, and in 1992, "Western-leaning Muslim Feminist" associations, primarily the leftist/Socialist oriented Union de l'Action Feminine (UAF), organised a "One Million Signature Campaign" to promote gender equality and eventually forced the government to revise the law and "promoted women's inclusion in the national Economy (Feather, 2014, p. 22)". Despite the increased feminist activism, no clause mentioned gender equality, and the law maintains that within marriage authority remains solely with men and that a married woman must obey their spouse. Colligan (2000, p. 22) outlines the shortcomings of the new *Mudawwana*: "Women are expected to be obedient to their husbands; fathers still have a say in their daughters' marriages; males and females are subject to a different minimum age for marriages, 18 and 15 respectively; and only widowed women (as opposed to divorced ones) are granted both physical and legal guardianship of their children". As may be clear, the law frames women's rights as a family issue and feminist organisations worked within this institutional framework by repeatedly demanding reforms to the *Mudawwana*. King Hassan's speech following the passing of the reform of the family code refers to women activists that fought for change as daughters and "gave a speech that resembled that of a father teaching his daughter life-lessons (Zvan, 2009, p. 60)".

The familial link to women's rights continued and culminated in more reforms to the *Mudawwana* in 2004. Shortly after the 1993 reform, secular women's associations worked with socialist and leftist political parties and demanded a rise in the age of marriage for women to 18, the abolition of polygamy, and the official registration of children born out of wedlock, among other demands. Secular women's rights organisations continued to focus their efforts on reforming the family law. In 2000, "more than 60 women's groups organized demonstrations in Rabat calling for reforms to women's legal status, especially within the family code", while Islamist organisation held rallies opposing such reform (Feather, 2014, p. 22). The 2004 *Mudawwana* was proposed to parliament by King Hassan's son and successor, King Mohammed VI. The passing of the new family law was praised by the international community and is the result of more than "20 years of struggle by feminists and women's NGOs (Ennaji and Sadiqi, 2011, p. 85)".

The new code heeded to key demands like raising the age of marriage to 18 for both sexes, allowing polygamy only with the first wife's consent, allowing women to file for divorce, officially recognising and registering children born outside of wedlock, and allowing both spouses to be responsible for the family. However, the law still encompassed all women's issues and rights within the umbrella of the family. As the law makes clear: "the *Mudawwana* is a not law for the women only, but a *Mudawwana* for the entire family – father, mother and children – and further ensures that this *Mudawwana* eliminates discrimination against women, protects the rights of children and preserves men's dignity (Human Rights Education Associates, 2004, p. 5)". In essence, the new *Mudawwana* has paved the path towards more gender equality and is one of the most progressive examples of women's rights legislation in the region.

As may be clear, the aforementioned examples of reform are strictly institutional strives towards gender equality, and Moroccan feminist organisations have traditionally focused on this institutional realm of women's rights. The spike in protests and contentious politics in Morocco following the Tunisian Jasmine Revolution of 2010 has not only led to increased protests for further democratisation, but also widened political opportunities for feminist causes. Within the F20, these were represented by feminist organisations along with independent feminist activists.

As we will see, since the Arab Spring there has been the shift away from feminist demands of merely institutional reforms of family laws and towards changing societal norms complicates the Moroccan gendered framework by no longer focusing on just familial issues, but rather focusing on societal norms and traditions that pertain to unmarried and married women alike. A report by the United Nations Committee Against Torture prepared by three Moroccan human rights organisations, including the influential Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM) seems to advocate that there indeed should be a shift of focus from solely fighting for change within the juridical realm. In response to the latest *Mudawwana* reform, they seem to indicate that juridical reforms are a positive step forward and that the underlying problem lies within societal norms:

> All of these concrete developments will certainly improve the status of Moroccan women. However, there are several laws that still discriminate against women. Every day, women are deprived of their rights under the weight of traditions and customs that go against non-discriminatory legislation in effect and lead to violence against them.
>
> (World Organization Against Torture, 2004, p. 44)

We will see that within the F20, a "new wave" of feminists shifted demands away from reforms and challenged societal norms by directly calling for gender equality and addressing other "culturally sensitive issues".[10]

Strategies of framing: Silence and talking back

On 21 February 2011, Fadoua Laroui gave a passionate narrative of her struggles and the discrimination that single mothers face in front of a government building of *Souq Sebt* – a rural village about two hours from Marrakech. After Laroui's home was demolished, the local government denied public housing due to her single mother status.[11] Prior to her self-immolation, Laroui tells her story: "How can I give away my children, because I have nowhere to live with them? They call me crazy. Have you ever seen a crazy person fighting to keep her children? Where do I go now? I have no one but God (Salime, 2014, p. 17)". Louri's self-immolation has symbolised the ordeals of women which fall outside the realm of institutional feminist politics. According to Salime (2014), Louri's self-immolation helped spur "protests opposing religion-based state regulation of women's bodies that has

"revitalized old feminist claims about full citizenship rights for single mothers (p. 17)".

Laroui, as a single mother not living with her parents or family, fell outside the state's social safety net since authorities do not recognise children out of wedlock.[12] The town's mayor shed light on the subaltern position of Laroui by stating that "divorced and single women and single mothers live with their parents" and that she did not qualify for social services in part due to her single mother status.[13,14] The F20's official Facebook page, within the same week of Laroui's death, posted messages of support for Laroui. One post read:

> What kind of change are we asking for? The change that makes a positive difference in every Moroccan's life. The kind of change that would have allowed Fadoua Laroui to feed and shelter her children. Change that would have earned Fadoua people's respect for being a hard working single mom, rather than their despise for being unlucky.… Change is desperately needed.[15]

In spite of these initial signs from the F20 that the movement would provide an opportunity for women to directly demand gender equality for all women, the F20 was notably silent to these issues. In essence, despite the political opportunities for women to demand change, primarily through new political enfranchisement within an ongoing social movement, feminist demands tended to be silenced within the F20.

The F20 strategically utilised specific frames and symbols that resonated with Moroccans, while excising those that did not. Badran (2020) finds that the F20 believed that Islamist symbols, like Islamic attire and gender-divided protests, would not be culturally resonant with Moroccans.[16] In other words, although the public was conservative and in favour of upholding Islamic traditions and values, they were not supportive of Islamism.[17] Even Islamists within the F20 recognised this and remained less visible within the F20 during the first three months of demonstrations (Badran, 2020).

As previously discussed, despite the political opportunities of alliance formation within the F20, activists did not want to openly address culturally sensitive issues since, it not only threatened the internal consistency of frames, but primarily since there would have been a lack of narrative fidelity. Leftist and Islamist activists believed that the movement should not have officially demanded gender-equality or called for the decriminalisation of homosexuality since these issues would have been used to delegitimise and demobilise the F20.

Silencing

The F20 adopted a human rights and justice frame which called for an array of constitutional reforms. Interviewees revealed that activists within committees agreed on the slogans of "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice" since it encompassed many of the specific demands of the movement. However, other slogans and banners concerning the release of political prisoners, ending corruption,

recognising the Amazigh language[18], and even demanding the ouster of specific politicians were commonly raised in demonstrations (Badran, 2020). Activists repeatedly expressed that culturally sensitive issues like gender equality, freedom of religion, and LGBT rights were actively silenced within the movement since according to activists they fall within the broad frame of freedom or human rights (Badran, 2020). The General Secretary of the JCO made clear that the Islamist organisation would not explicitly say that the organisation was against slogans for gender equality, but rather that the topic "was better left alone for a later time".[19] Another Islamist F20 activist had a visceral response to why the movement did not explicitly address "culturally sensitive" issues like LGBT rights: "Do all of Americans agree with gay marriage? No! Not all of them! There are groups and organisations that refuse homosexuality (In the West) – like in France. The difference in Morocco is that we can't discuss a marginal issue when larger democracy is not present".[20] According to many Islamists, gender equality and LGBT rights were marginal issues that were better left alone until full democratic reforms were adopted in Morocco. Some Islamists believed that the state itself implanted these discussions concerning sensitive issues within the F20 in order to weaken it. In the words of one JCO member, "the Moroccan state raised this question in order to weaken the movement. They would say in the media that they (F20) are homosexuals and eat during Ramadan etc. – knowing that the public is Muslim and do not accept these things".[21] A member of the Islamist organisation, Hizb-al-umma, illustrates the divide with the movement and echoes the Islamist sentiment that such issues can only be addressed after democratisation:

> Some people defended personal liberties as their main demand. Personal freedoms refer to gender equality and homosexuals and freedom of religion. These demands, within Hizb-al-Umma, are considered secondary. Which means that they are not primary, the main demand is changing the power (distribution) and democratizing and having democratic elections, but these other issues are not the primary goals. The day we have a democratic state we can talk about these things.[22]

Many leftists agreed with Islamists that addressing sensitive issues surrounding gender equality and LGBT rights should not have occurred. One leftist activist asserted that "people who believed in real human rights had no problem with the LGBT community", but also recognised that if the movement would have explicitly addressed culturally sensitive issues, then "people will run away from the movement" and the regime would "take advantage" of this to weaken the movement.[23] Williams and Blackburn (1996) find a similar dynamic occurring within the United States Anti-Abortion Movement that was forced to adopt a form of liberalism that many within the movement disagreed with. Said differently, sometimes movements hide their "true colors" in order to resonate with the public. This was certainly the case for many liberals and leftists within the F20. A prominent F20 co-founder lamented that some within the F20 movement tried to address such issues since this played into the regime's goal of delegitimising

the movement: "What we wanted was a new constitution with new rights and individual rights…They hijacked this cause, and for me…So, some from the left fell in this trap because now they talk a lot about this".[24]

The previous director of the Moroccan Association of Human Rights (AMDH), a human rights organisation that has a long history of fighting for addressing women's rights, recognised that:

> if the February 20 Movement talked about these topics then it would have to deal with the public, and not just the Islamists, but the general Moroccan public. So, they (F20) preferred to delay talking about this and we met youth that were known in the movements concerning personal freedoms and sexual freedoms, they would say 'we won't talk about these topics right now…. When the movement receded, these topics were brought back again.[25]

Similarly, a member of the DWP, a radical Marxist political party, suggested that the issue of gender equality and LGBT rights were not even allowed to be discussed in rural areas of the country:

> In Mr'rt we did not talk about this topic because it's a region with a strong Amazigh and Islamic culture…In Meknes, however, the brothers that were part of the JCO would separate men from women (in demonstrations).[26]

The same interviewee distanced himself from groups advocating gender equality and expanded personal liberties: "I don't have a direct relationship with these guys (MALI) and the same thing goes for the homosexuals".[27] A USFP party leader from Agadir echoed similar sentiments when asked if the movement discussed demanding gender equality or LGBT rights. She claimed that moderate leftist parties, like the USFP, were especially hesitant to take on these issues. In her words:

> As classic leftist parties, we see those demands as liberal claims that are not really interesting. We feel like if we get to solve the big issues, then these other issues will be solved in time. If we get to have jobs for everyone and we get justice for everyone, then even women will be included. So, these (gender equality and LGBT rights) were not in our discussions.[28]

Said differently, moderate leftist parties tended to agree with their Islamist rivals that the F20's overarching demand of "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice" encompassed culturally sensitive issues that, according to this activist, were secondary issues. The same USFP activist asserted that "when you say freedom, it includes everyone. When you say dignity, it includes everyone" and that "women's issues" within the USFP focus not on equality between sexes, but on fighting for "good education, good health, and justice".[29] This is representative of the "old school" feminist belief that change should occur through reforms and by adhering to, not challenging, cultural norms. A journalist who covered the F20 movement

and participated with the movement summarises the divide within the F20 concerning directly addressing gender equality and personal liberties:

> There was an official slogan of "dignity, freedom, and social justice". There were some leftists, especially feminists or women's movements, who would say that there needs to be gender-equality within this slogan as well: dignity, freedom, social justice, and gender equality…So there were discussions and differences…Personal liberties (referring to LGBT rights) created a lot of problems too, even among those that believed in defending personal liberties. Some would say that personal liberties were a marginal battle and that even if it is an official demand, the conditions for achieving and defending personal freedoms are not present in Morocco. Also, the state would use events to weaken the movement and hurt it and reverse the public opinion against it. When they talked about leftists, they [the state] would say that they are a group of atheists that want to rid [the country] of religion and the Moroccan identity. So, there were justifications to attack some groups within F20 that defended gender equality and religious freedom and freedom to eat during Ramadan. I mean, you (the movement) are in front of a public that is uneducated. Many in the general public are not educated enough to form independent opinions not affiliated with that of the state…So, unfortunately, citizens believed that this movement was foreign to them or it was not democratic and would lead to failure, like what happened in Libya and Syria.[30]

As we see activists within the F20, regardless of what their stance on gender equality or LGBT rights are, strategically felt that such issues should not visibly be demanded within the movement. Overwhelmingly, activists believed that silencing divisive voices would effectively garner support from bystanders and create a winning coalition that focused on the F20's overarching goals. For Islamists, silencing demands tended to be based on ideology and the belief that these issues were inherently incompatible with Islamic values. However, leftists strategically tried to silence voices that called for gender equality and more personal liberties.[31]

Therefore, we see that narrative fidelity and internal consistency were important for the F20. In other words, it is clear that activists were aware that the movement needed public support to succeed. In turn, this convinced many leftists to not openly address culturally sensitive issues in and adhere to the justice frame of "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice", which is compatible with existing cultural narratives. Similarly, as Badran (2020) outlines, many F20 activists were also cognizant of the need for internal consistency of F20's justice frames, and therefore, tried to focus on the overarching goal, transitioning the country to a democratic parliamentary monarchy. This strategic recognition by many in the movement essentially led to the aforementioned silencing of women. Moreover, women were even told not to smoke during protests as this conflicted with Moroccan cultural norms.[32] As we see, the movement silenced controversial voices within the F20

in order to resonate with the public, while framing the movement as moderate, reformist, and culturally compatible with the Moroccan public.

Talking Back

Women within the F20 challenged the movement's official stance of not including gender equality in the movement's slogans, banners, and official list of demands. One feminist activist indicated that some women would explicitly demand gender equality: "we would say freedom, dignity, and social justice, and the women would say *and* gender equality. But this was not an official demand".[33] Members of MALI were at the forefront of the battle over including gender equality to the F20's main demands. The co-founder of MALI revealed that Islamists and leftist allies tried to silence these demands:

> In Morocco there is a lot of cultural relativism and I am against this. Human rights are the same everywhere in the world, so it was very complicated when we talked raising slogans of equality between men and women, for secularism, or for individual liberties, or for freedom of religion….There was a lot of misogyny and sexism and the craziest thing is that it was from moderate activists and not Islamists.[34]

Another MALI activist indicated that for many leftist allies, "the question of women is not a priority".[35] In May 2011, women recognised that their demands were not being addressed within the F20, and began creating new factions within the movement. The leaderless and horizontally organised structure of the F20 allowed for this.[36] In the words of one independent feminist F20 member:

> We created a group in the F20 Movement called *Ashreeneyiat* (the Women of F20)… There were always conflicts in the committees about gender equality and that it should be present in the movement (demands). So *Ashreeneyiat of Casablanca* went out first and we (in Agadir) did the same. We women would go out with our demands for gender equality and chant against sexual harassment.[37]

Many women lamented that "old wave" feminists were noticeably absent from F20 demonstrations and some believed that the "old wave feminists" were no longer effective: "The old school, in the beginning they were dynamic and changed a lot of things-this is true. You cannot deny it. But it's like the trade unions here in Morocco. Most of them are dependent on political parties and feminist organisations are dependent on them too".[38]

The absence of old wave and reformist-oriented women's rights groups provided a political opportunity for new wave feminists, like MALI. These new movements were not tied to political parties or international-NGOs. These new-wave feminists, on other hand, tended to focus on bottom-up change by forming new women's movements within the F20:

> Due to their [old-wave women's rights groups] absence, the F20 movement allowed networks of radical feminists to become active. For example, there was a group called, The Arriving Women [Al Nisah Al-Kademat]. There was now a network that called AL-Femme or Red-Femme which are emerging in Rabat and Marrakech too. There is another initiative called Be Haly Be Halek [Like me, like you] that defends women's rights to be in public spaces and to push back against the violence against women and discriminative behaviors based on social gender.[39]

By the end of 2012, the F20 demobilised and protests subsided (Badran, 2020). However, the brokerage that the F20 facilitated for women, led to many new feminist mobilisations that no longer limited their struggles for women's rights within existing institutions. In March 2012, demonstrations demanded justice for the suicide of 16-year-old Amina al Filani. Filani took her life after her rapist invoked article 475 – a law that allows the rapist to marry his victim. Women quickly mobilised to demand a repeal of article 475 (Flock, 2011). A demonstration in front of the parliament in Rabat was organised by F20 activists and "new wave" feminist organisations.[40]

Similarly, in 2012, Woman Choufouch, a Moroccan off-shoot of the Canadian SlutWalk movement was formed.[41] The movement focuses on combating sexist societal views towards women and primarily fights against blaming victims for rape.[42] The movement's co-founder, Majdoline Lyazidi, decided not to take an offensive stance to women's rights and work for change through state institutions. In her own words, Majdoline states that:

> Growing up I never really understood why society kept teaching us the "don't get raped" mentality instead of a "don't rape" one, anchoring in that way a never ending victim blaming process of "she was asking/looking for it". I think it's time to change this mentality, we've got to give a chance to the next generations to walk the Moroccan streets feeling safe and respected.
>
> (Skalli, 2014, p. 122)

A secularist-feminist from the F20 believes that these new-wave feminist mobilisations were facilitated by the brokerage within the F20 and "what the F20 started in 2011".[43]

Unlike past efforts by established feminist organisations (i.e. ADFM), the discourse for change is aimed at society and not solely the government and its laws. More specifically, the "mentality" of men is often mentioned, with one post alluding to SlutWalk international's original goal of fighting against blaming women's attire for explaining or justifying rape/sexual assaults.[44] One of their first posts reads: "Society teaches don't get raped rather than don't rape, it's time to change this mentality".[45] As we see, feminist movements that followed the F20 mark a break from strictly focusing on institutional change to societal change.

Specifically, since 2012 we have seen various mobilisations by women surrounding issues stemming from a new body politic that no longer applies solely to

married women. Many of my interviewees claim these new wave feminist movements are a result of the brokerage the F20 provided.[46] Moreover, as discussed, many feminists felt that the absence of the institutionalised old wave feminist organisation paved the way for new movements, like woman Choufouch, to form. In the words of one independent F20 activist: "This movement (F20) will live in a different way through different organizations".[47]

Conclusion

This chapter outlines how women's demands for gender equality, along with other culturally sensitive issues, were strategically silenced within the F20. This chapter also outlines some political openings before 2011, mainly a wave of reformist-feminists, helped pave the way for new wave feminists that were no longer constricted to the institutional realm of reforming the Moroccan family code. Islamist and leftist activists alike silenced voices that openly demanded gender equality and LGBT rights. Interviewees tended to classify both demands as "culturally sensitive issues" that were already addressed within the justice frame of "Freedom, Dignity, and Social Justice". Activists tended to focus on the cultural incompatibility of addressing these issues – even if they personally believed in gender equality and decriminalising homosexuality. In essence, activists believed that making explicit demands for gender equality, specifically, would have led to a lack of narrative fidelity, while simultaneously threatened the internal consistency of F20's justice frames and goal of a democratic parliamentary monarchy.

Another finding of the chapter is that the F20 facilitated brokerage among like-minded feminist-activists who eventually formed their own separate movements that rejected the "old school" reformist and institutionalised women's movements. In essence, despite the internal silencing that occurred within the F20, brokerage was facilitated within the F20 among women and new and creative movements were created. Since the advent of the F20, there have been various mobilisations by feminists that no longer focus solely on the rights of just married women. There has been a shift away from traditional feminist demands of demanding reforms of family laws and towards changing societal norms. This complicates the gendered framework of equating women's rights with familial issues. Feminists are now focusing on expanding rights to unmarried and married women alike. Zakia Salime (2012, p. 2) argues that "the new feminist subjectivities in the February 20 (Movement) present us with a counter-topography that disturbs first, the NGO-ization of feminist activism, second, the confinement of this activism to women's spaces, and third, the state's regulation of the NGOs sector". My interviews reflected this same sentiment by women within the F20.

The trend away from women's issues outside a strictly institutional realm is important since it tells us where Moroccan feminism may be headed. Indeed, the online activism of women following the Arab Spring has led to new discourses about how to better fight for change outside the traditional juridical realm of "family laws" and penal codes. Indeed, as destitute-unmarried women from rural Morocco, neither Laroui nor Filali had much to expect from the established

women's rights groups or the state. Their performative suicides were perhaps the only way their voices could be heard.

The trend of increased discourse surrounding the question of self-agency over the female body continues in Morocco. On 16 June 2015 two women were arrested on "public obscenity" charges for wearing skirts in Agadir, Morocco. The arrest of the two women sparked national outrage in the form of demonstrations, sit-ins, and online petitions with over 14,000 signatures by Moroccan women.[48] Many women wore skirts and some held up signs denouncing the "public obscenity law". Eventually the women were cleared of any charges and released. The creation of a Facebook page titled "wearing dresses is not a crime" again sparked discourse surrounding the female body and featured various women posting pictures of themselves in skirts.[49] This is indicative of a more common trend to shift discourse from strictly the language of reforms and into a realm of body politic. Therefore, this analysis of the trend away from women's issues outside a strictly institutional realm is important since it tells us where Moroccan feminism may be headed. Indeed, since the F20 and the creation of Woman Choufouch, we have seen various mobilisations by women surrounding issues stemming from a new body politic that no longer applies solely to married women, but to unmarried women as well.

Despite the internal silencing that occurred within the F20, the images of Arab women engaging in contentious politics against societal norms does deconstruct "the perception of the Arab women as powerless, invisible, and voiceless" and as Houda Abadi notes, "through their active online and offline participation, they showed that these orientalist representations of the Arab women are only imagined (Abadi 2014)". The long and dynamic history of feminism in Morocco attests to this deconstruction of the "submissive Arab woman" and the more recent examples of contentious politics outlined in this paper demonstrate that women can exploit the political opportunities in order to gain enhance their networks and mobilise in new and creative ways.[50]

This study's findings contribute to the blossoming research on feminist activism in North Africa. It also opens avenues for further research that illustrates the importance of studying movements from within. This approach highlights internal power dynamics that may hinder the visibility of certain elements within social movements. This is especially important for women and feminist activists within conservative environments. As outlined in this chapter, a movement's aim for cultural resonance can clash with certain demands, like gender equality. Focusing both on framing and political opportunity structures can highlight which voices are heard and silenced within social movements.

Notes

1. Women within the F20, like Nidal Hamadache, are credited with popularizing the movement. Nidal Hamadache's Facebook posts concerning Morocco's socioeconomic problems were widely viewed and shared leading up the group's first protest.
2. To protect interviewees, identities of activists will remain anonymous throughout.

3. Interview on 05/06/17 with MALI Co-Founder.
4. The term resonance will be used to mean "the 'fit' between frames and audiences' previous beliefs, worldviews, and life experiences (Williams, 2000, p. 105)".
5. According to interviewees, culturally sensitive issues in Morocco primarily focused on gender equality, LBGT rights and sexual freedoms, and freedom of religion.
6. Interviews were conducted in Rabat, Casablanca, Tangiers, and Agadir. The conclusions for this chapter were based on interviews with seven women participants of the F20 – all of which identify as leftist or liberal, five male Islamist activists, four male leftist activists, and one independent journalist. Most interviews were conducted in Arabic and translated / transcribed into English; however, some were conducted in English and Spanish too.
7. Benford and Snow (2000) find that "collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change (615)".
8. In the case of the F20, many activists silenced controversial voices and demands, despite privately being supportive of these same demands.
9. Salime (2014) suggests that single mothers illustrate this best since being a single mother reduces women to a "marginal location from which one cannot make valid feminist claims (p. 17)".
10. I use the term "old school feminists" refer to feminist organisations that strived for change through institutional reforms to the *Mudawwana*. The term "new school / new wave feminists" refers to feminists that no longer work strictly within the institutional realm and are not affiliated with traditional feminist organisations.
11. 'Fadoua Laroui: The Moroccan Mohamed Bouazizi', *The Nation*, 27 February 2011. Available at: http://www.thenation.com/article/fadoua-laroui-moroccan-mohamed-bouazizi/ (Accessed: April 26, 2021).
12. 'Moroccan single mother burns herself in protest', *Reuters*, 23 February 2011. Available at: http://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-protest-idUSTRE71M4ZF20110223#ulX0HgV03RI8T7l5.97 (Accessed: 26 April 2021).
13. IBID.
14. The term "subaltern" is coined by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who tells us that "the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in the shadow (Spivak 1988: 83)". Indeed, Filali came from small impoverished-rural villages, often neglected by the state, and their subaltern position within that context as not only inferior woman, but more critically invisible unmarried women, regulates them to the lowest crusts of the subaltern periphery. Zakia Salime (2014) suggests that "Laroui's death invites us instead to consider politics and resistance from the standpoint of subalternity (p. 17)".
15. Moroccans For Change Faceboook page. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/MoroccansForChange/posts/206562199358114 (Accessed: 26 April 2021).
16. Badran (2019) also finds that framing conflicts forces movements to change diagnostic frames and prognostic frames, which can ultimately demobilise a movement.
17. This is a claim made many F20 activists and supported by survey results. The 2018 Arab barometer found that 72% of respondents disagreed that women's share of inheritance should be equal to men, while 47% believed that a husband should have the final say in all decisions concerning the family. 82% of respondents considered themselves religious, while just 36% of respondents were in favor of "religious people" holding public office.
18. The Amazigh community are the indigenous inhabitants of pre-Arab Morocco.
19. Interview on 10/31/16 with JCO General Secretary in Rabat.
20. Interview with Islamist F20 activist in Casablanca.

21. Interview on 11/04/16 with JCO member.
22. Interview on 11/05/16 with an Hizb-Al-Umma Activist.
23. Interview on 01/19/17 with independent activist in Rabat.
24. Interview on 10/06/16 with Leftist F20 Co-Founder.
25. Interview on 10/05/16 in Rabat with Ex-President of AMDH.
26. Interview on 10/13/16 with DWP Leader in Mr'rt.
27. IBID.
28. Interview on 12/13/16 in Agadir with USFP Regional Leader.
29. IBID.
30. Interview on 12/23/16 with Journalist in Rabat.
31. Most leftists I interviewed personally believed in expanding personal liberties and gender equality.
32. Interview on 05/06/17 with MALI Co-Founder.
33. Interview on 01/04/17 with independent F20 Activist in Marrakech.
34. Interview on 05/06/17 with MALI Co-Founder.
35. Interview on 03/13/17 with MALI Member in Rabat.
36. The F20 is what Zeynep Tufekci (2017) labels a horizontalist social movement. This means that the movement does not have official leaders and is not organised in a hierarchal fashion with clear leadership and decision-making structures. Decisions were made within loosely-organised committees based on a general consensus.
37. Interview on 12/12/16 in Agadir.
38. IBID.
39. Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 Leader in Marrakech.
40. We are Amina page found here: https://www.facebook.com/We-Are-All-Amina-Filali-392757007401977/
41. The word *Choufouch* is a sexual invitation used by men in Morocco and can also mean "why don't we see you (Sadiqi, 2014: 15)."
42. Lahdidi, Mehdi. 2012 "Maghress : Woman Choufouch, Une Marche Contre Le Harcèlement Sexuel Dans Nos Rues." N.p., n.d. Web. 14 Dec. 2015.
43. Interview on 12/12/16 in Agadir.
44. Woman Choufouch Facebook page. Available at: https://www.facebook.com/Woman-Choufouch-105487879580033 (Accessed: 26 April 2021).
45. IBID.
46. *Brokerage* refers to new connections between previously unconnected or weakly connected activists.
47. Interview on 01/04/17 with F20 Leader in Marrakech.
48. 'Sit-in in Casablanca in Solidarity with Two Women Arrested for Wearing Miniskirts', *Morocco World News*, 29 June 2015. Available at: http://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2015/06/161982/sit-in-in-casablanca-in-solidarity-with-two-women-arrested-for-wearing-miniskirts/ (Accessed: 26 April 2021).
49. IBID.
50. Some of these new forms of contention have been incendiary and inspired by radical western feminists, like *FEMEN*. For instance, Tunisian feminist Amina Sboui posted bare-chested photos of herself online with the words "my body belongs to me, it's not the source of anyone's honor" written in Arabic on her body. Similarity, Egyptian feminist, Alia Magda Elmahdy, posted a nude photo of herself online to protest societal sexism and violence. Amina's and Elmahdy's actions stirred controversy throughout the Arab world and protests in Tunisia and Egypt. Like Woman Choufouch, their body politics and political motives focused on sovereignty of women's bodies in spite of breaking cultural honors.

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7 SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN RURAL AFRICA

HOW AND WHY MOZAMBICAN STATE CLOSED THE PROSAVANA PROGRAM

Luca Bussotti and Laura António Nhaueleque

Introduction

Protest and social movements are an integral part of political and social life in Africa. While most research gives prominence to the role of urban forms of collective action for political change, only recently there has been a growing interest in rural protests. A first moment which attracted the attention of some scholars regarding the agrarian question was in South Africa with respect to the constitution of the Landless People's Movement in 2001, whose peak was the organisation of the 2005 National Land Summit (SAHO, 2019). The Landless People's Movement was affiliated to *La Via Campesina*[1] and spread its influence to various countries of Southern Africa, such as Namibia and Zimbabwe. In 2008, together with other actors, the Landless People's Movement formed the Poor People's Alliance; a network of radical South African grassroots movements and communities that boycotted electoral processes in the country. Today, this network has expanded its interests, as in the case of campaigns for a sustainable agriculture or for gender equity in South Africa.

Similar rural movements of opposition to national governments as well as to international neoliberal policies were constituted all over the world, especially in developing countries of Asia, Latin America, and Africa, adhering to an explicit anti-capitalist ideology (Moyo and Yeros, 2005). Although with local differentiations, the question of land acquired a meaning beyond its material importance: the notion immaterial or symbolic "territories" informed the development of new ideologies to oppose neoliberalism (Fernandes, 2009). "A different model of development and way of life" were the important issues contended between rural social movements and neoliberal policies (Rosset and Martínez-Torres, 2012, p. 2).

This was the international atmosphere which characterised the rural issues when Mozambique became involved in a huge agrarian development programme, ProSavana, carried out through neoliberal principles, at the beginning of the 2010s. The Mozambican government lead by Frelimo, and in particular by President Guebuza (2004–2014) created a strong incentive for foreign investments as well as megaprojects, involving the resettlement of the people living on the lands involved (Lamas, 2018).

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However, the Mozambican government and the international partners of the ProSavana, Brazil and Japan, did not anticipate the political and social risk of implementing this programme. There was an illusory optimism that it would not face fierce opposition, given the country's weak political opposition and absence of rural protests (Bussotti, 2014). Strikingly, the movements that opposed ProSavana were able to define clear goals and forms of struggle, claiming a different, more equitable and sustainable form of rural development. Starting from these actions, they seized political opportunities to force the Mozambican government to close this ambitious program; and indeed, their actions culminated in a halt to the ProSavana program (Koomans, 2004, p. 65).

Through the lenses of political opportunities theories, it can be observed that rural social movements against the ProSavana, were able to redefine "the ground" of mobilisation and leverage the promoters of this program. Rural movements could draw on a political opportunity for a struggle that their adversaries had not calculated. This was possible for two reasons: first, rural movements had acquired an unexpected political maturity in a short time, thanks to the development of continuous horizontal contacts, capacity building programs, and a network of alliances carried out *sub rosa* and with modest financial resources; and second, the process surprised the mentors of ProSavana program, preventing them from recognising the risk to their intentions that this program would offer. Overall, our analysis reveals the importance of two political opportunity structures – local allies and international allies.

This study seeks to clarify how organisations, such as UNAC (National Union of Peasants) or FM (Women Forum), which seemed politically close to Frelimo's positions, were able to provoke a radical change in Mozambican state policy as well as in the position of the local social movements, obtaining, as their final result, the end of the ProSavana program. To this end, a qualitative methodology was adopted, combining bibliographical and documental analysis and interviews with privileged witnesses who took part in the campaign against the ProSavana program.

The relevance of this study is twofold. First political changes, in Mozambique, have historically occurred through top-down initiatives, systematically excluding local populations. Second Frelimo is the dominant party in a semi-authoritarian regime that limits both opposition parties and citizen participation in politics. ProSavana program is a thus a paradigmatic case as it made clear the relevant role of citizens in politics, against the expectations/calculations of the elites.

This chapter is organised as follows. Following a discussion on the rush for land in Africa, and international pressure for implementation of neoliberal policies, we present an overview of rural protests in Africa. Next the framework for the analysis of ProSavana in Mozambique is presented, highlighting the social protests in Mozambique. The methods and data are also described. After illustrating how political opportunity structures represent a fundamental tool to interpret the strategies adopted by rural social movements in Mozambique, the next sections conduct a case study analysis of ProSavana. They aim to show the chronological evolution of ProSavana program and opposition to it by social rural movements.

In these sections we demonstrate how decisive the domestic as well the international alliances were. These were established by the mentors of the "No to ProSavana" campaign, having as ultimate goal the end of the program. The conclusion summarises the results of this research.

The economic and political presuppositions for the rush for land in Africa: Awakening the sleeping giant

The 2007–2008 period marks a new phase of agricultural investments in rural Africa, with the so-called food crisis (De Brito, 2017). In a quite unexpected way, the world woke up to discover a scarcity in basic commodities, such as rice or soybeans, provoking a rapid rise in their market prices. These trends in food shortage and price increases developed parallel to the increase of prices in other important items, such as energy, which directly affected the urban middle classes.

The food crisis affected most developing countries and in Sub-Saharan Africa witness an increase in food import bills of 74% between 2007–2008; (Mittal, 2009). African States, which in 2003 had signed, the African Union Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme for increasing public investments in agriculture for the following five years (with the commitment to allocate at least 10% of national budgetary resources), did not fully commit to this goal (Mengoub, 2018). As most states failed to address the challenges of the Agricultural sector, the solution came from the outside, with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Bank (WB) taking the lead. In a document released in 2009, both institutions highlighted the main avenue for African agricultural development and the world in general: a rapid increase of productivity in African agriculture, which would contribute to worldwide food self-sufficiency. African lands (supposedly underexplored) would have to be submitted to a process of intensive agriculture, under the aegis of an attractive political program, based on the principle of food security for all (FAO and WB, 2009). A similar perspective was shared by the most powerful countries in the world. In a meeting held in 2009 in L'Aquila (Italy), the G8 issued a Joint Statement on Global Food Security that agreed on the investment of 20 billion dollars on the agricultural sector, with a special attention to Africa.

The ideology that informed the G8's Joint Statement, as well as FAO and WB documents, underlined important common characteristics of all: they were market-oriented and against all forms of protectionism, and perceived the increase in price of food as an opportunity for Africa. To confront hunger and crop scarcity, it was necessary to transform the sleeping agricultural sector of Africa into a competitive commercial tool to guarantee a "rapid development" (FAO and WB, 2009, p. 2). Specific crops attractive to the international market, such as cassava, cotton, maize, soybeans, rice, and sugar, had to be privileged.

Three countries served as case-studies in the study conducted by the FAO and WB (2009); Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia; and two paradigmatic models of rural development success were considered as points of departure for these countries: the PRODECER project in the Brazilian region of Cerrado, and a

project in the Northeast Region of Thailand. Both regions had unfavourable climate conditions for significant agricultural production but thanks to significant infra-structural investment, and intensive programs of agricultural development, heavily dependent on agrochemical fertilizers, they were able to experience agricultural transformation and boost the production of certain products. The question then was how to apply the same methodology to Africa, reproducing, with few adaptations, the two aforementioned models of success.

FAO and WB study suggested measures to be applied to a country such as Mozambique for future programs of agricultural development. The main idea was that the land had to be available for market-oriented production, "allowing land to change hands over time to those who can use it most productively" (FAO and WB, 2009, p. 16). Such program of privatisation should have led to an intensive exploitation of land, enabling the commercialisation of agricultural commodities for exportation. The catch was that this program could provoke the expropriation of many small peasants, and subject them to a condition of being simply subordinated workers. This issue, had to be tackled politically, and so were the proposals to extend the land in a "vibrant commercial farm system" (FAO and WB, 2009, p. 20), to the detriment of forests and pastoral lands, considered as unproductive. Some African researchers stated at the time that this process of a capital-intensive agricultural modernisation was not adequate for the local productive systems, both from an economic and a social point of view (Mosca, 2017).

Despite concerns about programmes of privatisation and modernisation of African agriculture, African states were ready to implement policies coherent with the attractive format of the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition. This Alliance was launched in 2012, under the auspices of the G8 in the 2013 Summit in the United Kingdom. The pivotal idea was that of modernisation of rural African society, "implicitly or explicitly suggesting that 'traditional' societies must develop or progress into 'modern' ones", with very little space for small peasants (McKeon, 2014, p. 8). This Alliance aimed to propose an integrated and apparently attractive pattern of growth.

Immediate adherents to this Alliance were the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, together with many chemical multinationals, interested in helping international organisations in their effort to increase African land productivity, companies such as Yara, Syngenta, and Monsanto. This involvement of multinational corporations in a crusade against poverty in Africa made it possible to transform the ideas of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), officially launched in 2011, into a concrete program, despite many criticisms (Odésiná, 2012). Kofi Hannan, in a famous discourse held in Addis Ababa in 2004, appealed to the African States to adhere to an African Green Revolution (AGRA, officially launched in 2006), which Yara sponsored at the 2006 African Fertilizer Summit in Nigeria (McKeon, 2014).

The role of agrochemical corporations was fundamental for implementing the program of the New Alliance in Africa. The Pan African Chemistry Network, in 2012, offered a precise model for a "sustainable intensification" of agricultural productivity, having as its specific target the small landholders (The Pan

African, 2012, p. 3). An integration of organic and inorganic fertilizers, known as Integrated Pest Management, was promoted. This approach received many criticisms because of its environmental impact and financial constraints, forcing peasants to buy new seeds every year, increasing their debts with the banks.

Rural protests in Africa

Social movements, protests, and manifestations are an integral part of African politics and society (Bussotti and Mutzenberg, 2016). For instance, Larmer clustered African social movement activity into four periods including social movements related to African nationalisms (1950–1960), to the first post-colonial period (1960–1975), to the politics of structural adjustment (1975–1989), and to the pro-democracy demands (1990–2010 and after) (Larmer, 2010). While other scholars have proposed different chronological phases (Brandes and Engels, 2011), it is interesting to note the prevalence of urban protests in the study of African social movements (Mamdami and Wamba-Dia-Wamba, 1995). Rural movements did not play a significant role in the four phases identified by Larmer, with a partial exception of the last one. This statement is confirmed by specific research: Bratton and Van de Walle (1992) stressed that, at the beginning of the 1990s, a sample of 30 African countries did not give any evidence of rural protests. Asante (2018), who studied the case of Ghana, confirmed that post-colonial protests in Africa have been largely urban. According to Wantchekon and García-Ponce (2014), rural classes could have played an important role in African social and political protests only in some countries before their independence, and always in strict alliance with urban classes. Immediately after, especially in the long season of one-party regimes (approximately from the 1960s to the beginning of the 1990s), rural populations were more the victims than the protagonists of social transformations, resulting from failed agricultural policies (the State cooperative in Mozambique or the Ujamaa in Tanzania), or from explicit violence against them by many African regimes, as in the cases of Angola and Mozambique (Mkandawire, 2002). In fact, it was only with the liberalisation process that occurred in Africa in the late 1980s–early 1990s that rural movements became more prominent. For instance, in many countries, women's associations played a leading role, as for instance in South Africa, with the foundation, in 1986, of the Rural Women's Movement, of Mali and Tanzania (Tripp, 2003).

Although the pro-democracy protests, since the 1990s had their main expression in African urban centres, rural protests assumed a significant role, especially from 2007–2008 onwards, when the programs of agricultural development started being implemented. As a matter of fact, if the agenda for urban African was focused on the expansion of civil and political rights, in the countryside the struggle aimed to protect the right to land and, thus, the material and symbolic patrimony of local communities.

All over the continent movements of opposition manifested their opposition to the new wave of land privatisation, intensive exploitation, and use of inorganic seeds. This occurred in the 2019 meeting held in Burkina Faso, when peasant

organisations from nine different West African countries refuted the use of GMOs or hybrid seeds (FIAN INTERNATIONAL, 2019), as well as in the 2013 meeting in Harare (Zimbabwe) (LA VIA CAMPESINA, 2013). Despite such widespread opposition, the adoption of Integrated Pest Management and the process of privatisation of land were implemented all over the continent. Mozambique offered all the best conditions to receive this model: the institutional availability, a supposed limited opposition by local peasants, as well as favourable climatic and geological conditions, especially in the North of the country. As later shown, these and other models of agricultural development faced strong societal opposition in Africa, and particularly in Mozambique, contradicting the optimistic previsions of the government about the success of an initiative such as ProSavana.

Researching protest in Mozambique

Political changes, in Mozambique, have historically occurred through top-down initiatives, systematically excluding local populations. This was the case in the choice for a socialist regime in 1975, immediately after the obtaining of political independence, as well as for the shift towards a liberal political and economic system at the end of the 1980s, which opened the avenue for a new Constitution (1990) and a General Peace Agreement after a 16-year civil war (1992) (Ngoenha, 2004).

For years, Mozambique was hailed post-war success story (Paris, 2004; Macedo and Pereira, 2010), however it has recently faced political instability (Muchemwa and Harris, 2019 while authoritarian practices remain pervasive, as various democracy indexes, human rights reports and political analysts demonstrate (Levitsky and Way, 2002; Amnesty International, 2008; Freedom House, 2020). Across these different historical periods, Mozambican has experienced four waves of protest as proposed by Larmer (2010).

The first wave started in the 1960s with the struggle against colonialism and ended in 1975, with the country's independence. The second wave occurred during the socialist experience, known as "First Republic" (1975–1990). From the outset of independence in 1975, Frelimo, the sole legal party, created many collateral organisations which served as transmission belts within civil society namely: trade unions, women's associations (as the *Organization of Mozambican Woman* OMM, or the *Women Forum Mulher*, FM), and peasant movements, such as the National Union of the Peasants (UNAC). However, civil society was completely controlled by the regime, and elections served only to confirm the power of the incumbent party; there was no opposition (Victorino and Silva Sousa, 2018). Nevertheless, Frelimo underestimated at least two phenomena: the historical opposition which had developed among local populations, especially in the Centre and in the North of the country, and the transformations civil society was undergoing, starting from those organisations which Frelimo had created, but that were becoming more independent and mature (as for instance the UNAC). During this period there were three forms of struggle against the Frelimo government: the civil war carried out by Renamo (National Resistance of Mozambique), especially in the Centre and North of the country (Temudo, 2005); the opposition by rural

classes against the policies of villagisation carried out by Frelimo (Monjane and Bruna, 2019); finally, localised demonstrations organised by urban workers especially in Maputo, as in the case of railways workers or students of the University of Eduardo Mondlane in the 1980s. In general, these demonstrations resulted in the tightening of the measures of repression by Mozambican institutions, leaving no space for social or political changes.

In the third period (1990–2008), in an apparent atmosphere of peace, social protests registered a modest intensification. The authoritarian nature of Mozambican state, with a strict control of popular masses as well as popular organisations, did not leave many spaces for protests and public demonstrations. The moves towards political and economic liberalisation had little societal input (Bessa Ribeiro, 2015), even though humanitarian organisations and the church played an important role in the peace negotiations that led to the signature of the peace accords in 1992. During this period, where peace and democracy were still unfolding, public demonstrations were rare and did not have the desired effect, and the state often resorted to repression to contain them. An example of such protests is the Madjermane case, a consistent group of former Mozambican workers in East Germany, claiming for their lawful pensions. Mozambican State has always denied the payment of Madjermane's pensions, despite their weekly protests in Maputo city (Oppenheimer, 2004).

The last period of protests registered two large and violent demonstrations in 2008, September, and in 2010, February, in Maputo. Protesters were able to build on social media to amplify their frames and spread the message. However, about 20 people died, and important concessions were made to alleviate an increase in the price of bread and oil. As Luís de Brito wrote, the most important result was that the Mozambican state began to fear these demonstrations, reversing a long tradition of pure repression (De Brito, 2017). Force and violence were the means used in these demonstrations which were able to obtain some significant but limited successes. Nevertheless, after the last demonstration of 2010, the urban context became highly controlled by Mozambican police forces, and violent protests were never to be repeated.

Political opportunity structures for protest in the countryside

Starting from the end of the 2000s, the Mozambican rural context was the theatre of three great protest movements in response to mega-projects: the coal project in Tete carried out by the Brazilian Vale, the protests against eucalyptus plantations in the Centre of Mozambique, and finally the opposition to ProSavana. In the first case, a group of potters, in its majority former soldiers, used violent means, such as blockage of roads and railways, to obtain a specific objective, an adequate indemnification to compensate the expropriation by Vale. In the other two cases the results obtained followed a different, new pattern of social struggle: a shift from localised claims to a broader perspective embedded in the defence of land rights by local rural communities. For example, in Manica and Zambezia, where Portucel, a Portuguese company invested in eucalyptus plantations for the

production of pulp and paper etc., the movements were able to renegotiate the conditions of the original investment. Resistance was even stronger in the case of ProSavana, as follows. We argue that political opportunity structures were relevant for the success of these protests. Nevertheless, ProSavana offered a different pattern of exploitation of political opportunities in relation to the traditional social and political movements we mentioned earlier. For instance, different from the Tete's potters, ProSavana opponents did not use violence, but tried to build an articulated network of alliances based on a common program and ideology. The surprise-effect in relation to the Mozambican government was that violence was not used, with the game played on a pure political field. This, as well as pressure from the other international partners, was also decisive for the success of the "No to ProSavana" campaign. Our explanatory approach highlights the role of political opportunities, that is the various factors that helped the movement attain their political goals (Meyer, 2004; Sanches, 2022). For the case of Mozambique, we reveal that local and international alliances and networks played a crucial role in bringing about the end of the ProSavana.

Methodology

ProSavana is a program of rural development carried out by a coalition of the Brazilian ABC, the Japanese JICA and the Mozambican government, involving 11 million hectares in the Nacala Corridor, an area composed of 19 districts distributed among the provinces of Niassa, Nampula, and Zambezia.

Our research question aims to understand how rural populations of the North of Mozambique were able to close down one of the most important programmes of agricultural and integrated development in Africa. To this end we employed a qualitative methodology, using a documental analysis of the available material, semi-structured interviews with privileged witnesses, namely some of the leaders of the national organisations engaged in the struggle against ProSavana, complemented by some visits to local communities involved directly in the program, especially in Nampula province. The privileged witnesses were selected among the civil society representatives engaged in opposition to the ProSavana. They all agreed to speak with the team of researchers, although one of them asked for anonymity, due to his peculiar professional situation. The mosaic of information obtained was processed through a qualitative methodology, through a discourse analysis which pointed out the different perspectives of our interviewees about the various phases of their struggle. The data used confirmed that the decisive element for the success of the "No to ProSavana" campaign was the close relationships established among the different actors of this initiative, who were able to find a common ideology, strongly oriented towards an anti-capitalistic approach. Our interviews showed that, despite the great differences among the various components of this campaign, there were a common objective and a shared understanding of collective relations in the countryside: they all wanted to protect small landholders from the ProSavana mega-project, which was interpreted as a menace to their rights, which had to be overcome through collective action. From our

interviews this interpretative framework emerged clearly, as well as the different roles and approaches of the various entities (and interviewees), as following.

An unpredictable risk: Awakening rural social resistance against ProSavana

This section presents a short reconstruction of the phases of the movement, introduces the actors and the political opportunity structures that mattered.

Start: Collecting information and raising awareness

The triangular deal among JICA, ABC, and the Mozambican government in 2009 was shrouded in secrecy; rural organisations were able to capture some information through unofficial channels, namely international press (Aragão and Kraychete, 2018) and through direct relations with foreign rural movements, especially between UNAC and La Via Campesina of Brazil since UNAC was a member of La Via Campesina. This relation had been possible thanks to previous contacts between UNAC and the Brazilian Movement of the Peasants Without Land (MST). MST visited UNAC in 1998 and UNAC became aware of La Via Campesina and its programs through MST. Besides these sources, Mozambican public media, i.e. *Rádio Moçambique*, also began to broadcast news about ProSavana in 2011. According to Pedro, a member of a local NGO in Nampula, who participated in all the phases of the campaign against ProSavana, local institutions had not yet passed on any official information at that time.[2]

The first Mozambican organisation which asked for information about ProSavana was ORAM (Rural Association of Mutual Help), but it did not have as solid an international network as UNAC. For this reason, UNAC activated its relations with its Brazilian partners. In November 2012, La Via Campesina organised, together with other Brazilian organisations, such as the Movement of the Small Producers and the Federation of Organs for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE), a first visit of UNAC to Brazil. As a result, UNAC returned to Mozambique with a video which reproduced and explained what the program PRODECER – which constituted the model for ProSavana – represented for Brazilian peasants. According to Adriano Vicente, at the time an influent member of UNAC, this video was projected in villages in the Nacala Corridor, and it had a noticeable effect on local populations[3]. The UNAC, under the leadership of Augusto Mafigo, was responsible for raising the first alarm about risk related to ProSavana with respect to the local rural populations. One of the first slogans promoted by UNAC, as Adriano Vicente remembers, was "No peasant without land!"

Local alliances – building shared frameworks and reaching wider audiences

After having received clearer understanding of the ProSavana programme, many other associations joined ORAM and UNAC to develop a solid opposition to

ProSavana. According to Adriano Vicente, this process was very swift. In about two months – between November and December 2012, 48 Mozambican associations had joined the front against ProSavana, starting from the two (ORAM and UNAC) which formed the first nucleus of opposition. The philosophy of struggle developed by ORAM and UNAC was shared by the other organisations. The first idea was that no peasant had to remain without land; the second was a call for transparency, regular access to information about the program; finally, ProSavana had to guarantee above all the alimentary needs of the local populations before food export.

A bottom-up approach was adopted, contrary to what the ProSavana institutional actors were doing. This bottom-up approach was possible thanks to UNAC's, and in part, ORAM's, local networks. Two meetings were called to share information with local populations. The first one was held in Nampula, in 2011, at Quinta Naja, and the second one in Inhambane (Quiva). Here, the opposition against ProSavana was officially formalised, despite differences of opinions among the various players, as Adriano Vicente confirmed. So, all the civil society organisations which had participated in this meeting decided to carry out an intense campaign known as "No to ProSavana". Local alliances allowed the amplification and resonance within this framework and gathered networks and resources to help achieve the protesters' political aims (Benford and Snow, 2020).

International alliances

International actors were perceived as crucial POS for accessing information about the ProSavana, and to create effective bridging and cooperation strategies so as to maximise the protesters political impact and public visibility (Meyer, 2004).

Adriano Vicente, as well as Jeremias Vunjanhe, the leader of ADECRU,[4] confirmed that nobody thought that it would be possible to win such a difficult battle resorting only to domestic alliances. The battlefront had to be enlarged. A specific strategy was elaborated, consisting of two stages. "In Mozambique", remembers Adriano Vicente:

> you cannot think to win such important struggles against the government without international alliances. In the case of ProSavana, paradoxically the fact that the government implemented this program thanks to two other state institutions, Japanese and Brazilian, gave us this opportunity, since UNAC had already established good relations with rural social movements in Brazil, which could be used as our partners in the struggle against this enormous program of land grabbing.

In the first stage, each organisation had to activate its own international channels. As Vicente noted, UNAC was the forerunner, but other new organisations joined this strategy. ADECRU, for example, was able to build on its international network to establish more meaningful ways of penetrating the rural areas.

ADECRU was a partner of important rural and academic organisations in Africa as well as all over the world, in particular in Latin America. Its main allies were the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies of the University of Western Cape (PLAAS), the Pan-Africanism Today Movement and, in Brazil, the Movement Without Land (MST), the Institute of Alternative Policies for the South Cone (PACS), in Rio de Janeiro part of La Via Campesina.

These relations had direct as well as indirect consequences on the organisation of rural protests in Mozambique: they showed that Mozambique was not isolated in the struggle against land-grabbing, since all over the world, in particular in the Global South, they were occurring. At the same time, these alliances provided a common, ideological base to carry out actions at the national level, which can be summarised as anti-capitalist. Quoting, one of our interviewees Jeremias Vunjanhe,

> We learnt many things from our international allies, starting from our South African partners and thus enlarging our processes of training and exchange of experiences to Brazil and Latin American in general. We saw that our struggles were their struggles too, so it was not difficult to understand that there was a common, international front which has the same objectives. This message was transmitted to our rural local communities all over the country, and this process gave them an ideological base and a force which we ourselves could not imagine.

Thanks to such alliances, ADECRU grew in terms of human capital, training, and specific knowledge concerning the general policies of agricultural development by multinational enterprises. This knowledge became a fundamental tool when ADECRU began to be part of a network among local rural communities, showing them the great potential for an important political change.

In the second stage, specific alliances were promoted to sustain the "No to ProSavana" campaign. Japanese organisations were involved what was a decisive option for the success of the movement. In little within a short time, since after 2013, 20 Japanese organisations had joined the "No to ProSavana" campaign, under the umbrella of the Japanese International Voluntary Centre (JVC), a network of local NGOs. JVC obtained information about ProSavana from the Japanese parliament, which discussed ProSavana in various sessions. The members of JVC immediately noted that a serious action was necessary to halt Japanese support for the ProSavana in Mozambique and affirm the principles of global justice and citizenship that this program was violating. For this reason, still in 2013, a team of JVC visited the Nacala Corridor, establishing direct relationships with the mentors of the "No to ProSavana" campaign. The Mozambican government disclaimed the promoters of the "No to ProSavana" campaign as unpatriotic and treating them as opponents of development and progress (Monjane and Bruna, 2019).

Given the predictable reaction by the Mozambican government, the opposition front looked for new allies, outside their traditional partners in the Global

South. Among them, the Pastoral Commission of Land (CPT) of the Catholic Church in Brazil, the Siemenpuu Foundation of Finland, as well as the Aid of Norwegian People in Mozambique. The Mozambican Catholic Church also indirectly supported this campaign, through its Nampula Commission of Peace and Justice, offering spaces for meetings and training, thus providing a discrete but very important aid.[5] Pedro, one of our interviews, also confirmed that the Catholic Church made its network of contacts available to the most remote communities in Nampula to explain the risk of land grabbing by Pro Savana.

"No to ProSavana" campaign

All the work developed by the local organisations which protested against ProSavana culminated in the launching of a vast campaign, the "No to ProSavana", which had a significant impact on national as well as international public opinion.

The first manifestations of this front were represented by a public letter[6], directed to the Japanese, Brazilian, and Mozambican governments, written in 2013. This letter expressed severe opposition to ProSavana, demanding a halt to this program. It was delivered by Augusto Mafigo to Shinzo Abe at the 2013 TICAD in Tokyo, where, according to Adriano Vicente, who was there, President Guebuza expressed total surprise in discovering that 23 Mozambican organisations together with 43 international organisations had signed it.

A second protest form, emanated from the ideological struggle that unfolded in parallel to the fight against the program itself. The promoters of ProSavana presented their project as a good example of South-South cooperation, which Lula had emphasised since the beginning of his mandate as a Brazilian President. Nevertheless, many observers noted that the ProSavana program had more similarities to the model used for Brazilian Cerrado than with South-South cooperation. (Paiva Toledo, 2016; Fingerman, 2013). The logic of ProSavana was clearly top-down, putting Japanese and Brazilian needs ahead of Mozambican (Funada Classen, 2013), and disregarding the interests of Mozambican peasants.

In response to the above-mentioned letter and to the significant protests carried out by peasant communities and organisations, the three main State actors adopted a strategy to try to persuade the opposition front of the good intentions of ProSavana, as well as to change some marginal aspects of the program. The analysis and recommendations of Majol, a consultancy company contracted by the ProSavana program, helps to understand how this program tried to overcome the unexpected resistance from the local communities in the Nacala Corridor. Majol pointed out that, in many cases, the transactions of land from the hands of peasants to those of the ProSavana investors did not respect the criterion of free consent, which had raised negative feelings about the program. In addition, Majol suggested organising meetings so as to involve local civil society, elaborating a "stakeholders mapping" to break the resistance front from within (Aragão and Kraychete, 2018).

It was clear that this underestimation of the "capacity of resistance and participation of the peasants and of the groups which amplified their voices" constituted one of the main elements that provoked partial changes in the strategy of the ProSavana programme (Aragão and Kraychete, 2018, p. 488). To their surprise, the ProSavana promoters discovered that many members of the "No to ProSavana" campaign were incorruptible; they also disposed of a vast and efficient network of allies, inside and outside Mozambique, with capacity to raise funds and with a robust experience in the struggle against ProSavana (Aragão and Kraychete, 2018).

Overcoming internal divisions

Unlike they had anticipated, the Mozambican government and its two international partners faced significant opposition by Northern Mozambican rural masses in relation to the ProSavana. As in the past, the Mozambican government imposed its authoritarian developmental agenda without trying to understand the reasons behind local NGOs and rural communities' opposition to the ProSavana. To offset opposition, the government first tactic was to break apart the opposition front. This was successful: a group of civil society organisations favourable to ProSavana was constituted in 2016 (called the Mechanism of Coordination of Civil Society for the Development of the Nacala Corridor), composed of the Provincial Platform das NGO of Nampula (PPOSC-N), the Forum of Niassa Province Associations (FONAGNI) and the Forum of Zambezia Province Associations (FONGZA). According to Vicente Adriano, this was the most difficult moment for the "No to ProSavana" campaign supporters: "We had to face a new situation now, the most difficult one since the beginning of our struggle", he remembers.

> Many of our comrades were thinking of facing another defeat against our overbearing government. Nevertheless, we decided to maintain our positions of opposition to the program, starting a new campaign with local populations in order to explain to them that what the new Coordinating Mechanism for the area was doing was wrong. But this meant, of course, a regression of our struggle.

The two opposition fronts assumed irreconcilable positions, whose consequences are visible until today. As the movement faced internal division, the implementation of the ProSavana program became increasingly authoritarian: the three entities which were carrying out this program envisioned a new political opportunity for affirming their projects. According to witnesses, the meetings held between 2017 and 2019 were like electoral rallies of Frelimo than to open meetings with local rural associations (Japan pushes, 2020). These meetings were called in accordance with the Mozambican land law, which established that investment could only be made after consultation with the local community. In the case of ProSavana, these meetings became purely formal, as our witness,

Pedro, confirmed: "it was impossible to attend these meetings without a formal invitation and nobody could criticize ProSavana". The continuous attempts by JICA to influence, with every means, the organisations which were carrying out the campaign "No to ProSavana" combined with continuing threats from local authorities was demonstrated in a letter to the president of JICA (14 February 2017), Shinichi Kitaoka. This letter demanded respect for human rights and environmental standards which the same JICA was supposed to promote (Funada Classen, 2019). The Mozambican lawyers' order upheld the cause of "No to ProSavana" campaign and even the Administrative Tribunal of Maputo condemned the program due to its lack of information and transparency in communication with the populations involved.

Despite internal division in among the NGOs forming the front, the "No to ProSavana" campaign continued. At the same time, the new Brazilian government decreased its interest in Africa and, consequently, in the ProSavana too. Only JICA continued to sustain and fund this program (JICA MOZAMBIQUE NEWSLETTER, 2014).

The end of ProSavana

The official end of ProSavana, was announced by the Mozambican government in 2020. This was a surprising decision for their opponents but came after ten years of persistent struggle. The change, in 2014, of the Chief of State, from Guebuza to Nyusi, did not seem to represent a significant transformation for programs of agricultural development such as ProSavana. What must be considered as the major win for a social movement of protest in Mozambique, the end of ProSavana, can be explained through a strategic alliance between Mozambican associations and the international network that they were able to establish, especially in relation to Japan where very serious criticisms was carried out against ProSavana. In May 2017, a meeting of the JVC and its leader, Naoko Watanabe, with the general director of MOFA (the Japanese Foreign Office), Yamada, revealed the strategy of communication of JICA in Mozambique. Yamada assumed the commitment to change the approach of JICA in Mozambique and began to raise doubts about the management of this important program. Later, a delegation of Japanese deputies visited Mozambique, and they too advanced the idea that the program be ended or radically changed. The deputy Satoshi Inoue questioned the approach of JICA towards local populations in Mozambique in a meeting of ODA (Official Development Assistance), the public Japanese agency which supervises JICA, accentuating the above-mentioned doubts (Funada Classen, 2019). Finally, the pressure of the Japanese lobby which had sustained the "No to Pro Savana" campaign was so strong and well organised that the Japanese government decided to stop financing this program, forcing the Mozambican government to declare its closure.

As Mozambican researchers have stated, it was not the ProSavana programme that woke up a supposed sleeping land, but rather the rural local social movements, in particular UNAC (Monjane and Bruna, 2019). Thus, this awakening of rural protests and issues became one of the most relevant impacts of the ProSavana.

Conclusion

The ProSavana program represented an attempt to carry out an ambitious program of integrated development in Africa. Its failure is a milestone in the social rural struggles in Africa, given the pacific means used by the movement actors.

The Mozambican state generally repressed such protests, to contain the risk of an expansion of the various claims, except for extreme forms of violence, urban riots, or similar demonstrations. The ProSavana case opened new opportunities for a significant political transformation. At least three elements can be identified: firstly, a non-violent approach; secondly, a bottom-up strategy, with a deep involvement of local communities as well as peasants' organisations; finally, a strong international network which had been created before ProSavana, under the led of UNAC or ADECRU, and which further developed in the "No to ProSavana" campaign. Adding to this, was the fact that ProSavana promoters underestimated the mobilisation potential of the "No to ProSavana" organisations. This was surprising, as rural communities had experienced similar situations of land grabbing in Malema (Nampula Province), with soybeans and cotton cultivations by Mozaco, in Lioma (Gurué, Province of Zambezia), with soybeans, corn, and kidney bean cultivation by a joint venture of Amorim Group from Portugal and Intelec by the Mozambican Salimo Abdula; but in all these instances local communities were not so effective in their struggles, due to the isolation of their actions and the state capacity to repress them.

What seems to have played a decisive role in the "No to ProSavana" campaign was the political empowerment of local organisations, and even more the international alliances they established. This hypothesis is confirmed by other similar cases of rural African struggles against mega-projects. It is the case of Ethiopia, where the strategy of land acquisition by external investors has been on a large-scale as in Mozambique, and where the alliance with international civil society organisations played a fundamental role. Even more, in Ghana, faced with an investment in biofuel by the Norwegian ScanFuel, a strict alliance between the local FoodSpan civil society coalition and some Norwegian youth organisations forced the external investor to negotiate better conditions for the peasants subjected to the process of land dispossession. In this case, the emphasis on human rights played a very significant role in the strategy of resistance against the ScanFuel investment.

These cases demonstrate that forms of resistance against the global process of land-grabbing in Africa must be adapted to the different local contexts; they also show that new political opportunities for significant changes cannot avoid a close relationship with civil society organisations of those countries which are carrying out the investment in a specific African country. Given that popular pressure in many African contexts can result in more repression by the state, in the countries of origin of the investing company the situation is, in general, different. And it is exactly thanks to the pressure of civil society organisations and mass media in these countries, interested in maintaining a positive public image which respects democracy and human rights, those new political opportunities

can result in significant changes in rural Africa. In the case of Mozambique this mechanism was effective since the principal investor of ProSavana program was the Japanese government. When the investor is a private company, the success of the protests generally faces greater difficulties. Nevertheless, in this case too, a strict alliance with civil society organisations belonging to the country where the investment comes from represents, today, a pivotal factor for new political changes in rural Africa.

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Notes

1. La Via Campesina is an international organisation of peasants and their different associations, whose main aim is to promote an articulation of rural social movements in defence of their rights to land.
2. Pedro is a nickname here used to protect the identity of this interviewee, who agreed to speak with the authors of this research under the condition of anonymity. The interview occurred in Nampula, 23 December 2020.
3. Adriano Vicente was interviewed in Maputo, 10 December 2020. The interview given by Mr Pedro also confirmed this.
4. Jeremias Vuhnjane is the leader of ADECRU (Academic Action for the Development of Rural Communities), which was founded in 2008 by university students under his leadership. He was interviewed in various meetings in Maputo, in June-July, 2018.
5. This information was obtained thanks to an interview made in Nampula with Sister Rita, the person formerly responsible of the Peace and Justice Commission of Nampula, August, 2018.
6. The whole text of this letter can be found at: http://contag.org.br/arquivos/portal/file/Carta%20Aberta%20Programa%20ProSavana.pdf (Accessed: 3 February 2020).

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8 *WE GOT A TASTE FOR PROTEST!* LEADERSHIP TRANSITION AND POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROTEST IN ANGOLA'S RESILIENT AUTHORITARIAN REGIME

Claúdia Generoso de Almeida, Ana Lúcia Sá and Paulo C. J. Faria

Introduction

"Our stomachs are empty; we can't take it anymore. This is not what the young people of Angola dreamed of. João Lourenço, you can leave, the nation doesn't need you. Are we troublemakers?"[1] Protesters echoed this message during a public demonstration in the capital of Luanda on the 45th anniversary of Angola's independence on 11 November 2020. The anti-government demonstrators demanded jobs, better living conditions, local elections, and the end of the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government, which had been in power since the country's independence from Portugal in 1975. A university student, Inocêncio Matos was killed in the protest and others sustained severe injuries. The authorities' violent response signalled the authoritarian nature of the MPLA regime and a reversal of president Lourenço's initial pledges to embrace a more democratic state.

João Lourenço succeeded José Eduardo dos Santos as Angola's third head of state in 2017. His election was initially met with optimism for more than just symbolic reasons: his reformist agenda, fight against corruption and proximity to the people distinguished him from the preceding president who had been in power since 1979 (Roque, 2017; Schubert, 2018). Lourenço was praised for his "new paradigm of governance", and his desire to improve the country's human rights performance and respect freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. He would create a more favourable environment that welcomed civil society initiatives and voices of discontent. Remarkably, the number of popular protests[2] has increased significantly since Lourenço took office. In just four years of presidency, the new leadership has faced more episodes of protests than the 15 years of Dos Santos' post-war presidency. What can explain the increased levels of protest during João Lourenço's presidency? And how impactful have these protests been?

This chapter answers these questions by exploring the political opportunities arising from leadership change. Our analysis focuses on four variables of political

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opportunity structures (POS) to assess how new opportunities brought by a new leadership can lead to an increase in protests in authoritarian states, namely: 1) the extent of the new leader's openness to protest (Meyer, 2004); 2) electoral pledges and policy implementation (Costain, 1992; Meyer et al., 2005); 3) the new government's use of repression (Meyer, 2004); and 4) protesters' perceptions of the political environment (Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Kurzman, 1996). These variables will allow us to look simultaneously at the political context and the agency of protesters within it and perceive how protesters react to the regime's responses.

We argue that the election of a new President in 2017 changed political opportunities for protest. The initial openness to demonstrations and criticism by Lourenço's presidency set a cognitive mechanism in motion or, as Tilly (2001, p. 24) theorised, an alteration in individual and collective perception that encouraged individual and collective actors to protest and engage different people in these actions. The increased intensity of protests under Lourenço's presidency reveals a change in citizens' perception of their ability to engage in protest actions: less fear of protesting and a growing "taste for protest", to use the words of Luaty Beirão, a well-known Angolan activist.[3] Regardless of the government's repressive response, this new cognitive frame, together with worsening socio-economic conditions and the government's inability to deliver on electoral pledges, influenced protesters' capacity to mobilise.

Our approach offers important contributions. First, it reveals the importance but also the shortcomings of political opportunities brought by leadership transition as triggers of change in autocratic regimes. The initial optimism about Lourenço's office gave way to widespread discontent because the regime's *status quo* remained as authoritarian and was incapable of improving good governance and living conditions. Second, it shows that it is worth exploring the impact of popular protests in authoritarian regimes from a different angle, i.e. cognitive. The literature tends to focus on more tangible changes such as political reforms but we can capture intangible, but quintessential, aspects of change by exploring alterations in the perception of protesters that encourage popular uprisings (Bratton and Walle, 1997; Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

The empirical analysis covers protests from the start of Lourenço's presidency (September 2017) until early February 2021. The quantitative data on protests was mainly collected from the ACLED dataset to depict the frequency, intensity, and type of protest.[4] To explore the changes in political opportunities after Lourenço took office and to identify the cognitive mechanism, we build on evidence from semi-structured interviews conducted in Luanda, Cacuaco (Angola), and Lisbon (Portugal), between 2020 and 2021 with young Angolan protesters, activists, and experts. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese and translated to English by the authors.

This chapter comprises four sections. The first outlines the main characteristics of protests and the opportunities for protest in authoritarian regimes, specifically addressing the "third wave of protests" in Africa. The following section explains Angola's relevance in the context of protests in Africa's authoritarian regimes. Section three focuses on the changes brought by the new president to four POS variables. The concluding section looks at what the Angolan case tells us about

political opportunities that enable protest and their transformative power in Africa's resilient authoritarian regimes.

Opportunities for protest in African authoritarian regimes

Protest is a form of political participation that complements others such as voting or civic activism (Thyen and Gerschewski, 2018, pp. 39–40), and it is particularly important when more direct forms of influence are absent (Meyer, 2004, p. 128). This is the case of African autocracies where political life has been dominated by elites with ever-diminishing commitment to the democratic project, resulting in difficulties in implementing reforms after elections, state *dominium* over the economy and an "authoritarian political culture" (Gyimah-Boadi, 2015, pp. 101 and 107). Political elites failed to deliver the promises of social and political inclusion made at two fundamental moments of transition: from colonial rule to independence and from single-party or military dictatorships to multipartyism. The first was expected to bring colonial rule and its inequalities to an end, while the second paved the way for multipartyism. The ongoing third wave of popular protests across Africa represents a third moment of transition that spans all regime types and calls for better governance and living conditions (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

Protesters demand improved socioeconomic conditions, access to public services, constitutional change, political freedom, and good governance (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Mueller, 2018; Mateos and Erro, 2021). Although mobilising grievances might be context-dependent and address economic or political conditions of a certain state, the literature suggests that protesters express various grievances at the same protest event, which can be summarised as governance related issues. Therefore, the political context will determine the grievances that mobilise protesters. These include economic exclusion and political dissatisfaction, as was the case of popular protests in Mozambique in 2008–2012 (Brito, 2017). Following the inauguration of Niger's first oil refinery in 2011, protests mobilised civil society and political opponents who demonstrated against unemployment and economic instability (Schritt, 2019). Meanwhile, in 2016 Zimbabwe saw protests against corruption, bad governance, and the government's failure to tackle unemployment (Gukurume, 2017). Educated young people from Oromia not only protest against land grabbing by the government, unemployment, and other socioeconomic grievances but also demand democracy (Abebe, 2020). But this third wave encompasses other movements and protests in democracies and autocracies against changes to the constitution that allow for third terms, as in the case of Senegalese *Y'en a Marre* in 2011 (Dimé, 2022) and Burkinabé Balai Citoyen in 2014 (Touré, 2017; Bertrand, 2022), or call for regime change, as in the case of Sudan where protests in 2019 resulted in the ousting of Omar al-Bashir (Hassanain, 2020).

This brief snapshot of protests depicts different actors, grievances, outcomes and regime types. Protesting in authoritarian regimes carries higher costs and may even put the lives of protesters in danger; so what makes people take to the streets in these regimes? There are a number of explanations for collective action but, from the political opportunity perspective, the likelihood of protests taking place depends on the context (Meyer, 2004, p. 124; Dahlum and Wig, 2019; Sanches,

2022). Political opportunities for protest are scarcer in authoritarian regimes than in democracies (Almeida, 2003), which means the possibilities of different forms of political participation are more limited. Nevertheless, despite fewer political opportunities for protest in authoritarian regimes, empirical evidence, and anecdotal data show that they are recurrent phenomena (Barría, 2018).

Protests can be triggered by an enabling political environment resulting from turning point events within the political regime, such as leadership transition. Leadership change has been an important issue in contemporary African politics and a topic of concern in several authoritarian regimes (Brownlee, 2007) given that a long list of African presidents have managed to extend their time in office with the help of much international collusion (Cheeseman and Fisher, 2021). For example, the former Angolan president, Dos Santos, was among the five longest-serving presidents in Africa until September 2017, when power was transferred through elections to João Lourenço.

Leadership change in authoritarian regimes constitutes a moment of uncertainty and is therefore a time when political opportunities for protest can alter. POS in non-democratic states are more limited than in democracies due to a lack of independent institutions and fragile communication channels between citizens and the state. Theoretical contributions to the debate on POS in authoritarian regimes are also scarce as this theoretical framework is more focused on contentious episodes in democracies (Alimi, 2009). Hence, it is necessary to explore how the alteration in the political context impacts political actors' and activists' perceptions of the rules of the autocratic game and affects their agency to protest.

If a new leader shows he/she is more open to dialogue, activists can see this change in leadership as an opportunity. The leader's openness to protests is therefore a variable of POS (Meyer, 2004). A new leader is also expected to fulfil electoral promises of long-awaited changes in economic and political conditions. The fulfilment of promises and the government's response to demands also constitute a variable of POS (Costain, 1992; Meyer et al., 2005). However, competitive authoritarianism is the type of authoritarian regime that offers some space for popular protest and, where protests can change the policies of elites (Vladisavljević, 2014). This contrasts with the situation in more centralised and oil-rich authoritarian regimes (Girod, Stewart and Walters, 2018), which rely upon repression. Individuals and groups using peaceful means to contend with the government are often the target of this repression (Davenport, 2007), which raises the costs of collective action when power holders see it as a threat. Repression can come in many different shapes and forms, from controlling the media, banning associations, infiltrating movements, to physical violence and intimidation (Osa and Schock, 2007). For instance, state responses to recent popular protests in African authoritarian states such as Rwanda and Ethiopia were brutal and included jailing, different forms of harassment and the killing of demonstrators (Mueller, 2020, p. 65).

Due to this political culture, "contentious participation" has a higher cost in authoritarian regimes than in democracies, though both regime types usually respond with a "repressive backlash" (Albrecht and Koehler, 2020, pp. 138–139). Repression tends to reduce threats and is used along with other strategies of social and political control, such as co-optation, to allow the regime to negotiate with

protesters by accommodating some of their demands or distributing economic and political benefits (Geha, 2019). Repression and co-optation are key mechanisms of autocratic control and stability (Gerschewski, 2013; Sá and Sanches, 2021), lessening the chances of popular protest. Therefore, the reduction of state repression is a variable of political opportunity for protest in authoritarian regimes, making contentious politics less risky for protesters. However, people also take to streets when repression increases (Osa and Schock, 2007), due to the urgency of their grievances and to the perception that promises and long-waited changes are not being addressed.

Lastly, the protesters' perceptions of the authoritarian status quo and the ability to demand better living conditions, democratic institutions, and political openness will be determinant to set a cognitive frame of individual and social mobilisation in motion (Gamson and Meyer, 1996; Kurzman, 1996). Protesters' perception of how the authoritarian regime works and how to handle repression and other forms of social and political control is a relevant outcome arising from the political opportunities in authoritarian regimes.

POS raised in authoritarian settings by leadership changes are key to explaining contentious actions and the transformative impact that protests have in the mind-set of protesters, who feel they have gained voice in the streets and expressed their dissatisfaction.

Why Angola matters

If we look at the evolution of protest in Africa in the 21st century, we note that the number of popular protests has increased exponentially in most Sub-Saharan countries since 2011. This steady rise followed revolutions in the North of Africa where long-serving dictators were ousted, as well as general uprisings in other African countries with an anti-incumbency agenda have shaped the third wave of protests in the continent.

When the two decades of this century are compared, we observe a greater increase in protests in countries considered Not Free by the Freedom House index (Figure 8.1). This trend confirms Barría's (2018, p. 140) claim that protest in authoritarian contexts is not only possible but also recurrent. In fact, the five African countries that experienced the biggest increase in protests from the first to second decade of this century are Mali, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania. The first three of these are classified as Not Free, which raises important questions about windows of opportunities for protest and the transformative power of protests in autocratic regimes.

On closer examination, we find there is another important pattern in the number of protests in Not Free countries: on average, the increase in authoritarian regimes that went through a leadership transition in this last decade is higher than in regimes with no leadership change (Figure 8.2).

Angola belongs to a cluster of nine resilient authoritarian countries in Africa.[5] It stands out in this group for three main reasons that shed light on the dynamics of protest brought by leadership change. First, it has been governed by the same

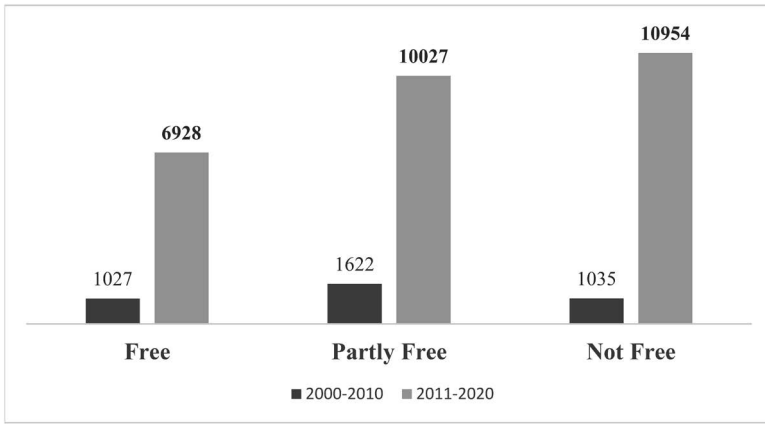

Figure 8.1 Total number of protests between 2000–2010 and 2011–2020

Source: ACLED dataset and Freedom in the World 2020 (Freedom House).

ruling party (MPLA) since independence, despite the transition to multipartyism in 1992. Angola has a dominant party system given that the ruling party has won every single post-war election (2008, 2012, and 2017) with more than 60% of the votes. Unlike their counterpart countries, and after a constitutional revision in 2010, the head of state is no longer directly elected; instead, it is the person heading the list of the party or coalition of parties receiving the most votes in the

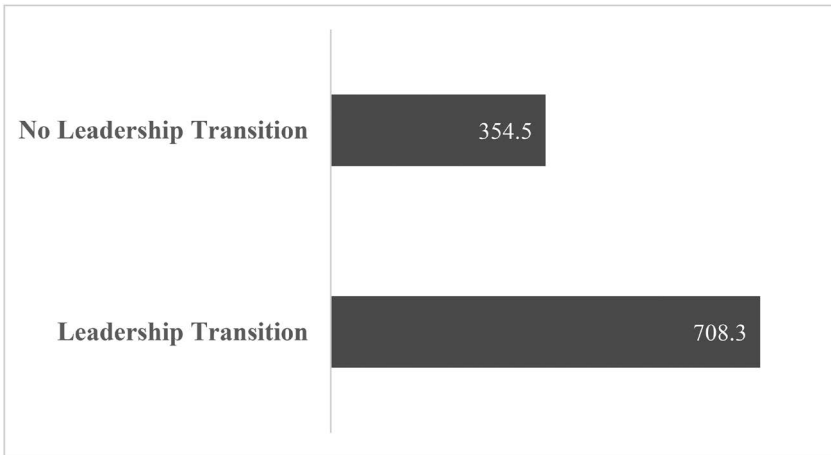

Figure 8.2 Mean increase in protests and leadership transition in not free states between 2000–2010 and 2011–2020

Source: ACLED dataset and African Leadership Transitions Tracker (ALTT).

general election that is elected. Second, this country experienced a protracted civil war (1975–1991; 1993–2002), which was brought to an end with the MPLA's military victory over The National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). The war outcome meant a new "democratic" hegemony of the MPLA and the party consolidation as a party-state (Oliveira, 2015; Mabeko-Tali, 2016). Finally, the rise in popular protest from 2015 became more marked in 2017 when Lourenço succeeded Dos Santos' 38-year rule as president.

The transition of Dos Santos' leadership to Lourenço occurred first at the state level (with the national elections of August 2017), and then at the party level. The MPLA's Extraordinary Congress in September 2018 elected Lourenço as the party's new chairman. As a result, the new leader gained full control of two main sources of political power: the presidency and the ruling party. This unprecedented leadership change represents a case of electoral succession, i.e. the new head of state comes from the same party (MPLA) as the outgoing president. However, this leadership change had a striking effect on the intensity of protest. Whereas, there were about 100 episodes of protest in the 15 years of Dos Santos' presidency after the war (2002–2017), Lourenço's presidency saw a total of 157 protests in just three years in office.[6]

The following section will analyse the selected POS variables – leader's openness to protest, the non-fulfilment of electoral pledges, the government's use of repression, and the protesters' perceptions of the political regime – that resulted from the transition of leadership. The findings are used to explain the increase in protest levels and the impact of protests, by focusing on the shift in the protesters' mind-set towards action.

New president, new opportunities for protest?

The new president's initial openness to protest

The 2008 global financial crisis and the wave of pro-democracy uprisings in the Middle-East and Africa in early 2011 challenged the view that stable authoritarian regimes could forever withstand and block any pressures for change. In countries such as Tunisia and Egypt "entrenched authoritarian rulers were jettisoned from office" by "popular protest" (Bellin, 2012, p. 127).

Angola witnessed an upsurge of popular protest against the Dos Santos' regime in 2011. Protesters demanded better living conditions, employment, and good governance (Morais, 2012). Additionally, protesters urged Dos Santos to resign because they thought that "32 years in power was too much", like other cases in the third wave of protests in Africa. The first street protest demanding Dos Santos' departure, on 7 March 2011, was organised by the New Revolution of the Angolan People (MRPLA)[7], but activists were harassed, arrested, and some even killed (Siegert, 2018, pp. 48–49).[8] Dos Santos did not tolerate dissent and those who dared to protest often faced a repressive response from the regime (Pestana, 2003). Moreover, protests in Angola "signal an attempt to break away from exclusionary, corrupt and elite-dominated politics" (Faria, 2013, p. 305).

The deepening global crisis and the decline in oil revenues highlighted the perils of the country's economic dependency on a single commodity. Social vulnerability grew out of endemic corruption, nepotism, and youth unemployment. The Dos Santos regime was also the source of discontent within the MPLA due to his family's economic and political monopolies as well as the strategic alliances with top-rank military and party elites (Verde, 2021).

The transition to a new political leadership took place in this context of internal discontent in 2017. The new president was seen as a "reformer" and our interviewees had high hopes that he would fight the rotten system.[9] President Lourenço heralded a new Angola. He was not shy to tell his party: "corruption is going to end, even though the first to fall were the ranked cadres and officials, who committed crimes and tarnished the good name of the party".[10] This strategy was behind the MPLA's 2017 electoral motto "to improve what's good, correct what's bad". Lourenço repeated this anti-corruption discourse in various interviews[11] and public speeches both at home and abroad.

Lourenço presented himself as someone that was aware of the "very corrupt system" and was ready to get rid of the Dos Santos regime. A handful of party officials linked to Dos Santos were either dismissed or brought to justice. However, the clean-up appeared to be more of a vendetta aimed at some rather than a balanced process to fix the rotten system. Lourenço used the word "marimbondos" (wasps),[12] a metaphor to describe those responsible for a nest of corruption and malpractices in both the state and the party. He distinguished between the "marimbondos", the Dos Santos inner circle, and the supporters of his own anti-corruption fight. This strategy gave the impression of dislodging the *status quo* but, in fact, it was misleading because corruption, bad governance, and lack of transparency still overshadow the MPLA government today. Lourenço went to great pains to show off his reformist and tolerant attributes, receiving well-known activists and critics formerly persecuted by the Dos Santos regime, such as Luaty Beirão and Rafael Marques, at the presidential palace.[13]

According to Meyer, political openness is a core element of political opportunity for protest (Meyer, 2004, p. 137). Lourenço signalled a posture of dialogue with civil society and made out he was a *protester-in-chief* that was keen to take on board the critics' reasons for protesting against him. But despite the timid gains made under João Lourenço's presidency in fighting corruption and dialoguing with civil society (Sanches et al., 2020), Angola remains a resilient authoritarian state. The limited progress gave way to a collective consciousness among activists that the president was part of the system of unfulfilled promises they were ready to denounce. However, as the activist José Gomes Hata admitted, "nobody took to the streets to see how far João Lourenço would keep his electoral promises".[14]

The president's unfulfilled promises

The MPLA went on campaigning in 2017, acknowledging the dissatisfaction felt while promoting a new leader, a promise of change (Pearce, Péclard and Soares de Oliveira, 2018, p. 155). Lourenço then projected himself as a reformer who

offered a new paradigm of governance to build a "different" Angola. The paradigm hinged on significant axes: separation of power between the executive and legislative branches; growing autonomy of the judiciary system; strengthening the role of civil society; greater independence of the media; combating impunity and corruption; inclusion and social well-being; and implementing local governance through local elections. One specific goal was to "create at least 500,000 new jobs" to tackle youth unemployment.

These pledges were constantly reiterated by Lourenço's government and triggered a cautious optimism among the protesters we interviewed.[15] However, the fight against corruption, the biggest electoral promise, has not yet translated into change in the regime, nor have people's social and economic conditions improved. Moreover, corruption proved to be more structural and two types of corruption were the main sources of grievance, namely, elite corruption (abuses of power, embezzlement), and police corruption (kickbacks) (Lewis, 2020, p. 2). It soon became clear to the protesters that the president was unable to fulfil his electoral promises and deal with the "marimbondos".

The perception of Lourenço as a reformer changed drastically as he failed to make good on his promises. Hata noted that "there was a moment of silence and peace. The street stayed quiet for a while, but the mass protests began as hopes were dashed".[16] Protesters broke the silence of the streets as the hopes of thousands of jobs for young Angolans, of local elections and institutional reforms faded away. The first massive demonstrations were held in Luanda and other cities on 21 July 2018.

The ACLED dataset and our compilation of protests show many different episodes in 2018 and 2019 addressing a variety of long-standing grievances. For instance, students protested against the increase in university admission fees and examination conditions. Employees demanded better wages. Women protested against domestic violence. Urban and rural communities demanded electricity and clean water. Protests addressing bad governance and nepotism of local authorities were organised in all the capital cities. Food price spikes and the worsening of living standards brought together different social strata of protesters. Our interviewees pointed out that the high cost of essential goods is a cross-cutting issue, affecting most of the population and ultimately leading to a comparison of food prices under the Dos Santos regime and now.[17]

In addition, restrictive measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic after March 2020, such as social distancing and the curfew, prompted protests by street traders and others affected by the state of emergency.[18] Police used violent methods to contain protests and to force people to comply with the government decree. The death of the Angolan doctor, Silvio Dala, on 1 September 2020 at the hands of the police[19] was a turning point in Angola's recent protests marred by policy violence. The death was an emotional trigger, i.e. a strong emotional reaction that makes people protest (Bellin, 2012, p. 136). Driven by anger and injustice, civil society activists, health-care professionals and opposition politicians gathered all over the country on 12 September to demonstrate against police brutality and the government's disregard of citizens' lives.[20]

Socio-economic grievances and demands for the long-waited local elections, due in 2020, continued to bring people onto the streets. However, the local electoral process had been held up due to discussions about a gradual approach and constant delays caused by the ruling party (Orre and Pestana, 2014). On 13 August 2019 and again on 23 January 2020[21] protesters gathered in front of the National Parliament to demand local elections across the whole country. The activist Tânia de Carvalho[22] claimed that the "urgent need for *autarquias* (local governance)" was the most relevant issue for protesters in the demonstrations of 24 October, 11 November, and 10 December 2020. She believed that decentralisation would mitigate socio-economic problems and improve governance.

Our interviewees reported there was anger because the MPLA "had been in power too long",[23] and they were sure João Lourenço would not be able to solve the problems of the Angolans.[24] The political openness experienced in the early years of Lourenço's presidency and his new paradigm of governance became a deceitful distraction as the electoral promises remained unfulfilled and protesters saw Lourenço's increasingly repressive response to protest.

Repression under Lourenço's presidency

The reduction of state repression is a variable of political opportunity for protest (Meyer, 2004). Activists expected the new leader's initial openness to protest and to listening to dissenting voices meant he would be less repressive than his predecessor. But the evolution of the type of protests during Lourenço's presidency (Figure 8.3) reveals that there was an increasingly repressive response to popular demonstrations from 2018, i.e. after Lourenço was elected chairman of the ruling party. The activist Hitler Samussuku pointed out that when Lourenço first

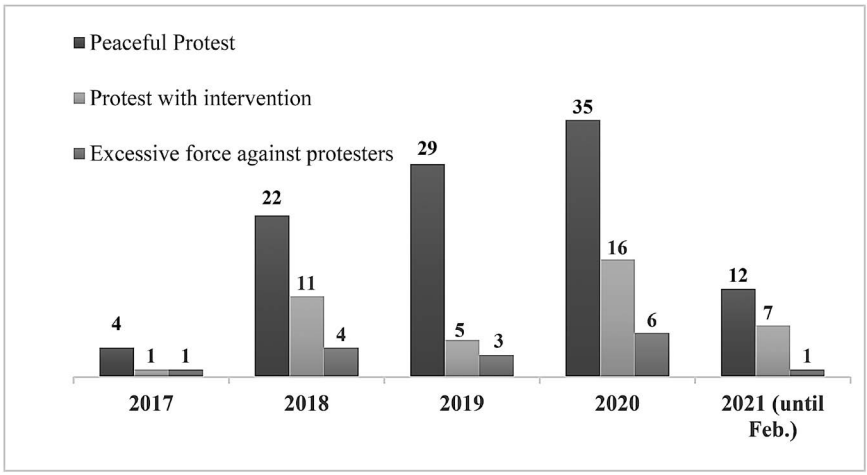

Figure 8.3 Type of protests per year during João Lourenço's presidency

Source: ACLED dataset and authors' compilation.

became President of the Republic, he only needed "to win the sympathy of civil society, the opposition and the international community through some openness. But, afterwards, the problems started".[25]

As protests escalated, the government response to widespread protest during the Lourenço presidency became more repressive. Indeed, the disaggregated data reveal a rising number of protests with intervention and excessive force by the authorities, especially in 2020 and 2021; the number of protests also increased during this period.

Episodes of excessive use of force by the Angolan authorities gave Lourenço's presidency a more repressive tone. Police repression was more common in demonstrations near political institutions, such as the parliament or the presidential palace in Cidade Alta.[26] However, new patterns of youth resistance emerged in recent protests. We analyse three of these protests below, namely the protests of 24 October 2020, 11 November 2020, and 10 December 2020.

On 24 October 2020, different actors and activists took to the streets of Luanda to express a wide range of socioeconomic and political grievances; this was the first of a number of massive demonstrations towards the end of 2020 with a clearer pro-democracy demand and calling for the end of MPLA rule. Protesters voiced their anger at unreliable institutions and the MPLA's kleptocratic system and they demanded local elections.[27] This protest is relevant due both to its size and the repressive response by authorities.[28] Well-known activists of the Revolutionary Movement of Angola (MRA) politicians of opposition parties and ordinary citizens took to the streets to voice their common grievances. There were episodes of violence with the burning of rubber tyres, and the police arrested 103 protesters and harassed the UNITA politicians attending the demonstration.

The anniversary of Angola's independence, 11 November 2020, saw yet another demonstration [29] where protest posters could be seen denouncing "João Lourenço, you ungrateful one, where are the 500,000 jobs?"[30] Although the authorities had forbidden the demonstration,[31] people went en masse and again police responded with brutality. Inocêncio Matos, a 23-year-old engineering student, was killed and became a symbol of Lourenço's repression. This tragic event underscores the regime's unease as it dealt with civic unrest amid the growing domestic crisis. Activist José Gomes Hata notes that the chances of repression are greater when the demonstration is political and indirectly affects people who belong to the state apparatus of the current regime.[32]

According to Mwana Ngola, these protests had an impact because they brought large numbers of citizens onto the street for the first time despite the repression. They would no longer allow the government to put their grievances on hold: "The people had no alternative but to protest".[33] The president was faced with two options to salvage his tarnishing image: he could either intensify the crackdown on peaceful demonstrations or resort to techniques of co-optation or signs of openness. He chose to calm critical voices and signal integration and dialogue when he set up a meeting with Angolan youths on 24 November 2020.[34]

However, on 10 December,[35] the official anniversary of the MPLA's foundation, another protest was organised against the same socioeconomic and political

grievances: unemployment, living conditions, corruption, and decentralisation. Protesters demanded the end of MPLA rule and, as a symbolic act, the picture of Inocêncio Matos was placed on the iconic statue of Angola's first president, Agostinho Neto, in Luanda. Unlike previous protests, there was no sign of police brutality or violence this time. Indeed, authoritarian regimes have various tools at their disposal to defuse the threat of protests (Sato and Wahman, 2019, p. 1422).

Despite the president's apparent commitment to drive the country on the path of the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights, he showed a greater propensity to repression, thus demonstrating that repression is context-dependent and can decrease or increase dissent (Osa and Schock, 2007, p. 133). This is clearly the case in Angola where the use of repression did not reduce the levels of protest.

Protesters' perceptions and the emergence of a new cognitive frame

As Gamson and Meyer (1996) and Kurzman (1996) stated, the protesters' perceptions are influenced by opportunities arising from the political context. In Angola, Lourenço's presidency raised hopes of a new country that could better accommodate civil society's demands. Citizens perceived this as an opportunity for protest. According to international Humans Rights organisations, there was "progress in respecting the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and several protests and marches were allowed across the country" (HWR 2020). As seen in the previous sections, citizens could now take to the streets or voice their demands. Despite Lourenço's repressive tone, a new protest dynamic had been created and there was no turning back. As the activist Luaty Beirão told us, with João Lourenço:

> The omnipresence of the state-party started to diminish and with that the taste for being able to speak more freely and for more freedom of assembly in public spaces without police intervention, which was something new and once unthinkable. It will be difficult for the regime to close the door to that.[36]

On the other hand, nobody believed that political change could be generated from a set of bold institutional reforms any longer. The unfulfilled promises of the new president along with repressive responses to protest consolidated the perception among protesters that the stakes were higher. The interviews we conducted with activists illustrate this. Dilson Branco Itchama stated, "we have discovered that he [João Lourenço] is so compromised that we realise that the problem was not Zé Dú [Dos Santos], but the system!".[37] For Dito Dali, "today society is demanding more because of dashed expectations".[38] Finally, Olívio Kilumbo noted that political parties offered no sustainable political and social answers to the protesters' demands.[39]

The new political environment brought by Lourenço set a collective consciousness in motion despite the risks of repression and/or co-optation by the regime. As Dito Dali declares:

> We do not necessarily conceive protest in authoritarian Angola in terms of what it can generate as policy changes, but as a progressive process where actively committed protagonists have the deep and personal conviction that it is the cause that is most important; because whereas a person can give in to co-optation, a cause never does so. (…) We must continue fighting, regardless of some people's decision to surrender to the MPLA.[40]

Branco Itchama also points out that the president's fight against corruption was recognition of the fact that MPLA is failing as a ruling party and that protests are a necessary tool to express discontent and "to raise the level of awareness of the population".[41] Samussuku highlights the more lasting effects of protests as a "process of constructing a collective consciousness";[42] he added that Angolan activists had begun to create points of contact in provinces where other activists had been arrested, so the "process of building collective consciousness has begun".[43] Key to this consciousness is the notion that better living conditions are not only a right but can be achieved and, therefore, the appalling inequalities and exclusion should be publicly denounced, resisted, and dismantled; in the absence of real political transformation and other channels of communication between the state and the people, this could be done through protests.

This was evident during the emergency measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic. When not protesting, "people stayed at home, they were confined, there was a marked increase in the use of the internet, and the exchange of ideas became commonplace".[44] There was no turning back for the new cognitive frame among protesters set in motion by the transition of leadership in Angola. Even though the incumbent party's responses to citizens' demands essentially remained unchanged, people now had the perception of the power of protest to express their discontent.

Concluding remarks

Opportunities for protest are particularly scarce in authoritarian regimes and contentious politics in these regimes is costly. Notwithstanding, there is an ongoing wave of protests spanning the African continent, raising questions about the explanation for people taking to the streets and the impact of protests in authoritarian settings.

The four POS variables analysed herein allowed us to perceive the dynamics between the regime's responses and the protesters' actions by looking at the political context of a leadership change and the related agency of protesters. The analysis of protest in Angola's authoritarian regime shows us that the leadership transition in 2017 changed political opportunities for protest, setting a new cognitive frame in motion that has led to relentless protests under the new president.

This finding is especially important since data shows that authoritarian regimes have faced more protest in this third wave of protests, and the increase was particularly marked where there had been a change in leadership.

Different actors in Angola saw this change in leadership as an opportunity to engage in collective action. The new president's initial openness to dialogue and reform raised expectations, particularly among the young, of a more democratic environment in the country with more inclusion and employment, and away from the quagmire of corruption and impunity. The president's initial less repressive response to discontent also had an impact on the protesters' perception.

When it became clear that Lourenço would not fulfil his electoral promises, dashed expectations led to more protests not only against socio-economic grievances but also pushing for political change. The new presidency's repressive response was unable to slow the protests, thus showing that the impact of repression depends on other variables of political opportunities, like those considered herein. Overall, the protesters believe their relentless resistance has helped foster a collective consciousness, which epitomises a "growing taste for protest", that made protest a prime channel of revindication for the Angolan activists in this new political environment. Whether collective consciousness alone can lead to a broad national protest movement against the regime is something that needs further critical appraisal.

The analysis of protest in Angola highlights the importance of tracing cognitive mechanisms to assess the transformative impact of protests in authoritarian regimes through more intangible signals of change; this is relevant given that so many protests in Africa have demanded the removal of political leaders and political change, and longstanding African rulers have actually been removed after street protests. This raises the following questions, which could certainly inspire further studies: how can the collective consciousness of protesters translate into collective action that enables the rise of a cross-national and continental network aimed at bringing authoritarian regimes to an end through pressure "from below", and how do these movements relate to formal actors of the political opposition?

Notes

1. Authors' translation.
2. We use ACLED's definition of protest, as "a public demonstration in which the participants do not engage in violence, though violence may be used against them" (ACLED 2019, p. 12).
3. Authors' interview, 17 February 2020.
4. According to this dataset, protest can be subdivided into: 1) Peaceful Protest, "when demonstrators are engaged in a protest while not engaging in violence or other forms of rioting behaviour and are not faced with any sort of force or engagement; 2) Protest with intervention, "when individuals are engaged in a peaceful protest during which there is an attempt to disperse or suppress the protest without serious/lethal injuries being reported or the targeting of protesters with lethal weapons; 3) Excessive force against protesters, "when individuals are engaged in a peaceful protest and are targeted with violence by an actor leading to (or if it could lead to) serious/lethal injuries." (ACLED 2019, p. 13).

5. Along with Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Somalia and Sudan.
6. Collected data from ACLED dataset and authors' compilation from April 2002 (end of the civil war) to February 2021.
7. This anonymous movement demanded a more democratic country and the end of corruption and socioeconomic inequality, using social media and rap music as means of communication (Yarwood, 2016, pp. 215–216).
8. The most blatant response was the imprisonment and trial in 2015 and 2016 of 15+2 activists who wanted Dos Santos to leave office. They were accused of plotting a coup by the provincial court of Luanda. In June 2016, they were put under house arrest and were granted amnesty in September. Today, these protesters contend they helped damage the external and internal image of Dos Santos.
9. This reformist profile of João Lourenço was raised by Mário de Carvalho and Dito Dali, among others. Authors' interview, 22 January and 5 February 2021.
10. Authors' translation from "MPLA prioriza combate à corrupção e bajulação", ANGOP, 9 September 2018.
11. See the interview with the German journalist Andrien Kriesch days before the official visit of the German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Luanda. Adrian Kriesch, "João Lourenço quebra o silêncio e fala à DW sobre Isabel dos Santos", DW, 3 February 2020.
12. VOA Português, "É preciso destruir o ninho do marimbondo", diz João Lourenço sobre o combate à corrupção", 22 November 2018.
13. GCS, Agência Lusa, Borralho Ndomba, "Presidente angolano reúne-se com ativistas, Rafael Marques será recebido quarta-feira", DW, 4 December 2018.
14. Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
15. Many of whom either were directly involved in the early protests – 10 years ago – or were part of the group of 15+2 who were prosecuted and imprisoned in 2015 for the alleged coup d'état attempt against the Dos Santos regime.
16. José Gomes Hata, Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
17. Lisandro Benguela, a young man living in the outskirts of Luanda, made this point very tangible when he compared food prices in the two presidencies: "In JES' [José Eduardo dos Santos] days, pasta cost 700 [kwanzas], and with João Lourenço it is 3000." Authors' interview, 23 January 2021.
18. For example, on 17 April 2020, more than 500 vendors protesting against the closure of a local market in Caluquembe, Huila, were dispersed by police.
19. Amnesty International. "Doctor Sílvio Dala", 9 October 2020.
20. Manuel Luamba, "Eu sou Sílvio Dala': Sociedade civil angolana protesta contra a morte do médico", DW, 12 September 2020.
21. Data on the protest events retrieved from the ACLED dataset.
22. Authors' interview, 27 April 2021.
23. Mário de Carvalho, authors' interview, 22 January 2021.
24. Olívio Kilumbo, authors' interview, 21 January 2021.
25. Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
26. José Gomes Hata, authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
27. On 3 October 2020, the Angolan Revolutionary Movement organised a demonstration in Luanda specifically demanding Costa's exoneration. In the interviews, activists stressed it was one of the most relevant demonstration during the Lourenço presidency. See Coque Mukuta, "'Revús' manifestam-se sábado em Luanda para pedir demissão de chefe de gabinete do PR", Voa, 1 October 2020.
28. Borralho Ndomba, "Luanda: Manifestantes relatam brutalidade policial para conter protesto", DW, 24 October 2020.
29. Rafael Marques Morais, "Manifestações, Desgaste e Descrédito", Maka Angola, 12 November 2020; Pedro Bastos Reis, "Polícia reprime protestos em Angola: 'Vivemos um ambiente de terror'", Público, 11 November 2020.

30. Authors' translation from Simão Hossi, "Polícia angolana reprime manifestação no Dia da Independência", Global Voices, 17 November 2020.
31. João Manuel dos Santos "Mwana Ngola", Authors' interview, 3 February 2021.
32. Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
33. João Manuel dos Santos "Mwana Ngola", Authors' interview, 3 February 2021.
34. Manuel Luamba, "Angola: 'Diálogo' de João Lourenço com jovens foi manobra dilatória?", DW, 26 November 2020.
35. Borralho Ndomba, "Luanda: Centenas de jovens em protesto contra corrupção e desemprego", DW, 10 December 2020.
36. Authors' interview, 17 February 2020.
37. Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
38. Authors' interview, 5 February 2021.
39. Authors' interview, 21 January 2021.
40. Authors' interview, 5 February 2021.
41. Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
42. Hitler Samussuku, Authors' interview, 1 February 2021.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.

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9 HOW JANUARY 2015 PROTESTS INFLUENCED JOSEPH KABILA'S STRATEGY OF "*GLISSEMENT*"

François Polet

Introduction

Between 19 and 21 January 2015 Kinshasa was shaken by political protests of unprecedented scale and duration. There were no mass gatherings, but rather scattered acts of rebellion that spread across most Kinshasa's 24 communes, which became the stage of confrontations between groups of young people and the armed forces, giving the protests a riot-like character. Police stations, legislators' houses, municipal buses – the symbols of power in the broadest sense – were destroyed, and the security apparatus seemed to have lost its footing. The cause of this unrest was the imminent parliament approval of a draft electoral law that would link the holding of presidential elections to the realisation of a national census. The opposition perceived this law as a strategy to allow President Joseph Kabila's to remain in power beyond his second and last term that expired in December 2016. Under the threat of renewed protests, a version of the law that obliterated the controversial provision was finally adopted by parliament.

Beyond this immediate outcome, the possibility that Kinshasans (or *Kinois*) would rise again on a large scale and oust Kabila "like Compaoré was ousted in Burkina Faso" has influenced Joseph Kabila's strategy of *glissement* (slippage), that is, his calculated decision to stay in office by delaying the organisation of the electoral process. From January 2015 to the holding of the elections, in December 2018, the prospect of a popular uprising became a main element of the political game, for the authorities as well as for the opposition and the external actors. During this period Kabila main strategy to offset the opposing voices was to increase the level of repression and to co-opt members of the opposition. Despite international calls to preserve the "democratic space", the government actions contributed to gradually reduce the direct threat posed by the "street" to the survival of the regime. As later demonstrated in more detail, foreign pressures and patronage politics were eventually the factors that shaped the political outcome of the *glissement*.

Popular mobilisation against the third-term bid has been an important feature of Sub-Saharan "third wave" of protests (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Dulani, 2011; Yarwood, 2016; Tull and Simon, 2017). In many countries since the beginning of the 21st century, people have taken the street to oppose what

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was widely perceived as a blatant breach of the rules of the game by rulers who, in most cases, had themselves unequivocally adopted constitutions that had at their core the principle of alternation of power. The frequency of the attempts to revise the fundamental law in order to stay in power is the ultimate evidence of the formal dimension of the democratisation processes of the 1990s – personalisation of power in the benefit of patronage networks remains a standard practice. This political unrest must be analysed against a common socioeconomic background of growing inequalities, huge unemployment rate among the youth, absence of public services and rampant corruption. Formal multiparty democracy has not delivered in terms of wellbeing for many Africans (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

Despite these broad shared conditions – social despair and distrust for the political class – constitutional revision attempts have caused very diverse reactions in terms of social protest throughout the continent, and these uneven popular reactions in the streets have themselves produced very different political outcomes (Posner and Young, 2018). At one extreme, the large-scale demonstrations of October 2014 in Burkina Faso have caused the fall of Blaise Compaoré and a regime change (Bertrand, 2022), at the other, Paul Kagame succeeded in organising a referendum that resulted in a constitutional change without any public dissent (Tull and Simon, 2017). Senegal in 2011 offers another example of failure of a constitutional amendment initiative under the pressure of the crowd (Demarest, 2016; Dimé, 2022). In many countries however, activists in the streets could not really prevent what they framed as "constitutional coups". Overall, "the ability of these pro-democracy movements to safeguard tenure limitations has been mixed" (Dulani, 2011).

One of ways to make sense of the great variance in mobilisations against third term bid and in political outcome is to look at the political opportunity structures that encourage protest. This classical social movement approach focuses on the political opportunities that emanate from the political and the social environment and then facilitate collective action – e.g. intra-regime divisions, diminishing state repression, political allies, favourable public opinion, or media coverage etc. In other words, all that activists perceive as an opportunity to amplify their frames and achieve their political outcomes (Sanches, 2022). However, one should also consider "threat and constricting institutional opportunities as conditions for extra-institutional mobilization" (Meyer, 2004). Almeida (2003) considers that, especially in authoritarian settings threat is an effective source of mobilisation. Following Tilly (1978), he defines opportunity as "the likelihood that challengers will enhance their interests or extend existing benefits if they act collectively" and threat as "the probability that existing benefits will be taken away or new harms inflicted if challenging groups fail to act collectively". In other words, the fear of losing some public goods can be a trigger for collective action as effective as the opening of a political opportunity to push forward new demands. In the case of third term bids, what is at stake is the perceived threat by activists of a democratic regression through the breach of the main rule of the political game.

Whether one is examining the role of opportunities or threats, the interplay between political environment and protest in Africa should be considered in its international context. As de Waal and Ibreck put it, "[t]he context of globalisation shapes the possibilities and the strategies of African social movement" (2013). The importance of foreign support (resources, training, protection) for the existence and effectiveness of African activism is well known (Pommerolle, 2010; Siméant, 2014). More significant for our concern is the way the "international community" influences the relation between states and constituencies through the diffusion of norms in the sphere of governance, pluralism, and civic rights. The dependency of African governments to foreign actors obliges them to, at least, give the impression they do tolerate critical non-violent actors. Other important variables of the political opportunity structure – intra-regime division and political alignment – are also particularly sensitive to international interference in African context.

But as the margin of autonomy of African governments towards western democratic conditionality vary greatly from one country to another; likewise, vary the extent to which international influences shape the national political environment of movements. Coming back to the Congolese setting, our main argument is that the international context and the involvement of foreign stakeholders had a major influence both on the emergence of the demonstration of January 2015 and their outcome, that is the *glissement* strategy used by Kabila. The international context shaped the perception of political opportunities and threat by protesters. Then foreign actors contributed somehow to lower the costs of the mobilisation by increasing the cost of the repression for state actors. Above all, they weighed on the political process around the modalities and the duration of the prolongation of Kabila's last mandate.

This chapter investigates the determinants of January 2015 protests as well as its consequences for the Congolese political process up to the end of Kabila's presidency. It starts depicting the main characteristics of the Congolese political system and how it creates opportunities and constraints for protest mobilisation. It subsequently outlines the context that led Kinshasans to the streets in January 2015, namely the tensions around President Kabila's will to engage in constitutional revision. Some other factors behind the triggering and the development of the protests are also reviewed, in particular the role of political opponents. It is also shown how the political parties, the main protest-entrepreneurs, used their resources, networks, and framing strategies to amplify their anti-Kabila agenda and contributed to mobilise other sections of the population – e.g. students and jobless people – to participate in the demonstrations. The effects of the January 2015 demonstrations on the Congolese political events are then highlighted and discussed. The threat of new popular uprising led to political reconfiguration and a strengthening of the security apparatus. A special attention is given to the influence of international actors on the conditions for mobilisation as well as on the political outcome of the protest. Ultimately, we conclude that causes as well as consequences of protest in DRC remain deeply intertwined with neo-patrimonial politics and international strategies.

Hybridity and extraversion

In order to identify the political opportunity structure that favoured the emergence and outcome of the January 2015 demonstrations, let us first consider the stable aspects of the Congolese political system under Joseph Kabila. As in other African countries, it can be considered as an "hybrid" regime (de Waal and Ibreck, 2013). In the Congolese case, the system results of the encounter between a neo-patrimonial state trajectory inherited from thirty years of Mobutism and a set of democratic institutions and formulas driven by foreign actors.[1] In practice, the functioning of institutions is undermined by personalised power networks, where loyalty to the "big men" prevails over formal mechanisms of accountability (Carayannis et al., 2018; Englebert and Tull, 2013; De Goede, 2012).

This neo-patrimonial system is influenced by foreign political institutions and their representatives in the country. Since independence (and even before), great powers have had special interest in Congo due to the size of the country, its location and its natural wealth. This attention has increased with the Congolese wars and its spill over effects in the region, as well as a renewed interest in strategic mineral resources. Since 2000, Congo has been home of one of the largest post conflict United Nations (UN) missions. So foreign political actors of high level, both, national and international have been actively engaged in Congolese politics. This poses a series of constraints for local political actors, notably a pressure to respect, even if only formally, certain rules of democratic governance. However, reliance on "extraversion" strategies is just as much a producer of resources as it is a constraint on leaders (Bayart, 2006). In local political representations, it is not possible to govern sustainably without the support of the *mundele* (the whites). Since Westerners are considered to be "kingmakers", their support, even if only apparent, is a central issue in Congolese political endeavours. However, this relationship of dependence is not one-way. Congolese political actors astutely use the fear ambassadors have that political competition degenerate into violent conflict to defend their interest.

This hybrid political environment generates complex and shifting opportunities for mobilisation. State reactions to protest mobilisations are indeed characterised by uncertainty. Formally, the political system is open to demonstrations – the new constitution of 2006 provides for a liberal regime in this respect, with the organisers' sole duty to inform the competent authorities in advance. The right to demonstrate is also regularly reaffirmed by the many international actors present in Congo, many of whom do not hesitate to call on the authorities during the most repressive episodes. However, in practice, public demonstrations are selectively authorised and mobilisations that constitute a political challenge in the eyes of those in power are subject to repressive and often violent treatment, as was the case in 2005 with the repression of opposition marches, 2006 in clashes with Jean-Pierre Bemba's militias and in 2009 when political-religious movement Bundu dia Kongo was crushed by the regime (Polet, 2017; Tull, 2010).

At the same time, Congolese political order is characterised by the quasi-automatic partisan politicisation of social protest. Political elites use popular protest

as a tactic to challenge existing arrangements within the political field. This phenomenon, although real, is exaggerated by authorities in order to discredit all popular grievances in advance. This context of political manipulation contributes to popular distrust of movement entrepreneurs.

The weak institutionalisation of the repertoire of street protests as a legitimate mode of political action explains the recurrence of turbulent forms of protest in Congolese cities. The hybridisation of the regime – both open and closed – is reflected in the hybridisation of the "politics of conflict", in which organised and codified forms of expression of dissatisfaction – "peaceful marches" – coexist in various modalities with spontaneous and violent forms of expression of popular anger – "making a mess" (Tilly and Tarrow, 2006; Ben Néfissa, 2011).

From the draft constitutional revision to the *glissement*

It is also important to identify the more volatile aspects of the political opportunities that gave rise to the demonstrations of January 2015, that is, the context of a largely delegitimised presidency seeking to stay in office by changing the rules of the game. Joseph Kabila began his first term (2007–2011) as popularly elected president[2] in a favourable political configuration. With support of the international community and a large part of the Congolese population, he had managed to profile himself as a man of peace, promoter of the reunification of the country. Moreover, the coalition that supported him, the Alliance for a Presidential Majority (AMP), had a majority of seats in the National Assembly.[3] But the president's popularity waned during his first term. On the one hand the hopes that the promises of development had generated were largely disappointed, and on the other hand the persistence of insecurity in the Eastern part of the country degraded his image as a restorer of peace, particularly among Kivu inhabitants. Kabila's popularity loss was further accentuated when several big men from the East defected the AMP, the most notable being Vital Kamerhe who was very powerful in South Kivu. Frustrations within the presidential alliance continued to grow, as reaction to preferential treatment of the clienteles from Katangese region networks which benefited from the spoils of strategic state sectors.[4] At the same time, Western partners became increasingly critical of the Kabila administration, for deviating from the commitments made in terms of "good governance", especially in the context of the mining contracts with China and the decentralisation programme. Kabila's internal and international political legitimacy was eroding but still he managed to get re-elected in the 2011 elections, against Étienne Tshisekedi, the leader of the UDPS[5]. These results were widely questioned for not being credible, but in the face of a *fait accompli*, and unable to measure the extent of the fraud, the Western leaders resigned themselves to record the re-election (Pourtier, 2012).

Kabila's major challenge facing his second term (2011–2016) was to broaden and strengthen his political support base with a view to reforming the constitutional article (article 220) that limits the number of consecutive presidential terms to two. The first attempt to co-opt the opposition in the framework of

the *Concertations nationales* of 2013, which was officially convened to "consolidate national cohesion", was a failure. The most relevant parties – the UDPS, Jean-Pierre Bemba's MLC[6] and Vital Kamerhe's UNC[7] – boycotted the meeting. The possibility of a constitutional revision polarised the political system and contributed to a convergence of opposition parties, a scenario that the presidential faction wanted to avoid. During 2014, the voices of the Catholic bishops and civil society mingled with those of opposing parties to disqualify the hypothesis of a third mandate. The explicit stance of the United States against the constitutional amendment weighed in the decision of the opposition parties to resist invitations from the government. It further contributed to deepening the rift within the presidential majority between the hardliners and those who believed that "we want to stay in power, but we must stay in tune with the people and those beyond our borders".[8] Yet a surprising political event in a foreign country would help change the president's strategy: on 30 October 2014, a popular uprising against a constitutional revision would lead to the fall of the president of Burkina Faso (Bertrand, 2022). Kabila's advisers intended to use the Burkinabe example to refine their strategy and legitimise the revision of the Congolese constitution.[9] The Burkinabe scenario, which the Congolese opposition seized upon to spread the idea of an imminent popular uprising in Congo, led the Kabila camp to abandon the strategy of constitutional revision, now considered too risky. This was replaced by another manoeuvre: inserting into the electoral law a provision making the holding of elections conditional on a census of voters, an operation that can take several years in a country like Congo, thus implying a postponement of the presidential election scheduled for late 2016.

The opposition parties then immediately began a campaign against what they described from that moment on as a strategy of *glissement* of the electoral calendar. This did not prevent the majority from tabling a bill to amend the electoral law. The vote on the bill was officially scheduled for Monday 19 January. In order to take the opposition by surprise, the majority decided to advance the vote to Saturday 17 January and to have the law endorsed by the Senate on Monday 19 January. In reaction, the opponents called on the Congolese to demonstrate and occupy the parliament to prevent the adoption of the electoral law.

Resources, framing strategies, and identities

To fully understand the emergence of the Janvier 2015 demonstrations, one must link the contextual analysis with other variables reflecting the agency of protesters. The organisational resources of opposition parties were crucial in the conversion of the resentment of the people against Kabila into collective action. Above all, opponents acted as framing agents of the electoral law as a "threat" for the nation, instilled a sense of urgency in the public opinion and made a link with the events in Burkina Faso. Another factor that contributed to the extent of the uprising is collective identity, as reputations of specific groups are at play during the protest (Polet, 2016).

Parties as movement entrepreneurs

As in other African countries, opposition parties played a key role in triggering the demonstrations.[10] Their action corresponds to that of the movement entrepreneurs described by McCarthy and Zald (1977). They not only "called for demonstrations", but provided some of the resources without which the shift to collective action would not have taken place. These are on one hand organisational resources: the "cells" and the "bases" of the militant networks circulated the call in the neighbourhoods of Kinshasa and leaflets were thrown at several important crossroads on the evening of 18 January. The financial resources invested by opposition parties in the demonstrations appear to have been limited. Small sums were distributed to young activists to cover the costs of printing leaflets and buying appeal credits, tyres, and petrol, but not enough to cover the costs of mobilisation, including transport, let alone to pay participants, a practice that the AMP systematically resorted to.

The most decisive resources that opposition parties brought into the mobilisation are of a cognitive nature, through the activity of framing aiming at linking "institutional manoeuvres of the majority" and "maintaining Joseph Kabila in power" (Snow et al., 1986). As an opponent told us:

> We were on the ground, telling that Kabila wants to stay, because there it was revising the Constitution, blowing up the 220 and all that. And now it's hitting. You see the population… what we call in English the trigger element, when we tell them that Kabila wants to stay, they say "no!".

In other words, politicians actively contributed to shape the meaning of the law amendment as an urgent threat for the nation (with slogans as "Il faut sauver le Congo"[11]) in order to convince people to march. "We were telling people that there was a desire to cheat, to amend the Constitution. But there had to be something that triggered this perception of cheating among the population, among the masses. And that's what happened".

Last but not least, the media resources of the opponents, namely their access to national and international prime-time channels, were decisive in the dissemination of this mobilising discourse. The majority of the demonstrators we interviewed relied on the statements of opposition politicians, heard on radio or television, to read the strategies of the majority and see the threat that the draft electoral law represented.

Students – coming out as "an elite"

Several hundred students from the University of Kinshasa (Unikin), the historic bastion of student activism in Congo, gathered outside the university housing on the morning of 19 January to head to the parliament, located ten kilometres from the campus. The violence of the confrontation with the police at the main crossroads of the capital claimed several victims in the student ranks, but this did

not prevent them from re-mobilising on 20 and 21 January, in smaller numbers, to make another attempt to break through the police roadblocks.

As elsewhere in the world, this student mobilisation was the result of the high level of politicisation of students and greater biographical availability (McAdam, 1988). This process of politicisation is nevertheless highly dependent on the action and discourses of the opposition parties. On the one hand, the clandestine branches of these parties are active on campus, in order to disseminate the catchwords of the opposition leaders, and on the other hand, the students attentively followed the speeches of the opposition politicians.

In our exchanges with students, we also realised that the Burkinabè protests that occurred less than three months earlier had modified their perception of what mobilisation could deliver in Congo. This quote from one of our interviewees is illustrative: "We wanted to do like in Burkina Faso. When they went to their parliament. We had the same goal. If they succeeded, why can't we?". Many students of the Unikin had followed these events through the international television channels. But some "professors-politicians"[12] had also explicitly used Burkina Faso to motivate students to mobilise. They did so by exploiting social representations of the students as a group, insinuating that it was the responsibility of "their generation" to "save the nation" by marching on the Parliament, "as they did in Burkina Faso". So, the January demonstrations were an opportunity for many students to restore a positive image of themselves as a social group with distinctive intellectual and political qualities: "We came out as an elite with an understanding of political danger" said one of them.

Jobless young people and the reputation of the neighbourhood

Beside students, jobless young people from poor neighbourhoods took part in large numbers in the protest. However, their participation was unorganised and spontaneous. Most of them acted as "followers": they only decided to mobilise on the very morning of the first day of the demonstration, as they saw political activists and students marching in the streets and defying the police. They then joined together in small groups with friends from the same streets to try to reach the parliament. Police roadblocks forced many of them to return to their neighbourhoods, where they burned tyres, set up roadblocks, destroyed symbols of power and looted Chinese businesses. Burkina Faso had also had an impact on the imaginary of some of these disenfranchised youth, as one of them told us spontaneously:

> I saw that in Burkina Faso, or Ivory Coast: if people have no job, they always march in the street. But here, if we march in the street, there is the military, the tear gas… But that day, we as Congolese people, said "too much is too much".

Identity issues are also at stake in the mobilisation of these young people: it was a question of showing that their neighbourhood, their commune, is among the most combative and "courageous" in the capital. It was important to know what

was happening elsewhere in other communes, but also "to let known" or being known for "*faire le désordre*" ("making a mess"). This interview with a young man from Ndjili (Thsangu district) is illustrative:

> We were waiting for the reaction of the others, from the campus, to see what was happening. But on Monday we see the governor on TV, who says, "Tshangu, I congratulate you because you don't make a mess, you'll get bonuses". Now the other communes say that we Tshangu are lazy. […] So we got together and we said to each other, "What we're going to do will be very strong".

The consequences of the January 2015 demonstrations

The strength and duration of the protest surprised all the actors and observers of Congolese political life. Despite the denials of the ministers, who tried to reduce the protest to vandalism and present the withdrawal of the controversial provision as an act of responsibility of the authorities, the narrative that prevailed in public opinion was that power had retreated in face of the people. In other words, the population had burst into the political arena. What until then had been mainly a rhetorical resource of the opposition has been translated into reality. For the government, the survival of the regime required from then on that it pays close attention to the potential reactions of the street and adapts its political strategies accordingly. At the beginning of 2015, the possibility of a Burkinabé-style insurgency scenario, made credible by the January demonstrations, conditioned the Congolese political game in the short term.

Political reconfiguration

As stated by Meyer, "development of movements reflects, responds to and sometimes alters the realities of politics and policy" (2004). The demonstrations of January had indeed a real influence on Congolese politics during some time. It first forced the Kabila camp to reorient its strategy. On the one hand, it opted for a less visible *glissement* strategy, by artificially creating obstacles to the work of the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), which is under his influence. On the other hand, it re-engaged in co-optation attempts of opposition forces, through the announcement of a new "dialogue".[13] Popular discontent has, however, contributed to the hardening of the opposition within Kabila's coalition. These tensions led to the exclusion in September 2015 of a group of seven major parties from the AMP.[14] A week later, wealthy businessman Moïse Katumbi, the president's main competitor within the AMP, left the presidential party and resigned as governor of Katanga. The alliance between the seven excluded parties (the G7) and Katumbi constituted from that moment a new and major political force within the opposition against the "dialogue".

The Kabila camp then placed its hopes in a *rapprochement* with the UDPS. This is a party with symbolic weight within the opposition, which could make

Kabila's dialogue sound more inclusive and thus provide internal and external political legitimacy. Negotiations were conducted between July and September 2015, but they did not lead to an agreement, as the two parties did not agree on the modalities of the dialogue and, more substantially, on the power-sharing between the PPRD and the UDPS, which it should lead to.

The January demonstrations also contributed to the rise of a new type of militant organisation in Congo: the *mouvements citoyens* (citizens' movements). In March 2015, several youth organisations met in Kinshasa to launch a civic youth movement focused on the demand for rights, with the support of Senegalese and Burkinabe organisations with an international reputation. The meeting was funded by the United States embassy. Seeing this initiative as a foreign-backed attempt to blow on the embers of January and raise young people against the regime, security forces violently intervened. The international media coverage of the repression gave public visibility and political existence to the newly created Congolese youth groups, especially Filimbi and La Lucha.

The *mouvements citoyens* had some influence on political actors during several months. Their new objective became to prevent the co-optation process of politicians initiated by Joseph Kabila through his proposal for "dialogue". Strengthened by their status as spokespersons for committed Congolese youth, Filimbi obtained external financial support and succeeded in inviting the main leaders of the Congolese opposition to a seminar in Dakar in December 2015, whose unofficial objective was the creation of a broad coalition uniting the opposition and civil society, against the *glissement*. The Front citoyen (FC) for the respect of the constitution and alternation was made official on 9 January 2016.

The appearance of the FC accentuated the fears of the Kabila camp of a Burkinabe-style scenario, that is to say, a larger scale repetition of January 2015 events. According to intelligence sources, the FC was the result of a Western conspiracy to use politicians and civil society and "push Congolese youth into insurrection" (ANR, 2015). This perception of an imminent threat to its political survival led the government to strengthen its anti-demonstration policy at the beginning of 2016, by incorporating into the national police force the Republican Guard units most loyal to the presidency, improving the anti-riot capabilities of the security forces, increasing surveillance of opponents and strengthening police control of urban space, notably through the acquisition of surveillance cameras (Polet, 2017).

The strengthening of the repressive apparatus led the FC to avoid mobilisation in the public space during the first five months of 2016, instead opting for non-confrontational collective actions. A day of prayer in memory of the victims of January 2015 was organised on 19 January 2016, and the demonstration planned for 16 February was converted into a *journée ville morte*.[15] But the crossing of a crucial threshold in the *glissement* strategy – the Constitutional Court ruling of 11 May 2016[16] – led the opponents to organise protest marches on 26 May. Authorised by the authorities, the demonstration in Kinshasa brought together thousands of citizens, who marched peacefully before being dispersed by the police. The restraint of the latter is undoubtedly the result of diplomatic

démarches behind the organisation of the protests, including a call to moderation of the General Secretary of the United Nations Ban Ki Moon. However, the May 2016 demonstrations did not have the same political effect as the January 2015 protest. The Constitutional Court did not reverse its decision.

In addition, rivalry between the opposition leaders quickly undermined the cohesion of the FC. The UDPS had not confirmed its commitment to the Front, as the Tshisekedi faction had not closed the door to dialogue with the PPRD. Katumbi's flight on 19 May 2016, on which repression had intensified following the announcement of his presidential candidacy, created the political, and financial conditions for the UDPS to change over to a more outspoken opposition to Kabila. The *rapprochement* between Tshisekedi and the former governor of Katanga led to the formation on 11 June 2016 in Genval (Belgium) of a mega-coalition of opposition parties, the "Rassemblement des forces sociales et politiques pour le changement"[17] (hereafter Rassemblement), which required the holding of the presidential election as scheduled, in December 2016.

Being marginalised by the Tshisekedi-Katumbi club, Vital Kamerhe finally agreed to participate in Kabila's dialogue initiative. With the participation of an opposition figure, the dialogue started on 1 September 2016, under the leadership of a representative of the African Union. On 19 September, the Rassemblement organised a large demonstration to demand the departure of Kabila three months later, on 19 December, the last day of his mandate. Whereas its leaders continue to demand elections to be held on schedule, the real aim of the Rassemblement was the creation of a truly inclusive dialogue leading to a transition period presided by Étienne Tshisekedi. Despite pressure from the *Rassemblement*, the dialogue resulted in an agreement on 18 October that postponed the presidential election to August 2018 and maintained the presidency of Kabila until that date.

The growing role of diplomats and the Catholic Church

After September 2016, the perceived risk of a popular uprising for the survival of Kabila's regime diminished. The effect of the January 2015 demonstrations and the spectre of a Burkinabe-style scenario gradually faded. The regime, which had weathered the two ordeals of the May and September 2016 demonstrations, gained confidence in the repressive apparatus to counter any attempt to destabilise institutions through recourse to the streets. The violence of the September demonstration, which was partially provoked by the authorities, served as an argument for putting the right to public demonstrations in the capital on hold. By officially prohibiting demonstration, the ruling elite increases substantially the cost of the protest and close the opportunity for mobilising. Although it initially called for increased mobilisation, the opposition fell back on the organisation of a *journée ville morte* on 19 October. This tactical change towards a much less conflictual mode of action signals the wear and tear of the street demonstrations as a political resource.

On the other hand, the influence of international actors and the Catholic Church is increasing at the end of 2016. Since January 2015, the attitude of

the Western powers had been to support dialogue, as a mechanism for reducing political tension, but also respect for the constitution, as the foundation of the rule of law which they had been promoting since reconstruction. On the question of meeting electoral deadlines, their positions would become more flexible during 2016.[18] At the same time, the issue of violence in the management of demonstrations has led the international community to increase pressure on the Congolese authorities, particularly following the deadly repression of the demonstrations in September 2016, which led to the adoption of international sanctions against several leaders of the security apparatus. While supporting the dialogue, the European Union insisted, even before its conclusion, on the need for a "more inclusive political process", which should include the main opposition force, namely the *Rassemblement*. From October to December 2016, the Europeans exerted strong diplomatic pressure on the representatives of both the *Rassemblement* and the Kabila coalition in order to push them to start talks under the aegis of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENCO).

Faced with Kabila's desire to remain in power, the Congolese Catholic Church had been oscillating since 2014 between a protest position and a unifying posture (Stearn, 2016). The bishops had spoken out several times against any modification of the constitution. Their level of political commitment increased at the end of 2015, with their participation in the Dakar meeting. But they had to withdraw from it after the government denounced the partisan behaviour of the Catholic Church. This incident, followed by the intervention of Pope Francis, led the bishops to adopt a more moderate profile, even favourable to the regime, by becoming advocates for a national dialogue without insisting on meeting deadlines. Engaged in the dialogue, the Catholics nevertheless used the pretext of the murderous repression of the 19 September 2016 demonstrations to withdraw from it and align themselves with the Western position, making themselves the promoters of a second dialogue including the *Rassemblement*.

After October 2016, the priority, for the church as well as for diplomats, is no longer the respect for the constitution and political alternation, but to reach a political compromise between Kabila and the *Rassemblement* in order to avoid a popular uprising against Kabila on 19 December, whose large-scale repression risks sinking the country into civil war (Sawyer, 2016). At that moment, the Rassemblement is indeed threatening Kabila to put the population in the street to oust him on the last day of his mandate, unless he opens "another dialogue". But Kabila sticks to the results of the first dialogue and seems confident that his security forces will be able to resist the next mobilisations. New international threats, notably the evocation of the International Criminal Court, finally lead him to engage on 8 December 2016 in a new dialogue, moderated by CENCO. During the night of 19–20 December, when his second term of office theoretically expires, a scattered, and relatively small popular mobilisation took place, under the call of Lucha and Filimbi citizen movements, which was easily stifled by massively deployed security forces. The CENCO dialogue led on 30 December to an agreement which provided for the maintenance in power of Kabila and power sharing with the opposition, as part of a transition towards elections to be

held in 2017.[19] Yet the new agreement is not respected by Kabila, who delays its implementation and takes advantage of the death of the charismatic leader of the Rassemblement, on 1 February 2017, to divide the opposition, by poaching several figures of the UDPS. The promulgation of the electoral calendar is delayed by the CENI, while the presidential entourage raises again the idea of a constitutional referendum on the possibility of a third term. Divided and discredited, the opposition is no longer able to mobilise to impose the implementation of the CENCO agreement. Calls for demonstrations by *mouvements citoyens* are hardly any more successful, revealing the weak anchoring of these organisations among the youth.

The non-respect of the CENCO agreement that the diplomats sought to establish as the legitimate basis of political power during the transition, squanders the little trust Western embassies kept towards Kabila. At the end of October, two weeks after a statement by the president of the CENI referring to elections in 2019, the United States ambassador to the United Nations visiting Kinshasa endorsed a further postponement of the elections, to the displeasure of the opposition and *mouvements citoyens* but set the end of 2018 as the final deadline. A few days later, CENI published a calendar setting the elections for 23 December 2018. Joseph Kabila nevertheless leaves doubt as to his intention to run again.

The Catholic Church, whose popular legitimacy had suffered greatly from the failure to respect "its" agreement, then took the lead in a new mobilisation campaign. Three national demonstrations, each time taking the form of dozens of processions throughout the country, are organised at the turn of 2018 by a group of Catholic personalities, with the support of CENCO, to demand the full application of the CENCO agreement. The crushing of these marches of "Catholics" led to international outrage. Unlike previous demonstration, where violence seemed to be on both sides, there was now a striking contrast between martyr-like priests and peaceful believers on one side and blind state violence on the other. It has given rise to a new series of international condemnations that increased diplomatic pressure on Kabila. Adding to Western injunctions there were growing concerns from African regional bodies and from neighbouring countries, which feared an increase in insecurity in the border regions if Kabila remains in power.[20] More than protests, it is this converging international pressure that leads Kabila to withdraw from the race, by designating on August 8, one of his PPRD followers, Emmanuel Ramazani Shadari, as the candidate of his coalition.

In the run up to the December 2018 elections, the opposition endorsed two candidates: Martin Fayulu, backed by Moïse Katumbi and Jean-Pierre Bemba; and Felix Tshisekedi (the son of Étienne) supported by Vital Kamerhe.[21] The official results gave victory to Tshisekedi, but serious evidence indicates that it is the product of a transaction between the different political camps, rather than the result of popular vote (Englebert, 2020). The original plan of the Kabila camp was to secure the win of Shadary, but Martin Fayulu's considerable lead over his rival led to a change of strategy and to the need of negotiating an agreement with the real winner. As the latter refused, it is to the other loser, Felix Tshisekedi, that the Kabila clan proposed the presidency, through an agreement preserving large parts of state power to the coalition of the outgoing president. The concomitant

manipulation of the legislative elections guarantees Kabilas's PPRD majority in the chamber.

The majority of the population, outside the Fayulu strongholds in ex-Bandundu, seemed to have accepted the election outcome, either because they did not perceive the extent of the manipulation, or because they considered that only Kabila's departure really counted. In any case, this attitude caught the western chancelleries off guard. After having first questioned the results, they took note of Tshisekedi's victory, considering that the non-respect of democratic principles was the price to pay to get rid of the Kabila dynasty without entering a new spiral of political violence.

Conclusion

The Congolese political process shows how important it is, in African settings, to take international context and actors into account among the variables that define possibilities for mobilising, as well as opportunities for influence. The January 2015 demonstration happened in a politically polarised national environment and a regional context marked by the Burkina Faso uprising. Through their resources, discourse and media visibility, political opponents had a crucial role in triggering the protest. From then on, the possibility of a repetition of January 2015 protest at a larger scale shaped the strategies of the presidency as well as of the opposition for several months. However, the impact of the popular pressure did not last. Big political players tamed it or tried to instrumentalise it without engaging really with the demands of the activists. Anti-Kabila protests did not produce substantive change in the relation between state actors and constituency.

Two factors are more specifically important to understand international attitude towards anti-Kabila protests from 2015 to 2018. One is contextual, the other is more structural. First, Kabila had already lost legitimacy among Western diplomats when January 2015 protests occurred. Unlike other leaders in the region, he was no longer deemed capable to secure Western interests and political stability. So, there was somehow political convergence between protesters and Western ambassadors. But more decisive in the approach of foreigners is the fear of Congo descending into chaos. Congo is different from other African countries as it is in some way considered "too big to fail". Like Mobutu, Kabila has tried to present himself to the exterior as the "guarantor of order". But the existence of public protest was the most visible symptom of a wide popular dissatisfaction with the statu quo. More than the principle of democracy reclaimed by the protesters, the fear of chaos, of which the demonstrations were seen as both a symptom and an accelerator, conditioned international and regional political reaction to the crises. And those ultimately forced Kabila to turn over power, even if he did so without respecting the sense of the popular vote.

Lastly, January 2015 demonstrations in DRC tell us that popular protests in Africa must be analysed as embedded in a multidimensional political game. Its causes as well as its consequences interplay with the complex logics of patrimonial politics – the conflictual negotiation between big men around the sharing of

the power – and the strategies of international actors. In a political field marked by extraversion, gaining international attention and support is a major dimension of the struggles, for power as well as for change.

Notes

1. From 2001, a massive international intervention took place to end the Congolese War (1998–2003) and rebuild a state that should be "administratively capable and well governed" (Vircoulon, 2005). The 2006 constitution, adopted by referendum, established a semi-presidential regime in a highly decentralised unitary state and safeguarded fundamental civil and political rights. Formal adherence to the reform package promoted by the international community allowed Joseph Kabila to gain the upper hand over his rivals between 2001 and 2006, before trying to emancipate himself from the Western "semi-tutelage" (de Villers, 2016).
2. From 2001 to 2006, Joseph Kabila ruled as a coopted president, following the assassination of his father, Laurent Désiré Kabila, in January 2001.
3. The AMP is a coalition of parties built around Joseph Kabila's party, the PPRD (*Parti du peuple pour la reconstruction et la démocratie*), in the run-up to the 2006 presidential election. It becomes the MP (Presidential Majority) in 2011.
4. Province of origin of Laurent-Désiré Kabila, the father of the President.
5. Founded in 1983, the UDPS (*Union pour la Démocratie et le Progrès Social*) is considered as the historical opposition party in the Congo.
6. *Mouvement de Libération du Congo.*
7. *Union pour la Nation Congolaise.*
8. Remarks by a parliamentarian at a meeting of the political bureau of the presidential majority, 25 August 2014 (www.7sur7.cd, 29 August 2014)
9. A PPRD delegation was present in Ouagadougou to directly observe the parliamentary process in Burkina Faso.
10. Demarest analysed the role of political parties in the popular protest against President Wade's third term in Senegal from a resource mobilisation perspective (2016).
11. « We must save Congo »
12. Many professors at the Unikin are simultaneously politicians.
13. An initiative encouraged by the Western diplomacy, according to our interview with the Belgian ambassador.
14. They collectively represent about a quarter of the AMP seats in the National Assembly.
15. Journée « ville morte » is a relatively common mode of protest in French speaking Africa, consisting of paralysing the city during one day or more through a sort of civil strike (everybody stay home and businesses are closed).
16. Allowing Kabila to remain in office until the inauguration of a new elected president, thus beyond 2016 if the elections are not held on time
17. Rally of Social and Political Forces for Change.
18. On 30 March 2016, UN Security Council Resolution 2277, presented by France, calls (among other things) on the government to organise the elections "in a timely manner". In September 2016, in view of the accumulated delays, the European Union referred to "the shortest possible time frame during the year 2017".
19. And no more in August 2018 as decided during the first dialogue.
20. The coming to power of João Lourenço in Angola (September 2017) and Cyril Ramaphosa in South Africa (14 February 2018), who do not have the closeness of their predecessors to the Congolese president, have contributed to harden African positions in the Kabila dossier.

21. On 11 November 2018, the seven main opposition candidates had agreed in an international facilitation meeting in Geneva to select Martin Fayulu as the sole opposition candidate. The next day, Felix Tshisekedi withdrew from the agreement, under the pretext of the refusal of the "base" of the UDPS to support this candidate.

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10 FROM VOTING TO WALKING

THE 2011 WALK-TO-WORK PROTEST MOVEMENT IN UGANDA

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Introduction

"Walk-to-Work", as the protests were called, were mainly challenging the sky-rocketing prices of fuel and daily commodities, a result of the extravagant expenditures of state resources by the ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) in the then just-concluded 2011 general election campaigns. Mobilised by opposition parties and civic groups, the masses showed discontent at the rising inflation by boycotting public transport and instead walking to their workplaces – hence the name Walk-to-Work – in addition to peaceful street demonstrations. As the demonstrations grew, however, spreading out to various major towns in the country, scenes of violent confrontation between police and protesters became common, and economic grievances morphed into political ones as protesters increasingly talked of regime change and started drawing inspiration from the then on-going revolutions in North Africa. The moment revealed deep-seated anti-regime sentiments that had been boiling for years.

The protests were soon crushed by the NRM regime, however, with teargas, rubber bullets and mass arrests, but not without leaving a lasting legacy. In Uganda's opposition, the huge enthusiasm on the streets reinforced the idea that the NRM's hegemony could be better confronted through revolution, as opposed to elections that were fast losing significance. The opportunity signalled by the protests re-energised civil society and the masses to more aggressively critique the NRM's economic mismanagement but also call for democratic reforms. But in response the NRM party-state also became more militarised and authoritarian, and in subsequent years passed draconian laws further limiting freedoms of public assembly and controlling media. The protests thus emboldened the demands for change while also prompting a further closing of political space, setting the stage for future confrontations.

This chapter, based on oral interviews with members of various opposition parties[1], academia and civil society conducted from January to June 2018, as well as participant observation of the events in April 2011, explores the nature and impact of the Walk-to-Work protests. It presents a two-fold argument. First, political opportunity structures that is the structure of alliances between opposition parties – the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) and the Democratic Party

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(DP) – and between them and civic groups (Activists for Change – A4C), was crucial for protest mobilisation. Plus, the activists were also able to count with a supporting public opinion. Second, framing strategies such as amplification, bridging, and transformation, helped make the demands salient, bridge diverse frames – cost of living, corruption, poor quality elections, democracy – and produced new understandings about the politics of opposition and protest in the country. Indeed, a notion of democracy by revolution emerged as opposed to a notion of democracy by elections. Uganda's Walk-to-Work protest was short-lived and provoked only limited changes in the political system, as the state reacted violently to the mass demonstrations. However, it sowed revolutionary seeds that flourished in subsequent years, particularly since 2017 with the emergence of Bobi Wine as the regime's foremost political opponent. This present study shows that while political opportunity structures may be less abundant in authoritarian regimes, the movement's capacity to innovate, and pass along resonant frames explains if not their outcomes at least their public visibility and recognition. This, we argue, may produce some cracks in the system and leave an enduring legacy for future protests.

The chapter is organised as follows. It starts with the setting, illustrating the political opportunity structures that aided their outbreak. It then explores the historical context that back dropped the protests. It then discusses the 2011 elections and their aftermath, in which the protests took place, as well as their nature. Finally, it examines the impact of these protests on both the opposition and the government and surveys the more recent cycle of protests – led by Bobi Wine and the People Power movement – and its breaks/continuities with the Walk-to-Work protests.

More than just the high cost of living: Understanding protest in Uganda

One of the most interesting features of the third wave of popular protest in Africa has been its focus on consumption that is material, issues. Indeed, between 2007 and 2008 food riots occurred in more than a dozen of African countries including Mozambique, Cameroon, Senegal, Madagascar, Egypt and Morocco (Engels, 2015, Berazneva, and Lee, 2013). The rising oil prices contributed to sharp food price increases that bear significantly on citizens' cost of living. Yet other issues – such as political rights and democratic reform – have also propelled people into the streets. The protest against presidential third-term bids in Burkina Faso (Bertrand, 2022), Senegal (Dimé, 2022), and Democratic Republic of Congo (Polet, 2022) and for policy change in Cabo Verde (Sanches and Lopes, 2022) are quite illustrative that political issues are also at the core of many protest events. From journalists to opposition parties, ordinary citizens, and musicians, in fact, large coalitions of individuals have protested against outgoing regimes. Protests have reached unprecedented levels in the 2010s even in the most authoritarian regimes (Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Sanches, 2022). Their forms of pressure, and repertoires of action, vary a lot and propel distinct results (Branch and Mampilly, 2015).

Uganda has been a part of this cycle of protests. The Walk-to-Work protests have been largely depicted as a demonstration against the rising fuel and food prices (Oola, 2011). And indeed, the inflation in the aftermath of the 2011 elections in Uganda was instrumental in sparking off the mass demonstrations. However, there was much more at stake than merely the skyrocketing prices. More importantly, there was also widespread popular disappointment with the results of the presidential election that had just ended in February 2011 – which gave incumbent president Yoweri Museveni a fourth term in power – coupled with longstanding grievances against the corruption and authoritarianism of his regime that had by then lasted for twenty-five years in power. In fact, these long-term factors constituted the more important drivers of the protests as they sowed seeds of popular discontent long before the inflation started. In addition, the revolutions in North Africa that were ongoing at the time captured the imagination of many discontented Ugandans. When the ruling NRM's lavish spending in the 2010 campaigns caused inflation in early 2011, it only opened the lid on these underlying sentiments. Therefore, these four factors – economic inflation, discontent with the 2011 elections, long-term authoritarianism, and corruption by the NRM regime, and inspiration from the then ongoing "Arab spring" revolutions – were the triggering factors of the protest movement.

To explain the nature and impact of the Walk-to-Work protests we interact two classical approaches in the social movement theories that have been discussed in the African context (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2009). First, we consider the political opportunity structures, that is, the context-dependent factors that enhance social movement prospects for mobilising, advancing certain claims, employing certain tactics and affecting mainstream politics (Meyer, 2004, p. 126). Political opportunities have been widely discussed in the literature and include several factors related to a country's institutional and cultural setting, for instance openness of the regime, elite divisions, presence of political allies and nature of political cleavages (Meyer, 2004; Sanches, 2022). In the case of Uganda, we find two types of political opportunities: on the one side alliance structures between opposition parties and between then and the civic groups that came together to fight against the incumbent party; on the other hand, broad popular support, as there were growing signs of discontent towards the regime.

Complementarily, we contend that framing strategies were important to explain the emergence and dissemination of mass demonstrations (Benford and Snow, 2000). Framing strategies refer to how movement actors disseminate their messages to achieve their political goals. Amplification, bridging, transformation, and extension represent some of the framing strategies that are utilised by movement actors (Benford and Snow, 2000). During the Walk-to-Work protest activists were able to rely on strategic framing strategies to win support. It is possible to observe that they tried to make their issue salient (amplification), linked diverse frames – cost of living, corruption, poor quality elections, democracy – and produced new understandings about the politics of opposition and protest in the country (transformation).

While the case highlights the relevance of POS and framing strategies for the emergence of the Walk-to-Work movement it also shows their limitation in subsequent stages. In the face of increased use of coercion by the regime the movement only lasted one month but had a long-term impact in opposition and future protests, as we show in the final sections of this chapter.

Uganda's historical and political context: Authoritarianism, clientelism, and repression

To properly consider the significance of this political moment it is important to revisit the political and historical context of Uganda. For twenty-five years (1986–2011) the NRM had ruled the country as a de-facto single party regime under the umbrella "Movement" system that restricted political parties from operating (Oloka and Mugaju, 2000). The country's conflict-ridden history was cited to justify this system as a post-conflict arrangement to enhance national unity (Oloka and Mugaju, 2000). When it took power in 1986, the NRM had found a country hugely divided along ethnic, religious, and other lines dating way back to the immediate post-independence era in the 1960s.

The earliest political parties that existed after independence had either an ethnic or religious composition, with the effect that any tensions in national politics then tended to take an ethnic or religious direction (Mutibwa, 1992). Consequently, the country witnessed a range of bloody civil wars, coups d'état, and general political instability from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Therefore, the No-party Movement system was presented by the NRM government as the solution. It would apparently limit ethnic and religious polarisation and conflict in the country and allow for a period of national healing and reconciliation until such a time as when the country was stable enough and ready to have multi-party politics again (Oloka and Mugaju, 2000).

On the ground, however, the picture was more complicated. Although the NRM did indeed restore a semblance of peace, stability, and democratic rule, armed conflict continued to destabilise large parts of the country. For instance, rebels of the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) occasionally terrorised parts of western Uganda throughout the 1990s. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebels also started an insurgency that would not end until the mid-2000s. These armed rebel movements raised questions about the extent of the peace that the government had restored.

Moreover, the NRM had begun largely as a guerrilla outfit in 1981 following a disputed election that was allegedly rigged by president Obote's Uganda's People's Congress (UPC) government. Its main goal had been to topple Obote's government that it considered illegitimate, end decades of authoritarianism, and pave way for the restoration of genuine democratic rule in the country. However, by 2011, the NRM was being accused of overseeing the very evils it had previously fought against (Kanyeihamba, 2002). For instance, state-orchestrated violence and allegations of vote-rigging had marked both the 2001 and 2006 elections.

Further still, it had taken power as a progressive government and initially included a range of opposition members in its ranks to ensure inclusivity in the post-war context; it also enhanced popular participation in government through decentralisation and spearheaded a range of economic reforms that saw President Museveni hailed internationally (Kanyeihamba, 2002). By the mid-to late 1990s, however, the NRM had made a gradual U-turn. Power was increasingly centralised around President Museveni and the progressive agenda was fast disappearing (HRW, 1999; Kanyeihamba, 2002; Rubongoya, 2007). Corruption scandals were becoming more common, state-orchestrated violence had made a worrying comeback, and the elite cohesion that fuelled the string of reforms in the initial years of the government was rapidly coming to an end (HRW, 1999; Kanyeihamba, 2002; Rubongoya, 2007). Within the NRM, cracks were appearing; a younger group of cadres were increasingly questioning the status quo and calling for internal reforms, while the old guard was increasingly adamant and bent on entrenching itself in power (Makara *et al*., 2009).

The 2001 election marked the first moment when the NRM faced a serious internal crisis. Kizza Besigye, a member of the movement system, a colonel in the Ugandan army, and former personal doctor to President Museveni, had critiqued the regime in a 1999 dossier that led to heated internal debate. As he faced increasing persecution within the NRM, he announced his bid for the presidency in the then forthcoming elections. The announcement sparked off widespread public debate, sent shockwaves throughout the system, and attracted unprecedented violence from the NRM machinery. Beatings, mass arrests, kidnaps, and other forms of violence against opposition supporters became the hallmark of the 2001 campaigns and elections – as they would subsequent elections. Following his courageous – though unsuccessful – challenge against his former boss, Besigye faced continued political persecution that saw him flee to exile in South Africa.

He would return after the restoration of multi-partyism in 2005 to lead the newly established opposition party, the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), and represent it in the 2006 presidential elections. Once again, widespread violence and allegations of irregularities marked the elections. Besigye became more popular despite his loss, scoring 36% in contrast to his 27% earlier in 2001, and opposition to Museveni's rule further grew despite his victory, as his performance declined from 69% in 2001 to 59% in 2006. The election generated a lot of anticipation about the next polls in 2011, with many an opposition strategist confident that the incumbent would be finally voted out of power in 2011. As will be discussed later, this anticipation greatly contributed to the widespread sense of disappointment that followed Besigye's third defeat in 2011 and eventually fuelled the protests.

The 2011 elections: a turning point

The 2011 polls were thus a pivotal moment in the contest between President Museveni of the ruling NRM and his main challenger Kizza Besigye of the opposition FDC. Aware of the growing threat from his former doctor, president Museveni and the NRM invested a lot of resources into the campaigns.

International election observers such as the EU-EOM described the election as the "most expensive ever", noting "the rampant (mis) use of state resources on the part of the NRM, and the fundamental failure, as a result, to establish a level playing field" (Conroy-Krutz and Logan, 2012, p. 632). They also highlighted a "variety of problems, ranging from blatant vote buying and distribution of "vast amounts" of money and gifts, to "other subtler forms of buying allegiance" (Conroy-Krutz and Logan, 2012, p. 632). The tactics were used side by side with the usual violence and intimidation of opposition supporters.

But the lavish campaign spending would have unintended – and not very distant – consequences. Following the election, there was widespread anger about the results among opposition supporters across the country, especially the urban youth, though for the NRM it was business as usual. After all, it had won two similar elections against Besigye in the past, amidst violence and bribery, with little or no consequences. For a moment it seemed that the 2011 election was no different from the earlier ones. Even when news of revolutions in North Africa, beginning in Tunisia, began to trickle into the country and triggered excitement in the opposition, there was little expectation that any uprising of a similar sort could even be attempted in Uganda. After all, the NRM had horned its military skills for decades while fighting insurgents in northern and western Uganda and could potentially nip any nascent uprising in the bud.

However, when fuel prices began to rise drastically as a result of the government's heavy spending in the then just-concluded campaigns, the political atmosphere began to change dramatically. The increasing fuel prices sent the prices of other basic commodities skyrocketing, and economic hardship suddenly united both opposition and ruling party supporters in condemnation of the government's extravagance. Inflation had soared from 6% in February to 11% by April (Gatsiounis, 2011).

This background fuelled grievances from all quadrants, bringing together opposition supporters, lawyers, women's groups and the merchant class "to protest against skyrocketing prices for fuel and basic commodities" in the post-election period (Conroy-Krutz and Logan, 2012, p. 626). The opposition, particularly the FDC which by then was the largest opposition party, and the DP, still reeling from its defeat, suddenly noticed an opportunity to seize. The discontent generated by the violent and messy conduct of the election, as well as of previous elections in 2006 and 2001, it realised, could be marshalled into a movement – akin to those in North Africa – that could potentially force the NRM out of power through a revolution. The events in North Africa, which were being followed closely by many people through news, raised expectation of a similar outcome. Moreover, there were many parallels between the regimes there and the one in Uganda.

For the government, it was a moment of unprecedented trepidation. Unlike the armed rebellions it had effectively crushed in the north and west of the country over the previous two decades of its rule, the thousands of peaceful protesters that thronged the streets in the Walk-to-Work movement could neither be easily distinguished from ordinary pedestrians, nor be shot without serious repercussions for the regime's image and survival.

Walking to work: Political opportunity structures and framing strategies

The Walk-to-Work protest, as it is called, began on April 11, 2011. A group calling itself Activists for Change (A4C), comprising of various opposition leaders and civil society actors, organised the demonstrations to show people's discontent over rising prices (Namiti, 2011).

Talk of an uprising had in fact emerged as early as February due to dissatisfaction with the conduct of the elections (Daily Monitor, 2011), but at the time it was still an inchoate idea and did not galvanise the population into action. However, with inflation soaring by April, public discontent grew, calls for protests picked up momentum, and the various political and civil society groups coalesced under the leadership of the non-partisan A4C. Mathias Mpuuga, Member of Parliament from Masaka municipality in Central Uganda, and coordinator of the A4C, stated to the media that the ensuing campaign was successful because the issues raised affected the population and not just the political elite. He further added:

> There will be Walk-to-Work tomorrow…We shall end this campaign only if we have had a plausible response from government, which is responsible for the situation in the country.
>
> (Mpuga, 2011)

The logic at the heart of the protests was simple yet creative. Opposition leader Kizza Besigye and other high-ranking officials from opposition parties and civil society called on Ugandans to express discontent at the rising fuel prices by boycotting public transport, which was getting increasingly expensive, and walking to their workplaces instead. Anne Mugisha, an A4C activist, asserted:

> On Monday we shall have a unique opportunity to join thousands of Ugandans who walk to work every single day…On Monday we shall shine a light on the plight of those Ugandans who now more than ever cannot afford a taxi or boda-boda fare. We shall show our solidarity with the parents who cannot put a meal on the table for their little ones due to the rise in food prices. We shall do this simply by walking together with ordinary Ugandans to our place of work and then we shall repeat the exercise every Thursday and Monday until the government pays heed to our demand to intervene and guarantee affordable food and fuel prices.
>
> (Mugisha, 2011)

FDC party leader Kizza Besigye echoed her sentiments but went beyond the inflation to focus on the political dimension of the protests. At the official launch of the Walk-to-Work movement by the A4C, he argued that "It's time to draw a line between those who want a dictatorship and those who want democracy. I am sure peaceful defiance of the dictatorship can be used to dismantle the dictatorship" (Kalyegira, 2011). The activists also took the lead in walking to work and news

of their actions – which spread countrywide mainly through television, radio, newspapers, word of mouth, and social media – soon inspired ordinary people to emulate them.

Though parties were involved, it is important to note that protest was framed largely in nationalist rather than partisan terms. Activists rallied Ugandans to put behind their various differences and come together to demand for a reduction in prices which, they emphasised, affected everyone irrespective of party affiliation. In fact, the very establishment of the A4C in 2011 as a non-partisan vehicle for the protests, instead of using the already-existing parties for the same purpose, was likely intended to avoid the impression that the protests were a form of unseemly politicking by the opposition. By transcending party affiliation, the protests would attract broad popular participation across the political spectrum and accommodate civil society actors who would have been uncomfortable protesting on a political party platform. This accent on non-partisanship was especially salient in the A4C's objectives;

> Political leaders, activists and civil society will act together to implement programs in a non-partisan space in order to raise awareness of ordinary Ugandans to their rights, responsibilities and duties as citizens. In order to effect democratic change of government we will mobilize the masses and set in motion a process to remove obstacles to free and fair elections through peacefully dismantling pillars of the authoritarian regime and erecting the pillars of democratic rule.
>
> (A4C blog, 2011)

The move seems to have paid off. The Walk-to-Work movement managed to attract support from a broad section of Ugandans and to overcome the bickering that had for years been a hallmark of inter-party relations in the opposition.

The simple logic and fluidity of the Walk-to-Work movement enabled its quick spread from Kampala to major towns across the country; as walking in protest did not necessitate meticulous planning and organisation beforehand, anyone anywhere could simply join the protests with no need for central coordination. Moreover, police could not easily distinguish between people that were walking normally from those that were walking in protest. This made everyone – protesters, bystanders, and ordinary pedestrians – a suspect, thus providing cover to the real protesters while threatening to overwhelm the police by the sheer force of numbers. Therefore, in a moment the government, which had just won the elections by a landslide, was scampering for solutions to a novel form of resistance that packaged itself in economic grievance but was largely driven by longstanding political discontent.

As the protests spread across the country, violent scenes began marking the confrontations between police and protesters. What had begun mainly in Kampala as a peaceful boycott of public transport on 11 April was slowly morphing into a powerful, nationwide protest movement that could potentially swell further and force the government out of power. By 14 April, they had spread out

to cities like Masaka and Gulu. Protesters – mainly young people in urban areas – had, at the start, complained of the rising prices, but gradually were beginning to point at other longstanding excesses by the government and hinting at the possibility of regime change. Images and slogans from North Africa were becoming more common in Kampala's streets; for instance, photos from revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East were being framed by traders and sold on Kampala's streets, and talk of people getting tired of Museveni's regime seemed to echo the slogan "the people want to bring the regime down" that was widely used in the North African uprisings. The fall of long-ruling autocrats in Tunisia and Egypt also inspired many to begin dreaming of a post-Museveni era and to draw comparisons between their context and events further north of the continent. According to my informal interviews and conversation with ordinary protesters, it was increasingly clear to everyone – more so to the government – that the ambition of the protesters was growing bigger and bolder than the mere demand for a reduction of prices.

It is this factor that drove the government's use of excessive force to avert the possibility of a Ugandan revolution – a "Ugandan spring" as many referred to it at the time. Teargas, beatings, and live bullets began greeting the protesters and by the end of April at least nine people had been killed by security forces. The government also banned live coverage of the protests and blocked social media (Echwalu, 2011). The protests started fizzling out after the opposition leader Kizza Besigye, the key mobiliser and face of the protests, was badly injured by security forces on 29 April and later flown to a hospital in Nairobi. In his absence the protests lacked a rallying figure and facing increasing crackdowns from the state, petered out by May 2011.

The Walk-to-Work movement may have been short-lived – it lasted only about a month – but its effects on Uganda's political landscape would endure for years. On the one hand, the state grew more securitised and the society more assertive. On the other hand, for the opposition, the defeat of the movement did little to crush the newly kindled hopes of revolution. There was even a sense of gratification that the NRM, whose landslides at both parliamentary and presidential level shielded it from the prospect of electoral defeat, was suddenly shuddering at the threat of revolution. The optimism about change through the streets remained alive for years despite the short lifespan of the Walk-to-Work movement.

On the other hand, in the NRM, attention began diverting from merely winning elections to averting the risk of revolution. It was no longer enough to employ all state machinery and resources at its disposal to defeat the opposition at the polls if there remained a prospect that the ruling party could still be forced out of power through protests. This lesson had been offered especially by the revolution in Egypt, but also insinuated by opposition activists in Uganda who continued to call on people to "rise up" in subsequent years, albeit with little success. From 2011, therefore, no red flag could be taken lightly by the NRM. Even small-scale demonstrations or gatherings by opposition leaders were met with heavy deployments of security forces, arrests, beatings, and shootings. Consequently, the next years would be marked by an upward spiral of repression and resistance.

The analysis afore-mentioned illustrates our findings. First, strategic alliances between parties, and between parties and civic groups (A4C), coupled with favourable public opinion, were crucial to elicit participation in protest. Second, movement actors used creative ways to catch public attention and attract support. Walking to work was a powerful initiative that helped amplify the protest frames in social media, national and international press. Furthermore, they were able to connect different frames beyond the cost of living itself. By doing this they managed to attract support beyond partisan lines. Finally, Walk-to-Work produced new understandings about the politics of opposition and protest in the country. This impacted future political events, which we discuss later.

To build or to protest?: Opposition in the aftermath of Walk-to-Work

It is important to examine the extent to which the protests were transformative for both the opposition and the government. Within the opposition, the party that was most affected was Kizza Besigye's FDC, the largest opposition party in the country in 2011. Within it the protest movement instigated the emergence of two factions that were divided over the question of which direction the opposition should take going forward. One faction, led by Besigye, placed accent on protest and revolution, arguing that a regime like Museveni's could not be defeated at the polls. They clarified that the past three elections had all been rigged, and that the only way out of the uneven playing was a revolution, as the 2011 protests had apparently signalled. A revolution, unlike elections, would allegedly redesign the Ugandan political landscape and restore genuine multiparty democracy, after which political parties could then institutionalise and operate normally, as their counterparts in other countries.

Another faction led by retired general Mugisha Muntu, a former army commander in the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF), argued that given the electoral defeat and the crushing of the protest movement, the party had to immediately embark on a process of institutionalisation that could see it build stronger grassroots structures and prepare for a post-Museveni era which, they said, was imminent. Their contention was that protest would divert the party from focusing on its internal organisation which was apparently the most critical element in countering the NRM's hegemony. As long as the opposition remained fractured and disorganised, they reasoned, it would stand no serious chance at defeating the NRM, whether at elections or through revolution.

For the opposition then, the years following the Walk-to-Work movement can be classified as the years of debate over what, between elections and revolution, constituted the better method for unseating president Museveni and the NRM. How to address this question became the fulcrum of opposition politics, and in particular the FDC, for the next five years.

Ultimately, the majority of the opposition, typified by the Besigye faction in the FDC, agreed that civil disobedience, as opposed to electoral politics, constituted a more realistic way of confronting the NRM. This sentiment was most reflected

in the triumph of Besigye's "defiance" faction in the FDC. Muntu had taken over from Besigye as party president in 2012, but Besigye's influence continued to loom large over the party despite his retirement. This was mainly because of differences in the approach and history of the two men; Besigye had a strong personality cult around him owing to his confrontational style of politics, his status as the founding president of the party, and his spirited contests against Museveni in three previous elections in 2001, 2006, and 2011. However, Muntu had never run against Museveni and was regarded by Besigye's faction as unnecessarily "soft" and "gentle" because of his accent on party institutionalisation – rather than revolution – which many deemed as utopian and unsuitable to the authoritarian context in Uganda. Thus when Muntu took over as party president, Besigye, who commanded greater support in the party, continued to operate behind the scenes and established a rival – albeit informal – party headquarters to continue his defiance brand of politics.

Besigye's faction eventually regained full control of the party when in 2017 one of its members, a little known former FDC legislator, Patrick Oboi Amuriat (better known by the abbreviation POA), got elected as party president, beating the more prominent Muntu. POA's election was widely attributed to Besigye's tacit support of him, although Besigye insisted he was neutral in the contest. POA's emergence as the new party president signified the triumph of the defiance approach as the official party stance, although, as the next section will illustrate, in practice it became much harder to organise any protest akin to Walk-to-Work. Dissatisfaction with POA's election and disagreement with the protest approach also led to the exit of Muntu's faction from the FDC and his eventual establishment of a new party, the Alliance for National Transformation (ANT).

It can thus be argued that the 2011 protests were fundamentally transformative for Uganda's opposition, more so for the then main opposition party, the FDC, as they triggered a change in its political agenda. Since they were framed as a non-partisan popular struggle against an authoritarian government, the protests blurred the lines between opposition parties and also attracted much broader popular support than what could have been possible had they been organised on a party platform. This augmented the opposition's strength as it minimised inter-party conflict within it and widened the schism between protesters (opposition parties, civic groups, and the general public) on the one hand, and the NRM government on the other. In the aftermath of the protests, therefore, many senior members of the FDC sought to harness this new politics of protest by attempting to re-model the party along the lines of a mass movement, believing that this constituted a more effective strategy for confronting the NRM's hegemony. They reasoned that discarding the new all-encompassing politics of popular protest and returning to the older and narrower confines of the political party would be short-sighted. It would amount to abandoning what had just proved to be a winning formula. In the next several years, therefore, the FDC generally seemed bent on reorganising itself according to a protest agenda and replicating the 2011 Walk-to-Work movement. This illustrated a learning process through which the FDC and opposition at large sought to adapt to the changed

political context and to exploit the opportunities signalled by the Walk-to-Work movement.

However, the transformation was not entirely positive. As already discussed, the move towards the politics of "defiance" led to factionalism and power struggles in the FDC. While the new notion of democracy by revolution became wildly popular within the party, it was not unanimously agreed upon. The Muntu faction felt that the protest agenda risked destroying the party's original identity and hampering its ability to establish grassroots structures. Since the NRM had brutally suppressed the Walk-to-Work movement and established a harsher environment that made protest unfeasible going forwards, they argued, it was more prudent for the party to focus its energies on institutionalising itself instead. The Besigye camp retorted that it was futile to attempt to establish structures in a context where the NRM party-state was determined to stifle their growth. This conflict paralysed the party for years, diverted attention from the main rift between opposition and the NRM, and ultimately resulted in the fracturing of the party when the Muntu camp exited FDC to establish the ANT party.

Policing dissent: NRM governance after the 2011 protests

While the years following Walk-to-Work marked a period of both renewed optimism and increased turbulence within the opposition, especially within the FDC as discussed earlier, in the ruling NRM they constituted a moment of reflection and restructuring the ruling party's approach to governance – albeit for the worse. The new threat heralded by the Walk-to-Work movement could not be allowed a chance to resurrect in the future, especially in the face of the NRM's declining popular legitimacy, and the government was determined to take all steps to rule out that possibility. This, in the subsequent years, would entail the adoption of a host of legal and extra-legal measures to limit the freedoms of public assembly and communication that had been critical to the emergence of the Walk-to-Work movement.

For instance, the police became much more militarised and abusive than ever before, according to my personal observation during field work, but also as documented in the literature (Spencer, 2018). Under the command of General Kale Kayihura, who arguably became the second most powerful person in the country after Museveni, the police became notorious for human rights abuses and the crushing of any dissent to Museveni's regime. It also incorporated vigilante groups into its ranks, notably the Boda Boda 2010, Crime Preventers, and the Kiboko Squad, who became notorious for beating up opposition supporters in order to dispel protests. Intimidation, brutality, and torture of suspects became commonplace and the police's disregard for the rule of law generally increased. Between 2011 and 2016, the Uganda Human Rights Commission received more than a thousand cases of torture at the hands of the police (Spencer, 2018).

Besides, draconian laws such as the Public Order Management Act (POMA) of 2013 came into place, giving the police almost unlimited powers to control freedom of assembly. In the guise of preventing "public disorder", the police was

equipped with broad powers by the law to control a range of opposition activities, including public rallies, protests, meetings, public consultations, to mention but a few. This is due to the fact that POMA required organisers of such events to notify police in advance about the date, time, venue, numbers of participants, and other details of public meetings. It also requires organisers to provide a traffic or assembly plan, and to ensure that no disruptions to public order ensued. Though framed as a legal check on public disorder, the law was arguably a political response to the new threat of popular protest that had rattled the ruling NRM in 2011, and the police frequently cited it to justify its abusive tactics.

The new threat of a popular revolution signalled by the protests, reinforced by news of the downfall of authoritarian regimes in North Africa, and maintained by the continued revolutionary rhetoric by opposition politicians would prompt the regime to create a more securitised, authoritarian context than before in a bid to strengthen its grip on power (Onyiego, 2011; Goodfellow, 2014). Military patrols in the city became the new normal (Branch and Mampilly, 2015). In 2014 government started plans to buy a phone-tapping machine for increased surveillance (Kasasira, 2014).

Nowhere was the new securitised setting more evident than in the aftermath of the 2016 elections. It was the fourth contest between opposition leader Besigye and President Museveni, and was widely expected to be pivotal in Uganda's political history given the then declining popularity of Museveni and the increasing opposition to it. However, both before and after the elections, there was heavy deployment of security forces to prevent the outbreak of protest. Unlike the 2011 election, of which huge expenditures by the ruling party became emblematic, the 2016 election was marked more by violence. The torture, kidnap, beatings, and intimidation of opposition supporters during the campaigns became normalised by the government, despite the negative publicity they brought it. By the time of the polls, it had recruited 1.6 million civilian vigilantes across the country to play the suspicious role of "crime preventers" during the elections (Stewart, 2016). Key opposition leaders were routinely placed under house arrest and social media platforms were temporarily blocked during the voting days (Duggan, 2016).

It seems that for the NRM, the cost of political repression was far more tolerable than the risk of an uprising. Faced with a choice between reform of the state to appease the restless masses and continued clampdowns to suppress them, it chose the latter. Thus, although Walk-to-Work had as its goal the reform of the state – and ultimately it's overhaul through revolution – the government's heavy-handed response heralded a further closing of political space. For the opposition, while Walk-to-Work became etched in memory as an enduring symbol of the people's ability to check the government's excesses, in practice the new securitised context made it much harder to organise.

It is this paradox that eventually characterised the government's and opposition's response to the rise of popular musician-turned-legislator, Robert Kyagulanyi Sentamu, (better known as Bobi Wine). By the end of the 2016 elections the NRM was ready to nip any potential revolution in the bud; columns of soldiers could frequently be seen patrolling the streets of Kampala city and various major

towns across the country, and loud, low-flying military choppers were also a frequent sight in the skies. The mood among opposition supporters was defined by anger and apathy, and there seemed to be a readiness to take to the streets at the slightest provocation by the government. There was mutual suspicion on both sides of the political spectrum.

Bobi Wine and the resurgence of protest politics

Bobi Wine's break onto Uganda's political scene in 2017 was largely enabled by this context. His sudden appeal lay not so much in his announcement that he would run against Museveni in the then forthcoming 2021 elections. Rather, it lay in the fact that he echoed the old sentiment, first heard in the aftermath of Walk-to-Work, that revolution was the surest path to a post-Museveni future. In his slogan, "People power, our power", opposition supporters heard a sentiment they were familiar with – but which now was packaged in more attractive ways. A popular musician had come to embody the long-running aspiration for change. Moreover, unlike veteran opposition leader Kizza Besigye, he was never historically part of the NRM ruling class that was loathed by many in opposition circles. Further still, at 36, he was much younger than the then 62-year-old Besigye, and also closer to 30, the average age of most Ugandans at the time. His success story of rising from the poverty of the ghetto to fame and wealth through his musical talent was the adoration of Uganda's poor and unemployed youths. But most importantly, his frequent insinuations that if the NRM rigged the next election it could be forced out of power by the people freshly enthused many an opposition supporter. For instance, appearing on an interview with Al Jazeera, Bobi Wine asserted;

> If president Museveni tries to rig the [2021] election like he has been doing then the people of Uganda will rise up and they will stop it…It is worth it to fight for freedom even to the point of death. I've said it before and I will say it again that we shall continue to fight, legally and constitutionally, for our freedom and if need be, we shall die fighting for our freedom.
>
> (Al Jazeera, 2019)

Similarly, in Bobi Wine's People Power movement the NRM recognised a nemesis it was familiar with, albeit one in new clothes. The government had worked hard to crush dissent after Walk-to-Work and put in place various measures to prevent the outbreak for a similar protest movement in the subsequent years. In many ways, however, the new People Power movement looked like a resurgence of the earlier Walk-to-Work movement. Bobi Wine's vision of a non-partisan coalition of ordinary Ugandans that would take charge of the country from what he called the clutches of military rule sounded like a rallying cry for revolution and echoed the earlier sentiments by the A4C in 2011. Moreover, to the NRM's old guard, Bobi Wine's People Power brought back memories of the similarly named movement that toppled Ferdinand Marcos' government in the Philippines in the

mid-1980s, let alone the popular revolutions that had recently swept many autocratic governments in North Africa out of power since 2011.

It was this growing spectre of revolution that informed the NRM's even more heavy-handed response to Bobi Wine than to Besigye. The latter had operated partly within the confines of his FDC party, and thus partly – albeit unwittingly – legitimated the shaky multi-party system instituted by the NRM in 2005. But Bobi Wine, in the early stages of his activism, was critical even of opposition parties for apparently reinforcing the *status quo* and seemed bent on working outside the formal multiparty system, which he saw as a façade, to trigger radical systemic change.

Therefore, the state-orchestrated violence, mass arrest of opposition activists, internet shutdowns, media crackdowns, kidnaps, and murders that greeted the People Power movement reflected the kind of threat it posed to the *status quo*, but also the NRM's determination to contain the politics of the street that had been established by the earlier Walk-to-Work movement and which seemed to have made a surprising come-back.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to advance a two-fold argument to understand the emergence and impact of the Walk-to-Work movement. It has argued that, first, political opportunity structures entailing strong public support for the protests and strategic alliances between opposition parties and between them and civic groups were instrumental in organising the protests. Second, activists employed strategies that amplified the demands of the protesters, linked their diverse grievances – such as high cost of living, corruption, sub-standard elections, and authoritarianism – and transformed the ways in which opposition and protest politics was understood in the country. These two elements elicited broad popular participation in the Walk-to-Work movement and produced an unprecedented threat to the NRM's power.

From 2011, therefore, it became much harder for the opposition to organise. The democratic possibilities that had been signalled by the Walk-to-Work movement emboldened the opposition, but they also attracted greater political repression from the state and constrained the room for the organisation of similar protest movements in subsequent years.

Nonetheless, the progressive effects of the Walk-to-Work movement were remarkable; although it prompted the NRM to close the space for future movements of its kind, it also unmasked the regime's authoritarian character and resulted in more popular demands for accountability. It inspired a new wave of activism which has frequently and increasingly rattled the ruling NRM over the past decade and led to a more assertive population, as illustrated by the rise of the People Power Movement in 2017. Besides, the spectre of protest continues to act as a check on government power in the absence of strong civil society or credible political institutions to perform the role.

The case of Uganda's Walk-to-Work is interesting as it reveals the long-lasting impact of short-lived political events. It also reveals the importance of coalitions

(between different social groups and social classes) for the emergence of protest. However, as in other cases such as Congo or Angola, it also reveals the limited transformative impact of protest in authoritarian settings – at least at the political system/institution level.

This study has offered two contributions. Firstly, it has highlighted the role that political opportunity structures – the alliances between opposition parties and between them and civic groups, as well as the positive public opinion of the protests – can play in the emergence and success of protest movements. Secondly, it has also underlined how framing strategies – such as the amplification of popular grievances, the connection of diverse frames, and the transformation of understandings of opposition and protest politics – aids popular protests.

Future studies should try to explore the determinants of the durability of the alliances between opposition and civic groups and what impact this has on their capacity to challenge authoritarianism through protest in the long-term. There is also need to examine, more extensively, what drives the various regime responses – whether reform or further autocratisation – when they face protest or the threat of protest. The impact of securitisation by authoritarian regimes on protest movements also deserves more attention in order to understand what determines whether the suppression of protest movements results either in their retreat and extinction or inspires their adaptability, resilience, and resurgence.

Note

1. Kizza Besigye, former FDC party president; Mugisha Muntu, former FDC party president; Proscovia Salaam-Musumba, FDC Vice Chairperson and former FDC legislator; Patrick Oboi Amuriat, incumbent FDC president; Isaac Elakuna, FDC activist and speaker, Soroti municipality; Waiswa Latif Maido, FDC activist; Gaaki Kigambo, journalist; Yahya Sseremba, researcher; John Mastaki, former NRM chairperson Kasese district.

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11 ANATOMIES OF PROTEST AND THE TRAJECTORIES OF THE ACTORS AT PLAY

ETHIOPIA 2015–2018

Alexandra M. Dias and Yared Debebe Yetena

Introduction

Africa has been undergoing a sizeable wave of protests in recent years (Mateo and Erro, 2020), which in many ways diverges from the hitherto insurgent movements with Marxist-Leninist leanings from the prior revolutionary waves (Bahru, 2014). To start with the contexts, the motivations, the strategies, and the outcomes vary widely (Larmer, 2010; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Sanches 2022). Movements emerge out of material/economic issues, but also of deep dissatisfaction with the political order (Ibid.). Second, since the "Arab Spring", there has been a shift towards the "virtual" dimension of protests with research highlighting the increasing role of information and communication technology (ICT) and social media on protests events both online and offline (Etzo and Collander, 2010; Stepanova, 2011; Wolfsfeld, Segev and Sheafer, 2013). Indeed, in this new internet era the centre of political action is transferred from and through the social media to the streets, and protests which are local/national at their origin acquire global projection.

Ethiopia, our focus here, has been experiencing unprecedented protest levels since 2015, with varying motivations and outcomes. As much as the deep-seated grievances towards the Tigray People's Liberation Front/Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF/EPRDF) regime, the unfolding of handy political opportunities feed into a national outbreak of mass protests first in Oromia, later spread to Amhara and other ethno-linguistic regions.

The 2015 protests are part of a string events that have been ongoing since the early 2010s, when the authoritarian nature of the regime started to being exposed through cyber-activism, satellite radio, and television broadcasts. In 2014 after the publication of Addis Ababa City Expansion Master Plan (Addis Ababa Master Plan) which planned to evict Oromo farmers to create a new economic zone in the Oromia region, led to unprecedented youth protests (i.e. Qeerroo) that engulfed all of Oromia in 2015 and beyond (Pinaud and Raleigh, 2017). In 2016 the Amhara youth (i.e. Fano) joined the Oromo protest following the arrest of several members of the Welkait Identity Restoration Committee, and the attempted arrest of the Committee's chairperson without a court order (John, 2021). The protesters demanded for Welkait self-determination, the recognition

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of the identity of indigenous Amhara people from Welkait as Amhara, the release of political prisoners, further democratisation, and equal sharing of rights and economic benefits (John, 2021).

As the nation-wide protests grew, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn (in power between 2012 and 2018) decided to resign, following a collective decision of the EPRDF politburo. This brought Abiy Ahmed (alias Team Lemma) to power in 2018 in an internal reform within the ruling EPRDF. At the time, these moves raised hopes of democratic transition, and long-term peace. It is, therefore, the purpose of this chapter to explore the outbreak of protest in Ethiopia focusing on the protests held in Ethiopia between 2015 and 2018 by drawing theoretical underpinnings from political opportunity structure approaches.

Protests in Ethiopia need to be understood within the framework of contested interpretations of state formation and nation building and the role that ethnicity has had in it (see Gudina, 2003; Messay, 2008; Bahru, 2014). Which means context really matters to understand how grievances have formed and crystallised over time. This chapter adds to this discussion by arguing that three political opportunity structures – the death of Meles Zenawi which led to divisions within the incumbent party, the alliance between Qeerroo and Fano groups, and the easy access to digital activism platforms – help explain the rise, intensity, strategies, and outcomes of protest in Ethiopia. In fact, while protests succeeded in bringing about leadership change and further democratic reforms in 2018, they did not prevent authoritarianism and relapse into conflict. In addition, the state response was brutal. To substantiate our arguments, we build on qualitative material collected during field work through semi-structured interviews, newspapers, and reports, in particular Gondar, Bahir Dar, and Addis Ababa.

This chapter contributes to the literature on protest in Africa in several ways. First, internet shutdowns have become a go to source to repress activism in authoritarian countries in Africa. However, a nascent literature shows that, activists fight back and find innovative ways to bypass internet shutdowns (Rydzak et al., 2020; Freyburg and Garbe, 2018). In Ethiopia "the social media shutdown in December 2017, targeting primarily the Amhara and Oromia regions amid ethnic tensions, completely failed to hinder the patterns of protest that led up to it" (Rydzak et al., 2020, p. 4273). Second, by focusing on the territorial dimension we were able to understand how a single event may vary across space and how forms of coalition between different groups emerge. Finally, Ethiopia is a relevant case to understand the rise and outcome of protest in inhospitable environments, that is authoritarian, and conflict societies.

This chapter starts by examining the role of political opportunities in political protest and by setting the framework for the analysis of the Ethiopian case. It then presents an historical overview of protest in the country. The following section depicts the actors at play in the 2015–2018 cycle of protests before discussing how political opportunities shaped mobilisation strategies and the political outcomes. Finally, the conclusion discusses the main findings and raises implications for further research.

Political opportunity structures and protest in authoritarian settings

The political opportunity approach focuses on how activists perceive and take advantage of breaches in the social, political, and discursive landscape to achieve their political goals (Meyer, 2004b; Tarrow, 2011; Sanches, 2022). There is no consensual list of POS variables, Tarrow (2011, pp. 164–165) for instance highlights access to participation for new actors; evidence of political realignment within the polity; availability of influential allies; and emerging splits within the elite, while Kitschelt (1986) and Jenkins (1995) look at political institutional variables such as openness or closeness in systems of government. In places where systems are closed, movements are likely to adopt confrontational, disruptive strategies orchestrated outside established policy channels (see also Almeida, 2003).

In authoritarian settings, the protests could be engendered through informal and formal organisational structures, i.e. sympathetic institutions, associational networks, and civic organisations (McCarthy, 1996). These organisations link previously unconnected collectivities, exchange resources and information, and ultimately launch protest campaigns (Minkoff, 1997; McAdam, 1999). Confrontational strategies of protest movements in authoritarian settings also emerge for the need to resist the state, i.e. repression and erosion of rights (Goldstone and Tilly, 2001; Goldstone, 2001). In this case, activists manipulate such threats as an opportunity to mobilise the mass through discrediting the decadence and heinous nature of the government. A threat-induced collective action will follow in such contexts (Almeida et al., 2022). According to Tilly (1978, pp. 134–135) "Assuming equal probabilities of occurrence, a given amount of threat tends to generate more collective action than the 'same' amount of opportunity".

However, the rule of thumb to explain the nexus of protest and authoritarian regimes is that political opportunity seems to be less likely to exist. Instead, economic grievances, resource mobilisation and collective identity seem to have a stronger role in the outbreak of protests (Snow, 2013; Caren, Gaby, and Herrold, 2017). Yet scholars have shown that political opportunity such as elite competition, access to internet, alliance among diverse groups, and coupled with existing threats facilitates the emergence, development, and outcome of protest movements (Tarrow, 2011).

In this regard, protests have become ubiquitous in the most complicated settings in Africa. In places like Uganda, Sudan, or Eswatini ordinary citizens have gone to the streets to demand for further political/democratic reforms (Hassanain, 2020; Curtice and Behlendorf, 2021; Mutyaba 2022, Mthembu, 2022). Indeed, it is striking to observe that it is precisely in the most authoritarian countries that protest tends to be more recurrent. Indeed, in authoritarian settings protesters face higher levels of repression, media is usually controlled by the state, and access to internet is often restricted or cancelled. Despite facing harsher regimes, protesters have found resources and opportunities to engage in collective action. Almeida, Sá and Faria (2022) show that political transfers at the executive level can be a relevant opportunity for collective action in authoritarian post-conflict

countries. The new President elected in 2017 has experienced far more protest than its predecessor due to its more open and seemingly democratic rhetoric, but also because he largely failed on his reformist agenda. In the Democratic Republic Congo and in Mozambique international actors provided crucial support for local activists' demands. In the former, this happened in the context of the struggle against President Joseph Kabila third-term bid (Polet, 2022) and in the latter against the implementation of the agricultural program ProSavana which if implemented would have dire impacts on the rural communities of the North of Mozambique (Bussoti and Nhaueleque, 2022). The studies also seem to suggest that actors, resources, networks, and framing strategies also matter to explain the outcome and transformative impact of protest across different types of regimes (Jenkins, 1995; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, 1996; Tarrow, 2011).

Given this debate our analysis of the protest in Ethiopia in the 2015–2018 periods will focus on the political opportunities that may have helped boost protesters' claims. We also argue that the death of Meles Zenawi, and the subsequent vacuum of power and intra-party fighting, the access to digital activism platforms, and inter-ethnic synchronisation of the Amhara and Oromo shaped the repertoires of collective action and fierce anti-government resistance. Our analysis gives support to these claims but also shows that political opportunities may not be sufficient conditions for change. Indeed, after initial hopes of democratic opening the regime backslided to authoritarianism and political conflict.

Protest and resistance in Ethiopia: An historical perspective

Protest and resistance to the central government in Ethiopia is not a new phenomenon (Crummey, 1986; Bahru, 2014). In the twentieth century alone assemblage of the First Wayane Rebellion of the early 1940s, the Gojjam Peasant Uprising and the Bale Peasant Revolt of the 1960s challenged Haile Selassie I regime (Tareke, 1991). What is more, the celebrated Ethiopia Students Movement (ESM) of the 1960s and 1970s and the 1974 Revolution ended the longest serving and last Solomonic King of Ethiopia (Keller, 2014). Indeed, the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I (1930–1974) was in line of continuity with his predecessor's pursuit of the modernisation of the state encompassing the reigns of Tewodros II (1855–1868), Yohannes (1872–1889), and Menelik II (1889–1913). Central to the students' activism based on their Marxist-Leninist ideology were two critical questions that led to the demise of the imperial state: land and the national question (Balsvik, 1985; Bahru, 2014). In 1965 the group that came to be known as the student movement engaged in a mass demonstration before parliament motivated by demands for democratic and land reforms (Keller, 2014, p. 69). The 1974 revolution brought the *Derg* (Geez for Committee), low ranked soldiers, to power. The *Derg* brought some radical and progressive changes like nationalising and redistributing rural and urban land and the reorganisation of political and administrative authority (Messay, 2008; Markakis, 2011).

The accession of the *Derg* continued to face, however since the beginning, armed insurrection from insurgent movements such as Eritrea People's Liberation

Front (EPLF), the ethno-nationalist Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). Multi-national political organisations such as Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party (EPRP) also challenged the *Derg's* rule. The aforementioned insurgency movements eventually led to the downfall of the *Derg* in 1991. This marked the crackdown of the Military Rule for ethnic based social engineering and state-building that in practice was still based on a strong centralist and authoritarian policy. This phase heralded the beginning of another political project of state building put in place by the Transitional Government (1991–1994) which led to the creation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) from 1995 onwards based on ideals of a new revolutionary democracy. Each time, the violent overthrow of regimes, both of Haile Selassie's Imperial state from 1930–1974 and the *Derg's* revolutionary state from 1974–1991 costed many lives and, interestingly enough, was preceded by a cycle of protests (Crummey, 1986; Gilkes, 1975; Clapham, 1990).

The EPRDF's government publicly pledged its commitment to three radical reform objectives: first the decentralisation of the state; second, the democratisation of politics; and third, the liberalisation of the economy (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003). The designers of this new model of social engineering claimed that "they have found a formula to achieve ethnic and regional autonomy, while maintaining the state as a political unit" (Alem, 2003, p. 2). However, the TPLF/EPRDF regime was characterised by "divide and rule" tactics, one party dictatorship in the shadow of a dominant party system; and authoritarianism in all domains especially after the 2005 national elections. The dominant TPLF ruled Ethiopia with an iron fist with the baking of surrogate political parties such as the Oromo People's Democratic Party (OPDO) founded in 1988 and with the renaming of the multi-ethnic party Ethiopia People's Democratic Movement (EPDM) to Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM) in 1993 (Gudina, 2003; Semahagn, 2016). Competitive political parties were effectively ousted and paralyzed during the transitional period (1991–1994) namely: the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and All Amhara People's Organization (AAPO) and the independent or opposition party elected representatives were not accepted. After the 2000 national elections these opposition candidates and their representatives were not only side-lined but also persecuted and intimidated (Abbink, 2005, p. 181). The post-1991 Ethiopian political landscape was characterised by a hesitant democratisation experiment in the run up to the 2005 national elections. In its aftermath the EPRDF/TPLF made sure to bring it to an end and replace it with the well-known model of contemporary competitive authoritarianism (Pinto, 2021, p. 52; Levitsky and Way, 2010) where political parties are not allowed to compete at all, and the parliament is not the real legislative body. In these cases, the reconsolidation of authoritarianism is the expected follow up to the preceding limited phase of democratisation. The Oromo and Amhara (collectively constituting more than 60% of the Ethiopian population) were either represented by a surrogate party or entirely left without due representation in the new political dispensation. With the ushering of the ethnic-based federal model and the euphoria of hope in settling the "century old" oppression of nations, nationalities and peoples; the

grievances (i.e. freedom and self-determination) of the Oromo towards the central government remained unaddressed. In the case of the Amhara, in contrast, "a burden of history" (Markakis, 2018) translated in the lack of representation in the Peace and Democracy Conference (during which the framework of the 1995 FDRE's Constitution was laid out) (Admasu, 2010); and through ongoing societal security threats posed by the TPLF anti-Amhara policy based on the recognition of ethnic traditions in opposition to past Amhara domination and suppression (Abbink, 1995, p. 176).

The TPLF/EPRDF faced three major anti-government mass protests (1991–2018): the post-2005 election protest (Arriola and Lyons, 2016); the 2011 Ethiopian Muslims protest (Awalia Mission Schools) (Omar, 2020); and the youth protest (2015–2018). The 2005 election was praised as the most democratic elections Ethiopians ever witnessed until the announcement of the election results; which led to major mass protests in the capital and other major towns (Messay, 2008; Arriola and Lyons, 2016). Like its predecessors, the TPLF/EPRDF managed the resulting tensions through some combination of coercion and political dexterity, in devising formulae through which the fundamental divisions of an enormously varied society could be held in some kind of check (Clapham, 2009). It worked to suppress and prevent future mass dissidents through tightening the intelligence, incarcerating prominent opposition political party leaders, and passing restrictive laws: the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009 and the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009. In addition, the TPLF/EPRDF dismissed protesters to use Meyer expression as "dysfunctional, irrational, and inherently undesirable". The 2011 Ethiopian Muslims Protests, in turn, were an organised social media protest called through the "Let our Voices be Heard" social media platform. This was the first experience of digital activism in Ethiopia and was created to denounce Majlis's wrongdoing and expose the government's brutal responses to the Muslim questions (Omar, 2020). It was active from 2011 to 2015. Finally, the youth protest (2015–2018), our main focus here, had a strong anti-regime/government agenda, and united actors from different geographic and ethnic origins. The following section sheds light on the origins, processes, and outcomes of these protests, and analyses how political opportunities shaped these different stages.

Political opportunity structures and the outbreak of the youth protest in Ethiopia (2015–2018)

Two outstanding events set the precedent to the 2015 youth protest even if they did not result in mass scale demonstrations. The first was, Yenesew Gebre's (schoolteacher and human rights activist) self-immolation outside a public meeting hall protesting against the detention of young suspects for fifteen days devoid of their right to bail. As mobilisation depends on informational resources, the state suppression and disinformation prevented the incident from causing havoc. The second event was created from the Ethiopian Diaspora. It was in May 2012

at the Food Security G8 Summit in Washington, D.C.; Prime Minister Meles Zenawi encountered a strong condemnation and humiliation from an Ethiopian journalist in the diaspora, Abebe Gelaw. Abebe shouted out:

> Meles Zenawi is a dictator! Meles Zenawi is a dictator! Free Eskinder Nega! Free Political Prisoners! You are a dictator. You are committing crimes against humanity. Food is nothing without freedom! Meles has committed crimes against humanity! We Need Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

The TPLF/EPRDF as a "competitive authoritarian" (Levitsky and Way, 2010) effectively banned the media, co-opted opposition political parties and used subtle forms of persecution to keep critics and opponents at bay. On top of this state of affairs, economic grievances, erosion of rights, and state repression (discussed in some detail in the following section) fuelled popular discontent. Facing a "closed and strong" regime the anti-government movements in Ethiopia adopted what Kitschelt, (1986, p. 66) calls "confrontational, disruptive strategies orchestrated outside established policy channels".

The youth protest in Oromia (Queerroo) and Amhara (Fano), adopted a combination of both peaceful and confrontational strategies of protesting. Widely social media campaigns, marching, sit-ins, stay home, boycott, vandalism, and other strategies were used to express their dissent. The constellation of grievances and the government's repressive policy towards people's legitimate quests and peaceful demonstrations (in the beginning) ended up with the stepping down of the weak Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn; six years (2012–2018) after he had become the successor to the late strongman at the helm of the state. This brought Abiy Ahmed, i.e. "the reformer" to power in 2018. Reforming steps had been taken to address the central questions of the protesters, pardoned political prisoners, rapprochement with Eritrea, easing of restrictions on civil and political liberties (Verjee and Knopf, 2019). Under Abiy Ahmed's leadership the TPLF would be increasingly side-lined and the EPRDF was transformed in November 2018 into the Prosperity Party. A Higher official of one of the ruling coalition's partners, the Amhara Prosperity Party (APP), pointed out; "TPLF/EPRDF vehemently believed Ethiopians were not ready to embrace and live in democracy. The introduction of democratic rule in Ethiopia is believed to augment destructive outcomes" (Author's own interview).

To better understand the emergence of youth protests, the following section explores three relevant political opportunities.

Leadership vacuum and intra-elite competition

On 21 August 2012, the longest serving Prime Minister Meles Zenawi died. The party lost a "big man" that maintained its cohesion and his death left a wide shoe to fill. The unexpected death of Prime Minister Meles engendered intra-elite competition on who should inherit his legacy. After a thorough deliberation,

the deputy Prime Minister Hailemariam was elected as Primer of Ethiopia, which for Mulugeta (2012, p. 2) marked;

> … the dangers of a state built around one man, but he also leaves behind a formidable political machine. For Hailemariam the challenge is whether and how he can manage the machine. Members of competing elites may fight for control of this machine and ethnic movements on the periphery could be emboldened to exploit a perceived power vacuum.

The transition from a strong Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, to a weaker one, Hailemariam Desalegn changed the ruling party's leadership style – from a one-man rule to a collective leadership characterised by greater consultation and consensus building. As a result, power was de-centred and dispersed between three deputy prime ministers along ethnic lines. However, collective leadership came with additional challenges to the ruling party's maintenance on power, leading to elite competition and inefficiency in the exercise of power (Rift Valley Institute, 2013). In due course the national intelligence and military would rise as key political players and began to challenge the Prime Minister. Tamrat Gebregiorgis, founding managing editor of the largest English weekly in Ethiopia, Addis Fortune, in a press briefing defiantly asked the Prime Minister: "Can you tell me who is in charge in the government?" (quoted in Lefort, 2014, par. 1).

The de-centring of power opened institutional access, fostered a rift between allies within the EPRDF's central committee and explains the unfolding challenge to the dominant TPLF. The discord was between the OPDO and ANDM – best known as Team Lemma – against the dominant TPLF. The competition within the incumbent party created space for the emergence of anti-government protests in Oromia and Amhara.

According to Piven and Cloward (2012) shifts in political alignments and heightened conflicts during times of crisis make dissenting elites more willing to support challenger movements. In this regard, Team Lemma has claimed its support to the Qeerroo and Fano protests since the beginning. Indeed, granting more freedom to protest with less tight security presence from the Amhara and Oromia regional government partly illustrates Team Lemma's support for the challenging youth movement. This line of interpretation was rejected by some analysts (Zekarias, 2019) that characterised instead as an act of hijacking the youth protest to build the legitimacy of a remnant partner in the TPLF/EPRDF ruling coalition.

Internet access and digital activism

In the social movement's literature, the nexus between digital activism and protests is construed either in terms of cyber-pessimism (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2011) and/or cyber-optimism (Diamond, 2010; Shirky, 2011). In the Ethiopian case, with limited access to the internet, through the years of the 2010s digital activism has been effectively used by the activists and protestors alike to mobilise

resources, disseminate strategies, recruit members, and express dissent through social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs.

Unlike the traditional media (TV and Radio) broadcasts such as Ethiopia Satellite Television (ESAT), Oromo Media Network (OMN), Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle (DW), and others exposed the authoritarian nature of the regime and forged an alternative to the state-run media; the "liberation" media (Diamond, 2010) offered a versatile platform through digital anonymity to mobilise protests along ethno-linguistic lines. Activists living abroad widely used social media to set strategies and mobilise the youth in the anti-government protest. In this regard, Jawar Mohammed, a prominent Oromo activist with more than one million followers, and Bete-Amhara (House of Amhara) an Amhara Facebook page, to mention a few, played a paramount role in fundraising, mobilising, and organising rallies, bed-ins and boycotts (Workneh, 2021).

In addition to resource mobilisation, Twitter and Facebook hashtag #OromoProtest, #AmharaResistance, #OroMara campaigns to expressing dissent were widely employed to exert pressure on the regime. However, since the outbreak of the protest, the virtual dimension of protest was deterred due to total communications' lockdown, including mobiles' coverage and internet access in different parts of the country since July 2016 to quell tensions of anti-government protests. Above all the declaration of a state of emergency on 9 October 2016 (lasted for 10 months) imposed restrictions on telecommunications, media, and Internet shutdowns along with travel restrictions on diplomats and a dusk-to-dawn curfew (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Graffiti and printed flyers like the old days of the ESM (1960–1970s) were used to mobilise and disseminate information on the dates of protest events especially stay at home protests in major towns such as Gondar, Bahir Dar, Ambo, Jimma, among others.

The unprecedented Oromo-Amhara alliance

Since the accession of TPLF/EPRDF to power, an institutional caricature of enmity has been implanted among the Amhara and Oromo. The official narrative propagates that they are historically arch enemies, have unreconciled interests, and are destined to disagree. However, the protest held in Gondar (city in Amhara) has broken the enmity narrative through voicing "the blood of Oromo is ours too" and "free Bekelle Gerba" (prominent Oromo politician). The birth of the "OroMara" (abbreviation for Oromo and Amhara) movement takes its genesis from the Gondar protest. The solidarity between the once dubbed as "rival ethnic groups" further strengthened in the social media (Twitter and Facebook) activism, #OroMara.

To show their solidarity the Amhara joined the Oromo Irreechaa (thanks giving) celebration of 5 October 2016 in Bishoftu. The festive, however, left 55 people dead due to the security crackdown and ensuing stampede. On 9 October 2016 a six-month nation-wide state of emergency was announced. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said in a televised address: "We put our citizens' safety first. Besides, we want to put an end to the damage that is being carried out

against infrastructure projects, education institutions, health centres, administration and justice buildings" (BBC, 2016).

The common enemy, TPLF/EPRDF, sustained the OroMara coalition. The brotherhood continued to be celebrated particularly during the formal visit from the presidents of Oromia Region and Amhara Region; who concentrated the meetings on strengthening the relationship of the two ethnic groups in Ambo and Bahir Dar, the capitals of the two Region's States respectively (see Tezera, 2021). However, as time went by the OroMara coalition faded away. This begs a question on "why it faded away?"

The OroMara devised the coming of "Team Lemma" to power. Lemmea Megersa and Gedu Andargachew were behind the #OroMara and later unveiled they were backing the digital activism. The internal party struggle between TPLF versus ANDM and OPDO also contributed to quell the TPLF hegemony. The 2017 "deep renewal" of the TPLF/EPRDF brought individuals from the disgruntled ethnic groups to ministerial positions, albeit no policy, and ideological change was made (van der Beken, 2018).

Moreover, it goes without mentioning, the unprecedented rise and support of "Team Lemma" to the youth resistance and protest in Amhara and Oromia appears as more tactical than strategic. The youth movements never planned and had foreseen what kind of political scenario would prevail in the aftermath of ousting the TPLF/EPRDF. The members of "Team Lemma" as higher officials of the ruling party had done despicable acts in terms of corruption (with a lavish lifestyle) and the incarceration of youth protesters.

The OroMara movement, though despised by the TPLF as an "unholy alliance", transcended the ethnic arch-rival discourse seeded during the Italian colonial rule and institutionalised in the ethnic federal Ethiopia of post-1991. However, the question of Addis Ababa, the attitude of "our turn to rule" from the Oromos, and the subsequent ethnic-based attacks to the Amhara living in Oromia faded away the momentum of the OroMara.

The course and actors at play

The actors and dynamics of the protest that flared up between 2015 and 2018 were multifaceted. The protests indulged the different age groups in Amhara and Oromia, the diaspora, political parties and others. The youth were the major groups at the centre of every protest undertaken in various towns and cities of the two regions, i.e. Qeerroo (Oromia) and Fano (Amhara). Collective identity played as an organising or mobilising cause of the protest. The contagious nature of the protest, the common enemy, and shared grievances against the TPLF/EPRDF fostered inter-ethnic cooperation.

Qeerroo: Youth in protest

Qeerroo (Oromiffa) designates a young bachelor, but according to Gardner (2018) it has acquired broader connotations, symbolising the Oromo movement. For

Mosisa, (2020) the origins of Qeerroo protest movement trace back to the establishment in April 2011 of the Qeerroo Bilisummaa Oromoo; an Oromo national Youth Network movement for Oromo Freedom and Democracy[1], while for Østebø (2020) it "emerged as a spontaneous grassroots social movement without any formal structures". Qeerroo's fame and influence came to the fore and was remarked in the political scene after the intermittent major protests of 2014–2015 incited by the publication of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, but also deep-seated "grievances over maladministration, corruption and human rights abuses, the protesters soon called for the overthrow of the government" (Østebø and Tronvoll, 2020, p. 6).

In the beginning, Qeerroo protests were commenced by high school students; later university students joined the dissident and engulfed the Oromia Regional State. The protesting strategies consisted of a combination of peaceful demonstrations (though "illegal") and violent protesting that involved vandalism. The tempo of the protest had been subjected to the security or police or the notorious Agazi Commando's countermeasures against the protesting youth. The repression succeeded in temporarily quelling the protest, albeit facilitated in harnessing mass support and sympathy for the Qeerroo.

To be precise, the forms of protesting included bed-in, strikes, chanting, blockade, boycott, vandalism. Towns such as Ambo, Jimma, Nekemete, Shashemene, Ciro, subsequently held protests in a coordinated manner. The protests were called and mobilised through social media (such as Facebook), short mail service (SMS) during internet blackouts, radio, and TV Channels (such as Oromia Media Network) (Worku, 2020). The TPLF/EPRDF labelled the Qeerroo as a clandestine terrorist group aimed at destabilising the country and controlling local administration. With al-shabab – Arabic for youth, next door, Qeerroo has been equated with the Somali counterpart. Qeerroo protest faced heavy handed suppression from the government resulting in death, mass arrest, physical assaults, and other authoritarian responses.

Fano resistance

An attempt to arrest a member of the Welkait Identity Committee, veteran Colonel Demeke Zewdu, in 12 July 2016 sparked the subsequent protests in Gondar, Bahir Dar, and other towns of the Amhara Regional State. The centre of the protest was the question of Welkait and the people's right to identify themselves as Amhara. However, for different reasons during the war against the *Derg* regime the TPLF insurgent movement used this area as an outlet to Sudan and eventually declared it as part of Tigray in the front's 1975 Manifesto. In the post-1991 Ethiopia, the people, and the territory of this area were forcefully annexed and administratively demarcated into the Tigray Regional State.

The creation of this Committee was a response to low intensity rivalry and conflicts between the Amhara and Tigray regions over the domestic border problems created with the new ethnic-based Federal model and the contested reconfiguration of domestic boundaries (Clapham, 1990, p. 272). When the EPRDF/TPLF came to power, the implementation of its new political project of

state, and nation-building aimed at redrawing domestic boundaries along ethno-linguistic lines. In the previous political projects of state-building Amhara as a region never existed. Before the administrative reform of 1987 the localities under dispute were either part of Gondar or Wollo and those living in the two districts incorporated in 1995 in Tigray Regional state were predominantly home to Amharic speakers as their first language (Markakis, 2021, p. 33). Tigray in order to guarantee external access incorporated parts of Northern Gondar and Wag in Northern Wollo (Clapham, 1990, p. 211). The redrawing of domestic boundaries in this case was justified on the basis of the argument that these districts had been under Tigray's administration in the 1940s, however, the majority of historians have not confirmed this claim.

On the opposing line of the argument, a map of TPLF's controlled areas during the civil war placed Welkait from Gondar and both Raya Azebo and Raya Kobo from Wollo within the TPLF-administered realm. Markakis (1987, p. 249) on his turn followed a slightly different line on a map of Tigray's administered areas during the civil war against the *Derg* placing Welkait and only Raya Azebo within TPLF administered areas. This is a matter of guaranteeing access to critical resources as land but more importantly under the new ethnic federal dispensation, put in place since 1995, became a matter of identity. Raya Azebo is home to predominantly Tigrinya-speaking groups and Raya Kobo is home to predominantly Amharic-speaking groups however those who identify their homeland as Raya tend to identify with the Ethiopian state and under the new dispensation with the Amhara Regional state and not with the Tigray Regional State as determined by the ruling party.

Since the herald of the TPLF/EPRDF era, the Amhara raised a persistent quest for representation in the federal government, curbing grave societal insecurities, the question of identity, democracy, and justice in different realms. The establishment of the All Amhara People's Organisation and the endeavour made to voice these questions remained in vain leading to the killing of the President of the party, Professor Asrat Woldiyes. The constellation of these collective grievances ignited the protests.

The Gondar protest unfolded a year late to the Qeerroo protest in Oromia. Activists and scholars in the Diaspora, according to Messay (2016) encouraged the Amhara to join the Oromo protest to once and for all end the TPLF/EPRDF authoritarian regime. Although the ongoing armed resistance to free Welkait in Gondar province had been waged early, the Fano resistance was ripened and only needed the 11 July incident to join the Qeerroo protest. Initially more spontaneous the Fano matured through the establishment of various institutions such as the Fano Association in Gondar, the Amhara Youth Association, and the Amhara Students Association. Further, the Diaspora's financial support for the Fano proved critical in fulfilling the necessary logistics.

The youth were the primary protestors in Amhara, Oromia and other places. However, Fano does not mean "youth" in a literal sense, rather it refers to a warrior who defends the sovereignty of his country (Ethiopia). Its history is traced back to the patriots who strongly fought the Italian colonial occupation (1935–1941) and the radicalisation of the student's movement appeal to the idea of Fano – freedom

fighter. The Amhara resistance, then, exhibits in a way youth militancy. The Head of the Central Gondar Zone Security Office (2020) remarked, "The culture of owning arms and the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) smuggling in Ethio-Sudan frontier contributed to Fano's militancy". However, during an interview, a member of Fano recalled "the TPLF/EPRDF strategy of downplaying an organized armed resistance such as that of the Fano, particularly in North Gondar of the Amhara region, classifying it as an act of banditry".

The modalities of Amhara resistance, in addition to the aforementioned, expressed in peaceful demonstration, rallies, boycotting party affiliated company products (such as Dashen Beer), bed-ins, vandalism (destroying and burning local officials house and hotels affiliated to the ruling party), among other. Indeed, the Fano resistance has changed the course of history of Ethiopian politics coupled with the Qeerroo and other youth protests throughout Ethiopia. This is not only in terms of pressuring the incumbent party to look for viable options to stay in power but also exposed the authoritarian and heinous nature of the TPLF/EPRDF regime.

The state repressive response

Protests that unfolded in Oromia and Amhara encountered heavy handed repression and infrequent tolerance. In the face of the widespread protest, the government initially attempted to curb the protesting movement by suspending the Master Plan (which happened in early 2016) and detaining the Chairperson of Welkait Committee to stay in Gondar (Authors' own interview). But the demands transcended the plain triggering factors to the point of regime change, so the youth went on protesting.

The state repressive response changed the course and strategies of protesting. When security forces tightened the space for rally, bed-ins were used as an alternative action for a week or so. In some circumstances, vandalism, or wanton destruction of local government offices and ruling party affiliated companies and individuals' properties were targeted. In addition, more risky strategies have been adopted by the Qeerroo and Fano, costing the lives of thousands of protesters. The 7 August 2016 Bahir Dar and the 7 October 2016 Bishoftu (Debre Zeit) Ireechaa festivity incidents that costed the lives of hundreds of protestors illustrates such risky strategies[2]. This has led to an emotionally charged, year on year, commemoration of the fallen protestors in Amhara and Oromia respectively. These incidents were used by activists "as empirical verifications of the unworthiness of state managers to rule as well as for motivational appeals within organizations and interorganizational units to participate in future protest actions" (Almeida, 2003, p. 353). A better coordinated protest movement that mobilised various resources and reduced risky confrontation with security forces was created in the aftermath of 2016 to 2018.

With the escalation of the protesting movements, the TPLF/EPRDF undertook various remedial measures. First, a State of Emergency was declared two times between 2016 and 2018. This has, however, further restricted civil and political liberties causing more criticism on the regime. Third, "deep renewal" (criticism and self-criticism) was undertaken in the party's central committee to the grass

root level of government that brought new faces to ministerial positions from the disgruntled groups. This measure also failed to achieve the intended outcome. The third measure was an internal reform that elected a new Prime Minister: Abiy Ahmed. The coming of Abiy to power has marked a new beginning in the ruling party's history.

Conclusion

The cycle of protest under analysis in Ethiopia is revealing of the relevant role of contextual factors and political opportunities for understanding protest dynamics. The government intention to implement a policy (the Addis Ababa Master Plan) which would change the configuration of domestic boundaries both of the capital in relation to the Oromia Regional State and of administrative units between the Amhara and Tigray Regional States, triggered fierce and sustained protest, and unexpected political alignments between the protest movements associated with the two largest ethnic groups: Oromo and Amhara. The issues at stake – land, identities, rights, and grievances – echoed claims and unfinished businesses that resurface from time to time in the Ethiopian social and political landscape.

The centrality of the land question and the national question within Ethiopia's social engineering approaches and political projects of state-building is quite illuminating because of its unique trajectory in the African context: apart the Italian period of occupation between 1935–1941 Ethiopia's state trajectory forms part of non-colonial Africa. Ethiopia's difficulty and failure to resolve this dual challenge and the recurrence of protest across eras come as a portent reminder that whenever power is exercised without taking into account local demands and without creating space and opportunities for the peaceful demonstration of dissenting voices (and for the negotiation of conflicting interests) the regime is likely to be overthrown by violent means. This is a unique lesson to draw from non-colonial Africa and from a state where the legal and administrative institutions associated with the European state model did not take root. What is interesting in Ethiopia as the sole case of non-colonial Africa is the longevity of various forms of protest and the engagement of a plurality of social groups throughout different eras.

This cycle of protests in contrast to previous ones had in its origins a deep division within the traditional ruling elite from highland Ethiopia (the Amhara and Tigrayans) and had the differential outcome of leading to a reform within the ruling party that ultimately brought about a significant shift in the loci of power and exercise of authority: the sideling of the dominant party within the ruling coalition and across the various key security state's institutions such as the intelligence and armed forces.

Furthermore, the protests in Oromia and Amhara unfolded in the aftermath of the 2015 election and not before because of the political opportunities related to internal elite discord, combined grievances related to the continuous reconfiguration of administrative boundaries and extended access to internet and social media platforms. In spite of the government's resorting to internet and communications' obstruction and blackouts as a means of quelling dissent the extended access to

internet, even if intermittently, offered alternative venues to mobilise collective action and amplify its significance beyond domestic and international borders; ultimately linking the 2015–2018 cycle of protest in Ethiopia to the transnational cycle protest in Africa and across regions marked by contemporary competitive authoritarianism and other types of authoritarian rule in the twenty-first century.

Extended access to the internet and social media enabled the forging of an alliance between movements that had emerged out of identity and resource-based grievances. Indeed, when we compare the ineffective outcome of collective action in the political crisis a decade earlier in the aftermath of the 2005 elections to the outcome of the 2015–2016 protests, this chapter confirms Meyer's contention that the extent of grievances, the viability of various strategies of influence and the perceived costs and benefits of various alliances all change over time both because of what social movements do and how authorities respond to them (2004a, p. 140). In the 2005 political crisis the claimants of irregularities during the elections missed the opportunity to forge an alliance on the basis of identity and resource-based grievances provoked by state policy, whereas in 2015–2016 these same grievances around state policies not only spurred mobilisation within ethnic-based regions and groups but also across. In the end, the political elite division and lack of a common vision, the cooperation between different groups (Qeerroo and Fano) and the widespread ICT access and digital activism rendered collective action effective in bringing about political reform.

In the aftermath of this research it becomes evident that more detailed and fine grained research needs to be carried on how face-to-face communication, peer-to-peer mobile communication, and social platforms' activism affect cooperative behaviour among and across different groups in different locations (including both the capital and remote/hardship areas) and how these different communication strategies are key to understanding ICT access and digital literacy as a political opportunity approach in face of the widespread authoritarian states' response with internet shutdowns and total communications blackout.

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Notes

1. Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/QeerrooB/ (Accessed: 20 September 2021).
2. See for example: 'Bahir Dar Protest, 7 August 2016' at https://borkena.com/2016/08/07/bahir-dar-protest-august-72016/ (accessed 20 September 2021); '"Fuel on the Fire" Security Force Response to the 2016 Irreecha Cultural Festival' at https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/20/fuel-fire/security-force-response-2016-irreecha-cultural-festival (Accessed: 20 September 2021).

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12 PRO-DEMOCRACY PROTESTS IN THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI 2018–2019

Maxwell Vusumuzi Mthembu

Introduction

Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) is an absolute monarchy, ruled by King Mswati III (1986–current), who took over from his father, King Sobhuza II (1921–1982). Power is vested in the King and influential ruling elite, who have stakes in the perpetuation of a closed and repressive regime that is known for human rights abuses.[1] The actuation of political parties and civil society is severely constrained not only in law (ban from 1973; and 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act) but in practice (protesters face high level of repression). Despite facing a very inhospitable political context, groups and citizens have found ways to engage in protest. In the case of Eswatini, trade unions have been the leading protest actors against government policies and advocating for democracy. With a special focus on 2018–2019 protests, this chapter aims to understand the emergence and outcomes of pro-democracy protests in Eswatini.

It is argued that both, organisational resources and political opportunity structures (POS) were important to explain the emergence and the impact of protests in the country. First, trade unions were able to build on their resources and legitimacy to organise and sustain protest. Second, discursive political opportunities (legacies of unions work throughout the 1990s and first decade 2010s) contributed to create resonance with pro-democratic frames. Third, the presence of allies – namely of political parties and international actors – contributed to the creation of further pressure for change. Despite these incentives, protest movements were unable to promote significant political changes. These arguments are demonstrated with the help of a set of qualitative sources – from personal interviews to documentary analysis.

This study is relevant on two accounts. First, only a handful of studies, have focused on protest in autocratic monarchies, which means that a case study on Eswatini can add to blossoming literature. Second, the case of Eswatini reveals the importance of organised actors, in helping keep democratic issues on the public agenda.

The chapter is organised as follows. It starts by presenting a brief literature review on the role of organisations, and political opportunity structures in autocratic regimes with the goal of defining the arguments and framework for the

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analysis for Eswatini. Next, the methodology presents the data use in the study to test the arguments presented. The contextual section provides an historical overview of protest in the country, seeking to explore the role of trade unions. The main empirical section focuses on 2018–2019 protests – their emergence and outcomes. The conclusion discusses the main findings and reflects on the main lesson from Eswatini and how it contributes to enlighten the debate on protests in autocratic regimes.

Civil society organisations, resources, and political opportunity structures in monarchic authoritarian regimes

In order for a protest to be fomented there must be several resources, organisation, but also POS (Giuni, 2009; Sanches, 2022). Opportunity "refers to the extent to which power, repression (and facilitation), and opportunity (and threat) provide options for collective action" (Giuni, 2009, p. 362). These are opportunities that arise as a consequence of the political system availing possibilities that challenging groups could use to mobilise effectively (Giuni, 2009). Opportunities may also arise from the cultural context, making certain topics and frames more resonant and salient than others. So some movements may also benefit from discursive opportunities that enhance the reception and legitimacy of their message (Giuni, 2009).

Studies on POS in varying autocratic regimes show that monarchies are generally less hospitable to the existence of civil society organisation and political parties. Whereas patronage is endemic in authoritarian regimes in the form of co-optation and participation in elections (Hultquist et al. 2021), in Eswatini the absence of political parties has resulted in bootlicking and demonising any calls for democratisation from some quarters of the Swati society. Individuals who push the agenda for the maintenance of the status quo are likely to be rewarded with political office by the authorities. This is one of the approaches that ruling elites in authoritarian regimes use to control the electoral process (Hultquist et al. 2021).

Co-optation is evident in authoritarian regimes in the Middle East which is an attempt to minimise any threats to the leadership and guarantee support (Hultquist et al. 2021). Saudi Arabia is one country that has used selective co-optation and repression to ensure stability of the authoritarian regime, which Ertl (2015) refers to as the most stable in the region. Hultquist et al. (2021, p. 217) examine why rulers in authoritarian regimes co-opt ethno minority organisations by focusing on, for instance, the Berber parties in Algeria and Morocco, Shi' parties in Bahrain, and Palestinian parties in Jordan. Eswatini is a homogenous society where there are no ethnic minorities among the indigenous population which explains why co-optation happens at the level of the individual as opposed to a group. In Eswatini, citizens and trade unionists can participate at their *tinkhundla*[2] (constituencies) in their individual capacities and be elected in their constituencies. For instance, former SFTU general secretary, Jan Sithole, took part in the 2013 national elections and won. At the time, he was the president of the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA).

The Kingdom of Eswatini is a case in point to analyse the role of organisations and POS for protest. For many years, ordinary Swati citizens have not enjoyed the freedoms as pronounced in the country's constitution. Political parties were banned by King Sobhuza II shortly after independence, which created a vacuum that permeated politics for over 50 years. The absence of political parties in the country has resulted in unions taking the baton and racing towards political transformation in the kingdom. The political system known as *Tinkhundla* only allows citizens to elect members of Parliament in 59 constituencies and following the promulgation of the Election of Women Members to the House of Assembly Act in 2018, four women MPs were elected by members of the lower House to represent the country's four regions. "Openness of the political system" is restricted to this level.

The nature of co-optation in Eswatini comes in the form of appointment to both Houses of Parliament. Ertl (2015) refers to this legitimation through co-optation which is used by the ruling oligarchy as a survival strategy for the regime. In order to qualify for co-optation one is required to heap praises to the monarchy and acknowledge that the *tinkhundla* system of governance is a system like no other. This narrative guarantees praise singers either an ambassadorial position, appointment into parliament or one of the many advisory committees. The *tinkhundla* system is crafted in such a way that its supporters or their children are rewarded for defending the system. The country is an absolute autocratic monarchy, which means that social movement activity is severely restricted.

The monarchy is a sacred institution to the Swati people that is regarded as a unifier. The country's Constitution of 2005 states that the King is a symbol of unity and eternity of the Swati nation (Swaziland Government, 2005). This has serious connotations to anyone challenging the authority of His Majesty or advocating for democratic reforms in the country. Anyone perceived as fomenting political unrest is labelled as challenging the authority of the King. The King is seen as a symbol and custodian of Swati culture and identity (Simelane, 2016). The King is referred to as the "mouth that tells no lies". An interview I conducted with a former minister of justice in the 1990s summed it all when he said the King can never be blamed for any wrong decision he pronounces, but they as advisors are supposed to take the blame. This augurs well with the assertion that the monarchy is the "mouth that tells no lies".

This is the very reason that has made political parties find it difficult to set an agenda on the role of the monarchy in a democratic dispensation of the Swati society. Political parties are aware that they have to thread carefully when it comes to this institution. As noted by Motsamai (2011, p. 43), the local population see the monarchy as "the embodiment of Swazi identity". However, the monarchy has been losing legitimacy over the years especially because of the extravagance of the royal family in the face of abject poverty experienced by many households. From the 1990s on there has been sporadic dissent against the institution encountering support from across the spectrum of Swati society including the intelligentsia. In 1996, some pro-democracy organisations and non-political organisations declared that;

> the institution of the Monarch, revered and respected by the majority of Swazis, should be protected and every effort should be employed to save and rescue it from the hands of cabals and be elevated to a sovereignty position that is above party politics.
>
> (Swazi Solidarity, 1996)

More recently, in June 2021, three MPs questioned the appointment of the country's prime minister by the head of state arguing that he should be elected by the citizens instead of being appointed by the King. Additionally, some local communities have fiercely resisted the imposition of chiefs in the chiefdoms by the King.

In this context, few citizens have access to political power, and any opportunity that presents itself for collective action is grabbed with both hands. However, a major challenge has been fear of the armed forces that have on many occasions been unleashed, on peaceful protesters. Ertl (2015) argues that one of the survival strategies employed by the regime in Saudi Arabia is the use of repression. For instance, Ertl notes that in 2011, following protests that had started in February in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, the regime quashed the uprisings to prevent a groundswell of support in other parts of the country. In June 2021, about 50 pro-democracy protesters and bystanders were killed by the army and the police. In most instances protesters are quashed by the paramilitary wing of the Royal Eswatini Police Service. It could be argued that in the Eswatini context, the political system is closed as such protests take place in an environment which compels the pro-democracy movement to call for transformation through demonstrations.

Focusing on the 2018–2019 protests in Eswatini, this chapter argues, that both organisational resources and POS were important to explain the emergence and the limited impact of protest in the country. First, trade unions were able to build on their resources and legitimacy to organise and sustain protest. Second, discursive political opportunities (legacies of unions work throughout the 1990s and first decade 2010s) contributed to create resonance with pro-democratic frames. Third, the presence of allies – namely of political parties and international actors – contributed to create further pressure for change.

Methodology

The chapter employed a qualitative approach in generating data. A combination of desk top research, in-depth interviews and qualitative content analysis of newspapers was used. The aim is to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005), in this case the pro-democracy protests in Eswatini. Qualitative content analysis allows the use texts to identify the themes, discourses, and strategies (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2004, p. 24) used by protesters, and how the government reacted. The mainstream newspapers under review were the privately-owned *Times of Eswatini* and its weekend editions, *Eswatini News* and *Times Sunday*. The state-owned *Eswatini Observer* was also used for purposes of analysing its content together with the weekend editions, the *Observer on Saturday* and the

Observer on Sunday. The *Times of Eswatini* newspapers enjoy a larger market share by comparison.

The period covered for the chapter was specifically 2018 and 2019. A major challenge though is that the content of the newspapers regarding pro-democracy protests is almost similar in the newspapers. It was rare to have one newspaper not cover protest marches owing to the size and population of the country. What only differs in the newspapers is the placement of the stories which is determined by the editorial staff. However, a majority of the stories on protest marches in the publications were on the front pages of the newspapers, which in itself is agenda-setting.

Trade unions and protests in Eswatini an historical overview

Eswatini attained independence from British rule in September 1968. King Sobhuza II and his party, Imbokodvo National Movement (INM), won all seats in Parliament in the 1967 elections and took control of the government at independence (Baloro, 1994). In the 1972 parliamentary elections, the opposition Ngwane National Liberatory Congress (NNLC) led by a medical practitioner, Dr Ambrose Zwane, won three out of 24 seats in Parliament (Baloro, 1994). Consequently, the King had to tighten his grip as the opposition began gaining ground. In an attempt to quell the threat from the opposition, King Sobhuza II on 12 April 1973, unilaterally declared a state of emergency (Motsamai, 2011), dissolved Parliament and banned political parties. Political parties in the kingdom remain banned more than 53 years after independence.

The abrogation of the constitution resulted in the consolidation of power by the ruling oligarchy with the aid of traditional chiefs. The King assumed supreme power and all executive, legislative, and judicial powers were vested in him. The King's proclamation also banned trade unions, meetings of a political nature, and demonstrations. The proscription of trade unions was only reversed in the 1980s owing to a pre-existing International Labour Organisation (ILO) agreement which forced the government to rescind the ban and allow trade unions to operate legally in the country (Debly, 2011, p. 20).

In the absence of political parties, the trade union movement filled the void. The protagonists of the struggle for emancipation of the Swati people from the clutches of the royal oligarchy in the trade union movement are the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT) founded in 1928, Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions (SFTU) (defunct) established in 1973, and the Swaziland Federation of Labour established in 1994. They were later joined by the Swaziland National Association of Civil Servants (SNACS) founded in 1986, which later changed its name to the National Public Service & Allied Workers Union (NAPSAWU) in 2007 and the Swaziland Nurses Association (SNA) now known as the Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union founded in 1965. More recently, the birth of the Trade Union Congress of Swaziland (TUCOSWA) in 2012 reinvigorated the push for democracy in the country which had, at the time, become relatively dormant.

However, TUCOSWA has so far failed to have an impact similar to that enjoyed by the SFTU in the mid-1990s, as later demonstrated.

Public Servants Associations (PSAs) have enjoyed relative autonomy from the government. Even though the government has tried in the past to deal with their leaders it has not succeeded. A major advantage is that these associations have not relied on their employer for sustenance and resources to push the workers' agenda. The unions have put pressure on the government especially because of the massive backing by the membership on numerous issues affecting their membership including the calls for a democratic dispensation in Eswatini.

Pro-democracy protest in the 1990s

Trade unions have played a pivotal role in calling for political reforms and they continue to put pressure for political transformation in the country. Even though this started in the 1970s, the SFTU's two-day general strike on 13–14 March 1995 to press the government to accede to a list of 27 demands which had been put forward in January 1994 was a wake-up call for the government. Although these demands focused mainly on labour related issues, including the reinstatement of dismissed workers, there was also inclusion of political issues. For instance, one of the demands called for the development of a new constitution in the country (Sereo, 2018). The SFTU-led strike had a crippling effect on the economy as billions were lost as was the subsequent strike in January 1996. The vacuum left by the proscription of political parties in the country resulted in the SFTU becoming an advocate for human rights and liberal democracy (Kanduza, 2003) in Eswatini in the 1990s. Debly (2011) argues that the strikes were some form of resistance to the ruling oligarchy's hegemony. The inability to present grievances in a free and open manner resulted in political opportunity which led to the organisation and mobilisation of workers expressing their grievances in Eswatini. Trade unions in the local context cannot be separated from politics, they run parallel if not intertwined. For instance, TUCOSWA's first strategic plan elucidates that the organisation's establishment is to further the struggle for democracy and free trade unions (Hlandze, 2019). When TUCOSWA called for democratic reforms, the government revoked its registration in March 2012 (Wood, Dibben and Klerck, 2013).

The downward spiral in the popularity of the SFTU resulted in efforts to awaken the giant with the formation of yet another trade union, TUCOSWA. The SFTU found itself in a quagmire with its membership as a result of lack of transparency and unaccountability (Simelane, 2007). TUCOSWA was established in 2012 after three powerful trade unions in the country came together under one umbrella body. The three include the Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL) and the SFTU. The inclusion of SNAT in TUCOSWA was a positive development following the former's success in organising and mobilising teachers to push their agenda through mass protests (Sereo, 2018). The formation of TUCOSWA had been set

in motion in 2008 when the three trade unions signed a memorandum of understanding culminating in the establishment of a Labour Coordinating Council, a temporary structure in the quest towards the formation of the federation (Hlandze, 2019).

Prodemocracy protest in the 2000s: The role of (outlawed) parties and trade unions

More recent pro-democracy protests can be divided in two: those led by the outlawed political parties and those led by trade unions. The People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) and its youth wing, the Swaziland Youth Congress (SWAYOCO), have been the main protagonists in these protests by banned political parties. Since its formation in July 1993 (Sereo, 2018), PUDEMO has been one of the organisations advocating for democracy in Eswatini. Its overall aim is to attain a multi-party democracy in Eswatini (Sereo, 2018). The People's Manifesto, which PUDEMO adopted in 1996, demanded the creation of a constitutional, multi-party democracy with an elected and accountable government. PUDEMO's youth wing, SWAYOCO was established in 1991 by some students of the University of Eswatini and William Pitcher teacher training college (Sereo, 2018) who were members of PUDEMO. Other parties include the NNLC, the Communist Party of Swaziland, and the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA), a party that was founded by former secretary general of the SFTU, Jan Sithole.

Protests led by the political formations rarely attract huge crowds. This explains the decision by PUDEMO for instance to "infiltrate" the trade union movement (Sereo, 2018) in order to push the agenda for democratic change in Eswatini. Pro-democracy protests called by the trade unions, on the other hand, have received massive support from workers. The protests by the trade unions are disguised as labour related issues. For instance, the 2018 and 2019 strikes by public servants associations and other similar strikes brought the country to a virtual standstill. Mass protests are permitted only after having been sanctioned by the municipalities and the police.

Pro-democracy protests have concentrated mainly in urban areas especially in the capital city, Mbabane and the second largest city, Manzini. The reason is simple, that is the centre of government activity. In the past, there have been protests in the sugar and citrus plantations in the eastern part of the country. In most instances, these strikes revolve around conditions of service. Simelane (2016) argues that rural dwellers are conspicuous by their absence in the protests. This has impacted the success of the protests because of failure to appeal to the masses in rural areas (Simelane, 2016). He argues that the control of rural areas by the monarchy is more pronounced as chiefs are used to ensconce monarchical control alienating anyone who is promoting democracy. This however is beginning to change as witnessed in June 2021 mass protests which shook even rural areas. According to the 2017 Eswatini Population Census report, 76.2% of the population live in rural areas and the remainder (23.8%) is in the urban areas.

The success of any pro-democracy movement is dependent upon a buy-in by rural dwellers. The concentration of the pro-democracy activities in the urban settings diminishes any chance of success.

The political context behind the 2018–2019 pro-democracy protests

In 2011, Eswatini experienced serious financial challenges. This resulted in the country approaching South Africa for a bail out of about USD 350 million (2.4 billion rand). The country has still not come out of the woods yet following the global recession early in the decade. This crisis led to mass protests in 2011 from the trade union movement but also more recently, between the years 2018 to 2020. The country is going on a downward spiral financially as witnessed by the failure to pay government suppliers, failure to rehabilitate pot-holed riddled roads, and failure to secure medication for the country's health facilities.

The fiscal challenges facing the country have affected government operations. This has also hindered government's ability to grant public servants a cost of living adjustment (COLA). In a press statement in 2019 following a decision by the SNAT to embark on a strike action in September 2019 to force the government to accede to its demands for COLA, government acknowledged that fiscal challenges in 2018 and 2019 have made it impossible for awarding public servants COLA. Despite the spike in inflation government employees' salaries have remained stagnant. Government has also frozen promotions and in some cases employment.

Eswatini has been involved in numerous capital projects which however have been affected by the financial crisis. One such project was the construction of the International Convention Centre (ICC) and a five-star hotel. When the project was launched the estimated cost was USD 66,792,150 (one billion rands) however, the price has sky rocketed to about four times the original cost and still counting. A major bone of contention regarding this project is that nearby there are hotels that are not performing well. One of the Sun International hotels located about 300 metres from the ICC has been closed for more than eight years now. A state-owned hotel that was constructed to accommodate heads of state and government who attended the Smart Partnership Summit in 2004 was also making a loss. The construction of the ICC and the five-star hotel has drawn criticism from many quarters including the pro-democracy movement. This new structure was meant to accommodate heads of state and government at an African Union Summit that Eswatini was expected to host in 2019.

Another protest triggering factor emanates from the lavish lifestyle of the royal family. The royal family's expenditure has been a cause for concern for some time now. The icing on the cake was the purchase of 19 Rolls Royce cars for the king's wives and a fleet of 120 BMWs and motorcycles (Meyer, 2019) which were to be used by the close protection unit. A major challenge is that this expenditure cannot be questioned by anyone. Even parliament dares not debate the royal budget. The arrival of the fleet came at a time when public servants had not

received a cost of living adjustment for three years (Meyer, 2019). As noted by the then American Ambassador to Eswatini, Lisa Peterson, "should the people of Eswatini really be comfortable with such disregard for the perilous fiscal state of the country, particularly with so many of His Majesty's subjects living below the international poverty line?" (Peterson, 2019). Public tertiary institutions are also struggling to pay suppliers under the current economic climate. Local newspapers simply brushed through the story of the cars without any thorough investigations knowing the repercussions should they investigate further.

The 2018–2019 Pro-democracy protests in Eswatini: Claims and actions

Between 2018 and 2019, there were numerous protests by public service associations and tertiary students. In September 2018, TUCOSWA staged a three-day protest on the eve of the country's national elections which were scheduled for 21 September 2018. The strike turned violent after the police quashed it for having taken an unauthorised route. The bone of contention it could be argued were the 2018 elections. The trade union movement has been advocating for democratic reforms in the country since it was established in 2012. The national elections were a no party contest, yet TUCOSWA had always advocated for multi-party democracy. During the strike which newspapers referred to as a "Bloody clash", seven protesters were injured and three arrested (Swazi Observer, 19 September). Despite their assault by the police, the protesters were not relenting. They again took to the streets in their numbers and were later joined by bus conductors. The strike turned ugly as the conductors pelted the police with stones and blocked any vehicles from entering or leaving the second largest city's bus terminal. The police also detained some TUCOSWA leaders (Swazi Observer, 20 September 2020). The elections provided the trade union movement with an opportunity to mobilise its membership and protest against the banning of multi-party democracy in the country.

The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), an affiliate of TUCOSWA which boasted of 11,200 memberships in 2018 had about 6,233 who took part in the exercise to ascertain if the membership wanted to participate in a national strike to pressurise the government to pay COLA. About 99% (6,148) teachers voted to take part in the boycott. After the national elections teachers marched on the American Embassy in Eswatini. They called on the embassy to engage the Royal family of Eswatini on COLA arguing that despite the rate of inflation in 2017 and 2018 which stood at 7.85% and 6.55% respectively, they had not received and increment from their employer. Coincidentally, the King of Eswatini was in the United States of America where he had attended the United Nations General Assembly in New York. During his trip to the United States, His Majesty had the opportunity to meet the US President, Donald Trump. America in Eswatini has always been regarded as the doyen of democracy especially before President Trump took office. It would be folly to assume that COLA was a major factor in the march on the Embassy of the United States. The issue here is about

democracy. The timing of the protest march is of major significance. The leadership had planned the march such that it had a ripple effect while the king was in the United States. It could be argued that they were hell-bent on ensuring that the issues affecting the country, including the lack of democracy take a centre stage during the king's visit.

The march on the US embassy followed protest marches in September 2018. The *Times of Eswatini's* headline read "Bloody Clash" and on the following page it read "Five injured as protesters, police clash" On the same day the *Observer's* headline read: "7 injured, 3 arrested". This strike action had been called by the mother body of unions in Eswatini, TUCOSWA. This strike was on the eve of the 2018 elections which organisations like TUCOSWA call undemocratic because political parties are not allowed to contest elections. The following day the *Eswatini Observer* reported about the detention of the leadership of the organisation. There were clashes between the police and the protesters such that the second largest city in Eswatini left many commuters stranded as the protest action was joined by bus and taxi drivers as well as their assistants. Pro-democracy protests have felt the might of the Royal Eswatini police when they are unleashed on them. The heavy handedness of the police has in most instances resulted in casualties. Whenever, a protest march has been organised heavy police presence is witnessed.

In May 2018, the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (NEHAWU) staged a protest march at the main border with South Africa, the Ngwenya/Oshoek port of entry. This march was on the South African side of the border. The protesters were calling for the unbanning of political parties in Eswatini, the release of political prisoners and the release of Amos Mbedzi (a South African national) who was charged with sedition and terrorism in the country following the explosion of a device that he together with two others had planned to detonate at a bridge close to the Lozitha Royal Palace in 2008. The explosive device exploded prematurely in the car they were traveling in killing two of Mbedzi's accomplices. On the day of the explosion, His Majesty was due to fly to New York to attend the 63rd UN General Assembly (Debly, 2011). In 2012, Mbedzi was sentenced to 85 years imprisonment. The government of Eswatini maintained that Mbedzi is not a politician neither is he an activist as such he could not be referred to as a political prisoner (Nsibande, 2019, p. 3).

In September 2019, the *Times of Eswatini* reported on the call by the SACP, NEHAWU, and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to introduce democracy. This was at another port of entry, between South Africa and Eswatini, in the southern part of the country, Mahamba. Under the headline "Reintroduce democracy", speakers at that gathering noted that though the main issue was labour related it could not be divorced from governance because these issues run parallel (Nsibande, 2019). To rebut this statement, the government spokesperson argued that, "Eswatini is a democratic country where the people freely nominate and vote for their representatives in Parliament". The call by these South African organisations qualifies the argument advanced by Wood,

Dibben and Klerck (2013) that COSATU has over the years been preoccupied with the call for regime change in Eswatini and Zimbabwe.

In August 2019, students of the University of Eswatini went on strike a few days after the commencement of the new academic year. The bone of contention was that they had not received a refund of their caution fee which they had paid the previous academic year. This is the amount students pay at the beginning of the academic year when they register which is not refunded in case a student damages university property. The students' representative councils in all the universities are also members of the Swaziland National Union of Students (SNUS) which is linked to PUDEMO. PUDEMO has "infiltrated" the trade union movement to push its agenda of the democratisation of Eswatini. It is not only the trade union movement that political parties such as PUDEMO have infiltrated but they have also ensured that the students union, SNUS, also pushes their agenda. During elections for students' representative councils in universities and colleges, there is an attempt by members of SNUS, a majority of whom are members of PUDEMO, to ensure that their candidates are elected in the strategic portfolios in the student representative bodies.

Understanding the 2018–2019 Pro-democracy protests: Organisational resources and political opportunity structures

This section presents the factors that incentivised collective actions: trade unions organisational resources, discursive opportunities, and the presence of allies.

Organisational capacity

The SNAT is one union that is well organised structurally in Eswatini. SNAT boasts of 15 branches throughout the country with a membership of approximately 12,200. The organisation has managed to secure assets through membership subscriptions. The Swaziland Democratic Nurses Union (SDNU) which boasts of a membership of about 2,100 also relies on membership fees for sustenance. Even though the unions have survived on subscriptions, the support from international partners has bolstered their initiatives. As noted by the secretary general of SDNU:

> Our international partners give us mainly emotional and solidarity support. We do have those that give us financial support mainly for projects that are run by the organization such as the Wellness Centre and the Girl Child Programme. We do receive financial support from regional and global nurses' unions to attend international meetings.
>
> (M. Masangane, 2021, personal communication, 25 June)

In terms of networks the organisations do receive support from other international trade unions. For instance, SNAT does receive support from Education International on numerous issues facing the organisation such as "union bashing". There is also support that comes from the Open Society Initiative for

Southern Africa (OSISA) and the Trade Union Education of Finland, which support the organisation's capacity building programmes and advocacy for injustices. TUCOSWA also relies on a number of trade unions that support educational activities. These include the Confederation of Norwegian Trade Unions, the Confederation of Sweden Trade Unions, and the Solidarity Centre – American Federation of Labour/Congress of Industrial Organisation. TUCOSWA has 19 union affiliates with a total membership of 51,000 across the country.

The availability of resources has enabled the unions to transport members to push their agenda through protest-demonstrations throughout the country. One advantage that unions have had as opposed to the proscribed political parties for instance is that, they have been able to push the narrative of issues affecting heart and soul of the workers whilst synonymously pushing the agenda for democratisation. The secretary general of TUCOSWA stated that:

> Human and financial resources are invested for a successful protest action. Protesters are to be transported to the demonstration areas and are fed. For a protest action to be sustained it needs very minimal financial support. The protestors must pushed by their desire to see the change that they want as opposed to any secondary benefit like stipends. It always works well for us though if we at least transport them. Build up workshops are also fundamental to deal with consciousness.
>
> (MC Gina, 2021, personal communication, 27 June)

Discursive opportunities

Koopmans and Olzak (2004, p. 202) define discursive opportunities as "the aspects of the public discourse that determine a message's chances of diffusion in the public sphere". Discursive opportunities build on prior trade unions activism over the past thirty years. This has left a legacy of frames and forms of struggle that continue to make pro-democracy claims valid and widely supported. Yet it is important to recognise that public discourse has been hampered by the inaccessibility to the mainstream broadcasting stations which are owned by the state. Unionists are not interviewed on state radio and television; neither their events are broadcast on these stations. Daily and weekly newspapers have however enhanced the diffusion of public discourse of the issues raised by unions within society albeit on a limited scale. This is mainly because such media is not accessible in most parts of the country especially rural areas. The shrinking space in the traditional media has resulted in the use of other channels of communication such as the Internet. Social media platforms have been utilised by unions to disseminate information to their membership. For instance, the secretary general of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers stated that his organisation uses Facebook, Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp to communicate to their membership. The introduction of online newspapers has also provided a platform for the teachers' organisation to disseminate information to their membership (S. Dlamini, 2021, personal communication, 18 June).

In the online platforms, the issues that have tended to dominate are the ones discussed under political context. These are controversial issues that broadcasters do not broadcast and newspapers only skirt through so that they do not offend those in the echelons of power especially because they touch on the monarch. The gatekeeping tendencies of the state broadcasters who have a bias towards those in authority has tended to increase citizens' reliance on social media platforms as reliable sources of news despite the challenges associated with fake news. Over the years politicians and members of the royal family who have control over the national radio and television stations have lampooned the call for democracy. Despite radio being the most pervasive medium in the country, trade unions are banned from using national radio neither are journalists employed by these media allowed to cover any pro-democracy protests. The protests in 2018 and 2019 never received coverage on national radio and television despite Section 24 of the Constitution permitting freedom of the press in Eswatini. In 2013, the ministry of information and communication developed guidelines to regulate the operations and activities of the state broadcasters (Hlatshwayo, 2017). These guidelines do not accommodate coverage of any protests or mass meetings called by trade unions. The restrictions imposed on pro-democracy protests are an attempt by government to minimise the groundswell of political dissent in the country. News on strikes and protests is reported by newspapers and privately-owned TV station which have limited reach compared to radio.

Recently, the issue that has dominated the social media space is the construction of the International Convention Centre together with the five-star hotel funded by the taxpayer despite the fact that an operator has still not been identified. With many households living below the poverty line, the argument is, why construct a white elephant that will not benefit the country. The ministry of economic planning and development which is responsible for this project has continued to turn a blind eye to the concerns raised by citizens. The deaf ears in the face of concerns raised result in popular support of the unions' calls for protests. In June 2021, the country experienced pro-democracy protests never witnessed before as citizens called for the election of the prime minister as opposed to his appointment by the king. This call first emerged in parliament when three MPs argued their case over the appointment of the prime minister. This resonated well with the masses including the trade unions and young people hence its popular support.

The critical issue is that the citizens do not enjoy the freedoms as enshrined in the country's constitution. As argued by the secretary general of TUCOSWA,

> The Federation is a creature of collectivism. We are opposed to any form of governance that suppresses the right to associate, assembly, and free speech. We believe a system that guarantees all fundamental rights and freedoms, is an ideal one for any society. We believe that recognition of collective political and individual rights should be the way to go. As an organisation founded on association values, we believe political parties can be the means

> to achieve political freedoms in the same way that unions defend the interests of workers.
>
> (MC Gina, 2021, personal communication, 27 June)

Despite the availability of social media, the traditional means of communication are still utilised by the unions. For instance, the nurses' union secretary general states that "We communicate with our members through the shop stewards on the shop floor through constitutional structures like, branch meetings, regional General Council, National General Council, mid-term conferences and General Congress" (M. Masangane, 2021, personal communication, 25 June).

As a result, unions have explored and utilised alternative means of communication. The unions alluded to the fact that they do use social media platforms mainly WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. A major deterrent has been the cost of accessing the Internet in the country, which is relatively high. Consequently, trade unions have to use a multi-pronged approach to communicate to their membership.

The call for change has resonated well with the masses particularly in the urban areas and in the industrial towns. The pro-democracy protests have managed to use frames such as red t-shirts during protest marches. These are colours associated with the working class and the communists. Other frames used by pro-democracy groups are slogans such as "*Phansi ngembuso wetinkhundla, phansi*" (Away with the *tinkhundla* government)", "*Phansi ngabo gubhelakwesabo, phansi*" (Away with the greedy leadership, away), "*Phambili ngemzabalazo, phambili*" (Forward with the struggle for liberation, forward)". These have resonated well with the masses. As argued by Starr (2017, p. 1362) "Social movement actors use master frames to present their cause to participants, the media, and other audiences". This gives an idea what the movement is all about and what the ideals for which it stands for (Starr, 2017).

Political allies

There have been alliances between political parties, trade unions, and civil society to challenge the prevailing status quo in Eswatini. The alliances were cultivated on the premise that trade unions were permitted to "freely" assemble yet political parties were not afforded that space. One such party was the PUDEMO, which has forged an alliance with TUCOSWA in an endeavour to foster democratic change in Eswatini (Sereo, 2018). Not only that, PUDEMO and the NNLC played a pivotal role in the formation of the Swaziland Democratic Alliance (SDA) which was "a coalition of trade unions, Swaziland Federation of Trade Unions, political parties and NGOs" (Kanduza, 2003, p. 62). In the South African context, there is a tripartite alliance comprising of the Congress of the South African Trade Unions (COSATU), the ruling African National Congress (ANC), and the South African Communist Party (Wood, Dibben and Klerck, 2013). Though alliances between labour and political parties are common, in

Eswatini, the trade union movement retained its autonomy (Hlandze, 2019). Worth noting is that despite the assertion by Sereo (2018) that political parties, in this case PUDEMO, "infiltrated" the SFTU such that the trade union movement embraced a political agenda, this was also part of the trade union movement's agenda. It has always been part of their cause which explains why the opposition NNLC won three seats in company towns. PUDEMO needs the trade union movement more than the unions need PUDEMO because on its own the political party cannot mobilise the masses towards political change in Eswatini.

Another trade union that also played a pivotal role in an attempt to bring about democratic reforms in the country was the Swaziland Federation of Labour (SFL). SFL was founded in 1994 following a split from the SFTU. SFL was organised mainly in the finance, retail, and manufacturing sector. SFL focused on worker representation and provided a consistent national platform for its affiliates. Sereo (2018, p. 96) notes that though the SFL was a bit conservative than the SFTU, it also supported the pro-democracy movement. The fact that at its founding congress TUCOSWA made a pronouncement about the repressive and non-democratic system of government in Eswatini meant that they were not going to isolate themselves from the politics of the country (Sereo, 2018). The union also called for the boycott of the 2013 general elections (Sereo, 2018) which are constituency based under the *tinkhundla* system of government.

The International Labour Organization played a pivotal role in ensuring that workers' rights as well as political rights are respected in the country. The fact that the ILO intervened in the 1980s to ensure that unions are allowed to operate despite the 1973 state of emergency is proof of the role that the organisation has played to ensure the respect of workers' rights in Eswatini. The trade union movement has continued to ride the crest of support at the annual ILO assembly where they are afforded a platform to present their grievances in full view of the world. The trade union movement of Eswatini has not failed to make meaningful use of this platform.

Conclusion

The intensity and continuity of protests is a sign that as elsewhere in Africa the people of Eswatini are trying to disrupt and induce cracks in the system even in authoritarian contexts. However, the regime is able to offset these pressures albeit temporarily. The leadership in Eswatini has capitalised on the fact that there seem to be minimal support for pro-democracy formations in the rural areas. This short-sightedness threw the country into turmoil in June 2021 when pro-democracy protests erupted throughout Eswatini. The protests followed calls by three members of parliament that the prime minister should be elected by citizens and not appointed by the King as it is constitutionally. About 50 unarmed citizens were brutally murdered by the police, the army, and correctional services officers. During these protests shops were looted and others burnt in the process. The silence of the citizens has been misconstrued as peace. The protests are a culmination of years of misuse of state funds, unaccountability, and abuse

of power by those at the apex of the Swati political hierarchy. When the protests had ended, the King addressed the nation saying everything in Eswatini including citizens belongs to him. He then appointed the 11th prime minister of the country, Cleopas Sipho Dlamini.

The pro-democracy movement has succeeded in setting the agenda by sensitising the masses about the ills in the governance of the country through numerous protests over the years. The opulence of the royal family in the face of abject poverty experienced by many citizens of the country and unemployment has been a major cause for concern which is bound to explode in the near future with dire consequences. The ordinary Swati has since realised that despite the 2005 Constitution, they still remain subjects without enjoying the freedoms enshrined therein. The wheels of democratic change in Eswatini are already in motion, thanks to the pro-democracy movement. The trade union movement has continued to be a torchbearer for change since the proscription of political parties by King Sobhuza II in 1973.

Despite the opportunities available for pro-democracy groups there seems to be light in the horizon. For the first time in many years the king's powers on the appointment of the prime minister are being questioned. The culture of fear which has permeated society such that any discontentment is only in hushed tones in the private sphere is now playing out in the public domain. Many people who dared to criticise the status quo have been ostracised in Eswatini. The impact is also felt by their children who are either denied government scholarships for tertiary education or are denied employment opportunities because of the affiliation of a parent to a pro-democracy movement or political organisation.

As other authoritarian regimes discussed in the book citizens of Angola (Almeida, Sá and Faria, 2022), Uganda (Mutyaba, 2022), Ethiopia (Dias and Yetena, 2022), or Congo (Polet, 2022), pay a high cost for engaging in protest. However, this case shows that there is an enduring tradition of protest, and that a vibrant and strong organised civil society is pressuring for change. Ultimately, opportunities and structures have helped the inception of protest even if the impact has been limited.

Notes

1. 'SWAZILAND', Available at: https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/160146.pdf (Accessed: 17 January 2021).
2. Tinkhundla is plural for inkhundla. An inkhundla is a grouping of chiefdoms in close proximity. The tinkhundla serve as electoral and development centres.

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13 CONCLUSION

COMPARATIVE IMPLICATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS

Edalina Rodrigues Sanches

A new cycle of protests hit the African continent in the 21st century. It is the third wave of protest, following the ones that led to independence in the 1950s–1960s and paved the way for political liberalisation in the late 1980s to early 1990s (Branch and Mampilly, 2015). Like every wave, this one is unique since it unfolds in a given epoch, stretches across different geographies, has fresh intensity and builds on new issues; but at the same time, it is also familiar since it picks up from some "leftovers", that is from unfinished business that was left unresolved in previous protest waves.

Between 2010 and 2021, more than 79,000 protests took place in the continent according to ACLED data on protest and riots. This represents 90% of all protests counted since 1997. The protests spread out across Africa's wide range of regimes and took ordinary citizens – youth, middle-classes, farmers etc. – but also organisations – unions, nongovernmental organisations, students' associations, political parties etc. – onto the streets to fight against authoritarianism, neoliberal policies, unemployment, political and civil rights (Stephen and van Kessel, 2009; Larmer, 2010; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Engels, 2015; Mueller, 2018). Like its predecessor, the current wave continues to put pressure on neoliberalism and authoritarianism, but it more firmly embraces issues such as self-expression, gender equality and sexual diversity (Currier and Cruz, 2014; Tripp, 2016), and relies on ICT and social media to scale up the messages and visibility and to maximise the political impact (Ekine, 2010; Bosch, 2017; Luescher, Loader and Mugume, 2017).

In the wake of this protest wave, the main goal of this book was to tackle the following crucial questions: *How transformative are protests? Do they really matter and, if so, how? And how can we explain varying protest outcomes?* The 11 chapters in this book have sought answers to these questions building on two overarching arguments. First, change and transformation should be understood in a flexible and open-ended manner. It is possible to analyse varying degrees of change (limited or significant) and varying types of change (material and non-material, or else tangible and intangible), as well as combinations between them. In other words, some protests may provoke significative change and succeed in obtaining tangible goals – such as new public policies, democratic reforms, or the toppling of an autocratic president – while others may not successfully achieve these goals. In

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either case, protests may nevertheless produce intangible though also substantive changes, namely in citizens' consciousness, collective solidarities, perceptions of empowerment and imaginations about the future. In this sense, protests can be compared to *morphic fields*, a term borrowed from Sheldrake (2006), which, once formed, shape memories, messages, ideas that become recurrent in the future – generating new waves.

The second argument is that political opportunity structures are useful lenses to analyse the outcome of protest, particularly when understood in more dynamic and relational ways (Giugni, 2009, 2011). The book takes into account not only the opportunities that emanate from the institutional setting (power configuration, political alignments, openness of the political system, and so forth) but also those that relate to the cultural setting (legacies of past struggles, salience and polarisation of issues, and the legitimacy of certain actors, identities, and claims). Adding to this, it examines how opportunities change across context and issues, and how they interact with other factors such as actors' resources and framing strategies (Kriesi *et al*., 1995; Tarrow, 1998; Giugni, 2009, 2011). Overall, the 11 case studies herein help address the book's key questions in interesting and multi-layered ways. Showing the dynamic nature of political opportunities, the varying duration of protests and movements, as well as the different degrees and forms of change and the factors that account for them. The main findings are summarised from a comparative perspective in the following pages.

Protests as engines of (democratic) change

This book is revealing of the powerful role of African civil societies, understood here as the vast ensemble of actors and interests that tries to challenge the established order (Obadare, 2011). As synthetised in the Table 13.1, ordinary citizens from all social strata as well as distinct types of organisations have tried to elicit change. Even if some groups were more active and took the lead on some actions, the fact is that many social groups were caught up by the momentum and joined collective action at various stages. In Burkina Faso, *Balai Citoyen* musicians and artists relied on online campaigns, powerful catchwords, and songs to mobilise citizens across social strata and political spectrum to rise up against Blaise Compaoré's attempt to change the constitution and extend his rule. Senegal *Y'en a Marre* also owes its existence to young rappers and journalists who proactively started to mobilise the people (and particularly the youth) against the incumbent government. In Angola, young intellectuals, journalists, and musicians have also been at the forefront of demonstrations against the former and the current country President – José Eduardo dos Santos and João Lourenço respectively. In the politically instable Ethiopia, anti-government protests united the youth hailing from different locations (Oromo and Amhara) and belonging to different ethnic constituencies; while in Ghana, Eswatini, Mozambique and Morocco the middle-class, trade unions, and community organisations played a significant role in sustaining effective forms of mobilisation. The role of trade unions is especially relevant in the case of Eswatini, an absolute monarchy that has

Table 13.1 Summary: actors, subjects, opportunities, and outcomes

Chapter	*Country*	*Subject, year (leading actors)*	*Opportunities, vis-à-vis other factors*	*Outcome*
Chapter 2, Sanches and Lopes	Cabo Verde	Regionalisation, 2010 – on (GRD, GRRCV, and, Sokols 2017)	Institutional opportunities (+): election proximity, power transfer, elite and issue polarisation. Framing strategies (++): amplification and diffusion	Bill initiation
	Cabo Verde	Approval of new statute of political office holders, 2014 (MAC#114)	Institutional opportunities (++): election proximity, presence of allies Cultural/discursive opportunities (+): favourable media and public opinion Framing strategies (++): amplification and diffusion	Bill withdrawal
Chapter 3, Noll and Budniok	Ghana	Good governance, corruption, 2014 (Occupy Ghana)	Institutional opportunities (~): openness of the system, free media Cultural/discursive opportunities (+): salience of the issue of corruption Resources (++): organisational capacity, technical expertise, legal political knowledge	Increased public accountability, establishment of a special prosecutor
Chapter 4, Dimé	Senegal	President third-term bid, 2011 (*Y'en a marre*)	Institutional opportunities (~): political openness Cultural/discursive opportunities (+): legacy of youth protest in the country, favourable media coverage Framing strategies (++): amplification	New president elected
Chapter 5, Bertand	Burkina Faso	President third-term bid, 2013–2014 (*Balai Citoyen*, opposition parties)	Institutional opportunities (++): institutional status for opposition, less state repression, cooperation between opposition parties Cultural/discursive opportunities (++): legacy of prior forms of activism Specific opportunities (++): common issue	Change at executive level, civilian-led political transition and new cognitive mechanisms
Chapter 6, Badran	Morocco	Feminist demands, 2011 (Women's organisations)	Institutional opportunities (~): Strides in women's rights, and new forms of activism during the Arab Spring Framing strategies (++): silencing and speaking out	New opportunities for women's organisations
Chapter 7, Bussoti and Nhaueleque	Mozambique	No to ProSavana Campaign, 2012–2020 (Rural movements – UNAC and ADECRU, mainly)	Institutional opportunities (++): presence of allies at the national and international level Resources (++): local and international organisational networks	Halt of ProSavana programme; awakening of rural issues

(*Continued*)

Table 13.1 Summary: actors, subjects, opportunities, and outcomes (*Continued*)

Chapter	*Country*	*Subject, year (leading actors)*	*Opportunities, vis-à-vis other factors*	*Outcome*
Chapter 8, Almeida, Sá and Faria	Angola	Regime change, pro-democracy, 2017– (MRPLA, activists)	Institutional opportunities (++): leadership transition, political opening, unfulfilled promises, state repression Cognitive mechanisms (++): change in protesters' perceptions and emergence of new cognitive frames	Shifting awareness and, new opportunities for protest, but no fundamental regime change
Chapter 9, Polet	Democratic Republic of Congo	President third-term bid, 2016 (Opposition parties, students, citizens' movements)	Institutional opportunities (~): threat of democratic regression Resources (+): parties' networks and resources Other (++): international pressures	Change at executive level, but the same political order prevails
Chapter 10, Mutyaba	Uganda	Regime change, pro-democracy, 2011 (Opposition parties, civic groups)	Institutional opportunities (++): alliances between opposition parties, and between them and civic groups Cultural/discursive opportunities (+): supporting public opinion Framing strategies (++): amplification, bridging and transformation	Change in the dynamics of regime opposition, more popular demands for accountability and democratisation
Chapter 11, Mthembu	Eswatini	Anti-regime, pro-democracy, 2018–2019 (Trade unions)	Cultural/discursive opportunities (+): legacy of prior pro-democratic unions work Resources (++): networks and organisations	Agenda setting on pro-democracy issues though the regime remains autocratic
Chapter 12, Dias and Yetena	Ethiopia	Announcement of the Addis Ababa Master Plan, arrest of member of Welkait Identity Restoration Committee pro-democracy protests, 2015–2018 (Youth – Qeerroo and Fano)	Institutional opportunities (+): leadership vacuum and intra-elite dispute, group alliances, internet activism	Withdrawal of the Plan, change at the executive level, agenda setting on pro-democracy issues, but reforms halted by conflict and authoritarianism

Source: Author's elaboration

Note: The influence of opportunities, vis-à-vis other factors, on protest outcomes ranges from (~) weaker role to (++) stronger role. This is a qualitative assessment drawing on authors' findings.

banned political parties since 1973, and narrowed all channels for effective mobilisation. So, while, facing an adverse setting, trade unions have been able to organise and cooperate to bring about demonstrations to life. The case of Mozambique in turn, tells the tale of how seemingly week rural communities' organisations leveraged their stakes against the government and powerful interests in the agricultural sector. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, opposition political parties were strongly engaged in the protest and so were students and citizens movements.

The motivations and subjects putting protesters in the streets are diverse (see Table 13.1); which confirms Branch and Mampilly (2015) assertion that unlike other waves, the current wave lacks unifying goals and ideologies and covers a broader sample issues related to governance and regime reform. Thus, a constellation of movement actors joined demonstrations to elicit changes in policy design and implementation (Cabo Verde and Mozambique), to fight political corruption and bad governance (Ghana), to stop presidents from pursuing a third mandate (Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Democratic Republic of Congo), to bring in more democratic regimes and better policies (Angola, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Uganda) and to advance the gender equality agenda (Morocco). Not only these protests aim at different targets but take place in a wide range of regimes, including entrenched and resilient autocratic regimes; therefore it is crucial to ask: how transformative were they? and Did they really matter?

In most these countries, protests profoundly shaped the political sphere (see Table 13.1). In Cabo Verde, the MRCV and the Shokols 2017 led pro-regionalisation campaigns that helped keep their claims salient in the public agenda and pushed parties to present regionalisation bills in parliament in 2018. Even if the bill was not approved in parliament due to lack of consensus, this was a significant exemplification that collective action can influence public debates. A more successful outcome was obtained by the MAC#114 whose disruptive actions and slogans compelled the president to withdraw the new Statute of Political Office Holders which anticipated exceptional privileges for the political elite. In Mozambique, rural communities had an extraordinary win against international investors (Brazil and Japan) when the government finally accepted their demands and halted the agriculture intensive ProSavana programme. In Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Democratic Republic of Congo, protesters helped stop their Presidents – Blaise Campaoré, Abdoulaye Wade and Joseph Kabila, respectively – from pursing a third mandate, and decisively in the former two cases. In the latter, international actors played a more relevant role in determining the unfolding of the political events.

In Morocco, the transformative impact of protest is analysed from a within-movement perspective. It is revealed that during the Arab Spring in Morocco, the main movement (F20) emphasised certain demands and frames (democracy and justice) while simultaneously silencing others (feminist causes, gender issues) in order to enhance the movement's popular support and acceptance. Despite this, women's experience within F20 nurtured solidarities and cooperation between women's organisations, which elicited mobilisation in the future. In Ethiopia, protests seemed to have opened a window of opportunity for both policy and regime

reform but the outcomes were mixed. The government withdrew the Addis Ababa Master Plan in 2017, giving in to protesters demands (particularly the Oromo) but the expectations of democratic reform particularly after the election of Abiy Ahmed as Prime Minister vanished as authoritarianism and conflict relapsed. In the autocratic regimes of Angola, Eswatini and Uganda, ephemeral but recurrent forms of anti-regime demonstrations have put democracy and good governance on the public agenda. While some of the targeted political goals have not been attained, these protests were important in that they created new cognitive mechanisms; that is, "alterations of individual and collective perceptions" (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001, p. 26). The shifting awareness continues to trigger protest, even in the presence of strong state repression.

These 11 case studies offer a confirmation that protests matter as exercises of citizenship, sources of social capital, and engines of democracy and good governance. Africans are going to the street not only to transform their material conditions of existence but also their symbolic conditions of existence. These protest contribute to generate the *morphic fields* (Sheldrake, 2006) or the *free spaces* for protest (Polletta, 1999) that far from being just physical spaces are also symbolic spaces structured by ties, identities and meanings. The 11 chapters are also illustrative of the hybrid nature of African social movements. The set of issues that has taken citizens to the streets is diverse and does not follow the old versus new social movements issue division. In fact, the coexistence of concurrent frames and messages – material and post-material – is documented in several analyses in this book. Finally, the 11 case studies constitute a rich sample of the varying outcomes of protests and to that extent they are representative of broader continental patterns and surprises.

Political opportunities for protest

So how can we explain varying protest outcomes? As depicted in Table 13.1, political opportunity structures acted alongside framing strategies (e.g. Cabo Verde, Senegal, Morocco) and organisational resources (e.g. Ghana, Eswatini, Democratic Republic of Congo) as the key factors affecting the outcome of protests. A first set of opportunities emanated mostly from the institutional sphere including openness of the political system, elite polarisation, alliances between movements and political parties, and alliances between national and international actors. While most of these opportunities are present in the (semi) democratic contexts – e.g. Cabo Verde, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, or Mozambique – which tend to be characterised by more open political systems and more institutionalised political opposition – they are not exclusive to them. For instance, in Uganda alliances between political parties and civic movements were crucial for the dissemination of Walk-to-Work protests; and the divisions within the incumbent party in Ethiopia following the death of Prime Minister Meles Zenawi in 2012 made the regime more vulnerable to increasing societal pressure for regime change. Additionally, activists have utilised other opportunities to leverage their options: for instance, in Cabo Verde the MRCV, the Sokols 2017, and the MAC#144 took

advantage of the proximity of elections to influence the public debates and increase their bargaining power; whereas in Angola the election of President João Lourenço heightened popular expectations of regime change, even if this sentiment vanished quickly.

The second set of opportunities relates to cultural or discursive opportunities. Indeed, the presence of favourable public opinion or media coverage (both national and international), and the legacies of prior pro-democracy or anti-regime struggles facilitated public visibility and resonance, but also the legitimacy of movement actors and their demands. For example, in Burkina Faso, Benin, Eswatini, Ghana, and Senegal protesters were able to build on the legacy of prior pro-democracy and anti-government movements to further legitimacy, to amplify their message and mobilise more effectively. In a similar vein, one of the most interesting expressions of past legacies was the use of historical symbols and narratives to legitimise forms of protest.

In Cabo Verde, MAC#114 made its first public appearance on 20 January 2015 during the official ceremony of the 40th anniversary of Amílcar Cabral's assassination. Images of the historical pan-Africanist were also used on several occasions through social media, as well as in other youth protests in the country (Lima, 2020). The Sokols 2017 present themselves as "heirs" of Sokols of Cabo Verde, a youth movement that carried out protest initiatives against Portuguese colonialism. In Ethiopia, the Fano refers to the warriors that defended the country's sovereignty, tracing back to the Italian colonial occupation (1935–1941). The Fano also embodies the identity of "freedom fighters". In Senegal, activists found an ideological anchorage in Pan-African ideals, and sought to revive the dreams of the founding fathers as well as their desire to build a trans-African network of political activism. Lastly, in Burkina Faso, the insurrection was shaped by older legacies of uprisings that hallmark Burkina Faso's political history. The young people who took the streets during the 2013–2014 demonstrations wore T-shirts bearing pictures of former president Thomas Sankara, and *Balai Citoyen* leaders regularly resorted to his slogans and imagery. The use of Pan-African leaders' images, discourses, and ideals contributed to frame the identity and legitimacy of all these movements but, more importantly, it turned historical figures into peoples' allies against present injustices.

Finally, the case studies indicate that specific opportunities may arise depending on the policy areas or issues raised by the challenging groups (Giugni, 2011). The case of Cabo Verde, Burkina Faso and Ethiopia, for example help make this point clearer. In Cabo Verde, the resistance against the new Statute of Political Office Holders led by MAC#114 had broad popular support and united citizens from all social strata, which played an important role in the outcome of the campaign for the withdrawal of the law. MAC#114 was also able to emerge as the leading entrepreneur behind the protests. However, in the case of the regionalisation movement, which was led by different collectives (GRD, GRRCV, and Sokols 2017), there were competing views within the movement, in the public opinion of the different Islands and between political parties on the model of regionalisation. The extreme issue polarisation eventually resulted in the withdrawal of the

regionalisation bill due to lack of parliamentary support. The capacity of actors uniting around a similar goal, despite coming from different social, ethnic, or geographic backgrounds, was also highlighted in the cases of Burkina Faso and Ethiopia to explain not only the surge but also the outcome of protest. In the case of Ethiopia, an unprecedented alliance between Qeerroo and Fano groups represented a break with an historical legacy of ethnic rivalry and united youth who, despite their differences, shared an anti-regime sentiment. In Burkina Faso, opposition parties and civil society cooperated on a single common objective – political alternation.

Overall, the comparative analysis reveals that political opportunities matter to explain the birth, unfolding, but most importantly here, the outcomes of protest. Indeed, the material analysed throughout the various chapters allows the "straws in the wind"[1] tests to be passed (Collier, 2011); that is, it builds confidence in the book's argument that political opportunities matter. However, this is not sufficient to reject alternative hypotheses for, as we explain in more detail next, political opportunities acted alongside other factors, namely resources and framing strategies.

Moving beyond political opportunities

Protest outcomes are determined by multiple factors besides political opportunities (see Table 13.1). In Cabo Verde, Senegal, Uganda, and Morocco, movements utilised framing strategies such as making an issue salient (amplification), linking diverse issues (bridging), spreading the messages beyond geographic boundaries (diffusion) and setting an alternative agenda (transformation) to attain their political goals. For example, in Senegal *Y'en an Marre's* most striking slogan formulas mixed French and Wolof to reach wider audiences; in Uganda movement actors amplified their messages through social media, connected several issues – cost of living, corruption, poor elections, democracy, – and embraced new forms of political opposition during the Walk-to-Work protest. In Morocco's F20 movement, we learn about the costs of framing strategies: in order to enhance internal and external support, movements may intentionally silence sensitive and divisive issues (gender) while highlighting those that come across as more consensual (democracy and justice). Framing strategies can thus imply the belittling of the demands of some movement actors who no longer have a voice. This is not unique to the F20 movement, and sheds light on internal power configurations, on why activists opt to exit a movement, and on the importance of analysing framing strategies from within.

Secondly, organisational capacity and resources are vital. In Ghana, the middle-class, the main movement entrepreneur, employed its resources, namely expertise on how to organise demonstrations, political knowledge and technical expertise, communication strategies and the power to put pressure on the government to mobilise effectively. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, political parties provided the necessary resources, and networks, as well as access to national and international prime-time channels that were decisive in the

dissemination of their demands. In fact, this was a case where resources and international factors mattered more than political opportunities. In Eswatini's 2018–2019 protests, trade unions' organisational capacity, networks, and long-term experience of cooperation was crucial for the movement's visibility and authority, even if changes are not yet forthcoming.

Thirdly, depending on the context there may be more or less favourable conditions for challenger groups vis-à-vis institutional groups. In democratic settings such as Ghana and Cabo Verde, for example, movement actors were able to leverage institutional actors; however, in more autocratic settings the results were not so successful. In the cases of Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, authoritarianism and "big man rule" are enduring features that constrain collective action. In Angola, the incoming President João Lourenço presented himself as a democratic player that would "clean the regime", but not only he did fail to fulfil his promise, but he closed access to the political sphere and resorted to repression as soon protests intensified. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the massive use of repression by the regime led the international community to increase pressure on national authorities, including the adoption of international sanctions against several leaders of the security apparatus. Moreover, the regime relied on other tactics such as staging dialogues with the opposition and fragmenting the opposition to neutralise political protest.

In Ethiopia youth protests faced brutal repression and the regime used the state of emergency, which was declared on 9 October 2016 and lasted ten months, to impose restrictions on international travel by diplomats, on telecommunication and media as well as internet shutdowns. While the protests started by triggering a transformation in politics, the initial reformist momentum eventually derailed as a new spiral of violence escalated and past authoritarian practices gained ground. In Burkina Faso, the regime used co-optation, bribes, and infiltrators to foster divisions and discredit opposition politicians. And same happened in Mozambique when the government fragmented the opposition front by encouraging the formation of a group of civil society organisations favourable to the ProSavana programme.

Fourth, the diaspora and international networks continue to play an important role in protest just as they did in the past. The actions led by MAC#114 in Cabo Verde diffused to the diaspora, particularly Portugal, where several initiatives were also held to fight the implementation of the Statute of Political Office Holders. In Ethiopia, activists and scholars in the diaspora encouraged the Amhara to join the Oromo protest to end the TPLF/EPRDF authoritarian regime. The rural communities in Northern Mozambique would have had a harder time in pressuring the government to put a halt to the ProSavana if they had not found the support of international NGOs in Brazil and Japan. These international NGOs not only provided information about the programme, but also helped amplify their message and pressured their government to end the programme. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the international community was more determined than local protesters in Kabila's decision to step down in 2018.

By and large, the case studies demonstrate that political opportunities matter but do not rule out the other factors – resources, frames, level of state repression, international factors – that concur to explain the outcome and transformative power of protest. In this sense, the findings are also illustrative of the book's dynamic approach to political opportunities, that is sensitive not only to different types of opportunities but to the other factors that come into play.

Lessons, implications, and future research avenues

Building on the previous comparative exercise, this section highlights the major lessons from this book, while also pointing to future research avenues. First, the transformative impact of protest varies immensely so any attempt to label the third protest wave as either a failure or a success will miss the mark on the variations that exist within and across countries over time. The result is at best mixed, which means we need to "explore not only a particular movement, but also the wider context in which it operates" (Larmer, 2010, p. 252) if we are to make sense of possibilities of change. In authoritarian settings like Angola, Ethiopia, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, protesters face the highest hurdles; not only do they have more coercive states, but a legacy of political conflict and instability that shapes the interactions between the civil society and the political society. To be fair, democratic regimes also resort to repression to contain demonstrators but they tend to do so to a lesser degree when compared to autocratic regimes and generally offer more institutional mechanisms for participation (Carey, 2006). Still, the fact that autocratic countries feature high protest levels, encourages research on the elements that shape the formation of *free spaces* (Polletta, 1999) in these countries, and that make political mobilisation possible despite the odds.

Secondly, change is better understood in more open-ended and flexible terms. This links to Branch and Mampilly (2015, p. 25) who draw on Claude Ake's reflections to highlight the need to go beyond the restrictive "tendency to dismiss African protest because of what it fails to accomplish instead of taking seriously what it does achieve". In this sense, there seems to be an inherent value in pro-democracy protests regardless of the specific liberal reforms they entail. The following excerpt is quite illustrative:

> With Ake's advice in mind, we do not spend our time in this book lamenting the failure of protest to effect formal political change. Instead, we focus on the often-dramatic developments that accompany protest in popular organisation, political consciousness, and political imagination. As diverse social groups seek to understand and challenge their own oppression, they reveal new political possibilities whose resonance can reach far beyond their place of origin, transforming people's understandings of politics nationally, regionally, and even globally".
>
> (Branch and Mampilly, 2015, pp. 3–4)

This book embodies this vision, by putting forward a notion of change that encompasses both material and non-material dimensions. Indeed, it is interesting to note that in the cases where concrete reforms were not implemented, there were important cognitive changes – that is new perceptions, such as transposing the fear of protest, forging new solidarities, and gaining a new sense of collective action – that continue to feed protest. For instance, activists in Angola said they had gained the taste for protest despite facing state repression, and even though the F20 movement in Morocco silenced women's frames, it provided the ground for the establishment of new solidarities and forms of cooperation between women's organisations, which became crucial for future mobilisation around feminist causes. This suggests that experiences of protest may create political opportunity for protest, as anticipated by social movement theorists (Tarrow, 1998). In this sense, future studies should continue to explore how various forms of collective action can sow the seeds for future uprisings. The relevant questions to be answered would thus be what those seeds are concretely made of (identities, emotions, networks, resources etc.), how they are nurtured (framing, dissemination, socialisation, networks etc.), and what the tipping point is that makes them flourish at a particular moment?

Third, it is important to contextualise protest within the historical, political, and social environment in which they unfold (Larmer, 2010; Lodge, 2013; Branch and Mampilly, 2015). While existing research has mainly explored how contextual factors such as economic and/or political crises trigger protest, the present book offers the first systematic analysis of political opportunities for mobilisation in Africa's range of regimes. In doing so, it reveals the importance of institutional and cultural/discursive opportunities for understanding protest dynamics. The analyses displayed in the country case studies reveal a dynamic interplay of different opportunities in which movement actors benefit from more open systems, but also from cultural resonance and public visibility to attain their goals (see Table 13.1). This is a promising research line, to be further explored with other African case studies, that may either confirm or challenge these assumptions.

Fourth, protests have put broad coalitions of social groups in the streets – from deprived people to elite. These coalitions, even if temporary, shed light on the inner complexity of social movements and how actors with different backgrounds and interests build bridges, and use their resources, to attain a shared goal. Several cases in this book confirm that the resources held by the middle-class, the political parties or trade unions – time, money, national and international networks, political knowledge, access to national and international media, and so forth – go a long way in sustaining effective forms of protest. Furthermore, individual resources such as public notoriety and charisma also make a difference: musicians and pop stars have been able to move masses, and particularly the disenchanted urban youth, in places like Burkina Faso, Senegal, or Uganda. Thus, a mix of collective and individual resources provides the much-needed material, moral, and symbolic support to leverage the chances of collective action. Some of the research discussed in this book highlighted the role of collective resources and hinted at personal networks and resources. However, this is a subject that clearly

deserves more research and can enrich the discussions on the nature of third wave protests, since it nuances the view that mobilisation is achieved without extensive organisation and indicates that resources and networks exist beyond what Internet can supply.

Fifth, our findings on framing strategies add to the social movement literature. On the one hand, it confirms that movement actors use several tools to amplify and disseminate their messages (social media, striking slogan formulas, mixes of languages, etc.), and that new information and communication technologies are as influential in Africa as they appear to be in the Western world. On the other, it is revealed that framing strategies are not just about how demands are spread to the world; they are also about what movements chose to hide from the world. Future studies should delve into the hidden logic of framing, because it allows us to understand the competing views and interests within social movements, as well as how certain frames became dominant and visible while others are silenced, thus reflecting unequal power configurations from within. This goes along with Larmer's (2010, p. 253) view that "social movement research must always have regard to tensions and conflicts, not only between particular movements, but also within them, over a period of time".

Sixth, while is true that African social movements are hybrid in that some of the main movement entrepreneurs (e.g. NGOs) are externally financed and local agendas are often influenced by external agendas (Ellis and Kessel, 2009; Larmer, 2010; De Waal and Ibreck, 2013), this not universal. In many of the countries analysed herein activists put forward concrete issues to advance political goals in their country, even with limited or no external support at all. For instance, according to Lodge (2013, p. 147), one of the things that characterised the uprisals in Northern Africa vis-à-vis other pro-democracy waves was that, despite facing "tougher authoritarian governments", they received "less support from outside their national settings". Therefore, the material and symbolic exchanges between African social movements/actors and international movements/actors need to be complicated to a greater extent in future research.

Finally, there are two aspects that are less covered in this book and that warrant more investigation. On the one hand, the linkages between movements, actors, and identities from the local to the global scale. While research refers to forms of contagion, to solidarity and cooperation between movements, and to the circulation of actors and ideas (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005; Stephen and van Kessel, 2009; Branch and Mampilly, 2015; Yarwood, 2016; Mueller, 2018), more systematic analysis is needed to clarify whether a transnational Pan-African civil society is emerging. On the other hand, the chapters in this book focused mainly on urban uprisings which means there is little insight on rural uprisings. Although this was unintentional, the fact is that it neglects the geographic dimension of protest together with territorialised struggles, grievances, and identities. The rural-urban divide encapsulates differences in terms of state-constituent relations, levels of coercion exercised by the state (more despotic and brutal in the rural areas), political identities (rural "subjects" versus urban "citizens"), and interests and demands (Mamdani, Mkandawire and Wamba dia Wamba, 1988; Mamdani, 1996; Branch

and Mampilly, 2015). In this sense, there is a need for more research that can illuminate the issues, actors, and forms of mobilisation in rural Africa. This is not only important demographically, because the majority of the African population still lives in rural areas (59% according to World Bank 2020 estimates) but also substantively, as polarisation around the extractive industries, land use and agricultural programmes have been increasing and triggering new forms of contestation in rural Africa. Future research should address these gaps, and embrace comparative work cross-cutting regional boundaries.

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Note

1. In the process tracing methodology "straws in the wind" tests help increase confidence in our hypotheses and arguments, but do not rule out alternative hypotheses (Collier, 2011).

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Index

Note: Page numbers in **bold** represent tables; page numbers in *italics* represent figures; Page numbers followed by n and number represent endnote and note number.