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COMING IN SEPTEMBER
China and East Asia

AFTER TAMING THE PANDEMIC, Beijing has turned its attention to celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. Even as the nature of Chinese capitalism is still in flux, President Xi Jinping declares that the party-state has achieved its goal of eradicating poverty. Yet many in peripheral areas are still poor, and resistant to the government's drive to stamp out their heritage. Meanwhile, Japan is planning to host the Summer Olympics, a year after the games were postponed due to COVID-19—and without foreign spectators. Ten years since the Fukushima disaster, many younger Japanese are more interested in cultural change than sports spectacles. *Current History*'s September issue will cover these and other developments across the region. (*Please note: we do not publish June, July, or August issues*.) Topics scheduled to appear include:

- **Chinese Capitalism's Contradictions in the CCP Centenary**
- **Can Inner Mongolia Keep Its Distance from Beijing?**
- **Japan's Generational Conflicts**
- **Korean and Japanese Disability Rights Battles**
- **Everyday Finance and Fraud in Jakarta**
- **Military Business Interests and Coups in Myanmar and Thailand**

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May 2021

"Whatever is responsible for the relatively low numbers of cases and deaths in Sierra Leone—and in the region at large—the prevailing sense among regional health experts has been that the earlier Ebola epidemic prepared the country for the worst."

COVID-19 in Ebola's Wake: Safe Haven in Sierra Leone?

ADIA BENTON

In late December 2020, a colleague, Jonas, who conducts veterinary science and public health research in rural Sierra Leone, checked in by email to see how I was coping with months of COVID-19-related isolation. I was handling it as best I could. My book in progress about the 2014–16 West African Ebola outbreak—one of the reasons Jonas (a pseudonym) and I had become acquainted in the first place—was long overdue to its publisher. My plans to return to Sierra Leone to fact-check the book had been postponed indefinitely.

Jonas and I sent a few short messages back and forth. In late January 2021, he suggested that I travel to Sierra Leone for a break. "I don't know. I'm worried about traveling so far and having to quarantine," I responded. He urged me to throw caution to the wind and spend time in the rural southeastern part of the country, where there is little evidence of widespread transmission of COVID-19. "We really don't have this problem in the provinces. Covid is only brought to our country by people coming from Europe and America. It affects a few people in Freetown and not us up-country," he wrote. "We are safe."

It's hard to tell whether Jonas, a public health and zoonotic infections expert, was thinking wishfully or epidemiologically, or both. The same week as our email exchange, the government of Sierra Leone, in an effort to head off a "second wave" of COVID-19 infections, had imposed a national daily curfew from 10 p.m. to 5 a.m. on all residents and visitors, restricted travel between districts, and closed restaurants and bars on the weekends. Masks would be required in all public spaces. Public transportation would operate with limited seating capacity to accommodate social distancing guidelines. Land and sea borders were also closed to travelers. Mosques and churches could hold services provided they did not last longer than 90 minutes.

The extent to which all of these rules and regulations would be enforced or enforceable was not clear, but the pronouncements were made nonetheless. I searched for visual clues on Sierra Leonean social media and news accounts to see how these measures were being enacted and observed. In a Freetown bank, customers wearing paper masks queued a few feet from each other as they waited for service; beachside, friends sunbathed, drinks in hand; aspiring models and designers wore masks that matched their *ankara* or African attire; families celebrated birthdays at a local restaurant. February events like art shows and performances were postponed "in consultation with the national COVID response center" and rescheduled for March.

With all these measures in place, numbers of infections and deaths have remained relatively low in Sierra Leone. As of March 7, 2021, the government had confirmed 3,918 cases of COVID-19 and 79 deaths since the pandemic began.

Cheered by all of this, I began to check the cost of air travel to Freetown. My university is not allowing its employees to embark on nonessential travel—even to places with low COVID-19 incidence like Sierra Leone. Would flights to Freetown through Paris and Amsterdam still be running? (The London route on British Airways was closed

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during the country's Ebola epidemic and never returned.) Or would I have to take the dreaded flight to Freetown via Brussels, with its terrible airport and flight attendants known for acting aggressively toward black travelers? (The diamond trade, along with humanitarian organizations' need to keep moving supplies and people in and out of Ebola-affected areas, kept this route operational back then.) Visa and immigration protocols had also changed due to COVID-19; would my multiyear, multiple-entry visa still be valid?

Jonas' words ring in my head: "We are safe."

WARTIME CONDITIONS

The Sierra Leonean government has imposed stringent protocols for passengers entering the country via Freetown's Lungi International Airport. In addition to being required to provide a negative test result at the airport, arriving passengers are assessed for symptoms, and are offered two tests: a rapid diagnostic test requiring a blood draw, and a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, which entails a nasal swab and produces results in 1–3 days. Passengers' passports are held until the PCR results are received. Departing passengers must provide a negative test within 72 hours of departure. All of these tests are at traveler's expense: $80 upon arrival; 500,000 leones upon departure. An additional fee is assessed if a traveler wants to have a test performed in the convenience of their home or hotel room.

Interventions like curfews and internal travel bans might be epidemic security theater.

These measures ensure proper surveillance and control at the country's most manageable border. Many other interventions—curfews, internal travel bans, and the like—might very well be epidemic security theater, the likes of which were also staged with great gusto in the United States, when then-President Donald Trump proposed cordoning off New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey from the rest of the Eastern Seaboard, and closed borders to travelers from China, but not to those from the European countries belonging to the visa-free Schengen Area. By the time the United States had provisionally closed its borders to visitors from the European Union, the viral strains originating in EU member countries had already gained a foothold in major US metropolitan areas and in the places EU residents traveled to thereafter.

Closing borders, as many had predicted, did little to slow transmission in the United States and Europe, but it offered a small degree of solace for those of us living in what felt like a vacuum of public health leadership. Such arrangements also allowed countries like Sierra Leone to flex their diplomatic muscle—a role reversal remarked upon by citizens of African nations, who regularly undergo an extensive and often onerous process to obtain visitors' visas to enter the EU and the United States.

The Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces coordinates the country's COVID-19 emergency response. Elsewhere, I've referred to this as the militarization of epidemic response: the use of military assets, infrastructures, and expertise to carry out public health functions. These functions might include surveillance, containment, isolation, contact tracing, logistical support, and care. It remains an empirical question whether a martial logic—that is, the threat of "legitimate" use of force by the state—underpins the delivery of care and is experienced by communities as violent. I think it is clearer that the use of the military in this way reflects the limited scope of local public health expertise and capacity to address epidemics. It also demonstrates the continuous investment in the professionalization of the military—at the expense of institutions and logics of care.

During the Ebola outbreak, many Sierra Leoneans said that the epidemic reminded them of conditions during wartime. The political scientist Fodei Batty, for example, argued that the path of the Ebola virus from the Liberian border was remarkably similar to that of the Revolutionary United Front rebel forces in 1991. The Ebola virus has been described by anthropologist Sylvanus Spencer and others as "the invisible enemy" against which a war is waged.

I've argued against the salience of viral invisibility alone for explaining a martial approach to the Ebola epidemic—after all, viruses live in bodies. Efforts to "fight" Ebola would be a war waged against the people serving as hosts to the virus; the arenas for these battles would be marked by checkpoints established and staffed by members of the armed forces. During that epidemic, command centers of various kinds became sites where the movements of patients and their contacts were documented and traced, and through which emergency calls and other communications were routed. Isolation, containment, and treatment centers managed those suspected or confirmed to be infected.

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Early Ebola survivors whom I talked to often found themselves in the crosshairs of the state's epidemic response apparatus. They were hunted down and placed in isolation as they awaited a confirmatory diagnosis, interrogated about the people and places with which they were in contact, and listed in case files among "suspects," and they suffered the indignity of watching fellow patients, neighbors, and loved ones die from organ failure and neglect. As the coordinated Ebola response became more robust and oriented toward offering care, rather than containment, isolation, and an undignified death, the martial elements of public health subsided—or at least were hidden from view.

In placing responsibility for managing the COVID-19 epidemic with the ministry of defense, Sierra Leone's current president, Julius Maada Bio, took a cue from his predecessor, Ernest Bai Koroma, who was in office during the Ebola outbreak. Koroma deemed the response of the ministry of health and sanitation unsatisfactory and replaced it with the ministry of defense as the lead coordinating agency. Bio, in turn, appears to have bypassed the health ministry altogether. It would seem that he had little faith in the public health agency's capacity to coordinate the response to an epidemic crisis. It is not clear to me whether this is a fair assessment; was it too much to expect that the health ministry had been properly equipped to take on the logistical and managerial challenges of the pandemic?

ELITE TRANSMISSION

Outside of Freetown, is Sierra Leone "safe," as Jonas insisted? I keep thinking of Jonas' earlier insight, that the earliest reported COVID-19 cases on the African continent were found among political and other elites who traveled internationally with some frequency. This appeared to be the pattern on the continent, raising questions about how global hierarchies shaped the transmission of the virus.

I learned about the first cases of COVID-19 in Mozambique, for example, through a series of forwarded texts to my partner, who had lived and worked as a surgery researcher in the country for two years. One of his former colleagues had included him in a group text that detailed the transnational movements of Maputo's mayor, who had been rumored to be the first case of the virus in Mozambique. Supposedly the mayor had been seated next to an infected member of the British royal family at a Commonwealth meeting in London. When I recited this story to the journalist Joe Penney, he said that he had heard the same from Mozambican journalists.

Joe called me because he was writing a story about such African cases and how we should interpret them, in light of the patterns that were emerging from the data. In his research, he learned that "Senegal's first case, for example, was imported from France, while the Gambia's was from the UK, Angola's was from Portugal, and Suriname's was from the Netherlands."

I told him, "The colonial legacy lives in viral movements. . . . The 'knowing' is also a colonial symptom. There may have very well been an earlier case, but we know about the traveler. Their sickness registers."

Wryly, he replied, "On Facebook and in WhatsApp groups, some commentators have used the term 'coronized,' a play off 'colonized,' to describe this phenomenon."

The virus moved through elite networks, for sure, but many of us wondered about the drivers, cooks, cleaners, and others who work alongside, and for, these political and managerial elites that so preoccupied Jonas in his assessment of COVID-19 risk in Sierra Leone's provinces. What about all those Freetonians, both jet-setters and ordinary people, who often have family connections to the provinces? Was it really so safe out there?

'THANK GOD IT'S THEM INSTEAD OF YOU'

Every few months, in this long year of isolation and lockdown in the United States, national media outlets ask: How do we explain the relatively low number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in Africa and Asia? (The question came up in the *New York Times* again this morning, which is why I am revising this piece once again.) I don't like this question. It implies that African survival is not simply an anomaly but a perverse deviation from the natural order of things.

Without being able to look to Africa's failures for solace in the midst of our own misery and suffering, how do we define ourselves? What we have seen in the United States, for example, is that our racialized, class, and regional inequalities—and our demography, our austerity, our neoliberal governance of health care and public health—have shaped transmission dynamics in ways that have disproportionately sickened and killed the poor, the underinsured, the marginalized, the elderly, the black and brown, and people with disabilities.

But why had Sierra Leone (and much of Africa) been spared thus far? Is it an artifact of poor data

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collection efforts and miscounting, of which many health systems are indeed guilty? Is it poor diagnostic capacity—a lack of the ability to test a broad swath of the population in a timely and orderly manner, and report the results? Pseudo-explanations for a relatively low pandemic toll in Africa flow from the morbid expectation that any divergence or deviance from the norm—African sickness and death—is about what Africans *are* rather than what they did (or failed to do).

Could regional differences in the pandemic's impact have some biological explanation? Some have argued that exposure to a range of pathogens over a short lifetime may have primed West African immune systems. Most of the deaths due to COVID-19 worldwide are clustered among people over 70 years of age. Could we then attribute Sierra Leone's case numbers to an accident of demography? Like many neighboring countries, its population skews relatively young. According to recent estimates, only 4 percent of Sierra Leoneans are over the age of 65—which may well have contributed to the low number of deaths.

Good ventilation in tropical homes and time spent outside have also been offered as explanations. But we know that many households are multigenerational, crowded, and packed in close to their neighbors; that running water and basic sanitation services may be scarce; and that mass transit, transportation hubs, and market areas tend to be crowded.

None of these factors can serve as a universal explanation. We may never know the reasons for the differences in case numbers. We are nowhere near the end of this global crisis.

But here's a look at what we do know.

Whatever is responsible for the relatively low number of cases and deaths in Sierra Leone—and in the region at large—the prevailing sense among regional health experts has been that the earlier Ebola epidemic prepared the country for the worst. Early coronavirus screening of passengers entering the country might have helped to reduce the numbers early on. Making sure that diagnostic tests were available and laboratories could process them was the next phase. Strides made during the Ebola epidemic surely mattered.

The type of pathogen also matters, however. Although the early symptoms of Ebola virus disease—fever, headache, and myalgia—are quite similar to those of other common afflictions in the region, the virus is not easily transmitted by presymptomatic carriers; it is most likely spread during the disease's wet phase, which includes vomiting, diarrhea, and hemorrhaging. This makes Ebola relatively easy to control (despite the terror it causes) once it is known to be the causative agent of disease—and once responders are properly equipped with protective gear, and the physical environment accommodates proper ventilation and disinfection of surfaces. That is not the case for COVID-19.

Even a small number of severe cases could tax an already frail health system, so Sierra Leone might not be "safe" in the grand scheme of things. If we take seriously the idea that viruses move in bodies, and that how bodies move is largely rooted in the political, economic, and social reasons for crossing national borders with some frequency, then we should also be able to recognize that the distribution of opportunity to travel—the ease with which one travels—will shape early transmission dynamics. Bodies remember.

The colonial legacy lives in viral movements.

And if we take seriously the idea that the assemblage of agencies and organizations has been primed to respond to a disease crisis and can act accordingly, then it makes sense that these groups can effectively mobilize workers to trace contacts, administer diagnostic tests, provide care, and educate individuals and communities to protect themselves and others. Institutions remember.

The Ebola outbreak ended in the region in June 2016. Ebola virus disease had infected nearly 30,000 people in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, and killed around 11,000 of those infected. Many were left to mourn the Ebola dead. People with other health conditions died during the epidemic for lack of care. Many were buried as possible Ebola cases, irrespective of their diagnosis. The health system was also ravaged: many clinicians had fallen ill and died.

"It was hell," a health official who had worked in Moyamba at the height of the epidemic told me in 2017, during my visit to a refurbished district primary health care clinic. "Pure hell." And he wasn't even responsible for clinical care, but for the work of tracing Ebola contacts, managing the movements of sick people, and coordinating district-level efforts to bury the dead. These traumatic experiences surely shape how health

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workers have prepared for and responded to the current coronavirus epidemic.

ROLLOUTS AND BUBBLES

During a virtual book club meeting in March 2021 to discuss a chapter in Paul Farmer's new book, *Fevers, Feuds, and Diamonds: Ebola and the Ravages of History*, I joined Paul and two of his Partners in Health colleagues, Jon Lascher and Bailor Barrie, both calling in from Freetown. Bailor, a medical doctor who trained in Sierra Leone during the country's civil war, and Jon, the senior administrator responsible for keeping the operations of the aid organization running smoothly there, described in passing the COVID-19 meetings they'd recently attended.

In the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, a new set of Ebola cases had emerged in Guinea. Fortunately, Jon told us, the government and the World Health Organization were following the carefully crafted protocol that emerged from the previous outbreak. Thanks to the decades of development of vaccine candidates and multiple clinical trials carried out during the 2014 outbreak, Ebola vaccines are ready to be rolled out in the area, just as the COVID-19 vaccination campaign is getting underway in the United States and the global North, amid debates about equity in global vaccine distribution.

Now Sierra Leoneans can see the fruits of their scientific and clinical labor. Now, rather than scrambling to stitch together a response to these new cases, public health officials can figure out how to distribute vaccines to known contacts of Ebola patients and educate communities about getting "suspected" cases tested and treated early.

What will a robust Ebola response look like this time? Will it prioritize containment and control, as a health security approach implies? Or will it balance such approaches with early detection and diagnosis for the purpose of providing life-saving care? (A major criticism leveled by Farmer and Sierra Leonean clinicians working in public hospitals at groups like Doctors Without Borders was that they had limited the scope of care they offered to very sick Ebola patients. Intensive care was not the standard of care in humanitarian clinics in the early stages of that outbreak—they offered oral rehydration solution instead of intravenous drips, for example—which likely resulted in many lives lost.)

It was not lost on me that as I was sitting in my basement office, living through a pandemic, I was rehashing the lessons learned from an Ebola outbreak thousands of miles away, as leadership at every level in my well-resourced country failed to offer reprieve for those of us forced to live in isolation from each other, or in household "bubbles," for an indeterminate duration. Sierra Leone's government had yet to get a handle on COVID-19 everywhere in the country, but officials knew that they needed to prepare health personnel and communities to distribute and receive the 200,000 vaccine doses donated by the Chinese government, as well as more than 520,000 doses expected to be delivered by May through the international COVAX initiative.

Pondering whether Sierra Leoneans will remain "safe" from COVID-19 and its effects, I think some of the lessons from their two-year struggle against Ebola may offer clues. Vigilance and preparation—as well as adaptations made in previous crises—may have put the country's leadership in a good position from which to develop and implement its pandemic plan. Early action was key. Networks of solidarity and support have been important for ensuring the distribution of goods, services, and information at the subregional level. We saw glimmers of this in the United States. But on many fronts, we failed, thanks to fragmented leadership and inequitable, underresourced public health and health care systems. ■

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"COVID-19 has demonstrated the limitations of African states, yet it has simultaneously shown that collective African responses, driven by a strong spirit of pan-Africanism, can work well."

The African Union Makes Its Mark in the Pandemic

THOMAS KWASI TIEKU

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to widespread predictions of dire consequences for the African continent. The World Bank forecasted that the pandemic would sink the entire continent into a recession for the first time in 25 years. World Bank economists estimated that approximately 23 million Africans were at risk of being pushed into extreme poverty. Others predicted that African health infrastructure would collapse, and that the continent as a whole would likely become the epicenter of pandemic-related deaths.

At the time of this writing, none of these catastrophic predictions have come to fruition. Most African economies do not yet show signs of recession, the regional rate of infection is lower than the global average, and COVID-19 has so far killed fewer people in Africa than in Asia, Europe, or the Americas. As the *New York Times* pointed out on January 2, 2021, "All 54 African countries put together have registered fewer COVID-19 deaths than France."

Most scientists agree that African nations so far have weathered the storm relatively better than many rich countries elsewhere. The lower infection and death rates across the African continent, the *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* reported in August 2020, had aroused "the astonishment of scientists and public health workers alike."

Scientists and journalists have offered several possible explanations for this African pandemic puzzle. They mainly emphasize the continent's youthful population, lessons learned from previous infectious disease outbreaks, climatic conditions, and strong responses from African governments. I contend that the new spirit of pan-Africanism that guided African governments' responses to COVID-19 is another key reason for the comparatively better management of this crisis on the continent.

Over the past two decades, the new spirit of pan-Africanism has been expressed through the creation of African Union (AU) institutions and the increasing coordination of common African positions on major international issues. This preference for a collective approach to global issues led African governments to empower the AU to coordinate their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. The AU provided political leadership, medical expertise, scientific research, evidence-based policy solutions, and resources to help African governments fight the pandemic.

THE NEW PAN-AFRICANISM

This new pan-African spirit is a departure from twentieth-century pan-Africanism. Whereas the older version focused on the fight against racism, colonialism, and apartheid, and on the building of nation-states, the new pan-Africanism seeks to find continent-wide solutions to problems facing African states. The AU was created in 2001 to provide the institutional anchor for this collective approach.

Ten governing bodies, otherwise known as organs, make up the AU. Among them are the Assembly of Heads of State and Government (the Assembly), the Commission of the AU (the AU Commission), and the Specialized Technical Committees. These organs became the key coordinating institutions in Africa's response to COVID-19.

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The new pan-African spirit demands stronger solidarity among African states. This solidarity has found concrete expression in the AU's deployments of African intervention forces to prevent, resolve, and manage conflicts in trouble spots in countries such as Burundi, Sudan, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. The AU has often mobilized domestic African resources and international support for African regional economic communities, or for United Nations–backed interventions in African states. One example is the AU's mobilization of funding and political support for the African-led International Support Mission to Mali in 2013.

Pan-African solidarity has produced buzz phrases such as "African solutions to African problems" and "non-indifference toward African problems." Even though the deployment of these slogans was often for rhetorical purposes, over time they have caught African governments in a kind of trap. This pan-African solidarity trap, as British-Ghanaian scholar Densua Mumford described it in a recent article in *African Affairs*, often compels African leaders to assist counterparts in difficult circumstances.

The pandemic has forced the AU to demonstrate its value to African states.

At times, this social power has been used not to promote the greater good of the African continent, but to advance the parochial interests of governing elites. Such cases include the deployment of the pan-African solidarity norm to protect leaders, including former Sudanese President Omar al Bashir and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, from prosecution by the International Criminal Court.

Yet the pan-African solidarity trap also has enabled African governments to band together and strengthen relations with like-minded regimes in other regions, especially those in the global South. This has resulted in stronger cooperation between Africa and Brazil, China, India, and Turkey, as well as the European Union and the United States. It is reflected in the opening of the US and Chinese missions to the AU in the 2000s, Africa–China summits, and Africa–US summits.

Greater cooperation with donors encouraged the European Union to create the African Peace Facility, which has funded AU peace support operations over the past 20 years. China donated a $200 million multipurpose building complex in Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, completed in 2012, to serve as the AU headquarters.

The AU Commission worked with the United States to create the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) in 2016. The Africa CDC emerged as an important pandemic coordinating body, providing evidence-based information and institutional innovations to help African governments respond quickly and effectively to COVID-19.

At the multilateral level, the new spirit of pan-Africanism called for assertive African agency on the world stage. This required a forum where African governments could coordinate their policies and actions on key international issues. The biannual summits of African leaders serve this purpose.

The Permanent Representatives Committee, made up of African ambassadors to the AU, meets regularly at the Addis Ababa headquarters to prepare for the summits, supported by an international bureaucracy of more than 1,700 professionals. To ensure that the national leaders are well informed, Specialized Technical Committees are mandated to conduct background studies and prepare reports for consideration at each summit. The Council of Ministers meets before the national leaders to review these reports and make recommendations.

The coordinating work of the AU has helped African states exercise agency and speak in an effective, collective voice in global affairs over the past two decades. The AU's layered decision-making structure guided Africa's response to COVID-19.

MOBILIZING EXPERTISE

The Africa CDC was asked to coordinate African states' pandemic response before the continent's first official case was detected in Egypt on February 14, 2020. Rather than following the parochial nationalist approaches adopted elsewhere in the world, Africa's response to COVID-19 became "a rare case of internationalism" in the pandemic, as German scholar Antonia Witt observed in April 2020.

The pan-Africanization of Africa's response to COVID-19 is in keeping with the practice over the past 20 years of African states working through AU channels to address major international challenges, as well as the regular deployment of the AU's Specialized Technical Committees, including the AFRICA CDC, as first responders. What is perhaps surprising is how effectively the embryonic Africa CDC led the COVID-19 response—and

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the universal acceptance of its leadership, both in Africa and around the world.

The Africa CDC coordinated distribution of medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE). It provided expertise, offered technical guidance, fought COVID-19 disinformation, and served as an advocate for Africa. It worked with global partners to mobilize resources, including nearly half a billion doses of vaccines for AU member states.

The Africa CDC's first response to the pandemic was to bring together leading infectious disease experts and other health care workers to explore setting a continent-wide strategy and forming a task force to fight the virus. The Africa CDC director, Dr. John Nkengasong, inaugurated the Africa Task Force for Novel Coronavirus (AFCOR) on February 3, 2020, at least 11 days before the detection of the first infection on the continent.

AFCOR's mandate is to support pan-African cooperation and African leadership by sharing information and best practices, building technical capacity, facilitating sound policy decisions, coordinating detection efforts, and overseeing disease control at borders. The task force has six working groups, co-chaired by AU member states and AFRICA CDC staff, that focus on surveillance, infection prevention and control in health care facilities, clinical management of patients with severe infections, laboratory diagnosis and analysis, risk communication, and supply chains and stockpiling of medical goods.

The Africa CDC brought AU ministers of health together on February 4, 2020, to adopt a joint pandemic strategy. The twin goals of the strategy were prevention of COVID-19 infections, illness, and death in AU member states, as well as the minimization of social disruption and economic consequences. Health ministers convened again virtually on June 24–25 to discuss vaccine development and access.

The Africa CDC took a three-pronged approach to put its strategy into operation. First, it gathered information from various experts and institutions to outline measures that African governments could put into place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. The plan emphasized physical distancing, enhanced surveillance, testing, contact tracing, mask wearing, and research on preventive measures deployed around the world. The Africa CDC also provided the framework for AU external partners to donate diagnostic tools, PPE, vaccines, and technical assistance to African states. Through this framework, African countries received large donations of PPE from countries such as China and from private enterprises including the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba. These supplies were distributed to African public health institutions.

The second part of the Africa CDC's strategy focused on preventing deaths. It prioritized procuring therapies and medical equipment (such as ventilators), and providing technical assistance to AU member states and ongoing clinical-management training sessions for health care workers.

The third part of the strategy was providing recommendations to African governments on ways to prevent social and economic harm from the pandemic. The Africa CDC called for social protection programs and community engagement in the planning and implementation of COVID-19 responses. While studies have yet to establish the extent to which African states followed these policy recommendations, it is no coincidence that several governments introduced a series of social protection programs as part of their lockdown measures. For instance, the Ghanaian government provided free access to water and electricity for citizens, while the Ethiopian government offered a 50 percent reduction in rent.

MAESTRO RAMAPHOSA

If there was ever a national leader who behaved like a head of government for the entire African continent, it was South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who took over the one-year rotating chair of the AU Assembly in February 2020. He transformed this largely ceremonial position into the de facto center of African leadership on COVID-19. Like a conductor of a large orchestra, Ramaphosa struck the political chord around which African pandemic responses revolved.

Ramaphosa provided strong political support to the AU system and gave the Africa CDC much-needed backing. He created a special envoy's office to develop a strategy for Africa to secure funding, medical equipment, and vaccines. He campaigned for these resources, criticized rich countries for marginalizing Africa in the vaccine supply chain, and spoke to other world leaders on behalf of African states.

Ramaphosa converted the five-member bureau of the Assembly into a mini-cabinet when he took over the AU chair. At its first virtual meeting in early March 2020, the bureau established a COVID-19 fund for Africa with $5 million in seed money, some of which was directed to the

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Africa CDC. The bureau also brought the leadership of the major African regional organizations into AU pandemic decision-making. To focus on the pandemic, it set aside South Africa's original priorities for its year in the chair and other items on the AU's previous agenda, postponing the launch of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement from 2020 to January 2021.

The South African government held daily consultations with African counterparts, maintaining close contact with the director of the Africa CDC and the leadership of regional economic organizations, and chaired meetings of African health ministers and finance ministers. At their first emergency meeting in February 2020, the health ministers adopted the Africa CDC strategy and set a deadline of mid-March for African states to complete their own COVID-19 plans in line with that model. In subsequent meetings, they also adopted the Africa CDC vaccine strategy.

Ramaphosa embarked on a global charm offensive, talking to leaders around the world about how they could assist Africa to counter the effects of COVID-19. He spoke regularly to the director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, and UN Secretary-General António Guterres. He lobbied G8 leaders to support African governments' efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic, and called on donors to provide debt relief.

South Africa and India made a joint request to the World Trade Organization (WTO) to grant waivers from intellectual property rights for COVID-19 vaccines, urging the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge to developing countries to allow them to produce cheaper versions of the vaccines and medical equipment to fight the pandemic. The campaign was endorsed by the AU and the WHO in February 2021. As of the time of this writing, the WTO had yet to make a decision.

With Ramaphosa's guidance, the Africa CDC developed the AU Vaccines Financing Strategy. It was expected to bring in $12 billion in contributions from the World Bank, the African Export-Import Bank, and other donors.

At home, the South African government adopted, at very early stages of the pandemic, some of the most stringent response measures in the world, including lockdowns, flight cancellations, and border and airspace closures. It mandated other evidence-based prevention measures, including handwashing, mask-wearing, and social distancing. According to African health expert Agnes Binagwaho and her research associate Kedest Mathewos, the South African approach contributed to the decrease in the rate of new infections from 42 percent to 4 percent by November 2020. Several African countries took early steps to implement stringent COVID-19 responses similar to South Africa's.

The South African approach has not significantly changed since the discovery of a new variant of the virus circulating in the country, except for the government's decision to sell its order of the AstraZeneca vaccine to other African states, due to concern that it cannot protect South Africans from the new variant as effectively as other vaccines.

REGIONAL ORGANIZER

The AU took on an important coordinating role in responding to COVID-19 at both political and technical levels. At the political level, the AU Commission worked closely with partners like China, India, the United States, and the WHO to obtain support for African countries. The Commission, together with the bureau of the Assembly, provided a much-needed coordinating arena where African governments could share experiences and lessons on pandemic response.

The AU took on an important coordinating role in responding to COVID-19.

The Commission also brought the continent's regional economic groupings into its COVID-19 decision-making processes. Some of them took a prominent role in helping countries within their regions cope with the pandemic. The East African Community established the Regional Electronic Cargo and Drivers Tracking System to identify COVID-19 cases on the borders of East African states; the Economic Community of West African States standardized the fees member states can charge citizens for COVID-19 testing at international airports.

At the technical level, the Africa CDC coordinated the pandemic-related activities of public health institutions, working to minimize duplication of effort. The Africa CDC also coordinated aid to African countries from donors outside the continent, and worked with African governments to deliver the supplies they had received from abroad to health providers.

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The Africa CDC created the Africa Medical Supplies Platform to enable the sale of state-of-the-art medical equipment, such as ventilators and patient-monitoring equipment, to African countries. At a virtual meeting with the Africa Group of UN member states on April 15, 2020, Guterres praised the Africa CDC for ensuring that "medical aprons, masks, thermometers, face shields, gloves, goggles, gowns, and ventilators will reach many places in need across the continent."

The Africa CDC also moved quickly to help African countries address the challenges they were facing in procuring COVID-19 vaccines. On January 28, 2021, it announced that the AU had secured 400 million more doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine for the African continent. This was in addition to 270 million doses that the Africa CDC had previously acquired for the continent from Pfizer, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson. Although 670 million doses are not enough to cover Africa's estimated population of 1.3 billion, they provide interim relief to a continent that has struggled to acquire vaccines widely used in rich countries.

QUASHING QUACK CURES

The Africa CDC did not just organize procurement of medical supplies; it became a knowledge hub in the pandemic, providing evidence-based information to African policymakers and the general public. It organized a weekly press briefing on the latest developments, including the rate of infection in Africa, and shared best practices from around the world. It aggregated new COVID-19 research into digestible public health information and daily updates. Beyond sharing useful information, the Africa CDC also fought disinformation and fake news, moving swiftly to discredit false claims for the efficacy of traditional medications as COVID-19 treatments.

Most notable was the crafty way the Africa CDC addressed Madagascar's claim to have found a cure. The government had announced with much fanfare in April 2020 that the Covid Organics tonic, derived from the plant *Artemisia annua*, or sweet wormwood, and developed by the Malagasy Institute of Applied Research, could both prevent and cure COVID-19. The state produced the tonic on an industrial scale, marketing the product to its own citizens and exporting it to other African countries.

Misgivings expressed about the supposed cure by the international medical community, including the WHO, were rebuffed by the Madagascar government. On May 12, President Andry Rajoelina said, "If it was a European country that had actually discovered this remedy, would there be so much doubt? I don't think so."

The Africa CDC requested data from Madagascar on the tonic's safety and efficacy for review. The results established that there was no scientific basis for the claims. These findings were quietly delivered through diplomatic channels to African countries, putting an end to the promotion and export of the supposed cure.

CAPACITY GAPS

Although the AU has provided important tools for African countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic—sometimes more competently than certain governments in rich countries—there are still enormous gaps and limitations in the pan-African approach. A comprehensive discussion of these gaps is beyond the scope of this essay, but it is important to point out a few of them.

The AU is dependent on the generosity of external parties for many of the resources it has mobilized in the pandemic. It does not have the capacity to buy enough vaccine doses for African populations. The AU seems incapable of effectively addressing the vaccine nationalism and the monopolization of vaccine supply chains that are increasing inequality in the global distribution of essential health benefits. Compared with the number of orders placed by rich states, Africa is far behind. The vaccine doses that the AU has acquired so far will cover approximately just a quarter of the total African population. Most African citizens are unlikely to be vaccinated before the end of 2021.

Given the elitist way in which many African governments and the AU tend to approach issues, as well as the urban-biased distribution of health infrastructure in Africa, poor Africans and those in rural areas probably will not be vaccinated anytime soon. In all likelihood, the virus will be controlled in the continent's affluent urban spaces, but not in rural and poor neighborhoods where over 60 percent of Africans reside. A disease that was imported into Africa by elites and urban residents will turn into a silent killer of poor Africans.

Even the Africa CDC's current approach to COVID-19 education and disinformation is limited and has many holes. Most of its communications, including strategy documents, are delivered in English and French. Statistically speaking, no more than a quarter of the entire African

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population receives its primary sources of information in these two languages.

This communications challenge is compounded by the fact that the Africa CDC conducts most of its outreach through the Internet, which is accessible mainly to urban elites and affluent town dwellers. The Africans who need COVID-19 education the most tend to rely on local languages and traditional media, such as radio broadcasts, for their information. The Africa CDC's approach makes it difficult for those without Western education and Internet access to receive the essential information that it provides.

Moreover, the AU preference for Africans educated in the Western style of medical training (most Africa CDC meetings are attended by health care professionals formally educated and trained in medical schools) has excluded the region's numerous indigenous and herbal medical practitioners from the pan-African COVID-19 response. Since a high percentage of Africans relies on traditional medicine, as a 2019 WHO report showed, this oversight will make it difficult for health care workers to persuade them to get vaccinated.

The AU's pandemic meetings so far have been attended by older, experienced Africans with fancy titles. While this has given the AU access to expertise, the process has marginalized the voices of the estimated 60 percent of Africans under the age of 25, and the more than 90 percent of Africans who do not have the credentials required to participate in these decision-making processes. The absence of complementary and consultative processes with ordinary Africans will likely bias the AU's COVID-19 policies in favor of Westernized, urbanized, and elite demographic groups.

THE WAY FORWARD

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the AU to demonstrate its value to African states. Through the Africa CDC, public health institutions and governments have adopted evidence-based and innovative pan-African policy measures to address the immediate impact of COVID-19. But the AU response is providing temporary relief that needs to be coupled with long-term, sustainable measures.

Such steps may include developing better health care infrastructure across the African continent, establishing regional centers of excellence for health research in different parts of Africa, and enhancing the preventive capacity of the Africa CDC. Another priority is securing technology transfers as well as waivers from the WTO to allow African states to produce cheaper versions of the most effective vaccines. The AU should also do more to solicit input from ordinary Africans and incorporate it in decision-making processes.

COVID-19 has demonstrated the limitations of African states, yet it has simultaneously shown that collective African responses, driven by a strong spirit of pan-Africanism, can work well. African states have used the past 20 years to develop the AU formula for responding to collective African problems. The COVID-19 response may well give them the confidence they need to use this template to address other pressing problems confronting the continent.

The AU's pandemic response also has global implications. Time will tell if its approach is tried elsewhere in the world, or if others deem it a one-trick pony. Nevertheless, the African Union has given global policymakers a strong hint of how to solve serious transnational challenges in the future. ■

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"Geography—the places people live in, work in, and traverse—not only shapes people's everyday lives, it also determines their futures."

Spatial Injustice in Johannesburg in the Time of COVID-19

CAROLINE WANJIKU KIHATO, SARAH DE VILLIERS, SUMAYYA MOHAMED, AND BONOLO MOHULATSI

When Elizabeth moved to Ivory Park at the northeastern edge of Johannesburg twenty-four years ago, it was open land. She was a mother of three young children, and remembers building a basic shelter to protect them from Johannesburg's capricious storms. "There was a shack and a toilet," she tells us. Then, gesturing towards her two-bedroom house, she adds, "The government came and built this house for me."

We imagined how different Ivory Park must have been back then. There would not have been the stone wall that marks the perimeter of Elizabeth's 216-square-meter property, or the green metal gate at the entrance, or the six rental rooms and outhouse toilet she has built over the years, or the sidewalk, paved road, and street lights. All of these amenities came later.

Located on what was originally a farm, Ivory Park was established in the early 1990s, after the fall of apartheid, by the Transvaal Provincial Administration. The objective was to ease congestion and overcrowding in nearby Tembisa and Alexandra, which had been segregated black townships under apartheid. Due to the restrictions on black people living in white parts of the apartheid city, places like Alexandra and Tembisa grew beyond their capacity to accommodate newcomers. Ivory Park was relatively close to both Johannesburg, the country's economic powerhouse, and Pretoria, its capital city. New arrivals hoped to gain access to the economic opportunities available in one of the continent's wealthiest geographic spaces.

Initially, the settlement's residents were left to fend for themselves, building their homes informally, with few basic amenities like water supply and toilets. But in 1997, the City of Johannesburg gave the settlement an upgrade. It initiated a land-use plan to formalize the demarcation of residential and commercial areas, roads, and public facilities like taxi ranks in the cadastral plan. It invested in infrastructure: sewerage, water, and electricity. And through the South African government's ambitious Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), which sought to provide housing to citizens who were disadvantaged under apartheid, it built homes—like the two-bedroom house that Elizabeth lives in.

As in other parts of the city, however, the demand for homes and services far outpaced what the government was able to provide. Soon, underutilized land, including the backyards of RDP houses, mushroomed into the sorts of informal settlements that the city had originally sought to replace.

Sitting in Elizabeth's front yard, we were surrounded by her sacks of retrieved recyclable trash: 2-liter glass bottles, milk bottles, plastic buckets, cardboard, and empty fish, bean, and tomato tins. Each category—glass, aluminium, plastic, and paper—would fetch a different price when she took it to Asibambane, the recycling facility four and a half kilometers away. "The bottles for milk, the two-liter ones . . . and the aluminium cans earn the best," she

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said. A full sack, which she explained can take weeks to accumulate, "earns 500 Rands" (about US$30).

It was August 2019, in the world before the COVID-19 pandemic. The four of us visitors were huddled under a tree that provided respite from the blazing late-winter sun. We were researching space and the impact it has on everyday life and developmental outcomes.

As we began speaking to Elizabeth, some of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren—she lives with ten of them—joined in the conversation, sometimes directing their own questions to the 62-year-old matriarch. "If I am staying home," she told us, "I am thinking too much. I visit people and laugh. I want to be with people."

Her teenage granddaughter, bobbing her head up and down, said, "My grandmother once told me that when she is recycling she forgets everything. She cries at home because of her stress, but when she is recycling, it removes all her stress."

SPACE MATTERS

In our research, we sought to explore the role that space plays in producing urban justice and injustice in Ivory Park. A product of legacies of apartheid, racial segregation, and exploitative capitalism, Ivory Park is one of Johannesburg's poorest areas.

If we have learned anything from the novel coronavirus, it is that space matters. The spaces we live in and share can make the difference between life and death. Geography—the places people live in, work in, and traverse—not only shapes people's everyday lives, it also determines their futures. If we center our analysis on the physical dimension in which life unfolds, at the confluence of everyday life and systemic inequalities, does that change how we understand justice?

Although notions of social, economic, and racial justice are well developed in urban policy debates, the idea of spatial justice is less familiar. It suggests that embedded in space is both a manifestation and an embodied experience of justice, or its opposite. City spaces that are deprived—of infrastructure, services, and communal resources like parks and other safe public places—produce and reproduce poor socioeconomic outcomes.

But material deprivation is not inevitable. The unequal spatial distribution of resources is an outcome of broader economic, political, and social processes that are underpinned by unequal power relations—exploitation, oppression, and marginalization.

The experience of injustice is dynamic and multidimensional. Quotidian embodied practices like sleeping, walking, even going to the bathroom, are shaped by the space in which they take place. For people living in deprived neighborhoods, each of these basic activities, which others take for granted, is rendered difficult by the chronic deficit of resources. What is more, the lack of basic amenities has a cascading effect on people's life courses. Resource-deprived neighborhoods not only make everyday living difficult, they trap residents in a vicious cycle of poverty.

Poor housing, for instance, can have a negative effect on health, which may affect a breadwinner's ability to work. This could result in the loss of household income, making it difficult to obtain basic necessities like food. For children in school whose health is already compromised, poor nutrition can hamper academic performance and dim their future chances in the labor market.

Figure 1. An aerial view of Ivory Park
Plots originally meant for single households are organized to accommodate many more.
Source: Counterspace and UrbanWorks, 2019
Key:

1. 5–square meter backyard rental room
2. Shared toilet
3. Shared water tap
4. Main original RDP house
5. Rental units
6. Street entrance
7. Internal waste sorting area

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This is not to suggest that no individual can move out of a poor neighborhood, or "rise above their circumstances" to change their life trajectory. Rather, the point is that doing so requires disproportionate effort compared with peers living in better parts of the city. It is this inequity, and the seemingly vortex-like forces that leave households with few options, that we define as spatially unjust.

We set about mapping these intersecting processes in Ivory Park. Our aim was to draw out the dialogue between context and embodied practices, between the socioeconomic and political processes that produce space and the practices that are produced by it.

Over the years, Ivory Park homeowners lucky enough to have received an RDP home have capitalized on a strong rental market by building informal backyard rooms or leasing space in their backyards for self-built dwellings. A February 2018 study by the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (GCRO)—a partnership of the University of Johannesburg, the University of the Witwatersrand, the Gauteng provincial government, and local government—found that this has been the fastest-growing housing market in Gauteng, South Africa's wealthiest province. The report shows that between 2001 and 2016, the number of backyard dwellings in Gauteng more than doubled. This phenomenon has been replicated in other cities across South Africa, with governments playing catch-up to the growing demand for urban infrastructure and services.

Demand for homes and services far outpaced what the state was able to provide.

Although they provide much-needed housing in a city where affordable options for working-class people are limited, these makeshift settlements are far from ideal. They are often overcrowded, with inadequate or nonexistent infrastructure and services. Inhabitants of these spaces are disproportionately vulnerable to external shocks, such as an economic crisis or a pandemic.

A quality-of-life survey conducted by the GCRO in 2017–18 found that monthly income per household in Ivory Park was one-third of Johannesburg's average. Residents were more likely to be "less than satisfied" with water, sanitation, and public health facilities than people living in other parts of the city. The vast majority of residents, 88 percent, have no medical insurance, compared with the city average of 67 percent. Although 80 percent of the population has access to a flush toilet, many must share a communal facility with neighbors and strangers. It is often broken or much too far away to provide convenient access.

A LIFE IN POVERTY

Precious, a waste picker from Zimbabwe, decided to live in Ivory Park because of its central location, which allows her to walk to different neighborhoods on their trash days. It is also within walking distance of Asibambane, the recycling depot. "This location," she told us, "is in the center of Tembisa, is in the center of Ebony Park, Rabie Ridge—wherever we go recycling, it's in the center, so it's quick to travel everywhere. Plus, it is cheap."

Precious left Zimbabwe a decade ago to earn a living in Johannesburg and support her children, as well as at least 16 family members back home. She has a job as a domestic worker for one day a week. She spends the rest of her time reclaiming waste in neighboring suburbs, sorting it, and taking it to be recycled at Asibambane.

Since the demise of apartheid in the 1990s, South Africa has attracted an increasing number of migrants from the rest of the continent. Like Precious, they seek safety and opportunity in its cities. Official statistics put the number of migrants between 1.7 million and 3.5 million, though officials have been known to wildly exaggerate these figures. A former mayor of Johannesburg once claimed that there were 15 million undocumented foreigners in South Africa, a country of 58 million people.

The combination of growing unemployment, a weakening economy, increasing inequality, and loss of faith in the ability of the long-ruling party, the African National Congress, to deliver on its promises has dashed the dreams of many South Africans for a better life. In this context, foreign nationals, whose presence as business owners and informal workers has grown in the former black townships, are targets of xenophobic violence. Perceived as stealing South African jobs and bringing crime to the country, migrants have become the national bogeyman, used as a scapegoat by politicians who have failed to fulfill their promise to lift the majority of citizens out of poverty, and by communities competing for ever-dwindling resources.

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When we visited Precious in August 2019, we found her in her shared 5-square-meter corrugated-iron backyard room. It is full of stacks of personal belongings and what she considers valuable finds—a broken watch, a pair of sunglasses, or even old clothes that she could send back to Zimbabwe—culled from the trash that she sorts. "It is safer to put valuables inside," she tells us.

Her bed, which she shares with a friend, is the tarp-covered dirt floor, barely a meter wide. "When I wake up in the morning, I feel so tired, it is as if I am paralyzed and cannot move," she told us. "My home is small, so I can't live with my children, even when they come to visit. I have to find a place for them to sleep by asking the people around the community."

She works twelve hours a day, leaving her home at 5 a.m. to pull her trolley for miles, collecting trash. She has to time her trip carefully to avoid getting too thirsty in the midday heat—she cannot drink much water because she has no access to toilets on her route. At 2 p.m., she brings her trolley full of recycling back home, where she sorts it and then takes it to the recycling plant more than an hour away. Precious told us that she is lucky if she earns the equivalent of US$30 a month from recycling.

Like many residents in Ivory Park, she shares a communal toilet and tap with four other households. When the taps run dry, as they often do because of burst pipes or water shortages when the dams are low, she has to walk thirty minutes to fetch water from a public tap. "I have no problems other than the fact that I live in poverty. That's it," she told us.

UNEQUAL EXPOSURE

Urban space would come to play a leading role in the coronavirus pandemic. Yet COVID-19 only deepened the chronic resource deficits that plague marginalized urban spaces.

In early 2020, when the pandemic broke out, the World Health Organization issued guidelines meant to keep people safe from the rapidly spreading and deadly virus. The instructions were sensible from the standpoint of public health—maintaining a one-meter distance between people, frequent handwashing, avoiding crowded spaces, and isolating the sick. But it seemed absurd to expect Ivory Park residents like Precious and Elizabeth to be able to comply. Where would they find the meter of extra space to stay socially distanced? How could they avoid crowds when living so crammed together, or wash their hands frequently when they had no water? And where was the space to quarantine the sick?

Poor urban populations are disproportionately affected by such crises, and policy interventions intended to address crises tend to erode what little resilience these groups have managed to build up. When the South African government instituted lockdowns to curb the pandemic's spread, many in Ivory Park were dealt another blow. Police sometimes arrested and beat those who flouted curfew rules. Everyday acts of survival—working, fetching water, or just going to a toilet some distance away from home—became criminal transgressions.

Inhabitants of marginalized spaces thus face a double disadvantage in crises like the pandemic. Not only are they more exposed to the spread of disease, but they are also criminalized by policies ostensibly meant to mitigate suffering.

A 2020 report by the GCRO, "Mapping Vulnerability to COVID-19 in Gauteng," illustrates this double whammy. The report measured people's exposure to COVID-19 by considering their access to personal hygiene facilities and their ability to

Figure 2. A shared backyard toilet.
Source: Counterspace and UrbanWorks, 2019

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practice social distancing, as well as their struggles to weather the economic hardship of lockdowns, obtain medical insurance, and meet their basic needs, such as food.

The researchers found that in townships and informal settlements like Ivory Park, up to 60 percent of respondents experience various risk factors that increase their health and social vulnerability. Women in these spaces have been more likely to contract COVID-19 because they tend to live in crowded conditions, work in essential services as nurses, cleaners, or domestic workers, and rely on public transportation.

SURVIVAL ROUTINES

For the majority of Ivory Park residents, daily survival requires an incredible amount of maneuvering through space to overcome challenging circumstances. Everyday bodily routines such as going to the toilet, taking a bath, cooking, and working entail such inordinate physical and mental effort that the act of making it through another day becomes heroic.

A global event like the pandemic exposes the way in which urban space reinforces power hierarchies. These chronic injustices become clearer when we put space at the center of urban analyses.

Precious and Elizabeth's experiences are not isolated. Consider these typical examples of life in Ivory Park:

- The single mother with three children, who fears for their safety when they have to use a toilet 200 meters away across their street, and makes them to use buckets after dark.
- The food stand owner selling bread, pap (thick maize porridge), and meat, who has been vandalized so many times that he can never be sure when or whether he will be open for business.
- The domestic worker who spends two hours each day on public transport, and must weigh the risk of exposing her aging mother to COVID-19 against the need to keep putting food on the table.

The pandemic has hit many cities and households hard. But there is no doubt that poor areas have disproportionately carried the weight of its impact. Space has a cascading effect on urban life, and living in disadvantaged spaces erodes and undermines human capabilities. Spatial injustice keeps communities teetering precariously on the edge of survival.

Space is not a neutral container in which urban life takes place; it plays an active role in determining urban dwellers' ability to live and thrive in the city. To understand how justice works in urban contexts, we must see space beyond its physical form—the late urban theorist Edward Soja described it as an "active force shaping human life."

By taking space seriously, we aim to disrupt the ways in which our cities have normalized injustice. By juxtaposing the spatiality of ordinary life—quotidian embodied practices of sleeping, waking, washing, working—with the structural processes that create urban space, we try to show how geography is implicated in the nature of city life; and how, by extension, particular spaces produce unjust outcomes for those who occupy them.

Focusing on the injustice and violence of our cities' spaces should also draw attention to the kinds of investments and processes that lead to inclusion, healing, and justness. There is a need for investing material resources in space—infrastructure, services, public amenities; building mixed-income spaces; and strengthening social capital and modes of solidarity between groups, within and across space.

If they neglect the need for such interventions, cities are complicit in a kind of violence. In a reflection on spatial injustice (though he did not use that term), the Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote in his 1968 book *Faith and Violence*:

> When a system can, without resort to overt force, compel people to live in conditions of abjection, helplessness, wretchedness . . . it is plainly violent. To make people live on a subhuman level against their will, to constrain them in such a way that they have no hope of escaping their condition, is an unjust exercise of force. Those who in some way or other concur in the oppression—and perhaps profit by it—are exercising violence even though they may be preaching pacifism. And their supposedly peaceful laws, which maintain this spurious kind of order, are in fact instruments of violence and oppression. ■

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“#EndSARS may come to be seen as the moment when a new generation of leaders—young, wedded to different rules of engagement, and untutored in the ideological playbook of the previous generation—took over the reins.”

A Hashtag Revolution in Nigeria

EBENEZER OBADARE

The series of largely uncoordinated and at times violent street protests against police brutality that exploded across several towns and cities in Nigeria in late 2020, reverberating internationally under the social media hashtag #EndSARS, caught most people by surprise. But anyone with a finger on the Nigerian pulse could have seen it coming, for at least three reasons.

First, after a string of protests in recent years that by and large had fizzled out before gaining any sort of traction—#Occupy Nigeria (2012), #OurMumuDonDo (2016–17), #TakeItBackMovement (2018), and #RevolutionNow (2019)—the country was due for another bout of street action. All the frustrations that had motivated those previous protests were still simmering.

Second, in the same way as the 2011 Occupy Wall Street protests against perceived economic inequality in the United States eventually resonated globally and were appropriated by social forces in Nigeria, one might have confidently predicted that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests that flared across the United States after the May 2020 police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis would eventually ricochet on Nigerian streets. Of course, #EndSARS was not a clone of BLM; far from it. Still, a protest against police brutality toward black people in the United States was bound to find some sympathy in Nigeria, whether on account of racial solidarity or a new transnational sensitivity regarding violence and the black body—aided most certainly by the explosion of images in the media. Or simply because police brutality, epitomized by the impunity of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), is an undeniable fact of life in Nigeria.

Third, by the time #EndSARS protesters finally took to the streets—not to mention various social media platforms—at the beginning of October 2020, Nigeria was a society on edge. The hashtag #EndSARS had made its debut on social media sometime in 2017, as agitated Nigerians exchanged stories (and, where available, images) of police assaults and general misconduct. After “trending” for a while, it seemingly petered out as public attention was inevitably diverted by other problems. But evidence suggests that the most popular hashtags never die—they tend to continue to exist in a kind of digital limbo, waiting for their moment of resurrection, often by other hashtags with a cognate focus.

In any event, #EndSARS was reactivated and gained renewed traction in October 2020 due to a further concourse of factors. One was the COVID-19 pandemic. Among its other deleterious social effects, the pandemic had made it impossible for many Nigerians to travel out of the country. For a cross section of the Nigerian middle class, international travel is a time-honored means of letting off steam and getting away from the dilapidated infrastructure and annoyances of everyday life in Nigeria. For the first time in recent memory, COVID-19 had, albeit temporarily, cut off that means of escape.

To compound matters, there was widespread despondency over the country’s dire economic situation—partly brought about by the maladroitness of President Muhammadu Buhari’s administration, but structurally a function of Nigeria’s undue reliance on oil exports, since the global oil market had been more or less crippled by the pandemic. Finally, the tension across the country was not eased by the fact that universities had been shuttered since March due to a nationwide strike action (the umpteenth one) by the Academic

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Staff Union of Nigerian Universities, leaving thousands of high-strung young people with plenty of time, nowhere to go, and practically nothing to do.

The upshot of all this was a social explosion, the scale and ferocity of which arguably had not been witnessed in Nigeria since the 1989 student-led "anti-SAP" riots—against the structural adjustment programs imposed by the military at the behest of the International Monetary Fund—which reportedly claimed more than 200 lives. On one level, the #EndSARS movement, inspired by a hashtag and led (to the extent it had leaders at all) by members of a new generation shrewd in the employment and manipulation of digital technology, is the protest for this era. It displays the relative ease of instigating a protest (organizing one is a different matter) by leveraging the increased use and power of social media, which has driven the growing frequency of hashtag-driven movements.

At the same time, we can hardly doubt that #EndSARS was about accumulated grievances for which the hashtag served as a convenient placeholder. To understand fully the passion that galvanized and sustained #EndSARS while it lasted, we need to look closely at its socioeconomic and political antecedents, and the deeper issues around politics, the state, and civil society in Nigeria that the protests foregrounded.

The hashtag served as a convenient placeholder for accumulated grievances.

A THEORY OF POLICE VIOLENCE

One notable feature of social protests in contemporary Nigeria is that they tend to be about one thing and many things simultaneously. This is not to say that specific protests lack immediate triggers, but merely to observe that a peek under their veneer would disclose issues over which Nigerians have perennially sparred. This much is true of #EndSARS.

On the face of it, the movement was about ending the reign of terror maintained by the heavily armed elite police unit—and by law enforcement in general—over hapless Nigerians. Yet beneath the surface, angst concerning the overall place of violence in Nigerian society, of which police brutality is just one aspect, could not have been more palpable.

Not even the government's agreement to disband SARS, a concession made just as the protests were beginning to spread, proved enough to halt them. Skepticism founded on experience no doubt played a role—in Nigeria, disbanded entities frequently are resurrected under new identities, and SARS itself had been dissolved at least once before. But it appears that the protesters were determined to use the opportunity to press claims that many believed were equally, if not more, important. Police brutality may have been the proximate cause of #EndSARS, but the time was also ripe for a collective release; many people just had too much pent-up anger at the system that needed to be discharged. Accordingly, calls to "End SARS" and "End Police Brutality" quickly gave way to placards featuring broader messages like "End Bad Governance," "End Corruption," "Stop Killing Our Youth," and "End State Violence."

The question of violence in Nigeria, particularly violence involving the police, is critical. Daily, in encounters defined by gross impunity, police kill, torture, and maim scores of Nigerians. Between 2000 and 2007 alone, according to a Human Rights Watch report, police shot and killed more than 10,000 people, which averages to more than 1,400 victims annually. The average Nigerian expects any contact with the police to be uncivil, and the police rarely disappoint. Some of that daily dosage of incivility might be obviated with the right financial inducement (bribery is rampant), but the first law of survival in Nigeria is understanding that a police officer at a checkpoint is, quite literally, above the law.

Why are the police in Nigeria so prone to violence? One theory—to which a cross section of Nigerians tends to be sympathetic—is that the dearth of resources committed to law enforcement, and the ensuing degradation of policing as a profession, are such that meting out violence to hapless civilians is the only method of "policing" known to a majority of police officers. Treat the police well, the assumption goes, and they will return the favor.

That the police in Nigeria are shabbily treated is a commonplace. They often go without salaries for months (to be fair, they are not alone in this predicament), regularly shoulder the expense of purchasing their own uniforms and equipment, and endure notoriously barbarous living conditions in their barracks. For the average police constable, the checkpoint, whether legal or illegal (for all practical purposes, the distinction is academic),

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means survival. It is an opportunity to leverage his uniform and firearm to extort what he feels he is owed—by society, if not by his immediate employers. The need to extort becomes more acute when, as a wealth of anecdotes confirms, "earnings" from checkpoints have to be redistributed both up and down the police hierarchy, and among an informal network of agents, often including the wives and significant others of superiors. This is the material backdrop to the emergence of the checkpoint as a space characterized by violence, which is frequently lethal.

The class dimension of this violence is noteworthy. Police brutality is often random and is by no means exclusive to checkpoints, but its average target in Nigeria nonetheless fits a familiar profile: public transport drivers and passengers, students, hair stylists, auto mechanics, tailors, traders, artisanal apprentices. Given the nature of their activities, they are more likely to be brought into direct contact with the police. Since they occupy the lower rungs of the social ladder, they also lack the economic means or political clout to pursue redress. One of the more telling aspects of #EndSARS was the lamentation by a section of protesters about being accosted or shaken down by the police for the "crime" of being poorly dressed. Considering that police recruits are mostly drawn from the same part of the social pool, police violence appears to be mainly an intra-class phenomenon.

Police brutality is just one aspect of a state of deregulated violence that transcends class. This pervasive violence includes, but is hardly limited to, state targeting of ordinary citizens; ongoing fighting between the military and various armed groups and insurgents, such as the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram; incessant acts of banditry by outlaws taking advantage of generalized insecurity; attacks on persons and private property; violence between herdsmen and their "host" communities; violence between different arms of law enforcement (such as the army versus the police), often provoked by overlapping commands and zones of authority; violent interactions between individuals; and, last but not least, gender-based violence.

Nigerians' response to this excess of violence is to seek security in its privatization. Most private entities outsource their security to various paramilitary units, and those individuals who can afford it often surround themselves with multiple "orderlies" and bodyguards. But the most telling dimension of privatized violence is when Big Men (and Women) outsource their personal protection to the state, which is subsequently undermined in its statutory duty of assuring public safety. According to official figures, some 150,000 police officers out of the total workforce of 400,000 are attached to private individuals and companies, mostly as part of the ever-growing personal entourages of politicians and the upper middle class. These include both officially assigned security details and police moonlighting on their time off.

On the whole, violence involving the police, while often brutal, is hardly exceptional. It testifies to a troubling banality of incivility, whereby Nigerians treat one another shabbily and expect discourtesy as a matter of course in their quotidian interactions, whether formal or informal. Although there is no justification for violence by police against those they are meant to protect, it should be acknowledged that the police more or less treat citizens they encounter the same way most Nigerians in positions of power treat their subordinates. The only difference—a crucial one—is that the police are armed and their use of violence is, in principle, legitimate.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT, SOCIAL INFLUENCERS

If #EndSARS offers an opportunity to reflect on police brutality within a broader economy of violence in Nigeria, it is also an important moment to consider transformations in the character and capacity of civil society. Of the many placards displayed by the protesters, the one bearing the message "We Have No Leaders" stands out because of its unintended double entendre. On the one hand, the protester hoisting the placard probably meant to express Nigerians' frustration with the shenanigans of the political class at various levels in the country. It is not unusual for a group of Nigerians, seeing no end to the daily spectacle of bad governance, to sigh exasperatedly, "We have no leaders."

At the same time, the placard may have been intended to convey the message that the protests had no leaders, meaning that they were spontaneous, uncoordinated, and hence not directed by figures who might be co-opted or, in Nigerian parlance, "settled" by the state. For precisely this reason, many of the protesters were eager to insist that they had no leaders.

To say that #EndSARS had no leaders in this latter sense is both true and untrue. It is true, for instance, that much of the uprising was driven by the communicative élan of social media, which so

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far has proved too nimble for many African governments still steeped in the logic of the analog era. Although there is a unit in the presidency dedicated to digital and new media (headed by a former journalist well-grounded in that ecology), the Buhari administration failed to develop a coherent message or rebuttal to the protests on any of its social media platforms. This prompted condemnation that Buhari's so-called social media outreach was mere posturing, just like his predecessor Goodluck Jonathan's.

At any rate, to the extent that the movement had leadership at all, it was dispersed along various nodes on social media. In terms of eluding the grasp of the state and spreading messages in real time with minimum friction, this was a boon. But it proved more problematic when the largely peaceful protests turned increasingly violent—banks and the private property of certain political leaders were razed, prisons were stormed to release inmates, and policemen were subjected to random attacks. The need arose to coordinate efforts and separate the wheat of legitimate protesters from the chaff of those whose sole intent was to cause mayhem.

Nigerians' response to an excess of violence is to seek security in its privatization.

That being said, it is not technically true that #EndSARS had no leaders, though the movement did appear to have entered a rudderless phase after the Buhari administration agreed to disband SARS. Globally speaking, it seems typical for protests in the age of social media to be labeled as leaderless, and to some extent #EndSARS was merely being shoehorned into a preexisting categorization. It is not this apparent leaderlessness, but rather the sociological profile of its leaders, however informally organized they were, that is notable for the morphology of Nigerian civil society.

When the protesters presented their list of demands to the inspector general of police, Mohammed Adamu, on October 12, they were represented by 28-year-old David Adeleke, a popular singer known as Davido. Like most entertainers and celebrities of his generation, Davido is active on social media, commanding large followings on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—but this was the first time that he was putting his body on the line. The emergence of Davido and other celebrity-entertainers (such as Folarin Falana, aka Falz, and Debo Adebayo, aka Mr. Macaroni) as symbolic spearheads of the protests points to deeper transformations in the Nigerian civil sphere.

In the first place, the rise of celebrity-entertainers as leading political actors reflects their outsized influence due in part to the power of social media, and consequently the inundation of most areas of social life, including politics, by popular entertainment. It is not a coincidence that the most popular politicians in contemporary Nigeria are those who are active on social media, and whose political performances imitate the style of entertainers. Former Representative Patrick Obahiagbon and former Senator Dino Melaye are two good examples. Despite no longer being in office, and with their political prospects uncertain, both continue to enjoy cult followings of fans who see them as sources of pure entertainment. Davido's emergence as a spokesperson for #EndSARS epitomizes this commingling of entertainment and politics.

The rise of the celebrity activist is also a function of the vacuum created by the decline of both the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC) and the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) as poles of progressive politics. If #EndSARS was reminiscent of the 1989 anti-SAP riots in its intensity, it should be noted that the latter were spearheaded by NANS, at the time arguably at the peak of its political influence. Shaken by the ferocity of the riots, the military regime led by Ibrahim Babangida took measures that ensured the end of NANS as an effective social force. The NLC had a similar experience of being suppressed by the military, after reaching the height of its power as part of the Campaign for Democracy coalition in 1993, though the seeds of its decline had been planted well before then.

Both organizations have played an increasingly negligible role in overall civic mobilization over the course of the Fourth Republic since the return to democracy in 1999, featuring even less in most protests over this period. So it comes as no surprise that hardly any of the celebrity activists emerged from or belonged to any known political, student, or labor organization. In the heyday of NANS, its local chapters provided a training ground for debate and acquisition of organizational skills. The new generation of celebrity activists, leveraging the nascent politicization of online fame,

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seems grounded in nothing other than enthusiasm and popular notions of "social justice." In any case, the reliance on social media would seem to preclude the need for the kinds of skills normally acquired within the echelons of students' or workers' organizations and often required for offline, on-the-ground mobilization.

No matter their pedigree, there can be no doubt that the celebrity activists represent a new generation with different inclinations and, even more important, a different style than its predecessors. More than anything, #EndSARS seemed like its breakout performance.

OTHER VOICES

Two other features of the protests are worth highlighting. The first is the role of women and an increasingly assertive LGBT community. Aisha Yesufu, who first came to public attention as a co-convener of the Bring Back Our Girls protests after Boko Haram abducted 276 schoolgirls in 2014, continued to model her unique brand of socially conservative and politically radical feminism. Her "Lady Liberty" pose was the iconic image of the 2020 protests. But it was the new Feminist Coalition that stole the limelight as the organizational vehicle for a renewed emphasis on the gender dimension of violence.

Comprising professional women from upper social strata, the Coalition was formed in July 2020, proclaiming a "mission to champion equality for women in Nigerian society with a core focus on education, financial freedom and representation in public office." The Feminist Coalition (and by implication #EndSARS) received a massive publicity and financial boost from a most unexpected quarter on October 14, when Jack Dorsey, co-founder and chief executive of Twitter, called for donations to the Coalition and suggested they be made in Bitcoin—no doubt to circumvent the Nigerian authorities, who had started to monitor and obstruct inflows to the group's bank account.

Protests by the LGBT community over state violence allegedly directed against them for nothing other than their sexuality did not receive as much coverage in the Nigerian media. Many other protesters were uneasy at the prospect of their "political" message being "redirected" or "diluted." Yet placards bearing messages like "Nigerian Queer Lives Matter," "LGBT Lives Matter," and "Na Gay I Gay I No Kill Person" ("I'm just gay, not a murderer") were an important, if incongruous, element of the visual album of #EndSARS. As dissenters within a broader current of dissent, the increased visibility of the LGBT community speaks to its growing determination to challenge the rules about what it means to be a Nigerian citizen, signaling future battles along the axes of sexuality and identity within a civil society that is historically prone to division and rancor.

Another important aspect of the movement—and a further illustration of strains within the broader civil society—is that, not unlike most protests in recent Nigerian history, they were geographically circumscribed. The #EndSARS protests took place largely in towns and cities in the southern part of the country, with the north mostly playing the role of spectator. Northerners' relative unease with #EndSARS, which had been bubbling under the surface from the start, blew open on October 20, when the conservative Northern Elders Forum (NEF) issued a statement calling for a halt to the protests on the grounds that they had "registered tremendous success" and were in danger of being hijacked by criminal elements.

While the Forum may have been right in denouncing increasing acts of lawlessness by a section of the protesters (at this point, groups and individuals in other parts of the country were issuing similar statements), it is instructive that this was its first and only intervention. Not only did the NEF never acknowledge the legitimacy of the protesters' grievances, but its eagerness to condemn them at the first opportunity reveals a discomfort that goes to the heart of a division between civil and political societies in the north and south. If civil society in the south always seems to be in a state of permanent agitation (which may have to do with the education gap and skewed distribution of the media), its northern counterpart can seem permanently reposeful until piqued by perceived religious injury. #EndSARS, for all its scale and ferocity, was just one more reminder of the vastness of this chasm, and of the deeper Christian–Muslim fault line that is foundational to Nigerian politics.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD

When the Babangida regime established SARS in 1992, ostensibly in response to the rising incidence of armed robbery in the country, the special police unit received a skeptical welcome—particularly among those who feared that it might eventually be used as an instrument of political pacification by the military state. The fear was justified, given Babangida's infamous boast about

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"expertise in the management of violence," and his regime's earlier, unsuccessful attempt in 1989 to establish a National Guard.

SARS typified Babangida's approach to governance. For reasons having to do partly with his determination to consolidate resources and set up a parallel power base, and partly with his obsession with "action" and quick fixes, Babangida invested heavily in the creation of numerous overlapping agencies and special operations outfits. There was a familiar pattern to the results: success in the early stages, followed by an all-too-predictable reversion to the norm, after which the agency or operation in question took its inevitable place in the administrative discard bin. The Nigerian state is a veritable graveyard of such abandoned agencies.

Yet SARS endured well into the democratic era, even reincarnating after at least one campaign to eliminate it. This may well be an indication of how it satisfied an even deeper impulse in the state: the need to discipline, preferably using the kind of force that properly belongs in a state of emergency. But it is not only the state that has recourse to such "operations." This is the term used by everyday citizens to describe the activities of armed robbers and sundry paramilitary and vigilante groups. In either case, there is a common suggestion of something irregular, probably illegal, but definitely disagreeable.

Using #EndSARS as a critical lens, one detects an extant pattern and an emergent trend in Nigerian politics and society. The pattern is the history and ubiquity of violence: police brutality is part of a broader configuration in which violence is central to interactions between state and society, among actors within civil society, and between different arms of law enforcement. The trend is the rise of new civil society actors against the backdrop of the attenuation and dwindling authority of old civic actors and institutions like trade unions and student organizations. In this light, #EndSARS may come to be seen as the moment when a new generation of leaders—young, wedded to different rules of engagement, and untutored in the ideological playbook of the previous generation—took over the reins.

But for now, in the ambiguous aftermath of the protests, there are more questions than answers: What happens when a social movement falls under the sway of celebrities and social influencers? What becomes of civil society when the boundaries between politics and popular entertainment grow so hazy as to make them practically indistinguishable? What do these forms of inorganic civil society mean for Nigerian democracy? Are "hit-and-run" social movements more relevant to this age than civil society groups that grow organically—and organize with long-term aims and deeper roots in society? What does #EndSARS's overall hostility to the LGBT community portend for the radical possibilities of civil society struggles in Nigeria?

These questions are not just academic; nor are they exclusive to the Nigerian situation. On the contrary, given the broad consistency with emergent patterns elsewhere, they have global implications for civil society, social movements, and democratic politics. ■

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> "The current authoritarian turn . . . is more of a return to the early postcolonial period than a new departure."

Tanzania's Authoritarian Turn: Less Sudden Than It Seems

FELICITAS BECKER

Tanzania's reputation as a partly democratic country with peaceful and mostly free elections, a lively public sphere despite the electoral and institutional dominance of the ruling party, and a relatively good human and civil rights record—Zanzibar excepted—had suffered a reversal since President John Magufuli came to power in 2015. Freedom of assembly and expression were limited by a series of new laws, the security forces became more heavy-handed, and the government has appeared ready to ride roughshod over established economic and political relations, reneging on investment contracts and incurring censure from donors. In recent months, Magufuli had engaged in conspicuous displays of contempt for international efforts to control COVID-19.

The president's performative disdain turned macabre on March 17, when the government announced his death. While officials maintained that Magufuli died of a long-standing heart condition in Dar es Salaam, the opposition leader asserted that he had died abroad from COVID-19.

This turn for the worse in Tanzania would be easy to fit into the oft-repeated narrative about Africa's "mad dictators"—rulers who, even when they start out with popular legitimacy, go off the rails under the influence of unfettered power. Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Idi Amin in Uganda are perhaps the best-known examples. But this narrative is generally misleading, and especially so for this case. It would pass off as a personal failure what in fact is a structural feature of the Tanzanian political system. It would also require a degree of historical amnesia.

Tanzania's identity as a relatively democratic country—whose institutions, in comparison with others in the region, showed a modicum of respect for its citizens (again, Zanzibar excepted)—was only about 20 years old when Magufuli came to power. That reputation dates to the reasonably free, fair, and peaceful first multiparty elections, held in 1995. It was further burnished by orderly transfers of power to new presidents in 2005 and 2015.

It is important to note, however, that every president including Magufuli has come from the same party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), or Party of the Revolution. It emerged in 1977 as an amalgamation of the party that had won independence for mainland Tanzania in 1961 and the Zanzibari ruling party. The same hegemonic bloc has remained in power since independence, changes in personnel notwithstanding.

Still, opposition voices were given fairly free rein until around 2015. Under the first president elected in multiparty competition, Benjamin Mkapa (who held office from 1995 to 2005), and into the second term of his successor, Jakaya Kikwete, public debate in Tanzania was lively. One of the joys of doing research in the country during this period was people's readiness to speak their minds.

This came about partly because every postcolonial Tanzanian government has drawn much of its legitimacy from the promise to enable development for its citizens. Consequently, the direction of social change and the role of the government in it are widely discussed, and most people have views on politics. Thanks to the importance given to social graces, including in verbal interactions, many are very good at expressing those views. I have seen schoolchildren interviewed on Tanzanian television whom I found more articulate than some European politicians.

Newspapers were numerous and presented appreciably different viewpoints; they included

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some Islamist publications and ambitious weeklies. The broadcast media was also diverse. Yet all this diversity of opinion dated only to the early 1990s. For much of the 30 years before then, both the political system and the media ecosystem were tightly controlled by the ruling party. The founding president, Julius Nyerere, loomed large even after his resignation in 1985. Although his government had often acted in an autocratic and heavily interventionist fashion, since his death in 1999 both ruling party and opposition have often appealed to Nyerere's example as a paragon of pro-poor policies and personal incorruptibility.

WRITING ON THE WALL

The current authoritarian turn, then, is more of a return to the early postcolonial period than a new departure. Moreover, it did not start with Magufuli. A number of astute observers of the Tanzanian political scene, including Dan Paget and Ruth Carlitz, have pointed out that the first round of restrictive laws heralding a pronounced tightening of the state's grip on public debate predated his October 2015 election.

Introduced in early 2015, these laws forbade the use of official statistics unless the research based on them was submitted for vetting by the authorities, and made individuals legally responsible for any content in their social media feeds deemed to be "antigovernment." Even earlier, shocking abuses by security personnel that could be traced to Kikwete's inner circle had come to light. Rather than clamp down on the thugs who had pulled out a labor organizer's teeth, the president responded by suspending the license of the weekly paper that had established the connection between them and his entourage. The writing was very much on the wall.

Why did Tanzania's authoritarianism become more systematic and overt?

So why did Tanzania's authoritarianism become more systematic and overt when it did? In Paget's view, the strangling of public debate in recent years can be seen as a response to opposition parties' increasing electoral success. In the first few multiparty elections, the most headline-grabbing opposition party had been the Civic United Front (CUF).

This was a party with roots in Zanzibar, pursuing an identitarian, Islamist brand of politics that was relevant mainly to Muslim-majority constituencies near the coast. While the party's divisiveness was concerning, its appeal was self-limiting in a country where Muslims make up, at most, half the population and are internally very diverse. Many mainland Muslims are uninterested in the nostalgia for the lost status of coastal culture that animates Zanzibari separatism.

The opposition party with the greatest potential to build a broad-based electoral coalition was the Party for Democracy and Progress (CHADEMA), initially led by an ex-CCM politician, Augustine Mrema. It had drawn the greatest number of non-CCM votes from the start, and when CUF began to unravel after joining an ill-fated coalition in the separate Zanzibari parliament, CHADEMA cemented its status as the main opposition party.

CCM's share of the presidential vote declined from a peak of just over 80 percent in 2005 to just over 62 percent in 2010. Then the dramatic run-up to the 2015 elections laid bare the factionalism within CCM.

At the time, CCM-watchers spoke of two broad camps within the ruling party, the *mafisadi* and the *masafi*—roughly, the pro- and anticorruption camps. *Mafisadi* stood for the attitude that rent-seeking by those privileged enough to engage in it was a fact of life and should be tolerated as compatible with, perhaps even beneficial for, the smooth functioning of the state apparatus. *Masafi* denoted those who hewed more closely to the anticorruption stance that the government had officially endorsed for years as part of the international "good governance" agenda pushed by foreign donors, as well as in response to strong popular disapproval of grand corruption.

Former Prime Minister Edward Lowassa was a leading member of the *mafisadi* camp and Kikwete's presumptive successor. But leading *masafi* objected to Lowassa's nomination, given the brazenness of his self-enrichment. The ensuing stalemate was finally broken by the nomination of a surprise candidate, Magufuli—hitherto a relatively minor figure in the government, serving as minister for public infrastructure projects. Magufuli immediately wrapped himself in the anticorruption mantle. Lowassa left CCM to become the presidential candidate for a coalition of opposition parties led by CHADEMA.

The 2015 election turned into the first serious contest for the presidency. Lowassa had name recognition, connections, and well-honed campaigning

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skills. The opposition parties had mustered an unprecedented level of cooperation. It appeared as if CCM would at least have to become more responsive to the electorate in order to retain its hegemonic position.

That hope was soon dashed. CCM found a rather different way to defuse the mounting challenge after Magufuli won the 2015 election with 58 percent of the vote. This was the slimmest majority for a CCM candidate to date, though the party was more successful at maintaining its parliamentary majority.

RIGGING THE SYSTEM

Once in office, Magufuli promptly set to work introducing measures to stifle public debate and systematically rig elections in favor of the ruling party. The government changed the rules for authorized public assemblies, so that only members of Parliament currently representing a district can hold political rallies.

Other rule changes have stifled the media and freedom of speech. The government took particular care to make sure that social media could not serve as an incubator for political dissent. In one incident, a constituent was dragged into court for posting a critical comment on a local politician's social media feed.

The worsening of the political climate also brought a change in attitude and everyday practice on the part of the police and security forces. Repeatedly during Magufuli's first term, peaceful demonstrators or mere bystanders were shot by police. In one such shooting, in February 2018, the victim was a 22-year-old university student, sitting on a bus near the site of a demonstration.

This turn of events caused great consternation among Western donors, who began to fear that Magufuli had been an infelicitous choice. But this was not a case of one man's sudden, gratuitous authoritarianism. The steps Magufuli took reflected a calculated hardening of CCM's strategy in defense of its electoral and political hegemony.

As Paget points out, the measures entrenching CCM's domination of public debate are only one prong of the strategy. They are supplemented by changes that effectively penalize politicians for switching between parties and ensure that CCM's members remain loyal to the existing party structure. The party wants to prevent the emergence of another Edward Lowassa.

Magufuli's most effective appeal to the electorate, meanwhile, consisted of his anticorruption credentials. They translated into an ability, or at least a threat, to rein in rent-seeking among party grandees. As was evident in the fallout from the *mafisadi/masafi* showdown in the contest over the 2015 presidential nomination, graft had become so extravagant by the end of the Kikwete period that it undermined CCM's legitimacy.

NYEREREAN NATIONALISM

Since Tanzanians took pride in the lively and civil political culture that had been established under Mkapa and Kikwete, Magufuli's illiberal measures did not go unchallenged. They drew criticism from the opposition, as well as from donors and some civil society organizations. But for many Tanzanians, the most salient features of his government lay elsewhere.

Focused on reinforcing his "clean" reputation, Magufuli started his term with the motto *hapa ni kazi tu*, "we're all about work." This was a marked departure from Kikwete's inaugural motto *maisha bora kwa wote*, "a better life for all." Shortly after taking office, Magufuli joined broom-wielding citizens of Dar es Salaam in a campaign to keep the city clean. He fired a number of conspicuously self-enriching officials, and he revived rules, adopted in the 1970s under Nyerere and dropped during the period of liberalization, that limit officials' earning opportunities outside their day jobs.

Another important plank in Magufuli's efforts to reinforce CCM's legitimacy was bringing back the rhetoric of economic nationalism that had been central to Nyerere's political project. It had become obsolete under the pragmatic and technocratic leadership of Mkapa and Kikwete. During their presidencies, policy by and large stayed within the mainstream defined by international financial institutions and multilateral donors, and focused on economic liberalization, privatization, and what was known as good governance and institutional capacity building. Given Nyerere's remarkable rhetorical talents, as well as the widespread experience of economic vulnerability and disadvantage in Tanzanians' lives, Magufuli could draw effectively on well-established tropes. Some of his criticism was arguably well-founded.

In particular, contracts signed with international mining companies before 2015 had often provided enormous tax breaks for investors, enabling them to repatriate most of their profits while providing little more for Tanzanians than dangerous and precarious employment. A memorandum of understanding signed in 2014 with

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a Chinese conglomerate planning to build a massive container port from scratch in Bagamoyo, a tiny dhow port north of Dar es Salaam, contained clauses that promised the investors full control over the port if Tanzania failed to repay the costs of construction on time. And sufficient revenue to ensure repayment appeared highly unlikely, considering that the port was not matched by any supporting infrastructure in the surrounding region.

Magufuli's insistence that "only a madman" could accede to these conditions was not that far-fetched. The experience of Sri Lanka, which in 2017 had to hand over control of a port built under similar conditions to Chinese investors for a 99-year lease, provides a cautionary example. Nevertheless, commentators in the *Economist* and other venues were scathing about Magufuli's economic nationalism, warning of an exodus of investors and a further decline in income for the already impoverished state.

Such warnings were unlikely to harm Magufuli domestically, but this cannot be ascribed simply to political naiveté among Tanzanians. The notion that African populations are either politically quiescent (in the countryside) or overexcitable or easily misled (in the cities) forms a convenient counterpart to the cliché of the unhinged African dictator. The actual mix of moods and opinions in a country like Tanzania is considerably more complex, precluding wholesale explanations in terms of dysfunctional political traditions or cultures. Although historical heritage of this kind is not irrelevant, it has operated in the context of exchange with and influence by Western powers and international organizations for at least a century and a half.

Magufuli revived Nyerere's rhetoric of economic nationalism.

In this context, the influence of indigenous political practices is clearest at the interface between local government and citizens, in the many procedural niceties observed at this level, and in lively interactions between officials and informal networks of authority. But to understand why Magufuli's authoritarian moves did not undermine his standing with many ordinary Tanzanians, it is more useful to examine the political practices of the state he headed and the choices it provides for its citizens.

SHOESTRING GOVERNMENT

There are reasons beyond its relative calm and safety that Tanzania has long attracted more than its fair share of attention from academic observers. Its state presents interesting contradictions. You could say that it is barely there. The mandated territory was the poorest part of British East Africa, and its administration was even more of a shoestring operation than those in other parts of colonial Africa.

Today, Tanzania remains the poorest country in the region in per capita terms, and it is dependent on foreign aid for a substantial share of the running costs of government. In the countryside, government offices are dusty sheds, their corrugated-iron roofs resting on rough wooden structures. Official paperwork is conducted in handwriting on fragile, yellowing sheets, locked in rickety desks to protect them from rodents, ants, and rain leaks. Minor government employees, such as teachers, cannot always be assured of timely payment of their salaries.

And yet, Tanzania's tiny educated elite wrested independence from the reluctant British Empire earlier than their richer, larger counterparts in Kenya and Uganda. After independence, Nyerere's government signaled the scope of its ambitions by monopolizing political processes, abolishing at a stroke the so-called customary authorities that the colonial regime had fostered. Though these chiefs and headmen possessed varying degrees of legitimacy, few postcolonial governments sidelined them as decisively as Nyerere's did—at least until the 1990s, when involving "community leaders" in development projects again became fashionable.

After consolidating political power, Nyerere's government launched the most ambitious rural development program in the region. Exploiting the popularity of the president and his party, the government persuaded, or more often bullied, millions of peasants to relocate into larger villages, where services such as water or electricity would be easier to provide. It showered them with developmental inputs like tractors and cattle. In the process, the state claimed extraordinary powers in the name of pursuing this socialist vision of development, which it called "African socialism" or *ujamaa*. It abolished all political parties other than the ruling party and established an extensive network of grassroots CCM cells as well as informers, which Magufuli sought to reinvigorate.

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The new villages were poorly planned, the inputs dissipated in the absence of sustained support, and results fell far short of the extravagant expectations. Nevertheless, the government retained more legitimacy, and practiced less brutality, than its late-1970s counterparts in Kenya and Uganda. In the 1980s, Nyerere became one of the first founding presidents of an African nation to relinquish power voluntarily, setting the country up for its role as a beacon of "relative democracy" in the eyes of donors.

Nyerere's successors took the country through a series of painful economic reforms in the name of development, replacing his statist model with a market-based one derived from the orthodoxies of the international financial institutions. The result has been a long period of growth, during which some important metrics associated with poverty reduction, such as maternal mortality, have improved.

Yet much of the gain in gross domestic product has been jobless growth, and inequality has increased alongside the wealth of an emergent middle class. Life on the margins, for both urban and rural populations, remains hard and in some respects has become worse. Dar es Salaam's working poor, for instance, must cope with a transport system that shares roadways choked with the four-wheel-drive vehicles of wealthier citizens and expatriate technocrats.

One constant throughout the country's recent history has been the contrast between the limited capacity of the state and its significant ability to affect society. Arguably, this tension is at the heart of the way Tanzanians relate to the state. The poverty of the state reflects the poverty of the society that sustains it.

Tanzania's recent economic growth, while impressive, started from a very low base. The pre-existing limitations of the state, combined with self-seeking behavior by elites and international companies, and the inherent volatility of primary commodity revenues, make it hard to parlay growing GDP into growing tax revenue and efficient government spending. In a context of extreme scarcity, even the minor services and benefits that officials can provide take on great importance.

However ramshackle, corrupt, or inefficient its offices and representatives, there is often simply no alternative to appealing to the government. Moreover, as observed by Claire Mercer and Brian Cooksey, among other scholars, the CCM-led government has been skillful at maintaining its position as an intermediary between donors, aid organizations, and "target populations," despite its talk of decentralization and empowerment of rural areas. The state remains the default patron for the needy, and the chief cheerleader for Tanzanians' ever-deferred hopes for a takeoff of broad-based economic improvement.

POPULAR GESTURES

Against this background, Magufuli's maneuvers passed as acceptable for reasons more complicated than mere deference to authority. First, his economic nationalism and demonstrative persecution of some practitioners of corruption chimed with widespread popular views that both rich nations and the domestic establishment take advantage of ordinary Tanzanians.

One urban myth I encountered in Tanzania held that when European authorities introduced their currencies to the colony, they provided only an inferior, inflation-prone kind of money, while keeping the "good" money to themselves. Such beliefs reflect the fact that Tanzanian agricultural producers have been enormously vulnerable to fluctuations in world markets, often finding their sale prices declining while the costs of their inputs rise. As for rent-seeking by major government officials, its extent varies greatly but it is a real problem, and Magufuli's selective sanctions at least reduced the sense of impunity.

Assertive gestures toward international investors and selected miscreant officials also enabled Magufuli to claim Nyerere's mantle. Although divisive among Muslims, Nyerere retains the posthumous status of political lodestar, invoked by government and opposition alike.

A second type of gesture that worked in Magufuli's favor was his demonstrative piety and frequent appeal to Tanzanians' religious commitments. Although he stood no chance of reaching the embittered Islamist fringe, he was careful to de-emphasize differences between Muslims and Christians, which had raised concern over the possibility of interreligious conflict in the 1990s. Invoking the ethos of a shared civil religion, his rhetoric equally positioned followers of both monotheistic faiths as moral citizens who pray differently to the same God and practice similar virtues. This also allowed Magufuli to appeal to the strong egalitarian currents in Tanzanians' religiosity, presenting himself as just one among the faithful.

Third, popular appreciation for Magufuli expressed resignation about the lack of alternatives

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to existing government structures. More broadly, popular politics in Tanzania have been suffused with a kind of desperate hope. Every new president and legislative period serves as a peg on which to hang the hope that the country's much-lauded potential will finally come to fruition. Again, this forced optimism reflects not naiveté but an absence of alternatives, and an acute need for economic improvement.

Tanzanians tend to take pride in their country's achievement of stability in the face of staggering ethnic, religious, and social diversity. At the same time, they worry about getting drawn into the civil unrest and intermittent atrocities that have plagued nearly all of Tanzania's neighbors: Mozambique, Rwanda, Burundi, Congo, Uganda, and Kenya. Zambia is the only exception (though it has lately gone through its own version of an authoritarian turn). This mindset, too, encourages tolerance for strongman gestures if they are accompanied by appeals for unity.

PANDEMIC CYNICISM

Over the past year, Magufuli's stance on the coronavirus pandemic reinforced the impression that he was an unhinged autocrat. After initially following the advice of the World Health Organization (WHO), Tanzania officially stopped tallying COVID-19 cases and related deaths in April 2020, declaring the pandemic over. Following a "national day of prayer" in June, the president claimed that Tanzanians had succeeded in praying the coronavirus away.

> *The government has dealt with the pandemic by sticking to its denialism.*

More recently, the government was recommending herbal remedies against COVID-19 and expressing doubts about the effectiveness of vaccines. For some time, it appeared as if Magufuli might get away with this, since morbidity and above all mortality from COVID-19 remained limited. Since late December 2020, though, anecdotal observations in the absence of actual statistics suggest that the disease burden has risen greatly, certainly in Dar es Salaam—which is now considered East Africa's largest city, with a population of around 6 million.

Shocking as they are, these choices can to a large extent be explained as cynical calculations rather than evidence of battiness. Tanzania has next to nothing of the extensive technical infrastructure needed to treat severe cases of COVID-19. At the same time, its population is young, due to low life expectancy and high fertility. The age cohorts most susceptible to the virus are therefore relatively small.

Under these circumstances, the cost in lives lost by failing to respond to the disease proactively could be expected to stay relatively low, whereas more aggressive efforts to address the virus risked highlighting the shortcomings of the medical system. In an economy where many people have to earn a subsistence living by roadside vending or laboring for day wages, a full lockdown would have meant penury for many. Emphasizing "indigenous" herbal remedies and challenging "Western" medical orthodoxies allowed the government to reinforce its posturing as a defiant pan-Africanist stalwart.

It is possible, if not likely, that what eventually made these calculations untenable was the evolution of the virus—particularly the spread of the variant originating in South Africa. It has taken to killing Tanzanians of working age who are otherwise in good health, and in some cases follows a severe course requiring weeks of recovery in otherwise young and healthy patients. So far, the government has dealt with the situation by sticking to its denialism, obliging doctors to attribute deaths simply to pneumonia, with no reference to its cause.

Although the excess deaths have become practically impossible to deny, even people not given to excessive trust in the government hesitate to directly contradict the official stance by ascribing them to COVID-19. Instead, strangely bland euphemisms such as *kushindwa kupumua*—roughly, "failure to breathe"—are in circulation. The difficulty of gaining any level of certainty about the Tanzanian epidemic is an indication of how far the measures of the Magufuli regime degraded public debate.

The national media is muzzled, and international media paid little attention to the situation in Tanzania until Magufuli's death. An anonymous article ascribed to a Tanzanian journalist, published in early February in a supplement to the South African newspaper *Mail & Guardian*, gave the clearest account to date. Citing information from several hospitals in the Dar es Salaam area, it suggested that the situation was dire.

In the absence of actual statistics and on-the-record statements, rumors fly. At one point during the summer of 2020, people in Tanzania were

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saying that Kenya, which has followed WHO guidelines throughout, was exaggerating its COVID-19 burden to obtain extra aid. The implication was that Magufuli had been honorable and self-sufficient in comparison.

Magufuli won reelection in October 2020 with the highest margin of any CCM candidate so far, taking over 84 percent of the total vote. This revealed little about his actual standing with the electorate, since the elections were clearly the least free or fair since 1995. In the run-up, the police dispersed opposition rallies and tear-gassed opposition leaders. On election day, independent observers were sidelined, though reports of blatant manipulation such as pre-filled ballots and ballot stuffing emerged on social media. Prominent opposition members of Parliament lost their seats by margins that stretched credulity.

But from the point of view of Magufuli and CCM, evidently, the authoritarian-cum-populist strategy had paid off, COVID-19 denialism included. The way the government is handling his death suggests little deviation from that strategy. While factionalism behind the scenes is likely, in public the ruling party fell in line behind the vice president, Samia Suluhu Hassan, the constitutionally designated successor. At the time of writing, she was expected to finish Magufuli's five-year term, suggesting that the CCM establishment plans to work through and with her.

Moreover, there are no signs of a break with Magufuli's "medical nationalist" stance on the pandemic. During his absence from the public eye preceding his death, at least four people were arrested for suggesting he was ill. At his large-scale public funeral, masks were conspicuous by their absence, with mourners seated shoulder to shoulder and Hassan greeting the coffin unmasked. As similar obsequies took place across the country, Magufuli's funeral rites assumed the character of a superspreader event.

Dramatic changes would be required for any notable decline in CCM's dominance to occur. In this sense, the authoritarian turn as likely as not will continue to work. For long-time observers of Tanzania, this is a sad prospect, only slightly mitigated by the expectation that subversive humor, a well-honed coping strategy, will also endure—on the streets if not in the media. The predicament of Tanzanians shows that the adage that "every country has the government it deserves" needs to be handled with care.

Granted, Magufuli was adept at exploiting some popular sentiments. But he and CCM turned to authoritarian strategies precisely because they were not assured of the loyalty of their voters. In the process, they exploited democratic deficits in Tanzania's institutions that have a long and complex history, going back to Nyerere and the colonial origins of the state. ■

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An African Trade Revolution Takes Shape

BENJAMIN TALTON

If the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AFCFTA) is fully implemented following its symbolic launch on January 1, 2021, it will be the African nations' most ambitious united endeavor to assert financial oversight, transparency, and cooperation over their extractive resources. Africa will have the largest free trade area in any region since the founding of the World Trade Organization (WTO)—a single, continent-wide market for goods and services, business and investment. Still, its success is not guaranteed. The AFCFTA will either raise the costs for governments' complicity with corrupt foreign investment, or make it easier to illicitly traffic Africa's mineral wealth. If successful, it will be a giant step toward African economic sovereignty.

At this moment of transformative potential, the United States has an opportunity to act as a supportive partner to African leaders. The Biden administration has leading domestic and foreign policy experts with experience in African affairs and can benefit from a Democratic-majority Congress with African American lawmakers in key foreign policy leadership positions who have records of serious engagement with African issues. What matters most, however, is the change from within Africa.

A paradigm shift and continental rethink on trade and economic development is taking place, as reflected in the AFCFTA and similar transcontinental projects. Out of the total of 54 African countries, 24 have joined the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative since it was started in 2002 to improve governance and oversight in the resource sector. African countries have also launched initiatives to strengthen taxation regimes, transparency, human rights, and scrutiny of offshore-registered companies.

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African Mining Vision, a 2009 African Union policy framework, encourages member countries to apply income generated from mineral resources directly to domestic development. Similarly, African heads of state adopted the African Peer Review Mechanism in 2003 as a self-monitoring arrangement based on common codes of conduct and standards for human rights, democracy, and extractive industries. But there have been only meager efforts to implement these programs.

THE GHOSTS OF 1963

The AFCFTA is more promising. At its best, it will squarely place African nations on a path to economic and political unity—a path they elected to veer from in 1963, at the founding of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in favor of merely cooperating politically. That event marked a major turning point for African economic and political development. African leaders representing 32 independent nations were not in accord on the preferred definition of unity for a post-independence Africa.

Two sides dominated the debate. One, championed by Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, argued for a supranational federation of nation-states bound by a common market, shared defense, and unitary foreign policy. The other view, the one that would define intra-African relations for the next sixty years, was championed by Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, the OAU's first president and host of the inaugural meeting. He proposed limiting African unity to cooperation at the intergovernmental level, rather than integration. African nations' shared mission would be to work for Africa's full political independence.

The emperor said, "We must make one final supreme effort; now, when the struggle grows weary, when so much has been won that the thrilling sense of achievement has brought us near satiation." He then defined what became the consensus priority among political leaders in Africa and in the African diaspora: to help end European

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imperialism and white-minority rule in southern Africa. "Our liberty," he declared, "is meaningless unless all Africans are free."

The emperor's call for making common cause echoed a declaration in Nkrumah's speech at Ghana's independence celebration on March 6, 1957: "Our independence is meaningless unless it is linked up with the total liberation of Africa."

Despite their agreement on the urgent need for "total liberation," the two leaders' proposed paths to achieving pan-Africanism sharply diverged on the nature of unity. Nkrumah regarded political independence as a means to achieve economic independence, without which no nation could be truly sovereign. "Independence," he said in his address to the OAU meeting, "is only the prelude to a new and more involved struggle for the right to conduct our own economic and social affairs; to construct our society according to our aspirations, unhampered by crushing and humiliating neo-colonialist controls and interference."

Nkrumah urged member states to formally integrate politically and economically as the United States of Africa, insisting, "We must unite in order to achieve the full liberation of our continent." To secure true self-governance and forestall a crisis of control over natural resources and consequent political instability, Nkrumah implored his fellow leaders to "forge a political union based on defense, foreign affairs and diplomacy, and a common citizenship, an African currency, an African monetary zone, and an African central bank." Nkrumah warned that if he and his fellow African leaders failed to recognize the limited sovereignty of their respective countries, it would spell Africans' collective doom:

> If, therefore, now that we are independent, we allow the same conditions to exist that existed in colonial days, all the resentment which overthrew colonialism will be mobilized against us. The resources are there. It is for us to marshal them in the active service of our people. Unless we do this by our concerted efforts, within the framework of our combined planning, we shall not progress at the tempo demanded by today's events and the mood of our people. The symptoms of our troubles will grow, and the troubles themselves become chronic.

The sixty years that followed bore out Nkrumah's prescient warnings on the continent.

The movement to dismantle white-minority rule in southern Africa—the course outlined by Emperor Selassie, and not opposed by Nkrumah—grew into one of the largest transnational mass protest movements in history. The OAU was essential to the cause of ongoing liberation, supported by African leaders and activists in the African diaspora well into the 1980s.

During the same period, however, foreign multinational corporations' extraction of African mineral wealth caused military and civil conflicts, labor exploitation, and environmental degradation. As Nkrumah alerted his fellow leaders in Addis Ababa in 1963, in what remains a distressingly accurate assessment today, "Our capital flows out in streams to irrigate the whole system of Western economy."

FAIR TRADE?

As the sixtieth anniversary of the OAU's founding approaches, African leaders have begun to reimagine intra-Africa relations. As they do so, they face unprecedented continent-wide crises, including climate shocks, the COVID-19 pandemic, and internal population displacement. Addressing these crises will require goodwill, common cause, and investment from partners outside the continent.

Nkrumah's argument that economic integration is a rational response to African nations' limited economic sovereignty is all the more timely given growing global demand for digital technologies and battery-powered vehicles, which has sparked resurgent foreign investment in African minerals. Lithium-ion batteries will soon render combustion engines obsolete. Africa, with the world's largest reserves of cobalt, a key ingredient in these batteries, is critical to this transformation.

In this sense, Africa is the world's technological breadbasket. But if the continent's economic and political status quo remains unchanged, heightened pressure and competition among Europe, Asia, and North America for its mineral resources will continue to contribute to corruption, labor exploitation, and environmental degradation. There will be little to no discernable material benefits for the citizens of the African countries involved.

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has 60 percent of the world's cobalt. Yet it ranks among the five most impoverished countries on global poverty indices. The DRC's deprivation, corruption, and chronic civil war astound even the most experienced monitors of financial malfeasance and its consequences. Its resources, particularly copper and cobalt, are sold to private foreign investors for a fraction of their value,

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robbing its citizens of the opportunity to use the wealth of their land to improve their lives.

DRC leaders, including former President Joseph Kabila, have reportedly enriched themselves through corrupt deals with some of those foreign investors. Israeli billionaire Dan Gertler's egregious bribes to amass billions of dollars in profits from diamonds, oil, and cobalt are well-publicized examples. The Biden administration reimposed sanctions on Gertler after they were lifted by outgoing President Donald Trump. But neither Gertler nor the DRC is an aberration; they are emblematic of the mining industry's opacity.

The greatest impediment to economic stability in African countries, with some exceptions, has been a fundamental lack of basic infrastructure to facilitate cross-border and international trade, from roads and railways to ports and storage facilities. Improvements in infrastructure will enhance production. China has invested heavily in infrastructure projects, which have given it a strategic advantage on the continent. It is now Africa's largest trading partner and biggest creditor; and it has acquired a dominant position in mining on the continent, in exchange for financing infrastructure. Chinese-owned firms mine 50 percent of the DRC's cobalt, and some 80 percent of cobalt chemicals (used in cathodes for lithium-ion batteries) are produced by Chinese companies.

African leaders have begun to reimagine intra-Africa relations.

While African leaders redefine intra-Africa relations and rethink Africa's economic relationships with foreign investors, intergovernmental and multinational organizations must radically alter their approach to economic and political engagement with Africa. The leadership of Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, appointed as director-general of the WTO in February 2021, will be critical to ensuring that African interests and issues are addressed at this level. As Nigeria's finance minister, Okonjo-Iweala aggressively pushed for greater transparency and accountability in the government's dealings with foreign multinationals. She also worked for 25 years at the World Bank, rising to its second-highest position.

Liberalizing markets and shrinking the role of governments became the default prescription from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for African economies during the 1990s. These steps have failed to foster economic growth. Okonjo-Iweala can usher in a culture change to make the WTO a more effective partner in helping Africa realize its trade ambitions.

Renewing a partnership

The US government also has an opportunity to play a constructive role in shifting the paradigm on African investment and trade. President Joe Biden has signaled from the start of his administration that he is prepared to work for productive partnerships with African countries and to support the AFCFTA. On February 5, 2021, in his address via video to the 34th summit of the African Union (formerly the OAU), Biden touched on key issues for African economic development and sovereignty: increasing trade and investment; providing peace and security; and backing democratic institutions. He pledged US support and partnership for the AU, in a spirit of solidarity and mutual respect.

Even before his AU address, Biden took steps that will help rebuild the US alliance with African countries, such as resuming US participation in the Paris Agreement on climate change and membership in the WTO and the World Health Organization, and ending restrictions on student visas and the travel ban on 13 predominantly Muslim countries put in place by Trump. Biden also ended Trump's Mexico City Policy, which blocked US funding for foreign aid organizations that provide information about abortion or lobby for changes to abortion laws.

The Biden administration should support a new approach to African governance and economic development through the powers granted by the 2012 Magnitsky Act. This law enables the US government to freeze the financial assets of individuals and groups identified as human rights offenders and ban them from entering the United States.

Meanwhile, African American lawmakers and government officials are likely to continue their decades-long tradition of acting as the principal political proponents of mutually beneficial US policies on Africa. It would be wise to lead multilaterally through the US ambassador to the United Nations, Linda Thomas-Greenfield. Finding a more experienced diplomat for this position would have been difficult. Thomas-Greenfield served as assistant secretary of state for African affairs during President Barack Obama's second term and previously was the US ambassador to

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Liberia. She should be at the helm of Biden's Africa-related initiatives.

Representatives Gregory Meeks, who took over as chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee in January 2021, and Karen Bass, who became chair of its Africa subcommittee, will lead on African affairs within the US Congress. Meeks' first official event as committee chairman was a roundtable hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies on "A New US Policy Toward Africa." He called Africa his top priority.

Renewed interest in African affairs is also an opportunity for the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) to resume its historic role as the leading voice for African issues and interests within Congress. The CBC had been the primary proponent of a progressive US policy toward African countries since its founding in 1971, but its members' involvement in African affairs waned during the 1990s. African Americans remain a vital constituency for a reimagining of African trade and governance, now that conditions seem more auspicious.

Kwame Nkrumah's warnings about the implications of foreign involvement in African economic affairs should be a continual reference point for African leaders as they work to sway international financial institutions to change their conceptions and reform their practices in relation to mining, investment, and trade on the continent. The United States, as a hub for international finance, has a special part to play in this transformation. Its government and financial institutions must break from past practices to avoid aiding and abetting corruption. At the very least, they themselves must not actively engage in promoting corruption.

A US–Africa partnership for people-centered development will mark a radical departure from the practices of the past. Mining and trading Africa's vital mineral resources, under African control, and in partnership with foreign investors and governments that recognize Africans' interests in global trade and the potential of its vast new free-trade area, will contribute to realizing Africa's elusive dream of economic security and independence. US support, accountability, and investment in Africa have the potential to play formidable roles in reducing corruption and promoting good governance. But it is up to African leaders to seize the occasion of a global energy transition to usher in an era of accountability, transparency, and human rights, so that the continent's resources may fuel stability and prosperity for its people. ■

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Who Is an African Jew?

WILLIAM F. S. MILES

Genetic Afterlives:
Black Jewish Indigeneity in South Africa
Noah Tamarkin
Duke University Press, 2020

First in his academic writing, and then especially through hosting the popular (but also controversial) 1980s public television series *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, the late Ali Mazrui neatly packaged religion in his treatment of Africa for a curious American audience. For Americans more used to exposés of the "Dark Continent" via *National Geographic* magazine and Mutual of Omaha's *Wild Kingdom* Sunday night broadcasts, having a Muslim, Mombasa-born, Kenya- and England-educated American professor as their guide to Africa was little short of a revelation.

The triple heritage that Mazrui professed begins with indigenous religion, the essence of which distills to a sacral relationship with nature from time immemorial. The most recent religious influence arrived through Western colonialism; Mazrui referred to this as Africa's "Greco-Roman" heritage. Between indigenous African religion and missionary Christianity is the spiritual legacy that Mazrui labeled "Semitic," or "Hebraic and Arabian."

Over time, Mazrui wrote in his 1986 companion book to the TV series, "The Semitic element narrowed to become mainly Islamic." He pointedly invoked Ethiopia as the epitome of the "older triple heritage on the continent," noting its Western social traditions and architecture, a flourishing Coptic version of Christianity since the fourth century, and "local versions of the legend of Solomon and Sheba" that "captured" the "impact of Judaism." But the new triple heritage, according to Mazrui, was best represented by Nigeria—presumably because it combines fairly equal postcolonial numbers of Christians and Muslims with a residual contingent of animists, without the Jewish component of Semitism. In this latter respect, Mazrui was prophetically wrong—until he provided the foreword to my 2014 book *Afro-Jewish Encounters: From Timbuktu to the Indian Ocean and Beyond*, in which for the first time he acknowledged the presence of present-day Nigerians practicing Judaism.

Mention Semites, Jews, and Africa in the same paragraph, and inevitably the irrepressible trope of the Lost Tribes of Israel makes an appearance. Through the same door enters—with a postmodern, biotech twist—Noah Tamarkin's *Genetic Afterlives*. In this finely detailed ethnographic study, Tamarkin (an assistant professor of anthropology and of science and technology at Cornell University) examines the identity politics of the unrecognized Lemba "tribe" of South Africa, which involve DNA swabbing and analysis that are used to buttress an oral tradition claim of Israelite descent.

Like Mazrui's earlier series, the Lemba Semitic saga found a mass television audience and a charismatic host: NOVA's 2000 documentary *Lost Tribes of Israel*, guided by the Indiana Jones of Lost Tribes, Tudor Parfitt, then of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies. (The name of the NOVA sponsor—Northwestern Mutual—echoes that of the *Wild Kingdom* series, an unfortunate coincidence.) Whereas the "afterlives" in the title of Tamarkin's book refers to the remaking and repurposing of purported genetic evidence emanating from studies published in scientific journals, the book itself is part of the aftermath of that NOVA broadcast.

The fact that there are vibrant communities of Black Africans practicing varieties of Judaism

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deserves no news flash. Ethiopian Jewry—whose members for centuries observed a pre-Talmudic version of the faith before mass evacuations relocated them to Israel—is the most notable case in point. Even without a similar claim to Israelite descent, the Abayudaya of Uganda have adopted a Torah-centric way of life since the early twentieth century. Judaism's Conservative movement ordained the first Abayudaya rabbi in 2008.

Since the 1970s (roughly in sync, coincidentally, with the virtual disappearance of Jewry from northeast Africa), a remarkable amalgam of indigenous communities has emerged throughout the continent, making considerable sacrifices to learn, observe, and practice rabbinic Judaism. At great familial and personal cost, they have categorically disengaged from the Christian churches that in some ("messianic") forms first familiarized them with modern Judaism; struggled to master the Hebrew alphabet, prayer forms, and liturgy; and striven to study and apply the canon of Jewish law as best their circumstances will allow. They build synagogues, observe the *hagim* (Jewish holidays), and overtly identify with the modern state of Israel (with the attendant complications). Even without the benefit of *halachic* (rabbinical law) conversion, these sub-Saharan communities have, for all intents and purposes, adopted the forms and modalities of modern Judaism (including the fractiousness of followers within and between its various denominations).

The Lemba, for all their other virtues, are not among these communities.

AUTHENTIC SIGNATURE?

What the Lemba represent is a subset of multiple indigenous communities around the global South who claim descent from ancient Israel and, by virtue of that claim, seek recognition—both locally and globally—as Jews. What sets the Lemba apart from most other Lost Tribe claimants is their ability to conjoin their longstanding oral tradition to the Cohen Modal Haplotype—a Y-chromosome "signature" (group of genes) common to Ashkenazi, Mizrachi, and Sephardic Jewish men who claim trimillennial descent from Moses' brother Aaron. To be sure, members of only one of the dozen Lemba clans, the Buba, have displayed remarkable similarity between their haplotype and that of the approximately 5 percent of Jews worldwide who are *kohanim* (descendants of the caste of priests). Still, even if no reputable geneticist will aver that the results "prove" that the Lemba/Buba are actual descendents of Israelites/Aaronites, the statistical overlap is intriguing. Whether that in any way makes them "Jewish" is another matter entirely.

Tamarkin's book on "Black Jewish indigeneity," then, is not at all a study about a sub-Saharan community that both purports to be Jewish *and* systematically strives to integrate the basic customs and observances of Jewry; this is a "Judaism" without Passover. To appreciate how Judaism is actually lived by sub-Saharan Africans today, one should read the work of Nathan Devir on Cameroon alongside that of Janice Levi on Ghana; Daniel Lis and Johannes Harnischfeger on Nigeria; Marla Brettschneider on Côte d'Ivoire and Gabon; or Isabella Soi on Uganda. Some of the Jewish communities in those countries believe, as do the Lemba, that they are indeed descendants of tribes from ancient Israel; others dispense with that claim entirely.

Such belief in genealogical descent ("Jewish blood," in its crudest formulation) is, in any case, secondary (and arguably immaterial) to their Jewishness, to their "doing Jewish" (as filmmaker Gabrielle Zilkha describes the Hebraic gestalt of Ghanaian Jews). For neither genealogy nor faith declamations replace the Jewish imperative to do, not merely to say; to practice, not merely to preach. And given the fraught Christian theology of supersessionism and the legacy of anti-Semitism, it also requires—especially in the emerging sub-Saharan context—a clear line of demarcation between identifying as Jewish and identifying as Christian, between worshipping in an African church and worshipping in an African synagogue.

Outside researchers who assist in blurring those lines do both epistemological and ethical injustice, however unwittingly, to those sub-Saharan communities that strive at great cost and personal sacrifice for recognition as authentic Jews. That some so-called messianic African Christians themselves ostentatiously blur those lines by donning *kippot* and *tsitsit* (skullcaps and prayer fringes) makes the task of outsiders more difficult, but no less critical. (Parfitt and Edith Bruder have published important compendia on both Jewish and "judaizing" communities in Africa; Parfitt has also just published *Hybrid Hate*, a history of the conflation of anti-Semitism and anti-Black racism from the Renaissance through the Third Reich. With respect to Africa, Parfitt delves into the legendary Black Jews of the west-central coastal kingdom of Loango.)

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Tamarkin's book is extremely valuable in very different ways. It sheds much-needed light on how science, and particularly the specialty of genetics, is used (and can be misused) to foster claims of ancestral origins and contemporary identity and belonging. It is fascinating to read how DNA analysis is also used to bolster a claim of tribal recognition for the Lemba, whom the apartheid regime, citing their lack of a distinctive language, did not accord the status of "tribe," and whom the post-apartheid regime similarly rebuffed. Although neither the candlewife system (marriage with high-status women from other lineages in order to buttress legitimacy of leadership) nor bone reburial ceremonies resonate as particularly Hebraic, Israelite, or Jewish, they are remarkable expressions of Lemba culture in their own right. Local squabbling over chieftaincy titles is certainly not unique to the Lemba; Tamarkin's detailing of them in this context of Jewish identity affirmation adds a uniquely southern African twist. The ambiguity of Lemba claims that they are both indigenous to the land on which they dwell and members of a diaspora hailing from the Holy Land and broader Middle East is intellectually intriguing, even if never quite resolved.

Genetics is used and misused to foster claims of ancestral origins and contemporary identity.

One can read a healthy ambivalence in Tamarkin's own evaluation of the Jewishness of his subjects. He recoils, in a literary way, at how the term "Jewish blood" is bandied about to proclaim a communal identity. In some instances, the claims made as a result of Jewish identity affiliation come across as more unidirectional than reciprocated by the author. (In this context, it is worth recalling that there are, conversely to the Lemba, countless tribes, clans, and individuals throughout the world who do carry genetic markers of Jewish ancestors but have no particular interest in abandoning their current identity or religion as a result: Jewish genes do not a Jew make. Nor does simply plopping a *kippa* on one's head.)

Tamarkin writes in the introduction that "Lemba people redefine genetic Jewishness through the racial, religious, and ethnonational mappings that resonate *for them*" (emphasis in original). By the end of the book, one wonders if those bases of Jewish identity resonate for his own Jewishness, which he volunteers (along with his sexuality) to the reader. On several occasions, Tamarkin's informants dictated to him how he must write the Lemba Jewish story, instructions that—despite his oft-expressed general affection for his hosts—seemingly rankled.

Nor does this reader take away the impression that Tamarkin approves of the "racializations" (by the Lemba themselves and outsiders) that "conflate race and religion." One also detects queasiness about the business of genetic ancestry, and the related overeagerness of some Ashkenazim to embrace their Lemba brethren without conducting anything similar to the deep cultural dive that Tamarkin undertook in fourteen months of fieldwork and follow-up visits over the next ten years.

A final word about book marketing: like titles and subtitles, front cover images can be more alluring than instructive. The photo on the cover of *Genetic Afterlives* shows one of the book's protagonists, Ishe Sadiki, looking toward Mapungubwe Hill, the site of a twelfth-century kingdom where human bones were excavated in the 1930s and reburied (ostensibly as Lemba remains) in 2007. The picture captures Sadiki from the back, wearing a fetching black yarmulke with a purple Star of David in the middle. One might think that he regularly sports a Jewish skullcap, or at least that the Lemba themselves produce such spiritual ornaments. In fact, Tamarkin notes, the *kippa* came by way of the Abayudaya community in Uganda. Tamarkin's book does not mention any cottage industry of Jewish ritual objects being made by the Lemba.

If you would like an authentic African yarmulke that comes with provenance, I'll put you in touch with Ephraim, a sub-Saharan tailor and practicing Jew, who sews a range of colorful and sparkling options. He could justifiably affix a label stating: "Made in Nigeria. By Jewish hands."

Tamarkin's "genetic Judaism" is an elegy to a southern African claim on a Jewish identity grounded in the ancient past. For the future of African Judaism, go north, dear reader, go north. ■

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Will African Federalism Work?

Excerpted from an essay by Rayford W. Logan in the October 1961 issue of Current History

The large number of "races," tribes, languages and dialects is a gigantic obstacle to continental, regional and, in some instances, national unity. Experts differ as to the classification and number of races and tribes. Congo (Léopoldville), according to some estimates, has some 200 tribes. French West Africans speak 126 principal languages and hundreds of dialects. In some regions the inhabitants of neighboring villages do not understand one another. . . .

Another barrier to African unity is the inadequacy of all communications: railroads, rivers, highways, and air travel. . . .

The continuation of the Cold War adds an almost insuperable burden upon African leaders in their efforts to develop their individual countries and to form economic or political unions. The continuation of the Cold War compels the East and the West to jockey for position in Africa and it imposes upon African leaders hard choices: either firm, consistent support of one of the two blocs or the acceptance of support from one in order to gain more support from the other. One must not expect, during an era of recurring crises, more wisdom from African leaders than from those in other countries. ■

African Unity Twelve Years Later

Excerpted from an essay by Richard E. Bissell in the May 1975 issue of Current History

The founding of the Organization of African Unity in May, 1963, was considered an occasion for great rejoicing by many. Poets pictured the new organization as a phoenix arising from the ashes of discredited European colonial empires. Visionaries foresaw the rapid development of a political and economic union covering the entire African continent. Political leaders hoped that they were constructing a grouping capable of bridging the enormous differences among the new African states in terms of ideological orientation, cultural background, and extra-continental political ties. Nearly all were disappointed within a short time. . . .

The new states, still jealous of their recently obtained sovereignty and wary of the intentions of those advocating immediate political unity (like the late Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana), made it clear that any unification would be a long-term process. The organization had no coercive power over the members; subsequently, in early 1964, the African Heads of State declared the current territorial boundaries to be inviolable. . . .

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The charter of the OAU outlined activities in virtually all spheres of life, with a relatively small investment in institutions to carry out the charter provisions. The first, and what has remained the foremost, function of the OAU was to provide for regular political consultation. . . . One should not underestimate the need for such consultation, on a continent where a telephone call from Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to Lagos, Nigeria, must be relayed via Paris and London, and where the diplomatic corps assigned to a country's former metropole is usually larger than all its personnel stationed in other African countries. Normal diplomatic channels were inadequate for a growing quantity of transnational interactions between states that had had virtually no contact under colonial rule. Of equal concern to the African states was their clout in international organizations; their combined 30 to 40 votes in the United Nations General Assembly could be a powerful bloc. The coordination of political views effected by the OAU was instrumental in giving the African bloc the power it wields today. ■

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